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**Oral history interview with Andrew Chinn, 1991
August 9**

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Andrew Chinn on August 9, 1991. The interview took place in Seattle, Washington, and was conducted by Matthew Kangas for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Interview

[Tape 1, side A]

MATTHEW KANGAS: This is Matthew Kangas on August 9, 1991, at 1724 Dawson Street. Okay, Andy, well, we're continuing . . . really beginning our interview. I wanted to make sure we get the facts straight about your birth and your birthplace in China. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: . . . and when did that happen?

ANDREW CHIN: I was born in Seattle, Washington.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Oh! Okay.

ANDREW CHIN: I was born in 1915.

MATTHEW KANGAS: What date?

ANDREW CHIN: June 27.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Uh huh.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah. So I'm over seventy-six years old.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Do you remember the hospital?

ANDREW CHIN: No, in those days, I think they still have, you know, the house, give-birth madames. Or what you call them, you know?

MATTHEW KANGAS: A midwife?

ANDREW CHIN: Midwife, yes.

MATTHEW KANGAS: You were born at home?

ANDREW CHIN: I don't know for sure, but in those days, it's very common. . . .

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well, that's how my father was born in Minnesota, you know, with the ten children on the farm, and they had a midwife coming in.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah. Yeah. That's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well, your parents were already living here?

ANDREW CHIN: Right, yeah. They were here. . . .

MATTHEW KANGAS: In Seattle?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah.

MATTHEW KANGAS: When did they come?

ANDREW CHIN: Well, I say about 1910 or around there.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And where did they come from?

ANDREW CHIN: They come from Toyshan, Canton.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Um hmm.

ANDREW CHIN: Toyshan is a village area.

MATTHEW KANGAS: How do you spell that?

ANDREW CHIN: Toyshan is T-o-y-s-h-a-n.

MATTHEW KANGAS: So why did they leave China?

ANDREW CHIN: Well, I think they make a better living for themselves. That's the main reason.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Why did they pick Seattle?

ANDREW CHIN: Well, because in those days the President Liners, they stopped, the first stop is San Francisco. I mean, first stop in Seattle. Now is in San Francisco. Before is in Seattle.

MATTHEW KANGAS: [You were born—Ed.] really only five years after they arrived. Were you their first child?

ANDREW CHIN: I'm the second one. I have a sister older than I am. She was born in 1913.

MATTHEW KANGAS: What is her name?

ANDREW CHIN: Her name is Ann, Annie.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Are you the only artist in the family?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, I think so. Because everybody is busy making a living some other way. And even for my sons, I discourage them to pick up a brush, because it's harder to make a living being an artist.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yes.

ANDREW CHIN: See, so. . . . Because of that, they are doctors now.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yes, good. [laughs]

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, yeah.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Making a lot of money.

ANDREW CHIN: Oh, yeah, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: But for some reason you decided. . . . Well, was there something in your childhood then? You were growing up in Seattle; it was very different in those days.

ANDREW CHIN: Yes. I was born here, but after my mother she pass on, during the first world war, there's a flu epidemic.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Oh, in 1918.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, she caught it, and die, and she was giving birth to a little brother. He die, too, at birth. And my grandfather took us home around about 1918.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Back to China.

ANDREW CHIN: In China.

MATTHEW KANGAS: To Toyshan?

ANDREW CHIN: In Toyshan, that's right. So I stay there with my two other sisters.

MATTHEW KANGAS: What about your dad? Did he remain here?

ANDREW CHIN: My grandfather took us home, see. And we were in China, and then I stayed in China until 1927. Then I returned to Seattle, 1927.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Let's talk about what happened when you were young, between 1918 and 1927. That's almost ten years.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And you were, what?, sixteen when you came back.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, yeah.

MATTHEW KANGAS: But to have grown up in China, I mean, that was. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah. I was in China. I went to school in China, also. To learn how to read and how to write, during that period.

MATTHEW KANGAS: What kind of schools were they?

ANDREW CHIN: Well, in the [old town, old-time] there, usually the village hire a teacher, and then the teacher find a place so we can all gather in his place. See, that's how we learned. And they are very strict, too, in those days.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yes. But to read and write, I mean, to read, to learn how to write Chinese, I mean, that takes years.

ANDREW CHIN: It takes some time. It takes some time. I would say probably a little bit more difficult, but it not much, [didn't much difficult].

MATTHEW KANGAS: Uh huh. But what about the calligraphy? Because during that period one had to learn calligraphy, too?

ANDREW CHIN: Well, calligraphy. . . . Calligraphy is something else. Not all the Chinese can handle calligraphy. They could write poorly.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Oh, okay.

ANDREW CHIN: You have to be able to write beautiful before you can call it calligraphy.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yes, but at this stage, when you were a young boy, you were not learning calligraphy then?

ANDREW CHIN: No, but the strokes you've done usually tell, give trace of if you gonna be good, you see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yes.

ANDREW CHIN: Because a person does. . . . Even when you're young, you can write, organize the composition of a word. That's art there, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yes, yes. So that even in the handwriting of a Chinese child they could tell if he has an aptitude to become an artist?

ANDREW CHIN: That's right, that's right, yeah, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And did that happen with you?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah. My uncle was the one that encouraged, encouraged me every way, see. So when I went to high school later, I was the teacher's pet because I could, I could write such a beautiful hand.

MATTHEW KANGAS: In addition to the reading and writing, what were the other classes?

ANDREW CHIN: Well, in the old day, you have geography, you have arithmetic, you have Chinese language, and you have citizenship. Actually there's more elective [courses—MK] than student in this country can follow. We have more.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Hmm! Um hmm.

ANDREW CHIN: You would say about ten elective, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And what about the form of the government at that time when you were there.

ANDREW CHIN: Well, at that time, the government is founded by Dr. Sun Yat Sen. And that's the Chinese Republic.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yes, yes.

ANDREW CHIN: And we should have a easier life, but a lot of poorer people didn't seem to go for it. They didn't know about how Communism was, so they thought that, well, we change to Communism, we, everybody will have something to eat, everybody will have some money, see, so blindly they follow. That's what happened.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well, there was great poverty.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah.

MATTHEW KANGAS: But still you think they were sold a bill of goods?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, the others sold the people.

MATTHEW KANGAS: But in '27, the revolution hadn't happened yet had it?

ANDREW CHIN: Well, 'forty. . . . I think '47 it's, actually, it's already happened.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Right. But when you left in '27. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Yes, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: . . . why did you leave?

ANDREW CHIN: Well, for one thing, 1933 I left China.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Oh, not 1927?

ANDREW CHIN: Nineteen-twenty-seven I was in China. I was in Canton, see. And we organize art club in those days. It's called the Same Voice Club. That means everybody doing the same, enjoying the artwork. And then we had the art club organized under the name Same Voice, and then we show our art exhibition, too, in 1927.

MATTHEW KANGAS: But I'm a little confused because you told me a couple minutes ago you returned to Seattle in '27.

ANDREW CHIN: Well, it's true, but I'm saying that '27 spring and '27 late, see, so that's a difference, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Okay, so how long were you back in Seattle then, when you came back.

ANDREW CHIN: Well, 1927 I came back. In 1929 I returned to China, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And let's talk about those two years when you came back to Seattle. Big changes?

ANDREW CHIN: No, '27, '29, there wasn't that much change. At that time the national government [in China—Ed.] was still in power.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Uh huh. But I mean, when back in America, did you think there were big changes at that time? Before the Depression.

ANDREW CHIN: Let's see now. That wasn't the Depression. The Depression was earlier [means later—Ed.].

MATTHEW KANGAS: No, that was '29 when it was Depression.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right, that's right. Yeah, we had, I had a pretty good time. In 1933 I came back. I had a pretty good time. I met a fellow artisan, name Fay Chong.

MATTHEW KANGAS: It was in '33, when you came back? You met him that year?

ANDREW CHIN: 1933. And he happened to play tennis, too, so we played tennis together all the time. Also too, we got together, we organize a club, name of the Chinese Art Club.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yes, yes. Let's take a break just for a second before we talk about that.
[Interruption in taping]

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well, tell me more about the Chinese Art Club.

ANDREW CHIN: Yes. Well, the Chinese Art Club, we had originally about six members.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Do you remember their names?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah. I think one is Seung Eng. Another one is Young Eng. And then myself, you have Fay Chong, and then you have Lawrence Yun. And then you have Henry Eng. So that's six. And shortly after that there's another man that join us. His name is Yippie Eng. And all these members are practically all gone except, well, Henry and Lawrence. But they don't do much painting anymore. I'm the only one that continue with my artwork.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Um hmm. Would you get together and share a studio, or . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Get together, share the studio, and then we have a monthly exhibition.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Oh, really?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, and we had guest art exhibition also.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Where was the studio?

ANDREW CHIN: 815 Jackson. Right now it's gone because right now the, I-5 going through the top, see. The bottom, there's nothing there anymore.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Tell me a little about the building.

ANDREW CHIN: The owner used to have a whole line of buildings on Jackson between Eighth and Tenth. And there used to be another store up there. The Western Gear Company over there too at that time.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Um hmm, but how about your studio? Was it upstairs?

ANDREW CHIN: No, just one floor. But I don't remember the guest artists that show on our studio. But I would say about half a dozen.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well, how did you come up with the idea to form the club to begin with? You just were talking with Fay Chong, and we said, "Well, let's do a . . ."

ANDREW CHIN: At the time, Fay's pretty good with the linoleum cut, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yes.

