



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with John Marshall,
2001 April 5

Funding for this interview was provided by the Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America. Funding for the digital preservation of this interview was provided by a grant from the Save America's Treasures Program of the National Park Service.

Contact Information

Reference Department
Archives of American Art
Smithsonian Institution
Washington, D.C. 20560
www.aaa.si.edu/askus

Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with John Marshall on April 5, 2001. The interview took place in Edmonds, Washington, and was conducted by Lloyd E. Herman for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America.

John Marshall and Lloyd E. Herman have reviewed the transcript and have made corrections and emendations. The reader should bear in mind that he or she is reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

MR. LLOYD E. HERMAN: This is Lloyd Herman interviewing John Marshall at the artist's studio in Edmonds, Washington, on April 5, 2001, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

John, perhaps we should start by your talking a little bit about where and when you were born.

MR. JOHN MARSHALL: I was born in 1936, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This is where I grew up.

MR. HERMAN: Well, I'm interested in your talking about growing up there and what your childhood and family life were like. Do you have brothers and sisters, and where were you in that pecking order?

MR. MARSHALL: Well actually, I was between a brother and a sister. And I have one brother that's older than I am by two years, and then a sister that's quite a bit younger than I am; she's about 16 years younger than I am. But I really grew up in an area that was quite rural. And I first went to public schools, and this is where I picked up my education. I really became interested in the arts and was fortunate enough to get a scholarship at the Carnegie Museum there.

MR. HERMAN: At what age?

MR. MARSHALL: Actually, it was in grade school, and they had an offering when I was in, I think it was, fifth grade, and I went to -- actually, the class was called the Tam o' Shanthers. And it was a class that was held every Saturday, and what they did was they brought students from all over the city in Pittsburgh, and there was a teacher that would give a problem and go through and discuss, like, the drawing of a hand, and she would discuss the anatomy and this sort of thing. But everyone would do the same problem, and each week the problem was juried. So then, at the next meeting, the next Saturday, the winners were asked to do their drawing in front of everyone on an easel, and it was a great experience.

MR. HERMAN: How many children were there in those classes? Were they all pretty much the same age?

MR. MARSHALL: They were all the same age, and -- actually, you had two groups: one was the grade school and the other one was the high school. And I went on to keep with it and went into the high school as well. But as far as the size of the group, the classes were held in the auditorium, and so I would say -- this is a guess -- probably around 75 students all over Pittsburgh, and this was a very exciting thing for me.

MR. HERMAN: How long did that go on, and through what ages did you participate?

MR. MARSHALL: Well actually, I was about, at that time, 14, 15, and then I stayed with it, mainly because of my mother's backing.

MR. HERMAN: Oh well, that was one of my questions, too. What kind of work did your parents do, and how were you encouraged, if you were encouraged? Did you have art in your home, and was there that sort of encouragement?

MR. MARSHALL: Not really. The encouragement came primarily from my mother. She, in a lot of ways, was very interested in just us boys at that time. It was just my brother and I at that point. And she was just interested in us having that opportunity to see where we would eventually find our way.

MR. HERMAN: So she was not so much interested in art appreciation, but looking at art as how it might fit into your life, either as a career or maybe an avocation.

MR. MARSHALL: Right. At that time in Pittsburgh, and probably most places, when you were going to school, you were thinking about basically what you were going to eventually do as a job. And the whole idea of going to the arts and getting involved with the arts was not something, at that time, that I felt I would take up seriously as a

job, because my father, actually, was a bread salesman, and he drove a truck. And at that time, my connection to a job was something that you worked hard, okay, and you put in your eight hours, and a lot of times it was something that you didn't enjoy, but you did it, and it was a means of getting through life.

MR. HERMAN: What other ideas did you have in your youth that you thought you might want to do?

MR. MARSHALL: Well, to tell you the truth, I was very interested in sports, possibly too much so.

MR. HERMAN: What sports?

MR. MARSHALL: Well actually, I played football, I played baseball, and also swimming. And it was something, again, I felt that was a way that I could get myself into college. The family situation was not -- well, we were not in a position to support someone going to school, so I felt that if I could possibly get a scholarship, this would make it possible for me.

MR. HERMAN: Did your older brother get a scholarship or did he go on to college? Was that any kind of an influence on what your choice would be?

MR. MARSHALL: Well, my brother -- actually, we were both accepted into this Tam o' Shanthers on Saturdays, and we both would go to class. And he went with me in the beginning, but eventually he decided that it was not for him. But I continued all the way through a good part of high school.

MR. HERMAN: Did you take art courses in school at the same time, or was the drawing and the assignments you had in Tam o' Shanthers really quite apart from any kind of more formal education in the arts?

MR. MARSHALL: Well, my education at school -- I was very fortunate to have good art teachers and people that took an interest in me, even though in public schools, a lot of times, it was struggle. But the high school teacher I had was Mrs. Bridgewater, and I still remember her. And she was a person that, again, gave me a lot of support. And I can still remember her as how interested she was in my being able to pursue --

MR. HERMAN: What different kinds of art did you try at a young age, then?

MR. MARSHALL: Actually, my palette was limited. It was a situation where we definitely just did some drawing, some painting. And again, it was in a public school, so we didn't get into --

MR. HERMAN: You didn't have clay or --

MR. MARSHALL: Yeah, we didn't have anything three-dimensional; everything was two-dimensional. And I did some things for the school, I painted some murals and I did stage crew work, as far as designing that, but didn't get into anything three-dimensional at that time.

MR. HERMAN: When did three-dimensional work first come?

MR. MARSHALL: Well actually, there was a situation again where the school played the role. I went into the service -- just to give you an idea of how I got myself into school -- I went into the service primarily to get the GI Bill, and also, I played sports there, too, with the idea of coming out with some kind of a sports scholarship and the GI Bill.

MR. HERMAN: Well, give me the chronology of when you went into the service, and what branch you were in, and what years, then -- you must have graduated from high school in '54, when I did, because you and I are the same age?

MR. MARSHALL: I graduated in 1954.

MR. HERMAN: And what high school was that?

MR. MARSHALL: Actually, it was Langley High School in Pittsburgh. And after I was finished with school, I felt that I was not ready to go on to college. I felt that I needed to see a little bit more of the world and get some more experience, and I was not sure of what I would want to major in, and this type of thing, and plus financially, I couldn't do it.

MR. HERMAN: What branch of the service did you go into?

MR. MARSHALL: I was actually in the army. I was a paratrooper. And again, I went into that service -- you get the additional pay for that type of, well --

MR. HERMAN: Risk [laughs]. If I can put words in your mouth.

MR. MARSHALL: Risk. [Laughs.]

MR. HERMAN: What years, then, were you in the army?

MR. MARSHALL: I went in in 1954, and I was in there for three years. I signed up for RA. This was, actually again, to my benefit.

MR. HERMAN: RA -- regular army.

MR. MARSHALL: Regular army. I was able to get the GI Bill at that time, and I wanted to make sure that that would happen.

MR. HERMAN: When you were in the army, where were you stationed? And did that give you an opportunity for any foreign travel, or were you pretty much domestic?

MR. MARSHALL: Well, there's a lot of situations and a lot of times you hear of people talking about the service in a negative way. Well, the service was good for me. I did get the opportunity to meet people and really get some great experiences by just that whole idea of meeting different people. But primarily, it did get me to do some traveling. I started in North Carolina and South Carolina, but then I went over to Germany for the rest of my time. The major part of my military was spent in Augsburg, Germany.

MR. HERMAN: That time in Germany, did you travel around very much to see other parts of that country, and maybe any others?

MR. MARSHALL: I did. I traveled quite a lot, mainly because, again, I was involved in sports. I played football, I played baseball, and then in the wintertime, I was a boxing official. So I was in special services the whole time, and in every case, we did a lot of traveling. And we had opportunities, because if we went to play a baseball game someplace, you would play two games, but you would be there for four days. And so, I would have a chance to see, like if we played in Worms or Munich, or Stuttgart, I would take the opportunity to walk around the streets and see different things.

MR. HERMAN: Well, that's what I was going to ask you. How did you use that time, and how do you think that affected, then, your career as an artist?

MR. MARSHALL: At that time, I, again, was still not thinking that art was going to be my major pursuit. I still looked at it as something I enjoyed. But when I was there, I did start to really see things, and I still remember looking in one of the German stores and seeing some metalwork. And I can still remember how enthused I was to see metal being worked and developing such an elegant experience for me.

MR. HERMAN: What were the pieces that you saw?

MR. MARSHALL: The pieces were mostly commercial. And when I would go into some of the areas where there was some sculpture and that sort of thing, I was interested in both. But I was very taken by their skills and this ability to do things so well and so exact. And then, the sculpture pieces that I would see, I got very excited about just, again, some of the emotion that I would feel from the pieces.

MR. HERMAN: Since that was the late '50s, what kind of sculpture were you attracted to? Because there would have been at least the beginning then, or probably well into, abstract forms as well as figurative sculpture.

MR. MARSHALL: Mostly representational things. I was more interested in how well someone could interpret through material form, shapes. And my relationship was just to see how I recognized it and could make that connection.

MR. HERMAN: Just to go back for a minute, did your mother work outside of the house or was she --

MR. MARSHALL: No, my mother was actually definitely a mother, and she believed in family and was very supportive at all times. We were very involved with a lot of things, and my mother was just a major, major support.

MR. HERMAN: Did you do a lot of things as a family? Were you involved in community activities, or church, or things of that sort?

MR. MARSHALL: Not really. My mother, actually, was the type of a person that had a problem with large groups, and she was more comfortable at home. But for myself, it was such a great thing: you always came home and you always discussed with your mother -- with my mother -- what I did for the day. And she was always very interested and very involved, but she stayed home. My father, he was very entrenched in just working.

MR. HERMAN: How would you describe yourself in your teens? Were you quiet, gregarious, outgoing, studious?

MR. MARSHALL: Well, to be honest with you, I wasn't the best student. And I was very involved with sports, to the point where every moment that I had, I would be either practicing, playing, or talking about sports.

MR. HERMAN: So when you were in the army, anticipating getting out and going to college, were you thinking that you were going to be, like, a physical education major, or how was the interest in sports going to come into the next phase?

MR. MARSHALL: Well, I had opportunities. I even coached when I was in the service for a short period of time. I received an injury and it sort of laid me off of this sport for a while, but I went back to it with the idea of coaching. I enjoyed that, but I preferred the actual playing. And the idea of what I was going to do in college, I thought about coaching, but then I still was very practical at that time, thinking that I would get something that would definitely set me up, and I could do my art on the side.

MR. HERMAN: So you were thinking about making art by that time.

MR. MARSHALL: Yes, but again, strictly not with the idea that it was going to be my major throughout school.

MR. HERMAN: Sure, but interesting though, because how many boys that age really are even thinking about hobbyist art?

MR. MARSHALL: That's true.

MR. HERMAN: What kind of things were in your mind that you might make, then, I mean, if you were already thinking about --

MR. MARSHALL: Well, to be honest with you, if I would think of how I might look at it, would be more of a function direction, maybe even to the point of being more of an architect or someone that would be involved in the building of something. At that point, I was really not thinking beyond the idea of how it could work for me in a practical way.

MR. HERMAN: Thinking about the time that you were in the service -- well, actually growing up, because the Depression was just over and you were a child during World War II, did that have any impact on your family? I mean, did you experience shortages and things? Did you have jobs when you were a kid?

MR. MARSHALL: Well, the idea of working and jobs, that was definitely something that was up front. I had paper routes, I had all sorts of little jobs and that sort of thing, but the whole idea of what the family was involved with was the idea of being able to hold together a family, and the idea of having food on the table, and that type of thing.

MR. HERMAN: Did your dad, did he do routes, then, to deliver bread to stores, or was it an individual delivery?

MR. MARSHALL: No, he delivered to stores, and this was another one of my jobs. On Saturday mornings, I would help him, because he had a double shift. And I would get up sometimes at three o'clock in the morning, and he would go out and start to work his route.

MR. HERMAN: Did you think that had any influence, having a kind of work discipline on your labor life?

MR. MARSHALL: Yes, definitely. My father definitely was a person that really worked very hard, but he lived very hard too. He was a person that could have lived better.

MR. HERMAN: Lived very hard -- how?

MR. MARSHALL: Well, he was a person that didn't take care of himself, and he was a person that came from a very hard life, north side of Pittsburgh, and a lot of times, he did a lot of things with the idea that life had to be hard.

