



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Ben
Messick, 1965 June 1

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Benjamin Newton Messick on June 1, 1965. The interview took place in Long Beach, California, and was conducted by Betty 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.

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. 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

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: This is Betty Lochrie Hoag on June 1, 1965, interviewing Ben Messick in his home in Long Beach, California. And that's spelled B-E-N, and then capital M-E-S-S-I-C-K. And Mr. Messick, do you—is it Benjamin, or—the full name?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Well, it is, but I don't use it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Don't use it. What about a middle initial?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: *N.*

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: *N.* And do you care to tell us what it stands for?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Newton.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Newton. N-E-W-T-O-N?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Uh-huh [affirmative].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Good. Mr. Newton was active in the Project in southern California.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Uh, Messick.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Messick. [They laugh.] I'm so sorry. I was reading it back. I'll delete that. Mr. Messick was active on the Project in southern California, particularly some of the mural work that I know of, and other things I don't know of.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes, there are other things. I was on the easel project a while.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Wonderful. I didn't know that.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes. And they also did some lithographs and things for me, and they took a part of them and gave me a part.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, good. [Cross talk.] [Inaudible.]

BENJAMIN MESSICK: So, I don't know what happened to those. I'll show you some later.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, before we talk about the Project, I'd like to ask you something about yourself. Would you tell me where you were born and when and where you received your education [inaudible]?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Strafford, Missouri, 1901.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Is that spelled S-T-R-A-T-F—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: S-T-R-A-F. S-T-R-A-F-F-O-R-D.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, Strafford, okay.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Missouri.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And were you raised in Missouri?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I was partly. I came out here—I don't know what age I was, to tell you the truth, but I was sort of wandering around [after I left home -Ed.].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You left your family and came out?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yeah. Well, I came with a cousin, actually, but I don't know what happened to him. He went somewhere else.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: As a teenager, you mean, or—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yeah. And I wanted to go to art school. I was very interested in that, but it took me quite a while, it seemed like, to get to it. And I finally found the Los Angeles School of Art and Design, where I went—let's see, I would say a period of a year, or a little more, perhaps, both day and night. Six months days, I think, and the rest were nights. And then, I had a special with the woman who was head of the school, Mrs. McLeod. I had a special course in her studio, where I got figure painting, drawing, and watercolor and things like that.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Academic basics.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Academic basics, uh-huh [affirmative.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Wonderful.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: That's right. And she was from London. And she was very good. I don't remember her first name, but her last name was McLeod, C-L-E-O-D. And then, I went away and worked a year or so, and came back to Chouinard Art Institute.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Now, did you want some particular aspect of painting? Had you had your heart set on something?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: No. No, I just want to paint.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Just painting.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: And so then I discovered that you have to make a living somehow. So then, I tried to learn all I could that might help me to do anything that came along, any kind of an art assignment, which was—turned out to be murals, I did of fashion drawings. I took a course in that for the stores—Desmond's [ph], Robinson's [ph], and different stores. I did various art assignments during the Depression, but I didn't make enough money to keep going. It was just not enough, you know? Everybody was closing their studios.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: So, I got on the Project, and then, I got a job at Disney Studio, and I got off of the Project.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Do you remember the approximate years?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: No, I don't. [Laughs.] I didn't keep any track of it at all, see. I just did it. And I don't know whether I could find it or not. I might be able to find it, if I kept looking through things and kind of orienting myself, you see.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You mean, you were on the Project for a short time and then at Disney [inaudible]—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I was on there for a while, and then I—Disney I couldn't take it. It was just too much of a grind.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Was this animation, or [audible]—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Well, I wasn't that high.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see [laughs.]

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I was in what they call in-betweens. And that's the lowest form of artist

there is.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Is it filling in with color or something?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: It's even lower than Disney himself. [They laugh.] And well, what it is is, the animator—say, for instance, a man is taking a step—the animator makes, say, three positions.

[00:05:12]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative.]

And the in-between person fills in between.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: And the in-between person fills in between. But this has got to flow, you see?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, I see.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: The movement's got to flow. And if it's a dog running or something, you can imagine how all—every little detail's got to work in with this, see. Now, I worked about a year, and I was working about 11 hours a day, and I was ready for a nervous breakdown, almost. And I quit, because I was only making \$14 a week.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, for heaven's sake.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible] you were about exhausted [laughs].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: That's right. So then, I went back—the—as I remember it now the—what was it now, not the federal, the Treasury—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes, Treasury.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —Treasury Project, see. I went on that.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, I see.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: And I worked on murals, the state building—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Now, this was with Lloyd, wasn't it? Lucile Lloyd?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I worked with Miss Lloyd in the state building. I worked with Leo Katz on the Frank Wiggins Trade School.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, you did? I didn't know that.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes. And I worked with Buckley MacGurrin the Hall of Records. In fact, I practically painted his mural, although I [inaudible] claimed it. He was the supervisor, see.