ANDREW CHIN: That year he graduate from Broadway High School, and then he was the one that, in charge of the annual, you know. I don't remember the name of the annual, but is an annual [at Broadway High School—Ed.]. See, he did a lot of linoleum cut illustration for that book. So he's very conscientious about that artwork. And me, I was that way too, so why don't we start, organize something. So we, that's how we started. Organized, and then the other four come in, and then Yippie Eng later come in. So 1933 all the way until 1937, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: I think that was a fruitful period for you young artists, at the time.

ANDREW CHIN: Yep. That's right the time.

MATTHEW KANGAS: I've seen the linocuts that Chong did and they're beautiful, and then today I saw two or three of the linocuts that you did and they're different, they're different.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: They seem more traditional, in a way.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And I had a couple of questions I wanted to ask you about. Well, you seem to choose traditional Chinese themes, like the flowers. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Yes.

MATTHEW KANGAS: . . . and the landscape. But was that because you were still feeling that you wanted to bring something of your earlier background into your art?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, because in China they taught us that way, so kind of I carried in the back of my mind—I'm still doing it— thataway, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yes. So that's why you would do the birds with the lotus leaves. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: . . . or the pheasants. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: That's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: . . . and grapes, is it?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And the lovebirds. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: That's right. Where do you get the information? [chuckles]

MATTHEW KANGAS: I just saw them down there.

ANDREW CHIN: Oh, yeah.

MATTHEW KANGAS: I think they were things that you traded with Fay Chong, and the Staley gallery [Carolyn Staley Fine Prints—MK] is handling his estate.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: But they're beautiful. Well, how about the other artists? Did they get involved in linocut thing though, too?

ANDREW CHIN: The other artists, the only one involved is Young Eng. He does oil painting, but then he die with a short life. And then the others, they are all in some other profession now.

MATTHEW KANGAS: But were they making linocuts at the time, too?

ANDREW CHIN: Eng, yeah. Yip Eng does that, too. Yip Eng. Yip Eng, Fay, and I would do some of that then, yeah. But in the early days Fay didn't go out to do, you know, the outdoor painting, watercolor. I was studying to do watercolor.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Really!

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Now how did you get into that?

ANDREW CHIN: Well, in China I already started doing that.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And was that a typical thing in China to do, though?

ANDREW CHIN: No, I don't think so. You carry a box, with paints, and a water jug, and then the papers, everything in the box already, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yes.

ANDREW CHIN: So you carry a little stool. You get out there, and you just sit down and put the box on your lap and put the paper on, and then you paint.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Was there a precedent in Chinese art history for working outside like that, though?

ANDREW CHIN: Well, that is, the influence by some of the Chinese artists who went to France and Europe, different areas.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Okay, that's what I was thinking about. Impressionist influence.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, they come back, yeah, that's it. So we, I did a lot of that, see, but at first Fay didn't do that. He in the studio do the linoleum cut and _____. But then I took him out a few times, then later on he work for the Federal Art Project. He did a lot of that. Yeah.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well, so those years, though, four important years, 1933 to '37, you did the monthly shows. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: . . . did the outdoor sketching trips. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: . . . and the guest artists' show. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Now, those guest artists, were they all also Chinese?

ANDREW CHIN: No. Caucasian artists.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And you don't remember any of the names?

ANDREW CHIN: There's one is Harold Weston. I don't know whether he. . . . If he lived now, he's over a hundred years old.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And did you feel that most of the artists were working in a traditional Asian style? Most of the Chinese Art Club members?

ANDREW CHIN: Let's see. Yeah, I think so. I think so.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Were any of you curious about Western styles or the modern art things that were starting to happen?

ANDREW CHIN: Well, if we go out to paint, usually we paint what we saw in old day, see. So that wouldn't be a traditional Chinese painting. But if were painting in the studio, indoor, then you remember the old thing, you kinda start doing it, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well, that is more Chinese that way.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah.

MATTHEW KANGAS: To remember nature.

ANDREW CHIN: That's right. We remember the detail. But, you know, after painting so much and seeing other painting, the Chinese painting it's good in certain ways, the Chinese style, but still there's no, no perspective, see. Because in Chinese painting, there's no perspective.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Right.

ANDREW CHIN: So I decided when I paint, my painting have to have perspective. So now, my painting I put in a perspective.

MATTHEW KANGAS: So this was about, what? 1935, '36?

ANDREW CHIN: I would say 1946 later on.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Oh, 'forty-six, later. We don't want to get ahead of ourselves yet, though.

ANDREW CHIN: No, no. That's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: So that was an important Western influence, though, at the time you got to that. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: . . . but we've got that ten-year period before that we want to cover. All right, so the club closed in 1937.

ANDREW CHIN: Right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And then what happened?

ANDREW CHIN: Then in '37. . . . Then in 1949 [sic], I went to the U of W [University of Washington—Ed.]. And then I study painting and designing.

MATTHEW KANGAS: 1940 and '41?

ANDREW CHIN: 1939 and '41, okay.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And was that in the School of Art?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah. At that time the dean was Walter Isaacs.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yes. Let's talk about him a little, because he was a very important figure, because he was the dean for so many years.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: He taught so many students.

ANDREW CHIN: Yes.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And you met him obviously.

ANDREW CHIN: Right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And what were some of your impressions of Mr. Isaacs, as they called him?

ANDREW CHIN: He's a very, a nice guy, soft-spoken. And one time. . . . We had a society called Graphic Techna, for the main society. So we had a meeting at the of U of W, one time, and then he was our guest, and then we had, we had a contest on painting portrait painting, quick portrait painting.

MATTHEW KANGAS: You mean like a sketching?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah. . . . A portrait, fast portrait, like caricature, yeah.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Uh huh, a caricature.

ANDREW CHIN: And then it end up that Mr. Isaacs like mine the best.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Oh! [chuckles]

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, so I get a prize for it. And so later on we went to visit him over his top hill, or. . .

MATTHEW KANGAS: Hilltop.

ANDREW CHIN: Hilltop. Oh, nice place out there.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yeah. That was a whole experiment in living, in a way, when they all built their houses out there.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right, that's right. And you take a look at that place now, all the houses, hundreds of houses around there, the hill now, you know. First only a few, at that time.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well, they even wrecked his house. They put a second floor on it, after he died, the people who bought it.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah. That's right, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: It's a whole interesting thing.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah.

MATTHEW KANGAS: So then you were at the university there for. . . . Who were some of your other teachers?

ANDREW CHIN: Well, you have [Igo, Aigo] [Hart, Heart, Park].

MATTHEW KANGAS: Who?

ANDREW CHIN: Igo Hart. I don't know how to pronounce it. And Ruth Penington.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Oh, yes, yes. Was she teaching printmaking?

ANDREW CHIN: She teaching. . . . What's she teaching? Jewelry is one. And then also teaching. . . . Well, I had a lettering from her.

ANDREW CHIN: You have a Hensley, Miss [Mercedes—MK] Hensley. And you have. . . . Golly. [Koya [Numay, Num-may]]. You have a Molzack, and. . . .

MATTHEW KANGAS: Who?

ANDREW CHIN: Molzack, I think is there. Like a musician, Molzack. A German. . . .

MATTHEW KANGAS: Oh, Molzahn.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that must be the name.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Johannes Molzahn.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, I think that's him.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yes, from Germany.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, Germany. Then you have Ray. . . .

MATTHEW KANGAS: Did you study with him?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah. And you have Ray Hill.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well, what was the industrial design or something with Molzahn?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, it's industrial designing and making some of these letters, you know.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Typefaces.

ANDREW CHIN: Graphic letterheads. I study with, also—he died now—Ambrose Patterson.

ANDREW CHIN: Oh, yes, of course, yes.

MATTHEW KANGAS: You remember. . . . Tell me a little about him.

ANDREW CHIN: _____ .

MATTHEW KANGAS: Your impressions.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, it's very nice painting, but the sad thing about it, is at the time people don't seem to appreciate his work so much. And he had a show at New York for month. . . .

MATTHEW KANGAS: Oh, he showed all over the world.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah. But he had that one-man there. It up one month and down one month, they purchase hardly anything.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Oh.

ANDREW CHIN: So didn't give him much advertising, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: He lived such a long time that he. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: It's amazing because now, of course, the Australians are paying thousands for a Patterson. What kind of a teacher was he?

ANDREW CHIN: Well, I wouldn't say that he's number one, but he's good enough to have the quality to teach students and they learn.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And what about Mr. Isaacs as a teacher?

ANDREW CHIN: Isaacs, he didn't bother you much, you know. He just let you do what you want, see. But then when you ask a question, then he'll tell you what he think.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Um hmm.

ANDREW CHIN: And now you have Ray Hill. Ray Hill, he had shellshock during the World War, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: He was?

ANDREW CHIN: He did. And then he's awful shaky. He got highly nervous, you know. And yet, surprisingly, see, his painting is so calm.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Very calm.

ANDREW CHIN: You know, very calm. But he's nervous.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yes.

ANDREW CHIN: He's very nervous.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well, that whole interest that he had in landscape. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: There was almost a kind of Asian quality to his landscapes. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah.

MATTHEW KANGAS: . . . they were so quiet. And what were you painting in those classes?

ANDREW CHIN: At that time, I already showing at the Northwest Annual.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Already! As a student!

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, already show. And as a matter of fact, I show practically—practically, not every year—but practically. Some are lucky enough, the juries that take me in, you know. I was in there practically every year. As a matter, the Puget Sound Group of Northwest [Painters—MK] interview me, and then I think Caplan, Irwin Caplan, interview me. And then he says “Andrew, Northwest here. Practically every year, he's showing there, so everybody know Andrew Chinn.” That's what he, he mentioned in the tape there.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well, what were you painting, though?

