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Oral history interview with Glenn Anthony Wessels, 1964 February 14

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Glenn Anthony Wessels on February 14, 1964. The interview took place in Berkeley, California, and was conducted by Lewis Ferbraché 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 2021 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. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Some language in this transcript may be offensive. It is presented as it exists in the original audio recording for the benefit of research. This material in no way reflects the views of the Archives of American Art or the Smithsonian Institution.

Interview

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Testing, testing. February 14, 1964. This is an interview with—between Lewis Ferbraché and Glenn, G-L-E-N-N, Anthony Wessels, W-E-S-S-E-L-S, February 14, 1964, at Kroeber, K-R-O-B—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: K-R-O-E-B-E-R.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: K-R-O-E-B-E-R Hall, University of California campus, Berkeley. Now, Professor Wessels, I'd like to get a little biographical information from you on your past history before the WPA Project.

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Where do you want me to begin? I was educated in California after coming here from South Africa as a child, and the usual education—high school and so forth. And then three years in college as a premed student and then the interruption of the first World War. And then a fling at newspaper work and then a fling at stevedoring [in San Francisco –Ed.] during which time I earned money to go to art school, which had become my goal.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Excuse me professor—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yes.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: —but may I get your birthdate down here.

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: My birthdate is December 15, 1895—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: And you were born—

[Cross talk.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: —[it was (ph)] Cape Town, South Africa.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Fine. And you studied at the California College of Arts and Crafts?

[Cross talk.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: And I—I went from the stevedore gang to the California College of Arts and Crafts [in Oakland, California –Ed.] and became a teacher there for 20-odd years.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: What was the period, do you remember, roughly?

[Cross talk.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: I entered the College of Arts and Crafts in the neighborhood of 1920, somewhere along in there, it seems to me. Yes, and went through their teacher training course and fine arts course. I became a teacher—a student teacher and an assistant—in the department, ending up finally as assistant to the president of the school, then Dr.

Frederick Meyer, and—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Would you spell out the names of these people? [Inaudible]—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yes. Frederick, Frederick Meyer, F-R-E-D-R-I-C-K [*sic* Frederick – Ed.] H. Meyer, M-E-Y-E-R who was then—was the founder and director of the California College of Arts and Crafts. I finished my work in the school and worked for a short time for Foster & Kleiser's [billboard firm –Ed.] as an advertising artist and later moved to an assistant—

[Recorder stops, restarts.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: [In progress]—became a rather well-known writer and director in movies amongst other pictures, *Martin Luther*. The—I became increasingly interested in contemporary painting and, in returning to the University [of California –Ed.], met Worth Ryder of the Art Department who had just returned from Europe. And he advised me that most of the questions, which I was trying to answer at that time by doing research in the Psychology Department—I have an AB in psychology—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Ryder, that's spelled—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: R-Y-D-E-R. Worth Ryder.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: That's for the benefit of the typist who will type up the script.

[Cross talk.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yes, yes, Worth Ryder. Worth Ryder urged me to take what he thought was a much shorter course towards the knowledge I wanted and to go to Europe and to study with André Lhote and more particularly with Hans Hofmann whom he had discovered in Munich.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: How would you spell—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Hans Hofmann, H-A-N-S H-O-F-M-A-N-N, and Andre Lhote, A-N-D-R-E, L-apostrophe-capital-H-O-T-E [*sic* Lhote –Ed.]. Both of them—Lhote was a very prominent Cubist teacher at the time and Hofmann was beginning to be discovered in Munich by American students who were looking for information on contemporary painting.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: This period was approximately—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: This was the period of—at this time it was 1928 when I left and I returned as Hofmann's assistant in America in 1930 to teach for the first time on the University of California campus. The—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Did you study in Paris, too? [Inaudible]—

[00:04:54]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: I studied in Paris for a short time.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: I'm asking these questions from your biography—

[Cross talk.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yes, yes. Yes, I studied—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: —in *Who's Who in American Art*, 1962.

[Cross-talk.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: I studied in Paris with Andre Lhote for a while and browsed around various other studios. At that time the ferment, which has taken form as contemporary painting, was at its beginning and there were a lot of questions being asked and it was an exciting place to be. The Depression had already begun before I returned and I returned home to teach, first with Hofmann in his first—to assist Hofmann in his teaching. I taught him English, by the way, and was his translator until he got able to express himself in

English.

And this—his first teaching experience in America was a summer session on the University of California campus in 1930. We—he returned to Germany and then came back again to teach in Los Angeles on this campus and in Los Angeles in the Chouinard School and then returned to Germany again and then finally came back to New York. We taught for the Art Students' League and then he organized his own school and he has, since that time, become internationally known as a leading Abstract Expressionist painter.

It's interesting in this connection to know that his Museum of Modern Art show is being brought out here in May and Hofmann himself is coming out here in—on our [University Charter –Ed.] day to receive a Doctorate of Fine Arts honorary degree from the president of the university. The Art Department of the University of California and its method of teaching owes a great deal to his pioneer teaching here, and several of us have been students of Hofmann's.

[…] [Going back to –Ed.] when I was a teacher in the College of Arts and Crafts, it became increasingly difficult. The conditions [of the Depression –Ed.] were such that students were dropping out of schools and so forth and finally the schools had to reduce their teaching time because they couldn't afford to pay the teachers. And so, I set out as a freelance teacher and set up a studio on Telegraph Hill [in San Francisco –Ed.] and was making the grade at a time when a good many of my colleagues were—and a good many of them good names—were going on relief. Just when things seemed blackest, William Gaskin telephoned me and said, "Dr. Walter Heil wants us to come out to the [de Young Museum –Ed.]—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: William Gaskin?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yes, William Gaskin—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Can you spell that?

[Cross talk.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: —telephoned—yeah—telephoned to me. William Gaskin, W-I-L-L-I-A-M, G-A-S-K-I-N, telephoned to me and saying that Dr. Walter Heil wanted us all to come out to his office in the de Young Museum in Golden Gate Park to hear about a new thing called the PWAP, Public Works of Art Project.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: This was approximately what date?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: This would be roughly 1945, I guess, or something like that. Let's see, no, no, no. No—'37, '37, around in there. These things can be checked. My memory of the dates is not good, but it's somewhere in the middle '30s [Note: 1933 –Ed.]. The—we also received letters from Dr. Heil saying that the government was going to sponsor work by artists and we should come out and propose a project and go to it. At that time, as I say, I was living rather sparsely, but getting along all right, and mainly by freelance teaching and so forth.

I had also been writing a small art column for some years in the *San Francisco Argonaut*, [a magazine –Ed.] which is now defunct. And so, this breath of hope came—coming from government sponsorship of art at a time when everyone was in a state of depression and dissatisfaction and the artists particularly were suffering, it sounded pretty good. So, we all showed up, a milling crowd outside of Dr. Heil's office and we presented ideas of things we'd like to do, and so forth and so on. What they wanted was monumental ideas. Well, actually very few of the San Francisco artists had, up to that time, ever experimented with fresco or with any architectural techniques and that is what the government seemed to want. They seemed to want us to decorate buildings.

[00:09:52]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: And at that time the Coit Tower had just been built on Telegraph Hill so a great many of the artists fastened on that as a place to do what they wanted to do. They had great ideas. Some of them went to the U.C. Medical School. Bernard Zakheim did frescos in the medical school. The people that I remember who worked in the

Coit Tower under this program were Albert Barrows, Ray Boynton. And Ray Boynton, by the way, was perhaps the only one who had had much experience in fresco, being a pioneer in mural painting, having done murals in Mills College and other places. Ray Boynton, R-A-Y B-O-Y-N-T-O-N. Others who worked in that building, I don't remember them all. Max—no, Maxine Albro worked elsewhere. The wife of Henry Howard—Jane Berlandina—did the stairway. Some of the—some of these—

[Cross talk.]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: [Inaudible]—excuse me—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: —Berlandina, Jane, J-A-N-E B-E-R-L-A-N-D-I-N-A, Jane Berlandina. I believe now a resident in London.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: And Bernie Zakheims [ph].

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Bernard Zakheim, B-E-R-N-A-R-D Z-A-K-H-E-I-M. A good many of the artists in this group, as in others at this time, were very bitter. They felt somehow or other the American civilization had let them down and they looked toward revolutionary Mexican painting as a kind of a guide. And a good many of them liked to, or rather felt, that they should express in their work the social dissatisfaction and so forth. So, you'll find some such expressions amongst others in the Coit Tower.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: And this—at this time, [there was a good deal of (ph)] confused —

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Excuse me, again, Coit, C-O-I-T?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: C-O-I-T, Coit Towers, yes, on Telegraph Hill in San Francisco. At this time there was a good deal of political confusion. We had a lot of [inaudible]—it was the first time a good many artists had even though politically and there was no question at all about the fact that some of them got very extreme opinions, and they expressed these sometimes in their painting. And sometimes it produced good painting and sometimes bad. In my experience I found out that a conviction is nearly always necessary for the production of a valid work of art and even though the conviction may be untenable.

The Mexicans then, such as Diego Rivera and Orozco [José Clemente Orozco –Ed.] really attracted the attention of a lot of the painters and a lot of them emulated in their painting, at this time, the Mexicans. It was so much so and that—at that time, you could hardly get a painting into a San Francisco Art Association Annual unless it had big feet like a Mexican peasant.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: [Laughs.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: The—there were others, however, whose work did not take this Mexican cast. The effect of the influence of the Mexicans had the effect of masking a steady growth toward what later became Abstract Expressionism amongst a rather small group who had been some of the first students of Hofmann on this coast. And for a long time, the growing abstractionism which later became Abstract Expressionism was completely masked by the vociferous social, seamy-side-of-life painters.

The P—my own personal part in the PW—the PWAP, William Gaskin and I, when finding that all the rest of these people were going to the Coit Tower, decided we should go as far away from them as we could, where we could be—work out our own ideas in privacy and peace. And we presented a project for a school or something, which I have now forgotten about, with the idea of working together, but Dr. Heil said, "Oh no, we can't put two good men in one place. You must find another place." So, I hit on Laguna Honda as a place that could be decorated. The idea was you simply went out and looked for a wall and then presented a project for it and without any aye—yes or no—you set about painting something for that wall.

[00:14:59]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: The Laguna Honda Home is the [city's –Ed.] home for elderly people—

[Cross talk.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Is the home for elderly people on the—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: —in San Francisco.

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yeah, over the tunnel [inaudible]—

[Cross-talk.]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: It's run by the city of San Francisco.

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: —run by the city of San Francisco. And Judge Wollenberg [Albert Charles Wollenberg –Ed.] later Judge Wollenberg was then director [of the home –Ed.] and he accepted my ideas. But, in the execution of this work, I found perhaps an unconscious censorship being applied and this, by the way, characterized most of the government art project, accepting the WPA, which was free of much censorship. They seemed to want me to paint in the manner of the Mexican muralists because that was the only contemporary muralist style that was known. And I found myself some—well, I wasn't satisfied with the work at the end because it had been confused with attempts to please them and I didn't—wasn't able to carry them out in the style—in my own style. I was more or less influenced by the Mexican approach.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Did they pick the topic or did you [inaudible]—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: No, I suggested the topic, but the manner of handling became criticized because it wasn't explicit in the Diego Rivera manner and so I—in any public work we are trying to suit a number of people, a certain amount of compromise is absolutely necessary, and I felt here that there was an almost unjustifiable amount of compromise forced on me. And so, when recently those murals were obliterated, I was quite happy about it.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: What was the subject matter?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: The subject matter, I—there were five—there were four panels and—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: About what size [inaudible]?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: About—I have some reproductions I'm going to give you later.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Fine.