[Cross talk.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes. He was busy with that part. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: That's how it counted. I did a lot of work under him, see. That's right. He would come in and have a little lunch with me, and [laughs] put a little paint on it. But we did a—I have a [inaudible] in here, the mural that we did. You probably have seen it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes, I have. [Cross talk.] Buckley loaned me that. Thank you.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: You've seen it. So you know what it is. Yes. So, it's in this thing, here, so, you know what it is anyway. And I worked with Feitelson on some high school's things, and also with F. Tolles Chamberlin in Pasadena, and that—the school—I did have the name of that school—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Is that Pasadena Junior High School?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I think it is.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Uh-huh [affirmative]. [Cross talk.] I haven't been over to see that.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: It strikes me as though it's a little bit—it's something different to that, but—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Now, he is dead, isn't he?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes, he is.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I have the address for his wife, but I'm not going to be doing—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes. Well, I think I have something here.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, good, because I haven't read anything about the work he did.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I did have it, but I don't know. And Ms. Lloyd, there, she committed suicide.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes, I know.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I wanted to ask you about that.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: And here I am with MacGurrin.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, yes.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: The Project gave me that photograph. And—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I've seen the finished picture, the mural, but not with any people with it. That's interesting.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Now, here's something I had at Pasadena High. This is on the easel project at Pasadena High, but I don't know whether that's the same school or not. It strikes me as though it's a little—oh, here it is. Here's what I was looking for.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Good, thank you.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: That's the mural. Now, on the back, it tells, you see.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It is the William McKinley Junior High School.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: McKinley Junior High School, that's it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: And MacDonald-Wright, you know, he told me that if I'd go over and—because Mr. Chamberlin [laughs] never seemed to get anything done—if I'd go over and finish it, then he'd give me credit for it. But I told him I didn't want any credit for it. So, I went over and helped Mr. Chamberlin finish it up, and that was it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And that's why you didn't get any credit on the records, because I hadn't seen your name.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: That's right. Of course, he was the designer and so—and actually got the mural through, you see.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That is a very ambitious mural, isn't it?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: It's big.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Did you ever count the number of figures [ph]?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: No, I never counted the figures [ph].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: There must be a couple hundred.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Oh yes, there's quite a lot up there.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Amazing.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: And, but he seemed to drag along with it and drag along and not seem to get at it. He was teaching and doing various things, you know.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: He was probably an older man at the time, anyway, wasn't he?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Oh, yes, that's true. Yes, that's true.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: He had done work in the Los Angeles Public Library, I believe, before. I think he did the rotunda mural.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: His wife.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: His wife?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Well, he might have, but his wife did a lot of dioramas.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, she did?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I wonder if she was on the Project.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: But not for the Project, I don't think. I don't think it's for the Project. No, I don't think it was. Before that, I think. I was in art school at the time. It was in the late '20s, and Mr. Chamberlin was teaching there. That's how I happened to meet him, because he was the teacher there at Chouinard's at the time. And I know that they were discussing often that his wife had done these dioramas there and he—but they closed up that entrance, and I don't know what ever happened to the dioramas. Well, anyway, now, let's see what—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible.] Well, since we're talking about the Project anyway, let's go back to that first one, which I presume was the Hall of Records, with Lloyd, supervisor's—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: No, that's the state building.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: State building.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: That was Lloyd.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, yes.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Lucile Lloyd. The state building. This might have—let's see, no, I believe Frank Wiggins Trade School was first. And that, I think, has changed its name to the Metropolitan Trade School. Now, I'm not sure about this.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, it has?

[00:10:09]

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I think it has. And I have here some photographs. And I did have others, and I don't know whether—I couldn't find them.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Now, this was the one with Leo Katz?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: That's right. Here is a couple—this seems to be the same panel, the only things I could find on that, and there was about eight panels.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see. And this is the Treasury Department? PW—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: That's on the Treasury. I'm sure that was on the Treasury.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes. Well, those were outright commissions to the artists. You don't remember anything about his [inaudible]—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Oh, we got more than they did on the straight WPA.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: As far as salary went?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yeah, that's right, that's right.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: How many of you were helping him? Just you, or—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Well, I was there, mostly, and I did nearly all the research and sketches and things for it. And I have some, too, that I should've gotten out, some sketches that I'd made for it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, I'd love to see them.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I've got some here somewhere. I think I might be able to lay my hands on them.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Good, I hope you can find them.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: And here's a show, too, that has some of the studies in here somewhere, at the museum, Exposition Park. Oh, yes, I think I marked it down here. Is that—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Good, yes, decorative panels, and *Feeding the Birds*. Some of yours in there.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes. Now, that's mine, see. And then, I had another one, here.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, that's early. That's 1934.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes. And then I had another one, here, where I had six sketches for the state building. They call them "sketches." Actually, they were studies. For the state building.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Had you had any experience in doing historical research, or did you —

BENJAMIN MESSICK: No.

[Cross talk.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible.]

BENJAMIN MESSICK: It was very easy. I thought it was quite easy, because Mr. Katz was quite familiar with the subject. And although the library was not very familiar with it, I found — when I went down there, I finally found it in the children's department material. I couldn't find in history or anything else. Now, this is the other that I was speaking about.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, good. That's in '36. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: That's in '36, yup. That's six sketches for the state building. They called them "sketches." And let's see. Here's another catalogue. I don't know what's in that. I just [inaudible]—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mr. Davis I haven't found. He did some of those in this.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Davis, what was his first name? Do you remember?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: In the Hall of Records. Charles Davis. He's down [inaudible].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I don't remember him. I don't seem to remember him.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Feitelson and Lundeberg and MacGurrin, [cross talk] [inaudible]— MacGurrin.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I worked with them quite a bit, Lundeberg and Feitelson, and the boy you spoke about a while ago.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Cotton [ph]?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: No. Well, I worked with Don [ph], too. No, there was another one. I don't know whether you've seen this or not. This is the state building mural.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: No, I hadn't.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I did the figures, mostly, in that. That is, I made the drawings for them the size they were supposed to be used.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It is a very beautiful mural. I went down to see it.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Did you see it?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes, I did.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: It's quite attractive. And, um—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: The board of supervisors was sitting, and they let me come in anyway and study it, which was nice.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Oh? We painted that when they were having liquor investigations of—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, really?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes, and it was very interesting.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You mean, you listened the whole time you were working?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes, we had to be very careful, because they told us if we moved too much, we would have to get out.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes. This was direct fresco, wasn't it?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: No, this was oil, and it had part of it—I think the sky was done late with gold leaf and then glazed on top of that. And we had trouble, because it wasn't really done there. It was done in a building out near Washington and Vermont. It was a block west of Washington, and it's where they paint curtains for theaters. And I don't recall—never had any occasion to, you know, remember—the name of the place at all.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Because they needed that much space to work in.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes, well, they had everything there, because they had a big slot in the floor, you see, and you could run these up and down through there and stand right on the floor and paint.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Great place to work.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: The second floor, you could paint almost any part of your mural, just by running it up and down.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Wasn't that a wond—I never heard of anyone having facilities like that.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes. And then they had a company come and mount it later. And that was done with white lead, I think, and some kind of mixture that they put with varnish or some kind of glue or something.

[00:15:05]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: There was another person helping on this, with Lucile Lloyd [inaudible]—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: There was another one or two, but they didn't last very long.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: They didn't stay very long, and when I went over, her husband was posing for her for some of the main figures, and I looked at him, I said, Well, that's not working at all, if what you tell me is what you want, which is the main character, here.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Toltec character?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Which was supposed to be some kind of a goddess.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes. A goddess [laughs]?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes. And he was a little, skinny guy, you know. [Betty Hoag McGlynn laughs.] And so I set to work to try to [inaudible]. She said, That's exactly what I wanted. So, then I went ahead and did the rest. I think I did all those figures.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: The figures for her?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes. She designed most of the [cross talk]—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I don't know much about her, because she died, you know, shortly after.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes, she died shortly after that.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Do you know where she came from or what her training was? Anything?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Her father was—he did window—like, colored glass windows.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Stained glass?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Stained glass, and I think things of that type. And she was raised there. But she couldn't draw well enough, you see, to be able to carry out her thoughts. So she made up the design for it, which was about an inch to the foot, I would say.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: And then I had to enlarge all the figures to go to this wall size, you see. [Cross talk.] It's very interesting.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I thought the [inaudible] foliage, the yucca was particularly beautiful.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Very nice, yes. Ornamental, you see—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes, uh-huh [affirmative].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —design. And that, she designed. In fact, she made the design and sold it to the—you know, sold it to the manager of the building, and I don't recall his name. Of course he's dead now, I imagine. But, of course, he was quite an elderly man at the time. Must have been 70. And I don't recall his name.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, most of the artists who got these Treasury Department commissions were pretty well-established by the time that they got into that work. I wonder if she—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes, they had to be, because I wanted to do some—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You were too young?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Nobody ever wanted to give me one, so I said that, I know I spoke to MacGurrin about it, and Feitelson, too. But I had a good experience. I had a wonderful experience, and I thought it was really worthwhile. Now, these are some of the Project things that I did. This—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: This is on the easel project?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Easel project.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes. [Inaudible.]