ANDREW CHIN: I painting landscape, outdoors. I paint trees, crooked streams, rocks, mountains. In annuals, everytime somebody win prize with that type of work, then everybody would follow, paint that style.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Right. Like at Bellevue too.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah. But I don't believe in that, see. So I paint the way I feel. And to this day, I still love nature. That's just it, beautiful. You know, when I go fishing, I bring my paintbox with me, and then. . . . You know, you saw my painting on the wall there? I get out there, I'm going again Monday, see, to Big Lake. And then Mr. Stedman like my painting so much. . . . He saw my Frye Museum [Charles and Emma Frye Art Museum—MK] show, and he said, “Andrew, you paint me a picture of my resort.” Big Lake Resort. “You paint a picture of my Big Lake Resort. You name the price,” see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: What year was that?

ANDREW CHIN: Was just, happen only two weeks ago.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Oh!

ANDREW CHIN: Then I told him, I say, “Mr. Stedman, I don't want your money, but I want to be able to get in here to fish for two years free coming and going.”

MATTHEW KANGAS: [laughs] Uh huh.

ANDREW CHIN: So he said, "You got it man, you got it." So two years free.

MATTHEW KANGAS: That's a good trade.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, well, you know, every time you go to fish a few days, fifty-five dollars. So you at least you fish for ten times, you know, a couple years, see. So that's pretty good that way.

MATTHEW KANGAS: It's a very good deal.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well, back to the Northwest Annuals. Did you meet Dr. [Richard E.—MK] Fuller?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, I do. As a matter of fact, a friend from China one time he want a show up there. Up at the museum. I went to see Dr. Fuller. I told him the situation. He say, "Andrew, you lucky, because there's one man that couldn't make. He line up to show, but he has not been able to do it. So we put your friend in there."

MATTHEW KANGAS: Who was your friend?

ANDREW CHIN: He died, too, recently. His name is Moy Jing Ying. Moy, the last name, see. Moy Jing Ying.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And was he someone you had met when you were in China and came over to visit you and. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Oh, in China he's already painting. But his works in different magazines. So I knew him from way back there. But he came up here, and then, you know, he show some of the works. I like it because I already knew him.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And were they landscapes?

ANDREW CHIN: Landscapes. And then I got him into the Puget Sound Group of Northwest Painters. Because they enjoy his work, too.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And then Dr. Fuller also liked it?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, therefore he like it right away, he look at it, he approve it. So his picture was hanging up there at the museum, on the left wing, _____

MATTHEW KANGAS: Did he have a show?

ANDREW CHIN: He had a show up there. He show, well, I think at least three painting out there.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well, so any other impressions of those early Northwest Annuals that you were in? Did you feel like you were part of another, a larger group, or different, or. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Well, a little bit different, little bit different, see. Because [one] look at it, see. Now see the picture out like that? You see the writing on there, expressing the thought. At the time you paint it, see, it's right there. So you [trace it], you find out when he's paint it, what I felt when I paint that picture. It's all there. So it's a bit different, and the regular Chinese tradition, it don't paint that way, see. You know that the Chinese learned, but it's not Chinese painting, traditional. So after '46,

it's all done that way. And that's what I taught the students. And they enjoy it, see. They said, "Boy," they said, "perspective. Mr. Chinn, the perspective you teach that really, so easy to understand." And they love it, so, oh, man, I tell you, six-thirty to nine-thirty, they work till ten o'clock, a lot of them. They get more done, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: That's enthusiasm.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, enthusiasm, yeah.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Which is what a good teacher can give them.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, I think I'm a good teacher, after all these years. You see, my teaching is based on the students, with the student. A lot of thing that they like for me to tell a little bit more, a little bit more explicit, so that's what I do for them, see. And also at 76 I don't need the money, but I want to be with the younger people.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Oh yes.

ANDREW CHIN: See, I feel so much younger.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well, look at Spencer Moseley!

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: He still goes in every day and is teaching there, and. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: That's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Was he a student there when you were?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah. He belong to same society I belong.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well, what is that?

ANDREW CHIN: Well, the Graphic Techna.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Oh, the Graphic Techna thing, yes.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah. Moseley. . . . Spencer and Anderson. . . .

MATTHEW KANGAS: Fred Anderson.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, Fred Anderson. And you have. . . .

MATTHEW KANGAS: He died last year.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, too bad, yeah, Fred Anderson.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Tragic.

ANDREW CHIN: Then you have Steven Fuller. And you have Wendy [Wendell—MK] Brazeau. He die, too. See? Yeah, and all these and, and Irwin Caplan. So all these people, they were my classmates, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yes, I see. And it's interesting when you think of that group because Spencer and, Moseley and Brazeau and Fred Anderson, their art changed by the the late forties, and got less realistic and more. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: . . . modernistic, or something. Did you feel that kind of pressure or desire at all? To go Cubist or anything?

ANDREW CHIN: No. No. Because, you see, I paint, see, in the back of my mind, I paint for self-satisfaction. That's the first thing in my mind. I don't give a darn how they paint, you know, to win prizes and all that, I don't. Self-satisfaction, that's what I want.

MATTHEW KANGAS: But do you think that their shift to a modernist, abstract kind of art, do you think that was just following a trend?

ANDREW CHIN: The modern art is some of them good, some of them I didn't think much of. And to me there's a lot of them like gadgets, you know. You use it for a few years, and then that's it.

MATTHEW KANGAS: [laughs]

ANDREW CHIN: See. And, but the conservative type, they've always come back. Look at them now. Look at the Andrew Wyeth now, he's all realistic.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Um hmm.

ANDREW CHIN: See? They come back. Modern, you know, what I hear is like. . . . Oh, I hear Jacob Elshin, he's a _____. He mentioned one time that, up at the Burnley Art School one year one student got hold of a oil rag. You know, they're for drying, using for paint clean, remove the painting on it. And he stretched that with a nice picture frame and sent it in to the Northwest Art Exhibition, and that got accepted, see. So that's a modern, that kind of modern is, you're lucky you'll make it, and otherwise you just miss it, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Uh huh, uh huh.

ANDREW CHIN: So that kind of deal with it there.

MATTHEW KANGAS: So do you think it was too—for you—too involved with just chance. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah.

MATTHEW KANGAS: . . . or not enough thought or skill?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, to me. A good piece of painting, you have to carefully thought out, see. And then do it that way. And you don't say, "Oh, I was lucky." You hear so much, about watercolor painting some student will say, "Oh, I was lucky; I make a good one." But I don't teach students that way. I teach them to lay it out good before they apply paint. See, I have to show them how to make the good composition. That's the first class they must do. And then the second one, how to draw it properly before you can draw right. And then you have the color, show them how many sets of colors we have, and how many kind of value, how many sets of values we have, and then we go ahead [with] the brush control. You have vertical brush control. You have sidestroke brush control. Now, with all this ready, then I let them paint. They have the basic, then go ahead. You know, a lot

of teachers. . . . You come to school to learn, and they look at you, they give you a set of paint and some paper, "Here, go ahead, do your stuff." Now I don't do those things.

MATTHEW KANGAS: No, you. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: I give them the basics first.

MATTHEW KANGAS: You've got to, you've got to. . . . They need the basics. Everybody needs the basics.

ANDREW CHIN: That's right, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: But was this the way that you were taught in China then, earlier?

ANDREW CHIN: No, not that much. In China, like perspective, no such thing.

MATTHEW KANGAS: But what about these other, these other steps?

ANDREW CHIN: What other steps?

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well, the instruction of the composition, and then the drawing, and then the color.

ANDREW CHIN: Well, yeah, in China, the composition. You have to have composition. No perspective. As for the color, don't say too much about it. Okay. And then for the sidestroke, vertical stroke, yes.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Brushstroke is what's maybe the most important thing that you brought to your American students.

ANDREW CHIN: That's right. I brought the brush. . . .

MATTHEW KANGAS: . . . from your Chinese background.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, the brushstroke. And lay it out. But the perspective not there.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Um hmm, um hmm. You added the perspective. Maybe that's your contribution to American landscape painting, _____ Chinese technique.

ANDREW CHIN: That's right, that's right. From seeing, see. See, that picture is painted on top the hill, looking west. Take a picture looking at that. First you find out where is your eye level first? And where is your center line, see? So from then on, you start drawing. I use a pencil, rough pencil, and then using paint, apply the paint on it. You look closely, you'll find that every place is just once over. I don't come back and then apply another coat of paint.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Um hmm. So you've still got to have this earlier stage of, you know, a little more planning or.

ANDREW CHIN: Right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Not spontaneous, but. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, planning, that's right. You have to have planning. Otherwise you be a "lucky

miss" type, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yes, yes. Well, so, then by 1946, when you made the decision, or you found yourself getting more into perspective, what happened?

ANDREW CHIN: Well, nothing happened. I was working along with the Boeing Airplane Company.

MATTHEW KANGAS: When did you start that?

ANDREW CHIN: 1945. And then I used that knowledge there. You know, you do a lot of perspective and do a lot of these isometrics. So that increase the interest in perspective. And put in lot of tension. So first, when I present the student, I didn't do as good, but now I could tell them exactly what to do, and then they like it. They said, "It's so precise." As a matter of fact, there's one student in class says that, "You know this?" I say, "Yeah, I do. She says, "You know, I told her about your perspective class, and then she said, 'I taught you perspective.' But I told her, I said, 'You didn't teach me like Andrew Chinn teach me. It's precise.' " Now that's what she said. Yeah, and then they all ready now for, for the coming class, the workshop class. You know, outdoor painting class? They're going to start toward the end of October. But then the regular indoor classes start, oh, about the same time as the community college. The only difference is the college is evenings. The other is morning—morning, nine to twelve.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well, you obviously get a great deal of enjoyment out of those classes.

