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Oral history interview with Edgar Anderson,  
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# Transcript

## Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Edgar Anderson on September 17-18, 2002. The interview took place in Morristown, New Jersey, and was conducted by Donna Gold 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.

Donna Gold has reviewed the transcript and has made corrections and emendations. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

## Interview

DONNA GOLD: Okay, and now I'll just say that this is Donna Gold interviewing Edgar Anderson at his amazing home—in Hardwood Township?

EDGAR ANDERSON: Harding Township.

MS. GOLD: Harding—in New Jersey. And it's September 17, 2002.

And I thought, even though our—the questions begin with your childhood, I wanted to ask you a little bit about something that you said, and that is—in one of your writings you said that we share 50 percent of our genes with trees—and here you are living and you share so much of your life with trees, and I was wondering if you wanted to talk about your affinity with trees and with wood.

MR. ANDERSON: Well, the tree analogy is sort of that all of us are affected genealogically by those that precede us, and I've been discovering some certain particular very, very valuable traits that I have in furniture design that I can really trace back through people and previous generations that had this particular thing. So I came up with this tree analogy, sort of that on the day of my birth my parents gave me a lot of presents, and one of them was the environment where the trees grow, and another was a toolkit of dreams which I could write my own user's manual. This is how I got into the tree thing, that a family tree, like a tree in the woods, is an entity that shares these things with me.

When I cut a tree I stand back and look at it and I talk to the tree, not in a romantic manner [laughs]—but I talk to the tree, and the tree and I discuss how best to fell the tree. And then when I cut that tree, after admiring the structure and the beauty, and the beauty and the utility of the wood that we're going to make out of it, which is going to be liberated from the trunk, I think about the tree's environment and its genetic characteristics. And then I take the tree from this wood, which is different from its neighbors in its size and its shape and its color and its texture and utility.

So, can the tree talk? And this is where if we have 50 percent of our genes that we share with our trees, we should be able to communicate to that tree in some manner or another, and indeed, when we do cut the tree we can look at its annual rings there. Each one has a certain significance to that tree itself. In periods of drought, the tree annual rings are small. In a period of time where the tree was adjacent to a much larger neighbor, you can see the annual rings, instead of being a circle, are less even where it was putting up a defense mechanism and perhaps and not succeeding too well. So this annual ring is really how we trace its roots, and it is the storyboard of the life of the tree.

So, you take the story of the tree and the influences on its life, and the story of the woodworker and the influences on his life and they come together, like, this is how—the beauty or the utility or whatever of the plank that I cut from it. The skill that I mentioned was structural visualization, or spatial recognition—and I had—not really self-diagnosed, but I've been tested and have fantastic skill in this, so, see around corners, all that kind of thing.

MS. GOLD: I was fascinated by that, just what you said about that, that you can see around corners. Do you remember recognizing that as a child?

MR. ANDERSON: I don't know a whole lot of these things, or the skills that I inherited from my parents. I really wasn't backward reading too much on that; I was wanting to get on with, oh, a great number of different things as a child. But all the things I was doing are indicative now of looking back and, oh, there were really some influence of that in there. And it's so necessary for woodworkers and three-dimensional people, of course, to be able to do this. And I think that it's inherited, and I think that the experience that I think I've inherited should serve as a model for remediation in woodworkers that don't have that.

Later on when I was teaching down at the Philadelphia College of Art—and I think this is getting a little aside, and I think when you get into wanting to talk about teaching—[inaudible]. But anyhow, I have all the students that did have this problem, and Bill Daley, a wonderful ceramist who was in the department, created a special course to take the students who were thinking flat and turn them into thinking in three-dimensions.

The progenitors that I had, they didn't know about spatial visualization or structural visualization, but they were engaged in occupations that required the great ability to visualize objects in a three-dimensional space.

MS. GOLD: And this is your parents you are talking about? You're speaking about your parents, right?

MR. ANDERSON: Yes, I'm talking about—yes, I'm talking about parents and grandparents and great-grandparents, and very briefly [laughs]—and I'd love to explore it in great depth because I really actually made some notes here on them. It's far greater than even the very brief things I'll tell you about.

One of the things that, in addition to the mere fact, or the major fact of structural visualization, they have just released a study that says that people who take physical action in their activities for which spatial visualization is necessary, like we have contractors in the family, construction people, and they have to have this, but they're also—some of them are physical people that—people that use structural visualization with physical activities, activities for which spatial visualization is necessary; they enhance both their physical skill and their spatial recognition ability, and the study they did says that baseball practitioners, fighter pilots, for instance, they have this.

MS. GOLD: Oh, boy, yes.

MR. ANDERSON: In other words, they see well so they perform well, and they perform well and that helps them to see well. So, this is a wonderful around and around thing. And I'm certainly not a pioneer on that, but why I'm making it so important to you is that in 60 years of doing this I find it's important, and I think it crucial that craftsmen, particularly in the useful three-dimensional arts, furniture designers and so on.

So my father was—Edgar Anderson was a civil engineer in World War I when he was a naval officer. My mother, Helen Anderson, Helen Raddoman [ph] Polkham [ph] Anderson was an artist. My grandfather was a large manufacturer of handcrafted bank ledgers, and he invented mechanisms for them also.

MS. GOLD: And these were leather—

MR. ANDERSON: Yes. We can't put it on tape but I'd love to show you [laughs] one of those. Cordovan leather—cordovan leather with corduroy, and handsome, handsome things, because this gave the people in the bank this important craft object to signify how the bank felt about the importance of their work—and all hand-tooled and engraved leathers, and I've got books that my—you want to see?

MS. GOLD: Sure, I'll take a look at them. We'll have to describe what we are seeing here. [Laughs.]

MR. ANDERSON: But look at this—

MS. GOLD: Oh, yeah—

MR. ANDERSON: —this corduroy and this—I don't know what cordovan leather is. That's what my family told me. And look at this—look at the engraving, the gold work.

MS. GOLD: The gold work, yeah.

MR. ANDERSON: And this mechanism in here that fastens all these in. It's adjustable. He devised little crank things that would expand so they could put more leverage on it.

MS. GOLD: So this is your grandfather, your father's father?

MR. ANDERSON: My father's father, yes.

MS. GOLD: And he was a leather—he was a bookbinder, really.

MR. ANDERSON: Yes, but he had the great physical skill of engaging in the gentle human sport of boxing that they had back then. A gentleman, he used to go down to the gym, and he actually was very good at that. As a matter of fact, he was a lightweight in that, and he was boxing with someone by the name of Cal McCarthy, who was a professional boxer. My grandfather knocked him out, and Cal McCarthy, three weeks later, became the lightweight champion of the world.

[They laugh.]

MS. GOLD: Oh, wow, that's something.

MR. ANDERSON: But he was involved in other stuff like that. The Triangle Shirtwaist fire, I don't know if you know about that.

MS. GOLD: Sure.

MR. ANDERSON: Okay. Very, very important; it's what all our building codes are based on. Here these women were trapped. The owner of this shirt manufacturer locked the doors so that they wouldn't be running to the bathroom all the time and be losing a couple of minutes of work—

MS. GOLD: Right.

MR. ANDERSON: So a lot of people perished in there. And I was discussing this with my father maybe 50 years after that happened, and he just casually mentioned, he said, you know, your grandfather had an incident down there where there were these people trapped in there and the fire escape was broken and he jumped up on the lower part of the broken fire escape, and he passed these girls down one after another. And I said, well, is that Triangle Shirtwaist? He said, well, he didn't really know, but the location and everything else [laughs]—anyhow, he did that kind of stuff.

Another show-and-tell I just picked up over there, this is my great grandfather's, who I was just about to reference, his telescope that he used when was a sea captain. He sailed out of Norway, and he was a sea captain, and, well, he had great stories too of the sailor scar on his arm that he got when the pirates that were really right in the Gulf War area attacked him and just quietly said, well—he never did that to anyone again. [Laughs] So, I don't think the pirate picked on the right guy. But let me get on track here.

MS. GOLD: You know, I was very interested in thinking about that bank ledger and the, what you said about the importance of the—you know, it just shows the importance that the bank placed in its people and its work, and I wonder if that got passed on to you in a sense of what—you know, how craft or beautiful objects resonate and mean a lot more than just something beautiful to hold? Do—

MR. ANDERSON: Yes. We were surrounded by Victorian furniture in my family's house because my great-grandfather Raddoman [ph] was a cabinetmaker and a stair builder and house builder, and we had some of his furniture, so I was surrounded by that. And I was also surrounded by a sense of integrity. All these people had very integritous [sic] positions. My uncle, Jack Anderson, was the commander of the United States Line, and he was captain of the America and captain of the United States, and this was a very, very responsible position, and people back then took those responsibilities seriously.

So, this is part of it—and my uncle, who I worked with for a while, my uncle, Mel Anderson—learned a lot from him, and maybe, if we talk about it, apprenticeships and things like that, we may talk about him later. But he was a very integritous person and his work ethic was always to do the best work that you could do. And this has sort of followed through our lives. We're not in business to make money; we're in business to create objects, and if it takes longer than we think and we're going to be bankrupt, that doesn't matter at all; we want that object to be what it is supposed to be. And, my alma mater, Pratt Institute, used to have a logo that said, "Be true to your work and your work will be true to you," and I took that to heart a little bit.

And then the—Stickley's Craftsman's Farms, the furniture this designer made was Stickley. His home base here was in a community right nearby, and the people that bought that from the Stickley family were very good friends of ours. So we would spend a lot of time over at the Stickley house with these great copper hoods over the fireplaces that sort of said things that were something to the effect that the day is too short to get the work done. That wasn't exactly what it was, but it was a great Gaelic expression of the same thing. So there's just a lot of things that go on there altogether.

MS. GOLD: Well, I think I'd like you to talk a little more about your uncle because I think you worked with him as a child, but also, if you don't mind just talking a little bit about your childhood—and I don't think I got where—you were born on—

MR. ANDERSON: Okay, let me get into that.

MS. GOLD: Yeah, sure—

MR. ANDERSON: Okay, let's leave the uncle until—you will probably be asking me about apprenticeships and so on. He'll fit in very nicely there—

MS. GOLD: So you were born—

MR. ANDERSON: I was born in Jersey City, and Jersey City was my grandparents' base—the family cemetery is right there looking at the World Trade Center. And I have great connections with the whole area there, but of course were terminated on—my family and my brothers and I became of school age when they moved out to the suburbs in West Orange. In fact we could go up to the top of our house on the side of the hill and we could look out and—the World Trade Center wasn't there but we could see New York City at that time. But my grandparents did exactly the same thing, they, when they were first married, were living in New York, and then when their children got of school age they moved—it wasn't quite the suburbs, but moved away from the city, over to Jersey City. And that's where I came from.

I was born on February the 23, 1922. That's two, three, twenty-two. My mother, an artist and amateur architect, wanted it to be two, two, twenty-two, and she tried very hard, not for any—

MS. GOLD: [Laughs.]

MR. ANDERSON: —mystic reasons, but just simply because the numbers were a bit nicer on the page.

MS. GOLD: Now, you said actually—before you said February 23, but it's actually February 3—

MR. ANDERSON: Yes, I'm sorry, February 3.

MS. GOLD: —which to me has a nice ring. I mean, that's a little harmonic dissonance in the numbers.

MR. ANDERSON: Two, three, twenty-two. Yeah, that's another way of looking at it. I look at things on pages. If I had realized how many thousands and thousands of times I would look at a document and see two, three, twenty-two, why, I think that the unsymmetrical numbers there, I think I would have been a little more cooperative. [They laugh.]

MS. GOLD: [Inaudible.]

MR. ANDERSON: Oh, no.

These visualization skills that I had—and I go a little bit beyond this—and I'm not unique in that Salvador Dali was one of the people that had these kind of things—

MS. GOLD: But we're talking about the ability to see around corners.

MR. ANDERSON: Well, yes, but more of that the way that I actually visualize things, I think of everything in images. Now, when I think about a document, it visualizes itself. I'm thinking about the contents of it, but I actually see the document with printed letters on it, so I visualize it. And any noun on that page that pops up creates a mental image of that object.

So this has a sort of an interesting other thing that makes my thinking process a little bit unusual and a little bit valuable. As an environmentalist here, I've been founding chairman of a committee that looks at land use and zoning issues in our rural residential community, and particularly as they are being attacked by the developers, and we have done a lot of work on this committee to limit the developers in favor of open space. So that is what I'm thinking about right now. When I first looked at a zoning ordinance, for instance, proposed to increase the distance that a house must be set back from road, this is—creates more open space but it simultaneously limits the big development of how many houses can be there. Our primary interest is the open space, but that's what happens. The words that were setbacks—changes to setbacks from a hundred feet to a hundred and fifty feet.

Right now a visual image of what I'm saying there, I see the blur of the road; I see the distance of the house moving back and the images of the road and building and the trees that will be saved, and the reduced traffic caused by reducing the developer's space. All of these are mental images on this. Other people do it also, but I'm comparing this to what the developer's lawyer sees. The developer's lawyer sees a package of words or sequences ready for evidence as a written legal brief. I don't know how unusual this is, but it's something that's very useful when you're on the board of a township making the plan and going and saying, hey, let's think about what we're really looking at here. I'm trying to think—

MS. GOLD: So you use that in your speech; you use that in your talking. You've described what you see in your eye?

MR. ANDERSON: I have two beautiful examples of that, but I do get sidetracked.

MS. GOLD: [Laughs.]

MR. ANDERSON: In my—to me, numbers, for instance, are actually tools. I greatly admire the scientists who can look at the Mandelbrot set, this complicated formula, and what I see is the wonderful flow of images that artists

have been using to create these sort of spaceship going down through the time tunnel and through sort of Victorian images kind of things. I have great admiration for the mathematicians, but the physicists are saying, this is a beautiful formula, and they're talking about the interrelations of the numbers.

Well, the numbers are really sort of a little bit of an impediment to me. I think of numbers as tools; tools like my pencil for instance that I use to make marks to cut wood. And in addition to that, since I'm making marks, not shuffling numbers, if I want to mark to the center of a board to make a cut in the center, and the board is nine and  $31/32$  wide, and I want it to be exactly in the center, well, that's a moderately easy thing to do—not that easy for me [laughs] but I can certainly do that. Then I simply mark the board and go to the closest sixty-fourths with my 2H pencil, but I can do it far more quicker and far more accurately by letting the ruler hang over an equal amount on each end. In other words, I'm not measuring—I'm not using the rule at nine and  $31/32$ , I'm moving over so that I see equal number of little marks.

MS. GOLD: And you can see it visually, or are you counting the marks?

MR. ANDERSON: I actually see them—I actually see the ruler. I'm not going to demonstrate it to you here because we want to the tape to be able to visualize it too. [Laughs.] But I move it over so that—let us say that here's the one-inch mark and the ten-inch mark, and I shuffle it back and forth so there's an equal amount of space inside of the nine-inch—or whatever we're talking about—the sixty-fourth of an inch. So, like, getting them visually exactly the same, I can see the sixty-fourth that isn't even marked on my ruler, and then I go to the five in the middle and make the mark, and—

MS. GOLD: And you're always right?

MR. ANDERSON: It's right on target. I have a lot of little tricks like that, but we'll save that for later. We really did get sidetracked.

[Tape stops, re-starts.]

I wasn't a great scholar, but because I had a heart problem, which I undiagnosed in order to enter the army later on, I couldn't participate in sports, and therefore I took a lot more art classes and spent my school time more in individualistic pursuits instead of being able to go out on the ball field. I enjoyed making things and fixing things. I fixed friends' cars before I could even drive. I was always fixing radios, and starting with a crystal set—I think I'll go back to crystal sets. [Laughs.] Our first radio was a crystal set, and I made one, but then fixing radios and ultimately I got into fixing televisions just for the fun of it really.

And in the summertime, why, I went into my uncle's carpenter and boat shop, which was—my grandfather had a large piece of property, and they had summer houses for the family there, but also my uncle lived there all year-round because his boat building and his carpenter shop was there, and I did a lot of things in there. And then the home environment that I was in at the time really encouraged reading and music and support for my—whatever I was experimenting at the time; metal or wood or chemicals—oops. [Tape recorder falls.]

MS. GOLD: Oh, dear. We're all set, I think; you're fine.

MR. ANDERSON: It's still—

MS. GOLD: Yeah, it's okay.

MR. ANDERSON: I'll have to give a free ad for Sony.

