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**Oral history interview with Ralph Rosenthal,
1997 February 10-April 7**

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Ralph Rosenthal on February 10 and April 7, 1997. The interview was conducted at the interviewee's home in Brookline, MA by Robert Brown for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

The reader should bear in mind that he or she is reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose. This is a rough transcription that may include typographical errors.

Interview

ROBERT BROWN: We're beginning a series of interviews with Ralph Rosenthal at his house in Brookline, Massachusetts. And this is February 10th, 1997, Robert Brown, the interviewer. And Mr. Rosenthal, I thought we might just start out by your childhood. Were you born here?

RALPH ROSENTHAL: I was born in Boston [Massachusetts].

MR. BROWN: When was that?

MR. ROSENTHAL: February 17 – next week is my birthday, next Monday. February 17, 1912. I was born in the south end of Boston.

MR. BROWN: That's a very old area, isn't it?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes, Dover Street, as a matter of fact, which is now called East Berkeley. And we lived there until 1925. Then we moved to Dorchester.

MR. BROWN: Why did you move to Dorchester? Was that a bit more up-and-coming an area?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Well, the south end was declining. And my folks wanted to move. And we had a variety store there, and also my folks sold feathers. And it was quite an event. Downstairs under the store was the cellar we had devoted to the feather area, and had quite a few customers for that.

MR. BROWN: What were they used for? Trim or –

MR. ROSENTHAL: No, they were used for pillows, what they called quilts, and my late father used to tell the story, of course he came over from the Old Country. And he used to tell the story that he went to Cambridge to buy some secondhand feathers. And on the way – of course, he didn't take the streetcar because that meant money, and money was scarce in those days. And he stopped at MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA] to have a drink. So he always used to say –

MR. BROWN: MIT?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yeah. "I went to college there." So that was always a joke in the family.

MR. BROWN: Where had he come from?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Russia.

MR. BROWN: Russia?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: He left at the turn of the century?

MR. ROSENTHAL: He left, and my folks got married there in Russia. My father went – instead of coming to Boston, he went to South Africa and left my mother there in Russia, to open up some sort of business there in Africa, South Africa, Johannesburg, as a matter of fact. And he got sick there and had gangrene of the right toe and was in the hospital for 18 months. And my mother, God rest her soul, was left in Russia.

So after he got well enough to go, he went back to Russia and then took her and they came to this country. They lived on Fay Street.

MR. BROWN: In Boston?

MR. ROSENTHAL: In the south end, right around the corner from where I was born. I had two brothers who – and now one – who were born there on Fay Street. And it was quite an area at that time.

MR. BROWN: Do you recall early childhood memories? Was it a pretty close-knit community?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes, very close-knit, very close-knit. There was no feeling of blacks or whites or Polish or Russians or Jews or anything. Everybody was as a unit. But now, things have changed, and not for the good.

MR. BROWN: No.

MR. ROSENTHAL: But thank God, it's improving.

MR. BROWN: What were some of your early interests as a little boy? Do you recall?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Well, when I was a little boy, my – there was a cap-maker in one of the stores on Dover Street who came over to my father and showed him what his son had made at one of the settlement houses. It was the head of Philips Brooks. And he was quite overjoyed with it. And my father said, "Huh. My son can do as good, if not better." So I had to join the South Bay Union on Plimpton Street.

MR. BROWN: That was what? A neighborhood settlement house?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes. It was a settlement house on Harrison Avenue, up halfway between Dover Street and Mass [Massachusetts] Avenue. The building is no longer there. It's been torn down.

MR. BROWN: So your father had you join that?

MR. ROSENTHAL: I joined that. And I remember it cost 50 cents for the year, with all supplies and everything taken care of.

MR. BROWN: So you had in fact not made drawings, to speak of, before that?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes. In school I was drawing.

MR. BROWN: Oh, you had? So your father knew that you were good.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. As a matter of fact, his brother – late brother, who was a doctor in Baltimore, wanted me to study violin. And he'd pay for the lessons and everything. My father said, "No, he's got too much to do. He has Hebrew lessons. He has his settlement house, and he has his school and schoolwork and drawing and everything else. He's got enough to take up his time, and I don't want him to" – to this day I'm sorry I didn't study the violin as well.

MR. BROWN: Did you have some musical talent?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Well, you never know. You never know. So I joined the South Bay Union. And I had Bill Tate as a drawing teacher. I had Anthony Debono [phonetic] and Dudley Pratt as sculpture teachers.

MR. BROWN: These were fairly well-known people?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes. Dudley's father made the statuary in front of the Boston Public Library.

MR. BROWN: Yes, Philip Pratt.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Philip Pratt.

MR. BROWN: Were they good teachers, these men?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes. They were terrific. They were terrific.

MR. BROWN: How had they began teaching you, in sculpture?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Well, in those days it was a matter of copying. So they had different casts. As a matter of fact, I have some pictures here that I'll show you. And you saw those in the dining room, of Napoleon and Dante. I also have one downstairs of *Venus de Milo*. And they were – we learned how to cast. And it was wonderful there. They had a workshop. There was all kinds of activities going on there.

MR. BROWN: Now, was this privately financed?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No – I don't know. I know. But the headquarters, I remember, was on Union Park Street. And I don't remember anything more about it.

MR. BROWN: About how old were you when you went there?

MR. ROSENTHAL: I was 10 years old. Ten years old, for the sculptures – I always won first prize in their exhibition. In drawing, I won the first prize. In sculpture, I won the first prize. And I have a statue of Massasoit that is in bronze that Cyrus Dallin did. The original studies were the small one, about 11 or so inches tall. And the original is in Plymouth.

MR. BROWN: Did you copy this?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No, no. This was a bronze that was given to me as a first prize.

MR. BROWN: Oh. By Dallin?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Who was still alive at that time?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes, at that time, yes. Oh, yes, definitely. I wish I had studied under him.

MR. BROWN: So your training then at this very early age would be drawing?

MR. ROSENTHAL: It would be drawing and sculpture.

MR. BROWN: Would you draw from casts?

MR. ROSENTHAL: We'd draw from casts, yes. From casts. Everything was copying from the casts.

MR. BROWN: And then the sculpture, you would use, what, modeling clay?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Modeling clay, it was always clay.

MR. BROWN: Yeah.

MR. ROSENTHAL: And we don't use clay here in the museum now. It's too messy, and there's not enough room for storage.

MR. BROWN: Um-hm. [Affirmative.] Would this be after school, after hours?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. I don't remember how many times a week I went, whether it was more than once or – I'm sure it must have been more than once. And we were up – as I recall, up on the third floor. And I can picture the casting room – the sink at the end of the hall. The modeling room was on the left, and the drawing room was on the right. And woodworking was way downstairs in the basement.

MR. BROWN: Did you do any of that?

MR. ROSENTHAL: I remember with a cigar box, making a violin or a stringed instrument there then. But in the later years, that was one of my hobbies, cabinetry.

MR. BROWN: Um-hm. [Affirmative.] So you got very firm training then?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes. It was excellent training, excellent training.

MR. BROWN: In the school itself, your public school, was there much art training?

MR. ROSENTHAL: We did have one week – one day a week drawing. And my drawings were always on display, always. And that was in 1924 that my late brother joined the – the doctor joined the museum classes [School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA] on his senior year in high school.

MR. BROWN: Um-hm. [Affirmative.] So you began hearing from him about that?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes. He brought me into the museum to do some work.

MR. BROWN: Um-hm. [Affirmative.] So you felt pretty prepared. Now, what did you know about the museum program? Was it pretty tough?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Nothing.

MR. BROWN: You didn't know anything?

MR. ROSENTHAL: I didn't know anything about it.

MR. BROWN: Had you been to the museum before?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Never. Never. That was my first experience. And I was in the Sunday classes. That was the last year they had Sunday classes.

MR. BROWN: You started about 1925?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Your brother had started the year before?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes. And he was – he started his last year in high school. And it's unusual that a student would get a straight-A the first time he got into class. And they were very strict on marking. And he got a straight-A. And my folks never wanted him to go into drafting or drawing. And he said he wanted to be an engineer. So my late father said, "Look at the fellow across the street. He's an engineer. Look how dirty he looks. He's going along with dirty clothes and a cap there. Would you like to look like that?" And my late father and mother inveigled him to study medicine. And he became a doctor. And he was a terrific one.

MR. BROWN: He went to?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Tufts [University, Medford, MA]. He went to Tufts University and graduated and had – three years at that time was a premed. And then the medical school – so he combined both.

MR. BROWN: But you then, about the age of 12 or 13, in 1925, you began these high school art classes?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No. First I was in the Sunday classes. And then from there I went into the Saturday classes. And Saturday classes were at that time a tuition class, but I was allowed to go in without having to pay any tuition. And that was the same on the Sunday classes. And from the Saturday classes, I went into the high school classes. And the high school classes were run by the city, connected with the museum.

MR. BROWN: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ROSENTHAL: In 1924, I attended the Sunday art classes at the museum. And this was the last year the classes were held.

MR. BROWN: Was that for the very first beginning students, they would start in the Sunday classes?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes. Yes. And then in 1925, I entered the Saturday classes held at the museum. And '26 through '29, I attended the high school art vocational classes there. And that title was changed to – vocational art classes, and then it was changed – I've forgotten what the title is now. But in those days, we used to go there five days a week, for which we'd get five points towards your high school diploma.

MR. BROWN: Whereas the Saturday and Sunday classes didn't?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No. No. That had nothing to do with the city. That was sponsored by the museum.

MR. BROWN: And now what did you first start doing? When you started going to the Sunday classes, what did they – did you begin with?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Creative work.

MR. BROWN: Oh.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Creative work in those days.

MR. BROWN: So that was a departure from what you had at the –

MR. ROSENTHAL: That's right. Creative, and then also we'd go to the different areas. We'd do pencil drawing of the scrolls that they had there, the statuary that they had. We'd use charcoal or painting, and painting the tapestries there, reproducing the tapestries on paper. That was – then in the high school classes we had five days a week. And the Monday the museum in those days was closed. And we were over at the Museum School. That was in the courtyard. There was an old building there, a quadrangle. And we'd have Ms. Lebrecht, who would teach us anatomy.

MR. BROWN: This was Alma Lebrecht?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Alma Lebrecht, teach us anatomy and drawing. Then on Tuesday, we had – in the museum itself was the rest of the week. We had design, composition, and textile work that was drawing and painting.

MR. BROWN: Textile work?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Not making textiles?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No, no. Drawing and painting from the different areas that they had.

MR. BROWN: Was that still Ms. Lebrecht?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No, no. We had two other teachers, Ms. Brink, Blanche Brink. She's gone now, and so is Alice Morse.

MR. BROWN: Blanche Brink and Alice Morse?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Alice Morse. Now, Alice Morse, when she passed away, she was an old maid. And all her friends were men and mostly women. She lived in Cambridge on Craggy Circle [phonetic]. And when we'd go visiting her, with my late father-in-law, we used to bring – sometimes with Ms. Lebrecht – we used to bring the gunkiest cakes that she loved to eat. But when you'd go into her house, she'd have a 15-watt lamp. That was all that she used. No radio, nothing. And when Lila [phonetic] was a little girl –

MR. BROWN: Your daughter?

MR. ROSENTHAL: My daughter, yes. She wanted to give her things, and of course, I told her that – never to accept anything from strangers. And to her, she was a stranger. And she would never accept anything. But later on in years –

MR. BROWN: This is Ms. Morse?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Ms. Morse. Later on in years, we had – my staff had a birthday party, I think it was, or some kind of a party here at home. And the front-door bell rang, and in came a letter to be signed from a lawyer. Oh, a lawyer? I looked at it and opened it up and let out a scream. She left her money to eight people. She denied everything herself, and left money to eight people. Who were the eight people? They were all women. She left money to my wife, Ms. Lebrecht, and one of the neighbors, and one of the – two of the teachers at the museum, and then I don't know who else. And it was a sizable sum.

So we couldn't receive any of the money. We didn't know how much. We couldn't receive any of that money until her niece, who lived in California, died. And when she died, we received the amount.