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Let's see, [laughs] I should say roughly 15 feet—no, not that high. Let's say 12 feet high and let's say about seven feet wide. They were lunettes and I was asked to paint in oil and marouflage—the oil canvas would be marouflaged to the surface of the wall. I walked into the lobby and saw four archways that in Spain, let us say—Laguna Honda is vaguely Spanish in architecture—would have been filled with mosaics and murals or something. It was curious that we discovered that a great deal of the derivative architecture in America was copied from the architectural notebooks minus the art which was used to finish the buildings.

And we developed this almost as a policy, that we would finish the buildings the way that the originators of the idea of this architecture would have wanted them finished. We would furnish the sculpture and the murals.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: We found empty niches, empty lunettes everywhere. The architects had done the building in this style, but they hadn't finished it up with the artists of the—the style. And so, the attempt was, whenever the artist could, to coordinate his ideas with perhaps the style of architecture, which was not up to date and sometimes there are curious incongruities because of this effort. It's like pouring new wine into old bottles, as the Bible says, and sometimes [there are some rather (ph)] strange contrasts.

But this was the effort—to carry forward the building which was unfinished in terms of painting and sculpture. And so, my canvases were marouflaged into these lunettes. I don't

think there was very much criticism at this time. It was just a matter of getting people to work and getting the money out. And so, I was immediately hurried into another panel which I hadn't at first conceived of and I think this is pretty typical of the PWAP in its earlier stages and so [inaudible] I did a fifth one. Now, the idea of these panels was "Fire," "Water", "Earth", and "Air", which was the Heraclitus division of the elements. And I showed the inside of the steel mill in the "Fire" one, and "Earth" showed a farm scene, and "Water" showed a ship at sea, and "Air" showed an airplane carrying mail. I've forgotten now, you see water or something—oh yes, it had to do with shipping. These were the four subjects, anyway. [Inaudible]—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Were they related to California in any way or just [inaudible]—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Not particularly, they just represented a modern industry in terms—in the "Fire" one [inaudible], and something to do with the ships in the "Water" one, something to do with farming with the "Earth" one, and something to do with airplanes in the "Air" one.

[00:20:01]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: What were your principal colors that you [inaudible]?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Principal—well, these were painted in oil and I tried to relate the color to the warm interior of the lobby. And they were generally in a warm tone and I would say dominated by earth-colored tones, although other colors were used. As I say, I don't have very [inaudible]—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Was this painted on canvas or [inaudible]—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: On canvas and marouflaged to the surface.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Fine.

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yeah. As I say, I don't have a very high opinion of them so I didn't object at all when I understood they were to be obliterated. Some artists, very recently, raised a big stink because of the obliteration of some of these things, but I didn't. I felt I was happier without them.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Was there any reason given? Or did the city [inaudible]—

[Cross talk.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: The city—the city fathers were refurbishing the place and wanted to make the lobby brighter or something, and these musty looking old paintings—I suppose they'd gotten a bit grimy by that time—were considered unsuitable and I don't doubt in the least that they were.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Were they taken down off the walls and stored [inaudible]—?

[Cross talk.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: No, they were just covered up, I believe.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Painted over with some [inaudible]—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: I think they were just—they may have been taken down or may have been covered up by a new wall, I don't know which. I do know that a member of the San Francisco Art Commission called me up protesting about it, and I said, "Don't protest too hard." Well anyway, this is all preliminary to the real story because the real story begins later. I had finished this job and was beginning to [inaudible]—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Excuse me [inaudible].

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yes.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: What dates or what period did you work on this?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Oh, through a period of one year. The first year that the government entered into art sponsorship [inaudible]—

[Cross talk.]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: From 1937 to '38? [Note: 1934 –Ed.] [Inaudible]—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: [It'd be along in there—it'd be along in there (ph)] yeah.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Did you have assistants?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yes, one, Ernst Stolz.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Would you spell?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: [Inaudible] E-R-N-S-T S-T-O-L-Z [*sic* Stolz –Ed.]. He was a close friend that my—I met as a student in the College of Arts and Crafts. And he and I worked together on them. He did most of the laying, and I did most of the finishing. The—I began—I was urged to present another project [Note: Mr. Wessels also did decorations and landscape backdrop curtains in the Oakland Municipal Auditorium, under WPA, in 1936. This artwork has since been painted over –Ed.]. But at that time, something new happened. A friend of mine had married in New York, Joseph Danysh, and they had come to San Francisco and were living on Telegraph Hill. They were also friends of Bill Gaskin's, William Gaskin. And—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Joseph Danysh—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: This was Joseph A. Danysh. And Joe—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. [Inaudible]—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: D-A-Y-N-I-S-H [*sic* Danysh –Ed.].

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: And Joe—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: He had the position of [inaudible] [Regional Director of the WPA Art Program? –Ed.]—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Not at that time. He—when I first knew him, he had no position at all and like most the rest of us he was suffering from the Depression, and life was a bit difficult. He came [to see me –Ed.] one day. We got to know each other very well. And, well, time passed, and one day I received a telephone call from him. And he was ill in a hotel downtown in San Francisco with the mumps, I think—something ridiculous like that. And I came in the room, and he was lying in bed, and he said, "I'm sick, but I've got good news." He said, "Don't work anymore for the PWAP; I want you to be a supervisor on the new WPA Federal Art Project. I've just been appointed Regional Director from Washington by Holger Cahill." And—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Spell that?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Holger Cahill, H-O-L-G-E-R C-A-H-I-L-L. And—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: And he was the director in Washington?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: He was—he had been appointed under Harry Hopkins to organize—I believe that Harry Hopkins and Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt both had a good deal to do with the setting up of the WPA Federal Art Project. There were at one and the same time two projects going: the Treasury project, which was a development under Edward Bruce of the—B-R-U-C-E—of the development out of the PWAP. And then there was the WPA Federal Art Project. And these were two separate government agencies, both [inaudible] or patronizing art in different ways. The Treasury project—I think Mr. Bruce's convictions led them into this form; they would make contracts with artists to do—they would submit plans for decorations for public buildings, post offices, and so forth. And a great deal of art was done in various municipal, state, and federal buildings on a contract basis with the artists. The sketches were sent to Washington, and they were done in competition, and the ones that were thought best were approved. The WPA, on the other hand, approached the whole

matter differently.

[00:25:03]

All of our people had to be on the relief roles, and if they felt themselves to be artists, could apply to the Federal Art Project to be transferred from the general relief roles to the Art Project. Our job as supervisors was to put these people to constructive work so that the community would get as much back for its relief money as possible. In other words, our job was to turn boondoggling into something constructive. They were going to be on relief anyway, and it would be much healthier if they were doing something constructive than not.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: The skills that we got were sometimes rather fantastic. I'll give a few instances of how we recruited people and what they turned out to be able to do and so forth and so on. But I found myself and my brother-in-law, Willis [ph] Foster, who you—who's name you also—F-O-S-T-E-R, Willis [ph] Foster—who's now a real estate man in Berkeley. He was an assistant to Joseph Allen [Herman Joseph Allen] and was given the particular business of handling the business end of what came to be known as the Oakland Project. In Oakland, as the San Francisco agency became more deeply involved—perhaps I'd better go back and say that at first until the Oakland Project got set up, I was asked to come into the WPA Federal Art Project offices in the old county hospital building out on Potrero in San Francisco. And there I worked doing lithographs with, I remember, Bill Hesthal, and somebody else who did lithographs—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Can you spell that?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yeah, William Hesthal, H-E-S-T-H-A-L.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: He's [currently –Ed.] Curator of Paintings now, isn't he, at Santa Barbara?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: I believe he is, yes, in the Santa Barbara Museum—

[Cross talk.]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Santa Barbara Museum [of Art –Ed.].

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: —yes. And he and I worked at opposite tables, and he did a lot of lithographs at that time of fine, antique San Francisco architecture. Whereas I occupied myself, as I remember it now with—I had a premonition about the Japs. They were collecting—buying scrap iron at a great rate. And so, I did a kind of a grim-looking lithograph of [scrap –Ed.] steel being sent to Japan. And this later—and I was told that this title was unsuitable, that this might stir up trouble, so the title should be changed to something else. Trouble came, all right, even if my title was changed.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: [Laughs.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: The—I soon was relieved of that job, though, because a set up was arranged in Oakland whereby the County of Alameda loaned us the old Hall of Records as a workshop, one floor in the old Hall of Records as a workshop, in exchange for a—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: That's in downtown Oakland?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Downtown in Oakland, and it is just below where the present freeway runs on Broadway. Yes, right across from—there's another county building there now. There are two buildings; they were facing each other. This one, the one I'm speaking about, is now gone. But they were downtown in Oakland, down in the sort of Skid Row area down there. At first, we were housed in an abandoned school building out in the Grand Lake District. But then we moved to the Hall of Records.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Do you remember approximate years or months or anything?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: It's very hard; I would say that I hadn't been on this Project—let's say, from the PWAP to the WPA would be about one year. The—I could look up dates and so forth, but I don't remember them offhand. The effort was—we were told to take

people off the relief role if they showed any art talent whatsoever, find out what they could do, and then set them doing it. And the idea was that the government at first paid their salaries and bought materials, but as the Project went along, more and more so-called sponsors of given projects would buy the materials. But at first, we had to get all our materials from the government Procurement Office, which was not set up in any way for this kind of thing. We gave them a bad time. If you'd—I can remember that some of my artists wanted to do egg tempera paintings, and I went to the Procurement Office and said, "We would like to have one egg a day," and the poor bookkeeper looked at me with a mad gleam in his eye and said, "I could give you a crate of eggs, and I could give you a hen, but I can't give you one egg a day.

[00:30:01]

[They laugh.]

So, by various dodges, we bought materials, traded around, and worked it out so that we could do work. But the—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Do you—excuse me.

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yes?

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Do you recall the other members of the projects there [inaudible]?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Well, I was the Technical Director. I had—was brought in [from the first (ph)] to handle the technical—give technical advice, because a great many of the artists didn't really know anything about—at all about any technique excepting perhaps a little oil painting canvases, and so forth and so on. And I was given the job of advising technically and getting them started perhaps in lines they didn't even know about and opening up new avenues for them to express themselves and so forth. And my brother-in-law, as I say, Willis [ph] Foster was—handled the paper end of the thing. And we worked together, both of us under Joe Allen and both of us in close collaboration with William Gaskin in San Francisco.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: From time to time, we were called over there. For instance, speaking of egg tempera, Helen Forbes, F-O-R-B-E-S, and Dorothy Wagner Puccinelli—and no, I can't spell all of that; her name is Cravath now anyway, C-R-A-V-A-T-H—did one of the most ambitious egg tempera projects in the way of a mural for the Fleishhacker Mother's House [Motherhouse –Ed.] in San Francisco in the Fleishhacker Zoo. This consisted of a frieze all around a large room executed in egg tempera on gessoed panels of all the animals going into Noah's Ark. Now this is still there, and it's still in good shape and represents perhaps one of the good remaining examples of a high-quality work done on the Project.