BENJAMIN MESSICK: This, with ten sketches—studies for this went to the high school over here in Wilmington. Phineas Banning, I believe it is.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes, is that still in existence?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: The school is, but I—you know, I haven't been over there since we moved out here.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, no one knows what's happened to their paintings. It's very funny. [Cross talk.] They weren't in the school—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: No. I just read in the paper not long ago that they dumped shiploads of them out in the ocean, and I never knew that.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I would like to know whether that's true. We've heard it, and—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: There were warehouses full of them, I'm sure. Well, I'd heard. Now, this was done for the board of education in Santa Monica. Or it was requisitioned by them from the Project.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: *Feeding the Birds*, isn't that delightful?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Later, I did a lithograph of that, which I had quite a bit of success with. And they printed it there. It was done in stone. They printed it there on the Project.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You were not in the lithography project at all, working?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: No, I didn't work on that project.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You didn't do any of the prints?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I was on the oil easel project. And this was—went to Santa Barbara Junior High. It seems to me like I showed it, too, somewhere, [inaudible] exhibit.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: This one you have in front of your fireplace now is much the same [cross talk] type of composition, isn't it?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Some of the same, you see, these were influenced by Italian primitive painting, which I liked very much—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes, yes.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —when I was first beginning to paint. Because they have this nice design, and [inaudible] design.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And lovely, clear colors.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Beautiful color and balance, and so on. And then, I decided that, being an American, I shouldn't paint like the Italians, [Betty Hoag McGlynn laughs] so I started painting my surroundings and doing quite a bit of study and research. And let's see if I have something else, I should—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Do you know if Santa Barbara has this? I'm going up there this week. Junior high school, have you ever been back to see if they have it?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: No, I haven't. I haven't really seen any of these since. I'll tell you, with the artist, it takes all your time, you see. And then, you get so involved. See, to date, I think I've had about 66 shows. Now, these are one-man shows.

[00:20:05]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Good heavens.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: And I've been in over 300 what they call mixed nationals and local shows, which is quite a bit of work to do.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: No time to go running around looking for—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: And teaching nearly all the time.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, I didn't know you were teaching.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes, nearly all the time.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: For goodness's sake.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I've had classes since I started teaching. In fact, I was going to say that, after I was on the Project—after I was on the last project doing murals, Mrs. Chouinard, Chouinard Art Institute, called me and asked if I'd ever taught any. And I said a little bit, but not too much. And so, she asked me if I'd come over for an interview. She wanted me to come, and I said I have a very good job. I was working at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, in the art department.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: As set designer?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: No, sketch artist, they call it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Sketch artist.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes. I took the three-dimensional sets and sketched the figures on them, see? And they gave me something with—in fact, I have a lot of stuff in the closet on that, you see.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Terrence Long [ph] does that, too.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes, he did that, too.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: He showed me some of his. It's just fascinating. I'd love to see yours.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes. I have a bunch of those things.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Really?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: And then—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You were liking that, so you didn't want to go teach.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: She says to me, "Don't you want to paint?" And I said, "Oh, sure, that's what I want to do, really." And she says, "Well, you'll have a lot more time if you come and work for me." [Betty Hoag McGlynn laughs.] And I got to thinking about that, and I thought, that sounds pretty good, see. I wouldn't have so much money, but I'd have more time. So I quit, and I took about \$30 a week less and came over to her, and I was there, then, I think, for seven years.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Isn't that interesting. Were you teaching life drawing?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I was teaching to model, drawing to model.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Drawing to model.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Life drawing, they call it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And are you teaching in a school now, or privately?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: No, I'm teaching—well, I have the YWCA downtown, and here at home, privately, is all I'm doing right now.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: At home?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes. I went—while I was still at Chouinard, I had a show in La Jolla, at the arts center. And the man that had the school down there, the San Diego School of Arts and Crafts, wrote a very nice article about my show and called it perfect painting [inaudible]. And so, a couple weeks later, he wrote me a note and said that if I'd like to come down, take a summer class, and teach it, that he'd love to have me.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, isn't that great?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: So, I went down, and I stayed four years.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You did? Was it—you mean just summers?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: No, all the time. All the time.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: For good? You did? Now, this wasn't Jackson who had it, or Donal Hord?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: No, no. No, this was—let's see, well here, [inaudible], here's one of the [road maps I got out there at that school –Ed.].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh yes. That's very interesting. My goodness. That must be a wonderful place to teach, because [cross talk] there are so many artists who are dedicated in that area.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: It was a beautiful place, really. I have pictures of the building, and it was built as a railroad station.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh really?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: And one side had a Spanish restaurant [ph], and the other side had this school, and it's a beautiful building. It's out on the road going to San Diego, up 60. Between 60 and 70. Somewhere—I don't remember the exact number. But anyway, [cross talk] I was there four years.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible.]

BENJAMIN MESSICK: And I enjoyed it, too, because there were nice workmen there. Mostly G.I.s, is what it was. Now, let's see what else we want, here. Can you—

[Recorder stops, restarts.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Turned—now, we have [cross talk] a Stendahl—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: And a friend of mine took this picture, there, of Stendahl's gallery, on Wilshire Boulevard, and it was in '37, I think. Yes, I'm sure it was in 1937. And I had had a show two years before at the Los Angeles County Museum, but I didn't have oil paintings. I just had sketches and things for that. That was my first show.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: My goodness, Stendahl's been going a long time, backing artists.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Oh yes, oh yes. He's been here a long time. I was with him about five years.

[00:25:02]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And it's also—apparently it's always been a great honor to get a show there. Everyone always speaks—

[Cross talk.]