MS. GOLD: [Laughs] To bring the Timex—

MR. ANDERSON: So I'd take my allowance and buy tools with it. And I still have, and I still use, some of those tools, and I still have tools that have been handed down through the family.

MS. GOLD: So woodworking was an early interest of yours?

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, my very first interest was I took apart the family's Big Ben alarm clock at age four [laughs]. I still have it and it still runs. I don't know whether I put it back or not—I took it apart. So I really was in—not to the sacrifice of the things that I could do. I certainly was pretty healthy except for my bad heart.

So this made a great problem, however, when I went to decide what of all of these skills I wanted to use for the college courses that I was going to take. And a relative that was a teacher up in the northern New York school system, she was one of the very first school counselors to help people decide where they were going to go. It wasn't really a big field at that time, and she was pretty good at it. So she suggested something I seem to remember was called the Rochester Athenaeum. She knew what my skills were and felt that this might be the place to go. But my father had wanted me to go to study engineering at his alma mater at Lafayette College,

and Atheneum to him didn't even sound like college. [Laughs.]

I always wondered if this Rochester Athenaeum had anything to do with the Rochester Institute of Technology. It's just possible, and I just never checked this out. But they of course were one of the very first people immediately after the war to do their whole craft course, and it's become a very important school there.

I'd like to discuss the power of—I'm just briefly getting to something important here. I think of words as symbols, and I think you have to be careful of what you call yourself. People in the advertising business are very, very, very aware of this, of what their icons are and what they call themselves. It doesn't necessarily have anything to do with what they are at all, but on the commercials on TV they are creating that particular image of their selves. Hey, this SUV with 150 watts of power for the radio. Well, when I turn on my stereo here and enjoy good music, why, I have it maybe at 10 watts of power. So they're creating some image that really doesn't have that much to do with me, but they sell cars that way.

So anyhow, you have to be very careful what you call yourself because you ultimately might become that which you have called yourself. So, this is that "Eureka!" moment in my life. This is, here I am floundering around and, oh, what do I want to be?

MS. GOLD: And you're about how old? You're in—

MR. ANDERSON: High school.

MS. GOLD: High school.

MR. ANDERSON: About at that point, hey, next year we're going to get to go to college kind of thing.

MS. GOLD: And it's assumed that you're going to go to college?

MR. ANDERSON: Yes, no question about that, yes. This was in the very late 1930s, and my mother discovered the Johnson O'Connor Aptitude Test at Stevens Institute, where—

MS. GOLD: Stevens Institute in—

MR. ANDERSON: In—it's now—it's a very well recognized engineering school now. It's in Hoboken. And it was donated, or was formed by the Stevens family of the old—Castle Stevens used to be their main administrative office, and in that, Castle Stevens was wonderful; a grand staircase going up to this elaborate family home. And that staircase was actually made by the great-grandfather I just referred to before—before he came—after he became a cabinetmaker he became a stair-maker, and this is one of the most intricate fields in the whole woodcraft business, designing—we haven't quite finished our circular stairs. [Laughs.] We have a design, but we haven't quite stepped up to the challenge yet.

And, coincidentally, my mother, later on, after this Johnson O'Connor test, she studied engineering—drawing there for her own use.

MS. GOLD: So was this your great-grandfather coming back to you, and—[laughs].

MR. ANDERSON: Oh, making stairs, over and over, but, hey, when I was taking the test [laughs]—hey, great. It wasn't the usual multiple-choice test that were being used in this infant industry. This was a pioneer, laboratory, hands-on investigation that had received great acclaim. And I took this one- or two-day test that included a 20-inch cube—Widley Blocks, among the other spatial visualization tests. And it was a scientifically designed thing, sort of like the things that you see at the crafts fairs; a little block that you take apart—

MS. GOLD: A puzzle—

MR. ANDERSON: —and then—yes, a puzzle block, a three-dimensional puzzle block. And as a matter of fact when Joyce and I were working down in Honduras, we actually made this, as part of our program in the local domestic woods in Honduras as a carry-on—sort of a blockhead kind of a puzzle. And we used all that the individual local woods there, including one that we didn't have a name for, and the Honduras people had a local name for it, but we had the scientific names on these so that people that took them had the game and could see the wood.

So, we sent a sample to the Wood Technology—Wood Technology Labs, and they didn't have a name for it. So what we did was took the first letters of all the people we had down there on our program, came up with a name, Wejeg, and in looking back—I'll have to check this in a Spanish dictionary—but one of the letters in Wejeg, it may be the W, it isn't in the Spanish language.

MS. GOLD: How do you spell Wejeg?

MR. ANDERSON: Let's see. W-A-H—I'll have to check with the boss later on. [Laughs] She's the language person and she speaks Spanish. I once again got a little sidetracked.

MS. GOLD: No, that's right. We were talking about Johnson O'Connor and we went to Honduras. But that's okay. We will—

MR. ANDERSON: Go back to Johnson O'Connor?

MS. GOLD: Yeah, yeah.

MR. ANDERSON: Great. This was my "Eureka!" moment; this was, be careful what you call ourselves—or yourselves. I was the second fastest—they timed your structural and spatial visualization on how fast it—

MS. GOLD: It's fine, it's going. I'm just—

MR. ANDERSON: I was the second fastest that ever reassembled the cube. This was of course only about two years they had been doing that, but still, I was the second-fastest. That was pretty neat, but yet, better yet, my mother had the highest score, and my brother, the scientist, had the second [*sic*] highest.

MS. GOLD: So was your mother the fastest then?

MR. ANDERSON: My mother was the fastest they had ever tested at that point, I was the second fastest, and my brother, who is a physicist and he was very much into this, and he was into optics, and he designed a video display tube that the Tectronic Company, who he worked for at that time, named the Anderson Tube, and built a whole separate factory just to fabricate that. So, he's pretty good, but he's into music also.

So at that—the spatial visualization and structural visualization, in addition to my extra-good tweezers-dexterity test among other of those kind of things—I handle things—indicated that I would be a pretty good surgeon, on the basis of those things. However, my poor language memory meant that I certainly couldn't get through medical school, which at that time required Latin. Okay, so I can't be a surgeon. I could become an excellent structural engineer and, hey, [inaudible]—but my bad numbers memory, as I later found out—I was not quite for structural engineering.

So they couldn't make any recommendations on, for instance, my excellent tonal memory, music tonal memory, and that in the context of numbers memory and so on and my score readings and so on, I probably would be impaired as a musician anyhow. Fortunately, it's good that I didn't become professionally involved in music because my hearing was damaged in World War II. And my damaged hearing probably amplifies, over the years, my poor manipulation of words and numbers. If you just give me a number out of context I have trouble hearing it because of my—

MS. GOLD: You do very well with words, I have to say. You do well.

MR. ANDERSON: Well, want to see my spelling?

Music really is an important part of my environment—our environment, and I think when we talk about environment and mental influences on our work, maybe with Joyce later on, and how that got into it.

Now, another aspect of all of this, there was a time ten years ago—more than that, when they first discovered the polar bias of people's hardwiring in their brain, and aside from the pop culture developed about that, I am very, very definitely right-brained, which means, again, the structural visualization and overall perception and pattern and recognition and a lot of the other right-brained things.

That also tells me, which is true, that I have very bad left-brain things, such as language skills and numbers and language memory, and even a linear time sense. As you're finding out now, I have no sense of time, and I'll be going on 'til midnight. [They laugh.] Anyway, I think that what I'm saying is that my ancestors passed along certain genetic information that could sort of be considered an instruction manual and Johnson O'Connor codified the index and then they gave it to me to take it from there. They sort of read the tea leaves and then now I'm going to go out and brew and serve the drink kind of thing. Now this leads us, if you want, to go onto the Pratt Institute now, which is the next lineal in line of the education.

MS. GOLD: Well, I—you know I thought I might actually ask you a little bit about your mother who was—you talked about her as being an architect and artist?

MR. ANDERSON: Right.



MS. GOLD: And how was that an effect on your life? I mean, was she actually working—

MR. ANDERSON: She was an incredible person at age—young in high school, she started collecting swatches of material for interior decorating and designing things. She got the catalogs for the then—now we're talking about the early teens—the craftsman-style house that you could buy in kits. She got those catalogs and she redesigned them and she drew furnishings for them, and she became quite a painter. She took courses in a nunnery on China painting, and she did China painting as a teenager.

And she was also a very beautiful person; she was actually an artist model for magazine covers, and my grandmother was very sure that the artists came to their house instead of my mother going to the artists' studio. And she was sort of an amateur architect and she loved to draw house plans, and I got this from her. And she—one time, as an adult, she had loved doing these house plans, a friend of hers was in the real estate business, and right down the road from us here—we didn't live here at the time, this was still in high school. He needed, quickly—he needed a drawing of the Frank Lloyd Wright house that sits back there, and the situation was such that he couldn't—she couldn't really go in there and measure and so on, so she went in, looked around, went home, and did a full floor plan completely from memory.

MS. GOLD: Oh—oh, so you really inherited those qualities from your family.

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MS. GOLD: And you had one brother?

MR. ANDERSON: I had two brothers: one brother was born with cerebral palsy and was instituted, in institutions all of his life, but my other brother, Robert, was early on into science things and so on. My father's method of educating us at home—both the family let us certainly control what we were doing; they gave us a lot of freedom in what we were doing. My father very much wanted us to excel in the things that he was good at; he wanted us to be cloned from him, more or less.

And his business, in the construction field—he for instance was in charge of the foundation work for the Chrysler Building, which was the second biggest building in New York. And it was a really rough-and-tumble thing there. And his typical response on that kind of job—and he had a certain amount of integrity that, first of all, he was responsible within this limit of money, he was responsible for the job, he was working for the contractor. Secondly—first he represented the building, then secondly he had to represent the contractor's interest. So the normal thing when all the subcontractors and the labor unions are coming making demands and demands and demands, his response was sort of like, well, the answer is no, what was the question? [Laughs] This is sort of like when you push the help button on the computer.

MS. GOLD: But he's the one who found Pratt Institute for you, right?

MR. ANDERSON: Pardon?

MS. GOLD: He was the one who found Pratt—

MR. ANDERSON: Yes. He's the one that found Pratt. Let me just turn back to my brother; I could live with this. My brother couldn't, starting with the fact that my brother never learned to swim and my father figured, well, you're at an age to go swimming, so he threw him off the dock; and my brother's never been in a bathing suit since then. So he then got very deeply into doing the creative things, and if you want I can go into the great things he did do, but primarily he did them out in the West coast, as far away from home as possible [laughs] and he achieved some great things in his field.

Let me get back to my father at Pratt. Here I was—

[Tape stops, re-starts.]

—because I wasn't involved in sports and things. So I enrolled in a four o'clock to eight o'clock Defense Department machine shop course. And I had a little metal lathe of my own and couldn't do much with it, and this—I had no intention of utilizing this course to do what—they suddenly need a lot of machinists. But I figured, hey, this could give me an additional skill out there that I could use, and indeed, might help the war effort; but that wasn't my primary concern. So my father was engineer in charge of some construction of dry docks in the Brooklyn Navy Yard, and this was a period that the United States was actually repairing damaged British boats. It was very well known; they'd sneak them into the harbor and they'd be repaired there.

MS. GOLD: Right, this was around '39?

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, whatever, it was about a year before we went to the—'39, '40 or something like that. So

my father came home one night and announced that he'd just visited a nice school with a great woodshop, a great machine shop, great foundry that I might like to see. And this was Pratt Institute. So all of a sudden I was enrolled in the mechanical engineering department.

MS. GOLD: Oh, mechanical engineering?

MR. ANDERSON: Mechanical engineering, yeah. And that's the reason—or that I stated recently. Mechanical engineering weren't very compatible so, I switched to architecture after successfully completing some shop courses and some Latin courses and a lot of other transferable courses to architecture.

During that freshman year summer vacation—and we were getting more seriously into getting into war—I went to visit a friend at the University of Wisconsin and for reasons that didn't have anything to do with this, he'd left while he was there, but he'd left me in his apartment so I stayed there for the summer and I got a job in Baraboo, Wisconsin. I'd already learned how to do surveying from my father, and I was on one of the numerous surveying crews on this huge site for the Hercules power plant, I had a golf cart in order to be able to get back and forth out there. So while I was there in Wisconsin I went to visit Frank Lloyd Wright to see if I could apprentice in the Taliesin Foundation.

MS. GOLD: And you knew of him because it was—everybody knew of him at that time?

MR. ANDERSON: One of the things that I took in some other high school—some aptitude test was that, well, what is it that you read, and I could go down through all of Frank Lloyd Wright's books and so on, so I was—I think I was fooling with their brain there, that this indicated that I had something other than what they really were testing.

And I've got the very first *Architectural Record* of Frank Lloyd Wright's work, a first edition, and when I went to visit the Frank Lloyd Wright exhibit in the Museum of Modern Art, right there in a glass case why they have a duplicate of the well-worn one I have over there, without that many, that many. Recorder, I'm holding my hands apart about sixteen inches. [Laughs.] I have a lot of Frank Lloyd Wright books.

So I knew who he was and I'm a little—hey, you know, I'm a little unsure on the dates here; I may be getting them wrong. I don't know that Ayn Rand's *Fountainhead* [1943] came out at that time. My mother gave it to me, or it was slightly after that she gave me "The Fountainhead," and that was a great, great story which was very, very loosely based on Ayn Rand's life, and Ayn Rand has done some very interesting books.

Joyce, when she was a Sloan Foundation fellow at NYU [New York University] after she had graduated found, why, it was in—oh, you wouldn't have the faintest idea, but she found a thesis project that Ayn Rand—a typewritten thing—and she brought it home. It was this wonderful, little simplistic story about the world's all blown up and the last two people in the world are a young guy and a young gal and they have great vision of how they're going to recreate civilization, and they go out and they invent a battery and so on. And of course Ayn Rand became involved with the John Birch Society, or what the—but a lot of her stuff had a certain moral quality to it, but she took it in a direction a little, little bit away from that.

MS. GOLD: I remember—I think was around maybe that age when I read her and I just thought she was wonderful but I think that there's a, yeah, there's a shift in the road that you can take there, and she took it.

MR. ANDERSON: Yes, quite. [Laughs] But—we do seem to be parenthetical again—in the recent reviews commenting here on the "x-x" anniversary of her book, one of the reviewers took her to task because of our enlightened awareness now, took her to task of writing the sexist novel on the basis that when she was over and over Roark or whatever the architect was working the stone quarry and saw that he was somebody she wanted and went home and broke the fireplace slab and then called him to repair [laughs] and if this isn't a classic case of entrapment, I don't know. But the reviewer said he raped her. Well, maybe he did, but it sure was—the reviewer was really taking it rather extreme.

MS. GOLD: Rather extreme, yes, yes, rather extreme.

MR. ANDERSON: Anyhow, we're—

MS. GOLD: We were talking about Pratt. You're—

MR. ANDERSON: Frank—we were off to Frank Lloyd Wright.

MS. GOLD: —at your time in Wisconsin.

MR. ANDERSON: And my approaching him to be an apprentice. They gave me a tour of the wonderful little theater, a big little theater where the fellowship of people if they were musically or theatrically inclined could give things; but they'd bring in outside quartets, and one of the nice things is the little music stand that is a

four-sided thing that he designed for a string quartet.

And we went wandering through the main drafting room, which is where the apprentices actually work, and actually do work on his projects. And we settled down—there's a little alcove that has the vertical fireplace—and this is a standing fireplace—we'd take a tree log and stand it up on end, burn it there and it's like a little lobby the apprentices have in the other areas, and we sat down. I sat down on one of the benches that he had designed for the apprentices, and this bench was a perfectly flat surface with a perfectly rectangular end on it, whether it was a slab or legs I don't remember. And the back legs went continuously up about forty inches so that that's what you would lean against, and this was all perfectly 90-degree angles without any consideration of the comfort factor at all.

And as a matter of fact, some of his other furniture that I've sat in that he's built in his architecture do have that also, and he's absolutely the greatest in everything he did, but he a little bit missed out on the comfort factor.

MS. GOLD: So that wasn't one of these intentional discomfort things—

MR. ANDERSON: Yes, he—

MS. GOLD: —for an apprentice not to get too comfortable?

MR. ANDERSON: Correct, yeah. Here I was sort of trying to slouch into conversation, and he said, well, I believe that to have a strong mind you have to have a strong butt—

MS. GOLD: —and you better get it right here. [They laugh.]