MR. BROWN: Was she a fairly severe person?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes. Severe, but very gentle. In those days when we were in the art scholarship classes, they were given as free scholarships to go to the Museum School if you wanted to further your education. And I just missed out, and I didn't know why, but I learned why later on when I got into the teaching business there. Everything is politics, so it seems.

One was Misher Richter [phonetic], who was a cartoonist. And I believe he lives in France, if I'm not mistaken.

MR. BROWN: Provincetown.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Provincetown, now? Oh, I'd like to know just where. I'd love to see him. And another one was Hannah Papat [phonetic], who has passed away – never did anything with her art. And the third one was Allen Crite [phonetic]. And I was supposed to have gotten the scholarship, but then Ms. Morse met me at the door and said, "We gave the scholarship to Allen Crite and not to you for the simple reason, he would have difficulty getting along in years because of his color. And I have a golden penny that I want you to keep the rest of your life." It was a five-dollar gold piece. And I've got that. I used to carry it with me all the time. But with conditions the way they developed, I left it home. And I have the original envelope that the money came in.

MR. BROWN: Because she in fact very much thought you were one of the top people?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yeah. Yeah. But when I got into the Museum School, I got through there on half-scholarship entrance, and then full scholarships all the way through.

MR. BROWN: Um-hm. [Affirmative.] Well, now, Ms. Lebrecht you mentioned, she taught drawing and anatomy.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: But Ms. Morse taught design?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Design, as well as Ms. Brink, design.

MR. BROWN: Ms. Brink taught that.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Ms. Lebrecht also taught composition.

MR. BROWN: Was a lot of this work copying?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No. No.

MR. BROWN: It was still an element of the creative?

MR. ROSENTHAL: The creative. And then the only copying we did was of the cast, drawing of the cast. And we did copy Old Master prints. That, yes, with Ms. Lebrecht.

MR. BROWN: You mean – very carefully, see a line, say a deer, and then put it on your paper?

MR. ROSENTHAL: That's right. And we'd have reproductions that we got at the museum. And they'd make their own selections, or we would make our selection as to who we would take for a drawing, whether it was Paul Rubens, Peter Paul Rubens or any of the many very excellent reproductions that the museum had at that time.

MR. BROWN: Now, they also at that time had a core plaster cast.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Do they still have that?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No. They don't have it.

MR. BROWN: No, but I mean at that time?

MR. ROSENTHAL: At that time, they had –

MR. BROWN: Because that's where you did the drawings of the casts?

MR. ROSENTHAL: That's right. Right now, the music room and that whole area on the first floor, Huntington Avenue, as you go in on the right-hand side, after you walk up the couple of stairs, you have a couple of rooms there, now subdivided. That's where the casts – that was from floor all the way up to the roof. And they had reproductions of the Parthenon or [inaudible] frieze around the top there, and the heads of the horse –

MR. BROWN: Did you make your copies in pencil?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Charcoal.

MR. BROWN: Charcoal. And would you spend a lot of time at them, or would you quick-sketch it?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes. No, never quick sketches. Quick sketches were done in the classroom for a composition or because some of the kids would come from high school at various times. And we were supposed to be there from two to five. And sometimes some would leave high school and get there about a half-hour later. So we'd have sketching, free sketching of the figure. Someone would pose, and that's what would happen then. Then we would go on with whatever the teacher had planned for the day.

MR. BROWN: But for example, what the teacher had planned or probably in class you would do later in the afternoon?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes.

MR. BROWN: I see. And all the supplies were provided?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes, everything – paper, pencils, charcoal, paints. Everything was supplied, because that was run by the city. For being paid – the teachers were being paid by the city. And the area of workmanship was done – provided by the museum.

MR. BROWN: Were very many of your fellow students in these high school classes serious about becoming artists? Did you have any idea what it meant to be an artist?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Never.

MR. BROWN: Did any artists ever come around? Or did you get to know anyone?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No, nobody that we knew of.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Because we were green, so to speak, in that field.

MR. BROWN: Yeah. But at the settlement house, on the other hand, you had had that contact with Dudley Pratt.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Dudley Pratt and Anthony Debono [phonetic]. I remember going to Anthony's studio on Dartmouth Street, and he had a commission for some outfit there, doing a sailor – or a soldier. And he had a life-size, a relief. And right next to his studio was the trains that went through to Back Bay Station. Well, he was working in clay. And one day he came in there, and the whole thing slipped right down to the floor. Everything was gone.

MR. BROWN: From the vibration?

MR. ROSENTHAL: The vibration of the building when the trains came through. And that was when he got back one weekend and saw that. He was sick. He was sick.

MR. BROWN: So except for that, you hadn't really been to an artist's studio?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No, no, never had.

MR. BROWN: Would you in these high school years have gone to look at any art exhibitions?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No.

MR. BROWN: What about at the museum?

MR. ROSENTHAL: At the museum, the only place we were familiar with.

MR. BROWN: Yeah. You would go.

MR. ROSENTHAL: We'd go see the different exhibitions there.

MR. BROWN: Were the curators welcoming? Did you ever – do you recall meeting any of them when you were a high school student?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No. We were told who they were as they walked through. And that was it.

MR. BROWN: About how many were there of you in the class?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, there were quite a number. Quite a number, almost – I should guess – I should say well over 100.

MR. BROWN: Yeah?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yeah. There was quite a few in the class.

MR. BROWN: Did many of you talk about going on to do more work, go to art school?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No.

MR. BROWN: You didn't really talk about that?

MR. ROSENTHAL: We didn't – we were just doing the best that we possibly could in the short time that we had there.

MR. BROWN: And your regular schoolwork was very time-consuming?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes, oh, yes.

MR. BROWN: Where were you in high school?

MR. ROSENTHAL: I was at English High School.

MR. BROWN: One of the competitive high schools in the city?

MR. ROSENTHAL: That's right. That's right.

MR. BROWN: What were your particular interests there?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Getting an education. Getting an education.

MR. BROWN: And that meant what? [Inaudible] mathematics and literature?

MR. ROSENTHAL: English, math, science – all of those things, regular – civics.

MR. BROWN: Were you a good academic student?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes.

MR. BROWN: Did your parents put high standards on? Did they drive you to do very well?

MR. ROSENTHAL: They were very conscientious and asked us to do – they didn't force us. And of course, we wanted to achieve. And that we did. We achieved.

MR. BROWN: You felt that there was opportunity if you did do well?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, absolutely. The world was ours. We were young in those days.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. ROSENTHAL: And developing. And they always said, "You never can tell who would be president. You could be president someday." And everybody worked hard, worked hard. And there was no – to my knowledge – of absenteeism, the way it is today.

MR. BROWN: Well, then, in what – 1929, you went to the –

MR. ROSENTHAL: I graduated.

MR. BROWN: You graduated from –

MR. ROSENTHAL: High school. And then I entered into the Museum School at half-scholarship.

MR. BROWN: Was that at the end of the summer?

MR. ROSENTHAL: At the end of the summer.

MR. BROWN: On half-scholarship?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Half-scholarship. And at that time, 1930, Ms. Lebrecht asked me to assist her.

MR. BROWN: Oh, during your very first year?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yeah, yeah.

MR. BROWN: She must have valued your – she thought you had an ability to teach?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes. Yes.

MR. BROWN: Did you feel you had an ability to explain things?

MR. ROSENTHAL: I had no knowledge in those days. I don't know now.

MR. BROWN: She must have sensed it.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes.

MR. BROWN: Was she a pretty gifted teacher?

MR. ROSENTHAL: She was an excellent teacher, excellent teacher. I've got photos in there, some I think you have reproductions of. But I've got others in there that I'll show you a little bit later, after we get through with some of this. And you can see just what's what.

MR. BROWN: Would say she was the top teacher of the women who taught at the – or were they all quite good?

MR. ROSENTHAL: They were all excellent, all excellent. I couldn't say that she was tops. Although she was tops, I couldn't say that she'd lord it over the others. They were all excellent teachers.

MR. BROWN: How would she teach anatomy? How was that taught?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Drawing. She would be drawing up on the – a full-size figure with charcoal and coke and colored chalks. And we would reproduce on paper. We learned that that figure was seven-and-a-half heads tall, and the proportion – which to this day I made drawings and pass them out to my students there to sculpture so they would learn proportions.

MR. BROWN: She would draw, and then you would copy her drawings?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Copy her drawings.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. ROSENTHAL: And then when I was in art school, Philip Hale, Philip Leslie Hale taught us anatomy. And then when he died, Dr. – I want to say Harmer, from Harvard Medical School [Boston, MA], came over and taught us anatomy. So I had a good – an excellent foundation of anatomy, which has helped me all these years.

MR. BROWN: Did you have a pretty good idea of what the Museum School would be like? You must have had some idea, since you were next door to it, and in fact had classes in it on Mondays in high school.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Well, you just looked – I was green. I didn't really know. I wanted to study sculpture, primarily. My folks said no.

MR. BROWN: Why?

MR. ROSENTHAL: You wouldn't be able to make a living. So –

MR. BROWN: Well, what did they think you should do to make a living?

MR. ROSENTHAL: I said, well, I'll – they wanted me to become a doctor as well as my brother. And I said no, I don't want to. But to this day, I've regretted the fact that I didn't join and become a surgeon, with my knowledge of anatomy and everything.

MR. BROWN: Because your brother had gone on to be a doctor.

MR. ROSENTHAL: That's right.

MR. BROWN: So they really weren't too much behind this?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Behind sculpture. They consented my doing drawing and painting. That, yes.

MR. BROWN: Why, do you suppose?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Because I could make a living on the drawing and painting.

MR. BROWN: Perhaps as a teacher?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Both teacher and then doing commissions.

MR. BROWN: Yeah, yeah. Did they think also in terms of commercial art?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No. They didn't know anything about that sort of thing.

MR. BROWN: Yeah. Yeah. When you got to the Museum School, was it rather intimidating or what was it like? What is a very welcoming place?

MR. ROSENTHAL: It's hard to say. But I did my darnedest. Consequently, I got scholarships all the way through.

MR. BROWN: What would you do in the first year, if we can kind of go through the curriculum?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Well, they skipped our normal first year, because of what we had in the high school classes. And we went right into life drawing and painting. I'll never forget – and I've said this time and time again. And as I say, I was green. I never saw a naked woman in my life. And when I came in the first day, it was a life drawing class with a woman. And I was stunned. I couldn't – my hand was up on the drawing board with the charcoal for fully 15 minutes before I could put a stroke on the paper, the shock was so terrible. But then I got used to it. And –

MR. BROWN: And it became a subject that you could draw?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, sure.

MR. BROWN: Do you feel that life drawing is an exceptional way to acquire skill and express?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes, definitely. That, plus using your own self in the various positions that you want these people.

MR. BROWN: Do you mean making self-portraits?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Self-portraits, the figure in motion, thinking of Mibridge's [phonetic] drawing, the photographs there.

MR. BROWN: Yeah.

MR. ROSENTHAL: The animal in motion and the figure in motion against a squared-off background. Then you see what's happening directly below an area or horizontally what takes place. But here, if you take the position yourself, you have a feel of what is there.

MR. BROWN: You would do that. And what? You would look at yourself in a mirror?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No. Make a sketch. And you've seen the self-portrait that I did, on the mantle there.

MR. BROWN: Yes. So that would be a method that your teachers would encourage?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No. That's something that you'd develop yourself. They would encourage it if they knew, I'm sure.

MR. BROWN: But the sensing of anatomy, of the way the body works, there's nothing better than what you just described?

MR. ROSENTHAL: That's right. That's right. I know Philip Hale –

MR. BROWN: He was the principal teacher of drawing?

MR. ROSENTHAL: He was – in the beginning, yes.

MR. BROWN: Yeah.

MR. ROSENTHAL: And then I would go into sculpture for a minor. And we'd set up a head every afternoon and tear it down at the end of the afternoon. So that we'd get the feel of the neck and the head and the character of the person, without features. So you'd just set it up, tear it down.

MR. BROWN: This was in modeling?

MR. ROSENTHAL: In modeling, for one whole year we'd do that. And then now –

MR. BROWN: Did that seem tedious to you?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No, no.