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I think so, I think so.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —of it as if it were some—you feel you've arrived—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Do they really?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —if you've gotten something in Stendahl's gallery.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Well, I'm glad they do. Because I've heard some of the galleries kind of say that it was a junk box [ph] [inaudible], but I don't think it was that way, at all.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: We'll, it couldn't have been. No, I should say not.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I thought he was a very good—in fact, he started, I was told, in the Ambassador Hotel, at one of the finest galleries, [cross talk] if not the finest.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I didn't know that. I know Joe Sutter [ph] was over there as his framer. He was on the Project.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes, I remember him.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And he died last year, and I didn't know it.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Oh, really? He's Swedish, wasn't he? Or maybe German? Or what was he?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I believe Norwegian.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Norwegian.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Something, anyway, Nordic.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Something. Nordic.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I was very sorry, because he'd done a lot of interesting work for Buckley MacGurrin restoring the missions [ph] on the Project, and it would have been fascinating [cross talk] to get a record of that, you know.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Oh, yes, he was working on it all the time. I remember him working, yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You didn't do any of that, of course.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Oh, no.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: No. Or any Index work?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: No.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I haven't been able to find anyone who was on that Index.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: No, I did nearly all easel and mural paintings. That's about—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: And here's a little blurb I noticed about the—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, yeah.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —murals. And that was in a magazine called *Hollywood Life*.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Now, you had already done the work with Leo Katz, is that how you pronounce it?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Well, he'd like to call it "Katz [pronounced 'cots']," because "Katz [pronounced 'cats']" don't sound too good. [They laugh.] You know, it's K-A-T-Z.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes. On the Frank Wiggins Trade School.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You'd already done that when you did this thing with Lloyd?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I think he was first.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes, he must have been, [cross talk] [inaudible] being completed.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I think he was first, yes, that's right. That's what—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Who—I can't find anything about him, where he is, or anything.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I don't know where he is. He went to New York.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, he did?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: He was with the Metropolitan Museum as a lecturer before he came out here.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: In art history?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I think so.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Or in technique of painting?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Well, he was a sort of—history of course, and I think quite a bit about the aesthetics of art and so on. How pictures are made, various sort of things.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Was he teaching here at the time? Or do you remember that?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I think he did teach some, but I'm not sure where. I think he did do some teaching.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Because he, again, probably was an older person, and he may not be around anyplace.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes, I doubt that he is.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And I haven't found out anything about him.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I just doubt that he is around. But he went back to New York, because he came from there.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Was he a pretty good artist, or—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: He's an Austrian.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Austrian?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes, he came from Austria originally, and he had done murals in Austria.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, that's interesting. Did you learn anything about technique from him? Because you couldn't have done any murals before then.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Not especially about technique. Of course, I don't think that he painted particularly a mural type of technique. He painted sort of like you would an easel picture.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see. Because he was doing his work on canvas, too.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: That's right. He worked—he painted with impasto solid paint, and then that would dry, and he'd glaze. And that was the method that they were using after oil painting was discovered, you know, way back in da Vinci's time, at the end of his life.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, really?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes. The van Eyck brothers discovered this technique. And so, they used—they underpainted just like they'd always painted, but they'd overpaint it with oil, in the beginning.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Isn't that interesting?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: And Rembrandt painted that way a great deal. He glazed a great deal. Impasto and glaze.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, that probably gives more depth, too, doesn't it?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: It gives a much more richer surface, I think, than they do today, you know. They don't know how to do that.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It seems so amazing that there was this great renaissance, only it wasn't a rebirth, of mural work at the time of the Project.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: You mean in this country?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes, at the time of the Project.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: No, it wasn't a renaissance in the same way the Renaissance in Italy

was.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Because it hadn't happened here before, is what I meant. I mean, it was the first time, really, it happened. And people didn't have experience.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes, but it was the government taking part in it, just sponsoring it, I think, is what really brought it on, don't you?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, definitely.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Because Edward Bruce, you know—you know who he was?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: He's the one that really got it through, and he was a newspaper man. And he saw Mrs. Roosevelt.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible.]

BENJAMIN MESSICK: He had a conference with her, and they influenced Franklin to start the Project, was what I read many times.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes, I have too.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Uh-huh [affirmative]. And as a matter of fact, here's something from Edward Bruce—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, for heaven's sake.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —that I found in my things.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Wow. Very exciting.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: [Laughs] I don't know how I ever kept these things. I can't understand. But he was the man that really started it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes. Oh, I hope we can—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: You know he—he—

[00:30:02]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —microfilm this, too. That's really thrilling, because this must have been right at the beginning of it, because you can see that he's excited about your being one of the artists on the initial experiment with it.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes, yes. Yes, it was.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Isn't that something?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: And I happen to have this old scrapbook here, you see, and it's full of stuff, and I picked out just the things—Project things. The rest of it are my own activities in art, see, so I just selected those out.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That was certainly nice of you [inaudible].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: But he was really excited about it. See, he was a Sunday painter, himself.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I did know that.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Bruce was. Yes, he was a Sunday painter. And I've seen his—as a matter of fact, the county museum did have one of his paintings. The Los Angeles County Museum, for a long time. They may not display it anymore, because it's old-fashioned, now, you see [laughs].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I'll have to ask. My daughter works there. I'll have to ask her to look it up.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Oh, does she really?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Uh-huh [affirmative].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Well, she probably could look it up, and it must be there somewhere. So, he had two newspapers, I've been told, one in San Francisco and one in Honolulu. And he got so enthralled with painting that he sold both newspapers and went to Paris. And it was while he was in Paris that he got the idea about the Project.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Isn't that amazing?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I didn't know that background.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes, and so he came back to this country, very wild with thoughts, you know.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: And got a conference with Mrs. Roosevelt. And that led to the whole thing.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It was certainly a wonderful time for someone to have that dream, wasn't it? [Laughs.]

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Well, he says, Now's the time, you see. He says, We have a Depression —

[Cross talk.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible.]

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —and the artists are not doing anything, you see. And we have buildings that need to be decorated, and all this kind of thing. And he talked it up, and that's the way it was. And this is the only thing that I have, really, of his. Whether I got anything else from him or not, I don't know. This—no this is the same as that I guess. So, is this the same one there that you have of that?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: No, this is a different view of it.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: It's a different thing. I think I have two different clippings on that mural.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Good. [Cross talk.] Tells more about it, yes.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: It's very large. Yes, it's very large.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, it's actually three murals, isn't it? There's another panel on this side, I believe.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: There's three panels.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Three panels.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: But it's—you know, we see it quite often, on television.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You do?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Oh yes. Quite often, they open up on that mural when they're having some kind of an investigation—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: For goodness's sake.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —or something in that assembly room. See that's the governor's—where the governor holds court, there, [cross talk] when he comes to Los Angeles.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I didn't know that. For heaven's sake.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes. I've seen him there several times.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: My goodness. Look at the people who are in front of this.