MR. ANDERSON: Like in the houses that he designed for Pleasantville and [inaudible]—this is another whole thing that I had a slight relation, too. He was taken to task that one of the houses was too short for the slightly more tall person that went in there. Of course I'm a very tall person.

MS. GOLD: Right. How tall are you?

MR. ANDERSON: And he said—what?

MS. GOLD: How tall are you?

MR. ANDERSON: About six foot four. Tall enough to keep me out of the Air Force, which I didn't belong in anyhow. But he said, I believe there's nothing wrong with my building, it fits me perfectly, but it's the owner's fault for being so tall, or words to that effect.

MS. GOLD: So you, you gave—you were given a tour by Frank Lloyd Wright himself, or—

MR. ANDERSON: By—oh, yes and we sat down and had this whole discussion, the end result, the aiming was so he could see me and I could see him, and I could apply for the fellowship. So—

MS. GOLD: And so he considered you a serious enough applicant to spend his time with you?

MR. ANDERSON: He—no, he didn't have my file or anything. It was that, yes, he was interested, and I was interested, and we hadn't gotten anywhere near to whether I could or whether he could; just a preliminary thing. But he took as long as I wanted. Now, I'm still paraphrasing everything I've said—this is 60 years later.

But there had been a press story about that time that had accused Mr. Wright of running a conscientious objector camp, and I don't know how I got into the subject. But we were floating subjects back and forth and I did ask him about it, and he said that one could not simultaneously encompass the desire to build and the desire to destroy; a very, very self-evident thing, and I think that I believed it, but in all this patriotic fervor and so on I wanted that time to think about that. And in the end I didn't pursue it, and I doubt that my drafting skills were good enough because the apprentices were actually doing finished drawings for Mr. Wright. So I think that he had more to bring to the table than I did, but I never explored it. And later on, while we were sitting there and some apprentices came in, it was also a communal farm there, to some extent, and they came in with peas and we all sat around shelling peas.

MS. GOLD: So what—were you, you know, nervous about meeting him? Were you in awe of him, or were you very—were you comfortable?

MR. ANDERSON: That—to delve into it is something in my personality that—I guess haven't thought enough to even talk about—but I have skills other people don't have, so no matter who I'm talking to, I've got my skills, and they have their skills, and I'm not really in awe of people. Met a heck of a lot of people out there, and I admire them and certainly appreciate that they have done fantastic, greater things than I have.

Maybe awe is the correct—I have awe for them, but it in no way interferes with my talking to them, and it's part of my feeling about the equality of everybody. But very definitely that when we're talking about people that have serious skills—let's think about that and talk about that later.

MS. GOLD: Yeah, okay. I was wondering if you could just tell me what it was like, what Frank Lloyd Wright was like, you know? Was he—

MR. ANDERSON: Well, for starters, he was shorter than I was, and this is something that I don't really notice, but of course in retrospect; and a very dynamic person with a very powerful ego; very gentlemanly person; he liked to wear capes and was very flamboyant; and a true genius, and he acted the part. He liked to display that he was in control of things; an awesome person. Hey, I just said it. I guess I was in awe. [Laughs] We solved that one.

MS. GOLD: Okay, now I've interrupted you enough, we can go back to—

MR. ANDERSON: okay, so I made the best decision by not having to be awed by him all the time.

So, back to Pratt. So I then went back—I was already enrolled—I went back for my second year. Coincidentally, the senior architect students had just completed a thesis project determining whether Mr. Wright's Fallingwater house [Bear Run, PA] would stand up, and it was sort of interesting.

MS. GOLD: What do you mean by that?

MR. ANDERSON: Well, Fallingwater, which he'd built a few years earlier for the Kaufmann family—Edgar Kaufmann had been an architectural student of him—and I'd like to talk about Edgar Kaufmann but that's another whole other subject we've got there, but—and his family—Kaufmann Department Store, Kaufmann Store in Pittsburgh, would've—Fallingwater, for the type of people that might understand that landmark, hallmark, you go out into the hilly part of Pennsylvania where this incredible stream comes down, and the rocks were sedimentary rocks so that meant that they foliated off in horizontal planes.

In fact, [Frank] Lloyd Wright was great with these prairie houses with these long horizontal lines, as I am. Everything I like to do, and like to do tricks here in the building to extend the horizontality of it. So, Fallingwater was built out in the woods, and he designed the house to be sort of a part of these layers of rock and this incredible, constantly falling water stream, and the house was built in and around and over it—and actually something we were going to do when we first started building here, we were going to do that down on our brook and didn't, and we're glad we didn't because of practical reasons.

But it was a landmark building, but being built out in the woods with the local contractors, why, instead of calling up the lumberyard and ordering six by sixes for the temporary formwork they went out and cut trees and— [inaudible]—under good engineering control. And it's noted most for this extreme cantilever never seen before in a horizontal, never seen before in a building, that—well, I've got the book right over there, but you don't have to—

MS. GOLD: Oh, that's okay.

MR. ANDERSON: So there was a question—

MS. GOLD: But I was just wondering—

MR. ANDERSON: It was a question of under these rough conditions whether this extreme cantilever was engineered to be able to stick out so far with all the trees reinforcing it and so on. So—I got into your question. [Laughs.]

MS. GOLD: Whether it would actually stand, whether it would remain—that's what they were asking the class—

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, well—yes, because of these—yes, because of the questions that had been brought up in the architectural class, which were totally resolved, but the architecture teachers decided to give this to the— the engineering subjects up to the students, and yes, it would. [Laughs.]

I studied architectural rendering in this second year with the great Caleb Hornbostel for rendering—rendering is the art of drawing pictures of projects—and Hornbostel's father, I believe, was one of the great Beaux Arts architects. They had these contests for building a new city on the river Seine, predominantly in museums and just fantastic, ornate stuff but really sort of a hallmark of the period of the 1900s, I guess. But the senior architectural students were also doing very creative work in camouflage designing and building dummy tanks and things out on an airfield and actually under government contract, so the rest of the students at that time did have the opportunity of some of that to get into the classroom.

But I took that year, but I enlisted in the enlisted reserves and went immediately into the Army [Corps of] Engineers because a lot of my skill things and that, they—Army Engineers turned out to be as good as any formal education for me. Got shipped to Fort Dix, the shipping place where you went for your basic training for however many weeks it was, out to a brand new camp out of, out in Bend, Oregon, way out in the woods.

And they didn't have enough of their old-time teachers that—the civilian army gets lots of people, and sergeants and first-class sergeants, when there aren't wars, as educators so when the war comes they can also go to war, but they can educate the new recruits that come in. So they didn't have enough of these so they needed new teachers, and they just looked at my resume and grabbed me out of basic training—I only had one or two weeks basic training—and made me a corporal. And I was teaching the mechanics of guns and weapons and teaching firing everything from the Colt .45 pistol to the small 35-millimeter cameras that the Engineers took around at that time.

MS. GOLD: So you enlisted as—you were, you were in your second year—

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, I was second year. Yeah, I enlisted in the enlisted reserve, which meant I was going into the regular army instead of the draft army, but it also meant that I could finish up whatever unit of education I was. That's why I was able to finish my second year there.

MS. GOLD: And then immediately they were having you teach?

MR. ANDERSON: Immediately. Yes, inside of two weeks, just because I—

MS. GOLD: You must have been taking apart all the—Big Ben and—[laughs.]

MR. ANDERSON: And they, well, they're not a very small group of officers and men, quite—there was military discipline, but we were all quite close together and we were sort of in a dangerous job in there because we could easily have somebody with a gun or something aim it in the wrong direction and, we used to compete on who could be the fastest putting back a pile of three different machine guns blindfolded, and we were all very, very good at that.

MS. GOLD: Oh, wow.

MR. ANDERSON: And they—you don't want more horror stories, do you? Actually, I have some very interesting things that happened to me during these courses, but let's go back to them later if you want. We'll—it's a—again, it's quite a bit of a sidetrack.

But we were so close in our relationships there—and I'm building on that toward a personal relationship that helped later on—we had the blitz course, and this was the horror of every trainee. The blitz course is a simulation of actually crawling on your stomach under live fire. And we had concrete platforms with about eight or 10 machine guns and it had—the machine guns were firmly mounted—and it had bars that the machine gun couldn't drop down, and we would be shooting over their heads with live ammunition, all of the time. And we indeed, each of us—every time they went through—one of us would go through with them to reinforce the confidence that we had just shattered. And the way we shattered their confidence—because if somebody had stood up in front of those guns—we were trained to quickly turn them off, but there could be accidents there.

MS. GOLD: Oh, so this was live ammunition?

MR. ANDERSON: Live ammunition.

MS. GOLD: [Inaudible]—is that you weren't shooting at them, you were shooting over their heads.

MR. ANDERSON: Shooting over them, about, maybe, three feet over so we could certainly anticipate if they started to get up because they were on their stomachs going under barbed wire and so on. And the machine gun is a thing on a tripod you wiggled in all directions, and we had a device that it could not—positively could not—go any further on down. But we were aware that that could happen, too.

So anyhow, to tell them how safe it was, we had test firing of each gun, and I had two guns. I was a little bit hidden behind the control tower, and I had the gun that I was normally firing, and I had a little smaller machine gun that sounded the same right along side. And test fire number one, test fire number two, test fire number five, and I would shoot into the ground; and it was all pre-arranged and the commanding officer would chew me out and tell me to get that gun aligned [laughs]—so we were so close there.

But anyhow, the commanding officer was—we really—he was a captain, but the structure there was that there weren't too many intermediate people; we were working directly with him. He recommended me for officer candidate school, and probably for some other skills in there, being able to assemble a bunch of machine guns. [Laughs.]

But my appearance before the board was not at all hurt by my ability to use my structural visualization skills. One of the questions they asked—they asked a lot of questions—was do contour lines of a topographic map ever cross each other? Now contour lines are, you have a contour map, and they give you a visual image of how the hill is, but if they crossed each other that would mean that of course one was over the other, and this can't normally happen.

So I knew the answer was no, but I said yes. And when they questioned me and I explained that, well, in the rare instance when there was an overhanging cliff—sure, look at the gorge we're into now, there are overhanging cliffs, that it could be. And I mention this because some of the fantasy pieces that we do are bigger than life-size female torsos, and I visualize these. Each layer that it is made of is a contour map; I draw a contour map of that, and that's a template for a pattern, and they, and so I—some of them I had castles and dragons holding Faberge wooden eggs and all sorts of fantasy. Some of them are a little bit more utilitarian like jewelry chests and the one jewelry chest that I did, and I think I'll save going into this because Joyce and I will be talking together on commissions. This was a commission, but the drawings could have been done on a CAD/CAM—

[End Tape 1.]

MS. GOLD: All right, this is tape two on Tuesday—September—and you were just talking about the contour lines.

MR. ANDERSON: Oh, right, yes—the use of contour maps and contour lines, and this affected the work on the female jewelry chest. And in fact, on that one—there've been a few other similar, but that particular one—each layer, each one-inch layer, actually is totally finished before it's assembled, so it's quite difficult. It has to be very, very exact from—in the drawing stage.

So the overhanging cliffs I'm referring to, about the female contour, has abundant overhanging cliffs, and this makes for real difficulty in finding out which one's going in, which one's going out, and so on, when I'm cutting the individual pieces of wood. So it's a good learning experience for that.

This was a risky thing to do, and very important to a bunch of senior officers, and they're giving you a stamp of approval, just like Merle [ph], and then—so that worked fine. And then the other question—and here I'm—craftsmen are people who subjugate themselves to risk. They're individual craftsmen, particularly when we started out there wasn't even any such field, and we're going to this further. Also, we were taking the risk of not knowing what we were doing and not even knowing that was a field out there for it, but it—[inaudible]—so—and surely, whatever you do when you're mixing a batch of this or sawing a batch, there's great risk there. That's the fun of it. It's problem solving.

So I decided to take another risk there, and I know that they're going to ask about a current war event. Well, here, we're out in the woods of Bend, Oregon, and we've the weekly military newspaper, but they wanted to know how quick I grasped what current events were. And all they had in the newspaper was—the Oregon newspaper was that they were doing something in that area that Tennyson wrote his great poem about “into the valley of death”—“in rode the 6,000.”

So it was “The Charge of the Light Brigade.” And I went and did that. I hedged, though, and said, oh, we're over there now, but here historically, maybe we don't belong there, or something like that. I don't think I said that. [Laughs.] I didn't want to take that much risk. But I figured, well, hey, here they're going to look at me, a guy that gutsy enough to take the certain unknown risk and that's what war is about, or maybe they just felt, well, here's a guy that's not only enrolled—wants to be an officer, but he wants to be a gentleman and an officer and shows that he knows about history and war and things, but whatever. It worked. [Laughs.]

So—and I just learned an incredible amount of stuff there. I learned who I was. I went in to this wearing saddle shoes and came out wearing some well-traveled boots.

MS. GOLD: Wearing what kind of shoes?

MR. ANDERSON: Saddle?

MS. GOLD: Oh, saddle shoes. Oh, yeah, yeah.

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, that's what we wore in high school, with the brown leather and the white—

MS. GOLD: Oh, of course, and you polished them.

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, you had to get a special brass brush to scuff up the suede leathers. [Laughs.] And in the Army Engineers in the war, it certainly wasn't a spit-and-polish outfit, so we had very well-scuffed boots.

MS. GOLD: Where did you end up serving? Or am I jumping ahead?

MR. ANDERSON: When did I what?

MS. GOLD: Where did you end up serving?

MR. ANDERSON: Italy—went to Italy, and our outfit was—a whole bunch of us went in as replacement officers, because the Army Engineers were good construction people, and they had to know how to fight. But when Rommel was going through the desert, our guys had to do more fighting than engineering. And they were just overzealous, and this outfit lost almost all of its officers. So we all went in as they moved into Italy as replacement officers, all us young OCS school people.

MS. GOLD: Did I skip ahead, about asking about that?

MR. ANDERSON: No, no. That fits in rather nicely, because here again, I just showed my really sort of lack of experience, but sort of natural experience. When I joined my outfit as a platoon commander, I was the youngest person in the entire platoon. These guys had seen a lot of combat, so that's when I grew my mustache really. [Laughs.] A lot of age in a hurry.

MS. GOLD: And you haven't ever shaved it?

MR. ANDERSON: I tried once or twice, but I'm sort of used to it.

So, anyhow, the closeness of—I mean, we were really construction people who also knew how to shoot.

MS. GOLD: Your father must have been so happy.

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, oh, he was overjoyed, and I was overjoyed because I was doing things that I knew how to do, I was serving my country, and I was educating myself all at the same time. In Italy, during the war—here I'm getting into the artist in the war, the Frank Lloyd Wright thing.

We had to repair a wonderful old bridge that had been disabled for a long time by the Germans shooting at it two years or a year before we were there. I don't know, some time—find out. And it had a beautiful wooden bridge there and the town—I don't remember the name—but it's a town well-known for its ceramic heritage, there are ceramic factories there. And the street that we were building this bridge on had storefronts with wonderful little faces on them.

Now the bridges that we built—unless they're expedient bridges—are what they call Bailey bridges, the Erector Set ones, all pre-designed parts that could be lugged by the number of people that could get around it, and really an Erector Set. And when, under combat, we're assembling a bridge on the near shore and have to push it to the far shore, we don't have any control of where that lines up over there.

And now this was in between combat, so this wasn't a combat situation, but it was very inconvenient for us to go two or three miles around to do it, so we did the usual combat thing. And what we did was add on to this Erector Set, added more bridge on than was necessary on the boat or the land or whatever that it was sitting on, then we would push it with bulldozers and roll it out over the span. This extra amount of weight was equivalent to the weight of the bridge itself, so it was counter-balancing.

MS. GOLD: Oh, okay.

MR. ANDERSON: If you take your pencil and hold it on your finger there, you have more weight on one end, but you wrap some elastic bands on or put on an extra eraser on the end there so that you can push it forward over that. And the last span—and sometimes we had to counter-weight them with bulldozers if we don't have space enough. But anyhow, the last span that we were putting up had two actual—here, we had 200 feet of bridge out there, firmly fixed on rollers, so we're not able to move that a couple inches out of the way.

But the construction was going to be right where these beautiful antique faces were, and they had to come off. And they had to come off because the tanks were very anxious, and instead of doing the usual thing of dispersion, they were already in line to go across the bridge, and sitting ducks for the German airplanes that were coming. Well, fortunately, this was during a retreat stage on the German side, so there weren't any coming over at that time, but they certainly could, so they had to come off. I was the one—we were alternating command. We're going continuously here, and this was my shift. So I decided if they had to come off, I'd be the guy that did it. I didn't want to put that on the conscience of somebody else. And that really sat on my conscience for a long period of time.