MR. BROWN: This was under Hale?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Under Philip – no.

MR. BROWN: No?

MR. ROSENTHAL: That was under – hm. What was his name now? Clark was in charge of the high school classes, and he also taught at the Museum School, taught design and composition.

MR. BROWN: This is another one, yes. But the sculpture and the drawing – was Philip Hale, what he taught –

MR. ROSENTHAL: He taught just drawing and painting.

MR. BROWN: He worked closely with you? Would he come around every day?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No.

MR. BROWN: No?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Criticism was twice a week. And invariably, he'd spend most of the time with the young ladies in their life class because men's life class was separated from women's life classes.

MR. BROWN: The pupils weren't together?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yeah. And he'd spend most of the time there. And then about five minutes to one – because that class was from nine to one. And five minutes to one, he'd come in and go through – and 30 people in five minutes.

MR. BROWN: Oh, my.

MR. ROSENTHAL: And very often, Bernie Keyes would come up and help him out to finish off the class.

MR. BROWN: Keyes was another instructor?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes. He was one of the painters there, Bernard Keyes.

MR. BROWN: Did you male students ever object?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No.

MR. BROWN: No?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No. We learned quite a lot from Hale. As a matter of fact, I have a conte crayon that he gave me of a portrait.

MR. BROWN: Now, how would he go about it? Would he just set up something and then talk a bit?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Well, he would go around individually. And imagine, in five minutes, what you can get in five minutes. But it was very intense, very intense. And you're always listening to what he's saying to the others. And that very often helped, very often helped.

MR. BROWN: Um-hm. [Affirmative.] Were you students pretty competitive with each other?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes, always, always. Even in the high school classes, we were quite competitive. You're going for a scholarship. And if you're going for a scholarship, you want to do your darnedest.

MR. BROWN: Oh, yeah. The first year then, you've described. And in the second, you had, what, three more years? You had four years.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes. The next year, we'd go and do some painting. And unfortunately, Philip Hale died, and the whole school went to pot. Then we had –

MR. BROWN: He died when, in 1930, '31?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yeah. Then we had an Englishman, Guthrie and Burns, two Englishmen that were brought over, and they taught us drawing. And they taught things life-size, so that if you hold your paper up, you can just mark off the top of the head and the bottom for the feet, and you draw the person within that area. And that was rather interesting. But –

MR. BROWN: But something went out of the school with Philip Hale's death; is that right?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, the whole school went. The whole school.

MR. BROWN: He was a very dominating –

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes. He, and there was – Allen was the sculpture teacher. Then we had –

MR. BROWN: Frederick Allen?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yeah. Then we had Bosley. And Thompson was the beginning painting teacher.

MR. BROWN: Professor Thompson?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yeah. And then Bosley was the advanced.

MR. BROWN: So they were competent teachers?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

MR. BROWN: What was it about Hale that made him stand out?

MR. ROSENTHAL: He was a good draftsman, excellent draftsman, and a good painter. We had still life with him, if you wanted to go and join, with oil painting. And I for one, and some of the others – not everyone – took that course with him. And I remember Thompson and Bosley would walk by the room. And he said, "I'm teaching them wrong the right way." That was one of his remarks.

MR. BROWN: "Wrong the right way" – this is Hale?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Hale, Hale to them.

[Laughs.]

MR. BROWN: But evidently, he had been the most important figure there?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

MR. BROWN: Did you think of ever going to another art school once he died?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No. No. No, I was there. We never traveled. We were stationary. That was the school that we started in, and that's where we continued.

MR. BROWN: Um-hm. [Affirmative.] And how was it the last couple of years after he was gone?

MR. ROSENTHAL: It was terrific, terrific. Painting, drawing, and modeling.

MR. BROWN: Was a great deal of attention paid to media, mastering oil painting and – what other forms of painting did you do?

MR. ROSENTHAL: I did mostly oil painting, never did watercolor until after the later years when I took courses at Mass Art. But the oil painting wasn't taught the way I learned after I got out, when I received the Carnegie Fellowship.

MR. BROWN: At the end of the '30s.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes. That was in the '40s – '38.

MR. BROWN: How was it taught then at the Museum School?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Well, the instructors would kind of whisper in your ear how to mix the different shades, different colors there. And everything was so – I don't know – secretive. That bothered me always.

MR. BROWN: Because everyone was going to be told this?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Sure, eventually, somewhere.

MR. BROWN: Why do you suppose they did this?

MR. ROSENTHAL: I have no idea. Jealousy, I imagine, might have been part of the thing there.

MR. BROWN: Well, Hale was a better-known figure.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes.

MR. BROWN: And more secure. These men, it sounds as though they weren't – Keyes and Thompson.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Keyes was young. Thompson and Bosley were there. Bosley was the older one. I don't know just what. But I remember going to Hale's studio. And you see little patches all the way around the head. And he'd explain it this way: When you go into a store to buy a piece of material for something that you have at home, you wouldn't think of what the color was or the value of the color in relation to what you have in your hand right then. You'd have to match them up. So he'd do a portrait all the way around, matching up the background with the head. And then he'd work on the interior of the head.

He taught anatomy as well. He was terrific.

MR. BROWN: [Inaudible] studio in the Fenway, studio [inaudible]?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes. Ipswich Street, yes.

MR. BROWN: Was that a pretty interesting place?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, it was. Especially – it was the first time I ever went to an artist's studio.

MR. BROWN: Except for Debono's?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Well, that was in the South Bay Union. But this was in the real artist's studio.

MR. BROWN: What did you expect to see?

MR. ROSENTHAL: I didn't know.

MR. BROWN: What did you see?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Well, I saw a number of his paintings, some casts, drapery. I can't remember what else.

MR. BROWN: Did he stay there somewhat, too?

MR. ROSENTHAL: I have no idea. I have no idea. I know I have a former pupil who has a studio there now, and he also has living quarters there.

MR. BROWN: Yes. So you were also then continuing to help Ms. Lebrecht as her assistant?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes. I was her assistant from 1930 to '37. And then I was given my own class from '37 on.

MR. BROWN: You also, I think, have mentioned that during your time you were at the Museum School you began to take some courses at Boston University [Boston, MA].

MR. ROSENTHAL: Well, yes, I felt my education was lax, so I went to B.U. [Boston University] night school. In those days it was on the corner of Clarendon and Berkeley Street; that whole area was B.U., the College –

MR. BROWN: The Back Bay?

MR. ROSENTHAL: – Yes, the College of Business Administration.

MR. BROWN: Is that what you took?

MR. ROSENTHAL: I took English, for one thing, vocabulary building, for another. I wish I had bought stocks in those days because one of the classes I took was in finance. I had no money but I took the course anyway. And I felt I got a little more to say in my work.

MR. BROWN: You mean this was the Depression, too?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes, yes, 1929.

MR. BROWN: It was pretty stark, I mean, you better think of something practical.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Definitely. Matter of fact, our folks didn't know where the next piece of bread was coming from.

MR. BROWN: Their business did very poorly?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Well, in that time, we left Dover Street in 1925

MR. BROWN: And went to Dorchester?

MR. ROSENTHAL: And went to Dorchester. My father then got into first, a garage, keeping cars.

[END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE A]

MR. BROWN: They had a meat market, your father?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes. And the employee that he had would ring up sales and never give out the slips. And he stole everything and left my folks without a business, without anything.

MR. BROWN: And this was – by this time it was the Depression?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yeah. Then it was the Depression. That's when I say we didn't know when the next piece of bread was coming from.

MR. BROWN: You were living at home?

MR. ROSENTHAL: I was living at home. And to save a nickel, I'd take in those days – you'd take the streetcar on Bull Avenue and Talbot Avenue. And you'd ride for a nickel to Dudley Street, and from Dudley Street you'd walk to the museum.

MR. BROWN: You were making any money? You were helping Ms. Lebrecht. Were you paid for that?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Not the first couple of years. Then I was given 15 dollars for the entire year, for

the entire year.

MR. BROWN: Gee, that was – why such a low amount, do you suppose?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Times were tough. And money was scarce.

MR. BROWN: So being the Depression, did sometimes your thoughts of being an artist waver?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No.

MR. BROWN: No? Maybe I'd better go into business?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No, never did, never did. But Ms. Lebrecht had me – thought that I was good enough as a teacher that I should continue on with that.

MR. BROWN: Well, then you did continue at Boston University. You received a master's degree.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Well, then, after I got out of art school, I got my bachelor's at B.U., and they allowed me the credits, 60-hour credits, towards my degree. And then I went a full year and got my master's in 1936.

MR. BROWN: And that was in art education?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Art education. And that was in education, not art education, because I had my background in art. And –

MR. BROWN: Was that of interest to you, or was this a way to get a job?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes. No, no. That was of interest to me. And the professor there in education there told me afterwards that he took my exam to build up his entire next year's course.

MR. BROWN: You mean your responses?

MR. ROSENTHAL: My responses. Because you see, at that time I was already beginning to teach at the museum with Ms. Lebrecht. So I had some knowledge of teaching.

MR. BROWN: Did you find the art education work at B.U. interesting?

MR. ROSENTHAL: To me, it was. To me, it was. To others, I wouldn't say, I wouldn't know.

MR. BROWN: What did it consist of? What training were you given in that year you were there?

MR. ROSENTHAL: History, the background of education, for one thing. I really don't recall. I don't recall. You'd have Horris Mann, I can remember that situation there.

MR. BROWN: Horris Mann, you mean as an example?

MR. ROSENTHAL: As an example.

MR. BROWN: Yeah. Well, then the following year, in '37 or something like that, you began teaching?

MR. ROSENTHAL: I began, yeah.

MR. BROWN: In the Boston Public Schools?

MR. ROSENTHAL: In 1936, I was appointed art teacher in the Boston Public Schools.

MR. BROWN: Now, would that be at the high school level?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No. That was grammar school. I was asked by Helen Cleaves, who was the director of the art department, to give a course in sculpture to the children in the fifth grades. In those days, the fifth grades, the girls would have a class in homemaking or cooking or something of that sort – no, sewing, it was. And the boys would have cutouts and papers. So she thought that instead of having the cutouts on papers, to give them a course in sculpture. So I developed a course in sculpture with them.

MR. BROWN: How did that work out?

MR. ROSENTHAL: It went beautifully. I don't have pictures. I've got them at the museum. I'll bring them home so that you'll be able to see them next time.

MR. BROWN: And these boys really responded?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. They were terrific. In the 36 weeks of schooling, we had some fantastic work, fantastic work. It wasn't professional, but it was what their inner self gave.

MR. BROWN: What materials did they work with?

MR. ROSENTHAL: We worked with plasticine, Harbutt's plasticine.

MR. BROWN: Harbutt's?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Harbutt, H-A-R-B-U-double T, apostrophe S. That's a funny story I learnt about that. It was mined – the stuff was mined in this country, sent to England, and manufactured into this plasticine, and sent back to the United States as a finished product. They had a lot of stuff there that was left by some teacher there in the various schools. I had eight schools that I used to go to.

MR. BROWN: Oh, you moved to different grammar schools?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes, yes. I went to – Mondays I went to the south – the Elliot School.

MR. BROWN: Where was that?

MR. ROSENTHAL: That's in the north end. Tuesday I was over at the Peter Faneuil; that was in the west end. Wednesday I was at the South Boston. Thursday I was in the area where the – near Springfield, near Northampton Station. And then on Friday I was in South Boston, another area of South Boston.

And in those days, Ms. Cleaves wanted me to teach them sculpture. So I developed a course in sculpture. And I'd start off by bringing in some pictures, clippings that I got from the museum, of different sculptures. And I would – because in those days, in five seconds they're all through with whatever they want to do.

MR. BROWN: The pupils are?

MR. ROSENTHAL: The pupils, yeah. So I'd have – I'd give them a course, and I'd say, "You're going to be drawing, doing either an elephant or a cat." And I'll start asking them, "What's the difference between the elephant and the cat?" Those are animals that they should have known about. And I'd get response from different parts of the room. And then I'd have them work. And as soon as I saw that they were tired and all through with their work, I'd go into the history of art.