[Cross talk.]

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes, it's the size.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Ferdinand Perret, who has—I've talked to Mrs. Perret [inaudible]—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Did you really?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes, she had, you know—she had her husband's great reference file.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Oh, yes, yes. He's—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And Thursis Field [ph] from San Diego. I've talked to him. I have to go back and tape him.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Oh, really?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: He was in charge of the San Diego Project, like [inaudible] here. But —

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I remember the name, yes. But Mr. Perret, I knew very well.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, did you?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: He had a library on West Washington.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes, originally.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: So you know—yes. And now, the government has all that in Washington.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: The Smithsonian has it—and his school, which is in St. Louis, I believe, [inaudible] university or something, has a copy, and the Archives has a copy.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Oh, really? Of all the things.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, this is what microfilm is so wonderful for. You see, they can all get copies. And have it.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Sure, sure. That's wonderful.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, it is.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Because he collected my things for a long time.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Really?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes, he did. Quite a while.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Which is great. I guess he was the only one in this area who was doing much work like that.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I think he was the only one.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It's a wonderful thing that he did. Interesting.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes, it is, isn't it? Let's see, what else [inaudible]—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You haven't any pictures of the Katz dedication? Katz—the Wiggins School?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: No. No, I don't have anything of that.

VELMA HAY MESSICK: I thought I saw [inaudible]—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: There was an article in *the New York Times*, and how I ever failed to get that, I don't know. But it was not, I don't think, anything really to keep. Now these are, of course, the same thing, I think under different light or something, because—and I had more than that, and I don't know where they disappeared to. I sent, you know, a lot of things to the Archives.

[00:35:05]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Where is that?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: In Detroit.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You have already?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Oh, yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, for—I didn't know you knew about us.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Oh, yes. I sent a—[cross talk]—a big box full—

VELMA HAY MESSICK: We thought that's why you came.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes, I thought that's why you came.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, really?

VELMA HAY MESSICK: Yes [laughs].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, for heaven's sake, how wonderful.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: A big box full of things, there. In fact, I have letters from it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, on behalf of the Archives, [laughs] thank you, also. Well, isn't that funny? Had someone talked to you from the Archives?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: No. No one personally.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Because most people don't know anything about it until I tell them.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: No one personally. I picked up *the New York Times* one day, and I saw that they were starting the Archives.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well bless your heart. [Laughs.]

BENJAMIN MESSICK: And I wrote there, and they told me it was going to be open certain time, so I boxed up a lot of things and sent them. I probably didn't get everything, but I got—let's see. Well, I have a letter from them telling everything that they received.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, it would be so wonderful if everyone who had things that were important would do that with them, so they'd be in one place, because everyone can share it [inaudible]—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Well, I felt it was going to be an important thing to have.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh it is.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes.

VELMA HAY MESSICK: Well, that's what they were asking in this notice that Ben saw, asking the artists to do that.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah, well, excuse me.

[Recorder stops, restarts.]

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —maybe, somewhere out there.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Do you think the Frank Wiggins mural [inaudible]—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: It was moved.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It was moved? Oh.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: It was moved. It was moved. I think there were eight panels, three on each side, and one at each end.

VELMA HAY MESSICK: Didn't you say something about it having gone to a country tubercular hospital or something?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Something like that. Some institution.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Now, I wonder if that could've gone out to Duarte.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Could be.

[Cross talk.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Duarte Tuberculosis Sanitarium had something.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: That sounds to me like it might have been there. I think it was there.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Or Duarte, I guess they pronounce it.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Duarte, yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That's probably what that was.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: See, it's funny, I had the center panel, here some—I thought I had it in here. A picture of it. It's very striking. What did I do with that?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You don't mean these ones that we looked at already?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: No. No, the center panel was a large panel of youths walking, and on one side was a telescope, and on the other side was a gun—you know, a large caliber gun, a field piece. And this was a center theme of his whole mural. Construction and destruction—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —sort of, you see. And they objected to a lot of it. School board did, so.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I wonder if this is the one that Mr. Schwankovsky [ph] interviewed and—in a very angry way in one of the old magazines.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I don't know. Could be.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It rather sounds like it.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Could be. I don't—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Was there a picture of the movie industry in that, too, with a very beautiful woman about to plunge a dagger into a warrior [inaudible].

[Cross talk.]

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Seems to me there might have been something in there of that kind. I know that one thing that the school board objected to, and I posed for it. Was—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, you did? [Laughs.]

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yeah. Was—see, two men were fighting, and the other was stabbing one in the throat.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes, I've seen the picture. Schwankovsky—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: That was the one?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —had pictures of that. Yes.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes. Uh-huh [affirmative]. And there was something else. I don't remember. It was just life, you know, sort of. And—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, his objection was that he didn't think it was healthy for children to come in the [cross talk] library, or wherever it was, every day and see [inaudible]—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Well, I think that was the objection of the school board, too. The school board objected like that. That's true.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: So they sent it to the hospital. [Laughs.]

BENJAMIN MESSICK: They wanted him to change it. And of course, he claimed that they were persecuting him, [laughs] sort of, you know?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: And I remember that it was soon after Rivera had trouble with the Rockefellers, you know, and it was—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: In the air for fresco artists to be persecuted.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: It was in the air. He took the same—Fifth Amendment or what [laughs]—not the Fifth Amendment.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Do you think there was much of that about murals, as far as dictation went—

[Cross talk.]

BENJAMIN MESSICK: No, I don't think [inaudible]—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —or political intrigue, or influence?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: In fact, I think that this was just to bring out the thoughts, was all it was for. There wasn't enough there, I don't think the average person would notice it, hardly. I don't think so. You saw the murals, didn't you? In the Frank Wiggins School? Oh, you didn't? I thought maybe you did. She studied there a while.