MS. GOLD: Yeah, I bet. So you had to take them off of the—

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, just destroy them. So this bothered me vis-à-vis the discussion with Mr. Wright. So about 10 years ago, we went with Phil and Joyce Anderson—there are two Joyce Andersons; don't get confused on that

—we went to Germany to visit an acquaintance, Edgar Anderson, so we had two Edgar Andersons and two Joyce Andersons—and then this also gets interesting later on.

But anyhow, we were visiting Joyce and Phillip, and Joyce and I were visiting some of the area that I'd been at. And we discovered that this bridge had been made by Andrea Palladio, the Palladian architect, and that the ceramic figures had been replaced on these storefronts some time after I'd left there, with just ordinary commercial marble, so that was all right.

But we were talking to our innkeeper where we were staying up on the hill, and we were telling him about the German bombers. He didn't speak much English, and I didn't speak much Italian, and I'm going—for the tape recorder, I'm making plane motions with my hand—and he said no. And he said—what we worked out what he said, that it was the Italian partisans that had destroyed it to deny its use to the Germans, and that he was one of the partisans that had destroyed it. [Laughs.]

MS. GOLD: Oh, so the Italians themselves destroyed this beautiful village.

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, he was one of the ones who participated in doing it.

MS. GOLD: They weren't really mad at the Germans for destroying it.

MR. ANDERSON: So once again, I wish I had been able to confer with Mr. Wright on the meaning of it all. [Laughs.]

MS. GOLD: Oh, yeah. That's interesting.

MR. ANDERSON: Now, the army itself was an education, very much of an education. And I got to be company commander, not necessarily for my advanced skills—I had seniority over the other officer candidates that were in the class behind me. It was that close. That was a very—I'll tell you, it was a very loose wartime structure, more like a construction job. So the whole lesson that came out of this, besides practical things, the most important lesson I learned was that I wanted less command over people's lives and more control over mine.

MS. GOLD: So you actually were company commander?

MR. ANDERSON: Oh, yeah, sure. We did some great things. We built a lot of bridges and blew up a lot of bridges. This is where my ears were hurt. We operated quarries to get stone. We were always operating a little in front of the artillery, and as soon as we would blast stone, why, the Germany artillery would be coming, and so this is one of the places that my ears were hurt. And we did great stuff. And we were about to ship through command to Japan when the war was over and so on, but—we could go on forever, but I think that we want to go on to education right now. [Laughs.]

MS. GOLD: Let's get back to your education.

MR. ANDERSON: I did good and they did good by me, and I didn't lose any—but that's another story. Yeah, I didn't lose any men.

So this wanting less command over other people's lives and more control over mine, it's not exactly that. It's more that what I have to offer is internalized, and I'm the only one that can translate it into the outside world so that anyone or anything between, such as employees or publicity or dealers or even making money, theoretically would be a distraction that reduces the flow from concept to the object. The more you can eliminate that, the better.

And those things would limit the freedom of individual expression and would—reduces a purity is sort of a precious way of saying—I'm not trying to make a precious—I'm just trying to say that a straight line is the best road from here to there. And what I'm saying is not that I don't want outside input—Joyce and I work together—with great input between us, to the extent that we are in a work sort of an organism, an entity. But there's lots of evidence to dispute that. [Laughs] We're both very, very great individualists, but I will listen to any kind of input. I'll listen to a single grain of sand on the beach, at the vineyard, or I'll even try to hear what Phillip Glass can tell me when he takes 10 minutes to change 10 notes in a composition. And then there's the curiosity—and I think we do have a question on outside influences here. I am jumping the gun on this, so, okay, I'll terminate that on that. I won't go into that.

But this curiosity thing is a thing that's missing in a lot of contemporary society, where results come first and fast, and I'm really interested, as our conversation has shown here, in puzzle solving. I can get maddening when you sidetrack—what I'm showing you here—but the sidetracking in my normal business is sort of at my choosing and not someone else's, except my editor and my wife. [Laughs.]

MS. GOLD: So as a company commander you learned that everybody has input. I think that's essential. I mean,



are you saying that—

MR. ANDERSON: No, no. I learned that really it was up to me to be in command, but we engineers didn't work that way. We worked—well, a construction crew has somebody in command, and I didn't want to be in command over someone's lives. That was my job, I just didn't like it very much. And—what the heck was it?

[Tape stops, re-starts.]

MS. GOLD: So this is the second day of talking with Edgar Anderson in his home in—the township again?

MR. ANDERSON: Harding Township.

MS. GOLD: Harding Township. I'll get that one of these days.

MR. ANDERSON: Named for President Harding.

MS. GOLD: Right. And yesterday we left off with you in the Army, Army Corps of Engineers. And do you want to continue talking about—

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, we got into the Army Engineers as part of education, but really, although it interrupted my education, it was an educational—and I think we pretty much finished with that, and I was just about to say, with the Army, that then I got married, and then I sort of realized, well, this is an exercise at continuing education, and so—getting married. [Laughs.]

MS. GOLD: So tell me your version of how you met and—

MR. ANDERSON: Well, really, we were in high school together and she happened to be in my chem lab, and she got her finger stuck in a flask and I came to her rescue. [Laughs.] And then we dated a lot, for a long period of time, and then going off to school—she went off to her school, I went to mine. We saw each other occasionally, we sort of lost track of each other, and it wasn't until after the war that I came back. And, well—[inaudible]—so let's look over the old crowd and see what we could do, and then all of a sudden realized that she had a lot in common—her individualism—individualisticism, her love of nature, and really, straightforward, not into the artificialities.

So we got re-introduced and then started dating when I got back to the Pratt Institute after school. So I was still in uniform and I hadn't really thought much about getting married, but, hey, here we've got this great number of years and we seemed compatible, and so we did.

Our first date back in high school was in 1940, and back then, why, we in the suburbs of New York used to go over to New Year's Eve in Times Square. It was great fun back then. It wasn't the mess that it's gotten to be recently over there. And we went to the New York Paramount to see Benny Goodman—our first date, Benny Goodman. And at midnight, the drummer—Buddy Rich, a fantastic drummer—he normally had a nice solo in—I believe it was either "Sing, Sing, Sing" or "Don't Be That Way"—he played for 15 minutes on the drums, and that went down in the history of jazz as quite a thing.

Joyce—she told me all about herself and so on, but she—as we were getting married after I got out of the Army, still in uniform when we got married—she had a Sloan Foundation fellowship for a degree in postwar planning and regional studies, the only one that was ever granted. But she had this terrific innate design sense. The meals put on the plate always have been things of beauty, and we've always wanted to set up a camera overhead for every meal because she thinks in design terms. And this was 60 years prior to—before it became sort of the signature thing for the five-star restaurants.

MS. GOLD: Right. You might even want to—we could describe the salad we had yesterday with cranberries. It was this form of cranberry that was—the shape of a cranberry that was kind of the shape of the hood over your stove, swooping over this beautiful bed of greens, and it was just perfect. [Laughs.]

MR. ANDERSON: This happens all the time. It's great fun. And she was very good at selecting clothing to match her beauty. She was a beauty queen when she went to Dickinson College [Carlisle, PA]. She probably didn't tell you that.

MS. GOLD: No, she didn't.

MR. ANDERSON: Probably didn't tell you she was Phi Beta Kappa either—

MS. GOLD: I'm glad you got that in.

MR. ANDERSON: —and graduated with honors. But she is one of the first female woodworkers who are fellows in

the College of Fellows of the American Craft Council. And we are the only husband and wife team of woodworkers. She's what you would call a multi-tasked person, and people have now caught onto the polymath thing, which has nothing to do with mathematics but it's people knowing things, and to learn is what polymath is. And she's just had a great variety of different things and other opportunities she could cover.

But back to what we did. We got married and returned to Pratt under the GI Bill. And at that time, the architecture studio class was under Philip Johnson. Philip Johnson was very, very young at that time. The only major example of slides he brought in to show us was his own house, and that was a well-known glass house that was really a neo-Bauhaus house, including the Mies van der Rohe Barcelona chairs he had in it. He later collaborated with Mies on the elegant Seagram building in New York, one of the very first appropriate design of the linear pattern of a building—these great bronze columns. And he was working with Mies van der Rohe on that.

And I didn't realize when I was studying with him that he was an admirer of Frank Lloyd Wright, even though he was so Bauhaus, because during the period that Frank Lloyd Wright existed side by side with the Bauhaus, they were two very different things. The Bauhaus was the machine design, and Frank Lloyd Wright was the prairie houses, and so on. But really looking back at them, they had a certain compatibility there, and so I can understand how Philip Johnson did that.

And I learned another thing after his courses. I was quite bemused by the amount of time he told us to locate the visually exact location for a passage door in a barn door that he had painted with a Mondrian pattern. And as a student, I said, hey, look, that's nice, but to take all that time to—just this very simple thing. But now that I really am a designer, I know how long these things take. I mean, these fractional measurements that—in my field anyhow—

MS. GOLD: You mean you're talking about to find the absolute right spot to locate—to put the door, whether it should be—

MR. ANDERSON: Right.

MS. GOLD: —or in your case, it would be—

MR. ANDERSON: Well, there is that hanging on the wall there, on our house. Joyce and I are in full consensus on the level of this. That took an awful lot of time to plan, even ahead of time. We had to put a special post in there to accommodate whatever we wanted to put there, so we had latitude going up and down. But how that relates to that blank spot, how it relates to the window mullions, and so on. We spent a half-hour looking at that. So I think that now that I know what he was talking about, I think I can really beat him on that [laughs] kind of racket. I just might take longer than he can.

If you don't mind getting sidetracked—it is to a point—we're going to get back here.

MS. GOLD: Okay. We're just going to move this back [speaking about the microphone].

MR. ANDERSON: Oh, okay, I'm talking too loudly into it.

[Tape stops, re-starts.]

MS. GOLD: All right.

MR. ANDERSON: This is pertinent, but it's off the beat—about 10 years ago we were guests of old friends, Herb and Marje Noyes, and their son, Doug, a woodworker/designer craftsman who got into woodworking sort of because we knew his parents forever and forever. This was at the definitive Frank Lloyd Wright exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art.

And Herb was a Yale architect, and he had worked with the Henkens on the Pleasantville/Frank Lloyd Wright houses. Frank Lloyd Wright designed three houses for Pleasantville. Henken was one of his students, and he was an architect. Henken was supervising the houses, and Herb worked for him for a while. Marje was a great graphic artist who studied with the great Bauhaus master graphics person, whose name slips me right now, but the old classic Bauhaus person, but went to Yale to teach it there.

We went through the exhibit, and I could show them the room, for instance—we lived in the Robie House—when we were in Chicago we lived in the Robie House quite briefly—then could show them in the visits to Taliesin to see Mr. Wright, where we sat, as I described before. And when we lived in Oak Park, we were surrounded by his houses, and the Unitarian church, and we could point out things there. So we're sort of going along, and all of a sudden we had a couple people following along, as if I were an expert on that.

So we had lunch in the second floor restaurant, looking out over the sculptural garden, where there had been a

little snack restaurant that Philip Johnson had designed very early on. He was associated with the Museum of Modern Art, and he was designing it, this little restaurant—it was sort of a bar type thing, or tray thing—and he designed it as a student-designed project. That’s what all of us do. If we have an interesting project, why, we give—the students are important to what we’ve done—and here, try that. And Marje, who knows me very well and is sort of the master of the putdown, said, and now you’re going to tell me that he built your design. And my reply was, well, yes. He had described the project so well in detail without telling us what he was doing that practically all the students had designed the same design. [Laughs.]

MS. GOLD: Oh, so he got to create it as if that were the only thing that could possibly go in that space.

MR. ANDERSON: Well, yeah.

MS. GOLD: So you were a student of Philip Johnson’s for—

MR. ANDERSON: Yes. For—I don’t know, just one semester, or for two semesters, and this is in what you call the studio class. This was your major design class. And he was teaching us there, and we did a lot of different projects. I did one—I had it for some competition or another, and in my drawing I made a little reference there to Frank Lloyd Wright as FLW, as the inspiration—and a little quote and so on. And when teachers want to be sure to make a point, instead of just putting a pencil mark, they’ll scribble out—[inaudible]—and I had this big black greasy pencil—“FLLW”—[laughs]—that’s the way Mr. Wright refers to himself.

MS. GOLD: What kind of influence do you think Philip Johnson had on your work?

MR. ANDERSON: I think he had a very important influence later on, in that some of the clean lines and things that I little bit rejected from Bauhaus have appeared in our house here, the same as Richard Meier’s have, and his philosophy and his ability to be his own person, I greatly admired. But he was able to be his own person because he had the money to do that, I believe. And he has done now some—now, in his later years, I even more admire his—he’s 10 years older than I am, and he’s out there doing great, provocative things all the time.

We were beginning to, at this point now, getting back on the education thing—we were beginning to think about following the footsteps of one of Mr. Wright’s previous apprentices, who—an ex-Marine who went out to the West Coast to both design and to build houses in the feeling—he certainly was his own person, but he had a lot of the things—Frank Lloyd Wright things in his designs. And we liked the idea of starting with a clean piece of paper, and with a client, and doing everything, absolutely the entire everything, to presenting the finished project—everything under our control. We would design it, we would build it, we would do the whole works.

And this we were not aiming at a top-level market. We were thinking more of people that couldn’t really afford a very large and expensive house. But the upcoming program in my next semester at Pratt, we were going to get into bigger projects with more engineering and for larger clients, and as architecture courses—architecture courses don’t normally have any hands-on construction work, so I couldn’t improve my construction courses, so I felt it was time to move on, and I transferred to some construction courses in Chicago.

And I brought enough—I accumulated credits in architecture so that they allowed me to pick and choose from their whole menu there. So that enabled me to, instead of taking a construction course in lighting, a very simple, couple-day course, I studied lighting with the electrical engineering, and I got into lumens and foot-candles and all that kind of thing.

MS. GOLD: And what predicated your move to Chicago? Was it the school?

MR. ANDERSON: It was just a school that happened to be teaching these kind of courses where I could get into and get what I wanted. Chicago had nothing to do with it, but to get straightforward construction courses at that time was pretty difficult.

MS. GOLD: And what’s—the name of the school is?

MR. ANDERSON: The school is Chicago Technical College. They’ve had a long, long record of doing courses on all sorts of stuff. After the war, they immediately set up a wartime school, actually in Al Capone’s—where Al Capone had his headquarters. [Laughs.] So I had the opportunity to go down where they later discovered the hidden things down there. I was down in that basement—didn’t know what was there, of course. But anyhow, by picking and choosing, it was just a wonderful way to become a top student. I graduated undeservedly at the top of my class, but only because I was doing what I wanted to do, which was another life lesson on how to do good.

MS. GOLD: Your degree was in?

MR. ANDERSON: Pardon?

MS. GOLD: Your degree was in?

MR. ANDERSON: I didn't get a degree. I didn't get a degree any place.

MS. GOLD: So you graduated—

MR. ANDERSON: I had all of this stuff. I'm like Gustav Stickley and I'm like William Morris, who had a great education and a great number of things but never got a degree. So this is sort of another sneaky thing like talking about being a company commander in the Army Engineers with just a couple of weeks of basic training. When I teach at Philadelphia I'm getting a full professor's salary, and in addition to that, I get the very unusual thing of a guaranteed parking space.

MS. GOLD: So at this point had you already realized you wanted to go on in woodworking, or what were you thinking?

MR. ANDERSON: No, no. We were—Joyce and I were going to go into this business of designing and building small houses. That was the reason to want to go out to the West Coast, to do that. And later on there have been lots and lots of people who have done that, but back then it normally was that the architect was one person, the contractor was another person, and—

MS. GOLD: So your idea was to design and actually pound the nails in these small houses?

MR. ANDERSON: That's right, and I had enough other skills to do that.

MS. GOLD: At this point, you had both decided to work together.

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, right, because with her great skills, she could fit in any place.

I'm getting the eating sign over there, but let me wind this up.

So this whole idea, before going to the West Coast, we just briefly dropped off to go see my uncle and I ended up working with him for a while, and really then learned and finally had to face up to the fact that in no way could we be totally responsible for the house because there would be input from the plumbers and the electricians and the union and the building codes and the zoning ordinances and the mortgage lenders and other influences on the design. I'm not placing a value judgment—these are all necessary things, which later on—they're good, and I've learned to accommodate to the public safety necessities of doing that kind of thing. And I think an appropriate—

[Tape stops, re-starts.]