To give you some idea of various things that a supervisor—a technical supervisor on the Federal Art Project was supposed to know, I received an agonized phone call from William Gaskin one day. And he said, "Glenn," he said, "something is happening to that egg tempera out in Fleishhacker Zoo, and we can't figure it out. Come over and see if you can help us figure it out." And we—the complaint was that where they had painted the day before, overnight, little white flecks appeared about six inches above the baseboard, a strip of area about six inches high, and little bits of paint had been lifted off or popped off or cracked off or something. Well, we knew technically that we were using a good egg tempera formula, that this shouldn't happen, that the ground was good, and everything should have been all right. So, finally, we set a watchman with a flashlight with instructions to look every half hour at this area in the wall that had been newly painted. And he reported the next morning that book mites were coming out of the woodwork and eating the fresh egg.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: [Laughs.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: So, we instructed Helen Forbes and Dorothy to spray their newly painted egg with a mild solution of formalin, which would cook the egg and poison the bugs, and the project went on very well after that [inaudible]. But this is only one example of some of the strange—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Problems.

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: —things—problems we ran into, and it was always the supervisor's job to figure them out. The Oakland Project, which I had—over which I was given, eventually, complete supervision was a kind of a workshop from which—where artist-designers could come and could execute a large work and where various assistants would be trained to help them. The—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Now, this would be principally fresco and mosaic—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Fresco, mosaic, and so forth.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: No easel work [inaudible]—

[Cross talk.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Well, yes, we had some artists who were more adapted to easel work, went on making easel pictures. And in watercolors—for instance, one of them was Dong Kingman. Not from Oakland, he was working out in San Francisco. And he just was set out to do watercolors.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: That's D-O-N—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Dong Kingman, D-O-N-G K-I-N-G-M-A-N, now, I think, an internationally known illustrator. There were many others who were felt to be competent and were just set out, and if they ran out of ideas, the supervisor would try to cook up something that would set them going again. And we had some people who prefer to paint in oil, others in watercolor, others in tempera, and so forth and so on. And we had printmakers; we had a lithographic and etching project going; we had a photographic project going.

[00:35:00]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Was this in Oakland that you're speaking of [inaudible]—?

[Cross talk.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: I'm speaking now in San Francisco, but we had a smaller edition of the same thing going in Oakland too. The effort was, as the Project went on, to get as many people away from the easels and into monumental architectural work as possible because the government exercised increasing pressure on us to get sponsors—people who would buy materials for the artists to work with. And—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Private individuals or—?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Private firms and institutions. We could work for any quasi-government institution down to the municipality—hospitals, schools, and so forth and so on. And so, the Project supervisor very often had to be a kind of a frontman and salesman. He had to go out and visit boards of aldermen, and because Bill Gaskin was so tied up in San Francisco, I did a good deal of it. I toured the northern part of the state. And I would visit school boards and so forth and so on and say, "Look, here you need a decoration in this place to [inaudible]—to fill out your building. You're building this in—the style is swiped from, shall we say, Spanish Gothic, and you haven't got the decorations to go along with it." And the first idea that would occur to them, of course, is the picture of the chairman of the school board would be quite appropriate. And I'd say, "Oh no, we can't do that because, you see, this is going to be done in [mosaic –Ed.] rocks. And we can't do you in rocks."

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: [Laughs.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: "It's much—it has much more like an ornament." And so, we'd have to put on a good deal of pressure to keep them from simply using the project to publicize themselves. And we tried to substitute something which had to do with the region, with what produce or what manufacturing went on there and so forth and so on. We tried to move their—but sometimes it's pretty tough going, and we would refuse a project if we couldn't get something that we could stand back of. It was a case of bringing the artist very often together with people in government positions who had no idea whatsoever of what the aims and purposes of art were, and the poor [Project –Ed.] supervisor was the grain to stand between the upper and the other millstone. I might say here that after seven years of 12 hours a day at—being a Federal Art Project supervisor, I landed in the hospital with a

nervous breakdown. The—there were no vacations on the Federal Art Project.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Were you paid overtime rates?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: No, we were paid flat salaries. Adequate, but not—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Was it hourly or weekly [inaudible]?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Weekly flat rate.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Do you remember the salary, just for a matter of record?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Artists—supervisors got about 10 percent more than the artists. At one time, I think at about the high point for full-time work—when I say full-time, that means day and night, I think I got $300 a month.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: But an artist might not make any more than $100.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Yes.

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: That—when I say $300 a month, that's the top. The most I ever got. I don't think I've ever worked as hard for that much. That was pretty good in those days [inaudible].

[Cross talk.]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: That went a long way [inaudible]—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yes, that was [inaudible]—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: —I was on the Writers' Project in San Francisco [inaudible].

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yes. Yeah. I've forgotten—we got the same—our people got the same as they did on other projects. And it seems to me a figure like $100 a month would be somewhere near what a full-time working artist would get. Now, our method—the method we tried to work out—a good many of the people were not capable of carrying out a full-scale work of art on their own. And so, in order to get them to doing something constructive, we tried to inaugurate projects which would use many hands and one head. And we would invite artists in who were not on the relief roles as minor supervisors and ask them to make a design, which would then be executed by these other workers who could do such things as sorting mosaic stones perhaps, or plasterwork, or something like this, but were not capable of making good design themselves.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Were any of these artists who were invited in, were they paid a flat sum for their design or were they [inaudible]—

[Cross talk.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: No, it was handled on a salary basis [inaudible].

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Salary basis [inaudible].

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: All on a salary basis. Now, things that were done on the Oakland side that I think are—that are still there, and I think are still of enduring importance. Now I may say that these were not initiated and carried out entirely under my supervision. But most of the immediate supervision on the Oakland side was up to me. But these projects were discussed with the central Project [office –Ed.] in San Francisco—Bill Gaskin, and Danysh, and Allen—everyone would—we'd all—would okay them before I'd go ahead with them.

[00:40:09]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: And in return, they'd call me in for counsel on things they initiated sometimes. We hardly ever did anything on an individual basis. And we became

experts in what I call the art of the possible.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Because it was simply impossible to do certain things in certain places and for certain clients. Now one of the most important jobs that we did, and I think one of the most unique and one I'm still rather proud to have had a hand in, is the inlaid stone—the two inlaid stone murals. They call it *opus sectile*, and we got the idea from the Cathedral of Montreal in Palermo, which both William Gaskin and I had seen in the Alameda County Courthouse in Oakland on Lake Merritt.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Is that downstairs in the lobby [of the courthouse –Ed.]?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yeah, downstairs in what was the lobby, but it is no longer the lobby because the new freeways have cut the front steps off the thing. And so, it becomes now a kind of a side lobby. But this having been one of the most important and complicated jobs done on [the Oakland –Ed.] side of the Bay, I might follow through it a little bit.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Fine.

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: But we were concerned. This [laughs] was one of these portmanteau things that had many facets. First of all, in order that we would be given the use of this old [downtown –Ed.] building for our shop, we had to do something for the County of Alameda. And then we had an artist who was a very competent designer who wanted to do a fresco in the Mexican manner. And so, at first—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: What was his name [inaudible]? [Inaudible]—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Her name, Marian Simpson, wife of Professor Lesley Simpson, now retired [from the University of California –Ed.]. She was a prominent woman amongst painters around the Bay at that time, and her work was generally recognized. And so, we felt that she was a good person to bring in as a supervisor and to design this project. She wanted to do a fresco. There was a romantic appeal in frescoes in those days because the Mexicans were doing them.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: I believe that Dr. Simpson and his wife had been in Mexico many times.

[Cross talk.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Oh, yes, they had. [Inaudible]—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Spain—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yes, yes. And—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: [Inaudible] professor of Spanish—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: He was professor of Spanish—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: —[at Cal (ph)]—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: —that's right. They're very good friends. And in fact, our friendship was increased rather than diminished after this project came to its success. This project then first began as the idea of a fresco decoration in a building which the county was to build. And when we walked into the building and found the lobby paved with—the lobby walled with shining bank [ph] onyx, if you know what I mean.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: [Laughs.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: We realized that—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: It was a fairly new building [inaudible]—

[Cross talk.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: It was a new building at the time, yeah, when we realized that

frescoes would look pretty dull in that environment. I don't think it had particularly occurred to us before. We went ahead with the idea that this thing would be done in fresco, and then we walked into the lobby and saw that shining onyx and decided that fresco would look dull and chalky in there no matter what we did. And so, Bill and I held a kind of a—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Bill Allen [ph]?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: No, this was Gaskin.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Bill Gaskin.

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yeah. And so, we decided we had to persuade Marian Simpson that these had to be done in shiny stone.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: And this was a terrific emotional upheaval for her because she conceived of it in fresco, and she wanted to do a fresco. Everybody was doing fresco; why can't I do a fresco?

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: [Laughs.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: And so, I had the job of kind of handling this situation. And so finally, we came up with her willingness to do a cut stone—inlaid stone thing. Well, at that time, coming out of the basements of San Francisco, there were available all sorts of fancy kinds of marble. We found the tombstone expert—a certain Duccini—who knew all about cutting marble and cutting stone. And—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Could you spell his name?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yes, Gaetano Duccini. The name is spelled out on the murals down there. G-A-E-T-A-N-O, Duccini, D-U-C-C-H-I-N-I [*sic* Duccini –Ed.], and he did the craftwork on the thing and—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: He did the cutting and the polishing [inaudible]—?

[Cross talk.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Cutting and polishing and shaping of the various stones, and Marian Simpson furnished the design and selected the textures and the stones and so forth for the design. Now, these things are about five by 15, if I remember rightly, and there are two of them, and the subject matter of one is the Spanish conquest and the other's the coming of the forty-niners and the [inaudible]—

[Cross talk.]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: The Gold Rush period in California.

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yeah, Gold Rush period, yeah, in California. These look rather old hat nowadays, but at the time, they were fairly adequate in terms of Cubist style decoration, and this style lent itself, I felt, very well to the use of flat plains of marble.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: And she had some 52 kinds of stone to pick from, and some of these were—a good many of these stones were junk that we had pulled out of old mansions in San Francisco—old alabaster Venuses with the clocks in their stomachs and so forth and so on.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: [Laughs.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: We just sawed them up into pieces of marble about half an inch thick. And these pieces of marble were shaped and then fastened down to heavier pieces of marble, which were an inch thick. And these, in turn, were locked to the steel structure of the building by bronze hooks so that each piece of marble, about a yard square or so, was supported independently. And if the building breathed, as they do, why, and cracks appear, they would—and you can't get your thumbnail in between these stones today, so it was a

good job. Now, first, Marian made large-scale drawings on graph paper, then these shapes were given over to Duccini and he cut the marble, and the work was carried to completion. It took almost a year of the work of two people. And about that time, some of the local Republican politicians began to talk about boondoggling and so forth, and some of the local Democrats then would come anxiously to us and say, "What can you give us in the way of something to argue back with?"

We had a certain amount of political furor. We were always accused of wasting government money everywhere we went. So, I went to a private firm and asked how much it would cost to do this job. I don't remember the exact figures, but it was something like five times as much as it was costing them—the County of Alameda and the government together. So, this was a demonstration that it was not boondoggling. We had to deal with the Alameda County Board of Supervisors, who were skillful politicians, perhaps, but they didn't know very much about art. At one time, they were persuaded that they—I hope I'm not being too garrulous?

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: No, it's fine.