[00:40:06]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I should say, the voice in the background is Mrs. [Velma Hay] Messick, who is also an artist, but because she wasn't on the Project, I can't interview her specially [laughs]. But she knows all about what we're talking about.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Well, I'm sorry I don't have more material.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: How did you go from the Treasury Department mural work into the WPA? Do you remember the occasion of finding out about it, or—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Well, I think I was first on the WPA, before I went to Disney's. And then, after I—I just had to quit Disney, or I would have a breakdown. And I was off for a little while, and I remember that, and I went back on to the Treasury.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, were you asked by the board to go on, or did you know Miss Lloyd? Did she ask you to assist, or what was the protocol?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: No, I think I was on, working. I was at the Project, and she asked for me.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You were assigned, [cross talk] at her request?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: She—and Mr. Katz asked for me, too. [Inaudible.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I just didn't know how they worked. And you were doing easels on the side?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I did easels—I guess I did easels in between. It's sort of hazy. I did work on some other things. I think I worked on this—what is this down here? Pieces of—

MRS. MESSICK: Oh, the tile?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Tile.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, in San—where am I? Long Beach.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Under the Kings [ph]?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes, with the Kings. I think I worked a little bit on that, but not very much. When I first went, I think I worked a little bit on that.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I'm still trying to catch up with the artist Miller [ph], who was responsible for the first designs on that.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Oh, really?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I'm not sure where he is.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I don't think I knew him. I don't recall that I knew him.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I believe that Mr. Ryden [ph] and Mr. King [ph] took over.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And he sort of left it after that. It must have been a thrilling thing to be working with so many people on that.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: It was quite a lot of people working on it. It was a big thing. But I liked the murals the best, I think, of anything on the Project.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Did you?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I think I liked them the best.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Do you feel, from an all over picture, that the Project—besides feeding you, of course, which all the people needed at the time—do you think it was a very worthwhile thing, the idea of the government coming in and helping artists?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Well, it certainly did me a lot of—helped me a great deal. Because I could—I remember, when I went on the easel project, they told me, Now, you go down to the store, they told me where to go. It was Flack's [ph], Ann Flack's [ph], on Seventh [ph] Street, and they made arrangements, and just get any material you need.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You could choose your own brands?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes, and I did some of these panels and things, you see. I got large 48-size panels, you know, and I went to work on real projects.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: How many did you have to turn in a month? Do you remember?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: You had to go once a week, I believe, and have a board look at it, and I don't remember now. They'd usually say everything's working all right. [Betty Hoag McGlynn laughs]. You take in your sketches and things that you were making, see, and they would look it over, and I remember, Dalzell Hatfield was on the board. And I don't recall—Louie Dans [ph], did you run across him anywhere?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I have his name, but I can't find him.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Well, Louie Dans [ph] was quite an—wasn't he from San Diego?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I believe so, originally.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: He was a writer.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, he was a writer, too?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I think he was a writer.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, excuse me.

[END OF TRACK AAA_messic65_8836_m.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —at the beginning.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Well, I see. Well, he was teaching at USC the first time I remember him.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Excuse me a minute, I have to tell who we are for the tape. Betty Lochrie Hoag interviewing Ben Messick at his home in Long Beach, California, reel two. We're just talking about some of the people who contributed without credit to the original PWAP Project. And you were saying that you knew Dan Lutz [ph] when he was teaching at USC.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes. I really knew him before he started, about the time he started.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: He was still a student, I think, because I was—I've been to his house a couple of times to parties and things. And then, he went to—let's see, who was teaching there? Whoever was teaching there went to Yale to teach. I can't remember his name. But Dan took his place.

BETTY LOCHRIE HOAG: I see. He's in either Pasamona [ph]—[laughs] Pasadena or Claremont now because I wrote to him—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Dan?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I believe so.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Oh, he was in Santa Barbara just recently, not long ago. Living in Santa Barbara.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, I'm sorry. Then I have him mixed up with Dike—Phil Dike.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Dike.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative], and Dike was also on it the same way. And he always—

[Cross talk.]

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Well, I don't know—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —because I can come and see him [laughs].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Oh, I—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: So—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —didn't know he was connected in any way.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Uh-huh [affirmative]. And then you mentioned knowing Hinkle—Clarence Hinkle.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Oh, yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Who had been starting when you'd been there.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes, I knew Hinkle quite well because I was a student of his.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: A student at Chouinard, you said.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes, that's right.

BETTY LOCHRIE HOAG: [Inaudible.]

BENJAMIN MESSICK: He was teaching at Chouinard when I went there.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, because these people were just contributing without talent, I think, probably it won't be worthwhile for the Archives for me to talk to them, because they were all established at one time—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: They were—he [inaudible]—

[Cross talk.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —weren't they?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —[inaudible] I'm sure he was.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: There probably is nothing they could contribute to how it was organized or anything like that.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Well, he's been dead several years now, of course.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I mean any of the other ones, like Dike that I could—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I don't know. I didn't know he was connected with it at all.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And then Louie Dans [ph], would you mind telling me again what you said about him for the tape.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Well, Louie Dans [ph] was connected with it because he came to the Frank Wiggins when the superintendent of the school has a luncheon for us there, two or three times.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: A number of times. And there was a lot of speech making and so, you know?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: But Louie Dans [ph] was usually there. And I know he was—must have been an officer of some kind in the—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I think he was area supervisor.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Something like that.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah, uh-huh [affirmative].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes, uh-huh [affirmative]. And then, if I'm not mistaken, he was a writer before he came.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Because he wrote some art books later.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I think he wrote some art books later, but I don't know that I ever read them.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I'll have to check the library—

[Cross talk.]

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I just—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —just for fun to see if they have them—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —it would be interesting to know.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I hope I'm not wrong about that because I think he did write—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I have a feeling someone—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —one or two books—

[Cross talk.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —else was mentioned that down there.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Uh-huh[affirmative]. Let's see—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Let's see, on getting back to—we're jumping all over—I am jumping us all over the place but because there's one other question I wanted to ask you about was Lucile Lloyd. For one thing, I didn't know if she was married. And—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: She was married.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Quite young at the time, wasn't she [inaudible]—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: No, she was—at the time of the—she was—

BETTY LOCHRIE HOAG: [Inaudible] mural, mm-hmm [affirmative].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Oh, I think she was 40. She had a grown daughter, I think.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, she did? [Inaudible.]

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Sure. She told me she had a grown daughter.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: She committed suicide—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —shortly after that.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Her husband died.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: And left them, apparently, with quite a lot of debts because he was—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible.]

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —pretty sick, I think. And she was just so indebted that she didn't know what to do. And the man down at the state building called me and told me about it. And he didn't understand—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Was it before the mural—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —why she would allow that to get her like that, you know? But it was just too much—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: This was before the mural was completed?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: No, it was after.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: After? This was—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Not long—a year or so after, I think, maybe a year.