MS. GOLD: Okay.

MR. ANDERSON: So, we went back from Chicago, came back to New Jersey instead of going directly out to California to join up with the architect, house-builder out there, and went out to work with—I actually just went to hang out there for a while but wound up, he needed some help, and I was working with him—

MS. GOLD: This is with your uncle?

MR. ANDERSON: This is my uncle, yeah. And the—my uncle was a boat-builder and a carpenter and a craftsman, and he was into all sorts of building in other trades. And he was perfectly able to do the plumbing and the line electrical and everything like that. And this is sort of historically interesting in that at this particular period in time, they hadn't invented wire nuts. These are the things that you fasten wires together. An electrician has a whole bunch of them in his pouch, twists the wires, and turn. Well, back then, we used to have to solder the wires together, and we had this little blowtorch that we would use. And he was still doing work on houses that had the lead plumbing in them.

And I even learned how to do what they called a "wipe-up lead joint," which there aren't any plumbers that know how to do it anymore. You had the lead pipe, and to join it together you couldn't put a torch on it because it would just go away in blobs, so you'd melt the lead, and you had a canvas ticking in your hand—canvas, heavy fabric. You'd pour the lead into your hand and wipe it up on the joint to do that. Once you learned how to do it, why, there wasn't any real problem of getting burned, but that hot lead is like 400 degrees.

So I learned a lot of little things that I never necessarily thought I'd do, but boat-building and being there on the water and handling boats and so on was great. But his woodworking was great, but the philosophy—he was a very integritous person. His work ethic was always to do the very best work that you can do. And it's sort of strange that my alma mater, the Pratt Institute, at that particular time, on the labels we'd stick on our books and so on, said, "Be true to your work and your work will be true to you," which is saying the same thing in another way.

And when we would be visiting our friends around Gustav Stickley's Craftsman's Farms, we'd gather around the coffee table in front of one of the hooded fireplaces—great, huge, up 10 feet in the air, this hood—and inscribed on the hood—if I remember it was sort of in Gaelic language that basically said that the day is too short to get all the work done well.

My uncle's shop was on my grandfather's summer property, and I helped him canvas a canoe and work on the boats and learn how to do a blind wedge tenon—

MS. GOLD: That was when you were pretty young.

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, I was back there.

MS. GOLD: And where was this?

MR. ANDERSON: This was in Bell Mawr, on Shark River, in New Jersey. It was on my grandfather's property, and he had a tremendous piece of property there. It was a brand-new subdivision of very, very small lots, and he bought about 20 of them, all along the riverfront. He had the whole front of a block and back in about a couple lots, and he owned the waterfront out there. And the town got permission from him to use it as one of their swimming beaches, and so on, so this was sort of nice. I mean, he inadvertently did what I attempted to do here, and that is have as few houses as possible on the property.

And then when he died and the property was sold off, my mother bought a piece of property down there. He had the largest single occupancy piece of property on Shark River then, and my mother then bought a piece of property that became the largest single-owner property. So we've been into this preservation of property for a long time.

But we went—earlier on, now, before I went back to work for my uncle, one of the neat things he did was he gave me an old Model T Ford, an abandoned one that he had around the property. And he said, here, you can learn a lot, to take it apart, and he gave me his wrenches and I took it apart because he was going to junk it anyhow. And I still have some of the V-shaped magnets that came off of the flywheel magneto there.

MS. GOLD: And this is when you were eight years old?

MR. ANDERSON: That was when I was eight years old, yeah. I mean, we started out by going back after the war.

MS. GOLD: Yeah, amazing.

MR. ANDERSON: So, in aggregate, why, this is sort of the apprenticeship thing.

MS. GOLD: So that was your apprenticeship—

MR. ANDERSON: In that respect.

MS. GOLD: —and that was learning a multitude of tasks and—so you went back to work for him, and at this point —

MR. ANDERSON: This just simply—I'd build a couple pieces of furniture for myself there. Oh no, I guess I'd done one of them a little earlier—no, I did that at that time. But what I did learn, and his relationship on houses he was working on and so on, all these other distractions. In our thought process, why, it went through my mind that maybe we ought to start thinking about getting out of the contractor's idea because of these distractions. And just about—three things happened at the same time.

We had seen some nice woodwork—I call this my "Eureka! Two." Remember "Eureka! One" back there; this is "Eureka! Two." We'd seen some—maybe some [James] Prestini—he's a famous bowl-turner—or maybe [inaudible] bowls, I don't know, but they're really beautiful things—

[Tape stops, re-starts.]

—and it's in stores. We went up and looked at it closer. It wasn't a real slab of wood at all; it was veneer on plywood. And that sort of bothered me, and I wondered, well, how can we really turn this into a fine piece of furniture with solid wood? So that's when I made my first serious piece of furniture in my uncle's shop, making it out of solid wood.

MS. GOLD: And it was a coffee table?

MR. ANDERSON: How—this was a—

MS. GOLD: What was it? Was it a coffee table?

MR. ANDERSON: Yes, it was a coffee table, uh-huh. Looking back on it, it's not the greatest thing. But it really was two—yeah, it was like one of these—the top was all solid wood.

MS. GOLD: And what were the legs?

MR. ANDERSON: I don't remember. [Laughs] Here with this great visual memory. They were—I believe they were slab-like. They were not turn-spindle legs there because he didn't have much of a lathe there.

So putting all these things together in this very short times period, I looked at it and I figured, hey, this piece of furniture is really a piece of small architecture, and the process to do this—and I went to it with a clean piece of paper and built the whole thing, did it all myself, and this is what I wanted to do in architecture.

We then suddenly realized we were sort of in business, that that's what we were going to do: start with a concept and a clean piece of paper. At that particular time we were very limited, but this is when we left my uncle and we went back to my family's house and took over their basement for a while. And with our limited budget, why, we had rolls of discontinued wallpaper that we used to make full-scale drawings on, and we wound up with a finished piece.

And this was really the true, natural offspring of architecture, the mother art. This was a piece of furniture, but it's more demanding—a more demanding child than the mother architecture, because in architecture you can always hide your bad places behind the tree, or you can have the photographer come put a tree in front of it. You can disguise your bad works, but a piece of furniture is three-dimensional instantaneously. As we sit there and look at these, why, as we move our heads back and forth we can see the various sides and see in particular how one side flows around to the other. And a chair—you can get up and walk around it and see this constantly changing negative space and positive space, and sort of really make these spatial things little objects within themselves, as you move around it. But a piece of architecture, to be able to encircle—okay, if you move around a chair you see this constant change in relationship, but in order to do that around a piece of architecture you have to drive very rapidly around it to see the flow of the line from one facade to another.

So this is why I say what I now—or what here I'm calling small architecture is really more demanding on having it totally in the round, but even architecture does, because you can so quickly see all the way around it.

So we're in business now, and we—

MS. GOLD: All right, do you have work—clients that you're working for?

MR. ANDERSON: Pardon?

MS. GOLD: Do you have clients that you're working for?

MR. ANDERSON: Yes, I do. Let me tell you about the next "Eureka!"—the "Eureka! Three,"—and that's the on-the-job ignorance. We had a lot of learning to do after we got this first commission, and this was a desk for a New Jersey friend who was a pianist and a composer, and he was just at the beginning of his career also, and he went on to a moderately good musical career here in New Jersey.

And what we made for him was a straightforward desk, a very nice slab, thick piece, but a tabletop size piece, nice grain for the cherry top. And it was hinged so that half of it could hinge up. It would be sitting as a regular table, a flat surface, and then when he wanted to work on a score he could lift a section of it up in the air to have it up to work on an angle. And the grain had continuity along the top. So in order to keep this parting line here where the two separate pieces of the same wood met, why, we put some rather large braces in underneath and we glued them.

And to be sure it was staying in place, why, I added some screws that you normally find on a drafting table on top, and thought it would be good. But in reality, I was creating a major problem here. As the wood changed with the seasons, this floating piece of wood warped and got a bend in it, so then we added some heavy bronze plates on the side of it and got it back. But then when the season changed, and it started drying out, why, they bent it back in the opposite direction. So, we had a problem. Well, the second time we got it back.

We'd known about George Nakashima in New Hope [PA]—we'd never met him. We read about him a small shop in an esoteric magazine called something like *Science Illustrated*, and it had things of a better quality than *Popular Mechanics*. It had a nice little article that, even as I remember it now, was quite sensitive to what he was doing. So I went to see him, and he had to resist laughing when he saw it. He says, everybody does this on their first piece. He said he did it too.

And we have become experts on this now. As a matter of fact, we do consultations. We really have a regular

consulting—not regular, very irregular; we’ve only done a few of them—on humidity and wood shrinking/expanding. And what happens is that wood expands and contracts only across the grain. And what I mean by that is if we’re standing up a two by four and look at it here, the wood won’t expand and contract according to the humidity in its length, but the wood will expand back and forth across its width.

And when you have two pieces going counter to each other, why, there has to be able to have slippage there, so that the pieces that are expanding back and forth—the top pieces that are fastened to the braces, they have to be able to slip. And then when I went back and took a second look under a drafting table, then I realized why they had those slots in there. Those slots are so that the screws that are fastened can slide back and forth as the wood expands and contracts.

So, why, our gluing it and fastening it and putting braces on, there’s permanently fixed interface, where they’re not going to move, and the only thing that could happen was the great width of the wide top boards overpowered the bending strength of the other ones. And because of this, this is the only place we ever use screws at all is when we have a solid top that has to fasten to something or something to fasten to it, that there is this slippage that is permitted in there.

MS. GOLD: So that gave you an immediate and early respect for the movement of wood?

MR. ANDERSON: Right.

MS. GOLD: We were talking earlier about the genetic connections between human beings and trees, and that sort of goes back to that, right? That there’s—trees, too, have this internal almost rhythm, or heartbeat?

MR. ANDERSON: Right, yeah. And then also, the technical aspects of it—the governments—I forgot the name of it—it was in Wisconsin, the wood laboratory, and the wood handbook that they have spells this out in detail. I can look up the grain of that wood and I can take the—we have test instruments for gauging the moisture content and know what it is in the air. I can tell you exactly what other different size it’s going to be under other different conditions. And that round table that we were talking about, and we’ll talk more about later, probably, that has the slots in it, those slots enable it to move back and forth. So I think that any young—any craftsman—and a lot of older ones don’t even know this—if they were writing a book, its very first sentence would be that wood moves.

MS. GOLD: Wood moves. [Laughs.]

MR. ANDERSON: Wood moves and you can’t stop it.

Okay, so we’re in business. We built a piece, we sold it, we had it back three times to repair it. It was a successful piece after we cut out all the braces and everything and made new ones. We now go on to our learning age, with our self-educations, our first piece. And we finally have an awareness now that—and I’m sure that many other furniture designer/craftsmen of our particular time felt the same thing—that we were not only inventing ourselves, because there wasn’t anything like us out there, but we were also inventing our field of endeavor. In other words, the furniture factory at Grand Rapids is noted for—not only the big ones but a lot of little ones around there—no matter how skilled the craftsman is, why, it’s commercially designed for commercial reasons so that it settles, not because it’s an integritous piece of art.

MS. GOLD: And even the Stickley furniture was hand-built, but hand-built by—Stickley himself did not do it.

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, there’s no workshop over there. That was a social and historic experiment that he had over there, of great value. And he had a little bit of the foreign thing, agriculture, and the handcraft feeling, and all of that. But when you go through a list of his records, his books and his inventory of his factory, why, he had multiple tools, multiple machines of every kind that I had here, and had a large number of people working for him.

And for your records—I wrote down here someplace, there’s a wonderful little Stickley book that the greatest thing in this—oh, it’s a good book—it’s got a 36-page bibliography—I’ll find it someplace else. It’s here somewhere—a 36-page bibliography that tells incredible local records and county records and his books and his bookkeeping, plus reference sources to the whole craftsman style thing. I mean, close-typed—I’m sure the Smithsonian knows about, but it’s worth knowing.

Okay, so—and the same thing with William Morris. William Morris—Stickley was another one who had the kind of education I had. I think he had some architecture. William Morris was an excellent draftsman—did wonderful drawings. He was trained in an art school and he had sort of an aggregate amount of formal education as I did, but he also had a factory that makes them. He could make it himself, but he had a factory.

And Hans Wegner, the architect, he has a factory making—there are very few of us, like Sam Maloof and I and

Carpenter and a few others that are—and both of them operate on a higher scale than I do. George Nakashima had his own place there, but he employed craftsmen, and he had some of his not-too-fussy work done in factories around—he wasn't a one-man operation.

MS. GOLD: So, what was it like? Here you are, you have these—both of you have these intense educations. Well, you left by choice. I mean, in terms of being trained for other things, you were trained as an architect. What was it like to go into a field that didn't exist? [Laughs] I mean, I'm sure your family, sort of, thought you were going to do something else.

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, my father wanted me to get an honest job and go and visit—he wanted to form a partnership with me.

MS. GOLD: Right, because he was an engineer.

MR. ANDERSON: It would have lasted about two days.

Well, like other examples I've told you—I've told you about the risk that I was taking before the Officer Candidates Board, to quote poetry. And Joyce also, in the great number of things that she can do, of popping in and out with great ease—we just simply knew that it fit into our environmental thing, and that this was what we wanted to do. So on our small experience of selling one piece, why, we figured that—we didn't figure this at all, but it turned out that our work progressed slowly enough so that our skills could catch up. [Laughs.]

MS. GOLD: So—

MR. ANDERSON: And don't forget there wasn't even a Norm Abrams that we could watch back on the family's 10-inch TV.

MS. GOLD: But you also—you were kind of back-to-the-landers in the time—even before there were back-to-the-landers. I mean, not that you were going and farming, but you were creating a world in creating your own furniture and going back to a craftsman's ethic.

MR. ANDERSON: This happened a little bit under the protection that we took over the family's basement, and we were there for one or two years. So then our other interests could develop to the point that when we were ready to go, why, then we were prepared for examining all of the environmental things, and so on.

But in the meantime, we self-educated on anything that we could get our hands on. And the Delta Rockwell Company that makes the—they still make the best machines of the scale for shops our size in the United States, and they had a whole batch of perhaps obsolete design books that weren't design books at all, with all the techniques on how to handle individual machines.

And we would write to supply manufacturers. Somewhere in the records we had a letter we wrote to—wrote Sherwin-Williams, one of the big linseed oil manufacturers, that we—following Nakashima's model, we use a rubbed oil finish on everything we do, and it's linseed oil. And we got a letter back from them saying, "Oh, we don't recommend using linseed oil for furniture. We use spray black." [Laughs.]

Ultimately Joyce developed our own formula. There were some proprietary things out there that we had to concern ourselves about, that it would be an edible product for her bowls and things, and some linseed oil had dryers that are metallic salts that are poisonous, so we had to locate a pure linseed oil source and a pure—her other mysterious formula uses—it wasn't mysterious at all, all our clients have it—it was spar varnish, and there happened to be a little New Jersey manufacturer that could guarantee that was free.

MS. GOLD: Spar varnish?

MR. ANDERSON: Spar—his particular spar varnish that—just this one company. And then the turpentine—instead of using the paint thinner that people normally use, we got turpentine, but it's a very special grade. It's called wood-stilled turpentine, so it was a perfectly safe ingredient that we—

MS. GOLD: So when you're talking "we did this," at this point, the two of you are working together—

MR. ANDERSON: Oh, yeah, Joyce and I are doing it. And she's doing the experimenting and finishing and locating sources of glue and I'm locating machine resources and so on, but still, we're working—I guess about that time I was probably doing salad bowls and plates and platters, and she got interested, so then we again self-taught. She learned how to do it, and then she got into doing that, and then over a great period of time later on there was ultimately a period of time where she was—we don't split our income, but at the bottom of the year, well, a bowl's so much and the furniture this. We didn't even do that before we discovered that she had earned a larger proportion of the income during certain periods when I was doing experimental work on furniture than I was making at furniture.



MS. GOLD: And at this point you're living where?

MR. ANDERSON: We're still living in West Orange.

MS. GOLD: And you have a lathe there that—

MR. ANDERSON: Yes. I suppose an amateur woodworker listening to us here might like to know the sequence. The first thing that's almost mandatory is a circular saw, so we got a circular saw. The next thing is a sort of a choice, but investment-wise a drill press, because on the drill press you can put a lot of attachments—not particularly as good as the individual machines.