ANDREW CHIN: Right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And also another way for you to continue being able to do your own work.

ANDREW CHIN: That's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: But back at the Boeing years, how long did you work there?

ANDREW CHIN: I work there for thirty-one years.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And you continued to do your painting on the side?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah. Oh yeah, oh yeah.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And your exhibiting. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: What, were you in the Frye Annuals also?

ANDREW CHIN: Oh, many times, many times.

MATTHEW KANGAS: You knew Mr. [Walser S.—MK] Greathouse?

ANDREW CHIN: Oh, yeah! As a matter of fact, Mr. Greathouse enjoy my company so much, he invited me to judge one show up there. I don't remember what, what annual that was.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And what are some of your impressions of Mr. Greathouse, who was the first director of the Frye Art Museum?

ANDREW CHIN: Well, he's a scholar, you know, very gentleman like.

MATTHEW KANGAS: He was, uh huh.

ANDREW CHIN: He's a, you know, scholar. Mrs. [Kay—MK] Greathouse [third director, Frye Art Museum—MK] is pretty nice, too.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And that was important exposure for young artists, at those Frye Annuals. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: . . . and the Northwest Annuals.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And how about your one-person shows? Were you having any. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: One-person, I had. . . . Let's see now, one, two. I only make three. Two at the Frye Museum, and one at the Seattle Art Museum.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Let's talk about those a little? Do you remember the years of them?

ANDREW CHIN: The first one, the Seattle Art Museum, I cannot remember exactly the year. But at that time, Callahan was over there.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yes.

ANDREW CHIN: He's in charge.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Kenneth Callahan.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, Kenneth Callahan, and Earl Fields was there at that time.

MATTHEW KANGAS: So what do you think this would have been? 1950, '51?

ANDREW CHIN: I would say that would be close, yeah.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And what did you show?

ANDREW CHIN: I show landscapes in a traditional manner. . . .
[Interruption in taping to answer telephone]

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well, we're talking some more about your exhibition, your first exhibition and your major exhibition with Seattle Art Museum. Was that 1942?

ANDREW CHIN: Gee. . . . [chuckling] My memory's not. . . .

MATTHEW KANGAS: This was at the Frye. You had your show in '53 at the Frye. And then in 1987.

ANDREW CHIN: That's right. The other one at the [Seattle—MK] art museum, I don't remember. I thought it was maybe fifty. . . . I don't know exactly what time.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well anyway, you showed your landscapes at the time. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: . . . and then how many paintings were in that show? Do you remember?

ANDREW CHIN: Gee, pretty hard to remember.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Was there any positive response, or sales, or reviews?

ANDREW CHIN: No, not that time. It was too early. Early [Asian], [no], [they didn't know.]

MATTHEW KANGAS: And was it all, weren't there some Seattle scenes also?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, most of them I show were scenes of outdoor paintings, mostly. And then a few traditional show, you know, traditional Chinese watercolor landscapes.

MATTHEW KANGAS: This period in the mid to late forties, you were doing a lot of Seattle scenes.

ANDREW CHIN: That's right, 1940s.

MATTHEW KANGAS: _____ the waterfronts.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And the Public Health Service Hospital. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: But what was it that attracted you to a particular scene that you would want to paint it?

ANDREW CHIN: Which one you talking about?

MATTHEW KANGAS: Any of them. What is it that you look for in a scene that makes you want. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Well, look for something that I like. See, that's the [same] thing. Then the first thing is, that's what I like, that's what I want to emphasize. So the painting, I want people to look at it, that's what they see first. See, so that's what I call the center of interest.

MATTHEW KANGAS: So, but in the case of some of these buildings. . . . I mean, like why the hospital, or why the bridge, or. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Well, that beauty of a building, or the beauty of a tree, the artist has a right to modify. And so the building that, "Oh, that don't look as good," you could make it a little bit taller, or lower, wider, either way you want. So that's how I do landscapes. [phone rings] Oh, my goodness! It's always when you're busy.

[Tape 1, side B]

MATTHEW KANGAS: But Fay Chong was a part of the university group?

ANDREW CHIN: Well, at the time he went to one of those meetings.

MATTHEW KANGAS: You mean they had actual meetings?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, they have meeting, yeah.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Maybe, for like faculty group, faculty member. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: What meeting I don't remember exactly, but that's what he said. He said somebody mention Harry Bonath.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Right, who's one of the greatest illustrators of this area, did the famous World's Fair poster.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right. But then they said, "Well, but he's not one of our university group now," that's what she said. I don't want to mention the name of whoever said that, but I remember the name, too.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yes. But the point is that you began to feel a sense of shifting.

ANDREW CHIN: The rejection, kind of bitter rejection, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yes, yes, yes. Well, in favor of what? The abstract trends?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Very interesting.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And so you said you felt like an outsider in a way after that?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: But what about the growing interest in your work and some of your friends' work that was not in the university group but downtown, Seattle Art Museum, the Frye Art Museum. What about even the Zoe Dusanne Gallery?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah. Well, Zoe Dusanne Gallery. . . . Which one is that?

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well, remember that woman, she showed on Lakeview Place and then on Broadway, Dusanne. You know, and she showed Matsudaira—John Matsudaira—and George Tsutakawa.

ANDREW CHIN: Oh, she's pass on already? She's _____.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Oh, yeah. Did you ever show there?

ANDREW CHIN: No, I don't, I haven't. And I haven't showed. One time I did stop by the Seders Gallery and talk to Mrs. Seders, and she look at my things. She said, "You got some nice things, but it's not the way we want, we will want." In other words, not abstract enough or something.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yes, well, that was the Seligman Gallery and became the Seders Gallery. That became the university group. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: . . . gallery in a way. Of course, it's been that ever since.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And maybe that was just a sign that Seattle was becoming a bigger city and it wasn't. . . . Well, the art scene had been a much smaller group.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: But it was becoming bigger and there were many groups.

ANDREW CHIN: That's right. Many groups.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well, and then of course you felt more comfortable maybe with your shows at the Frye in '53?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And what, tell me about that show, your first show at the Frye.

ANDREW CHIN: At that time, I think they have Gerald Grace as the director at that time. At that time, Mr. Greathouse [second director at Frye Art Museum—MK] still living.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yes.

ANDREW CHIN: And Ziegler, Eustace Ziegler. . . . Yeah, he's quite a well-known in Northwest here.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Oh, yeah. Did you meet him?

ANDREW CHIN: Oh, yeah. He wrote me a nice letter.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Really!

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah. He said, "Andrew? Really enjoy your painting." And then [special] _____
_____.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Neat. That must have been very encouraging.

ANDREW CHIN: Oh, yeah. And he's also one of our members, you know.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Oh, yes.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, he's _____.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Oh, members of the Puget Sound Group.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, the Puget Sound Group.

MATTHEW KANGAS: What about your show, though? Did he see your show at the Frye, or something?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, he saw the show, and he wrote me a nice letter. See, that he enjoy it. That's what he said.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And what was it? All watercolors?

ANDREW CHIN: All watercolors, yes. All watercolors. Some traditional and some the way I see it in [the] open.

MATTHEW KANGAS: What did the traditional ones look like?

ANDREW CHIN: Well, like you have chrysanthemums and mountain sceneries, you know, like that, "The taller the mountain, the more distant. . . ." you know, supposed to be. You know, the perspective, you don't do those things, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: No, no. Well, it's interesting. . . . So even then you felt a separation between wanting to do both kinds of work, the traditional Chinese. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And then, but your own Western-influenced, perhaps, in some way, as you say.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right, um hmm.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And did that always continue? The, both styles?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, yeah, that's right. I'm still doing that, you know, still doing that, yeah.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Didn't people ever say to you, "You must only work in this style," or "Why aren't you more Chinese traditional, or more. . . ."

ANDREW CHIN: I don't hear anything.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yeah, yeah.

ANDREW CHIN: You know, I don't. I already told you that I paint for self-satisfaction. If I were worried about how other people think, I'd be wishy-washy. I don't do those things, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: But what about them? Were any of the critics paying attention to you at the time?

ANDREW CHIN: All I know is [like] the Puget Sound Group, when I. . . . What's this guy's name. . . . You know, he run the school. [Edwin—Ed.] Burnley. See, Burnley sponsor me. Into the Puget Sound Group. 1945. And all the people at the meeting, the screening, none of them says reject; they all accept, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Um hmm, um hmm. Well, that was very flattering.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, very flattering, yeah. So they want me to be in there, see, yes. And, as you know, the Puget Sound Group is representing all, like the university faculty members. Maybe not now, but all along, like Brazeau. . . . I mean, not Brazeau. What's his name? He was the dean before Moses Spendley [sic, meant to say Spencer Moseley—Ed.] What's his name?

MATTHEW KANGAS: You mean Spencer Moseley?

ANDREW CHIN: Spencer Moseley, before.

MATTHEW KANGAS: You mean Isaacs?

ANDREW CHIN: No. There's one between. What's his name now? [Boyer Gonzales—MK]

MATTHEW KANGAS: Stephen Fuller, no.

ANDREW CHIN: No, Stephen never been the dean. This guy here. . . . Golly. Yeah, I don't remember.

MATTHEW KANGAS: I can't remember, but it'll come to me later. When Isaacs retired, you mean? Boyer Gonzales took over.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, after he retired, this guy here, see. This guy here, and then Moses Spencer [sic]. I don't know who it is now.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well, but now the membership is different. Now there aren't as many. Well, Tsutakawa of course is still a member, but he was a faculty person. Well, you felt comfortable with that group of artists [though, so]. It was a more traditional group.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah. Well, most traditional group, that is the Puget Sound Group.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yes, that's our oldest artist membership group.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's the oldest. Since 1923, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yes. And so then you had your show at the Frye in '53, and was there any newspaper coverage at the time?