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: At one time, they were persuaded that the whole thing was a waste of time and money, and they were going to throw it out. Well, if they did that, there went our workshop, which was supporting many other projects too. And there went our Project. So, again, this is an instance of the kind of thing that the supervisor had to do. I realized I had to persuade them as to the worthwhileness of the Project, and I detected in the—

[END OF TRACK AAA_wessel64_392_m.]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Testing. Testing. February 14, 1964. Would you continue, Professor Wessels?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yes, I was giving a rather complete story of the Project in connection with the Alameda County Courthouse [murals –Ed.], which were executed in cut stone—inlaid stone called *opus sectile*—after a technique adapted from the inlaid [marble –Ed.] murals, which William Gaskin and myself had seen in the Cathedral of Montreal in Palermo, [Sicily –Ed.]. I'm telling this in rather complete detail because I think I can best give the somewhat hectic atmosphere in which most of these monuments were attempted. We attempted to do these things because we thought they would be of lasting worth. But the circumstances under which we had—did them were pretty difficult circumstances for doing any permanent work. We were subject to constant political criticism; we were subject to interference from politicians; we were subject to all kinds of interferences, but we did get some done.

To give a notion of the kind of emergencies which continually arose, which the supervisors had to meet, I was about to tell about the emergency concerning this particular project [*opus sectile* murals project –Ed.], which was very nearly abandoned by the Alameda County Board of Supervisors. So, I decided something had to be done. So, I wrote, or rather [cabled –Ed.] to a friend in Paris, and I said, "Will you write me a letter saying that the Oakland—Alameda County Courthouse *opus sectile* project is being talked about in Paris in art circles? And will you please hold a conversation on the subject at the Cafe Dome tonight and then send me a [cable –Ed.] immediately?" He did this, and so I was able, at the next meeting of the Oakland the Board of Supervisors, to say, "The city of Oakland is being talked about artistically in Paris, and here's a [cabled –Ed.] letter to prove it. We don't want to abandon this." And they were so delighted with this, the fact that Oakland was being talked about in art circles in Paris, that they went ahead with the project. So, it was finished, or rather, almost finished [inaudible]—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Do you remember the period, approximately from the beginning to the end—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: About a year.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: —of 1938 [inaudible]—?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yeah, it'll be '38-'39, along in there. I think the dates are on it, probably, down in the right-hand corner [of the mural –Ed.].

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Do you remember any of the names of assistants?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Well, they were only—you see, we had about 30 people working in the shop. And at any time, some partly-trained assistant might be sent out to help the artist or to help Duccini. Duccini did the stone cutting in his own graveyard stone cutting place, and—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: That was located—?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: That was located in San Francisco, I believe. And I went out there a few times. I've forgotten now where it was, somewhere out in the Potrero District.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Was he paid [inaudible]—

[Cross talk.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: He was paid—he was a—he was on relief too. All these people were people who were on relief and who were otherwise without work.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Probably with exception of Mrs. Simpson [inaudible]—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Mrs. Simpson herself was the only one. She was the supervisor of the project and was a non-relief person. But on the average, we had 10 relief people acting as assistants for each nonpaid, or rather a non-relief person who was acting as a minor supervisor.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: We tried sort of to use the Oakland Project, particularly, as a kind of an orchestra where we could invite in conductors who [laughs] would do what they wanted to do, assisted by these people who were trained in various capacities. We had people who could cut mosaic tile; we had people who could plaster; we had all these various technicians. We trained these men, indeed so well that all of them got jobs in building this—the Treasure Island World's Fair after the—when the Project began to close up. But then, before that time, most of them were unable to do anything. But we trained technicians to do architectural artwork. And they were the hands, and the artists were hired as the designing head. I'll tell about other jobs that were done in this way. But one more story about the *opus sectile*. Everything got along fine until we came to the gold leaf part of the work. And we discovered that our people who knew anything about gold leaf tried to lay gold leaf on the marble and it tore. They couldn't get the gold leaf to lie on the marble. And so, the project stopped. There was no one who knew how to lay gold leaf on that stone.

[00:05:00]

I was sitting in the office biting a pencil that morning shortly after, and an old gray-haired gentleman came in and said that he wanted very much to get off relief and get to doing something, and did we have anything for him? I said, "Well, what do you do?" He said, "I make religious ceremonial objects." And he said, "I can make Virgin Marys. I can do this, that, and the other thing." And finally, the light began to dawn on me, maybe he—I said, "Can you lay a gold leaf on marble?" He said, "Oh, sure. I can do that." I said, "Fine. Come out and look at something with me and tell me if you can do it." And so, we went over and looked at [the marble –Ed.] and he said, "Yes, I can do it. But I'll have to have a special kind of gold leaf." He said, "They don't make that kind of gold leaf anymore." I said, "Well, then we got to find out where we can make it." Well, to make a long story short, we unearthed a former goldbeater who had retired and still had his tools and was running a small apartment house and was also on relief out in the East Oakland somewhere. And we went out and looked at his old, rusty gold beaters tools that he kept more or less out of matter of sentiment and asked him if he cared to beat some special gold [leaf –Ed.] for us. And he said he'd love to, and so we beat our own gold and the Greek image maker laid it on the stone, and the gold is there today.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Do you remember the name of this [inaudible]—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: I don't remember the name of either of these people; I'm sorry. But this finished the project. And then, when they—at the dedication ceremony, the chairman of the Board of Supervisors got up to talk about the magnificent "murial" that had been—"murials" that had been created—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: [Laughs.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: —for the Alameda County Courthouse. And we were in their good graces after that and were enabled to continue using the Project until the onset of the Japanese war caused the whole idea of the Federal Art Project to be junked. I think it brought about the destruction of many things which were valuable and would be of value still. Now I can go from this to describing some of the other things that emanated from the work in the Oakland shop, some of which are architectural and some of which were not. Work was done from the Oakland shop [to be placed –Ed.] in the Piedmont High School. And here Edgar D. Taylor, who is now in Los Angeles—Taylor, T-A-Y-L-O-R, Edgar, E-D-G-A-R—Edgar Dorsey Taylor, who is a very well qualified artist, and taught for a while I think in USC not long ago, may still be teaching there for all I know. At that—he was an expert craftsman and had—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: That's at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yes, but he was a student in the University of California Art Department and a graduate from here and at that time, had his home in Berkeley and was very interested in the craft side of art and a very skillful man with tools. And he, for instance, built a stained-glass furnace and cut his own glass for glass mosaic and so forth and so on and had these—worked these techniques out. And he came on the Project as a supervisor for us and did several mosaics of different kinds. And also, I believe some stained glass, although I've forgotten about that. Oh, yes, he did, I think, execute the stained glass that David Park designed for the Piedmont High School. Small stained-glass panels. I'm not sure as to that, but I think so.

In the Piedmont High School, Worth Ryder, R-Y-D-E-R, came—I was Oakland supervisor, and I brought these people in as competent designers—designed a fountain which is still in the courtyard of the [high school –Ed.] He and William Huff, H-U-F-F, who later did a lot of denoisers [ph] for the national parks and so forth and so on, executed the ceramic panels. I think they're ceramic, or—I've forgotten now what they're cast in. Perhaps some kind of stone for this octagonal fountain in the Piedmont High School courtyard. And then also Edgar Taylor did a glass mosaic there. There were a couple of other mosaics there, one of them done by one of the Bruton sisters who were going very strongly. That's B-R-U-T-O-N. Esther, and Margaret, and Helen Bruton. Three sisters, all of whom were very competent architectural artists, who worked extensively on the Treasure Island World Fair after that time, and all of whom understood the arts of mosaic, and so forth, very well. I think [Helen –Ed.] did one of the ones in the Piedmont High School.

[00:09:51]

David Park did some—designed some tapestries, which were woven by a technician, German, named Adolf Brun [ph], B-R-U-N, who turned up on the Project, who was skillful with natural dyes and with the primitive ways of making. He knew all about the technical matters of art, and he could grind pigments; he could produce dyes and dye wools and so forth and so on. And we dyed our own wool and in permanent natural dyes, and they were woven according to the designs by David Park. And I think Piedmont High School still has some of those small tapestries. The mosaic in Piedmont High School is a glass mosaic, as opposed to the ones made with natural stone and the ones made with ceramic tile. In Tulare High School and at a place called Lockport, Edgar Taylor designed and carried out two mosaics for this is typical of one of the architectural projects outside the area that I had to look into.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: That's in Tulare [inaudible]—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Tulare County, yes. Yes.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: So, central California [ph].

[Cross talk.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yes. One of the ones near our home is the one on the old powerhouse [exterior wall –Ed.], which is now used as an art gallery here on the UC campus. That was designed and carried out by Florence Swift and Helen Bruton. And this is made in—entirely of waste ceramic material. We went down to the ceramic manufacturers and bought up barrels of old tiles, ground them down to the right thickness, and cut them up in a mosaic tessera. Then in the shop, the workers there would take the sketch which the artist produced—a large, full-scale piece of craft paper with lines on it—and then as with the color

sketch as a guide, they would lay the right tiles in the right places, glue their faces down to the paper with a paste, which was made so that it would immediately release when the paper was dampened. This piece of paper with the tile glued down to it was then cut up into sections and laid on boards, and then carried out to the place where it was to be installed and then installed in a plastered wall, section by section. And before the plaster hardened, there was time to manipulate the tiles at the joints so that the joints wouldn't be too much in evidence. That's the way this particular one on the University Art Gallery was carried out.

The workers on that were Florence Swift, S-W-I-F-T, and Helen Bruton, H-E-L-E-N B-R-U-T-O-N, and their plasterer and the general assistant was a young man who had been trained as a carpenter and man of all work, Walter Dickie [ph], D-I-C-K-I-E. I remember that. I remember this particularly because amongst other things that a supervisor was called on to do was to settle political arguments. I was—I received—Florence Swift was a non-relief worker. Her husband was Henry Swift of Swift & Company [stockbrokers –Ed.] in San Francisco, and she didn't need relief, but she was willing to give her trained art talents to the service of the Project. And so, we were glad to have her. On one occasion, I received an anguished phone call from Florence. She said she wasn't sure it was safe to go up on the scaffold with Walter Dickie [ph]. And I said "Why?" She said, "Well, he told me I was going to be liquidated."

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: [Laughs.] [Inaudible]—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: And [laughs] so, I came out and found them glaring at each other and discovered they'd gotten into a political argument. And I had to say, "Well, now, look, all this may be so. Either one of you might have it right but let's get back on the scaffold to finish the job at hand." And they did. Florence is not liquidated yet; I saw Walter the other day, and he seems much milder and happier than he was then.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: [Laughs.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: The [laughs]—this is a little sample, I think, of the kind of daily problems that the supervisor had to deal with. Other things which were carried out—you'll see that we had 30 people working in the shop who would be sent out, two or three at a time, perhaps, to help out some artists in the execution of some large-scale project. And we would change artists from time to time, and then these same trained crews would work with different artists. And we felt that this was a reestablishment of the good old *bottega* system on which most Renaissance artwork was based where you had skilled craftsmen working under the supervision of a designer and then later those craftsmen, who were able to, developed into being designers themselves.