MR. HERMAN: I'm intrigued by that, if you want to go on with that.

MR. MARSHALL: Well, he definitely would pursue everything with the idea that -- well, he played hard, he worked hard, and a lot of times when he'd get involved in conversations or something, he always felt that he had to be right.

MR. HERMAN: Oh. [laughs.] That makes me think: Marshall sounds like an English name. Was his an English --

MR. MARSHALL: Scotch.

MR. HERMAN: Oh, of course, Scottish, yeah. Do you think that there are any of those attributes that are given to Scots that come out in you or perhaps in your dad?

MR. MARSHALL: Well, I think through my dad and just that whole feeling of -- he definitely was a person that kept with things. In other words, he would make sure it was finished. I remember when I would help him on Saturdays, there were certain types of bread that it was very hard to locate, but there's certain customers that he wanted to please. And we would spend sometimes 45 minutes finding a loaf of whole wheat bread for a certain customer. Which to me, at that time, I wanted to get home and actually play some football in the afternoon. But we would locate that one loaf of bread, and then we would go home.

MR. HERMAN: So when you got out of the army, what did you consider your options? You had already decided you were going to go to college on the GI Bill.

MR. MARSHALL: Yes, and I had the GI Bill, but I also received a scholarship for football.

MR. HERMAN: Oh, where?

MR. MARSHALL: The whole thing was that I received a couple injuries in the service, concussions, quite serious. But I had to really watch, and the doctor advised me to possibly not pursue football any longer because of it. But I knew I had to get some support that way through a scholarship. So I accepted a small scholarship at Grove City College in Pennsylvania, and it was an opportunity for me to get into college.

MR. HERMAN: Where was Grove?

MR. MARSHALL: In Pennsylvania.

MR. HERMAN: But where in Pennsylvania?

MR. MARSHALL: In Grove City. And it was a situation -- I thought if I played at a small college, I wouldn't have as much of a problem. And it worked out fine until I actually, halfway through a season, I came up with another concussion. And I also played baseball for the college, and here again, I ran into someone that was very interested in my art. I took one art class, and the art teacher became very interested in me.

MR. HERMAN: And what was her or his name?

MR. MARSHALL: I'm sorry, I don't remember that. I didn't have that much time with her. But the one thing that she did to me was she really insisted -- she almost insisted that I leave the school. She said that my talent was such that I should definitely pursue it, and in a more vigorous way, and that she definitely felt that that school was too small.

MR. HERMAN: And was this a four-year college?

MR. MARSHALL: Four-year.

MR. HERMAN: And what year were you when she --

MR. MARSHALL: I was just a freshman.

MR. HERMAN: Oh, so she was encouraging you to leave then.

MR. MARSHALL: I was just entering into school, and she really was a person that was very serious about it. And she was a person that a lot of people that took the class thought it was going to be a class that would be just very relaxing and possibly something that would be a filling situation, a filler. But she was more involved than a lot of people expected, and she just enjoyed the way I would really work the problems.

I found the art -- actually, my major was business administration. And I found the business administration classes were definitely something not for me. And the art class I looked forward to, and I really came to a decision there.

MR. HERMAN: Describe the kind of art you were making then.

MR. MARSHALL: Again, it was strictly two-dimensional. We were doing some painting, some drawing, and I just really went into some paintings that she was very interested in what I was coming up with, and how I was doing it. And there seemed to be a terrific rapport there; she seemed to be very involved with what I was doing, but I was very appreciative to how she would give me time.

MR. HERMAN: So how did you respond, then, when she encouraged you to go to another college?

MR. MARSHALL: Well, that's when I received that concussion again. And I thought to myself, well, I have one more opportunity with my GI Bill, one more change that I can make. So what I ended up doing was I decided to go back to Pittsburgh, okay, and I decided to enroll at Carnegie Tech and take an evening design class. At that time, I got married, and the evening design class I thought would be a good way of, again, seeing how I would work in that direction, and again, to test how someone else would react to my work, whether I could take this opportunity for making one more change for my GI Bill.

And while I was there, I met a student that had a sister that was going to the Cleveland Institute of Art, and she talked so highly of what the school was about, and how it really worked with, especially, the foundation classes. If I was going to go to a school, I felt this would be the school.

MR. HERMAN: So tell me what year you would have started at Grove City and then gone to Carnegie Tech.

MR. MARSHALL: I would be at Grove City in 1958 -- '59, yeah, excuse me. I only went there for one year, and then I came down and I started to work construction. I was working construction in the day and I was going to Carnegie Tech at night.

MR. HERMAN: Did you work construction that summer between Grove City and Carnegie Tech?

MR. MARSHALL: Yes. Construction became, actually, my bread and butter. And I really ran into situations that were very lucrative, and they were able to -- construction at that time was hard to get into, but there were certain jobs I was able to do.

MR. HERMAN: What sort of skills were you developing there, then, in construction?

MR. MARSHALL: Well, in construction, it was pretty raw. But if anything, again, the work ethic was there. And if you worked well and you worked hard, and again, if what you did was something that was well crafted and that sort of thing, you were able to move up. And so, I was very fortunate to get -- I was in pipelining at that time.

MR. HERMAN: Oh yeah, that's what I was really getting at.

MR. MARSHALL: And I was working in Pittsburgh there during the day, putting in major pipeline through Pittsburgh. They were trying to solve their problem with the river, so we were doing a very dangerous-type, open-ditch pipeline. And if anything, I learned everything about pipelining the hard way, because the job really had all sorts of problems, from dynamiting the stone, and the shoring out the sides from the river, and all sorts of things that told me that construction was good for me then, but I didn't want to continue with that life. It was just definitely a hard way to go.

MR. HERMAN: Is Carnegie Tech still that, or did it become part of Carnegie Mellon? I don't know if there was an evolution there too.

MR. MARSHALL: No, that happens much later, much later that it becomes Carnegie Mellon.

MR. HERMAN: Oh, but that is part of Carnegie Mellon now; it doesn't exist as Carnegie Tech. Well, tell me about getting married. Tell me your wife's name.

MR. MARSHALL: My wife's name is Jane -- Neff was her maiden name. And actually, I started going with her in eighth grade. And we sort of separated when I went into the service. I felt that it was not a time for me to even think about getting married, and Jane went off to Muskingum College and got her degree. She was in there while I was --

[Audio break.]

MR. HERMAN: This is Lloyd Herman with John Marshall, on April 5, 2001, in his studio. John, if you'll continue with what you were saying after you had met Jane Neff and she had gone to school, and you had been in the army.

MR. MARSHALL: Well actually, when I came back, Jane was finishing up her schooling, and I really just started into working construction and preparing myself to go on to school. But this situation was very fortunate; we just happened to bump into each other. I was downtown with some business, and she was getting on the bus when I was getting on the bus, and long story short, we all started up again.

MR. HERMAN: She was out of college and working then.

MR. MARSHALL: No, she was actually finishing her last year of college.

MR. HERMAN: And what education was she pursuing?

MR. MARSHALL: She was in psychology, sociology, and that sort of thing.

MR. HERMAN: And did she then go to work, or did you marry soon after that?

MR. MARSHALL: No, actually, we went together for a while, and then at that juncture, we did get married while I was still going to Carnegie Tech and working construction during the day. And this is where I definitely made up my mind that I was going on to Cleveland Institute of Art. So I arranged for an interview, and Jane and I went up, and I had these pieces that I had in my portfolio from what I did at Grove City.

MR. HERMAN: These were drawings, paintings, or what?

MR. MARSHALL: All drawings and some design solutions to problems that were given out. It was very sparse. I realized that, and I was a little bit shy about presenting them, because I could see, when I walked into the school, the standards in some of the other pieces on the wall, and I really was concerned, to say the least. But I made my presentation, and I made it there in the office, and to honest with you, I didn't think I was going to be accepted, that possibly I would have to work another year to bring up my portfolio, because my portfolio was very limited and I was looking at other portfolios of younger students, and they had a nice variety of work. And for some reason, the person that was interviewing me just said that they would like to have me come to the Cleveland Institute of Art if I would so feel like I wanted to.

MR. HERMAN: And do you remember who interviewed you?

MR. MARSHALL: He was the assistant director -- Bachtel.

MR. HERMAN: So you started in Cleveland, and what year would that be?

MR. MARSHALL: Actually, that was in 1960, yeah.

MR. HERMAN: And who did you study with there? Who were the teachers that really, sort of, stimulated your creative juices?

MR. MARSHALL: Well, here is where it all started, and to this day, I still draw from this experience. I had a terrific foundation there, and in a lot of ways, I still believe in this type of thing after all the teaching that I've been doing, how important the beginning foundation is. And their philosophy there is that you take these core classes in drawing, in painting, in design, in color, and everyone takes these classes. And after your first two years, you make your selection for your major, after you've gone through all of these core classes.

And during that time, this is where I met some wonderful people in the three-dimensional field. Kenneth Bates taught me my beginning design class. And then, later on, my advanced design class was taught by John Paul Miller. And here, what I was looking for was this opportunity to experience all of these different medias. I was just starting to get introduced to three-dimension and understanding the whole vocabulary that goes through that process of learning.

MR. HERMAN: Was Viktor Schreckengost also someone that you studied with?

MR. MARSHALL: No, he was head of the industrial design department, but I had contact with him because he was always in the area, and you could see how he would work with students. And being older, I would go to other areas, and instead of -- you know, a lot of students, they just sort of select their direction and they spend their time -- I, a lot of times, would go to other areas and listen to other instructors. And I, a couple times, had the opportunity to hear him crit-ing students, and so it was a good experience.

MR. HERMAN: Do you remember who else studied there at that time?

MR. MARSHALL: What other students?

MR. HERMAN: What other students at that period?

MR. MARSHALL: Winifred Lutz. She is a person that, I think she sort of set somewhat of the tone, or set the bar. She was just such a driven person. And so, it was something for me, and again, I would look at success, and I would say, "Why is this happening?" And you could see why it was happening with her. You know, she just definitely was that way. But I really found myself feeling very fortunate, not only because I was there at the right time -- Toshiko Takaazu was teaching there at that time; I mentioned Kenneth Bates, John Paul Miller; John Clague, he was teaching sculpture; McVey was teaching sculpture.

And these teachers, I still draw from them as to how they would respond to works and how they would respond to just the whole art feelings and emotions, and how they put it into practice in their own work.

MR. HERMAN: But there was where you felt you got really the foundation grounding. And how did that lead you eventually into metal? Or did you have any other detours into other media that interested you?

MR. MARSHALL: Well, actually, the metal -- I still, at that time, I was thinking that I would go into something like industrial design; that was one of the majors I was looking at. I was also considering the whole idea of getting into something that would be more commercial, again, looking at the practical sides of things. But I had a design class with John Paul Miller, and some of the solutions that I was coming up with, and how I was putting so much into the construction of these things -- because when I took his class, it was more three-dimensional design. Kenneth Bates taught two-dimensional design.

And just one day, he mentioned to me, he said, "John, would you be interested in metal?" And I said, "To tell you the truth, I've never considered it." Because basically, you didn't touch anything that dealt with metal up to that point. Everything was -- for your design classes, you were working with wood, and cardboard, and materials that were more in tune with solving just the visual proportions and those sorts of things. Metal was -- you had to select that, and then you got into actually learning the processes of doing that.

So he said, "What I'd like to see you do is take a metal class in the evening, on top of my day classes, and work with Fred Miller." And Fred was a person that John associated with and worked with, and actually later on, the two of them actually lived together -- Fred was married, but John was single. But they worked so much together that, actually, John started to live with them as a family.

MR. HERMAN: But Fred was not teaching.

MR. MARSHALL: Yes, he was.

MR. HERMAN: Oh, he was, because I thought maybe if that was an evening class, he was not actually on the faculty.

MR. MARSHALL: No, he was on the faculty, and he also was a head of Potter and Mellen Company. And he was a person that -- when I first met him, he definitely was a taskmaster, and he was a person that was only interested in perfection. And it was one of those things, that he wanted that to happen not only in his own work, but anyone that associated with him. So he pursued the craft to the nth degree.

MR. HERMAN: So you were taking that class in the evening at the time you were also doing the foundation classes?

MR. MARSHALL: Yes.

MR. HERMAN: You were pursuing those simultaneously.

MR. MARSHALL: Yes, that was my second year.