ANDREW CHIN: No, because again, at the time, the person who writes for the Times is the university type, you know, and don't think much about the conservative painting. See.

MATTHEW KANGAS: I see, I see. Well, let's see, you were continuing your work at Boeing, and. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: And we have a Boeing Art Club.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Oh, that's right.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, yeah, I was one of the organizer out there.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Seattle Times mentioned that you won the award, actually, in 1950.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, the grand prize, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: . . . with the grape leaves.

ANDREW CHIN: Huh? The purple grapes.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Tell me more, a little more about the Boeing Art Club. How many members were. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Gee, right now I do not know. I left Boeing for twelve years already.

MATTHEW KANGAS: But when you were there, you don't remember how many members there were?

ANDREW CHIN: When we were there, they must have some thirty members out there.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And annual shows?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, annual show, yeah. Annual show, invite some of the well-known painters as judges.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And were there any other artists—well-known artists like yourself—who were also working at Boeing who were members of that group?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah. Kinsman is one.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Who?

ANDREW CHIN: Kinsman, Keith Kinsman.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Was Max Benjamin in that group?

ANDREW CHIN: Max Benjamin. I don't remember I know him. I don't remember I know him. Yeah, that's, Kinsman's one, and Don Crowley is one. Don Crowley still is pretty good painter. He's still around.

MATTHEW KANGAS: When did you start your own art school? The Andrew Chinn Studio of Art?

ANDREW CHIN: Well, right here. 1953.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And where was it?

ANDREW CHIN: Down, studio downstairs.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Right in the house here.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah. I got a big studio downstairs.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And how many students?

ANDREW CHIN: Well, at times eight or nine. But they're not as big as at the college, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Was this before you were teaching at the college?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right, that's before.

MATTHEW KANGAS: So how long did your own school in the house, how long did that go on?

ANDREW CHIN: Oh, I would say less than about five years.

MATTHEW KANGAS: So 1958?

ANDREW CHIN: '58's one of the year, but I don't remember exactly what year. It's hard to remember.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Uh huh. And then when did you start teaching at Seattle Central [Community College—Ed.]?

ANDREW CHIN: 1946.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Oh. Was that the night classes, or day classes?

ANDREW CHIN: Evening classes. Even now, it's evening classes. So it's 45 years with the school. But then at that time it wasn't the college. . . .

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well, then it was Edison [Technical School—MK].

ANDREW CHIN: Ah, that's it! You got it.

MATTHEW KANGAS: It was next door to the Broadway High School, wasn't it?

ANDREW CHIN: No, they move. When I was there, it was in regular high school. They _____ area.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Okay, okay. And what were the classes that you were teaching? The traditional brushwork, or. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Just under the name Watercolor Painting. Just like the one now, Contemporary Watercolor Painting.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And a similar teaching philosophy that you had, that you told me about?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right, that's right. Similar philosophy.

MATTHEW KANGAS: I wanted to ask you this question about watercolor, though, because people think it's such a difficult medium to master.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah. Well, comparing with oil painting, and that, it is. Simply because oil, you can overlap. You know, one color over there not good, you can put another color. You get by. But watercolor you cannot do that.

MATTHEW KANGAS: No.

ANDREW CHIN: Watercolor, you look at the thing, like the tree, the color, the value, then you mix it, you apply it. The brush will give you light and dark value. See, just once over. You want to have refreshing color, you gotta do that. Is overlapping? No, nothing doing.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Does it take them a long time to learn that?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah. You see, when they use a brush, a lot of people don't know how to do it because they even strength, even motion, but in painting you can, you gotta really press to get the dark color and the strength. The same way with the Chinese calligraphy. You don't just press _____. You hold it [and, in] really fine. When you have to use pressure, that's where it gets heavier line and stronger power, and then you hook up, see. After you finish, oh, maybe a hundred word or so, you get sweating over it, because it's just power behind it.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well, did you eventually teach Chinese calligraphy also?

ANDREW CHIN: No, but in the class I have calligraphy. See, because calligraphy is a part of the vertical control.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yes, I see, yes. And did you study calligraphy yourself?

ANDREW CHIN: Oh, you betcha, yeah.

MATTHEW KANGAS: In China?

ANDREW CHIN: In China.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Tell me a little more about that.

ANDREW CHIN: I spent sixteen years in China. And in the six-year time, I use the brush every day. And in school the teacher says, "Andrew, I like your writing. It's so detailed stroke by stroke you can handle." You know, we used to put in about three, I mean, a quarter square. You know, there's a lot of books, blanks they make with a one-quarter square.

MATTHEW KANGAS: You mean a quarter-inch square.

ANDREW CHIN: Quarter-inch, yeah. Very small. You put in the every working [inside] that square, you know. Some of the words just got very simple; you can do that. But you have say twenty-four stroke inside that little quarter square. You know, it take a lot of patience. In order to make it good and all the strokes involved in it.

MATTHEW KANGAS: How did you do it?

ANDREW CHIN: Well, that's patience. You know?

MATTHEW KANGAS: Uh huh, patience.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, so putting in there alone is hard enough, but when you have [to—Ed.] put in there with a beautiful stroke, that's something else.

MATTHEW KANGAS: But didn't it take years to memorize all of the characters?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah. And you have to know about couple of thousand characters in order for you to read Chinese newspaper fluently, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Can you still read Chinese fluently?

ANDREW CHIN: Perfectly. I can write Chinese beautifully. You can see it right there, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well, I wanted to ask you about the characters in the watercolors. What do they say? Or is it poetry?

ANDREW CHIN: Well, it say that when the painting is finished painting how you feel, see?

MATTHEW KANGAS: Uh huh.

ANDREW CHIN: And sometime you feel so good you write poetries in there. Sometime it's only description of the time you paint it. Always date it. See, your signature's in there; your chop is in there.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And is that also true of classical Chinese brush painting?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, yeah, it's also true.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Very interesting. Let's stop just for a second here.

[Interruption in taping]

MATTHEW KANGAS: I just want to introduce this section of our interview with the comment that we're going to discuss briefly the work that you did when you were a part of the Federal Art Project. And what years were those? Do you remember?

ANDREW CHIN: Well, I think it's from 1941, the autumn of 1941 on. You see, at that time, the name of the Federal Art Project changed to Washington Project of Arts, see. That's, the name change: WPA, you know. [WPA usually refers to Works Progress Administration—Ed.] At first it's Federal Art Project under Roosevelt. Then at that time you have quite a few well-known artists there that's still living, like Morris Graves.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Did you meet him?

ANDREW CHIN: Oh, yeah, we went painting together. Guy Anderson, and then you have Carl Morris, Oregon. You have his wife. . . .

MATTHEW KANGAS: Hilda Grossman.

ANDREW CHIN: Hilda Deutsch, yeah.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Hilda Deutsch.

ANDREW CHIN: And you have Jacob Elshin. You have Fay Chong. I understand that Callahan was, you know, was in it for a short time, but I'm not sure, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well, tell me, I'm curious about your memories of Graves.

ANDREW CHIN: Oh, he's a very good entertainer, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: [laughs] Keep your notebook down here so we can hear you.

ANDREW CHIN: Okay. And the Art Club, he used to come down for the party. We used to have parties.

MATTHEW KANGAS: For the Chinese Art Club, he would come for the party?

ANDREW CHIN: Chinese Art Club party. So he would dance out there, you know, quite a comical, yeah. Put his hand around his head, and then turn him around, you know, dancing. And nice to talk to. And, you know, he had a studio near Volunteer Park there at one time. And we went over there to the studio to see him, and Guy Anderson was there, too.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And when was this? The late thirties?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, I think so. I think you are right. And then later on he had another place over. . . .

MATTHEW KANGAS: [Did he have—Ed.] a studio over on Jefferson or something?

ANDREW CHIN: Uh, Jefferson? No, this place I'm talking about. . . . It's not too far from Seattle.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Oh, you mean the place out in Edmonds?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's it.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Oh, that was many years later.

ANDREW CHIN: Many years later. Many years, but we still associate, you see. And then he built that studio himself, and we went to see him. Fay and I went to see him. And then we had dinner with Morris Graves and Guy Anderson. Then after the dinner, I took him back to University District. His mother living there. And the daughter—I mean, the sister. . . . He had a sister living with a mother and didn't marry yet, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: In the University District?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, in the University District. And I took him back there. And then a few days later I learned that. . . . Before he left the studio out there, after entertaining us, he put the wire screens, you know, kept the fire's, the sparks come out see. But just somehow what happened, the spark came out, and then it burned the whole building.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Oh, that studio, yes, yes.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah. Burned the whole building and burned all these works over there, that, you know, part of his work out there is all burned to the ground. Later on there's a booklet come out. It mentioned that he had a bunch of Oriental friends to visit me, the day before. That's us. But didn't mention name but that's us, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well, that was tragic.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, it's tragic.

MATTHEW KANGAS: But when you think of your first-hand knowledge of Asian art and then when you think about Graves's strong interest, did he really understand Chinese art?

ANDREW CHIN: Well, that I do not know, but I did know that he use pictures of these Chinese, oh, Chinese metalwork for the early two thousand year ago, you know, _____.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Metalworks?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah. Not _____ work. It's, you know, like for incense and also for wine holding, the old. . . .

MATTHEW KANGAS: You mean the bronze vessels _____.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, yeah, that's right. He went in the library, take a look at a lot of these thing, and make use on his pictures later.