[00:15:07]

The other parts of the Project that I should mention, once in a while we would get rather disturbing demands from the Washington office. One of the disturbing demands came in connection with the Alameda County Courthouse project. Just about the time when we were ready to set all those stones up on the wall, we were told to ship one of them intact to Washington, to an exhibit in the Corcoran Gallery. And with set—we have devised a method of setting these things up in plastic wood and sending them, but it was set up without the proper supports behind it. We discovered to our horror and amazement that our carefully cut-out pieces of [marble –Ed.] would warp when they stood edge to edge by their own weight. And so, we had to redo a good deal of the work as a result of sending those pieces to Washington. One must realize that this was made out of jigsaw-shaped pieces of marble of various textures and consistencies and that marble is a rather soft stone and not—it isn't really sensible to try to ship an architectural work of art [laughs] around.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Excuse me, professor.

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yes.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Now, this Corcoran Gallery, a government-owned gallery in Washington, D.C.—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yes.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: —they were having an exhibit of WPA items at the time?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yes. Yes. Yes. They also exhibited at one time there, I don't

know—one of my Laguna Honda murals was shipped there and exhibited. I think they had two or three such exhibits. But the demands from Washington were sometimes quite reasonable and sometimes almost impossible to fulfill because the people there were so out of context, out of the picture of what was going on here. We realized their hearts were in the right place, but they sometimes asked for impossibilities. I don't know what it was that set me off on Washington. Oh, yes, I was saying that there were other things which the Project did which usually emanated from good ideas in Washington. One was the American Index of Design idea. And we found ourselves asked to send certain people out who were competent to gather artifacts from American folk art, and so forth and so on.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Out into the field [inaudible]—?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yes, to look for them, and to sketch them and photograph them and otherwise record them. And this mass of material, I believe, is now in the Congressional Library, and is the subject of a book called *The American Index of Design*, I think written by Holger Cahill. There's only a small section of the amount of work that was done on that project. Well, some of the things we did in this connection: we sent artists down to Indian caves, where there are in Indian petroglyphs—drawings on rocks, and so forth—and we had them make careful lithographic reproductions of them. We photographed them and so forth. And then we made paintings of figureheads on rotting [old ships beached –Ed.] in the Oakland estuary. We [illustrated fine antique Spanish-California –Ed.] furniture that could be found and old [American –Ed.] tapestries, Indian relics, all kinds of things that could be said to belong in the American Index of Design. There were two or three people all the time working on the project, working out of that shop, doing these things.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Were these done in watercolor [inaudible]?

[Cross talk.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Very often executed in watercolor on Bristol board.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: The kind of technique that a jewelry designer usually uses, you know—transparent and opaque watercolor on the Bristol board. Then in connection with the Writers' Project, we had perhaps one or two people illustrating books for them. One of the works, which was illustrated out of that shop, was the *California* [*Guide* –Ed.] the book put out on California by the Writers' Project.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: *California Guide* [inaudible]?

[Cross talk.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: *California Guide*, that's right. These books, I think, are the nearest thing to a *Bötticher* [ph] that America has ever had, and I wish that they'd be brought up to date. The—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Do you remember some of the artists who worked on that [inaudible]—?

[Cross talk.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: I can't remember the girl's name. It was Sonia [ph] something or other, but I can't remember her name. But she did those little black and whites for that book.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: [That was done (ph)] in the Oakland workshop?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yes, yes. We had—we loaned technicians out to institutions such as the University of California, and we had a young man who later—Abraham? I'm thanking hard for his name—Kaplan? Who did—who made a great many slides. He was a photographer for the University of California slide collection. This was a project working out of the Oakland Project. We had other photographers on both the Oakland and San Francisco sides recording architectural things which would soon disappear.

[00:20:00]

One of those—I can't think of his name now, but he was a pretty prominent photographer at

the time—did excellent work in recording architectural details that have since been gone. We had—this may sound ridiculous and amusing, but to show you to what extent we went sometimes finding out how to use skills, you must remember that we had people who were doing nothing and getting government dough and people who wanted to do something. And it was our job to give them something constructive to do.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: And sometimes we were hard put to it to find these jobs [for them –Ed.]. But if we could find a job they could do, they could get off the relief roles and [away from –Ed.] the psychological depression, which being on the dole produced, and become self-respecting citizens again. And so, our job was one of morale as much as it was one of production. We got the idea that if burnt earth from Sienna [Italy –Ed.] was a good pigment, maybe some burnt earth from Oakland might be a good pigment. And we sent an elderly woman who came to us—who had never done anything before in the art line than paint pansies on sofa cushions, I'm sure—looking for eight native earth colors that we could use, and native earth—and native dyes which we could use. And we found out that there was indigo growing in Monterey, and that there was terra verte in the Mojave Desert, and that there were all sorts of sources for earth pigments every bit as good as those imported from Italy within three miles of the Oakland City Hall.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: That's very interesting.

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: And so, we began producing—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: No—excuse me—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yeah.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: —no doubt the early Indians used those colors [inaudible] paintings—

[Cross talk.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Oh, yes, undoubtedly. Undoubtedly, yes. Now, we began making practical use of some of the pigments we prepared. We ground and levigated these pigments in our own shop. And the artists used them if they wanted in the place of imported pigments. And we didn't have a full palette by any means. But oh, I should say a third of the paint used was made right there in the shop of pigments which were found locally. And this, to a certain extent, cut down some government expense and then also developed materials which had hither to not been developed. An immediate result of this, the lady who was doing this particular job of finding earth pigments first reported that she had—was being followed by a truck. And we looked into the matter and discovered that a local paint company was beginning to realize they've been overlooking sources of raw materials. And as a direct result of her investigations, the boxcar [ph] people out in Richmond mined away about half of Red Rock because they discovered it was made of Indian red, and they hadn't known it before until she found it out. And so, I don't know whether these resources have been used since but at least at that time, the local paint companies woke up and realized they didn't have to import dirt from Venice in order to get Venetian red.

This—I'm ranging this way to show you how the desperate and hectic times produced imagine—feats of imagination on the parts of the supervisors in finding constructive work. It was hectic. Everything—you were under pressure all the time, and you had increasing emergencies as the Project began to go into its later years and the demands from Washington were more and more "Support yourself, support yourself," and there was less and less money for materials. You had to get more and more from local agencies and so forth and so on. And the pressure increased to the point that it became almost intolerable. But I stood it for seven years. And when I ended up in the hospital with what was called a nervous breakdown, and it was proved to be simple fatigue, Beckford Young was brought into the Project. Now, this opens up another—Beckford Young is now an organizer and a supervisor of large-scale hotel installations. And he had a genius for organization. He himself was a skilled mural painter and did execute an excellent mural involving the [U.S. Revenue –Ed.] Cutter Bear and Coast Guard history on Government Island in Oakland estuary.

[00:25:00]

In this office building, which I believe is now off-limits because of Army or Naval or Coast

Guard secrets or something or other. I don't know what, and of course, I suppose they may very well have whitewashed those walls long ago. But on those walls were murals by John Haley, frescoes by John Haley, now of the UC staff, who is a skilled fresco painter, and one of his students, Miné Okubo, is now a successful illustrator and painter in New York, and by Beckford Young, who was trained as a muralist, and I think a very good one. These were three frescoes carried out in a place where it was suitable for fresco on Government Island, the offices of the Coast Guard. And this is one of the projects done out of the Oakland office. And this is one of the places, by the way, where our homemade pigments were used.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: John Haley, that would be H-A-L—[inaudible]—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: H-A-L-E-Y, John Haley. He's a Professor of Art, University of California now, yes. And now, I think I'd better—I could go into many small details, but I think I've given a picture of the time.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: [Inaudible]—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: I could—I could say one thing about another project to show you the unfortunate attitude on the part of people who knew nothing about art values and how we—how many of the things, which—the worthwhile things that the Federal Art Project did have been destroyed or used for other purposes. We tried to set up a project with Mills College for the decoration of their music room, and David Park [now deceased –Ed.], who has since become nationally and even internationally famous as a painter, was working on the Project at that time and he executed a series of what I might call Neo-Greek—because this was something like his style of painting at that time—panels [oil on canvas, mounted on plywood –Ed.] of Greek musicians, dancing and music, clashing symbols, playing pipes, and so forth, in kind of a frieze form which was to be set up around the music room in Mills College. Well, the donor of the music room was somewhat conservative, shall we say, in her art tastes and didn't like them, so they didn't get set up. So, we had them for a while around the Project, looking for a place where we could use them because we thought they were very beautiful. After my retirement from the Project, I learned to my disgust and amazement that they had been given [during the war –Ed.] to a housing project [Marin County Recreation Center –Ed.] to decorate a recreation room. And those people looked at these things as only nice big pieces of plywood. So, they cut them up and turned them over into ping pong tables.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Sad thing [inaudible].

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: I imagine that these four panels would be worth somewhere around—somewhere in the thousands of dollars apiece now if they were still extant, because David Park's work is—has been promoted to the point that it is that expensive. So, we did create value. We wasted some money, but we paid our own way, I'm very sure. Now, are there any other questions that you'd like to ask?

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: For the record, I'd like to know approximately when you finished on the —when you left the [inaudible]—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: I was there seven years. And it seems to me that I began somewhere around '30. See, I left the Project, and I landed—almost immediately after I recovered from [ph] the [breakdown –Ed.], I was invited to the University of—the State University of Washington, that's at Pullman, Washington, as an instructor in art. And I left this area after recovering, and the Japanese war broke while I was traveling north. So that—let's say that was about a year before, or six months before.

[Cross talk.]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: [Inaudible] fall of 1941 probably [inaudible]—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yes. About six months before the outbreak of the war with Japan would be when I retired, ill, from the Project. And—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. That would be then probably late spring or early summer [of '41 (ph)].

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yes, yes. I remember we traveled up there in winter. It was—I was—we left here around the last of the year in December.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: And if you were on the Project seven years, that would go back to about 1934.

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: That'd be about right. Somewhere in there, yes. I'm [inaudible] —

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Which were—which they [first –Ed.] called the PWA then and then—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yes.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: —later, it became the WPA.

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: That's right.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Right.

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yes. It didn't become [immediately –Ed.] because the Treasury art projects went on afterward in this other form I've described. The—I think in retrospect that the WPA Federal Art Project, when properly managed, was about as good a government art project forum as I can envisage.

[00:30:08]

Lately, there has been discussion of state art projects in connection with Governor Brown's new state art commission. And I was told that I was a candidate for a place on this commission, and I had a private discussion with my own conscience. Can anything be done by the government in art? I have many reservations, but I still think there can be.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Very good, very good point. May I ask did you do some of the work connected with the Golden Gate Exposition of 1939, 1940 [ph] [inaudible]—

[Cross talk.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: I was in the hospital when that thing opened. I learned that many of the people that we had trained as technicians did work on that project. Not in major, but in the minor—the Bruton sisters, for instance, who were supervisors for us, did some work. A great many of the artists who worked on the Federal Art Project did do work for that fair, and many times assisted by the very same people who had assisted them on the Federal Art Project. Diego Rivera's huge murals, which were done in the art building on the Treasure Island World's Fair and which are now, I think, still stored in San Francisco—now there is talk of bringing them out and doing something with them—were executed by Diego Rivera, assisted by the same Miné Okubo who [assisted on –Ed.] the fresco for us on Government Island. So, in many cases, you will find the assistance of the people who did the major works for the World's Fair were technicians trained by the WPA Federal Art Project.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Fine. I might [ph] ask you about some of these names that you can give me a list of. What was your opinion of Joseph Danysh?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Joe Danysh was a close friend and still is, and I think of him as a very clever and intelligent person with a tendency toward opportunism, and he knew how to take advantage of the situation very quickly. He's rather brilliant. He later became [president –Ed.] of the California College of Arts and Crafts [in Oakland –Ed.], and I was rather surprised to find he failed there—

[END OF TRACK AAA_wessel64_393_m.]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: February 14, 1964.