MR. HERMAN: And did metal click, as they say, or did it take a while to kind of get interested in it?

MR. MARSHALL: No, I enjoyed it right from the beginning. The thing that I found that related to me was just the whole idea of being able to create something, and it took a definite skill to put this material into the forms and shapes that you wanted. But there was such a satisfaction, such a positive, exact satisfaction when you were finished. There was not any sense of the softness or the edges. You know, it was one of those things; there was discipline, but in the process of discipline, there was also the feeling of creating.

MR. HERMAN: What metals were you working with at that time?

MR. MARSHALL: Well, in the beginning, I worked primarily with the jewelry. And we always started out with copper, brass, and these things, until you really got a feel. And again, you sort of had to prove to Fred Miller that you could handle before you moved on.

MR. HERMAN: Do you remember the first pieces you made in that class?

MR. MARSHALL: Yes, I did a brooch first, a brooch for Fred, and then I did a pearl ring. And in both cases, it was a situation where he had definitely laid out some things that you had to prove and skillfully do.

MR. HERMAN: So these were problem-solving pieces, in a sense, then.

MR. MARSHALL: Yes, definitely.

MR. HERMAN: And did you choose the form that each was to take, or was that assigned?

MR. MARSHALL: No, actually, this is where you had to come up with the designs. But at that point, Fred was very controlling to show you directions.

MR. HERMAN: What would you say the kind of style influences were then? Was there a particular kind of style that was advocated by any of your instructors?

MR. MARSHALL: Yes, you could start to see this happen, the whole feeling. And later on, I used a lot of what I learned, and then some of the things that I felt could have been handled differently by my experiences as an undergraduate at Cleveland. But overall, I think the influence that was happening at that time, Fred was involved with more of a Scandinavian direction, very clean proportions, and transitions, and how the form actually related to the materials, and the metals, and the process.

MR. HERMAN: Did you learn to replicate any classic forms, or was that part of the teaching there, or was it pretty much a contemporary expression, looking at what was maybe happening elsewhere in the world? Or, as a student, were you aware that much of the whole heritage of metal? I think of urn forms and classic coffee servers, and things of that sort.

MR. MARSHALL: Well, in the beginning, definitely you were concerned with the design of the piece and how it was working in proportions, and you talked a little bit about shape. There was not too many examples shown to us of what was going on in the contemporary field in the beginning. It was just more or less of a learning how to work it. And you would come up with drawings, and you would stay with the drawings until Fred approved, and then you would go into the process that you were learning at the time.

MR. HERMAN: Oh, so you were really working, in the drawing stages, on proportion and size, and --

MR. MARSHALL: Function.

MR. HERMAN: And function. So function was always --

MR. MARSHALL: Always up front.

MR. HERMAN: Yeah. Was surface embellishment something that was not considered much at that point, if you were dealing mostly with smooth surfaces?

MR. MARSHALL: Not too much. In fact, here is where I learned how to make something happen strictly with the idea of a reflection and the idea of clean form, and how you could make recesses and breaks, and that sort of thing, and then understand how to darken the materials so that those things would become more exact or noticeable.

MR. HERMAN: So, since that time, has the function of objects always been important to you?

MR. MARSHALL: Yes. It's the thing, I guess, that I feel should be there. But as I worked on and became more involved with it, function became something that it's there, but then, what started to come into play more was the emotion. And this is much later than Cleveland that I started to feel and started to say something through the material that I would say have concept and the idea of how I can put my expression into the surfaces and the shapes.

MR. HERMAN: What were some of the hurdles you remember at Cleveland in the academic program, what you would consider your milestones as you progressed through that program?

MR. MARSHALL: Actually, I found more of a challenge in the hollowware area. And here, it was just that whole experience of, again, controlling your metal and learning how to deal with the idea, how much the metal would allow you to do. But then, to the point where the metal didn't have the complete control. In other words, you are asking the metal to do something. It will do so many wonderful things as far as shaping and breaking, and causing nice reflections, and what it does to light, and that sort of thing.

But then again, it definitely has its limitations. But in hollowware, you really take the metal, and by hammering it, shaping it, stretching it, forging it, you have such a vocabulary that goes on there. And the idea of taking a flat shape and bringing it up into a hollow shape by, especially, the raising process. It is a slow, tedious process. You're only getting about a quarter of an inch every time you raise, and you have to completely work that the whole surface, then you anneal it to soften it, so that you can work it again for that other quarter of an inch.

But what happens, there is an experience, because when you draw something or if you even bring it up with clay, it happens so quickly that sometimes you don't notice those shapes that happen in the process of bringing it up. When you're raising something, even when it's down only in its beginning shapes, there is a shape there, and every time you raise it, there's another shape that becomes part of your vocabulary, and that's what I enjoy. I built on that.

MR. HERMAN: But you started making jewelry, and I suppose that part of the requirements of the school would continue to include jewelry or other small objects. Did you find, from that very first class with Fred Miller, that your interest was moving away from jewelry? I don't want to put words in your mouth.

MR. MARSHALL: I found that the jewelry -- and I continued to do jewelry, all the way even at Syracuse, when I went on for teaching and getting my master's. But jewelry, it became more of my bread and butter. I could make pieces, and I sold a couple major pieces while I was an undergraduate at Cleveland. And I still remember the first gold piece that I did; you know, it was my first gold experience. And I made a pendant that was purchased by a person that came to Cleveland to just view the student show.

MR. HERMAN: Do you remember the name?

MR. MARSHALL: Actually, it was a gallery person in New York, and I think it was Hannen -- I'm not sure about that.

MR. HERMAN: So, did you work a lot in gold during that period?

MR. MARSHALL: Well, I did it mainly because, again, I felt it was necessary for me to experience, and I used to watch John Paul Miller working in gold. And a lot of times in the evening, John and I would be the only ones there working in the studio. And he would be doing his granulation and I would be working on my pieces, and that's where I really started to see what gold and that whole idea of metal, in those wonderful warm tones, could do. But even with seeing John work with it and all the wonderful pieces that he did, I still found myself appreciating silver and hollowware.

MR. HERMAN: You graduated, then, from Cleveland in what year?

MR. MARSHALL: I graduated from there in 1965. I stayed at Cleveland an extra year so that I could pick up my B.F.A.

MR. HERMAN: Because not all your credits were transferable from Grove City or Carnegie Tech.

MR. MARSHALL: Yeah, Carnegie Tech, actually; they got me into Cleveland, but there was only one design class, I think, that was able to transfer. And then, when I went to Syracuse, the Syracuse thing was I decided that at that point, a lot of the people were going on to grad school, but basically, I couldn't see myself doing that. I couldn't see it financially, okay, and at that point, I was ready to go to work.

MR. HERMAN: Yeah, you would be -- what? -- 29 at that point?

MR. MARSHALL: And so, I had that in my mind, and plus Jane and I, we were wanting to start a family. And Jane was great through this whole thing. She was working for the *Plain Dealer* in Cleveland.

MR. HERMAN: Oh, the newspaper, yeah.

MR. MARSHALL: Well so, something again that was very fortunate for me, I was teaching at Cleveland. I was accepted as a Saturday teacher in drawing. And when I was teaching one Saturday, Mrs. Schmeckebier came in, the wife of Laurence Schmeckebier, the dean of Syracuse University. She came by, I talked to her for a little bit, and then, actually, Laurence Schmeckebier used to be the director of the Cleveland Institute of Art and knew Fred and John very well.

And there was a position open at Syracuse for the head of the metals program. I just had a B.F.A. though, and they were looking for someone with a master's degree, but they invited me down. And so, I went down not thinking that I would get the position. In fact, I was considering accepting a position at General Motors as a clay designer, and this would be my bread and butter for my art.

But I went down to Syracuse and I took my portfolio down, and I met with Dr. Schmeckebier, and we spent the day. And he looked at my portfolio, and he took me over to the vice provost and we reviewed my portfolio again, and he showed it to a number of faculty people, and to make a long story short, they hired me there for that position, the head of the metals program at Syracuse University, with a B.F.A.

MR. HERMAN: Wow. Who had been the head of that program before? Arthur Pulos was not --

MR. MARSHALL: He was the head of the industrial design.

MR. HERMAN: Was he then teaching at the same time you were?

MR. MARSHALL: Tarantino.

MR. HERMAN: Tarantino. So, you were teaching then. Were you working toward your own M.F.A. there while you were teaching undergraduates?

MR. MARSHALL: Dr. Schmeckebier said to me, "You're going to have to work on your master's degree because all of our professors have M.F.A.s." So he arranged it through working with him as part of the requirements, and then, of course, I had my thesis, and then he arranged that I have a one-man show at Syracuse University after about my third year there. And so, I was teaching and doing my master's at the same time.

MR. HERMAN: How long did you teach, then, at Syracuse?

MR. MARSHALL: Five years.

MR. HERMAN: And you got your masters during that period.

MR. MARSHALL: Yes, I did. And he also arranged for me to have a one-man show in New York at the Syracuse House in New York.

MR. HERMAN: How did your own work progress during that time in Syracuse? How much time did you have even to make your own work if you were both teaching and studying yourself?

MR. MARSHALL: Well actually, I was able to get quite a bit of work done, mainly because I had to produce a field of work for my M.F.A. And while I was there, again, Dr. Schmeckebier was a person that really supported the working artist, and actually, we built two studios there. We had one that I completely reworked, and it was in the basement with the ceramics; actually, it was in a basement of the girls' dorm. Then, he decided that the program was moving along so well, they moved us up to Steel Hall on the main campus, and we had to redesign and build another studio there. And the program, it was a very exciting time.

MR. HERMAN: Did you do all of your work in the studio at the school then? You didn't have your own studio then.

MR. MARSHALL: No, I didn't have that. Actually, I really took the role of what Fred and John Paul Miller did. They worked in the school studio, and this was something, at that time, that worked very well for me, because I could instruct and work, and in the evenings, I could even help students that were struggling with pieces and that sort of thing, and then they could see what I was doing. And during that time, I was doing my master's piece, which was a chalice, and this is when I met Paul Smith. And he came up and he was putting together the "Objects: USA" show.

MR. HERMAN: Gosh, that was already up to that point.

MR. MARSHALL: Yeah, and he was going around and viewing at pieces, and that sort of thing, and he, at that time, was interested in this piece that I was doing. And I said, "Well, I'm doing it for my master's, and it actually belongs to Syracuse University." Well, to make a long story short, he wanted it for "Objects: USA," and they purchased it. And then, they contacted Laurence Schmeckebier, the dean, and one thing that Dr. Schmeckebier was, he was always very supportive, and he said, fine, that we want that piece to be in the collection.

[Audio break.]

MR. HERMAN: The tape number three, interview with John Marshall on April 5, 2001. Now John, if you can recapture that thought you just had, we were at Syracuse -- well, let's just start with Syracuse. And I was asking you about, I think, the direction your work was taking then, and you had said you'd made a chalice -- oh, "Objects: USA," and you were talking about that.

MR. MARSHALL: Well, Lee Nordness and Paul Smith were the two people that visited Syracuse University, and they were interested in what I was doing. And I showed them this chalice, and it definitely was being made for my master's thesis piece, and it would be going into the collection of Syracuse University. But they were very interested in it being part of the "Objects: USA," and Laurence Schmeckebier was nice enough to allow it to go to that collection.

In return, the monies that he received from that, he asked me to do something for the university. So I decided to do a punch bowl, which later became the chancellor's bowl. And so, it was, again, a great experience for me to get into such a major piece. And so, I did a punch bowl with a ladle, with a gold strainer.

MR. HERMAN: Where is the original chalice that was in "Objects: USA"? Because if you made that in '65, "Objects: USA," I remember, opened in '68, and it traveled for several years. But do you know what museum it's in now?

MR. MARSHALL: Actually, it's in New York.

MR. HERMAN: The American Craft Museum.

MR. MARSHALL: The American Craft Museum. Certain pieces were kept right in the museum, and every once in a while they'll show it.

MR. HERMAN: As I recall, Paul Smith selected 100 pieces for that museum, which was then the Museum of Contemporary Craft, and then other museums on the tour were offered other pieces. So that's choice that yours was one of those top 100.

MR. MARSHALL: I didn't, at that time, know anything about "Objects: USA," and when they came and mentioned it, they were looking for pieces for that -- and to be selected and then to see it travel -- it was just a wonderful show.