So they'd – I'd give out materials, say, for five minutes. Fifteen minutes for their work, and then the rest of the time – because it was one hour's time –

MR. BROWN: Yeah.

MR. ROSENTHAL: I would give them a course in the history of art.

MR. BROWN: You mean you would talk?

MR. ROSENTHAL: I would talk the rest of the time.

MR. BROWN: These were 10 year olds or so. Did they enjoy that?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yeah, yeah. Oh, yes, oh, yes. And then as time went on, my talking was diminished, shortened, and their work-hour was lengthened. So by the end of the time there, I'd given them different subjects. And they did fantastically well.

MR. BROWN: At first, though, they were impatient?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes.

MR. BROWN: Eventually, they could spend almost an hour modeling?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, or more. More. Towards the end there, they wanted to stay more than the hour that they had for work.

MR. BROWN: Would they have this with you for one whole year?

MR. ROSENTHAL: They would have just the fifth grades. And then prior to that, Ms. Cleaves wanted me to give the supervisors a course in sculpture. So I had a friend, Helen Bulis-Lesnick [phonetic], who had a studio in a part of Mass Avenue, in Boylston Street. And she allowed me to have the class up there. So I had long boards on a table there, with the materials that they would be using. And I gave a course to them.

MR. BROWN: Were they art school trained supervisors?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes, oh, yes. They were.

MR. BROWN: They had been to art school?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, they had been to art school.

MR. BROWN: But they simply perhaps hadn't had sculpture?

MR. ROSENTHAL: They had never had sculpture. Some, some did. A little messing around, but never did anything to any extent.

MR. BROWN: So your first year, then, you were teaching very young children?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes, yes.

MR. BROWN: And then did you gradually move to teach older ones in the public school?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Then attendance dropped so that I asked Ms. Cleaves if I could condense the program in the different schools so I'd have the afternoons free and that I would go around to the junior high schools and senior high schools and give demonstrations for them, and have the teachers who were art-trained, to carry on after I left. She was thrilled with the idea. And that's just what happened.

MR. BROWN: Why had attendance dropped in the fifth grade? Were there fewer pupils?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Fewer pupils, fewer pupils.

MR. BROWN: At the end of the '30s, 1930s. So you began doing this in the junior high schools?

MR. ROSENTHAL: In 37 junior high schools and what-not.

MR. BROWN: So there you worked with their – they had regular art teachers?

MR. ROSENTHAL: That's right. And they'd carry on. Later on, as I – after I got into the art department, I was able to go to the different schools with the ceramic program and would carry that out, a little bit later.

MR. BROWN: I'll ask you this. Do you feel you were a pretty quiet teacher or forceful? You said you talked, you gave lectures, even to the fifth graders. I mean in these early days.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: You didn't go around whispering?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, no. Oh, no. I'd be up in the front of the class there with different illustrations of Old Master drawings and paintings, and explain to them – or sculptures – and explain to them what they saw in those paintings there.

MR. BROWN: Did you attempt to introduce them to modern art, to anything like that? Had you had some exposure to abstract art or –

MR. ROSENTHAL: No. I had very little exposure, practically none. Although right now I do know a good deal.

MR. BROWN: There wasn't much to be seen in Boston at that time.

MR. ROSENTHAL: No, no, no. There was nothing to be seen in those days.

MR. BROWN: And I suppose Cezanne would be about the most advanced. Did you ever see him?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Van Gogh.

MR. BROWN: Van Gogh.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yeah, and Cezanne also.

MR. BROWN: Nothing else? You didn't see Picasso or –

MR. ROSENTHAL: No. Oh, definitely not. He was a bad word in those days.

MR. BROWN: Oh, I see. Really? You mean your teachers spoke of him?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yeah. Yeah. Didn't speak of him at all.

MR. BROWN: Would you – I just want to digress. Would you go to art exhibitions of some of the dealers in Boston, by the '30s, as a young adult?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

MR. BROWN: Can you recall some of those you may have gone to see?

MR. ROSENTHAL: I don't remember. I don't remember. But old modern art is a matter of design, primarily.

MR. BROWN: You'd had excellent foundation in that.

MR. ROSENTHAL: That's right.

MR. BROWN: Beginning with your high school.

MR. ROSENTHAL: That's right.

MR. BROWN: At the museum.

MR. ROSENTHAL: That's why I appreciate the things I did then. Henry Morse things, or people of that caliber. Calder with his mobiles, stabiles

MR. BROWN: Yes. I was going to ask next, you mentioned briefly, ceramics. But in the summer of 1940, I believe, you went to –

MR. ROSENTHAL: Wait. Hold off a minute.

[Audio break.]

MR. BROWN: Sorry. Maybe you want to talk about your Carnegie Fellowship?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, that will come along there.

MR. BROWN: Okay.

MR. ROSENTHAL: From 1937 to 1965, I taught university extension classes. And these classes were held at different institutions. For instance, one was at MIT. One was at Harvard. And one was at Teachers College.

MR. BROWN: And Teachers College was where?

MR. ROSENTHAL: That was where what now is Mass College of Art [Massachusetts College of Art and Design, Boston, MA] on the corner of Longwood and Huntington.

MR. BROWN: Oh, yes. And these extension classes were after hours?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Once a week. After hours, once a week, and I'd be going to the different places, different years. Harvard one year, MIT another year, then Teachers College. And I got disgusted with going around to different places and getting tickets on my car for parking. And I said, well, why not bring these classes into the museum? And at that time I brought in the adult classes, which are now the adult classes at the museum. And they developed from that.

MR. BROWN: You began with people, say, from Harvard Extension School [Cambridge, MA]. You brought them to the museum?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Museum – Harvard and MIT.

MR. BROWN: Why did these schools have extension schools?

MR. ROSENTHAL: This was run by the state. These are Massachusetts state extension classes.

MR. BROWN: Oh, I see. For example, Harvard administered them or something?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No, no. The state apparently had access to a room in the building one year. The next year they'd have a room at Teachers College, the next year a room at MIT. And that's where I'd be going. So instead of going around in circles, I brought them all into the museum.

MR. BROWN: And that's where you kept them for many years, through the 1960s?

MR. ROSENTHAL: They're still now, still now.

MR. BROWN: But I mean, you – did you sort of set these up, or were you one of the first teachers?

MR. ROSENTHAL: I was the first teacher they had because I brought them all in.

MR. BROWN: No, I mean at the other places. Had this program been going on before 1930?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No. They had pottery, yes, but not sculpture. I found a torn-out page in one of the catalogs there that I have in that green folder that advertised the class there.

MR. BROWN: What were you teaching in these extension schools?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Sculpture.

MR. BROWN: Sculpture?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes.

MR. BROWN: It looked like sculpture was going to be your –

MR. ROSENTHAL: My field.

MR. BROWN: – field. And then in – can we maybe jump in for a minute, when you went to Alfred University [Alfred, NY] in the summer of 1940, that was to study ceramics?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Well, yes. That's a little bit later. In 1938, I received the Carnegie Fellowship to study at Harvard at the Fogg Museum [Harvard Art Museums, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA].

MR. BROWN: Was this something you applied for?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No. This was something that I was – Ms. Cleaves apparently nominated me for that. I was one of twenty-two in the United States to receive that Andrew Carnegie fellowship.

MR. BROWN: And this was – what was its purpose?

MR. ROSENTHAL: To study the techniques of the Old Masters. See, my field was actually painting. So I studied the techniques with Dr. Sauers [phonetic], who was our instructor. And I did the egg emulsion and also egg painting, tempura painting. And I have the tempura painting, but the Fogg Museum kept my – Dr. Sauers kept my emulsion painting there.

MR. BROWN: So you were picked; you didn't apply for this?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No, I didn't apply for it. I didn't know anything about it.

MR. BROWN: Did Ms. Cleaves think that it would be a good thing?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yeah. Yeah.

MR. BROWN: So that it would equip you to teach – help you to teach painting?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Painting, sure.

MR. BROWN: You would have had – would you have had some instruction at the Museum School in egg emulsion and some of these old –

MR. ROSENTHAL: No. No. All we had was oil painting.

MR. BROWN: Oil painting.

MR. ROSENTHAL: But not the way they taught it at Fogg. Fogg, we used Chinino Gleeny's [phonetic] book on painting, using the ground colors, mixing your own pigment. And we'd paint that way, tempura as well as the egg, gold leaf, and what-not.

MR. BROWN: Was this a full-time program at the Fogg Museum?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No. This was a summer program. Andrew Carnegie paid for all our expenses – room and board. We stayed at Harvard there at Wigglesworth G [phonetic]. I've got pictures of that and the activities that took place up there, because we were four in a room, a big room.

MR. BROWN: What was the background of the other fellows?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Some were connected with art institutes. Some were artists. And there were men, women as well. And we had a glorious time and a very fruitful time. We really enjoyed it. At least, I did, and I'm sure the others.

MR. BROWN: You said, I think, also to me, that among other things, you learned to compare authentic work with forgeries.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Right. At Fogg Museum, they had a painting there, a tempura painting, of a Christ figure, where they had taken out a section of a thigh and forged an Old Master painting using the same tempura technique, and then repainted that thigh in the same manner, and had it as a

forgery for found painting of the real artist. I don't know whether it's still up there in the gallery upstairs in the classroom.

MR. BROWN: But somebody had done a forgery and they used it for instruction.

MR. ROSENTHAL: That's right.

MR. BROWN: Therefore, you'd analyze very carefully the brushwork and the medium?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes, yes, yes.

MR. BROWN: Was it fairly authentic?

MR. ROSENTHAL: That's right.

MR. BROWN: But it was a forgery.

MR. ROSENTHAL: That's right. Boy, that was terrific training, terrific training.

MR. BROWN: Yeah.

MR. ROSENTHAL: In copying those techniques and then teaching to paint.

MR. BROWN: And then in the public schools you were teaching painting as well as sculpture?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes. I was teaching watercolor.

MR. BROWN: Watercolor?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Watercolor. And I didn't know a hell of a lot about watercolor painting until I took more courses at MIT – I mean, at Teachers College there. And I think on the stairway is one of the paintings that I have of when I was there then. And then the oil painting of my mother and the old lady, that's in the other room. Then –

MR. BROWN: Were you married at this time?

MR. ROSENTHAL: I was married in 1941. In '40 I went to Alfred, studying ceramics for a half a year.

MR. BROWN: Was that suggested by Ms. Cleaves?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No, no. I was working with a friend that was connected with the Paul Revere Pottery. And I have some of their pottery here.

MR. BROWN: And this friend was?

MR. ROSENTHAL: A woman.

MR. BROWN: A woman.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes. Lily Shapiro, she was one of the workers over there. And she's gone now.

MR. BROWN: And this was a – you were working with her?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No. No. She got me interested in it. I had a studio on Causeway Street,

downstairs.

MR. BROWN: That was in the north end?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yeah, west end – well, west end of north, yeah. And Lily Shapiro's brother had a soda and liquor store up above, two doors down. But he owned the building. And we had the studio – or I had a studio downstairs, and we had not only pottery, but sculpture.

And the students that I had coming there would say, "When I came to class, it's as if I left my burden of woes on the top of the stairs, and then I came down into another field, and I had a hell of a good time. And when I went home, I just picked up my burden and went on when I got upstairs."

MR. BROWN: So you were teaching there?

MR. ROSENTHAL: I was teaching, yes.

MR. BROWN: Sculpture and ceramics?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Sculpture and ceramics. And Lily Shapiro was the one who suggested that I go to Alfred.

MR. BROWN: What was it like in 1940?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Alfred was wonderful. It was wonderful. It was off in the area where – it was country. And they had – we'd go out into the swamps there and get reeds to finish off whatever it was that we made in plaster on the wheel.

MR. BROWN: You mean to make – to incise the –

MR. ROSENTHAL: No. The reeds we used for polishing, like sandpaper. So as the plaster spun around the wheel, you'd hold the wet reed, and it would smooth it right down and give it a sort of a satin finish.

MR. BROWN: Were there many other pupils there?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes.

MR. BROWN: And this was one of the most prestigious schools of pottery in the country at that time.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, definitely. That's right. That's right.

MR. BROWN: Who was your teacher? Did you have various teachers?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Harter was the one that was our teacher.