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: [I'm trying to remember. (ph)] At the end of your last tape, we were talking about Joseph A. Danysh, D-A-N-Y-S-H, who was, on directive from Washington, asked to set up the Western region. I believe that, at one time at least, he was made Regional Director of seven Western states. And the San Francisco office is where it all started, and he brought very early into the Project his friend, William Gaskin, who also was a friendly acquaintance of mine. I think that to William Gaskin should be attributed the position of being chief idea man for the Project. Mr. Gaskin was a philosopher. In fact, I think an early kind of Zen Buddhist, if you like, but—and often appeared ineffective. But it was his imagination which opened up new areas for the Project, and which I think gave Danysh a

chance to put his undoubted executive skill into full play. I think it was probably to Gaskin that we should attribute the fact that the Western [Art Projects –Ed.] occupied itself pretty chiefly with architectural and monumental decoration, and that most of the energy of the artists did not go into smaller things such as watercolors and studio oil paintings and so forth and so on. Gaskin had a vision of bringing art and architecture together again. And I think that Danysh and the others accepted this view wholeheartedly and he [Gaskin –Ed.] should receive credit for his contribution.

Danysh was, I think his—even his best friends would say, an exceedingly clever opportunist, a man of great energy and quick intelligence, and had a certain amount of political skill. His enemies say that he was interested in aggrandizing himself. But I think we ought to remember that we're dealing with people here, often people who had been seriously frustrated, who had not had responsibilities before, and who were now put in a position, rather quickly, a position of some kind of power. And how they used that power was often—well, they've often been blamed for the way they used it. But they were like children given a new and powerful toy. [At the first (ph)] some of them didn't quite know what to do with it. Some of the painters, when confronted with whole walls when they had never painted anything bigger than an easel painting a yard square, really lost all sense of proportion and of self-importance. And this is true also of some of the other people involved in the Project. So, in judging personalities, I think we ought to realize that rather suddenly these people were given the chance to pioneer in an area where nothing had been done. And there were mistakes made, and there was waste, and there was confusion. But a great deal did get done. And so, we must put down to Joseph Danysh, in spite of any criticisms of him, the fact that he did act as an executive and coordinator of a great many different ideas, most of which had to do with architectural expressions in art. But I think that Bill Gaskin was his idea man in most of this.

Joseph Allen was a quiet and a taciturn, smiling man who I think worried more than he showed but attempted to act as business head of the San Francisco area [and of Northern California –Ed.]. And we all liked him in spite of the fact that he too had his peculiarities. Again, let me point out that each of us as individuals given this power and these opportunities expressed ourselves almost—under such hurried and hectic circumstances, we almost had to act by instinct and native intelligence rather than by any great degree of consideration. And we were continually in a state of ferment and continually in a state of emergency. Every day brought new opportunities and new emergencies and we had to meet these as we could with the information [to our hand (ph)]. And if clashes arose between individuals, if there was criticism, if there were mistakes, I think the whole situation was somewhat artificial, and one should realize that it was a constant state of emergency, and temperament is bound to show under those circumstances.

[00:05:13]

So, I would say that Danysh with [ph] times was reckless of individual rights. I would say that there was favoritism in some quarters. I would say that some of us had axes to grind. But I would say on the whole that this part of the Project was pretty much free of that sort of thing, that actually there was a good deal of good work done. Other names that come to my mind now, men that I had very little contact with who had the welfare of the Project in Southern California under their jurisdiction. Stanton Macdonald Wright, who was one of the synchronous painters—a sort of American variety of Orphists or late Cubists—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: That's W-R-I-G-H-T?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yes. W-R-I-G-H-T. Stanton Macdonald Wright. And I believe Lorser Feitelson or I—I've never known him, but he is still a well-known Southern California painter. He's—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: How would you spell his name?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: F-E-I-T-L-E-S-O-N [*sic* Feitelson –Ed.], I think. Lorser Feitelson. And these men, Macdonald-Wright and Feitelson, organized the Southern California Project along their own version of what had been done here in San Francisco. As we did mosaics here in somewhat the manner of Ravenna, I think they thought they were superior in using the whole bathroom tile instead of chopping it up into smaller pieces, that in some way this was more modern or using the material more directly. But we here felt that the flexibility allowed the mosaic artist by using smaller tessera made up for the fact that our mosaics

perhaps looked a little bit old-fashioned. One large mosaic I can think of in Southern California which is what we call a bathroom tile mosaic was on the auditorium in Long Beach and I think it's still there. It's made of tiles uncut. And it's simply a tile job, and I think that the expressiveness of the art suffers a little bit because the artist was limited by the fact he had to use square tiles. It becomes more a work of craft than a work of art. Whereas mosaic is a more flexible medium and allows the artist more freedom of expression.

The other man in connection with the San Francisco Project, Beckford Young. I think I could use Beckford as an instance of ability which was later proven. And a thing I'd like to say here is that these men all in one capacity or another have proven themselves to be worthwhile and efficient human beings in their later successes. In the case of Beck Young, he went from the Federal Art Project to become one of the best organizing shipbuilders during the wartime and had charge of several ships being built at a time, which gives some evidence of organizing ability. He was employed because he was efficient and could handle people. Well, the first time—first chance in his life he ever had to handle people was when he took over my place on the Federal Art Project.

There were some other individuals that were interesting. Going back a little bit, occasionally I would be sent out from Oakland to see how things were going in Carmel or someplace else where there were groups of artists working. In Carmel, there was Bruce Ariss doing school murals. And there was a rather interesting—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Excuse me.

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Bruce Ariss, A-R-I-S-S.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Thank you.

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Bruce Ariss and a sculptor, I think his name was John Carter [*sic* Dudley Carter –Ed.], who was somewhat a unique figure in that he did all his sculpture on huge redwood stumps with an axe. And he was a skilled axman and this fascinating business of carving a large wooden sculpture with an axe was so interesting that he later was, I believe, put on display in the Treasure Island World's Fair and given a huge stump to chop. But in Carmel, he did a number of large statues in redwood with his axe, and they are still standing on the Monterey fairgrounds, I believe. These were done under the Project. There were many other such unique expressions, but I think I've given an idea of what might go on.

[00:09:58]

Now then, other individuals. In the state of Washington, I met these people because there would be regional get-togethers between supervisors once in a while where we could exchange ideas and talk about difficulties and so forth. And one man I came to know and like very much during that time was Bruce Inverarity. I-N-V-E-R-A-R-I-T-Y. I believe he is now a director of the museum, the Adirondack Museum, in the state of New York. He was the organizer and builder of the Folk Art Museum in Santa Fe and then had some differences of opinion with the sponsors there and moved onto the other museum. Bruce was in charge of the region in Washington state. And although there were a great many others under his department, some of the notable artists who developed out of Washington state are Mark Tobey and Morris Graves. And I think that C.S. [Clayton Sumner –Ed.] Price worked for him too [on the Portland, Oregon Art Project –Ed.], although I'm not sure.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: That's T-O-B-E-Y?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Mark Tobey, T-O-B-E-Y. Morris Graves, G-R-A-V-E-S. And C.S. Price was the Oregon [seacoast (ph)] painter. I think he worked on the Project, although I'm not absolutely sure. Then there were the names of Carl and Hilda Morris. I believe they first worked out of the Washington state office and had to do—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Excuse me.

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yes. Morris.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Morrison?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: M-O-R-R-I-S. Carl and Hilda Morris. I think Carl Morris is still to be found working in connection with the Portland Museum. I saw some paintings of his not

long ago in New York, so I know he's active. Well, talking about them brings up the whole business of art centers, which was a development in the later years of the Project that must not be overlooked. The people in Washington—I think probably—I remember him as Thomas Phillips [ph]. I'm not sure that was his name. But he was one of the immediate subordinates of Holger Cahill. And Daniel Defenbacher presented the idea that it wasn't enough to get the American artist to work. But it became quite evident that you had to do something to make the public realize the importance of this work, and in some way share in it, and in some way become educated to use it and to understand it. And so, the idea emanated from Washington that we must not only carry on architectural projects and not only do easel paintings, lithographs, and sculptures, and all these other things, but we must also educate the public so that they could get something out of them. And the means whereby this was to be done was through a kind of a municipal art school, or—to be called an art center. In fact, this is the very first time I ever heard the word art center used was in connection with these projected institutions.

The first one to be developed in California—I think there were a number in other states, but I only know of two myself—was in Sacramento. And Beckford Young was put in as supervisor of the art center. And this consisted of an art school, really, where anybody could come to learn to draw and paint, and take lecture courses in art appreciation, art history, and so forth and so on. And perhaps work together under an artist designer in the execution of a mosaic or a mural or something of the sort. And so, in this way, the effort was to bring the general public into at least the handwork that had to do with the making of a monument, so that there would be some feeling of identification between what the artist did and what the general public did. In other words, we were trying to break down the line I think has been drawn by the artists themselves to some degree. Artists have a tendency to run off into art colonies and to dress differently and to establish different sets of values and to separate themselves from the social body. And I think this has been bad for them and bad for the social body too. And this was an effort, the establishment of these art centers, to break down this tendency [on the part (ph)] of the artist. The art center in Sacramento ran, so far as I know, until the Japanese difficulty upset the whole WPA Art Project. Carl and Hilda Morris conducted an art center in Spokane. And when I left California—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: That's Spokane, Washington?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Spokane, Washington, yes. And when I later went up there to teach in Pullman at the State College of Washington—[Washington –Ed.] State University it's now called—I found that there was a group of people who had been inspired by these teachers to [buzzer rings] paint and so forth. Pardon me a moment.

[00:15:10]

[Tape stops, restarts.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Now, where were we? We were talking about—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Carl—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: —Carl and Hilda Morris and what I found in Spokane when I went up there to teach in the State University of Washington. I found that there was a group in Spokane asking for leadership, that when the Project had left them stranded as it were without a leader, they felt insufficient to go on alone, and they wanted someone. And so, the first art extension classes of the State College of Washington, I used to travel through the snow once a week, 83 miles in the evening and back again that night, to give this group, which were determined not to stop work. I never saw such enthusiasm. They had started with the art center, the art center dissolved, and they wanted some place to gather and continue their work. And so, I supervised this for some time during those years that I was in the State College of Washington. This was evidence to me that these art centers did do good work, made more people, perhaps even only as hobbyists or as people who painted for therapeutic purposes. Nevertheless, more people did come to partake of art values and to understand them and to become enthusiastic about them through the work of the art centers. This was my personal experience.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Were there art centers in Oakland or San Francisco? [Inaudible]—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: They were usually in places where people did not have much regular cultural activity. The effort was to open these things up in places that were relatively

isolated, where people didn't have much chance to go to museums and things of that sort, where they could partake of art activity in spite of the fact that they were somewhat remote from the larger centers. And so, I can remember one was set up in Gold Beach, Oregon, which is a somewhat detached portion of the state, far from Portland and so forth. The tendency was to set up art centers not where there were museums and art activities, but where there weren't. That's what the art centers were for. I don't really know how many of them there were. But I imagine there must have been 15 or 20 of them before they were through anyway.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Do you remember any in northern California or central California in the small communities?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Only the one around Sacramento, where the only art activity up to that time was the fine old Crocker [Art –Ed.] Museum, which was more of a storehouse than a cultural activity at that particular time, although it's been more active since.