MR. HERMAN: How did that, just to digress for a minute on that, was there any kind of interesting fallout from "Objects: USA" and the exposure your piece got in that? Did it lead to any commissions or other exhibitions, gallery connections?

MR. MARSHALL: Well, it was one of those things that it seemed to pop up, and it still pops up. The show was so well presented, and just the way they professionally displayed the pieces and how it was promoted, it has followed me to this day. And I know when I came out here for my interview at the University of Washington, one of my colleagues mentioned that piece and made reference to it being a major piece in "Objects: USA."

MR. HERMAN: Which of your colleagues knew that piece?

MR. MARSHALL: Ramona Solberg. And it was a situation where to this day, I can't believe how fortunate I was being in the right time and the right place.

MR. HERMAN: So you left Syracuse. You and Jane wanted to start a family. Did you have any children?

MR. MARSHALL: Yes, while we were at Syracuse, we had our boys, David and Joel. And again, in the midst of trying to get my master's degree and building up a studio at Syracuse University and having two kids, we were busy.

MR. HERMAN: What years were they born, then, during that period in the early '60s?

MR. MARSHALL: Actually, David came along at the end of the first year we were there, and then Joel came the third year we were there.

MR. HERMAN: Then, when you finished your master's work at Syracuse -- oh, I know what I was going to ask: whether or not, during that period, you continued to make jewelry, or whether you had really moved over almost entirely to hollowware in your own work?

MR. MARSHALL: While I was there, I was still doing jewelry commissions and wedding sets, and this type of thing. And then, I remember, talking about jewelry, I did a piece while I was leaving Cleveland that was in "Young Americans," a piece of jewelry, a pendant. But jewelry I continued to do, but I really started to become more interested in the hollowware. And while I was there, because of the chalice that I did, and my master's paper was on the pieces on the altar, and I interviewed all of the different denominations.

MR. HERMAN: You mean in a general way, of what sort of altarpieces that different religions require or were these all just on Christian altars, not looking at Torah pointers and things of that sort?

MR. MARSHALL: No, just all uses of bowls and hollow forms used in religious ceremonies. I remember going around, and I went to the rabbi, to the priest, and different people on campus and off campus. And while I was there, I actually did a piece for the Catholic Church, a -- bowl with cruets for the Syracuse Immaculate Conception Church. And I really enjoyed the idea of doing something with -- here's where I started to get more of a feeling for saying something through the metal.

And doing something like this, there's definite meaning to it other than what I want to say as an artist; it's actually saying something to people. It's satisfying a function, but it's satisfying also an emotion in the same process. And how you can make metal to a point where people can feel this. In most cases, they're looking at metal in a cool way, but how to bring it forward in a way that there is a warmth and an inviting sense of it doing a function through the church or whatever.

MR. HERMAN: Did you find the traditions or conventions of certain kinds of objects used for religious practice confining or challenging, to find something to do within that context?

MR. MARSHALL: Well, when you really study it, it's amazing how many different ways, for instance, communion

was served. I mean, there is even situations where they had silver straws and they sipped wine through a silver straw. In some cases, the chalice was one chalice that they passed around. Everyone drank from the same container. And in a lot of cases, it's a situation where you really have to learn how to deal with how the cup is handled. And then, when you get into the kiddush cup for the Jewish, how they look at the cup and that whole sense of how precious it can be.

And sometimes getting beyond the whole feeling of what it's saying, sometimes I look at the piece as getting so elaborate that you lose that whole sense of, it's the blood of Christ, and that sort of thing.

MR. HERMAN: You mean, it becomes more personal expression than really keeping in mind what the function is.

MR. MARSHALL: Right, right.

MR. HERMAN: Has religion played a personal role in your own life, or has it been primarily in the metalwork that you've done?

MR. MARSHALL: Well, it has. I grew up definitely being part of the church. This is where I met my wife, in church.

MR. HERMAN: Are you Catholic?

MR. MARSHALL: No, I'm a Methodist. The church has been a very solid foundation for me as far as life's direction. But I find myself, at the present time, not that connected to the church. I've done a lot of church commissions; even in my own church I've done some pieces. But I've done crosses, and baptismal bowls, and chalices, and this type of thing. And it's strange, again, how sometimes that becomes a question in my own mind, how people respond to what they're saying with the pieces that I'm doing.

MR. HERMAN: Have you found it interesting, as you've said, these different liturgical objects in metal travel and how, for example, elaborate altars and things in Mexico, or a number of countries, where you would find really quite remarkable silverware? Has that been part of your interest, or have you traveled very much?

MR. MARSHALL: Oh, I have traveled, and I've traveled quite a lot, and that has been one of my major things that I sort of look for. I've been to Europe, England, France; I've been to Germany, Copenhagen, and Sweden; and it's not too long ago I spent some time in Russia. And in all those situations, I've always enjoyed seeing the insides of churches and how it affects me. I know when I was in the service, sometimes when I really wanted to get away and get myself a little centered, I'd walk into a church and it seemed to do things for me.

MR. HERMAN: Did you find, though, as you became a professional metalsmith, that you were looking at those objects with a different point of view? Has that really influenced your style?

MR. MARSHALL: It has, mainly because the one thing that I found myself doing was becoming more aware of trying to say something through someone else. I know as an artist, we're very concerned with our identity. But sometimes, when you're doing something that means so much to a group of people -- I remember doing something for a very small church here in Seattle. And when I walked in there, I was approached by an elderly woman who was concerned with what I was going to do to her church. And I really became very concerned. You know, I wasn't after changing this church; I was after trying to do something that would help it say it stronger.

So they asked me to do a cross, and I ended up doing a very large cross in wood, though, with a metal crown of thorns that floated just ahead of the cross. But it basically was all suspended in the ceiling of the church by stainless steel wires. So it sort of hung over the congregation when they came up to the altar. And it was quite a heavy thing, and it was an experience with learning -- some of the things that I learned in construction that helped me to do this. But long story short, the woman that I talked to in the beginning came up to me at the end and she was very, very happy.

MR. HERMAN: What church is that in?

MR. MARSHALL: That's in the Our Redeemer's Lutheran Church in Ballard.

MR. HERMAN: Oh, where I live. I'll go see it. Well, that's interesting, because that, on one hand, is certainly removing yourself and your own ego from your work, makes me ask the question, is there another end of that scale, where you are dealing primarily with your own sense of self-expression and putting your own identity into the work?

MR. MARSHALL: Well, I really have had situations come to me that have helped me get involved more with the idea of saying something personal in the concept. And here is where I think I, again, in contact with someone -- this is the way life has been for me. I had a situation where I was showing a piece here at the University of Washington, and Patrick Lannan came to see the show. And he was just visiting Seattle for other reasons, but he was always in the process of getting pieces for his collection.

Well, he invited me to come down. I was here at home; he called me and asked me if I would come down and talk to him about two pieces that I had in a faculty show down there. So I went down and I talked to him. He was very interested in both of them.

MR. HERMAN: What were the pieces?

MR. MARSHALL: One was a punch bowl, and actually, it was a piece that I did for a client in Cleveland, Ohio.

MR. HERMAN: The name of the client?

MR. MARSHALL: That was Mayer, Charles Mayer, and he wanted to purchase that piece. And I said, "Well, I'm sorry, but that belongs to someone else." But he wanted to contact that person and buy it from them. And I said, I really didn't appreciate that, because I made it specifically for that person. He said, "Well then, would you make me one? But I would like to have one larger." Well, that was a five-gallon punch bowl. So I said, "Yes, I would." And he said, "I don't normally commission people." And I said, "Well, I will work up a drawing for you and send it to you."

And long story short, this started a series of pieces that I did for Patrick Lannan for his collection. He invited me to come to New York. And after I had worked up this punch bowl for him and sent it to him -- the punch bowl with two ladles in it -- and halfway through the making of the piece, he called me and said that he wanted me to feel more free with the piece. He, in fact, sort of apologized for commissioning me to do something around the idea of it being a function. He said if I wanted to make it more artistic or more of a sculpture, that I should go ahead and do that. So I did. I made some changes, still functioned as a punch bowl, but it definitely worked as a sculpture.

MR. HERMAN: What year was that, John? Do you remember?

MR. MARSHALL: Oh, that was in -- I'm sorry.

MR. HERMAN: That's okay.

MR. MARSHALL: But anyway, he invited me to New York, and we spent some time in his apartment, which he had wonderful pieces of art all around. I was so impressed; I was kind of intimidated with the whole thing. But we spent the afternoon together, and he drove me around and talked to me about these different spaces where there was a, kind of, intimate kind of feeling.

MR. HERMAN: You mean spaces in New York or in the city?

MR. MARSHALL: In New York. He took me to small museums and places where he found this sense of total -- and he told me about his gallery in Palm Beach; and he told me he was starting to commission me to do pieces for that.

MR. HERMAN: So he already had moved the collection out of his house there into --

MR. MARSHALL: No, he had a collection in his house and he had a collection down there, too.

MR. HERMAN: No, I mean his house in Palm Beach.

MR. MARSHALL: Yes, because what I did was, after we met and talked about this series, he said to me, "John, I would like you to do a series of pieces for me." And he said, "What would you like to do?" And I said, "Well, to tell you the truth, I would like to do something of a larger scale, and I would like to do something that would have a concept behind it." This is where I really started to get away from this function and the idea of saying something with the metal.

MR. HERMAN: But you had already finished the punch bowl.

MR. MARSHALL: Yeah. And he said, "That's what I want you to do." And he said, "What would you like to do?" And I said, "I'd like to do a piece that would be almost as large as I am, six feet in size." I'm not quite six feet, but take a piece of silver of six feet. And I was just off the top of my head, and I thought, here's an opportunity. I can see that this man wants something that would be really that grandiose, possibly. And so, he said, "Fine." He said, "How many pieces would you like to do?"

MR. HERMAN: Had any money been mentioned yet?

MR. MARSHALL: No, not any money. And I said, "Well, I'd like to do three pieces." And he said, "How long will it take you to make these?" And I said, "It's a lot of work for these. I would like to have a year for each piece, so it would take three years. Three pieces in three years, and I'd like to have six feet in size." And he said, "Fine." He

said, "I'm arranging for you to go down to my gallery in my home in Palm Beach."

So I flew down to there from his home, from New York, and I couldn't believe his galleries there. He had a nice lunch for me and I stayed overnight, and you know, I thought to myself, gosh, this is just too good to be true. And so I worked for him and did these three pieces. And in each case, after I was finished with the piece, he would have someone come to the house, box it up, and ship it down, and all of that was taken care of.

MR. HERMAN: You mean he would have them sent to New York first.

MR. MARSHALL: No, he went right down to Palm Beach. He had a place in his Palm Beach place that was called - he says, "Eventually it's going to be called the Marshall Room." And he says, "I want to use this space to meditate." And so I, at that time, just gave a lecture in Alaska, and when I was up there, I really got some terrific ideas about the glaciers. So I built the series of pieces around the glacier, the coming of the glacier and the leaving of the glacier.

So the first piece was actually a wedge shape, bench sort of attitude, like the glacier comes. And the next piece was related to the cycle of freeze in a glacier. And then, the last piece was the start of the thaw of the glacier.

MR. HERMAN: So, I'm interested in how you, since you incorporated Lucite or Plexiglas in those, how that came about, and whether that was yet another kind of material that you had to learn about.

MR. MARSHALL: Well, it definitely was a material that I had to learn about. But what I was looking for at that time was, I always enjoyed silver, mainly because of how it did have a sense of depth, that it has a sense of temperature, too. In other words, you can feel sometimes the coolness of it. But then again, you can feel the warmth in it. It reflects and it drinks in what's around it, and so basically, there's a lot of temperature in that piece. And I felt that the silver would really relate very nicely, but I needed something that would give me a feeling of even more of a transparency.

And at that time, the University of Washington physics department was doing research, and they were using this acrylic. And I went down there and looked at what they were doing. But they had this acrylic, and I started to do some experimenting. They came to me and said, "Can you do anything with this? Because when we're finished with it, we discard it." So I said, "Well, let me work with it for a while." And so I started to work with it, and it became just a real exciting sort of relationship to the silver. It was just what I needed to get that sense of depth and vision through the --

MR. HERMAN: An iciness.

MR. MARSHALL: Right, and this is when I started to use the acrylic with the silver. And they had these large pieces that I could work with.

MR. HERMAN: What kind of tools did you use to work that, then?