MR. BROWN: Charles Harter?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Charlie Harter. Somewheres I have pictures.

MR. BROWN: What was he like?

MR. ROSENTHAL: He was a wiry, playful, wonderful guy. And he'd work on something on the

wheel, with a chunk of clay, and build a pot that his hands would – his arm would hardly get into it – in no time. In those days we had every mixture. There was one black fellow whose name was Isaac Hathaway. And he was a black, and everybody shunned him except Rosenthal.

MR. BROWN: People did then, didn't they?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes. I took him into the group. And we had – they were all sort of grouped. And I took him into the group. And he said, you know, he would never forget me. He said, "My name is Isaac Hathaway. And Isaac hath a way." And the first coin that the United States ever made, done by a black person, was struck off the mint. He gave it to my daughter. We have a coin.

MR. BROWN: Is it by him?

MR. ROSENTHAL: By him.

MR. BROWN: Which was that coin?

MR. ROSENTHAL: I don't remember – I've got it in a vault – whether it was a dollar or a half-a-dollar. And then he did a self-portrait relief that I've got here in the house, also.

MR. BROWN: But most of the pupils were pretty gifted, weren't they?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes.

MR. BROWN: But you were unusually liberal then, if you befriended this black?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes. Oh, listen. Black meant nothing to me – color meant nothing to me. Still doesn't. And you'll see in one of the –

MR. BROWN: That was unusual for that time, I guess, was it? It was a spin-off from where you grew up.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Where I grew up, that was unusual. That was unusual. I've got – I can show you the book, where –

MR. BROWN: Yeah. Well, were you thinking of maybe becoming a potter?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No. Sculpture was my field, not pottery.

MR. BROWN: What did you do by the time at Alfred's? What did you try to do?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Pottery, yeah.

MR. BROWN: On the wheel?

MR. ROSENTHAL: On the wheel, working on the wheel. So I learned how to do it, mixing glazes, firing. Those are the things that I learned, primarily. And when I was in the pottery supply business, all my formulas that I developed over at Alfred were used in there. So that when you look at a piece of pottery, you can pretty much tell what made that particular color.

MR. BROWN: Well, you began that right about that time in the '40s as a pottery supply company?

MR. ROSENTHAL: That's right.

MR. BROWN: With a partner.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes.

MR. BROWN: You mentioned –

MR. ROSENTHAL: Herb Kahn.

MR. BROWN: Herbert Kahn.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And that was called what?

MR. ROSENTHAL: The Roka Pottery Supplies.

MR. BROWN: R-O–

MR. ROSENTHAL: R-O stood for Rosenthal, K-A stood for Kahn. And we developed, sold to – I think our first customer was the YWCA, where we sold clay because we had machinery there. We were on C Street in South Boston. We had improvised machinery so that we'd mix up 500 pounds of clay to send out to them, then developed under-glazes and glazes that they'd purchase from us.

MR. BROWN: And were your early customers then school programs and things like that?

MR. ROSENTHAL: School programs, institutions, individuals.

MR. BROWN: Did you fairly quickly become known throughout the country?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, throughout this area. We were the first in this area in ceramics supplies.

MR. BROWN: You spoke how that you and Herb Kahn developed – what sort of thing was it?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Well, the first 500 pounds we had to mix from powder with the water by hand. And then, as well, boy, what a hell of a job that was.

MR. BROWN: You had to mix it, and then –

MR. ROSENTHAL: And then pound it and wedge it.

MR. BROWN: Yeah, yeah.

MR. ROSENTHAL: And we sent that off. But then we got a secondhand machine that bread makers used to make their dough for bread. And that would go round and round with a blade inside that machine, that drum. And that would mix the water with the powdered clay. And that's the way we got that – the next orders out.

I'll never forget that place there. South Boston was at that time the area where food would be coming in from the different parts of the country. And it was a train area.

MR. BROWN: Railroad trains?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes. And the rats were tremendous. They were dog-sized, not cat-sized.

They were big. We used to have classes in that shop there on Tuesday nights. We'd have people who would be working with their different potteries or different sculptures that would come in to glaze. And one day in the summertime, we kept the doors open. There was a double door in front. And one door was left open, the other door was shut. And we had seen our food eaten. So we finally kept things in tin boxes so they wouldn't get at it.

But one day, this rat came along, and I saw it. And it was rolling up from the poisons that we had spread on there. So I didn't want them to see it, so I gave it a kick to get it through the door. And I missed the open door, and it hit against the closed door. And everybody looked up and wanted to know what it was. "Oh, nothing." And the thing got out afterwards.

[They laugh.]

MR. BROWN: Oh, my. These were private pupils?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Private pupils.

MR. BROWN: What was Herb Kahn's background? Was he also –

MR. ROSENTHAL: No. His wife was a former pupil of mine.

MR. BROWN: I see.

MR. ROSENTHAL: But Herb was a terrific guy, very business-minded. His wife turned out to be sneaky. So the business, as far as I was concerned, went to pot. I lost everything that was there. And I was out of it.

MR. BROWN: How long did you stick with it?

MR. ROSENTHAL: A couple of years. A couple of years. I'd come in on weekends to fire, stay there, and then go Monday into school.

MR. BROWN: The company, the name continued?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yeah.

MR. BROWN: I believe it still does.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes.

MR. BROWN: In World War II, briefly, were you drafted or anything of that sort?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No. My wife –

MR. BROWN: You'd married in '41.

MR. ROSENTHAL: I was married in '41. My wife had a fungus in her hands, and the baby, Lila, was born in '43. And she couldn't take care of the baby. So I was exempt from – because I had to bathe her and care for her, feed her and everything.

MR. BROWN: Now, your wife was a musician?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yeah, pianist.

MR. BROWN: This was back in the '30s [inaudible] I gather she worked in dance programs as well?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

MR. BROWN: In Boston?

MR. ROSENTHAL: That's right. And you have a catalog there of –

MR. BROWN: There were even government programs?

MR. ROSENTHAL: The PWA [Public Works Administration].

MR. BROWN: Was she a native of Boston as well?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes, oh, yes.

MR. BROWN: And what was her name? Irene?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Irene Epstein. She was born in Charlestown. She's a townie. And she had a sister, or still has a sister. And she had a younger brother. Both of those were younger. And when her mother died in 1925, she assumed the role of mother. Her father never married – a wonderful guy.

[Audio break.]

MR. BROWN: This is the second interview with Ralph Rosenthal. This is April 7, 1997, the second interview with Ralph Rosenthal, at his home in Brookline, Massachusetts. And, Mr. Rosenthal, I thought we'd talk this time a little bit more about your teaching. We talked about your early days at the MFA School, the Saturday classes and the week classes for schoolchildren. And we've also talked about the beginnings of your teaching in the Boston Public School.

Are there some other details, say, before World War II, some of your early things?

MR. ROSENTHAL: I was in New Jersey at the time, vacationing with my late brother and mother.

MR. BROWN: About when was this?

MR. ROSENTHAL: This was, oh, back in the early '30s, mid-30s. I don't recall exactly when. But I got a special-delivery letter from Helen Cleaves, who was the director of the art department in Boston, to come – if I was willing to come to teach sculpture to an all-boys school or all-boys schools. And I replied and said that I'm interested. And I came along. She said that I'd be only doing substitute work until I received my examination and certification. So I said that was all right. In those days we got only five dollars a day, and when we worked. If school was called off, no pay.

So the all-boys schools were to be taught sculpture, whereas the girls in the different schools had sewing and cooking.

MR. BROWN: Very different.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes. In the previous years, they just sculpture – the boys had cut-paper things out of whatever they drew. And I don't remember just what it was.

MR. BROWN: You got them into modeling and art.

MR. ROSENTHAL: I got them into modeling. I have some beautiful pictures of some of the things that I'll show you a little bit later on.

MR. BROWN: You then towards the end of that decade – that was about '37, I think.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes. That's when I was appointed, in 1937.

MR. BROWN: And you took some courses, watercolor courses?

MR. ROSENTHAL: I did, at the Mass College of Art.

MR. BROWN: Why did you do that? Were you [inaudible] watercolors?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Well, I didn't do any, to any extent, watercoloring.

MR. BROWN: Yeah.

MR. ROSENTHAL: And I was going to be teaching it.

MR. BROWN: So you were going to be teaching it.

MR. ROSENTHAL: So I knew that I had to get more information and more advancement, as far as that was concerned. Enrollment dropped in the public schools in the fifth grades. I had originally eight schools that I took care of, as a regular, because I traveled each day, and sometimes two schools in one day.

MR. BROWN: People tended to leave school after the fifth grade?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Well, no, not necessarily. I think our judge there started in with the – getting the different schools, the blacks integrated in with the whites, and then the whites leaving Boston.

MR. BROWN: Yeah.

MR. ROSENTHAL: And I think that was the first downfall of the city.

MR. BROWN: Well, you're speaking much later now.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: Way after World War II.

MR. ROSENTHAL: But here, I don't recall exactly why the numbers dropped. But I asked Ms. Cleaves if I could combine the schools so that I could go out and give demonstrations to the junior and senior high schools and grammar schools and what-not. So she thought it was an excellent idea and allowed me to do that. So I had many schools that I used to go to, and I don't recall now the exact number. But there were quite a few.

MR. BROWN: And what would you do?

MR. ROSENTHAL: I would demonstrate, and not only demonstrate, but suggest to the teachers what to do after I left. So they would carry on a sculptural program there to some extent. Then when she left, she left a note to whoever was to follow to have me, if possible, as one of the supervisors in sculpture for the entire city.

MR. BROWN: This is Ms. Cleaves?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Ms. Cleaves, Helen, when she left.

MR. BROWN: Was that still before World War II?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes. And then in came Casimir Shea, and of course nothing was done as far as that was concerned. That was her suggestion.

MR. BROWN: How do you spell that?

MR. ROSENTHAL: C-A-S-I-M-I-R. He was the new director.

MR. BROWN: Casimir, and his last name?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Shea, S-H-E-A. And –

MR. BROWN: In your own growth, you said that since 1939 you were named a master craftsman?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Master Craftsman of the –

MR. BROWN: Society of Arts and Crafts in Boston.

MR. ROSENTHAL: That's right.

MR. BROWN: Now, what does that signify? Had you shown things?

MR. ROSENTHAL: I had shown things up for sale. And they sold things for me. And also, ceramics as well – and I have some pictures later on in 1941. Oh, 1940, I had a Carnegie Fellowship.

MR. BROWN: Right. You mentioned that.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes. And then in 1941, before I got married, I went to Alfred University to carry on with ceramics.

MR. BROWN: When you became a Master Craftsman in '39, what did you submit to them to get that?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Well, some sculpture, mostly.

MR. BROWN: Sculpture, um-hm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ROSENTHAL: Because I didn't do too much pottery at that particular time. I did much more pottery when I went to Alfred, using the wheel and what-not.

MR. BROWN: Now, continuing on your teaching, after teaching elementary school, you then went to the high schools?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes. When Casimir Shea was the one who insisted that I take the exam for the high school, and I taught the list, and went in to teach in the high school.

MR. BROWN: What high school was that?

MR. ROSENTHAL: It was the High School of Commerce [Springfield, MA].

MR. BROWN: Now, what kind of a school was that?

MR. ROSENTHAL: It was a more – well, it had to do more with taxes and that sort of thing there. But it was a general academic school. All of the high schools were. But they specialized a little bit more on business. And I was there, and I taught art in that particular school. When that school closed up, they transferred me to Technical High School [Boston, MA].

MR. BROWN: In Boston?

MR. ROSENTHAL: In Boston. And there I had an art program, and drafting as well.

MR. BROWN: That was in the 1950s, you told me.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: Yeah. Now, what about the students at the Technical High School? Were they going to go on and, what, be draftsmen?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Well, some of them, yes, draftsmen and other things of that sort.

MR. BROWN: And how did you compare them, say, to – well, let's say with you as an artist? What was their attitude or approach to art?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Well, I had to redesign the entire art class, art program there to what I was capable of doing. They wanted me to teach drafting, and I knew nothing about drafting. So I took courses over at MIT in drafting there. And then I was able to do that. The teacher – the head of the department said, "All you've got to do is be one step ahead of them, and you'll be all right." But I was in tears – actually in tears, because I didn't know anything about it. And how can you teach something when you know nothing about it?