BETTY LOCHRIE HOAG: Too bad—Mrs. Perret mentioned that, and said she was such a fine artist. And she never—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yeah.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —understood why either. And I just wondered—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: No.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —if you knew anything about it.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: No. Um, as I say, she had lots of ideas, but she didn't seem to have the capacity to carry them out.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Quite often, drawing was her—seemed to be her drawback.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It's a bad drawback for an artist [laughs].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: And she couldn't—it was—she couldn't express herself in drawings very well. And it—that seemed, to me to be her main drawback.

[00:05:00]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, when our tape was just going off, you were telling me what you felt about the overall benefit of the Project had been the [inaudible] —

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Oh, I—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —individual.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —think that it really started me really on the road to painting because I felt after I left the Project, I had the biggest lift. And then, I was beginning to exhibit—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —see, quite a little bit.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: And it wasn't long until I was going real good. Real fine. So, I will never say anything against the Project as far as the opportunity—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —was concerned.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Did you feel there was anyone on the Project who influenced your work, particularly—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: No.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —as being a younger artist—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I don't think so.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —for being exposed to them?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Not at all [inaudible]. For a time, I noticed when we did murals that I would use some of the, oh, heavy line drawing or something. And—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —for a short time, and then it disappeared. So, I went [inaudible].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Went in your own—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I think so.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —[inaudible].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: You're just developing yourself, you know. Just through work and, you know, doing a lot of things, exhibiting, and work, and various things. And teaching, too, helps to—to prove lots of your theories and ideas about art, I think.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And you have to explain it to someone else.

[Cross talk.]

BENJAMIN MESSICK: You have to explain it to someone else.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You have to know what you're really thinking, I guess.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: That's right. I think it helps a great deal. Up to a point, I think it helps.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Turn this—[Audio break.] After this intermission, I want to bring the tape up to date with us. We were reading a biographical sketch about Mr. Messick. And I told him he didn't tell us before about being born in a two-room log cabin in the Ozarks. And as a result of that, he brought out the yearbook of the town in Missouri, Stafford, a yearbook for 1953, which is dedicated to him. And I hope he'll let us microfilm this.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes.

[Cross talk.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It's fascinating, because they have—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes, it is. A very nice—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: A beautiful book.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I'm very happy with that book.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: All of your paintings for the end pieces and throughout—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: It's—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —the book.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —full of my pictures. And—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Every place. And they had Mr. Messick do a portrait from photographs and from memory of the superintendent of schools, which was given to him as a gift at—what was it—their annual meeting last night, or school board meeting?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I don't know.

MRS. MESSICK: It was in the school [inaudible].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I suppose it was in the school and it's his 25th year.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, I see.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: You see? And—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That was a nice thing to do. I am, oh, curious about the fact that these are all clown pictures. Have you specialized in circus paintings to a great extent?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I've painted Emmett Kelly. And it was so successful, you know?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I had—it was, I don't know—

[Cross talk.]

BETTY LOCHRIE HOAG: [Laughs.] [Inaudible.]

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —it was—it was printed—written about and—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —various things, seemed to be liked, and it photographs very well. It was in lots of newspaper reproductions.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: As a matter of fact, I think I have it in over 15 magazines—

[Cross talk.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible.]

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —of different things—papers it's been in, catalogs, and different things. And by the time that I had—it took me about three years to get the material. See, I don't work from the model.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, you don't?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: No. As a rule, I don't work from the model. And the only one I have there that the model was the least concerned was the little girl on the right. She posed part of the time.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative], that's beautiful.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: That little red-haired girl.

BETTY LOCHRIE HOAG: [Inaudible] isn't she sweet?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: But most of the time, I worked from sketches and memory.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mrs. Messick, I bet you looked like that when you were little.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I think she probably did.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Uh-huh [affirmative], has much of that [Benjamin Messick laughs] quality in the face [inaudible]. Did you know Kelly?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: No, I never met him.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Uh-huh [affirmative].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I tried to avoid it. I wanted to get something that I could—sort of a candid camera like—not camera, not the exterior—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —but the interior.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: But to study him. So, I went, time after time and time after time, and you know, the circus only comes once a year.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: At least Ringling.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: We were living in Los Angeles at the time. And I couldn't always get seats where I could see well. And so much of the material that I did get from him I couldn't use at all.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I had sketches and sketches I couldn't use at all, because it was either a back view. So often he operated—he does little sketches and little skits.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative], yes.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: You've seen him work.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes, I have.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Little skits, you know? And he did those so often I couldn't make a painting out of it. So, I had all this material, and then I got—then, the Circus Fan's

Association—

[00:10:03]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I was a member of the Circus Fan's Association. I went out in the back yard of the circus. I got in there. And I was sitting on one of those wagons. And he came out and was eating a sandwich, sitting there on a pop bottle box, and leaning up—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —against a bale of hay. And I got this, and I felt—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —right then that's it, you see?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: But that's—it's—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Caught the whole spirit of—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: It seemed to add up to a good painting, a good, well-balanced painting. I could see in the backdoor on the right there was some clowns under a—under a fly like—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —where there's a cast shadow on the left—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —a couple clowns. And there was a—just a little bit of a chariot on the left lower part here that I used sort of as—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, down where your name is there?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I used that sort—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —of to break up that space and balance. And it seemed to work out as a painting, so that's what I did. This, incidentally, is—

BETTY LOCHRIE HOAG: Wonderful painting.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —this year's queen that I was asked to select.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh. And no wonder they asked you to select the queen every year.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I've—I get the good—[They laugh.]

[Cross talk.]

VELMA HAY MESSICK: [Inaudible.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Isn't it beautiful?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I—she's a beautiful girl—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That was last year's, yeah.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —isn't she? Yeah, this is last year's.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: My goodness, Missouri has more than you and Truman then. [They laugh.]

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Benton too, you know? [They laugh.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, that's right.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I've been compared to Benton, but there isn't any—I'll tell you frankly, there's nothing related between Benton and I as far as painting is concerned.

[Cross talk.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You never studied with him or had—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: We don't think the least bit alike.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: There's nothing. No. Well, let's see—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, actually, that wasn't your region at all because you came out here so young that you wouldn't have the same feeling about [inaudible]—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I never knew Benton until I heard him lecture one time at the California Art Club at a luncheon there. And the first time I ever saw him, and he came out and I had never seen him before. This might be interest too. This *American Artist*—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —*Magazine*.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I'm sure the Archives has one of those—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —because I sent them—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Good. Well just for the tape I'm going to put down the number of it too. It's November 1950, *American Artist*, on page 49 an article about Mr. Messick, *An Artist who is in Love with Everybody*. That's a nice—oh, and it has this painting in it.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: It has that painting in it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, and the one next to it.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: And the next one to it too? Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That's very nice. Thank you. Well, we won't microfilm that then.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: No.