Now, the important—I was talking about the later importance of some of the men who developed on the Art Project. I don't think it could be said that Mark Tobey developed under the Art Project. I think that he was a very fine painter before the Art Project ever came along. But the Art Project certainly gave him help and sustenance during the years before he achieved international fame. And of course, he's now known as one of the fathers of art since Abstract Expressionism, at least in Europe found him so accredited. And Tobey is unquestionably a very influential contemporary painter, and unquestionably he and many others were kept alive if you like during the Depression by the Art Project.

Now let's see, we've talked about the art centers, we've talked about the Art Index [American Index of Design –Ed.], we've talked about individuals. I think you might stop the machine until I collect a few wits. I'm not absolutely sure what—

[Tape stops, restarts.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Some of the other names that one remembers in this connection—there were three Bruton sisters, Helen, Margaret, and Esther, all of whom were skilled architectural artists and had worked with architects and did work with architects after the Project. And they were responsible for some large-scale mural decoration in the Treasure Island World's Fair and have continued work in this area ever since. They were exceedingly skilled artist craftswomen and were leaders in that line of work. Florence Swift was another one of that group. These people were active in connection with the San Francisco Society of Women Artists and became recognized as professionals. Let's see, who else was it you mentioned?

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Were there two Cravaths, Ruth [inaudible]—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Oh, [inaudible] Ruth Cravath and then Dorothy—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: That's C-R-A-V—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: C-R-A-V-A-T-H, yes. But Dorothy Puccinelli, she was married to the sculptor Raymond Puccinelli who taught at Mills College for a while, and then she married [Austin –Ed.] Cravath, and her name is now Dorothy Cravath.

[00:20:03]

And she is still doing architectural art, I believe. But she and Helen Forbes, who I talked about before, did the big egg tempera mural in the Fleishhacker Zoo mothers' room [Motherhouse –Ed.] in the building there [at the San Francisco Zoo –Ed.]. Now, who else is there?

[Tape stops, restarts.]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: I think we wanted to continue with some of the personnel—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yeah.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: —such as David Park.

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Well, David Park, I've known for a good many years. David was

on this staff [at the University of California –Ed.] when he died here. And my first meeting of him is when I was reviewing art shows for a little magazine in San Francisco, as I've said. And when he appeared on the government Art Project, we were already friends. And as I said, he designed for Piedmont High School in terms of tapestry and he designed for Mills College in terms of painted egg tempera paintings [on plywood –Ed.], which were later sawed up and used for ping pong tables by some recreation project. David worked—was typical of a competent artist who worked in his own studio at home. He didn't work in the shop, he only came into the shop when he wanted tools, materials, or help. And there were quite a number of these people of this sort that worked by themselves at home. They would be visited at stated intervals by the supervisor, by myself.

Another one was a man named Joseph Sheridan, worked out in the area around Mills College and did things there. He did an unsuccessful quasi-mosaic for Oakland High School. We could say not successful because he insisted on using large panes of glass in it, and the plaster being such as it is will not grip the back of a piece of glass, and so the plates of glass fell out, and I believe that the mosaic was later destroyed. I don't think it's still there. Very often an artist put to a strange technique that he didn't understand would make a botch of it. He very often resisted the idea of adapting himself to necessities. We supervisors developed an idea that we call the art of the possible. And sometimes the artist was so sure that his own way was right that he refused to consider natural law, as was the case of Joe Sheridan. And his work was just destroyed by the fact that he didn't understand what held a mosaic tessera into the plaster. These—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: David—excuse me.

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yes.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: If we may go back to David Park. Did he weave these tapestries himself [inaudible]?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Himself? No, they were woven by Adolf Brun [ph] who was a skilled weaver.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Adolf?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Adolf Brun [ph], B-R-U-N, who was a German craftsman that came onto the Project and who had to do with the preparation of dyes and weaving—dying of wools and the gathering of the native materials. We sent our researchers into the university libraries to find out what plants the Indians had used to dye wools with. And we discovered and developed a whole palette of native dyes, which Brun's [ph] were, were more permanent than the aniline dyes, at least most of them, and insisted on using. And it was with these materials that David Park's things were woven.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: What were the subjects of the tapestries?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: You know, I can't really remember.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: It's still hanging at the Piedmont High School?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: I imagine they still have them in Piedmont High School, whether they're hanging or not. Now is a good time to talk about the curious arrangement known as permanent loan. The way in which institutions got the objects that were made by the various artists of the Federal Art Project was this institution known as permanent loan, whereby the government retained title for these things, but they were loaned permanently to the various institutions. In this way, a mural might be put up on, shall we say, a municipal building, but because the federal government owned the mural, the municipal building, even though there was a change in polities, couldn't destroy it. This was a kind of protection. And as long as the government insisted on exercising its right, it was a protection. But as soon as the government lost interest in the Federal Art Project, as it did with the oncoming of the Japanese war, a good many of the municipalities and agencies simply took matters into their own hands and destroyed these things, good or bad. The permanent loan gave the University of California many slides that were taken by Project photographers. It gave—I think some were floating around this institution. There's a whole sheaf of watercolors by Dong Kingman whom I spoke of earlier as having worked on the Project.

[00:25:02]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: You think these may be stored somewhere in the Art Department [inaudible]—?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Oh, yes. Somewhere in the libraries or somewhere. I know—I know as much as when I was acting chairman here some 10 years ago, I found a pile of these on a shelf. I don't know where they are now. But undoubtedly—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: I wonder if we could make a search for these slides, for example. [Inaudible]—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Well, I don't know if they even identified—they may be. We could ask the slide people if there are any of those. A lot of the work of the American Index of Design was loaned out to people who taught interior decoration and so forth and so on. And some of the drawings which our people made and lithographed, copied from the prehistoric Indian petroglyphs, were, I know, given to the anthropological library and so forth, such things as this.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Here at the University of California?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Here at the university, yes. Now, what went on here at the university, of course, would also go on in other institutions, in other collegiate-grade schools. I have no idea how much material is still extant that was prepared by our people and given on this permanent loan basis to schools and institutions. I only know that it was going out all the time and that we were glad that it was being used. We undertook to cooperate with educational institutions wherever we could and prepare such material for them if they asked for it. Let's see, there's some other names there we should—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: William Gaw, G-A-W.

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Oh, yes. At one time William Gaw painted, was a painter on the Project, and did a number of paintings for the Project. He later became head of the Art Department at Mills College and is another Project man, I think, that is—whose eminence in the world of art is assured.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Was he an easel painter?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: He was primarily an easel painter for the Project. We had easel painting projects in connecting with these shops. Where people had already reputations as easel painters and were obviously able to work at home in their own studios, why, we gave them the tools and let them. And put their works out on this permanent loan deal with the institutions that wanted them.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Would these be any subject that the artist would choose, such as still life or portrait or [inaudible]—

[Cross talk.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: These artists were relatively—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: —figure work?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: —yes. These artists were relatively free to do what they wanted to do. Where we would run up against patron trouble or client trouble would be where we were decorating some public building and where the board of aldermen wanted a picture of themselves or something or other, and then we would have some difficulty perhaps in changing their minds. But the painters who were working in their own studios were relatively free to paint what they felt was important. The fact that some of them painted the seamy side of life and the degradation of the Depression and so forth [inaudible]—

[Cross talk.]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Skid row [sort of thing (ph)].

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Skid row sort of thing. It was only really a reflection of the depression of the times.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: An interesting question to me would be, what is the proportion between

the, we'll say, murals, frescoes, and easel paintings? Was two-thirds of the work—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Certainly, most of the money involved was involved in attempts at permanent, monumental architectural decoration. The amount of money outlay for easel things was certainly less than the amount that went out the other way. You see, this was our way of getting public support and financial support. The government would not pay all the way. It would pay the relief salaries, but we had to earn our own materials. And often the easel painters were painting with paint which was really paid for by one of the other projects.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: And then there was some system of sponsorship by the—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yes.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: —local institutions? [Inaudible]—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yes, yes. The sponsors—when I say clients or patrons, these were representatives of governmental institutions of some sort. And their sponsorship consisted on buying the materials necessary to do their particular job. And sometimes, as in the case of the Oakland Hall of Records—or Oakland old Hall of Justice, loaning us space to work in.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Now that was paid for by our doing the Alameda County Courthouse inlaid stone. But it gave space to work for the whole shop of 30 people who were working on all kinds of other things too. And we didn't—for instance, we didn't count the pennies on each particular project. We had a certain number that paid us and these financed others that didn't pay us and so forth.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Fine. And then Maynard Dixon. Do you [inaudible]—

[Cross talk.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Oh, Maynard Dixon worked out of the San Francisco office. Maynard Dixon, of course, is an almost legendary, well, inheritor of the cowboy tradition of painting. Frederic Remington and all that, although I've always thought he was a better painter than that.

[00:30:01]

And I first met him when he was a designer for Foster & Kleiser. But—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: That was the billboard people?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yeah. Yeah. Maynard, in his later days, and like a great many other artists of good reputation, found himself needing relief, was employed as a supervisor and sent to do a huge spectacular painting in cement paint. I'm not too clear about this; I didn't have direct supervision of this project, but I believe at that time there were being developed paints on which—which would dye cement in a permanent way. And I think the theory was to have Maynard decorate the outside of the Salinas Rodeo Bowl in this medium. I don't really know whether any of it ever got done or not. But—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: That's Salinas, California?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: That's Salinas, California.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Near Monterey?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yes, near Monterey. And he, of course, was thought of as a cowboy artist. Perhaps this is taking it a little too literally. I think that the cowboy—he always used to go around dressed like a, oh, a Bret Harte gambler.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: [Laughs.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: And he was a type. And he sort of, as artists had to in those

days—very often artists had to affect some kind of manner to—it wasn't done I think with the idea of any affectation on their part, so much as it was a way of identifying themselves as artists to a public who thought that artists had to be peculiar.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Something of showmanship?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yes, a little showmanship in the line of business. And Maynard Dixon always dressed like a gambler out of Bret Harte. I remember him that way. And I think that actually he was a very [laughs] good painter in a certain manner and not at all limited to cowboys, but that's what he was supposed to do for Salinas. I don't know whether he ever did or not.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: [Laughs.] You spoke of Marian Simpson, S-I-M-P-S-O-N—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yes, Marian Simpson, S-I-M-P-S-O-N.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: —and some work in the city hall in Berkeley, California.

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Marian worked—I'm not just sure of whether her [inaudible] work as an architectural painter apart from the Project and on the Project, I'm not too sure whether the PWAP didn't sponsor the Berkeley municipal—it's a [fresco wall –Ed.] map done in the Berkeley Municipal City Hall. I'm not sure that that was done on the Project. It may have been, but I think it was done on the PWAP. But she was a very competent decorator and designer and was well-known amongst the women artists of San Francisco at that time as one of the leaders. And she also did some work [fresco wall map –Ed.] in the Assessor's Office in San Francisco. I can remember that there was a good deal of difficulty about that because she was supposed to do it in an incaustic medium, which I think had been invented or developed by Hilaire Hiler. Hilaire Hiler was a pretty well-known painter who had been in Paris in '29 and '30, and came to reside in San Francisco, and was made [a supervisor –Ed.] —given the Aquatic Park decoration to do.