MATTHEW KANGAS: True. But what I'm saying is, what I'm curious is the way that he made his art look like Oriental art. When you first saw that at the time, what did you think? Because after all you are Chinese, he is Western, and you were influenced by perspective, but he was influenced by Japanese—or Chinese—brush painting, but. . . . Was it a curious mixture, or what?

ANDREW CHIN: Well, I couldn't tell much, but for the same token, this other guy, that [he's, his] white writing, you know, to me. . . .

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yeah, [Mark—Ed.] Tobey.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, Tobey. To me, it didn't make much sense, because the Chinese writing it talk about power, talk about thin and thick strokes, but with his white lines I cannot see the Chinese influence.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Because there was not enough variation in the stroke?

ANDREW CHIN: That's right. There's no variation in the strokes, and there's no power emphasized, so I couldn't. You say that. I don't understand it, but certainly I don't see the influence.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well, no, I think you may have a greater insight there and it could be that, you know, since he. . . . That's a whole other topic, Tobey, but I think sometime had converted to the Baha'i faith and it could be that the white writing grows more out of the Islamic Mideast calligraphy.

ANDREW CHIN: Um hmm. But he didn't write Chinese calligraphy, did he?

MATTHEW KANGAS: No, but, I mean, it could be that it's Arabic.

ANDREW CHIN: Oh! Yeah, could be.

MATTHEW KANGAS: _____ Arabic more than Chinese. Although people say, "Oh, it's Asian influence," and, you know, there was an exchange student, Chinese exchange student, in Seattle whom Tobey met. I wonder if you knew him. Teng Kuei?

ANDREW CHIN: Teng Kuei.

MATTHEW KANGAS: 1928. At any rate, the story goes that he learned the Chinese, studied Chinese calligraphy with this exchange student but I, we don't know for sure.

ANDREW CHIN: But the Chinese student, but that's not Chinese stroke.

MATTHEW KANGAS: No, no.

ANDREW CHIN: See?

MATTHEW KANGAS: Any other responses to Tobey that you felt, as far as the art. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Well, I don't really know him pretty well, but all I know is one time I make a painting showing at the. . . . Oh, the first few years Seafair [Seattle summer festival—Ed.] we had an international art exhibition. George Tsutakawa is one of the fellows out there, and there's a colored guy in there, I forgot his name. Well, anyway, Tobey came to see the show. I show one that's the Magnolia Bluff, with [showing]. . . . And then he like that picture. He told George, didn't tell me. You know, he say, he told George, he know George, he say, "You know, that's a nice painting." But George told me later, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Not Tobey's response to your work, but your response to Tobey's work. What did you think? Besides the white writing, were there other, any other aspects that seemed genuine? Was it based on a misunderstanding of Asian art, do you think?

ANDREW CHIN: No misunder. . . . But I [think] to me it's highly decorative, you know. Millions of dots, a million strokes is highly decorative, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: You [didn't] sense that kind of spiritual subject matter that everyone was saying it was the mystic. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: I heard that said, but so. . . .

MATTHEW KANGAS: Did you feel that?

ANDREW CHIN: I. . . . I don't feel it.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And what about Graves? Did he capture anything of the real Asian art?

ANDREW CHIN: Well, the material that he draw, in a sense it's in a Chinese form, see. And like a teacup, you know, [in] the Chinese form.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And then the rice paper.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah. And rice paper, that's right. You know, actually the term of rice paper is wrong, you know.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Is it?

ANDREW CHIN: It's wrong because. . . . I'll tell you why it's wrong. When you said "rice paper" everybody has the sense that you could eat that paper.

MATTHEW KANGAS: [laughs]

ANDREW CHIN: See? But actually the rice, the Chinese watercolor paper make just like what you see the American water[color—Ed.] paper, using cotton seeds and use a little bit of rice straw, and that's [soft?]. But it's not made of edible, you know, rice or anything like that, see. So the Chinese watercolor paint [they—Ed.] make to preserve, long time to come. So that term. . . .

MATTHEW KANGAS: With the high fiber content.

ANDREW CHIN: That's right, so no different.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Not really rice, but. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right. And so every time paper says "rice paper," I told 'em that that's the wrong term.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well, thank you for correcting them.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Again, this whole period of 1945 to 1955 interests me, in Seattle, because it seems as if we had a strong group of Asian American artists. And then we had another group of artists like Callahan and Tobey and Graves and Anderson. Now those guys, all of them, were influenced by Asian art.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, yeah.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And all four of them became very famous.

ANDREW CHIN: Um hmm, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: But why didn't the same kind of recognition happen for the Asian artists?

ANDREW CHIN: Well, that's a good question. That's a very good question.

MATTHEW KANGAS: What do you say?

ANDREW CHIN: Well, I really don't know what to say. Only thing I could say is that they have exposure to the critics that much more. Critic could do wonderful things, you know.

MATTHEW KANGAS: I know; I'm a critic. [chuckles]

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: But weren't the critics interested in what the Japanese American and Chinese American artists were doing in Seattle? I saw some articles they wrote about _____. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Well, I really _____, I don't know what to say. [When I, like] play mah jongg: You gotta be good and you gotta also be lucky, too.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Of course maybe they had Dr. Fuller behind them, too.

ANDREW CHIN: It could, they get the Guggenheim scholarship.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yeah.

ANDREW CHIN: That make a lot of difference. See, like this fellow here. Richard. . . . You know, the young man that make bottles and. . . . What's his name?

MATTHEW KANGAS: Chihuly?

ANDREW CHIN: No. But he's, lately, he's doing a newspaper. There's a Times reporter—[Deloris—Ed.] Tarzan's the one that give him a nice writeup.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Makes bottles.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, a lot of bottle painting. Oh yeah, I'll think a minute. [pauses] Gilkey, or something. You remember the name [Richard—MK] Gilkey?

MATTHEW KANGAS: Oh, yes.

ANDREW CHIN: Gilkey? Well, Dr. Fuller got him a scholarship, and then he [worked, walk] into it, and then. . . . Well, look at this Helmi, Helmi Donovan.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Juvonen.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right. She died now.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Did you know her?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, I used to work with her at the WPA project. There used to be an Indian artist. . . .

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yeah, let's get back to the WPA. We'll talk more about it.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right. Used to have an Indian artist belong to [those]. Tuohy, that's his

name.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yes, Julius Tuohy, yes.

ANDREW CHIN: He used to have a house over at Rainier and Jackson Street nearby there. But he just all of a sudden miss, disappear. We don't know what happen to him.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yes, I know, I know. Nobody knows. Maybe he ended up back in Utah.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, maybe. . . .

MATTHEW KANGAS: He was a Ute Indian.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, I see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: It's interesting to think how varied, how racially varied the Seattle art was, with the Native Americans, and Asian Americans. . . . And they were strong presences. And someone like Helmi who would live with the Indians.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And, well, what was your impression of Helmi? You know, she ended up in the resthome.

ANDREW CHIN: It's a sad story.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Very sad, and I [ask] many people about this because . . . I love her art, you know and my grandparents were from Finland. You know, like the Juvonens. And so she looks like my grandmother looked, you know.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, um hmm.

MATTHEW KANGAS: But I do not believe that she was mentally ill.

ANDREW CHIN: No, I don't think so.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well, what do you think happened?

ANDREW CHIN: Well, I think she step on some party, and they feel that's she's not safe enough to run around loose. Like Fay Chong, when he, when Priscilla give birth to Bruce.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Priscilla Chong, his wife.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, Bruce Chong. His wife give birth. . . . So, at that time, Helmi was in Sedro Wooley [a mental institution—Ed.] somewhere. So Fay went over there to ask to get Helmi out to help his wife to give birth to a baby, see. After the baby's born, and they expect Helmi to be there to help, but then instead of stay[ing] in the house, she's always out. Didn't help Priscilla at all, see. Then [when] need help, but she's just always out. So Fay says, "I make a mistake," see. But later on. . . . I don't know who put her in Forkner over there. I don't who did. But when I passed that place, I saw her. And then she was pretty sad. And then a guy, he _____ back. . . .

MATTHEW KANGAS: Do you mean over in Elma? You mean at the old folks' home in Elma?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, are we talking about the same person? Helmi?

MATTHEW KANGAS: Helmi, yeah.

ANDREW CHIN: Helmi. . . .

MATTHEW KANGAS: Juvonen.

ANDREW CHIN: . . . Juvonen, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yes.

ANDREW CHIN: She was over the other. . . . It's a mental asylum, was that the name of. . . . What's the state out there?

MATTHEW KANGAS: You mean Steilacoom? Or Sedro Wooley?

ANDREW CHIN: Sedro Wooley. Over Sedro Wooley.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Right.

ANDREW CHIN: Fay went over there and get her out, see, because I think that they know that she's not crazy, but she just talk too much and got a lot of people around.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yes, yes. She wasn't crazy, though.

ANDREW CHIN: No, I don't think she's crazy.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And then later they got her, put her into the home down in McCleary.

ANDREW CHIN: And that was in Forkner I saw her.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Where.

ANDREW CHIN: F-o-r-k-e-r.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Oh. I don't know where that is.

ANDREW CHIN: That's a small town. That's Forkner, that's the name of it. [Does he mean Forks?—Ed.] And then there's another artist went over to see her, and then she said, "Get me out." They kept her there; she couldn't get out. But he couldn't do anything. So she was in Forkner there for a long, long time, one of those homes out there.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And she continued making her art the whole time, and did some fantastic things.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: That's a chapter in the history of Northwest art we may never know the truth [of—Ed.].

ANDREW CHIN: That's right, yeah.