MR. MARSHALL: Actually, there again, I had to do a lot of research. It's something how acrylics will respond to heat, and if you're not careful with this, you cause all of the unnecessary crazing in there; even after time, it will start to do some crazing inside, and then you lose that transparency. So basically, I had to learn how to deal with tools and carving tools that were not of a high RPM, in other words, fast revolutions produce the heat, so they had to be carving tools that would cut, but still do it in such a way that would not produce the heat. So I really started to use these different types of burs and cutting tools that actually became almost like a pencil to me, to draw my lines and to cut my lines.

MR. HERMAN: Were there a lot of trials, then, before you actually started carving the pieces?

MR. MARSHALL: Oh, yes, because just like silver, you have to anneal it to soften it, to work it. Acrylic is also something that has to be annealed. And after it's annealed, if you heat it up again, this is when the crazing starts happening.

MR. HERMAN: You know now, because Seattle is perhaps the world center for artists working in glass, whether or not you would ever consider glass rather than acrylic.

MR. MARSHALL: I did, and I had some opportunities to work with different people with the glass, because there is so much happening here with glass. But the only thing that bothered me with glass is you can't get that close to it, that whole business of working through something. Where, with the acrylic, I really enjoyed the whole sense of it. You know, you're so direct with it and you're right on it. And not only that, but it's not a fragile material. I mean, it's something that is very forgiving, okay, and even if somebody does something with it, it will take quite a bit of punishment. And it gave to me just what I thought the glass would get me.

MR. HERMAN: Do you remember the year that was?

MR. MARSHALL: Again, I was working through the '80s.

MR. HERMAN: In the '80s, yeah. Because I remember when those pieces were published and how astounding they were, because no one had done anything at all like that with silver or combined it with other materials. When Patrick Lannan died, then, where did those pieces go?

MR. MARSHALL: Well, at first, they stayed right there --

MR. HERMAN: In the museum.

MR. MARSHALL: Yeah, they were still figuring out where those pieces would go. So a lot of the pieces were starting to be given away and separated from the collection, but mine seemed to stay there.

I would like to say something about how Patrick Lannan really fulfilled his dream, because he kept telling me that these were all going to go into one room, and it was going to be called the Marshall Room. Well, I kept hearing about this, and I would ship these pieces off one at a time, because I did three and then he asked me to do some more, so I did two more.

And then, the last piece that I did, I actually made it with the idea -- he passed away when I was doing the last piece. And so before I started -- and actually it was the summary of that whole series, and it was called *Landscape*. But anyway, after it was all finished, I then went there with my wife, and it was all true. He had a room in the major building there down in Palm Beach.

MR. HERMAN: In the museum building, not in his house.

MR. MARSHALL: This was in the museum building.

MR. HERMAN: It was actually in --

MR. MARSHALL: Yeah, it was in his house, and it was called the Marshall Room, and he had every piece lit and positioned in this one room. He had a white tile floor. And the experience, I still have a hard time dealing with the emotion. It was everything he said; he had it all in the one room and beautifully lit. He had someone come in and specially work on the lighting, and that sort of thing.

MR. HERMAN: Well, I know that the Lannan Foundation collection went through a sort of a dissolution when his son took over the chairmanship of it and they moved it to California. And then, many of the objects stayed in the Palm Beach Community College collection, and now many of those have gone into what I think is called the Palm Beach Museum of Contemporary Art. Do you know where your pieces are now?

MR. MARSHALL: Well actually, I had a one-person show at the National Ornamental Metal Museum in Memphis, and they shipped all the pieces -- down to that show, when I had that one person show,

[Audio break.]

MR. HERMAN: This is Lloyd Herman interviewing John Marshall in his studio, tape four, April 5, 2001. Now, you were talking about the Lannan collection, and they had shipped the pieces to the National Ornamental Metal Museum in Memphis.

MR. MARSHALL: Well actually, the pieces were then, after the show was over, were shipped back to the Lannan Foundation. But then, when they finally came to trying to decide what they wanted to do with the pieces, they contacted the National Ornamental Metal Museum, and that's where they are.

MR. HERMAN: Oh, they're in the collection.

MR. MARSHALL: They're in that collection, yeah.

MR. HERMAN: Well, let's get back to -- we're still in Syracuse in terms of your evolution. After you got your MFA at Syracuse, what happened then?

MR. MARSHALL: Well, I was very satisfied; I was ready to just really focus in on teaching there at Syracuse University and starting to work on my career. Actually, I was visited by Spencer Mosely. He was there being interviewed for a position, and he talked to me -- actually, it was for the dean's position, and I was on the panel, one of the people that was asked to talk to him. And we went out to dinner one evening, and he mentioned to me and was telling me about the University of Washington, and he just asked me if I would consider coming out there and looking at the position that was going to be opened up with the metals program.

MR. HERMAN: Was this a new position or one that was going to be vacant and they were looking for a --

MR. MARSHALL: This was Ruth Penington's position. Ruth Penington was going to retire.

MR. HERMAN: What year would this be, then, that you met with him?

MR. MARSHALL: This was 1969. I started teaching there in 1970.

MR. HERMAN: And so, you accepted the position, or you came out for --

MR. MARSHALL: Well, it was one of those situations: I was not looking for a job. But he said, "Would you come out and give a lecture," and I said, "Yes, I'd love to come out there." It was just at the time Syracuse had just gone through a snowstorm you wouldn't believe, and I was getting tired of that, and I came out to the University of Washington and it was beautiful. And I gave a lecture and went back home thinking that this was possibly all there was going to be to this. But then, I got a nice call from them, and they definitely accepted me for the position.

MR. HERMAN: Had you actually applied for the position?

MR. MARSHALL: No, I didn't apply for the position at all. In fact, I told them that I was probably wanting to settle in at Syracuse there, but he said that the position was mine if I wanted it, so, in talking to Jane, we decided it was time for us to possibly -- for a change. And so, we got in our VW bus --

MR. HERMAN: With two boys, who would be -- what? -- in their teens by then?

MR. MARSHALL: No, not quite. In fact, Joel was quite young; he was only about two. We got in our VW bus and we came out here. I think it was a great move for us. We missed Syracuse. Syracuse was a wonderful time for us, but also, at that time, I felt that the experience would be good for the family.

MR. HERMAN: Was Jane working while you were in Syracuse, or was she a mom at home?

MR. MARSHALL: She was mostly a mom at home, yeah.

MR. HERMAN: And how did you find the art community here? In fact, I should ask you this really about Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Syracuse, and Seattle, and the sort of supportive community or lack of support for the arts, particularly the crafts, at the time you were in each of those, or if you had a sense of that.

MR. MARSHALL: Well, Pittsburgh, I really didn't know the community that much. I mean, I was just developing a sense of what that was all about. But when I got into Cleveland, a lot of support, especially for three-dimensional work. The museum had a great show every year, and it was a juried show, and it was very well received.

MR. HERMAN: The May Show.

MR. MARSHALL: And very well received, and Fred and John always had pieces in there. And again, I was very fortunate. The first time I submitted, I submitted a ring to the May Show and I won a prize.

MR. HERMAN: Oh, do you remember who the juror was?

MR. MARSHALL: No, I don't. I was so taken back with the whole thing; I was just wanting to get in, and all of the sudden, I was in the catalogue. It was almost like the "Objects: USA" thing. And so, getting back to Cleveland, Cleveland was very supportive. And the Cleveland Institute of Art, you know, they were well respected there, especially with the three-dimensional work.

Then, when I got to Syracuse, Syracuse again, was a perfect place to be as far as support. They supported me in building that program, plus they were very supportive to their faculty. In other words, they always were interested in commissioning faculty to do things. Like I did three pieces for the chapel, and that sort of thing. And every summer, they would bring in an artist to do a major piece on the campus. And they had that Syracuse House in New York that you could show your work.

I think the major thing that I learned there, though, was the importance of starting to tell people what you're doing through catalogues. Now, Laurence Schmeckebier was a major support in this way, and I was able to do two shows there, in both cases, very nicely documented with a catalogue. It was paid by Syracuse University. And those catalogues, when I showed them here for this position, you know, there was really a professionalism that was right with that catalogue, and it worked very well.

MR. HERMAN: And then, moving to Seattle, how did you find this community?

MR. MARSHALL: Well actually, the community here is one that they support the arts. I find that, in a lot of ways, it's a place that you have to struggle a bit, and the idea of the identity, it's here. People, they want art here, and

it's one of those things. But when I say struggle, I think of it more as a metalsmith. Ceramics, tremendous reputation, very supportive. Glass, just wonderful, again. But as a metalsmith, to be honest with you, the majority of my pieces, I've dealt with clients outside of Seattle.

MR. HERMAN: Well, that leads me to a whole kind of a market question, because you've really been involved with teaching from the moment you got your bachelor's degree, so haven't depended, at any point, have you, on making and selling work, other than when you were going to school and helping to support yourself that way?

MR. MARSHALL: Actually, my commissions have been very supportive, and I've worked always through drawings and this sort of thing to do commissioned work. And again, I learned this from Fred and John Paul Miller. They did a lot of commission work. And the idea of designing something two-dimensionally and showing it to a client, and then making the pieces is basically what I have found to be the big support to me. Because as a teacher, your salary is definitely minimal.

MR. HERMAN: So the making and selling of work has always been important to you.

MR. MARSHALL: Very much so.

MR. HERMAN: But have you had any gallery relationships?

MR. MARSHALL: No, no. Actually, I have dealt mostly through people finding me and clients that I come into contact with. One of the greatest things that happened to me was when I became acquainted with Annie Hauberg. In fact, I was just setting up a studio at the University of Washington, helping to just work into getting the hollowware program strengthened. Ruth Penington did a wonderful job in establishing the right attitude and the rapport for the program. But the hollowware program, which I was very interested in, needed some work.

So actually, what I did was, a lot of my equipment that I had acquired over the years --

MR. HERMAN: Your personal equipment.

MR. MARSHALL: My personal equipment. I just moved in to the space at the University of Washington. And this gave me the opportunity to get the whole thing through to the students. And then, when the students started to produce the work, then later on, the University of Washington then acquired that equipment that I had brought in, and I then moved myself out here to Edmonds.

MR. HERMAN: And then equipped a new studio.

MR. MARSHALL: And started my own studio. Because when I first started teaching at Syracuse, I worked with the students in the studio. But the more I got involved with these very personal pieces, I found that it was important that I had that kind of concentration, that whole sense of being able to get totally involved in your work without interruption. It's important to me. I work in a studio by myself, and I find this works for me as an artist.

MR. HERMAN: Have you ever had apprentices, or were you ever an apprentice?

MR. MARSHALL: No, I felt that teaching was enough to pass on what I knew. I thought that that was important, that there were a lot of things that were taught to me by Fred Miller and John Paul [Miller]. And I felt that being a teacher, you were adding to that and helping that to move on. But as far as with my own work, an apprentice, I found, was an interruption. If I have something that I need to have done, and there's more pieces or more parts, or maybe something I don't have the equipment for, I contract it out.

MR. HERMAN: Now, in the case when you came to work here, there was not a hollowware studio, if I understand you correctly. Ruth Penington was primarily jewelry.

MR. MARSHALL: Primarily jewelry, but she did have a small hollowware offering. But it was limited in size. She did some wonderful pieces in hollowware, but it was just definitely one of those things. I was more involved in the hollowware than I think she was.

MR. HERMAN: When you came, was Ramona Solberg teaching with Ruth Penington, or did the two of you then replace Ruth?

MR. MARSHALL: Actually, Ramona was teaching the beginning jewelry classes when I came, and she continued to do that. And actually, even when, later on, Mary Hu was hired --

MR. HERMAN: When Ramona retired.

MR. MARSHALL: No, Ramona was still there, and she was teaching, and Mary Hu was teaching, and I was teaching. But then, eventually, it was just Mary Hu and myself.

MR. HERMAN: And was there a hierarchy there? I mean, were you senior, certainly in terms -- you were the head of the program.

MR. MARSHALL: Yeah, I was the head of the program. And when I stepped in, Ruth retired right at that time.

MR. HERMAN: Oh, and you were immediately head of the program when you took this job.

MR. MARSHALL: Right.

MR. HERMAN: Speaking about commissions, I'm curious whether or not those have been, sort of, continuous or whether there have been lulls. Have you ever made any work on spec, since you didn't have gallery relationships?