So I went to MIT and took a number of courses there and was able to do a good job with that. And then not only that – drafting, I turned it into an art program as well as a drafting program.

MR. BROWN: You mean based partly on mechanical drawing?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes. But not only that, but the lettering and things of that sort that would be of use to them in later life.

And then when he retired –

MR. BROWN: And now we're talking about Technical High School?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes. And then when Casimir Shea retired, Elizabeth Gilligan came in as the director of the art department. A number of us sent in resumes and things of that sort that would enable us to go for that – take exams of that particular – and I was one of them.

MR. BROWN: What was the exam for?

MR. ROSENTHAL: To become director of the art department.

MR. BROWN: [Inaudible.]

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes. And I came in, I think it was third. And I didn't top the list next time. Then

when she came in, then I was there teaching at Technical High School. And then one day the telephone rang in the classroom, and the headmaster said to me, "I see there's an exam coming up for supervisor [inaudible]. I want you to take the exam." I said to him, "I'm not interested. I'm interested in teaching." He said, "I want you to take the exam. And in your free period, come down to the office. I want to talk to you."

So I came down to the office. And he made me take the exam, and I topped the list. He said, "The only reason I'm asking you to do this is because you're undoubtedly the only one who ever received A-plusses in your teaching throughout your entire year. And I want you to take the exam so that you'll be able to go on further."

MR. BROWN: He helped you to make it through.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, all teachers – yeah. All teachers are rated as far as their teaching is concerned.

MR. BROWN: This was 1966, you said, about that time?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yeah. That's when I was appointed as – I took the exams, got listed again.

MR. BROWN: Did you mind being supervisor?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No, no. I had so much responsibility. I had a dozen schools that I had to supervise.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Not only showing them and helping whatever help was needed. And that was one of the things. Then a bunch of new schools were being built, and I was on the construction of all the new schools and all the art departments there. I had to outfit every one of the new schools. And that in itself was a job.

MR. BROWN: I'll bet. New equipment?

MR. ROSENTHAL: New equipment, cameras, what-not.

MR. BROWN: So in the beginning you did photography?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes. Photography, ceramics. I was also involved with ceramics for the entire city. I was in the pottery supply business back in the early '40s.

MR. BROWN: Yeah, you mentioned Roka.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yeah, the Roka Pottery Supply. And that was an outgrowth from Alfred University.

MR. BROWN: Where you studied in 1941.

MR. ROSENTHAL: And the fellow that was with me that was a friend of mine, and his wife was a former student.

MR. BROWN: His name was?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Kahn.

MR. BROWN: What was his first name?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Herbert Kahn.

MR. BROWN: Herbert Kahn.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Herbert Kahn.

MR. BROWN: You knew a good deal about –

[END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE B]

MR. BROWN: At Roka.

MR. ROSENTHAL: The R-O stood for Rosenthal, and the K-A stood for Kahn. That's how we got the name Roka. And in the beginning, we had no equipment, just the chemicals and clays. And we had to mix up clay by hand. The first order that we had in mixing clay was from the YWCA for 500 pounds. And we had to mix it by hand.

MR. BROWN: Yeah, you mentioned that earlier.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Our fingernails were worn down from mixing the clay. But then we got some equipment, making bread secondhand, because we had very little money, if we had any money at all. And we had that machine there, and made clay that way, mixing it.

The glazes, I had some of my glazes. And one of the customers came in one day and had some Bennington ware that he would like to have reproduced. So I said, "I'd reproduce them, but not under the name Bennington. It has to have your name on the bottom of these containers, and we'll scratch it in. And I'll do that." So he agreed.

And fortunately, one of the glazes that I had fitted and was exactly a reproduction of Bennington. And I produced these things there, and I'll show you a little of them. I have them here. And they were exact size, because I had to reduce them, figuring out reduction and drying of the pieces, the ware, and then the firing and what it would come to. And I figured that out so that they're exact size and container-wise. And the glaze –

MR. BROWN: Fortunately, you had a good technical instruction at Alfred, didn't you?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes, yes, as far as glazing was concerned there. And I have those pictures of Harter in there –

MR. BROWN: Charles Harter.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Charlie Harter.

MR. BROWN: Yeah, your teacher. So by the time you were supervisor, then, that was part of it.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: What about the – you said all the other art teachers had gone to art school. Did some of them have very decided ways of doing things?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Right, right.

MR. BROWN: Did you have to try to take advantage of their strengths and weaknesses?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Exactly. Being a supervisor, you had to do that.

MR. BROWN: Yeah. You had to be quite a diplomat?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yeah. To say the least, to say the least. And that's what happened over the years, teaching there. And I was also involved – during all of this time, I had the Saturday classes that I conducted. And then –

MR. BROWN: At the Museum of Fine Arts?

MR. ROSENTHAL: At the museum. And then I had the high school classes, also, that I was teaching, the art scholarship classes with Ms. Lebrecht. And then not only that, I was teaching night school. Night school, I was teaching watercolor and drawing.

MR. BROWN: Where was the night school?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Rosendale High, Rosendale Evening High.

MR. BROWN: So you were supervisor of art in public schools. You taught the high school kids Saturday classes. You taught during the week at the museum.

MR. ROSENTHAL: I taught six days a week and –

MR. BROWN: And you also had night classes.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yeah. I taught six days a week and five nights. And I was exhausted at the end of the week. But Lila now says, "I don't know how you ever found time to do all that you had done." I had the garden, I did the cooking, the canning, and photography was one of my hobbies. And it all filled in to the little spaces that I had. There are 24 hours a day, so you sleep a little bit less.

MR. BROWN: You were with the public schools then until 1976. You retired?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes. I retired in '76. And in '76, I still had the museum. And I brought in the adult classes that I had going around to – one year it was at MIT, and another year it was over at Harvard, another year it was over at Teachers College. So I brought those classes into the museum. And that was the start of the museum adult classes.

MR. BROWN: They started out as state sponsored?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes. The university extension classes were state sponsored. So now the program is adult classes. And Lila had the beginning there, the high school classes, as well as the adults.

MR. BROWN: Well, now, your daughter Lila has gone through art school?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes. She went to B.U. school of art.

MR. BROWN: When did she start working on the classes at the museum? In the 1960s or '70s?

MR. ROSENTHAL: You'll have to ask her. I don't recall. I don't recall.

MR. BROWN: Were there any of the earlier things you wanted to comment? You made some notes, I know, for yourself. Before we talked about individual students, I wanted to have you comment on.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Let me look.

MR. BROWN: You wanted to say something about your many, many years you've been at the museum teaching.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes. I've had some tremendous students, many, many who are out in the field, either teaching or professional artists. And I have a list of a few of the present and – that stand out immediately.

MR. BROWN: Why don't we talk about them? I can ask you questions about some of them. Are we starting with some of the ones you had in the earlier years?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Well, let me say something before that.

MR. BROWN: Sure.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Things that I did myself. I painted on mural for a woman who was kept over opposite the Lars Anderson estate.

MR. BROWN: In Brookline?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Well, yes, it's in Brookline. And it was in a bedroom on a gold canvas. I can visualize it now – between two windows. And I had a branch coming out coming from one window going over towards the other, with two lovebirds on that branch. And it was on a gold canvas. And I still don't know where the house is, whether it's the one opposite an intersection, or just where.

MR. BROWN: Was this before you started teaching?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, no. This was while I was teaching, while I was teaching.

MR. BROWN: Well, we could talk about some of your own work. Do you want to concentrate now on some of the students that you wanted to talk about?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Well, if you want me to do that I'll – or do you want me to finish what I was – my own?

MR. BROWN: Let's talk some now about – more about some of your own work.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: You've talked about some of the earliest things you did.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes. And then I painted this mural and caused quite a commotion there because it was for a kept woman.

MR. BROWN: Oh, I see.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: Oh.

MR. ROSENTHAL: I did many portraits in pencil and also conte crayon. And one that stands out in mind is for a fellow in New Jersey who was a Shakespearean actor. His name was Fritz Liber.

MR. BROWN: Liber?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Liber. And I did a portrait of him and did many others. But he is one that stands out in my mind.

MR. BROWN: Would you do these, you mean, even in the '30s, you started doing likenesses?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes, oh, yes, when I was quite young.

MR. BROWN: Were they usually people who were referred to you?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes, yes. And then you would be able to see in the other room there a self-portrait that I gave to my mother, God rest her soul, when I was 21. And one, an oil painting, that I did of myself back when I was in art school, and other paintings that are there.

I did a number of portrait sculptures of heads, one of – that I have a duplicate of, a boy 13 years old. Mother wanted to have something to remember of his bar mitzvah, and I did that portrait of him. He's now a professor in psychology somewhere. And I did another one of – later on of Reverend Paul Layton, who is a minister. And he is now not only a minister, but he's a lawyer as well. He lives in Nantucket at the present time.

MR. BROWN: Was that commissioned by his family?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes, his wife. They were both, incidentally, students of mine. And they saw the work that I did there and they wanted a portrait of him, and I made it. And then I did a portrait of my prize here, Irene.

MR. BROWN: Irene.

MR. ROSENTHAL: That's in bronze. And I have other bronzes.

MR. BROWN: Now, these portraits were models. Did you model them?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes, modeled –

MR. BROWN: In plaster?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No, modeled them in plasticine and then had them reproduced in the – either plaster or in bronze.

MR. BROWN: As you look back on your sculpture, you know, you concentrated, did a great deal of that when you were in art school.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Well, when I was in art school, yes. And this painting here is of a torso that I did that was on exhibition at Symphony Hall many years ago.

MR. BROWN: So do you think your sculpture changed at all? Who was your principal teacher of sculpture at the Museum School?

MR. ROSENTHAL: I have to stop and think.

MR. BROWN: I can't remember the name.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Grace Gutfrey was it?

MR. BROWN: Was it quite a good program?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yeah. Well, they had in those days, the men and the women were separate. And I never liked to go into the men's class because they were always either fooling around or talking or doing something else. So I used to go into the women's life class, or portrait class, there and do my work because they were more concentrating on their work rather than gabbing so much.

And I should have gotten the traveling scholarship. But being what I was, my religion, being a Jew, I was definitely ostracized from getting that traveling scholarship.

MR. BROWN: Yes, that pays you to – yes, traveling scholarship.

MR. ROSENTHAL: And that's the way the ball bounces, I guess, in those days. So you have to take it.

MR. BROWN: Yeah.

MR. ROSENTHAL: And that's when you write poetry. And one of the lines that I keep reciting from various things there is, "As bigoted and selfish, narrow and sly that feed their bellies and let others die." And I have that in a poem that I wrote.

MR. BROWN: Yeah. Um-hm. Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ROSENTHAL: And then the museum had asked me to do a number of reproductions. One of them was of a Grecian deer and fawn. And I did that, did the cast – had casts in the salesroom in bronze. And they also asked me to do a Degas dancer. They started me off with one eight inches tall, and then after getting started with one eight inches tall, they wanted me to increase the size to eleven inches. So I stopped doing that and then went on to the one 11 inches. And they sold quite a few. And for some unknown reason, they discontinued that particular –

MR. BROWN: That was fairly recent, wasn't it, that you were doing that?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes. Oh, about four or five years ago.

MR. BROWN: Do you – what I was going to ask earlier was, do you think your sculpture changed? I mean, your own personal sculpture, apart from portrait busts or making versions for the sales room at the museum? Your own personal work, was it pretty realistic when you thought about it, very figural?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Realistic, yes, yes.

MR. BROWN: Did it change over the years?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No. No.

MR. BROWN: After you had ceramic training, did it change?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No. No. I have a tape of myself giving a demonstration, that I'm going to show you. And that's setting up a figure for the classes. And it usually – making a quick sketch like that would take me from about 20 minutes to a half-hour. And I have – someone wanted me to do it – I think – I don't recall whether it was the museum, or someone wanted me to do a portrait – do a figure and have it on tape.

MR. BROWN: Was that part of – your training at the Museum School years ago, did you learn to work quickly there?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No.