BETTY LOCHRIE HOAG: They would have.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: No, it's not related to the Project. I don't know that she even mentioned the Project. In fact, I—when she wrote that I didn't see this script at all.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: And there were some things that I would have been just as happy if she hadn't said. [Betty Hoag McGlynn laughs.] But, you know, you just have to accept that all [inaudible] good publicity, I guess.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You know, that's one reason I was kind of excited about this Ford [ph]grant studying this particular period. Because, I guess, it was because it was the Depression when people were unhappy, but whenever you read a review about an artist, if you'll notice as I have been trying to find out about from that whole period, that whole decade, is a gap in their lives.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yeah.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: They don't—the interviewers don't ask them about it. They never—

the artists never contribute anything about it. And you'd think—

[Cross talk.]

BENJAMIN MESSICK: No.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —nothing happened to everybody in that—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: She never mentioned it because—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —time. It's the funniest thing.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —I never—she sent me part of the script after it—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —was printed.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, you had all your eagle paintings then, and your lithographs.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And you were doing mural work. And this was an important part of your life, of your development as an artist.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: That's true.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible.]

BENJAMIN MESSICK: They don't mention it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Isn't that strange?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: It is very funny.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, I hope as a result of the work the Archives are doing that— you know, the art history of America [cross talk] [inaudible]—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: All you can say is that they're limited. They're limited in the amount of space they have. And, perhaps, they can't—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —cover too much, I don't know.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: But that's what they always jump.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes, they seem to.

BETTY LOCHRIE HOAG: That period for every—for every artist.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Uh-huh [affirmative], none of them seem to have that period.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: No.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Isn't that strange?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And it is. And we have the evidence of it all around us. Any post office you go into, most of the schools, there's so much work from—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes, that is strange.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —and all this. And the first time, as far as I can see, that the American public was really conscious of American art, they certainly have never felt that way before.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And here I am putting words into your mouth [laughs].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Oh, no. Oh, no. You're right—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I don't know if you feel that way or not—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: You're right.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —but I think of—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: [Inaudible] I do sort of feel that it's true. You go on, you know, to something else, you see?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: And probably that's the reason, I don't know.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: I was always excited about the present at the time.

[00:15:02]

BETTY LOCHRIE HOAG: Yeah.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: And what's going to happen next.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, of course, that's the important thing.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: It is important.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: But that's important too. Because I do feel that the Project was a very constructive thing for artists. And I understand that several, now, are among the most successful, financially and every other way—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —that were on that. I—we read that, didn't we? Yeah.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative], in that same article.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yeah.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Do you remember any other things of interest from the Project period? Anything that happened that would be interesting or about people? Anything like that before we stop?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Not that I can think of right off.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Anything about the exhibits, for instance, that were [inaudible] the work at the time?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Well, of course, we had a big exhibit at the Los Angeles County Museum.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: A very huge exhibit. And I wish I'd have kept a newspaper because Millier of *the Times* said that people came to scoff and remained to pray or something.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: It wasn't quite like that. [Betty Hoag McGlynn laughs.] But, I mean, in other words they came with their tongue in their cheek. But when they got there they were surprised—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —to find that all this work had been done, and that it was of a higher

caliber than they expected. Because a lot of people thought it was just like children playing around [with paint -Ed.], the way they spoke about.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: And they found out that the artists were serious, and they were glad to have the opportunity to get ideas down that weren't too interfered with, you see?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: That's one thing I thought about it is that they said to me, You can paint anything you want to. I said, What do you want me to paint? "Anything you want to." Well, then, the ideas just fell right in on me, you see?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah. That must have been a thrilling thing.

VELMA HAY MESSICK: Isn't that wonderful?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yeah. They just came right in on you. And just were really excited.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: But I was [laughs] real [inaudible].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I interviewed him a couple of weeks ago, and I'm going back again. And he certainly said some nice things about it, too.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Good.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: A critic and an artist too, because of course, he [inaudible]—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: [Inaudible] Millier?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —work on it [inaudible]—Millier.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes, yes. Yes, he was very encouraging. He seemed to think it was great—of course, I think somebody told me that Millier was on the Project similar in the first World War.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, really?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Well, I was told that one time, that he had studied under the federal— not exactly the same thing, but something similar that the government would sponsor.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Under the first World War?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: You ask him—would you ask him about that?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I didn't know there was such a thing.

[Cross talk.]

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Because—

VELMA HAY MESSICK: We have a friend who was an attorney and he went to school on government.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: But now—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: During World War I?

VELMA HAY MESSICK: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Now, this was following World War I—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible.]

BENJAMIN MESSICK: And I understood that they— what was the Otis Art Institute is now LA County.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: That—pardon?

VELMA HAY MESSICK: They changed it back again.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Oh, they have?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, have they [laughs]?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Oh, yeah, that's right they changed it back.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Uh-huh [affirmative] [laughs].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: But that—Millier was there. And it was—it was—it wasn't called the same thing, but it was—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Uh-huh [affirmative].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —similar because the government gave them a certain stipend, you see, to work on. And there was another Norwegian man—and I was trying to think of his name— that was on there. And he paints today. In fact, he's a—he belongs to the California Watercolor Society, I think.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Not Frodi Danz [ph]?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: No, not Frodi Danz.

VELMA HAY MESSICK: Hansen [ph]?

BENJAMIN MESSICK: No. No, not Hansen [ph]. I just—I can't remember his name, but he was there that night, you know, we went to the dinner that they had up in Sunset Strip?

VELMA HAY MESSICK: Yeah.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: He was there. And I think he had a prize. I can't remember his name. But—

VELMA HAY MESSICK: [Inaudible.]

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —he was—Millier was always very—he was sick for a long time. And Millier was always kind of trying to do something for him or something. And I was—I don't know who else would—could be—could have been on this particular thing.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BENJAMIN MESSICK: But I was told that Millier studied that way.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, it would be very interesting. And I'm so happy you told me because I'll ask him about it. A comparison—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —of the—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —way—

BENJAMIN MESSICK: See what he thinks about the—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: —too.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That would be fascinating.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Uh-huh [affirmative], it would be fascinating. I never had a chance to talk to him about it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, I certainly am grateful to you for this interview. It's been fascinating and [Benjamin Messick laughs] you're both so kind to get all this out.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: Well, there's often [inaudible]. [They laugh.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN:

I enjoyed it [laughs], thank you.

BENJAMIN MESSICK: There is so much—

[END OF TRACK AAA_messic65_8837_m.]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]