MR. MARSHALL: I always have made room for pieces that I do free of commissions. I'll do them around, above, same time. But I find it's important that I always, sort of, experiment, and I try to put that into the commission, but the commission always, sort of, has a little tie to it. And a lot of times, I will have things happen. Like there was a workshop put together for -- actually, this happened through Stanley Lechtzin. He got a grant, and he was dealing with his electroforming.

And this sort of started me into seeing what acrylic could do. Acrylic became definitely something I did, but he was doing some acrylic work there with the electroforming. And I did a piece as part of the grant, and this actually started me in that direction.

MR. HERMAN: Have you taught other places, summer workshops, you know, Penland, Haystack? Have you been involved with that kind of circuit?

MR. MARSHALL: Well, I've been invited. A lot of times, I've been invited to these different schools. In fact, I had calls, summer after summer after summer, to do that. But I usually have myself contracted into some kind of a commission, and I find myself where I'll make a commitment. And basically, with a family, I've always had to, sort of, keep after those things. I've had chances to work at Haystack. In fact, not too long ago, we had a workshop dealing with clay -- and it was a great experience.

MR. HERMAN: A workshop at Haystack.

MR. MARSHALL: Yeah.

MR. HERMAN: So you have done that, even though you haven't done that too much.

MR. MARSHALL: Right. And it was something to see how it's done, and it gave me the opportunity to be able to tell students about it and help them get involved with it and that sort of thing, but it just was not my field.

MR. HERMAN: Well, it does seem to me that there have been a lot more techniques and processes, and maybe even materials and combinations of materials that have come into the metalsmithing vocabulary, not to mention all of the craft media. So I suppose even just as a teacher, you've had to keep up with those advances. But have you explored any of them? I know you've done some things with mokume gane, for example. Have there been other processes that have intrigued you, that you've integrated into your own work?

MR. MARSHALL: Well, I have. A lot of these things -- every once in a while, I just really feel that it's important for me to try something so it becomes part of my palette. But I just keep coming back to the whole idea of really enjoying what I can do with the sheet and how I can manipulate that. There are so many things that I find that I'm still exploring with it. It's not something that I can say, it's totally in my control, because metal is something that challenges you constantly. If anything, I'll come up with a design or a shape, and I'll come up with a shape that I wonder if I can make the metal do that, and that's the challenge that I have.

MR. HERMAN: Is that usually in the pieces that you're doing for yourself, rather than before those ideas go into --

MR. MARSHALL: But sometimes, to be honest with you, Lloyd, I will say to myself, this is what I want in this piece, and I'll say, I'm not quite sure whether that's going to happen in the metal the way I want it, but I'll take the challenge and I'll even bite the bullet to go out there on a limb and say, well, I'm going to do it in this piece, even though I haven't done it before.

MR. HERMAN: Today, do you still have the same interest in functionality that you had maybe initially? Because it seems to me that more and more, your pieces are purely sculptural or have dealt with sculptural problems. And I want to get into your other major commission clients, like Michael Scott, because I know he's given you these very large, beautiful, well, semiprecious stones.

MR. MARSHALL: Some of them are precious, but just uncut. What's happening is, he gets these stones before

they have the opportunity of being cut into gems, in the raw state as crystals -- he calls them specimens. And the whole challenge there, again, is to relate to this sort of richness that you see in a formed piece that just grew this way, and how you can take a crystal that is terminated at both ends, to allow both ends to be seen and presented in such a way so that it is visually experienced and falling more into a sculptural sense than just the stone alone.

MR. HERMAN: If it weren't for commissions for those pieces, do you think you would be following this more sculptural bent, or would you make primarily functional objects?

MR. MARSHALL: Right now, I'm more involved with the idea of saying something through, I guess, more of a sculptural way. But I still enjoy -- I just finished a coffee set for Ruth Nutt here in Seattle. And again, I found the function and relating the whole idea of how you can make a coffee set so that it does everything that it's supposed, even to the point that the spout doesn't hold a drip, and it goes right back into the pot. I still find that something very rich, the experience of being able to do it, but I related it to where her home is on Orcas Island, that whole feeling of these islands.

And each piece that I did was sort of a separate little island. And when you set it on a tray, I made the tray out of the soft stone, that tray becomes the water, and each one of the pieces becomes the islands that are peaking out.

MR. HERMAN: How many pieces are there, then?

MR. MARSHALL: Actually, there's the teapot, the coffeepot, the sugar and the cream, and the tray. And actually, the whole idea of this is around that whole feeling of the organic sense of the terrain and the water around the pieces. They function -- again, the function played a major role, but the sculptural sense of it is definitely there.

MR. HERMAN: I'd love to see that. Do you think of yourself as part of an international tradition or one that's peculiarly American?

MR. MARSHALL: Well, I think more American. I feel like, in some ways, it's the way silver has gone through its stages related to certain people that have made it happen.

MR. HERMAN: Like?

MR. MARSHALL: Well, when you just even start with Fred Miller and where he, through his relationship through the Handy and Harmon Workshop --

MR. HERMAN: Describe that a little bit.

MR. MARSHALL: Yeah, that was a group of metalsmiths that were brought together, again, to start to appreciate some of the things that the European metalsmiths knew how to form and shape and stretch metal. John Paul Miller was part of that, so was Ruth Penington part of that. And all these people were brought together, and then that became the vehicle that went out into the classrooms. But that workshop, put together by Handy and Harmon, was the major thing that united that and then caused that spark to move out.

MR. HERMAN: That was really the resuscitation of hollowware techniques after World War II -- I've heard it described that way. And I'm wondering whether, because it came about at that time, whether the Handy and Harmon Workshops, sort of, were proponents of what was then the contemporary Scandinavian style.

MR. MARSHALL: It definitely was influenced with that, because what they were taking it out of was more of a sense of shape and form, and less of a decorative surface embellishment. When you got involved with silver, the first thing that comes to your mind were all of the luscious sort of surfaces that were done by chasing and repousse and those things. Again, it has its place, but at that time, they were really involved with the purity of form and that whole sense of --

MR. HERMAN: And the polished surface.

MR. MARSHALL: And the clean, sort of, polished surface.

MR. HERMAN: Because I think some of the early metalsmiths from that period, Hans Christensen, who was Danish, Jack Prip, were all Scandinavian. So a lot of the programs that came about in the schools seemed to follow that sort of tradition.

MR. MARSHALL: Definitely.

MR. HERMAN: Can you describe the difference between a university trained artist and one who's learned his or her craft outside academia, what the difference would be?

MR. MARSHALL: Well, an awful lot of the difference is just this more broad vision. In the university, you are introduced to a larger picture. I think in an apprentice sort of situation, you're studying under the master, you do as the master, and you have a tendency sometimes to just mimic that situation. I know a lot of times when I talk to different people that decide that they want to take a class in one of the schools in Europe or something, that they come back and say, well, basically we're not allowed to do something different.

The one thing that I think is very important in teaching is that you really bring out the individual. And so in most of my problems that I give students in the hollowware class or any class that I'm teaching, I'll give them the process, but then I'll have them design using their identity. In other words, as I would teach them, I want them to learn that process, but they've got to make that process understand and use their feelings, ideas, and concepts.

MR. HERMAN: John, you're not teaching at all now, are you?

MR. MARSHALL: Well, I'm still part of the university, but this is basically my last year.

MR. HERMAN: So you are retiring in 2001.

MR. MARSHALL: Yeah.

MR. HERMAN: I wasn't sure whether you actually had or not. Are there any of your students that you are especially proud of that you would mention, or is that too loaded of a question? Who have been some of the successful students that have come under your tutelage?

MR. MARSHALL: I'd really like to leave that one.

MR. HERMAN: Okay, that's all right.

MR. MARSHALL: I have some that definitely, if I mentioned a certain name -- there are some that are really coming along, and I really feel that their time is going to be --

MR. HERMAN: But any that you feel have already reached a kind of success either as professors or as makers?

MR. MARSHALL: Well, I'd like to go back to one of my first students. I think this is one that is very rich. There's a fellow by the name of Don Bacorn, and he was in one of my first classes. Don was the kind of person who, no matter what it would be that you would introduce to him as far as the process, he would master it, and he had a tremendous sense of the skill of drawing. He entered into the student silver guild competition and he won first place. He did a chessboard; it was just fabulous. And then, he won the next year in second place with a box.

But he went on to work for a silver company and he did very well there, too -- Kirk Silver Company. And now, I know he's with another company, because Kirk has, I think, been purchased by someone. But anyway, he, to me, I really must say, was someone that was very important to my forming as well as his forming. As a teacher, you know, the whole idea of teaching someone and watching it happen through somebody else, and being concerned about their identity, you learn, I think, more as a teacher than you do as a student.

[Audio break.]

MR. HERMAN: And you were talking about your former student, Don Bacorn, and how he had gone to work with Kirk, and from then on, what happened?

MR. MARSHALL: Well, he's still working for a silver company right now. Kirk has actually been purchased by another company. To tell you the truth, I'm not sure. But I watched him move right along. But it was just quite a wonderful thing for me to run into a student so quickly into my teaching experience that I could see what teaching meant. The one thing that I find, the difference between the apprentice and then the studying of metal in a university or a college -- so many times, I look at students and my major concern is their identity. In other words, how they absorb something, learn something, but in the process of learning from someone, still come through with being themselves.

For me, it's one of the hardest things to do as far as teaching, because so many times, you're so willing to pass on how you would do something, how you think that shape should, how you would do that, instead of being patient and backing off. Let them explore, let them make a mistake, let them struggle, let them have that success. But the important thing is that they are themselves as artists.

MR. HERMAN: It sounds like you're saying that you really have gotten great satisfaction from teaching.

MR. MARSHALL: I can't tell you; it's very hard to say it in words. You know, just as you get a satisfaction out of watching a piece of metal form and do the right thing, to watch a student develop and blossom into something, it's rich. It's just a wonderful experience.

MR. HERMAN: Where do you think universities fit in the craft movement in America?

MR. MARSHALL: Well, I'm getting a little concerned at this time because so much emphasis is being placed on the process of talking and getting dialogue, even though I think this is the major role of the university, is to teach people how to communicate from person to person, what they're doing, why they're doing it, the whole idea of what they're experiencing. But sometimes, just like so many different things that we get involved with, we get carried away. And sometimes, at this point, I'm finding that -- I would like to see us get back to some of the basics and really get back to learning how to deal with things before we start to get so much into talking about it. In other words, I see the young students getting thrown into their art too quickly, with the idea of coming up with a concept.

MR. HERMAN: You mean, developing their voice before they've mastered the basics?

MR. MARSHALL: You're right. And they have a tendency to be able to verbalize very well, but then, the end result is not there.

MR. HERMAN: Do you think that's a pressure either from the art world or from society?

MR. MARSHALL: I really feel that this type of thing is happening both places. I think society is enjoying the whole sense of wanting to know everything, why the artist does what. And to me, the one thing that I always enjoyed about art is, some things, you don't need to say anything about it; it's there, and you enjoy what you see.

MR. HERMAN: If these are visual arts, let them be visual and don't have to describe it.

MR. MARSHALL: Right. It doesn't have to have everything described in detail, and it has to be related to something that happened. Sometimes, it's there.

MR. HERMAN: Does that come out of the way art education has changed or the way that other courses require students to be more -- to describe their feelings or, you know --

MR. MARSHALL: Well, it just seems to be one of those things that's being forced right now. I definitely have times where I really want to talk about what I have tried to say in my work, and I'm interested in hearing how other people receive that. But a lot of times, for me, to have a complete description so that I hand it to someone and then they read it before they look at my piece of work, that's taking everything away from me. Because in some cases, somebody could come up to a piece of mine and see something completely different.

I remember I did a piece for a church. A woman came up there, and she saw all sorts of visions in that. I was excited. That's what it's all about, yeah.

MR. HERMAN: Getting people to look rather than read the labels.

MR. MARSHALL: Yeah, right, I just can't see that.

MR. HERMAN: Well, I guess there are two things: where do you feel that students that you're training today are going to go with their work; what is the career future for someone who's majoring in metal today?

MR. MARSHALL: Metalsmithing today is definitely -- and it's not only in this country, it's in other countries, too, because I've been talking to different people. In fact, I just wrote a paragraph to a metalsmith in Europe, and he's putting a book together. But his feelings, too -- I read something of his -- and he was talking about the tradition of silver. And the tradition of silver is a challenge. Sometimes it gets in our way. But then again, the whole process of explaining what we do, I think, is an important thing to a point. And I still feel that our visual experience, sometimes what we want to say should be there in the work. And the whole idea of allowing the viewer to see sometimes what they see.