The decorations in the Aquatic Park in San Francisco are done in wax by a process developed by Hilaire Hiler. All those fish swimming around the walls in the Maritime Museum there are his. He had a project of his own, like Bufano had a project of his own, workshop of his own with his own assistants and so forth and so on. Well, Bill—William Gaskin—got so intrigued with what Hiler could do with wax on the walls that he tried to get Marian Simpson to work with the same medium in some work for the Assessor's Office. And I can remember him coming into her workshop and finding her wearing a flu mask and trying hard not to breathe vaporized wax as she was spraying this material. She hated it. The whole place smelled of lavender oil or spike oil, which is what Hiler used as a solvent for his wax, to such an extent that one could hardly bear to come in. I don't know how Hiler used it, but it wasn't successful with Marian Simpson. She hated the job as she tried to do it. It was a case, I think, of mistaken—mistakenly trying to force an artist to use a technique too far from his or her own style. But then this is one of those little things that happens. I finally got her out of it and into something else.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: That map you spoke of in the city hall in Berkeley, was that a relief map or [a mosaic map –Ed.]—?

[Cross talk.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: No, it was, I think, a fresco.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: On the wall—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LEWIS FERBRACHEL: —of Berkeley or [inaudible]—

[Cross talk.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: It was—it was a map of Berkeley, I think, done in a decorative manner. I don't remember too clearly to tell you the truth. But—and this makes me think that it was done on PWAP, and I went there merely to see it rather than to supervise it. I think that was the case. Have you any other names there?

[00:35:10]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Maxine Albro, A-L-B-R-O.

[Cross talk.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Oh, Maxine Albro was—had, I think, worked in Mexico City, if not under Rivera or Orozco, but in some connection with some Mexican artist, and had a style of decoration which was based on Mexican. She did some mosaics in earth colors in native stone. A mosaic is of three kinds. You can make it out of natural rock, you can make it out of artificial rock, which is of course ceramic, glazed ceramic, or you can make it out of glass. The famous one down in Stanford is a glass mosaic. The combination of glass with tile and rock is used in some, but usually they're done either one way or the other. And this being Mexican and hence earthy had to be done in natural rock. And so, the tones are mainly those of rust colors that you find in native rock pigments, although there are some pale greens and blues in that. But she did mosaics for the San Francisco State College, which was then downtown in San Francisco. And Herman Volk [*sic*] also did—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: That's V-O-L-K?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Herman Volz, V-O-L-Z. Herman Volz was a good, sturdy German craftsman, and did some pretty strong work in mosaic. I don't know that his were ever put up. I do have a photograph I can let you have later of that one lying on the floor. He had a little tendency to aggrandize the worker. If I'm not mistaken, the one I have is of a very fierce and noble man holding a pick or something like that. Sort of a man with a hoe thing affected a good many of the artists at this particular the time—the worker and so forth. I don't think he was very much known before that time. But you must remember that the working-class hero was just beginning to rise at that time. The luxurious appointments of labor leaders were not then in the public eye.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: There was quite a bit of the influence of the longshoreman on the docks and the seaman [of San Francisco –Ed.]? [Inaudible]—

[Cross talk.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yes, yes, yes. This attitude, particularly—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: [Inaudible] Merchant Marines—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: —amongst the—yeah—particularly amongst the more, shall we say, manly painters, they liked to work with these motifs and to identify themselves with the working man.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I wanted to ask you also, was there sculpture work being done at your workshop at the old [inaudible] hall?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: We tried to start—amongst other experiments, we tried to start a—bring in someone who would supervise sculptural work, and we tried to open up new avenues in sculpture. For instance, we couldn't see why a gessoed wood wouldn't lend itself to a very delicate form of painted sculpture. And at that one time, now internationally well-known Claire Falkenstein came down and experimented with that medium on a project. Not as a paid worker but just because she was interested and wanted to see how it would work out, and we wanted to see if it would work out into something that we can employ a good many relief workers doing. Nothing much came of it on the Oakland Project. The sculptors were pretty well [ph] people, like Bufano, who could take charge of a whole shop and employ people working for them. And as I told you, you could get information on what went on in that shop from other people better than from me.

My own feeling about Bufano is that he was a man who had become so frustrated and upset by his own war with present-day culture that he became rather egoistic, and hence perhaps didn't give his assistants all the credit that was their due. And I think as you investigate into this, you'll find a good deal of ill-feeling toward Benny for that. My personal relationships with him have always been the best. He tried very hard to help me when I was a struggling art student, and we've remained friends through the years, but I think he has a warp of some sort about his importance.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Still an interesting, controversial character.

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yes, yes. And many of the young sculptors who have since achieved considerable reputation worked under Benny. Now, other sculptors I don't remember particularly, but there must—oh yes, Sargent Johnson did bas-reliefs for the Aquatic Park building, which was, by the way, built from plans prepared [ph] in the WPA Federal Art Project offices and is almost entirely a product of the WPA Federal Art Project. The whole building and all the decorations in it was in San Francisco.

[00:40:10]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: It is now the Maritime Museum. [Inaudible]—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: It's now the Maritime Museum in San Francisco, yes. A good many people don't realize that that was almost entirely the product of the sponsorship of the city of San Francisco with the San Francisco WPA Federal Art Project.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Clear from the ground up [inaudible]—

[Cross talk.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Right from the ground up, yeah. Yeah, yeah, right from the ground up, the whole thing. And at least that's to my knowledge, it was. Now, Hilaire Hiler had to do the interior decoration of it; Sargent Johnson had to do with the carving on the doorways and so forth and so on. And I don't know what architects and draftsmen designed the building, but at least I know it was all under our supervision. I didn't have much to do with that directly.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Do you think the artists that worked on it and yourself in particular gained a lot of knowledge and so on from WPA? [Inaudible]—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: I'm sure a good many of the artists did. I think I learned more about human nature than about art. I had come pretty well-prepared having taught art for a good many years. But I don't think I progressed as an artist while I was on the Project, but I think I learned a good deal about what they call politics, and a good [ph] deal about human nature, and particularly a good deal about artists because I had to deal with as many as 300 of them at a time and was responsible for their getting their paychecks. And this is a pretty intimate relationship.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: How about your own creative efforts?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: They practically stood still during those years. I used my imagination to create jobs for other people. [Wessels did murals and backdrops on the WPA in the Oakland City Auditorium in 1936 –Ed.]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Did you do any actual designing?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: I started out to but found I could not supervise and do anything of any importance at the same time. It was a 12-hour a day job, and I was also teaching and also writing art criticism at the time, and I had my hands full.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: But it was, you think, a worthwhile experience?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Well, let's say, if I was younger and it happened again, I would do it again.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Very good.

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: But I wouldn't do it now.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: [Laughs.] Not as you're older?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: No. I think it was worthwhile. I think that it was a great experiment, and I don't say that in the sense that they use that phrase in connection with Prohibition. I think it was a great experiment. I think if it could've continued, we would have learned how to do it better. I think that one of the difficulties with it was the fact that the local enterprises were so far separated from the central controls in Washington that things

often got out of hand and there was very little coordination between different parts of the country. I think that if we had had a chance to organize better that the whole thing would have run better. As it was, some parts of the Project were eminently successful and far outstripped others in the value which they produced, I mean aesthetic as well as financial. And I think that if it's all summed up, you'll find out that the work done was paid for by the artists' work.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: On the subject of exhibits, you mentioned once before that some exhibits were sent to Washington, D.C., to the government galleries there. [Inaudible]—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yes. We had an exhibit program, and these exhibits were available to educational institutions and municipalities and so forth and so on. In connection with the art centers that were established, the effort was to circulate exhibits through them to make these into kind of not only art schools but also places where people would come and look at art, and things that traveled through, and so forth and so on. Beatrice Judd Ryan in San Francisco had to do with putting together the exhibits. She was a skilled gallery woman who is well-known in San Francisco for some time and did a tremendous job in organizing exhibits which were shipped throughout the various states and through various agencies, municipals, county and state, that would house them. And there were exhibits of prints, exhibits of paintings, exhibits of architectural painting and mosaic techniques, and so forth and so on. And these were sent out as a regular thing.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: What in general was the public's reaction do you think to [inaudible]—?

[Cross talk.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Oh, it ranged all the way from indifference—well, let's say, from active opposition, and this usually came from—it was usually political, really. We would find sometimes—the supervisor would find themselves accused of corruption and all sorts of things by local politicians who happened to be on—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Even to the extent of red-baiting and—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Oh, yes, on the—and then we had really two enemies. We had the far left and we had the far right.

[00:44:59]

And we were even physically attacked by some of the—well, I won't name which extremes attacked me particularly, but it doesn't make any difference; they were both fanatics.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Particularly the American Legion, I believe, was very anti-[the Project (ph)]?

[Cross talk.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yes, yes, yes, yes. And it was, I think, pretty much anti-Franklin Roosevelt rather than anti-Project. They just didn't want to see it work, and they were not art-minded anyway, and so they hated all this stuff. And they were anti-artist, anti-art, and anti-Roosevelt, and how more anti can you be?

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: [Laughs.]

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: And they expressed themselves in various ways, which sometimes even they tried to pull down public decorations or deface them. And they even tried to—then again, we were troubled with a strike at one time of Project artists who felt that the communities were not treating them rightly, and they weren't sufficiently appreciated, and they weren't getting paid enough, and so forth and so on.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: That was here locally?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Yeah, we had a strike at one time, against the Project. The supervisors again were caught in the middle. We were trying to do what we could with what was given us by the government, and it wasn't enough and so the workers became dissatisfied. The—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: That's interesting. Did it last very long or [inaudible]—?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: No. No, it didn't last very long [inaudible]—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Any improvements [inaudible]—?

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: Couldn't be. The Project was being squeezed then from above. We were being told more and more that the local areas had to pay for what we were doing. The local [municipal authorities –Ed.] were asked to take over the art centers, they were asked to sponsor more and more, and to pay more and more for the things that the Art Project people did. The effort, in other words, was apparently to make it sort of self-supporting and supported by the local municipalities, which I think probably as an ideal, is a good thing. But the municipalities were not ready for it. And the result was we that were trying to keep it alive and effective were troubled by strikes of the workers on one hand and attacks by the politicians on the other. And it was in this kind of hurly burly that I finally passed out and went to the hospital.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Well, thank you, Professor Wessels. [It was (ph)] a very interesting and detailed account. And I think it will be appreciated from time to come by researchers. The Archives does plan a book on the subject. This is financed through a Ford grant to the Archives. And there will be a book result [inaudible]—

GLENN ANTHONY WESSELS: I'd like to say one thing. There's been a good deal said about boondoggling. I'd like to say this, that in my experience in my particular area of the Project, I saw no boondoggling. I saw a little waste through mistake, very little. Very little wasted time, very little loafing. Mostly enthusiasm on the part of people who perhaps were not fully capable of what they were trying to do, but enthusiasm to do their very best. I say this not with any idealistic eyewash at all. I think that the Art Project was eminently worthwhile, and it was worth very much more in intrinsic, essential, lasting value than the money it cost.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Fine. Very good. Thank you.

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]