MATTHEW KANGAS: But someone wanted to get rid of her, in my opinion.

ANDREW CHIN: Some influenced people that got the power to do it.

MATTHEW KANGAS: That's right, because she became a nuisance.

ANDREW CHIN: Yes.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And I hope that our laws today are such that that could never happen. We could never lock someone up.

ANDREW CHIN: That's right. And, but she did love. . . . You knew about her love. . . . This artist, what's his name again?

MATTHEW KANGAS: Tobey.

ANDREW CHIN: Tobey.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well, now we're getting into the embarrassing part. I don't want to talk about _____.

ANDREW CHIN: [chuckling] Okay, let's not talk about that yet.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Let's get back to you and the WPA. How much were you paid?

ANDREW CHIN: How much I paint?

MATTHEW KANGAS: Paid. How much did they pay you?

ANDREW CHIN: Oh, at that time I think we getting \$85 a month, at that time. But then all the materials is furnished.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Oh! That was a good deal.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah. And then we paint and turn in two or three paintings.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Per month?

ANDREW CHIN: For a week.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Per week?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, for a week. You know, those painting that we paint out there, they turn up one day at the Vincent de Paul, St. Vincent de Paul.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Really!

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah. And then somebody buy them over there, see. Turn up from St. Vincent de Paul. And the Fay got hold, heard it, and went over there. But by that time, they already had all gone. How it got there, I don't know.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well, now, when you were on the WPA. . . . Robert Bruce Inverarity, was he the director of it?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah. You know him?

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well, no. He's still alive. He's ninety, in his nineties, down in Monterey, California, apparently.

ANDREW CHIN: Oh, yeah, Bruce Inverarity, that's it. Fay's first-born named after him.

MATTHEW KANGAS: I see.

ANDREW CHIN: They were pretty good friends, you know.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Any memories of Inverarity?

ANDREW CHIN: He's six foot two or three. Kind of thin guy, see. And seemed to be a nice guy. He's always got a pipe in his mouth. And that's about [all—Ed.] I remember.

MATTHEW KANGAS: But was it helpful to you to be in the WPA?

ANDREW CHIN: Oh, yeah, he's the one that got me in there. Because without his approval, I couldn't get in.

MATTHEW KANGAS: But, I mean, once you were in, did it help you—the money and. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: No. At that time, no, because the materials all, they pay for, you know, and at that time the wages considered pretty good for the time, eighty-five dollars, see. [AC appears to have misunderstood the question; means yes.—Ed.] Right now, that's different, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: But if you had not had the WPA, would you have been in trouble economically.

ANDREW CHIN: No, I don't think so.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And were there any pressures on you to paint in a particular way?

ANDREW CHIN: No, no. At first, we were making the model of, you know . . . Sand Point Naval Station?

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yeah.

ANDREW CHIN: We were making a model of that, and then we used to go out and pick up some of those trees and spray it and preserve it, and make trees for the model. Jacob Elshin, myself, and Fay, we used to go out to hunt those trees. We just do anything they want.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Um hmm, so it wasn't just making your own art.

ANDREW CHIN: Well, we gotta produce something and turn in, yeah. But then we can paint the way we do. But certain areas, certain times, then we get these tree to make model. See, we make models, too.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Um hmm, um hmm. And did you ever feel that there was a pressure to paint patriotic paintings.

ANDREW CHIN: No, no. They didn't, they don't, no. No, nothing like that.

MATTHEW KANGAS: What do you think was the major thing that you gained from participating in

the WPA?

ANDREW CHIN: Well, particular gain, it give me more chance to do the painting. That's the _____ thing. Fay and I [would], we really produced, too.

MATTHEW KANGAS: How many paintings would you say you did all together?

ANDREW CHIN: I think in a year's time, I probably produced, oh, about thirty-five paintings.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Where are they now?

ANDREW CHIN: Well, Fay and I, we usually kept couple paintings, and then turn in three or four a week, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: What happened to the ones you turned in?

ANDREW CHIN: Golly, that's a good question.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yeah. [chuckles]

ANDREW CHIN: I don't know, I don't know where they are now, so long ago.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Do you still have the ones that you kept?

ANDREW CHIN: I should have, but I don't know which one. . . . That early part, 1941. . . . No, I don't know exactly. I still [have] a lot of paintings downstairs, but I cannot tell you where, you know, where or when those pictures come from. You know, I don't remember.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well, let's move ahead, and we talked about your first show at the Frye, what about your last show at the Frye, in 1987.

ANDREW CHIN: The last show, I didn't sell many. . . . I only sold one out of there. One guy came in, he wanted that one, but afterward I sold about half of that, six of 'em, yeah.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Was it all new work?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, all new work, all new work.

MATTHEW KANGAS: So it wasn't like a retrospective or, of all of your art that you'd ever done that they bring in and. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: No, no, those are all new work. Those works are done, actual scenes and also using color photos, references.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Really!

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah. Because a lot of times, that when I go traveling, I cannot paint along with some group of people, and you can come back, see. You see the impression, and you make a picture to remember it. And come back and paint, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: But when you refer to the photograph that you lose some of the spirit of the original scene or. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: True, true, true. Now, you take a look at that [pointing—Ed.], and think of that one. See, that is from color photo, and that one is actual scene, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Uh huh. I think I like that one a lot better than the one next to it.

ANDREW CHIN: [laughs] Yeah, okay, all right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: How many paintings in your 1987 Frye show?

ANDREW CHIN: Fifty.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Fifty!

ANDREW CHIN: Um hmm.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And how many years did that cover?

ANDREW CHIN: I'd say about three years, three years' work. I paint pretty fast, and I junk them pretty fast, too.

MATTHEW KANGAS: You what?

ANDREW CHIN: Like some of them. . . . Now here's my way of doing. That big picture, at that time, don't. . . . It look good at that time. I don't [trust] it. And then I would leave it, put it on one side. Three months later I look at it again. At that time, [if] it's still good, then I keep it, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yes, yes. So it's partly a thing of knowing when to stop.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right. It's important know where to stop. A lot of people [rend], put in [rendering], [rendering] just ruin their picture.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Um hmm. And isn't partly what is important in this nature scene is also what you leave out?

ANDREW CHIN: That's right. You know, every class at the college in Mercer Island I always give a demonstration, thirty-minute. And then everything's in that thirty minutes. It's a [twelve by fifteen], everything in it. So they says, they says, "Mr. Chinn, how do you do you it?" I say, "You can do it if you only work on that [area] just once," see. See, then you put in all the dark and light values, the strong colors, not as strong. It's all there, thirty minutes, see. And then, that way, why your demonstration is interesting.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Um hmm, well, true, true. But also good discipline. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: That's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: . . . to paint and. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Don't come back; do it.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well, you can't with watercolor.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah. That's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: You have to get it done.

ANDREW CHIN: That's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: You can't labor over it for months.

ANDREW CHIN: That's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Again, to get back to the difficulty between oil painting and watercolor, that's a major difference there because it's the pressure of completing the watercolor. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: . . . whereas with the oil you can go have a cup of coffee and smoke a cigarette.

ANDREW CHIN: After a few days dry out, you don't like that color, you can put another coat. But in watercoloring, you cannot do that, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: So it's more of an immediate inspiration, perhaps, and the skill.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right. You have to have the skill, and before you lay out that composition, you gotta take a look at the size of the picture. Is it rectangular shape paper you use? Or is it the square shape? Now, all those gotta take into consideration. Lotta people, you know, like talking a friend in a telephone booth, with a pen in hand and [just] doodling, see. You don't think about those things, the painting. You just think about making a sketch. But a painting is more than just a sketch. A painting is lay out. That's what I tell a hundred times to students.

MATTHEW KANGAS: But what is the secret to knowing how to plan correctly, and make the. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: To see, to eliminate. You see a lot of things in there. You don't put everything in there. See? Only the, some of the thing here. If you see thirty trees out there, you don't put thirty trees out there. You know, you just make some, just a few trees, and then make a big batch of color, that's it.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well, and then, now we get into what is abstracted about Chinese watercolor. That is to say, it's not really realistic, is it?

ANDREW CHIN: Well, it's not really realistic.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Not literally realistic.

ANDREW CHIN: But you take a look at it, you know what's in here.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yes, yes, but. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Okay? That's suggestive.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yes, suggestive, suggestive.

ANDREW CHIN: Suggestive, that's right. Suggestive, that's the word.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yes. And it's still a question of looking at nature, but then choosing from

nature.

ANDREW CHIN: That's right. And then you, if you look at nature, if you want to paint everything detailed like that, it would take you long, long time to finish the picture. You cannot do that.

[Tape 2, side A]

MATTHEW KANGAS: Okay, well, we're concluding our interview with Andrew Chinn on August 9, 1991, in Seattle, Washington, and we've spoken about your youth in China and, and your coming back and forth with, between the United States and China and. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: . . . your, the art club, the Canton Art Club or the Same Voice. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Same Voice, yeah.

MATTHEW KANGAS: . . . and then the Chinese Art Club in Seattle. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: . . . and then your work on the WPA. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: . . . and your exhibit at the Seattle Art Museum. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: . . . and your nomination to the Puget Sound Group painters. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: . . . Group of Northwest Painters in nineteen-forty. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Forty-five, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: . . . five, and your two important exhibitions at the Frye Art Museum and your Andrew Chinn Studio of Art. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: That's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: . . . that led to your teaching at first Edison Tech and then Seattle Central Community College, where you're still teaching. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Right, um hmm.