We couldn't afford a band saw, so we were cutting out blanks for the lathe, which ultimately would be round—I cut them on—hexagons on the band saw. But then we got a jig saw, a small—does the same thing as a band saw and other things, but very much smaller. Then we got the jointer, and that's the one where you get the edges of the boards smooth for joining together. And up to then, everything else was hand—we had to use a hand plane. I had one of my great grandfather's 24-inch long inch wooden hand planes to plane the joints.

So we started more on the Army manuals, and there were—when we got Joyce her small, old 1927 Cletrac bulldozer for up here, and we started doing that. And she did the excavating and the log-skinning, and we found an old manual for that.

But there were two outstanding books here that I recommend to your tape. Only of them is available. One was a very detailed English book—a very elaborate church and upscale residential work with elaborate moldings that stopped at art deco. I'm sorry, I said I'm recommending two books—this was great for its time because at that time there wasn't—we had a bookshelf this big on wood techniques, and we had fine woodworking magazines and all of that kind of techniques. But the one that was really valuable for the technical side was the one I stumbled over before called *Wood Handbook*. And it's a U.S. Forest Products Laboratory publication—they're in Madison, Wisconsin—and it's the one that even quantified the wood shrinkage. And I have two original paperbacks that I would update as I got them, and then finally they've really had it in a bound volume, and I have two of those. One I had within easy reach of the drafting table, and the other—that's the one that's all dog-eared with a broken binding. The other is one I keep pristinely clean for when I need slides for a particular slide show or something, or need some other reference.

MS. GOLD: So at this point you have bought your land.

MR. ANDERSON: Not quite yet, no. We haven't gotten to that, because now we needed books on tree and wood identification—and this is another link now. We had a very good relation with the Monteath Company, which was the world's largest importer of rare wood: rosewood and zebrawood and all those things. And when we got to know—then he was a yard boy; he was the owner eventually—Doug Dayton—his father was Monteath. And he would be out on the road, and we didn't do any business at all that needed him to stop by as a salesman, but he'd be in the area at lunchtime frequently—[laughs]—and we became quite good friends, and we would buy stuff there that—because there were no small people like us except Emil Milan, a bowl carver/sculptor.

We were the only ones. They were used to taking this lift trucks that straddle a pile and go around, and we'd say, oh, yeah, well, the one we want is down on the bottom there. So they'd bring the lift truck up, they'd bring two laborers and a foreman. They'd get out one individual piece of wood, which would account for a hundredth of their daily income. Later on I asked Doug Dayton, well, how can you afford to do that? He said, we can't. You're about the only one we do it for anymore.

So anyhow, they closed it down. The competition from—

MS. GOLD: They closed Monteath down?

MR. ANDERSON: They closed Monteath because of the environmental impact laws on the imported woods, and because their drying process had been outdated by some German processors that freeze-dried the woods instead of using all the energy it takes to put it in a heated kiln for two or three weeks. So when they closed down, and we still had this relationship with him, he said, we have all this stuff here that we got to get rid of; can you help us? I said, I sure can because I have—and this is way later, after I had been teaching Philadelphia College of Art—I called all my students and all my woodworking friends, and instead of selling them by the piece—a piece of rosewood one inch thick and 12 inches by 12 inches is now worth about \$40, and we would walk out of there with an entire station wagon-load full of rosewood for less than \$40.

So we were sort of first in line, and he sent us up—

[End Tape 2.]

MS. GOLD: Disc three of Edgar Anderson on July 18—[laughs]—July? September 18, 2002, and we were just talking about Monteath and getting a whole load of wood from it, from them when they went out of business.

MR. ANDERSON: Okay, we can cover the rest of our education, I think, quickly here. They had an old guy by the name of Tanky who was in charge of the kilns, and every time they put the wood in a kiln—kiln, K-I-L-N—is under very exacting humidity control. You can't just go in and heat it because everything would crack and shrink, so they have to inject steam and so on. So every batch I'd cut a sample piece out of the whole lot to take into the testing laboratories, and these would be nice two, three, four-foot long pieces that were just ideal for turning into turning blanks. So that's the kind of thing.

But in any event, we learned a great deal from Tanky. He was a wood collector himself, and his collection—he'd have woodworkers make eggcups for him, so he had this tremendous collection of eggcups and all this great variety of woods. All these—I don't know whether we talked about our bar code floor here before or not, but what you're sitting in is about 100 examples of different exotic woods. I bring that back to that—[inaudible].

MS. GOLD: And is this from the—your—what Monteath gave you at that time?

MR. ANDERSON: We bought it out there at favorable prices. Well, it's the wood of that type that they were using, but yeah, most of the exotics here—granadillo, negra, purpleheart, and greenheart, and bubinga and visalon [ph] and so on—they are all things that we had. And we still have a rather large selection. I mean, we have a three-time lifetime supply with these. We still have enough if we lived to be 100.

So we learned woods and set up our own wood identification samples. But really, for our domestic furniture, we prefer a wood that has been happy living in that environment. So here in New Jersey—in fact, all along the East Coast—why, we use the walnut and the cherry and the beech and the birch and the oak—the different oaks, red oak and white oak. We've got six different oaks out here—swamp oak, and I've forgotten what the other ones are—so those are the woods that we use here.

MS. GOLD: Now your use of that—your use of wood in its environment. Is that a symbolic thing, or does it also have to do with humidity and what it can, what its uses—

MR. ANDERSON: I think I'm making a little bit of a statement here that, hey, we have all this stuff. Dogwood trees—which in the forestry business are called trash trees and not good for anything in the woodworking field—but we can take a wonderful convoluted piece of dogwood and find this beautiful, subtle—it's hidden under the cabinet there, you can't quite see—it's wonderful wood.

We can take a walnut tree—our sliding door cabinet on the sliding clothes cabinet, the one that, when it's closed, encloses the coats and things. When it's open, it slides across the bookcase instead of folding out. That was made from a walnut tree that was a standing, dead tree. It survived the insects and everything for a long period of time while it was standing. And we cut that down with our portable chainsaw, and then we made it into planks. And the pattern on it—the pattern, not the color—the pattern is identical to the most beautiful piece of rosewood—the color, the rosewood goes red and the oak goes into browns and tans, so it is a combination. It is a little symbolic of our philosophy, and it's marginally so. It's a nice idea; it's a practical thing.

But we happen to have the very best furniture woods in the world—the ones that I just named—for making furniture out of, because you have to balance the toughness and the hardness and the strength and the ability to sand it and—these are all specific things. Again, in the wood handbook, there's comparisons here that cherry is easier to sand than walnut, and all of those kind of things. So—

MS. GOLD: So you do use—now dogwood, it must be so thin. I mean, the trunk is never more than 6 inches big, so you only use it for specific kinds of things.

MR. ANDERSON: We are very fortunate in that we had—well, we were unfortunate because the trees died, and the dogwood died—but we had two of them that were, at the base, were about 12 inches in diameter. And we have collected other ones there and—you triggered something in my mind that just went in and out the other side. [Laughs.] The statement [inaudible]—the statement, it is practical and to a certain extent why we like to think of those in terms of—we have in this batch that we got from Monteath probably the only visalon [ph] that is in existence anywhere.

MS. GOLD: What is visalon [ph]?

MR. ANDERSON: I haven't the faintest idea. It's a very, very hard mahogany type. It looks like mahogany but it turns, has a very hard—a funny thing on the lathe is that you have to make very clean slices, and the softer of the hardwoods fuzz up a little bit, but if they're very hard they are cut much more cleanly. We have, from that

batch we got, we had two four-foot wide by 13-foot long bubinga planks. One solid piece of wood—13 feet long and four feet wide—that's as big as one-and-a-half sheets of plywood.

MS. GOLD: And is this one of the pieces of wood that you just sort of say you can't use, because you can't figure out where to use it, it's so special?

MR. ANDERSON: Well, not only that. I knew where they were down in Monteath, hidden away—not hidden away, nobody wanted them they were so big—I'd seen them for 10 years. And then when they closed down, why, I got two and a half, and it's still too good to use. The beefwood plank—Joyce is the one that found Monteath. She'd heard about it, and for a Christmas present, she went down there without my knowing it, and she got two beefwood planks to give to me. And beefwood is—maybe a Dalbergia, I don't know. No, it's more in the purpleheart family. It's a hard, dense, greenish wood, and she got them all for the stair treads.

MS. GOLD: For the circular stairs?

MR. ANDERSON: We didn't have a circular; we didn't know what these were going to be for. So the final thing on the learning curve—

MS. GOLD: Oh, but before you go back, before you go away from the wood, tell me what bubinga is.

MR. ANDERSON: About what?

MS. GOLD: Tell me what kind of wood bubinga is because I don't know much about it.

MR. ANDERSON: Bubinga? Okay, you'd look at it and you would call it a piece of mahogany. Mahogany, the true Honduras mahogany—there's 100 things that are labeled, roughly 100 things that are labeled Philippine mahogany. It's just a red Philippine wood, moderately soft. A lot of mahoganies have coarse grain that when you plane them, they grain up in the air. Honduras mahogany is very, very best. It cuts easily, it's very strong, and it's good furniture.

Bubinga is—bubinga is of the Dalbergia family. It looks like mahogany, but it's a great deal harder than mahogany, and it gets—mahogany is nice for a sort of bland, even, overall pattern. But bubinga gets these wonderful, interesting, little stripes and things, so it's a beautiful wood for furniture and beautiful wood for all turning. Now, I think I gave you a false impression; I've done a lot of work in all sorts of exotic woods. There's a teakwood table over there that we did and some hard little stools—those are—used to be a rosewood one here some place. And for our clients, we've done lots of different woods.

MS. GOLD: But there's a certain desire or an aesthetic that you like to also have, which is to sort of keep things local.

MR. ANDERSON: More or less that I think I'm really doing myself a favor. Because if I can get walnut—like that table that we were discussing, that, like about four feet, four feet by nine feet, where we inverted the sapwood. Walnut has dark heartwood, the center part of the tree, the tree that's not actually growing, and the sapwood, which is called alburnum—the sapwood is this pale tan color; and that's the only living part of the tree—the sapwood—actually. The dead part in the center is nourished, so that it doesn't decay, and that's the structural support for the tree. But it's this outer amount that—or it's even more specific than that. It's the first couple of cells under the bark that are actually growing. You cut the bark off the tree so those are exposed, and the tree will die. This is the way that when they're doing forest clearing in primitive countries. They cut the bark off and let it stand there, and the tree will die and fall over.

So, anyhow, this large or medium-sized dining room table is made out of four separate boards that expand out four feet. We joined the two sapwood edgers together, so that starting from the outside this place where you were sitting with your placemat was defined by this pale streak, irregular but quite straight, just at the edge of your placemat, and then the center that was darkwood in the middle, and then the opposite on the other side. So, this is beautiful to do with walnut, and walnut is one of the very best working woods for the craftsman.

MS. GOLD: So you were talking about your education.

MR. ANDERSON: Oh, yeah, we're going to finish the education now. It's about time I graduated here. No, Joyce and I both learn on a daily basis, and when you're new to computers, that means definitely on a daily basis.

[They laugh.]

MS. GOLD: Hourly basis.

[They laugh.]

MR. ANDERSON: We're new even though we've had them for five years. I still haven't mastered PhotoShop. We have WQXR on all day long, and your researchers at the Smithsonian would have been treated for that now except that would be a little bit difficult. [Laughs.] We turned it off. WQXR is called the classical station of the *New York Times*, and it's one of the few ongoing all-classical all the time. And I'm not so great on opera, and it does have a few other things that are interesting, but mostly, we're listening to classical music, with some news interspersed. And this not only enhances my musical knowledge, because listening to them for 50 or 60 years, even though they are not great on spelling out the history of the music, I've gotten to where if I come in on the middle of something, I can instantaneously maybe identify it. And if I'm a little lucky and my brain's working right, I can put a name on it, or I can recognize it and I know what happens next. I'm definitely not a musician.

But the other thing that the *New York Times* does is that it keeps me up to date on very nicely spoken English. These *New York Times* people—they're always absolutely correct, and the announcers are picked for their ability to pronounce all this great multitude of German and Spanish and Italian—some of them. And I'm pretty sure that they actually rehearse even their news reports, just to get it right. And the only errors I think I've ever remembered was that they mispronounced Metedeconk, New Jersey, and I only knew it was because it was near my family's place down at the shore.

MS. GOLD: How do they pronounce it?

MR. ANDERSON: Metedeconk. Oh, they stumbled all over it. Meta-de-conk—that's the way it looks like when it's spelled. And then Antigua—we had a program on the island in the Caribbean that was Antigua, which is spelled exactly the same as the ancient capital city—where there are rooms and things and other historic buildings there—the ancient capital city of Guatemala, and they can be excused for that.

And all these cultural explanations become more important as I mature. And I don't know who I'm quoting—I just saw it recently—he said that culture is the fitness center of the soul. And I use that—he used it, I cribbed that from a newspaper article. I gave him credit for it. He was talking about the city of Berlin who values its opera so greatly—and this is not a high-budget city, they're not very wealthy there—they spend more money, more taxpayer's money from the city, on their opera than currently the United States—entire country, United States taxpayers—pay to support the National Endowment of the Arts, and—

MS. GOLD: Such a shame, isn't it?

MR. ANDERSON: This is my—okay, yeah. Where are we?

MS. GOLD: I want to just say that the discussion about the development of Joyce and Edgar Anderson's business will be on the tape that we go, relates to both of them.

MR. ANDERSON: Great.

MS. GOLD: So we're going to jump ahead and talk about how you—jump ahead chronologically, and talk about you get ideas for your work.

MR. ANDERSON: Ideas just spring out in whole form, and they actually come from what I'd call a data bank. My giga-giga-drive memory up here that has absorbed 80 years worth of knowledge.

MS. GOLD: Isn't it good that technology has come in to give us a vocabulary for our brains, and how much we lose, too? [They laugh.]

MR. ANDERSON: Put us in our position. [Laughs.] The computer has more than I've got. But the kind of influences, it comes out, just totally none of this that I think about is a specific thing. When I say that a drawing from ancient Rome—here's this great, of ancient Rome ruins, this great Renaissance investigation of perspective—I'm a perspective freak myself, I love it—that I see images of that, and those images appear in my thinking of some of my other influences.

Reading—Umberto Eco is an incredible image-creator. You read *The Name of the Rose* [translated by William Weaver. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983]—not the Sean Connery film of it—and in my mind I'm creating exact images when he talks about the horse going down the pathway and the horsehair getting stuck on the bramble bush and so on; I see all that, and that goes into my memory.

I have a great collection of what I call do-it-yourself deer kit, a do-it-yourself coyote kit, a do-it-yourself rabbit kit, a do-it-yourself blue jay kit. I love to collect skeletons around the property. And the hunters will be hunting on some other property—and this may be totally anthropomorphic—but our deer are friends of ours. We've actually

had them born right in sight out here, and we watched them for the first several weeks and learn the whole process—that the mother will never come up close to them. She'll go off some distance and give up a vocal signal. And the deer are so camouflaged that I know it's there, and if the weeds are high I can't see it. And the deer has no smell so the predators can't get it, and all this fascinating stuff, so—

MS. GOLD: Did you watch the deer being born, or—

MR. ANDERSON: I would never actually watch. Well, we did have a deer on our property was about to give birth and went over to the neighbors, and it was hit by a car, and there was the fetus and the placenta and everything. This was very disastrous to the kids over there. And so they got a blanket and wrapped it up and so on, and then after that [inaudible] and buried it over here. But anyhow, I save these, some of them. I'm not a bone collector, but I saved some of these skeletons in the same manner that Henry Moore did. Henry Moore's shelves were littered with bones and pebbles and rocks like mine are.

You look at the eye of the skeleton of the deer and see this incredible, complicated, convoluted forms and shapes and the shadows in there and it—you just store that away as a possible use. And the strange coincidence that my—I had an antique 1938 Ford Phaeton, and the headlight on that had some of these same shapes and things. And I took the whole mechanism—the bone of a seagull beached on the shore, or the grain of sand. These all get stored away.