MR. HERMAN: But do you feel that there are opportunities for metalsmiths, either apart from jewelers, or maybe those who do objects as well as jewelry, to make it as makers, or is the future in teaching, or as designers for industry?

MR. MARSHALL: The teaching situation is very thin right now.

MR. HERMAN: You mean for opportunities.

MR. MARSHALL: For opportunities, for major positions. In fact, there's a lot of metal programs in universities that are folding, and mainly because the interest of the student coming in, which really is the thing that the school builds around -- what do the students want -- and that's where they put their emphasis. And metals programs are small; they've always been small. And it's been something that we've had to fight from the beginning. You can't teach metalsmithing by mass; you really have to deal with it almost one on one.

MR. HERMAN: For a time, maybe 20 years ago, it seemed to me that there were enough opportunities to go teach in metals programs. But if they're declining in number now, it sounds like teaching is not going to be a viable option for graduates of metals programs.

MR. MARSHALL: No. In fact, when I'm teaching my students today, I really teach with the idea of -- to give them a feel of what form is all about, not with the idea that it is totally focused in on metal only. In other words, a lot of my students, after they leave me, I hope they have an understanding of just what can happen with form. Because I have students right now that are designing in other materials completely, in the automobile industry as well as Boeing, as well as --

MR. HERMAN: You mean graduates of your program.

MR. MARSHALL: Yeah, as well as Corning Glass, and people that have come out of -- students, the whole idea of giving them a sense of what form can do, so that they can actually, when they get out there, these opportunities come around, if they're designing -- for people that are designing furniture as well as industrial designers -- when they come out.

MR. HERMAN: How does that approach to education compare with a craft education in other countries?

MR. MARSHALL: Well, the one thing that I noticed in other countries -- and I did some research in Germany at one of the schools there -- their concern, primarily, is to teach people to learn the craft.

MR. HERMAN: The techniques.

MR. MARSHALL: Yeah. They control the design. I can still remember going to this one school I don't want to mention, but their big direction was that the master smith would make something, and then everyone in the class made the same thing, and how close they could come to his mastership was really what they graded on. And the whole idea of someone coming up with different than that -- and then, when I was in Russia, I really found that the majority -- I did a workshop there, and the majority of the concern there was restoration, how to teach metalsmiths how to copy something that was maybe damaged, destroyed, or something. So it was more in the restoration direction.

MR. HERMAN: Or making a replica.

MR. MARSHALL: Yeah, right.

MR. HERMAN: But that's not the way that other schools operate in the U.S. Is your program at the University of Washington more similar to the way metalsmithing is taught elsewhere here in this country?

MR. MARSHALL: I know there's a lot of programs here, again, that are taught with the idea that the person that is teaching the class, you can really see their influences.

MR. HERMAN: The style.

MR. MARSHALL: In other words, you can take a look at that piece of work and you can say, well, he was taught by so and so. And this was one of my major concerns right from the beginning of teaching. I remember I had a group of students, I really was excited about what they did, and I worked with them night and day. But then, when we got all finished and we had it all out on the table, there were just a whole bunch of little Marshall pieces there [laughs]. And I said, that's not a good teacher.

MR. HERMAN: So how did you consciously go about changing that?

MR. MARSHALL: What I would do is I wait, and this calls for patience -- just like metalsmithing calls for patience, teaching calls for patience -- you wait, you let them digest, and then they say what they want to do with that metal and that process. And then, you try to work through --

MR. HERMAN: The little Marshall pieces.

MR. MARSHALL: Yeah, and you've got to put the little Marshall pieces aside; you've got to work through their piece. In other words, their design, you say, all right, I see that, but you've got to help them see maybe how some proportions could be changed, or maybe how some piece could be constructed a little better, or you've got to show them how that design element there can be subtly changed so that the relationship falls into a proper transition.

MR. HERMAN: Do you tell them how to do that, or do you simply say this isn't quite right and figure out what to do?

MR. MARSHALL: You still just introduce it to them. You give them the possibilities. But one of the hardest things for a teacher to do is not to grab it up and say, well, do it this way. Now, I was taught that way. I must say that Fred was definitely a person that liked to control, and he wanted it right. And the one thing that I learned from him was definitely how to handle the material. But he, in some cases, was a little more control than I wanted to give my students.

MR. HERMAN: So you're not doing that.

MR. MARSHALL: I'm trying not to.

MR. HERMAN: Where do you think that the work -- the metalsmithing that you see today in the U.S. -- how that compares to, then, really the output from other programs?

MR. MARSHALL: Well, right now, because countries are so close together now that we're being influenced back and forth, but the one thing that I do see here in the United States is just the inventiveness, the expression, and the communication.

MR. HERMAN: You see a relationship between metalsmithing today and the objects that come out of it with the other arts.

MR. MARSHALL: Yes, there's definitely an influence that you get, say, from watching, in this area, the glass.

MR. HERMAN: You mean in this geographical area.

MR. MARSHALL: The whole fluidity that happens with it. It's very hard to get sometimes with the metal, but now, with electric forming and different ways, you can get that plasticity. It's always been there, but it called for such control to get it. But visually, to see it happen, and then to push it into a material like metal, it's a challenge, but you know, one worked against the other.

The other thing that happens is just the whole sense of watching artists deal with this whole idea of illusion. Your painters are always trying to produce something that's flat, to make it look like it has dimension. And that whole feeling of illusion can happen on the surface of metal, too, with the use of just line, and the whole idea of using color today is something that's starting to happen more and more.

MR. HERMAN: Color in metal.

MR. MARSHALL: Color in metal, because with the different patinas that you can put on, okay, the use of enamels on the surface -- enameling, which goes way back in history. But we have anodizing that can happen, too, on the surface of metal, and that whole sense of taking the shape and complementing it with the color, you can produce so many wonderful, again, illusions, okay, to space, and cause those shapes and forms to have one more, sort of, step to produce your ideas.

MR. HERMAN: And yet, color has not been really part of your design vocabulary. You haven't used bold color; you use subtlety, perhaps, in metal shades.

MR. MARSHALL: The thing that I've always enjoyed about my pieces is that I try to produce a piece where you're limited in color. But where you put it, and how you place it, color comes into it. In other words, now I'm working with the mokume gane, so I am working with a lot more color, actually, on the surface. But with my silver, the thing that I work with is reflection. And a lot of times, I really started to recognize this when I photographed my pieces as to, you reflect a color into the surface and to watch it break up across these images that you make.

This is why I engrave lines and chase lines in the surface. You break up those colors, but the color is important to only look at it without the idea of what's reflecting. The reflection is something that a lot of people don't see unless they work with it enough, but they do see it sometimes subconsciously; they enjoy something and they don't know why they enjoy it, and sometimes, it's the reflection falling into the piece of color.

MR. HERMAN: Yeah, I hadn't really thought about that as also being color.

How has your work been received over time?

MR. MARSHALL: Well, from the first day I got involved with arts and I had someone come to me and say they were interested in what I was doing, I've been excited. And to this day, when someone says to me, I would love to have one of your pieces, it's a wonderful feeling. And I have been blessed. Right now, I'm four years behind in pieces, and I've always been at least two, and when I first started teaching, I was struggling a little bit, so I was doing pieces just as they came in. But basically, I've always had wonderful clients, from Annie Hauberg -- to name some of the major ones -- Annie Hauberg, and Patrick Lannan, and Michael Scott.

MR. HERMAN: Tell me a little bit about how Michael Scott's commissions began, and how many you've done, and what they are, because I think he's a very interesting client.

MR. MARSHALL: Well, I was asked by a friend to do a show at the Members Gallery at the Seattle Opera. He was head of membership and that sort of thing, and he asked me if I would put on a show, because at intermission and that sort of thing, they come into that member's space, and something for them to see. And to be honest with you, I wasn't too enthused with it; I was really caught up in so much work, and teaching, and that sort of thing. But he prevailed, and I said, fine, I'll set up four five-foot cases.

And my son helped me, because they didn't have any cases, so we put the whole thing together. And it just so happened that it was a *Ring* production, and the person that made the major contribution, if not all of the contribution, was Michael Scott.

MR. HERMAN: You mean, toward that production *War and Peace*, which the Seattle Opera's well known for.

MR. MARSHALL: Right. And they went for the first part of the opera, and I was in there with the cases, and there was someone standing there. And I went over to them just to maybe explain about the work, and he said, "I'm very interested in this. I've been looking even in Europe for somebody to do some things for me. But I'm really interested in this. Do you know the artist?" And I introduced myself, and he said, "This piece that I'm looking at, I'm interested in it. I'd like to buy it."

MR. HERMAN: And what was that piece?

MR. MARSHALL: Actually, it was a silver raised pitcher; it was called *Growth Cycle*. And I gave him a price for the pieces, and he said, "Well, let me go in and catch the first act, and I'll come back." And he came back and he said, "I want that piece. I'll buy that piece." But he said, "I would like to meet you" -- arranged to meet him at one of the major jewelry stores, because there was a large safe that kept some of his stones.

MR. HERMAN: In Seattle.

MR. MARSHALL: In Seattle. But when I was standing there, Speight Jenkins came up and started talking to Michael, and I didn't know really who Michael was at that time. And then, Speight Jenkins said, "Well, Michael Scott is the reason this opera is now being performed." And long story short, Speight told me who he was.

MR. HERMAN: Speight Jenkins is the artistic director of the Seattle Opera.

MR. MARSHALL: But this has been a very, very rich experience, because what Michael ended up bringing to me, bringing up to Seattle, were a number of these very rare stones. The first one that I worked on was a perfectly round rose quartz, and it was a gorgeous stone. And he brought it to the hotel where he was staying --

MR. HERMAN: What's the size of that?

MR. MARSHALL: It's about three and a half inches.

MR. HERMAN: So a sphere.

MR. MARSHALL: Yeah, a sphere. But it's a gorgeous -- one thing about it, it has one star in it, which is hard to find. And just like everybody has stones that he collects, they're from all over the world and very special.

MR. HERMAN: Some of them are crystals, some of them are precious, some of them are nonprecious. They're really mineral examples, what some museums --

MR. MARSHALL: That's what his background is, actually, in the understanding of these different minerals. And so, I took some measurements of it. He says, "Well, you could take it with you," and he gave me an idea of the price of that piece, and I said, "No, I don't think so. Why don't you keep it," and then keep it in the safe that he had arranged to keep it in Seattle. And I went off and I worked up, again, a drawing and a rendering for him, and we met again, and he approved it. Then, I went ahead and made the piece completely, and we met again, and it was a great experience for both of us, because he brought out his stone and I brought out my piece, and he dropped it into place.

MR. HERMAN: Perfect fit.

MR. MARSHALL: Perfect. It went so well that we went from stone, to stone, to stone, to stone.

MR. HERMAN: And what year was that when that started? The *Ring* is done every four years, and it's being done this year, so it had to be eight, 12.

MR. MARSHALL: '91 I think it was.

MR. HERMAN: That would be ten years ago. Yeah, it would be '90 or '89.

MR. MARSHALL: '89, yeah.

MR. HERMAN: And how many pieces has he commissioned now?

MR. MARSHALL: I've done 21 pieces for him.

MR. HERMAN: With the stones.

MR. MARSHALL: No, I did some pieces without stones. I would say the majority of them were with stones, but I've done different things for him. Right now, we are in the process of -- I finished a fountain for him. And the fountain has to go on the grounds where his house is. He's now having a -- it's actually almost a small lake within, and it's a very large pond or a small lake.

MR. HERMAN: He's in California, if I remember.

MR. MARSHALL: Yeah, he's down in California, and on the edge of the lake is going to be this fountain. And the fountain is primarily made of columns of the basalt stone, about eight- to nine-foot-tall columns. And the stones are drilled through the center core, so the water goes through the stone. And then, at the top, are a series of very large sheets of silver, five feet, six feet in size that have been shaped in sort of umbrella shapes. The water comes and hits the underside of the silver and cascades down the stone, and then recycles back up again.

MR. HERMAN: Will there be lighting coming from below to reflect off the silver?

MR. MARSHALL: He has all sorts of ideas as far as the lighting and the arranging, so that actually it can be viewed from almost any place on his property. And this pond or lake, there's going to be a walkway all the way around the edge, so that you can view it from any position.