MATTHEW KANGAS: . . . and where was the other place that you were. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Mercer Island Community Center.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Mercer Island Community Center. And we've talked [about—Ed.] your philosophy as an artist and a teacher. But, on a more personal note, I thought we could. . . . There is increased interest on your generation and the things that you brought to American art. that were

different, that were not here, and the influence, that really maybe more as a group, that you had on Western painters like Tobey and, but I think it would be helpful to people to hear some more personal reminiscences of your friends and colleagues that are no longer with us. But maybe we could start with Fay Chong.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah.

MATTHEW KANGAS: What was he really like?

ANDREW CHIN: Well, Fay is a gentleman, always a gentleman. And don't say too much, but he has his conviction, too. He know what he saying every time. See. And we stay very good friends, and. . . . A friend, another [artisan], Larry Chin, introduce us, 1933. And then he play tennis, so I play tennis with him. And then we go out to paint, and then. . . . We also went out one day, we went out to Renton to paint with Morris and Guy Anderson.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Morris Graves and Guy Anderson?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, yeah. And Guy Anderson had a Model-T Ford at the time, see. They were using oil, but we were painting watercolors. And so later on Fay and I, we organize a Chinese Art Club, and then with the help Yippie Eng, because financially he's more capable than we did, so he rented that, this 815 Jackson Studio, and then we help to pay the rent of course, and then we got it going from 1933 all the way to 1937, I think. And Fay and I went out to do a lot of painting. Landscape painting. That one hanging out there is Fay's painting, his earlier work.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Um hmm. His later, his later work seemed to be more. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: More, more. . . .

MATTHEW KANGAS: More modern.

ANDREW CHIN: More modern, more abstract, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: What happened?

ANDREW CHIN: Well, he probably influenced by Tobey, see. He took some lessons from Tobey, and then influence from Tobey. And so we were painting away all the time. He went on his own style, and [I] went in my style. And, but then, something happen; he die in 1973.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yes, that was tragic. It was too early.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, 1973. I was in the hospital with Priscilla, his wife, out there. He was very, he was unconscious. We stay with him until the last minute. And when he die. . . .

MATTHEW KANGAS: You were with him when he died.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah. When he die, I understand that the bloods come, come out later, see. Blood come up his eyes, his nose, and his mouth. And so therefore at the funeral Priscilla didn't want they open up the casket the last viewing, see, because. . . .

MATTHEW KANGAS: They didn't have a final viewing. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: No, no, no. And bury, he's buried in Washelli. . . .

MATTHEW KANGAS: Uh huh, Washelli.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, Washelli. And I feel, every time when I go to play tennis, I just say, "Gee, wish Fay's here."

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yes.

ANDREW CHIN: See, every time, rain or shine, he's always calling, "We play tennis." You know, in the old days, the tennis club, in the winter months they don't stretch the nets out to play. So he provided our own tennis nets. And he's got brooms in his trunk.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Huh!

ANDREW CHIN: So we clean up the place, and we put the tennis [net—Ed.] up, and then we play.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Where was this?

ANDREW CHIN: Well, we used to play a lot at Broadway High School, and we play a lot over at Jefferson Playfield out here. Yeah, we played wherever there's available courts, see. And then we also play tennis. . . . We used to have a tennis club, and we challenge all the tennis club along the coast here. Like Portland, Oregon, and Santa Barbara, and. . . .

MATTHEW KANGAS: Like what, doubles?

ANDREW CHIN: Play doubles, and singles, too. I'm still playing tennis.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Uh huh, great.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, I start playing since 1929, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Uh huh. Well, it's a great way to stay fit obviously.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, I think so.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And how old are you now, seventy-six?

ANDREW CHIN: Seventy-six. Make seventy-six June 27, 1915. Wait, in 1991.

MATTHEW KANGAS: You know there was another artist I wanted to ask you about.

ANDREW CHIN: Go ahead.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Frank Fujii.

ANDREW CHIN: Oh, Frank Fujii. Let's see now, let me see. Fujii. Do I know Fujii? Let's see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: He was a part of the so-called Group of Twelve.

ANDREW CHIN: Frank Fujii. There's. . . . The Group of Twelve, huh, Frank Fujii. You know, the name very familiar, but I just cannot recall, you know. . . .

MATTHEW KANGAS: What about the relationship between the Chinese American artist and the Japanese American artist in general? Was that close?

ANDREW CHIN: Well, when we were showing at the International Show, we were pretty close. But then later on we don't see much of us often enough. The relation finally cool off there, see. Hah, the name Fujii, it sound very familiar, but I just cannot recall. . . .

MATTHEW KANGAS: What about Nomura and Tokita? Did you know. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Oh yeah, I know them. They die. There's one work for, work for the Pacific Frame Company, long time ago. Nomura, I think.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Kenjiro Nomura.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, yeah, that's right. He die. And this man that's still living, what's his [name—Ed.], you know, making all these college, college [means collage—Ed.] of painting, you know. Not Fujii.

MATTHEW KANGAS: What do you mean college paintings?

ANDREW CHIN: In a coll. . . . C-o-l. . . .

MATTHEW KANGAS: Oh, collage, oh, right. Oh, Paul Horiuchi.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, Paul, he's still living.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Oh, yes, yes.

ANDREW CHIN: We used to, when we were having the International Show, we used to see each other quite often. But after that, why, no more.

MATTHEW KANGAS: What were the International Shows?

ANDREW CHIN: The International is part, at least sponsored by the Seafair committee. And then included, we included Fay and I and George Tsutakawa and this fellow here. . . .

MATTHEW KANGAS: Horiuchi.

ANDREW CHIN: Horiuchi, yeah. And then a colored painter, too. Simon somebody. I don't know whether he's still around. Simon somebody. And a few fellow Filipino artists, but then I don't know what happened to most of them now.

MATTHEW KANGAS: How long did those shows go on for?

ANDREW CHIN: The first three year of Seafair, that's when we had it, _____.

MATTHEW KANGAS: So that would have been, what? Fifty-one or. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, the first three year, I think. And, yeah, George, George Tsutakawa, he's too busy with the fountains, I think. But he still do a little sumi painting. Oh, yeah, the term "sumi"

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yes.

ANDREW CHIN: . . . I want you to clarify [a reviewer are] mistaken now. I have heard people say this: "sumi ink drawing."

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yeah.

ANDREW CHIN: See, that's the wrong term. "Sumi ink drawing" is a wrong term. Because "sumi" is already water and ink. Now why do you put a sumi ink drawing in?

MATTHEW KANGAS: It's redundant to, you see. It's a sumi drawing.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right. Right. But you say "sumi ink drawing" then you all wet, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Um hmm, um hmm.

ANDREW CHIN: But I have heard people talk that way.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well, they don't know the meaning of the original word, so they. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: And, you know, like you've got these newspaper editors, they have to spell everything out for the readers.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah. [laughs]

MATTHEW KANGAS: I know that, in my reviews.

ANDREW CHIN: Uh huh.

MATTHEW KANGAS: They want you to spell everything out. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: [laughs] Yeah.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yes, I was just trying to think about how Nomura and Tokita. . . . Now, do you remember him? Kamekichi Tokita? He died, actually, about '46.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah.

MATTHEW KANGAS: But he had been part of that group with the Zoe Dusanne Gallery.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, they [make] [famous] of these houses. . . .

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yes, yes!

ANDREW CHIN: . . . with a kind of terra-cotta color, you know, kinda reddish-orange color.

MATTHEW KANGAS: In oil, oil.

ANDREW CHIN: In oil, yeah, that's right. But they were a little bit earlier than we were, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Okay. Older generation.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah. They older. Now, we are in there [about] the same group with this Kenji Nomura, see. But I think Kenji Nomura belong to that group, too, I think.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yes.

ANDREW CHIN: But then he lasted till, until later.

MATTHEW KANGAS: He died about '58, I think.

ANDREW CHIN: That's right. He's still working for the Pacific Framing, Frame Company, but it's under another name. Somebody bought it over, see.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well, now what about Matsudaira. Did you know him?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, I know him, too.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Didn't he work at Boeing also?

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, I don't know. . . . I don't think he still does, but he work for Boeing at one time. And there's another fellow here that. . . . Dr. Fuller give him, get him a Guggenheim scholarship. Okada?

MATTHEW KANGAS: Frank Okada.

ANDREW CHIN: Frank Okada, yeah.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Oh, yes. They're doing an interview with him like this.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, yeah, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: That was a very modern kind of work, though.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right. He paint big, you know. And he put in the mustache, you know. . . . One time I saw him at the Boeing. I said, "How old are you?" He told me, he says. . . . Right now, he's probably about . . . under sixty. I said, "Gee, why do you put a mustache in there? You look much older." You know, he just want to put something in. And he's a young man.

MATTHEW KANGAS: He wanted to look older, maybe.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, maybe. He's got a, got a brother, Charlie Okada. You know him?

MATTHEW KANGAS: Hm mm.

ANDREW CHIN: Charlie Okada worked for Harry Bonath at one time.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Oh, really. [Frank—Ed.] Okada really got into the academic modernism abstract thing. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: That's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: . . . teaching at the University of Oregon and yet there is a delicacy to the brushwork, you know. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: That's right, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: . . . _____ that he's. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: There's gotta be something.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Yes.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, that's right.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well, I think we've covered a lot and. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, I think so.

MATTHEW KANGAS: . . . and I want to thank you for sharing this time with me and. . . .

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, you bet. You know a lot of things about Northwest Art, you know. I mention, then you know the name. You know, that's good.

MATTHEW KANGAS: Well, it's an interest of mine, and I want to send you a copy of another article that I wrote on the Asian American abstract painters.

ANDREW CHIN: Yeah, yeah, that's right. I like to get that one, yeah.

END OF INTERVIEW

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