MR. BROWN: No.

MR. ROSENTHAL: No, that was in the development of my giving demonstrations to the different schools.

MR. BROWN: Sure. You couldn't be too long, too prolonged.

MR. ROSENTHAL: No. That's right. They only allowed me in the schools three-quarters of an hour to an hour. And then I had to get everything that I wanted to say and do in that particular time. So I worked, and of course through practice, I cut down on time. So that's what I have on these papers here.

MR. BROWN: So now shall we talk about some of the students that you feel stood out, or in your mind were particularly interesting?

MR. ROSENTHAL: In earlier years, Reed Kay, David Aronson, Robert Burkes, Jack Kramer, Arthur Polanski, Jason Berger, and Bernie Chaet all were in about the same time, in 1940, I think it was, or thereabouts. And they were all friends of each other, and they all produced and have gone along and have done wondrous works.

MR. BROWN: Did you think when you were teaching them that they were exceptional?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes. Yes, they really were. And some more than others. But you could see what you have in the past of Reed Kay's work and Dave Aronson, with his sculpture as well as his painting. Dave Aronson's son, I think, in a way surpasses Dave himself.

MR. BROWN: Oh, as an artist?

MR. ROSENTHAL: In his work as an artist, yeah. And –

MR. BROWN: When they were high school students, would these people ask a lot of questions? Or did they just work very hard?

MR. ROSENTHAL: They worked hard. They worked hard and asked questions and produced. They were serious. And you had others in any field, you have others who were whisking away the time and wasting their lives and not really gaining anything.

MR. BROWN: Now, you mentioned Reed Kay and Aronson, and Polanski, all of whom had considerable careers here.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Robert Burkes, the sculptor.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Burkes – he's right now in Long Island. I have a book here of his work. And I have something on tape that –

MR. BROWN: Yeah, I saw that, yeah.

MR. ROSENTHAL: With bronze, of various people, famous people that he's done. His father was an antique dealer. And Bob had a gift of gab and really could produce. And he has done wondrous things there with his sculpture. The head of Kennedy in Washington in the museum – in the auditorium there is his. He did the Pope, and many celebrities, Justice Brandeis, and many movie stars. And he has a particular way of working.

Now he's more interested in creating something with metal in the field out in Midwest of something like what Gutzon Borglum did with the heads on the mountain. He wanted to do the buffalos on the range, working with metal and having the winds blowing and creating the sounds that he heard. And that's part of film that I have.

MR. BROWN: Perhaps we can look at that. So he was among that generation?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes.

MR. BROWN: That earliest generation would you say was just about the best you ever had?

MR. ROSENTHAL: That until recently. And then recently I have a number of others. Well, Jason Berger is also in that field, that group.

MR. BROWN: Sure.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Bernie Chaet –

MR. BROWN: Would you have been going to look at their work whenever they had shows here?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes, definitely, definitely.

MR. BROWN: You kept up friendships with them?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes. Yes. Yes. As a matter of fact, I had to have the house painted. And Reed Kay had his house painted. And I asked him to give me the name of the painter that he had, because he did a wonderful job. And he's the one that's going to be painting this house.

MR. BROWN: I see. So he's pretty close.

MR. ROSENTHAL: So Reed is – and then many of the plants that I have dug up – the irises and things of that sort that I gave to Reed to plant around his house.

MR. BROWN: You've been a major gardener since you were a boy, right?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yeah.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Then Bernie Chaet, Chairman of the Art Department at Yale [University, New Haven, CT], and Dave Aronson, Chairman of the Art Department at B.U. after he left the Museum School.

MR. BROWN: So these people you kept in touch with, mostly?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Though I think I showed you a letter of Aronson's there.

MR. BROWN: Yeah.

MR. ROSENTHAL: What he had to say.

MR. BROWN: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ROSENTHAL: And a more recent, within the past, oh, I should say 10–15 years or so, I have Denise Buckley, who is now teaching and doing her own sculpture in Ohio. I just received a card from her from Spain where the entire faculty was given a trip to Spain.

MR. BROWN: She teaches what?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Sculpture.

MR. BROWN: In college?

MR. ROSENTHAL: In college, and I don't know whether it was elementary also.

MR. BROWN: In a private school?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Well, it was a private – well, this is college now. She taught in a private school. But she was a rather interesting individual. She would come in wearing one-colored laces and another-colored laces, or one-colored stocking and another-colored stocking, and different things that would happen during the course of the different holidays, dressed.

MR. BROWN: But Denise Buckley is one of the more recent?

MR. ROSENTHAL: She is one of the more recent. And Martin Blank, I have a short tape of his work. He was a glass-blower.

MR. BROWN: He learned that later?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes, he learned that later. But also, sculpture was part of the glass-blowing.

MR. BROWN: Would most of these students then go after studying at the museum, taught classes – would they go to a local art school?

MR. ROSENTHAL: They either would go to a local art school, or they would go to Rhode Island School of Art [sic] [Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI] or Mass College of Art. Denise Buckley went to Mass College of Art, and she founded the bronze casting department there. And she carried that bronze casting through many other schools, art schools that she attended and developed.

Then a very recent is Joseph McGurl.

MR. BROWN: Joseph McGurl.

MR. ROSENTHAL: And he did many oil paintings, scenic. His father was a landscape – not a landscape painter, but a muralist for different organizations. And Joe would help him out, and of course, he did some art. I've got some of his very early work at the museum. Also, Frank Strazulla – I've got some of his work at the museum.

MR. BROWN: Now, did these men stand out as pupils in high school?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes. Oh, yes, oh, yes. Joe really did some stupendous work. And his work in the recent exhibition is a completely sell-out. And not only that, the prices that he gets are tremendous, five figures. And another one was – who is teaching now and also does some of her work is Joan Shrier [phonetic], Joan Ascowitz Shrier. And she teaches now at the museum. Those are a few of the more recent people.

MR. BROWN: Um-hm. Um-hm. [Affirmative.] Do you think the way you taught changed over 60-something years? Particularly, say, in teaching adolescents, high school age?

MR. ROSENTHAL: I'd be stupid if I'd say no. It had to change with my development. And I know when I first started in, when Ms. Cleaves asked me to take over the fifth grade program, I used to take in some pictures, some reproductions of sculpture of different things that I would have the kids think about.

For instance, at the very first lesson, I'd compare a dog with an elephant, and things that they would see, and if not see, read in books or see at the zoo, and have them give me an idea as to what they think the dog or the elephant, whichever they wanted to do. And then I'd give sort of a history of art lesson, because they were in those days were through in five minutes; they were all done. So I had to increase the length of talking time to the length of working time. And as they developed, I shortened the length of talking time, giving them more time to work.

And the things that they did in one short hour – that's all the time I was allowed in each class – you can see in the pictures, they were terrific.

MR. BROWN: Yeah. Well, these were the beginning of fifth grade.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Fifth grade.

MR. BROWN: So you couldn't keep them too long at their work. No.

MR. ROSENTHAL: And you'll be able to see the difference between their work and what the high school and the Saturday class people did. Incidentally, this is a photograph of some of the work that the evening school, that they did with watercolor.

MR. BROWN: This is the evening school –

MR. ROSENTHAL: In Rosendale.

MR. BROWN: In Rosendale?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes, Rosendale High School.

MR. BROWN: But these are the adults?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes. Those are adults.

MR. BROWN: But some were quite good, weren't they?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

MR. BROWN: Were they worked from memory or photographs?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No, from photographs, mostly.

MR. BROWN: Because these look like scenes from the mountains or something like that. And you were doing that – this is works from the 1950s. Now, the first group we're looking at are works from elementary school?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Elementary school, fifth grades.

MR. BROWN: I see.

MR. ROSENTHAL: They had an hour to work. And by the end of an hour, over the 36 weeks, they did some terrific work. I'd start them off with a single figure or a single animal. And I had armatures that I devised that would work for either an animal or a figure. And you can see through those photos just what they had done.

MR. BROWN: Now, they're regular figures.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yeah.

MR. BROWN: They had been asked to sculpt each other?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No, no, no, no, no. Just from their knowledge of what I had to give them for proportions and things of that sort.

MR. BROWN: And they began absorbing proportions, not anatomy?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No, no anatomy. I never thought of anatomy – even now I don't have them think of anatomy. I have them think of bumps and dents. And that way you can avoid using the word "anatomy" and thinking in terms of anatomy.

MR. BROWN: These are quite complicated, that they did.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yeah. Some of those are towards the end of the year.

MR. BROWN: And you'd see marked improvement, generally?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, oh, oh, tremendous, tremendous. And then I had one teacher who was in the Capered [phonetic] School.

MR. BROWN: In Boston?

MR. ROSENTHAL: In Boston. And her grandfather or father – grandfather, I think it was – was Colonel Prescott in the – the one in the statuary in front of Bunker Hill Monument. And she gave me her bell when she retired after 50 years of service to the city.

MR. BROWN: This bell that was used as what?

MR. ROSENTHAL: That they used to call the class together, out in the play yard.

MR. BROWN: I see.

MR. ROSENTHAL: She would have the kids, give them extra time at the end of the – my time. She's have them save their work. And then when they did some good things for her, she let them work on the different things. And there was one boy there who was quite outstanding. And in those days I gave a scholarship to the Saturday classes to one of the youngsters who did outstanding work. And he was at the Dwight School. And he was a black boy, but unfortunately, he didn't carry through, didn't do the work the way he should have done, and I never gave another scholarship because of his attitude and work that he neglected to do.

MR. BROWN: Well, these kids would concentrate pretty hard?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

MRS. ROSENTHAL: Tell him about the one you gave a scholarship to, or you got a scholarship, a five-year scholarship for.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Between –

MR. BROWN: Between – what we just looked at were elementary students?

MR. ROSENTHAL: And these were from the Saturday classes at the museum.

MR. BROWN: Um-hm. [Affirmative.] And these would be high school age?

MR. ROSENTHAL: These were high school age, carving in brick, carving in plaster, working with the plasticine, primarily, getting action, getting life.

MR. BROWN: You began to get stylization.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes.

MR. BROWN: The figure of the tennis player with his bell-bottomed trousers looks like something art deco. And by age, they'd be aware of these trends, wouldn't they?

MR. ROSENTHAL: This fellow was – Land was his name. He was a ballet dancer. And –

MR. BROWN: Even as a teenager?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Even as a teenager, he was a ballet dancer. And he went on to California, and I lost track of him after that. One of the other students that I – my wife just reminded me of, Donald Stuart, who is now an architect. And I was able to get a five-year scholarship for him at Syracuse University studying architecture and art. And he has done many outstanding pieces of sculpture and doing quite a lot of architectural work.

MR. BROWN: And he was a student you had in the Saturday classes?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes. It was rather interesting. His father, he never knew – he was a doctor, but an alcoholic. His mother was wonderful. And she used to work for Keystone and had –

MR. BROWN: Keystone? What was that?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Keystone was a toy manufacturer down in the Quincy area. And then different holidays, she would have presents for my kids there, for Lila and Gerald.

MR. BROWN: [Inaudible]?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes, different kinds of toys. Well, one Saturday, I called her up and said, "What's happened to Donald?" Because he was absent for three consecutive weeks. I said, "Why? I sent him off to school, to the art school." "Well," I said, "he hasn't been here for three weeks." "So I'll see what happened and get back to you."

So he knew that I knew what was going on. So when he came back, I didn't say a word. But his mother, apparently, gave him the devil. And he continued to do outstanding work. Where was he? He went with one of the other students – Valier was his name – that went – and they went to the movies and went to different other things there, and played around and played hooky.

But I caught him, and then he concentrated and never left the classes. He stayed the whole day, have lunch there and stayed the whole day instead of in two different classes. And I was able to get him the scholarship over to Syracuse University. And he's now an outstanding architect down South.

MR. BROWN: Do you think this was your method? Your method was sort of to indirectly indicate if you knew if they were not doing something?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, definitely, definitely.

MR. BROWN: You didn't just preach to them.

MR. ROSENTHAL: No, no, no, no. I don't preach. I don't preach. I see what they can do with their capabilities and have them go ahead.