MR. HERMAN: Have there been other major clients who've commissioned multiple pieces or really huge single pieces?

MR. MARSHALL: Well actually, as I mentioned before, Patrick Lannan, and then Ruth Nutt and Anne Hauberg, and Mark Bloome; I've done a series of pieces for him, some flatware as well as some vases, that sort of thing.

MR. HERMAN: Any corporate commissions?

MR. MARSHALL: No. I did one piece for Boeing one time, but it was definitely for the retirement.

MR. HERMAN: Have there been powerful influences, either people or styles of art, or technological developments that have stimulated your work?

MR. MARSHALL: Actually, the whole process that goes on in metal, there's just always something coming out that does have some impact in me. But as far as some of the things that really influence me, a lot of times is other art.

MR. HERMAN: Like?

MR. MARSHALL: When I went to Europe and in London, they had a Henry Moore show. They had a whole series of his pieces, and that feeling that you get from his pieces, the energy that comes from the inside out. And so much of that with hollowware, you're so aware of it because of that feeling that you get watching a sheet come up. But the energy that's inside is really what you get involved with and what starts to echo out onto that skin.

[Audio break.]

MR. HERMAN: And we were talking about --

MR. MARSHALL: Contemporary artists.

MR. HERMAN: Yes, other sculptors or designers, yeah.

MR. MARSHALL: Well, I'm always wanting to visit museums or places where I can see some sculpture. For instance, in this area, George Tsutakawa has had a great influence on me, mainly because of how sensitive he was in, again, a piece that had so much to say both as itself and both as its function, his working mostly with fountains and his way of making the fountain produce a wonderful experience for the water.

The water doesn't fight the piece, the water works with the piece. And even when the water's off, it has a life. And he has a nice sense, again, of the sheet and how he's taken the sheet and manipulated it in such a way that it receives space very well, as well as receives water.

MR. HERMAN: But he has worked in bronze, so the reflectivity or the color of metal has no importance for him. Anybody else you can think of or any ideas of art movements or design styles that have influenced you?

MR. MARSHALL: Well, I think I've been influenced by faculty members that I'd like to mention. One is Lee DuSell. He was a faculty member at Syracuse University. Here, I think, is where I really started to feel more in tune with emotions. He was a person that worked with [Minoru] Yamasaki as an architect, but he did a lot of his detail work, different things, like the science center here in Seattle. He did the light fixtures that are inside the arches.

And the way he would pursue the design to fit the space, but still the piece had enough of a life that you really enjoyed it as an art form, even if it was a door handle. He did handles, he did elevator doors and things like that, but as a designer, he had such an artistic touch, and he could tell you about it too, which is kind of wonderful.

MR. HERMAN: Have there been critics that have been influential on you? Of course, I think critical writing in the crafts is always something that we complain about. And since you have not, for the most part, done gallery shows so your work has been in museum exhibitions, has critical writing been any kind of an influence?

MR. MARSHALL: I'm not going to name anyone, because at the present time I really struggle with a lot of people that are critics that I think don't know the field. In other words, they're talking about something, and some of the explanations they give, as far as in our field, just some of the people that we have that do a decent job with that, you can see them struggling with it. I think Bruce Metcalf does a decent job. Gary Griffin does a nice job of describing. I think Griffin, he is involved and he does work with the material, and some of his descriptions I do enjoy.

As far as magazines, I think Lois Moran of *American Craft*, she has always been, I think, a person that has dealt with the craft world in a way that she's been able to make people aware and still keep it to a high caliber, but say it in such a way that I think she shows a real respect to the artist and the craftsman.

MR. HERMAN: Do you think that periodicals like *American Craft* have been beneficial?

MR. MARSHALL: Without a doubt. I know myself, when I was doing my undergraduate work, the program was such that we really didn't get introduced to a lot of outside work. Sometimes we might see some slides, but not very often. In some ways, I felt this was a benefit, because I really had to struggle within myself to come up with something. Today, we have so much of this information to the students, they're almost bombarded with it. Sometimes, you can see how they're influenced by somebody and they do it; they almost mimic the situation to meet the times, instead of trying to struggle through the whole idea of what should happen here, not what has happened here.

MR. HERMAN: Is there -- because I think about how craft marketing has changed and the advent of the big wholesale and retail fairs -- students you may not see, though, are looking that far ahead to how they're going to sell that work and whether they're thinking in terms of multiple production versus individual objects.

MR. MARSHALL: Well, the student today is very caught up in how they can market. And you have so many things going on with the Internet and everything else that makes a lot of this happen. But too much of some of the questions that are being asked about work are not the right questions. One of the first questions someone says is, how much? Or you have a lot of silver in there; how much did the silver cost? And this has always disturbed me, because the value of the silver is such a small token of the value of a piece.

MR. HERMAN: It's really probably only in metalsmithing, though, is that question asked. No one asks how much the glass or the clay cost or the threads.

MR. MARSHALL: Yeah, this is something that definitely is a challenge for me to get around.

MR. HERMAN: Yeah, that raises a question about the importance of metal versus clay, or glass, or other materials as a vehicle for expression.

MR. MARSHALL: Well, when I was at Cleveland, I had, like I said, because of the foundation Toshiko Takaezu was my ceramic teacher, and definitely, she was a wonderful person to study under. But clay, just the whole sense of it, didn't work for me. And I tried wood and I tried stone, and again, Cleveland was great that way.

MR. HERMAN: You know, certainly in school, you are looking not only at your teacher's work, but other students' work too, and often that grows into, as you graduate, into a craft community, whether it's a metals guild or a more general craft membership organization in an area. Has that kind of community been important to you?

MR. MARSHALL: Very much so. For instance, the Society of North American Goldsmiths, this was my real way of getting introduced to the field. And I remember coming in contact with [Olaf] Skoogfors and so many people that gave me so many insights on some of the problems and some of the challenges that I was facing. Because when I was at Syracuse University and teaching there, I was somewhat alone, still challenging the whole idea of trying to establish myself as a metalsmith.

But when you came to an organization like that, this is where I met Stanley Lechtzin and so many people in the field, doing so many different things. And Fred Fenster was another one that I was really pleased to meet. And the whole idea that you could exchange not only what you're doing as a metalsmith, but also as a teacher.

MR. HERMAN: Does that continue to be true? Are you actively involved now with either the Society of North American Goldsmiths, the Seattle Metals Guild, or other groups?

MR. MARSHALL: I really don't do it, and I'm not as involved as I used to be. At one time, I really felt that it was necessary as a teacher and as an artist to get this experience as much as I could and touch these people as much as I could. But right now, I find time so valuable and I have so many things that I want to say -- I must admit, at this point, I'm very selfish, and I want to just do as much as I can that's up in my head.

MR. HERMAN: The similarities between your early work and what you're making now, do you see a continuing thread or have you changed directions over the years?

MR. MARSHALL: I would say, as far as just the whole idea of -- when I first started, I was very concerned with the craft and how to teach my hands to do the right thing. Now, I don't worry about my hands, and I know what I'm doing there. And the whole idea of communicating from my mind to my hands, it's there. Now, it's a bigger picture, and it's an opportunity right now of digging a little deeper and saying something that -- it's almost like when I'm reading something, you read something here, but when you finally get to reading poetry, you're getting down to where someone has taken those words and sifted them out and found just the right ones to say just enough.

MR. HERMAN: That sounds like a good analogy. And where do the ideas for you come from?

MR. MARSHALL: Well, an awful lot of it comes from my visual experience. Like when I was at Syracuse, I was just starting to see some things. I would go down into New York and try to experience as much as I could, but here, my experience with landscape and space -- my work, when I came out here, it grew, and for some reason, I became outside instead of inside. I really realized not only one piece but many pieces. I realized that the whole sense of opening up the space outside of the space, instead of getting so involved with the containment of space.

MR. HERMAN: Is there any way that political and social commentary figure into your work?

MR. MARSHALL: Not really. No, I really find that the whole business of teaching, when you're talking about politics and that sort of thing, it is too heavy and it gets in the way.

MR. HERMAN: Your work is not figurative, so it would be in a very abstract way if that should happen.

MR. MARSHALL: Right.

MR. HERMAN: What about your relationships with curators and museums? Are there any that you would comment on?

MR. MARSHALL: I definitely would comment on Paul Smith. I think he's been so steady, I think, in his direction and focus, and very genuine about how he's pursued this. I also find myself enjoying the National Ornamental Metal Museum there -- Jim Wallace. Jim is a person; he works so hard, and so does his wife. You know, they're putting on things and it's amazing what they're doing there.

MR. HERMAN: John, are there other things that we haven't touched on that you want to talk about?

MR. MARSHALL: Actually, the only thing that I would like to say at this point is that so much of what has happened to me has happened because of just people and their influences. So when I look at this situation where I come from and the whole experience of education, we definitely have to support education. The whole idea of coming from a public school and being given this opportunity, and it has been given to me through public support. And then the whole business of getting into universities and watching how something has happened that I never thought would happen to me. I'm very fortunate, and I think education is something we just really have to give notice to.

MR. HERMAN: Have you noticed a difference, since education in elementary schools and public schools has been declining over the last decade or even longer, how that's -- well, it would have to be longer for you to have any

sense of the impact in the students you have at the university level?

MR. MARSHALL: So much of it, I'm looking at it in the art direction, I just find that there seems to be more emphasis on the other fields, and I think they're important. The basics of just reading, writing, and math and this sort of thing, and the computer. But I'm getting very concerned with how we are being manipulated into this situation where the mind is getting too many things that are being forced upon it without allowing that whole sense of creativity to be appreciated.

MR. HERMAN: Forced how? I'm not sure I follow.

MR. MARSHALL: Well, I just see how, when you're looking at these young students coming in, they seem to have too much of things that have been sort of planned and controlled as to the directions that they should take. In the high schools, you've seen the art classes disappear, unless they go to private schools. Private schools are not supporting the arts and supporting that whole idea of creating the individual.

MR. HERMAN: [Public] schools are not supporting the arts.

MR. MARSHALL: Right. I'm seeing a lot of the art classes that are possibly not getting that kind of support and importance that it should receive. And I know that's something that just played so heavily in my direction.

MR. HERMAN: I didn't ask you, but I will now, to describe your working environment and your way of working.

MR. MARSHALL: Well, my studio, actually, I planned it around the whole idea of working by myself. We're now seated in the loft area where I do my designing, and then also some showcases. If I have a client that I bring, I can set the cases up to meet certain situations, again, to give them an idea of how I do something and how it might relate to what they want. And then, the main floor is where I do all the forging, raising, and all my different processes. And then, I have a back room for doing all of my buffing and finishing.

But it's really built around the idea of -- things are close, and I build it around the idea of it being very convenient to get to things and try to get the equipment, so that when I want to say something, it's here, and if I want to do a certain process, I can do it right here and I don't have to go anywhere else.

MR. HERMAN: How much time do you spend in a studio during a typical week? How much are you teaching -- that would be part of it?

MR. MARSHALL: When I was teaching, I really worked usually down at the university three days a week. The other days, even sometimes on Sunday, I would be doing something in the studio. Right now, I usually try to work in the studio five days a week at least, sometimes more.

MR. HERMAN: Eight-hour days, or longer or shorter?

MR. MARSHALL: Actually, my days are, I try to get in eight hours. I'll break it up sometimes, but I'll try to get in eight hours. Before, I would probably put in more like 10 or 12, but I'm back to eight right now [laughs].

MR. HERMAN: Have either of your sons taken up art-making as a career, or has your example influenced them in any noticeable way?

MR. MARSHALL: Well actually, my boys, the one thing I tried to do just like I did with my students -- this is your life. And they've watched, and they've been a very major influence to me. And they still come in and we talk about my work, and they'll give me their thoughts. I even talked to my son last night about us talking together. He's an actor; he's down in Los Angeles, in Hollywood, and he's struggling. So I do, as an artist, have certain things that I talk to him about. And my other son, he's in physical therapy, and he works downtown --

MR. HERMAN: Here in Seattle.

MR. MARSHALL: Yeah, with patients. And I am very proud of him and how he's very supportive to getting people back to their normal way of life.

MR. HERMAN: Yeah, that's great. Well, I can't think of anything else to ask, so unless you have any concluding comments, I will say this is the end of the interview with John Marshall.

[END OF INTERVIEW.]