Two years ago, we cut a tree that was damaged just before frost, and the sap was coming out of the stump, and then it froze, so we had this waterfall of ice that I can visualize. My antique model steam engines sitting up in the studio, or Frank Lloyd Wright's stained glass windows, or the head on Yo-Yo Ma's cello, Benny Goodman's clarinet valves, or the weird, weird things: *2001* [*2001: A Space Odyssey*, 1968] is the last of the really, really live movies; there weren't digital images there. Everything on there was a model, and the great vision of the spaceship—

MS. GOLD: You can keep going. Just keep going [Referring to a recording issue].

MR. ANDERSON: Hmm? Oh, okay. The great view of this little space ship coming into the big spaceship accompanied by Strauss—[humming]. It's not very good, and I'm moving my hand like a spaceship coming in, for the tape here. That—it's almost erotic, this spaceship coming in. And so many of the other scenes in that movie—they leave an impression. And, *Gray's Anatomy* [Henry Gray. London: Longmans, 1967]—it's been superseded, but just full of wonderful little drawings of all ghastly things. And my grandmother's kaleidoscope over there, with ancient Victorian glass, and inside the glass, there's little colored liquids, and you turn that.

All of this, all of this gets into my head. So here I'm telling you I use all of these things, while in reality I don't actually use any of them, directly. They're just stored in my hard-drive mixmaster up in my head there, and I pick and choose elements out of all the levels. I'm describing sort of a folksy thing here as if I was making a paste-up of cut-outs, but it's not that at all. Actually, my designs are far more sophisticated than this folksy thing might indicate. But that's where they come from; I'd register anything and use it as I want.

Now, that's the starting process, but when I get working on a piece of wood, unless it definitely has to fit a very specific space, if I see that something can be changed a little bit here or there or particularly the selection of the wood if the pattern of the wood tells me something, then I would utilize that. And you probably see more in the house around here on cabinet doors and so on that are that level of thing. I have to have a plank to do something, and out of these large number, I can pick a pattern that I can either match or mismatch or whatever and accentuate and that's—

MS. GOLD: So then the wood is a kind of—works with you as a kind of a dialogue, or you work with the wood as a dialogue, choosing—

MR. ANDERSON: Yes, definitely. And again, I'll be able to describe this here with an old triangular stool birch piece. And the grain of the wood is already at such an unequal triangle, that the long axis of it has the cathedral pattern of the wood going up towards it. So, the whole thing pulls together, and it took quite a little time of all the various things that we could do with it to get it to do that. So, the form had been established, but the wood told me what it wanted to look like there, or told me to interpret what I thought it wanted to look like.

Here's the mechanism: when I go to sleep at night—I'm almost asleep before my head hits the pillow—but in any event, I try to think about the things that I'm going to think about tomorrow because since I don't worry about keeping awake worrying, I let my subconscious work on it. So I'll think, and I'll sleep, and then when I wake up in the morning—just in that little time span before I'm awake and before I'm, while I'm still partially asleep—my subconscious is working back and forth with me there. And these ideas, or some other similar idea, have sort of gelled together and have taken me on a direction. If I get up quick enough and get them down, I can work from that. But at least they, this is where a heck of a lot of my creativity comes from, just that period of time.

MS. GOLD: Is that your daily eureka moment?

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, I mean it's sort of like a morning non-exercise, and I'll be there for 15 minutes realizing, hey, I better get up, and actually, no, I've got more important things to do here. And it works.

MS. GOLD: When you say you have to get it down, do you make designs, or do you make written notes?

MR. ANDERSON: Whatever, whatever it might be. If it's words, I scratch them—I have a pad there I scratch them on. If it's a design—since I think in words, I think in images and not in words—if it's designs I've retained them, so I'll just simply say, hey, if I'm thinking about a roundtable, just remind me that that's what it is; I'll draw a circle, and that's enough to bring it back to me. Because these images I think in are not words, and have—got a whole bunch of other thoughts on that, if you're interested in—the images are of words that they—an image of what the words describe. So, if we want to go into that, we can, or if we want to do that later and get onto to something else now.

MS. GOLD: So I want to ask you about some specific pieces that you have made, like the—we could start with the clock, the hand clock, I guess you wanted to call it the grandfather clock—[inaudible].

MR. ANDERSON: Okay. That particular one is—what we're talking about is a six-foot-four high model of my own hand and arm.

MS. GOLD: And the six-foot-four height is—

MR. ANDERSON: My height.

MS. GOLD: —is your height, right?

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, I tend to think in these terms. I don't think I've ever told you that that's a memorial that I designed. It's in process for the Liberty State Park memorial—two hundred and—I've forgotten exactly—a little over two hundred feet high. The reason for that exact number that I wish I could remember is that my former teacher Phillip Johnson's tallest building was one foot less than that. [Laughs.]

But that has family relevance. My father, in charge of the Chrysler Building—there was this great fight that they were on paper the tallest building in the world, and the Empire State Building started building, and Chrysler was still going to be the tallest building in the world. And then the Chrysler Building added some more floors, and it kept going like that. And what they didn't know—but is known in the—it's known all over now, but back then they didn't know—but my father had drawings that showed the Chrysler Building with a helmet-dome top. And they had, in a secret place one time, had already prepared to put another amount on top of that. So these two buildings were about to top-out. The Chrysler Building did that, and then the Empire State put the radio antenna up there, so I come by my dirty work naturally.

So anyhow, this is the hand and watch house, and it—I made a plaster cast of my arm, and I didn't put enough oil on my arm to keep my arm hairs down, so my arm hairs all got stuck in the plaster cast—where they go in the laser to cut my arm out from the plaster without destroying the plaster, and then I made a mold of that and then I enlarged on that.

MS. GOLD: So how did you decide? Had they asked you for a clock? They asked you for a clock?

MR. ANDERSON: Yes, a hall clock.

MS. GOLD: They asked you for a hall clock?

MR. ANDERSON: A grandfather clock, but they're technically a hall clock, and—

MS. GOLD: How did you decide to do that?

MR. ANDERSON: Well, I'm just sort of interested in hands because they're really what separate us from the primates, and I've always been interested in them. And earlier on, before—oh, you triggered it. Well, I started in one direction—they, within the context of what we were saying the other day about the new research—about the mutual reinforcement between the development mental processes and the physical use of your body to advance those processes work back-and-forth there.

So as an example, when the ape learned to use his hand in order to hold the rock, that he used the rock as tool, then he began to find new uses for both his hand and for the rock as a tool. And this became mutual, and this is how we took our lower brain, and evolution over a zillion years developed the upper brain because the hand was very important in doing that. And perhaps the other side of this—I don't know how we got into *2001*, but in the movie *2001*, the first 22 minutes in it is the development of the apes and how they used their hands as tools and

the rocks and the bones for doing work with, suddenly discovered they could be used for weapons and then the movie splits out —

MS. GOLD: But that of course is the very natural thing that a hand is where we have our watch so often. It's so obvious that I'm really surprised that nobody—people have not done that before, created a clock that would show a wristwatch.

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, that is. Lou [Grotta] has a Movado watch, I doubt that that, really, I don't, can't at all try to—it might have fit into there. And what I made was an identical six-inch diameter wood Movado clock there for the wristwatch, and it tells time. And by its telling time it—I've been thinking a lot about functionality of woodwork and art and design, designer craftsmen, and so on, and this is a little bit a part of that—that I sort of intersected different things there, and I'm a little more into sculpture in some areas, too.

But the hand and the clock as a working clock means it's a functional piece of furniture. It does exactly the same the grandfather's clock did, far less ornately, far more direct and with the symbology of the hand, which appears as an important thing in non-Arabic religions—the clasp of hands for the sign of the sun and the hands appear on tombstones, and so on. So the whole thing all pulls together. If that clock didn't work, it would be sculpture; just pure, straightforward sculpture, done by a craftsman, and without a value judgment on that, it would be visually, totally as acceptable. But it pleases me more, it makes me—that's an egotistical statement—it's a nicer thing, the fact that this piece of sculpture actually is a working, functional piece of equipment.

MS. GOLD: So have Lou and Sandy Grotta talked about what it's like to have somebody else's hand so prominent in their home, the hand of the craftsman there?

MR. ANDERSON: No, they, well, they like our furniture, so, hey here's a—I doubt that they'd ever say this—here's the hand of the guy that did this. They wouldn't, but we're in that category. I think it's just part of the whole thing there. But Joyce has this hand problem that she had an operation for, and she's gone for therapy on and, we gave them one of the—a page from the catalog from a museum show that has a hand, and they had that displayed up there. And apparently a lot of their patients bring in things—they have a whole row of hands, and my hand that Joyce brought in there—

But before the Grottas, this interest in hands probably started when we first started building our house—our studio, actually, we lived in our studio for a long period of time—and we had to have a toilet paper holder, and I just don't like any commercial hardware. You've probably noticed that the house has no handles anywhere. Hinges are hidden; the bathroom fittings have been selected piece-by-piece to be the minimal appearance, because I don't want somebody else's hand in here. So we did a toilet paper holder, a hand holding a rod with toilet paper, a dowel, a big dowel with toilet paper sitting on it and it's very functional. But it's also a little bit of Rorschach test, too, because the toilet paper hand has six fingers on it, so we can tell who are the people that count fingers.

[They laugh.]

MS. GOLD: Oh! You shouldn't have told me that!

MR. ANDERSON: No, that's not this one here. This one was equally complicated. We had restrictions—we had one sticking out there, but we had to change things, and so on. So what I had to do here was take a regular fasten-it-on-the-wall holder, which I didn't like. I took the whole wall down and cut a hole and brought it out from behind, so all you see is these two little prongs sticking out.

MS. GOLD: You mean you took the wall down in order to recess the toilet paper holder—

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, to pull it in from behind. I had to fight pipes and other things there.

MS. GOLD: You didn't think of it beforehand so, before you—

MR. ANDERSON: No, this was after we switched and we had another—Joyce had designed a flower-like thing in the manner of the hand that was there, but when we changed the toilets there, we had to do something different. The one downstairs, why, I did take the parts of the regular fixture and then built a wooden box-like thing for it to sit into the wall we had control of at that time.

MS. GOLD: So these hands are carved?

MR. ANDERSON: A great variety of different things. That particular one was done about—now, the Grottas' hand is, again, is architectural: making templates and patterns ahead of time so I know where things had to go because you can't have the base of that, the elbow part is maybe two feet wide—if that were a solid log, it would expand and crack like we were talking about before, and would crack and check and—even the very best wood

sculptors run into that problem. So it had to be made of separate pieces so it could be hollow inside, so to reduce the total amount of movement to the smaller thickness of the wood there.

MS. GOLD: So you laminated the wood—am I right?

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah.

MS. GOLD: And then—but, around the outside—

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, you have to. Now, a lot of the template thing is exactly like a sewing pattern. I know how the wood is; I get the rough pieces and lay them out. I've already, by measurement, determined the changes on it, and I make a cardboard or plywood or paper template to trace it out and then figure out how the separate joints go up and hold them around and down. And then I have this whole stack of two-inch or three-inch—they're different for different situations—these parts of hands—if you cut off your first finger all the way to your wrist, and the other hand and all of these were glued together. And then all these crude, rough marks went through a great deal of cutting and carving and rasping and planing and shaping.

All the handwork to come out with having rather closely the individual major blood vessels on my hand, and the fingernails, and the little creases on my knuckles and things like that, so that it really was designed as a realistic—I never thought of myself as a realistic portrait person, but this is a really realistic-looking hand, only as tall as I am.

MS. GOLD: That's interesting because you have these realistic elements and fanciful elements in your work. That's—when I say the realistic: also the high chair with the arms and a little bit the chest of drawers, and then you have the fanciful, which, like the knight's table. But predominantly your work is so—is purely abstract, and I wonder if you can talk a little about the, about those elements—

MR. ANDERSON: Okay. I'd love to. Do we want to finish the hands off here?

MS. GOLD: Sure, sure. I'll just get that question out and then you can go ahead and talk.

MR. ANDERSON: Because one of the important things from a technical point-of-view, and this is interesting. I use the band saw as a carving tool. A band saw—it's a wheel on top and a wheel on bottom, and this skinny little saw thing is a flexible band that goes around, and it's cutting, cutting very small. And by it being such a small diameter, such a small thickness, instead of a 10-inch diameter of a table saw, you can curve, do curved cuts with it. All of these curved things you see here on the backs of the chairs and so were all done by that. And I use that as a carving tool, use it freehand where I have this blade here, and I'm taking the wood through it, and then when you get into the other dimension, the other curve, you're sort of rocking around on it. And you have to have a very long period of experience to do that. It's definitely too dangerous to let the new students use it.

With a fine-tuned saw, we can use it for almost shaping things as small as wooden rings. We can get them close to finished size, just tiny little rings, which it means we're very close to the saw, but we have to know that that saw's welding is good, so it doesn't break, and it's sharp enough that it doesn't twist and so on. So, it is. It is dangerous, but if you know the direction where the forces are going to come from, you can protect yourself. And since we're talking about hands, of course, one has to protect one's self, has to protect one's hands in order to make hands.

So that's what I did, buffed out the toilet paper holder, and then when I started getting involved in Peters Valley as a teacher and as a board of directors and so on—which, I think we might have time to talk about later, I don't know. But I'd be staying up there, and Peters Valley is—the school itself—is in all these farm buildings, where this territory was a farm before the government took it over and filled a dam in the area. So a lot of them have the very old-fashioned windows that don't have any counterweights on. If you push the window up it falls down, so traditionally the farmer had a little notch stick that he would put under it. So, since I'd be in the wood shop there, I might not having anything to do at the evening, I started making up hands as supports for the windows, and they—

MS. GOLD: Nothing better to do.

MR. ANDERSON: Everybody commented on them, so then lately I have an annual thing where going craftsmen donate things, so every year at that auction I donate a couple of hands for window stops.

MS. GOLD: Wonderful.

MR. ANDERSON: We already talked about Sandy's high chair with arms holding the tray—



[Tape stops, re-starts.]

—go back and become the arms, and that was a bit of design problem: how to take a chair and have the arms become arms at that point. But we achieved that pretty successfully; we did manage to get that little bit of flow changing from furniture to arms.

MS. GOLD: So the design problem was the shoulder area, how to make that—

MR. ANDERSON: How to get that out, yeah. It worked out fine. It worked into the back of the chair. It took a little model making and things like that, that worked out okay.

MS. GOLD: Have her children commented on the—

MR. ANDERSON: The children?

MS. GOLD: Or the grandchildren that have sat in it; have they commented on it?

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, we've gotten—it's when the grandchildren are there that they're using it, and of course, they very quickly grow out of that phase, and they're in it at a phase that they're not too vocal about things, so what you're asking is have they in their later life commented how it affected them. I guess I don't know. That'd be interesting to find out.

MS. GOLD: They think about it, you know. I used to sit in this—just surrounded by my Grandma's—

MR. ANDERSON: Hey, my grandmother's held me back all my life, and that's why I'm on dope. [Laughs] Not those kids; they're going to be achievers. So, you were holding your hand in a manner here. One of the more sophisticated hands we did—and I'll probably talk about this female castle that I did that has dragon's claws and a dragon holding a Faberge egg and so on, and that hand was carved. But again, the initial cutting—I didn't change any appreciable elements in the design by being able to do it on the band saw as it changed in shape to go in at different ways to rough-cut the fingers and so on.

And I was unsure what a dragon's claw should be, and we've got a few pieces of ancient ceramic stuff here, and reading about dragons I found out that there were the royal dragons that had five claws and ordinary dragons had three claws and so on. But I just didn't know how they articulated, and so I went to the closest thing to a dragon expert—a fellow by the name of Souie or Sousie. He's head of the Raptor Center over here, and he's good technical stuff. He's a surgeon for birds and so on, and they take birds—raptors, which are the crows and the hawks and predatory birds—and rehabilitate them, and if they can't, people donate cages there, and there's been an eagle there for about fifteen years that can never fly again.

So I went over and had this serious—in quotation marks—this “serious” discussion with him. Okay, what, a dragon does that kind of relate to a dinosaur, or a lizard, or they fly, are they going to be close to a bird? Of course, all these are the same thing. The bird's structure of the wing is like hands; bats—which are a mammal of course—really have fingers for their wings; and the lizard's got different numbers and so on. So then he could say, how many joints and how they articulated, and for the particular business that he was in, how far the—if it was all scales, or if it were fur, why it would get further [inaudible].

MS. GOLD: So this is—here you are. You're creating this sort of fantasy castle with a little dragon. How big is the dragon going to be?

MR. ANDERSON: We were only going to have its claw, and it's a little smaller than my hand.