MR. BROWN: And if they suddenly fall short, then you look into what might be –

MR. ROSENTHAL: What's the cause?

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. ROSENTHAL: What's the cause? And when I see that they're absent, after two or three times there, I want to know why. And then as far as the school department is concerned, you have to keep a roster as to – in case of court situations. So to this day, I still find what – I keep an accurate record as far as attendance is concerned.

I have one situation where a woman – this was in the adult classes – came in to the class there, and was there just the first evening. And then her husband came well along in the classes to find out whether she was coming to class. And I told him that she wasn't – she only came to the first meeting. That was her responsibility and his responsibility. I couldn't fight them. But I told him actually what had happened.

And that was the end of that.

[Laughs.]

MR. BROWN: So now I'd like to follow up on your work, particularly sculpture. And maybe we can start talking about the sculpture and other things. What about the earlier work? I know that as a boy, you have an example here of a head of Dante, which you did very early.

MR. ROSENTHAL: When I was 10 years old, I have the head of Dante and the head of Napoleon. This was done when I was in the South Bay Union Boys Club.

MR. BROWN: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ROSENTHAL: And my late father saw what one of the youngsters did from the store further down the street – he was a cap maker. And he boasted to my father that, "Gee, look what my son has done." So my father said, "My son can do as good, if not better." And I had to produce. And I had Dudley Pratt and Anthony Debono as sculpture teachers, and then Bill Tate as drawing. And then I used to get the first prize in both drawing and sculpture. And that's why I got the Cyrus Dallin little figure of Massasoit as a prize.

MR. BROWN: Yes, as a prize. So was Dudley Pratt a pretty good teacher?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, a very good teacher, very good teacher.

MR. BROWN: Did they teach you in groups?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No, individually. That was a class, so they had tables in there. And everyone who was in the class there were in different tables. And in those days, you copied rather than creating the way we do now. And that's why I have that. And then downstairs in one of the cupboards, I have one of *Venus de Milo*.

MR. BROWN: So you copied famous examples.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes, plaster casts. And you'd copy. And then if it turned out well, they were –

[Audio break.]

MR. ROSENTHAL: And they'd cast and show us how to cast. That's why I have them now as a remembrance of days gone by. My late mother used to keep everything that, not only I – my brother who just passed away recently, he was also a terrific artist. And he did a pen and ink drawing of something that was in the museum. And it was lost, and he had to do another one. And they finally found the first one.

MR. BROWN: Your work, then, evolved. We have some other examples here, say, of the 1930s?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes. No, no, nothing from that era.

MR. BROWN: But you do have some – now, not sculpture. But you do have some drawings?

MR. ROSENTHAL: I have drawings.

MR. BROWN: Let's talk about them. You have the self-portrait.

MR. ROSENTHAL: The self-portrait there that I did –

MR. BROWN: Was that done about the time of 1933?

MR. ROSENTHAL: That was when I was 21. I gave it to my late mother for a remembrance in a present.

MR. BROWN: You were in the art school?

MR. ROSENTHAL: I was in the art school at that particular time. And this conte crayon is one of my classmates, that I did.

MR. BROWN: Now, these, the drawing, the self-portrait, about how long would you be working on that? It looks like a very detailed drawing.

MR. ROSENTHAL: The pencil drawing?

MR. BROWN: The pencil drawing.

MR. ROSENTHAL: That was just probably one or two sittings. That's all.

MR. BROWN: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ROSENTHAL: And then –

MR. BROWN: But this, learning to draw with great precision?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Precision. Exactly. And that was me. And then the painting was when I was in art school, the self-portrait. That also is that particular era.

MR. BROWN: Did you do that sort of thing just as practice, would you say?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Practice. Practice.

MR. BROWN: That was probably done fairly quickly, wasn't it?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes, oh, yes. Oh, yes. I had a paint box that was a Japanese paint box – I still have it – that was put together with pegs and container inside. And you were able to use that. It was fixed so that you could use the paint box as an easel as well. And that's when I did that particular thing.

In those days, I lived at home. And I had no expense that way. But I got a job while I was at art school, as a guard at the museum, on Sundays. And I would get three dollars for the day on Sunday. And that took care of all my expenses, car fares and things that I needed to put my folks – so my brother and my mother were able to keep me going without having additional expense.

MR. BROWN: Very nice.

MR. ROSENTHAL: So that was it in those days.

MR. BROWN: So now, also from the '30s, do you have any other work here? Or is it a bit later?

MR. ROSENTHAL: It's later, later. This is when I was at Alfred.

MR. BROWN: Now we're looking at ceramics.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Very fine bowls or bottles.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Bottles. I had a – I made a mold, made a thing in plaster on the wheel. And in those days, we went out to the field and got these reeds and soaked them and used that as a sandpaper to smooth out the mold. I believe the mold I have is downstairs in one of the cabinets. And I made reproductions of – from the mold of these bottles. And I also made one out of – not plaster, but porcelain, to show the difference between low fire and high fire ware. How much greater shrinkage there was in the high fire.

And these glazes are glazes that I created. You had this one glaze, which was the gray underneath, and the copper luster, which is on top. And the copper luster would run, and you'd get this very interesting effect on there.

MR. BROWN: This was – you were taught very closely principally by Charles –

MR. ROSENTHAL: Charles Harter, yes. He was the only instructor that we had at that particular time.

MR. BROWN: In the summer of –

MR. ROSENTHAL: The summer of – yeah. And these – this is another mold that I had made. And you can see the colors I tested.

MR. BROWN: These are all bowls.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yeah, bowls.

MR. BROWN: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ROSENTHAL: And then the cat that's over there.

MR. BROWN: The crouching cat.

MR. ROSENTHAL: The crouching cat is something that I had done – I made a mold of that. There's a seven-piece mold for that crouching cat. And –

MR. BROWN: This ceramics cat, was that done also while you were at Alfred?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No, no, after Alfred. That was after Alfred.

MR. BROWN: Well, you continued to do a certain amount of ceramics?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Oh, yes. And then the cat that I have on top of the buffet, of the cabinet there, I should say, is also after. And I had submitted a number of animals and figures there to the Arts and Crafts Society, which had sold many of the things that I had made.

MR. BROWN: And you'd become a Master Craftsman, as you said earlier?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes, yes. And then the torso over there, the small one. And there are some other things over there that –

MR. BROWN: You mean the torso on the right?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Is that what, an unfired –

MR. ROSENTHAL: Unfired. That's just the raw clay.

MR. BROWN: Yeah. Do you find that you more frequently work in clay than in plasticine or plaster, eventually? Did you come to prefer clay?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Clay is messy. And the only thing that I would do are the things that would have to be fired. And you'd have a problem of waiting for it to dry. And I did a beautiful bear one time, life sized – not life sized, half-life-sized there. And it was hollowed out and I had a couple of vents there, underneath the legs and through the mouth. I was impatient in having it fired. I fired it, and it blew up in the kiln.

MR. BROWN: Uh-huh [Affirmative].

MR. ROSENTHAL: That was time wasted, but it was a great lesson not to be in such a hurry, but to fire slowly and not to wait 'til it's almost dry but wait 'til it's thoroughly dry.

MR. BROWN: What did you do your ceramics for mainly, for sale?

MR. ROSENTHAL: For sale. For sale.

MR. BROWN: Did you have a kiln at home or –

MR. ROSENTHAL: I had a kiln when I was in the pottery supply business. I still have the kiln downstairs that I built. I had one of the schools weld the framework – and I used canthle [phonetic] wire for the elements and used that to fire in the kiln there. I also have downstairs a small kiln there that would only go up to cone 04, which is nothing but 1,850, 1,900 degrees.

In the corner there, I have a bronze elephant that I had made, and Denise Buckley, when she was at Mass College of Art and formed the foundry there, she taught us how to cast things and make things so that we can cast in bronze.

MR. BROWN: She had been a pupil of yours?

MR. ROSENTHAL: She had been a pupil of mine; now I am a pupil of hers.

MR. BROWN: I noticed there are a good many animals, particularly elephants.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes.

MR. BROWN: What was the reason you started doing so many?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Well, I love elephants. And I love bears. And those are the two animals that I do mostly.

MR. BROWN: And you began doing them just for sale and for your own use?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes, and cats as well.

MR. BROWN: Um-hm. [Affirmative.]

MR. ROSENTHAL: Mostly for sale. And then many members of the family, of course, always, "Give me! Give me! Give me!"

MR. BROWN: Oh, yeah.

MR. ROSENTHAL: So you have to make something so that you can satisfy the "Gimmes." And this in back of me, the portrait of my mother –

MR. BROWN: When did you do that?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Back in 1934.

MR. BROWN: Did you want to do it to commemorate something?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No. I just wanted a portrait of her. And I did that. And then also, in the other room there, the portrait of the old lady there. That is –

[Audio break.]

[END OF TAPE TWO, SIDE A]

MR. ROSENTHAL: – the old lady, that was probably done a little bit later than the portrait of my mother.

MR. BROWN: Your mother was done while you were in – still at the Museum of Fine Arts School?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes.

MR. BROWN: About that time?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes, yes.

MR. BROWN: Was this done somewhat as an exercise?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No, no. Something that I wanted to do, and do something that I did as a fond remembrance of her.

MR. BROWN: And by that time, you were in, what, the advanced painting class?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yes. You could say that.

MR. BROWN: And that was taught up there at –

MR. ROSENTHAL: At the Museum School.

MR. BROWN: Who was the teacher?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Well, in those days we had quite a change of schedule because Philip Hale passed away.

MR. BROWN: Right, yeah.

MR. ROSENTHAL: And then we had a couple of Englishmen come in. Bosley and Thompson were given the run-around, and they left.

MR. BROWN: Leslie Thompson and Frederick Bosley?

MR. ROSENTHAL: And they left. And the Englishmen were the ones that I did the painting under.

MR. BROWN: Um-hm. [Affirmative.] So there was some hard feelings?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Then there was another one who taught at Mass Art. I can't remember his name.

MR. BROWN: He taught the –

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yeah, he taught the painting. And it was under him that I did many portraits, one that the Museum School kept, of one of the models. Harmer – Farmer? No. I can't remember his name.

MR. BROWN: I meant to ask, you said there was a sort of run-around of a couple of people dismissed – were there hard feelings during those years?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No, no, no. They wanted a change, apparently.

MR. BROWN: Well, did these English teachers bring in more modern ways of doing things?

MR. ROSENTHAL: They had a unique way of sight-size drawing. And you'd be sitting down and holding up your paper and just marking off where the top was and where the feet were. And that was the size of the painting that you'd be making – or the drawing, I should say, that you would be making.

MR. BROWN: Did you find that was a successful method?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No.

MR. BROWN: No?

MR. ROSENTHAL: No, I didn't like it at all. But I was there in school to learn. And as I say even now, take the good things that any teacher gives you – let them keep the bad things. And that's what I did.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. ROSENTHAL: That's it.

MR. BROWN: Would you say as a teacher, then, that – you pointed out how you'd sit down and work right with the students. You don't just preach to them.

MR. ROSENTHAL: I don't do their work.

MR. BROWN: And you don't do their work. You're demanding.

MR. ROSENTHAL: Yeah. I show them what's wrong.

MR. BROWN: Right.

MR. ROSENTHAL: And see if they can correct it.

MR. BROWN: Yeah, yeah.

MR. ROSENTHAL: And then as far as the students that I have now, I ask them – this is not working in stone, because we have to set the stone and see what the stone itself suggests. But –

MR. BROWN: In sculpture?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Sculpture. I have the students make sketches of ideas that they would like to do. The ideas might be good for drawing and painting, but not for sculpture. And I have them to go back and do a couple more. I always ask for at least six, from the beginning. And then we finally get some things that are possible for sculpture.

When you work with stone, we want to see how little stone we can cut away to suggest the idea that we're trying to create. Then we can refinish it. The idea is the important thing. And then the rest of the work is easier to come by.

MR. BROWN: Now, are these high school age students we're speaking of now?

MR. ROSENTHAL: Both high school and adults. Both.

MR. BROWN: Um-hm. [Affirmative.] Yeah.

[END OF INTERVIEW.]

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