MS. GOLD: And you go to a raptor expert—

MR. ANDERSON: And then I made this wooden egg, this complicated—out of separate parts—as complicated as a Faberge egg almost—with all these little—but a solid unity. While I was doing all this, while I was designing—Joyce didn't, at that point, know; she knew I was doing something like this. And I'd sit at the dining room table and I'd be holding my hand, and then I'd turn it over and hold it again, and, of course, she never said, what're you doing? I guess I finally had to say, hey, you want to know what's going on?

What I wanted was not a predatory dragon that was stealing somebody else's egg, but was a maternal dragon that was holding its own egg, so that went into the whole concept. So then the—I think, to get rid of all the hands here, I had a very good friend who was a Nobel laureate—he won the Nobel Prize in physics, and the laureates are told about it in the morning the announcement is made. And he called us up and said, come over for dinner tonight, and he told us why. And we went to a dinner, and the other guest was the head of the organization for which he worked.

And this was the wildest day, and this had been happening all day long—one telephone after another from

physicists from around the world and friends from around the world and reporters and so on. So anyhow, like about 11 o'clock in the morning we found out we had to quick get a present for him, so what do you give as a present to a person that's just become a Nobel laureate? So, we thought very quickly and said, let's give him a big hand. [Laughs.] So I had a nice piece of wood that I could rough carve on the band saw—a hand little bit bigger than life-size, a big hand—and did it with the thumb facing up and out so it could hold the, whatever the certificate thing is he gets—the medallion, I would think.

And so that's what he got, and that's what he uses it for. And a few weeks later, he had appeared before the United Nations because of this and because of some of the other things that he's into, and he mentioned that, so brought a film of that to show us, talking about the Anderson hand that the United Nations saw. You know, in sort of a sense, I think I could say, I had a hand in the United Nations. [Laughs.] And I think I've mentioned previously the power and the misuse of words.

[They laugh.]

MS. GOLD: Words, yes, the way words get misused. So, I've jotted down a couple of the pieces that I wondered if you might talk about. When I think of the realistic pieces that I've seen of yours, it's the hands, but also the headboard, which is somewhat realistic. And when you talk about being a perspective freak, that's clearly the perspective freak side of you that made that headboard for the Grottas. And also when I think about the fantasy—you talked a little bit about the castle, but I'd love you to talk more about that, and then, of course, the more abstract pieces that really are your general work. And I don't know where you want to say the chests fit in—

MR. ANDERSON: Don't know where the what?

MS. GOLD: Where the chests of drawers fit in, if that's—the chest of drawers.

MR. ANDERSON: Oh, okay.

MS. GOLD: If that's realistic or fantasy.

MR. ANDERSON: Well, that one has a history in relation to other commissioned works that probably Joyce might want to help fill in on.

MS. GOLD: Okay. So you want to talk about the headboard?

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, I want to talk about the headboard, but I think I want to talk about it within the context of some of the things that are about it that are sort of in relation to the trend of crafts in America and particularly what the effects of the craft magazines have been. Because we—probably longer than an awful lot of the craftsmen have been into it, as I said before—we were inventing ourselves, and we were thinking that we invented the field. Of course we didn't realize what was out there, but we of the contemporary craftsmen—the ones that are recognized now more or less in conjunction with the museums and so on—did create this new designer craftsman in America. And when we first started out there were no magazines in the field and the books were, as I had mentioned, quite archaic ones that I'll say were rather poorly done do-it-yourself books.

I think I mentioned before that the Stickley's Craftsman—maybe I didn't—Stickley had a lot of different things going for him and one of the things that he pulled his philosophy together with his aquarian interests and his manufacturing was his—and architecture—was the Craftsman magazine. And I don't know if I've mentioned it before or not, but our friends, the Stickley's, are the friends who actually loaned me several issues of that, which is quite a thing that they're very valuable even at that time.

And this was historically interesting and philosophically interesting of what the craft movement had been through, the same as the show that Joyce was in Bard [College] last year, "Women Designers of the 20th Century." This covered the same period with the emphasis on females in all the craft stuff, this is how—and you go over there, and you get to know the houses very well. You can see all of this that what he was writing about in the magazine.

MS. GOLD: You mean if you go to the Stickley farm, which is nearby?

MR. ANDERSON: Twenty minutes away. Yeah, it's right over the other side of Route 10 there, and it's open as a museum now, and they have tours that you can go through. It's an ongoing thing, and there are several Stickley private residences around here. The only other thing at all I think I mentioned the Nakashima article; there wasn't really anything out there.

MS. GOLD: It sounds like when you were starting out the idea that there was just anything out there was very important to you, to find some people that were even close to what you were doing.

MR. ANDERSON: Well, yeah, we had all these other people that I hadn't realized were there, but in addition to

that, we didn't have an instruction manual so to speak. My mother had had some Stickley furniture—in fact, she had a [William] Morris chair too. But I was at the age of, well, it's just some old furniture, and, actually, that was sort of my attitude on my great-grandfather's Victorian chest I have in there, which was part of the environment and I didn't really think much about it. But I didn't know who Stickley was.

But yeah, you were saying both things there that there weren't other people out there, but there wasn't much information out there, either. So it wasn't until 1975 that the first fine woodworking magazine came out, and in this intermediate time where there were a lot of do-it-yourself books that came out, and there would be articles in the—*American Craft* was before that, I'm sure—but I don't know why I can't—I've forgotten just when that was, but in any event—

MS. GOLD: But *American Craft* showed you pictures. It wasn't, I mean—showed you images and talked about people. It didn't talk about techniques, which is—

MR. ANDERSON: Ok, that was my point, yes, very definitely, yeah. And both of them were black-and-white at the time.

MS. GOLD: *American Craft* was?

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, it was called *Craft Horizons*. I've got a lot of early issues. In fact, John Kelsey, the first editor, and Paul Roman, we did an article for them—and they were friends of Rob Sperber's because they all went to Rochester Institute of Technology—and I remember—I've forgotten exactly why—but Joyce and I talking about philosophy of the magazine with them up at Peters Valley one time.

So, the first annual 'good design book'—and I don't think that's exactly the right name [*Design Book* series, Taunton Press]—they were really into trying to highlight designer craftsman. Each issue had had something on somebody, like the third edition—I just happened to check it the other day—has Hans Wegner's stuff: his designs, and his drawings, and his workshop techniques.

The second edition had George Nakashima, and we were scheduled to be in the one just before they stopped doing it. Ultimately, even though they were very good at the start, ultimately, they had to increase their subscription base, which was primarily the average home workshop guy who couldn't care less about contemporary—he wanted to know how to make a Chippendale table. But they're still coming out with things, but this first—and the second, actually—the first 'good design book'—and I don't think they have done that much since then—it was submitted designs, of whoever wanted to submit them, of contemporary furniture design.

MS. GOLD: And that was sent to?

MR. ANDERSON: That was published by Taunton Press which was a fine woodworking press. And I had a medium-size class of about 16 students, and all of them were very good, and they've all had very good designs, so I went to the Dean—no, I went to the head of the school and—

MS. GOLD: This was what school?

MR. ANDERSON: Philadelphia College of Art. And he since has become the head of my alumnus, Pratt Institute, and I was over there about three or four years ago and reminded him of how we worked together, and I'd talk a little money out of him, and he could get a little publicity out of it.

So anyhow, we had the professional photographers do the work of all of these students. They came in and set up a light paper and all of that. But the photographs were really very, very good, and I talked to John. I told John, the editor—I told him what I was going to do, and I sent them in, and shortly after he got them, they made an announcement that the deadline has been extended. And I figured, that's pretty weird, they certainly are getting a lot of applications. And I much later on found out that there weren't enough Rochester Institute of Technology students that had submitted, so they wound up with about equal number of both, and both of them were pretty good for students.

[They laugh.]

MS. GOLD: What about Pratt? Did they get their stuff in too? And what about Rhode Island School of Design?

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, they had some stuff, too.

MS. GOLD: But Kelsey is an RIT [Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, NY] graduate?

MR. ANDERSON: Pardon?

MS. GOLD: But Kelsey went to RIT so he wanted to make sure his school got represented, huh?

MR. ANDERSON: But the early issues did have profiles of people and shop procedures and had Bob Stocksdale, and they had Sam Maloof, but in a manner that has somewhat happened to craft shows, too, and they need to expand to get more money, more traditional stuff starts coming in. But they're still very good on technical stuff, and they still have occasional profiles.

*American Craft* has always been the leader in the field and ever since it became *Craft Horizons*, Rose Slivka was editor there and did very well with what she had there as a black-and-white magazine. But the current editor, my very good friend by the name of—I'll think of it in a little while—and she has been a good friend; she's been very helpful to us here. As editor, she's pulled together a lot of good people, and it has, however, gone a little bit in the direction of artist craftsmen rather than designer craftsmen, and it doesn't give any great stress—it lets the functional stuff get in, but it's more the artist craftsmen thing.

MS. GOLD: And we'll talk about the idea of function and designer and craftsmen and artist craftsmen in a little bit.

MR. ANDERSON: Yes, we will, but we're leading now towards your original question on the headboard. Let me talk about the influence of photography because all the periodicals, books, and catalogs are just so incredibly superior with these very high-quality photographs of craftwork. And *Craft Magazine* takes advertisements, that the four-to-a-page of really a very competent photographer.

But, this is one of the hassles I have with the total trend in the whole craft field: that the photography is great and has helped these magazines to help the craft field, but it's a bad influence on a lot of the work, and particularly in functional wood furniture. A commissioned piece—or that one that is exhibited to a limited number of people—can be seen by these limited number of people that can enjoy it. And this is sort of an example of what were talking about—the headboard. This is a limited piece. But, a furniture—by having this individual piece, that may or may not have any exposure, by having a photograph of it, why, then this generates greater sales opportunity, enhances the designer's reputation, which results in more sales, and so on, on the basis of the photograph itself.

It's sort of like that whole sculpture trend to go out and dig a hole in the desert, and it may be a perfectly beautiful hole but nobody ever sees it. And the sculptor—nobody would know about him or about the sculpture itself, except for the photographs. And this is what I'm interpreting, and in some instances is a bad thing that the pictures become more important than the objects themselves, that what is seen out there in the picture is the important thing.

And as an example, this is what the fashion industry is all about, that they—and commercial TV ads and radio programs and all the other sources of the lowest denominator in taste, that are not really my role models—that it's the picture that has more relevance in some instances to what the object is. Now, this is okay if the object is truly represented by the picture; it's perfectly fine. But, the picture is taken from a particular view, so that all the viewer sees is the front of the object—the front of the chair, for instance, front of chair. And the picture-viewer has no idea whether this is a true sculptural, three-dimensional piece in space, or not. Stage scenery makes very great three-dimensional objects that are just simply painted on a flat thing, with the shadows in a bright place and so on. So again, I'm not saying whether it's good or bad, but we just don't know, and—

MS. GOLD: So are you saying that at some point artists or craftsmen—craftspeople started to create work that was more visually interesting as a photograph than as itself?

MR. ANDERSON: Correct.

MS. GOLD: And have you really seen that in—

MR. ANDERSON: I've definitely seen this, and it is perhaps done consciously, and it is perhaps they're capable of doing three-dimensional work but—and I call this designing through the viewfinder—it's also possible that they don't have the three-dimensional skills to do this. I first caught on to this when we were working in Honduras, and the shop we were working in was making chairs, and all seats sloped forward and I asked someone, why did they do that? And they said, well, their customer got this picture from the United States in the newspaper, and they wanted that.

And the photograph was taken as a front-view with the camera up high and any chair that is—at least a flat chair, or even if it was angled that properly—will tend to look like it goes forward. So, if we're talking about these three-dimensional skills previously, that if there are craftsmen out there that do not have that skill, and their furniture is really a front-view and side-view, it doesn't go around the corner. And if it's designed deliberately through the viewfinder, it makes a perfectly good picture from the front-view, but it doesn't work otherwise. And there are several of the newer woodworkers that have had training in graphics and in photo and in painting that

have that particular problem. I don't really want to name names; I could show you some examples, but—

[End of Tape 3.]

MS. GOLD: We're on disc four of the interview with Edgar Anderson. It's September 18, 2002. And we were talking about craft magazines and leading up to our discussion of the headboard that is at the Grotta's house.

MR. ANDERSON: Right, okay. And we got as far as describing the problem of—although magazines are great because of great photographs, the photographs themselves become a problem when the object that is photographed is not a really genuine—it's a three-dimensional object, but it doesn't have the quality of going around the corners and so on, whether by design or by inexperience or whatever.

And that the second part of that problem is that furniture that looks sculptural in photographs is actually what I call flat-frame construction. There's another commercial term for that, but it's a production technique where you put together on the flat—on the bench—make some joints and have this flat frame-like kind of thing. And then you round over the edge and then you take these separate pieces and put them together, sort of like knockdown furniture in a furniture store to make an object that becomes labeled a sculpture, but when you see it in its dimensionality, why, it still is these separate un-sculptural elements glued together. Now, you certainly can take Lego blocks and assemble them into units that you can call sculpture, but nobody went in there and carved them by hand so that they don't have the really true flow around the curves from one line to another; so that's where I got that.

Now we're going to be talking about the headboard. A very interesting sort of a reverse variation on all of this is a piece that I deliberately explored three dimensions and virtual reality; this piece has never been published. Almost everything at all I've ever done has been in books or magazines, or in show catalogs, and newspapers, and occasionally on TV. And that's not because of anything other than we're so meticulous and so time-consuming in our work that there's not much out of it there, so when somebody wants to do something on us, why, there's a limited number of things. [Laughs.] Our total lifetime—and I haven't calculated this; I certainly could—our total lifetime production is less than a year's worth of one of the production-type furniture designer craftsmen, and I'm not talking about Stickley, or a real factory thing, but current furniture designer craftsmen who are into production.

Now, Richard Meier designs very few houses, and mostly museums and buildings like that. He's the one that designed the wonderful Getty Museum out in California. It took about 10 years to do, and it's one of the lightest and greatest—depending on who's reviewing it—museum. And our clients are one—Lou and Sandy Grotta—are one of the people that have one of these houses, and they are very proud of this house. And of course, since it is—always is a sort of a rarity when—anyone who has a Richard Meier house is going to have an awful lot of people that want to come through and see it. Generally, people that own these houses are relatively selective there.

So in their private house we did most of the major pieces of furniture in the house. We'd done a lot of them for a previous house, and this house was designed in a manner where it also, on the original drawings, had places where that furniture was going to go and other furniture that we were going to do. They use the house itself as a symbol for—on their key tags and on their doorknobs and things like that.

MS. GOLD: So they use a model of their house?

MR. ANDERSON: Pardon?

MS. GOLD: They use a model of the house—

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, well, the key tag—we have one here. It's so nice that we don't have it hung up with our key tags with keys on it [laughs]—it's sitting around as a mini piece of sculpture, and I don't know where. And the doorknob is a stylized view of looking down on the house. And—

MS. GOLD: Maybe it would be helpful to describe the house with its sort of turret-like portions and elliptical portions.

MR. ANDERSON: All right, most of the segments use circular elements, and he superimposes them with rectangular elements. So you come in through the loggia, down a long rectangular—go into a rectangular building, and then you are inside a part of a circular element. That is where the main function of the house—there's a living room and the den and the dining room, and the circle, this cylinder, is interrupted on the exterior with one of these cubic rectangles piercing into the side of it. So it's a very Bauhaus kind of a structure, and it's all done in white porcelain enamel steel—had to have special curved steel elements. That glass—that's solid curved glass, but it's Thermopane glass; two curved pieces that have to be joined together over a 10-foot span, so it's quite a thing.

Well, we have done several beds for them, for their children, and so on, and for their housekeeper, and we did beds and headboards for them, and I took this sort of a challenge—I'm very interested, as I mentioned before, in perspective, and I got this idea of trying to flip a perspective drawing made to look like an object to taking the object itself and making it look like a perspective. And in very, very simple terms, why, if I took a cereal box and squished it over to one side, why, and then you looked out on it, and it would have very crudely the feeling of looking at a perspective drawing.

So, what I did—I had to write this down because—they say I'm the only one that knows it, and I'm a little unsure right now. [Laughs.] We made a three-dimensional wall model that was not a model of the house. It was a model of a two-dimensional plan view of the house, as in a perspective drawing of the house. So, to get back to my cereal box analogy there, the house is in plan view, and the cylindrical element—that is the living room and master bedroom and the dining and all of those rooms—the cylindrical element is about like, say, a coffee can, and then we have the rectangular elements like the cereal box angled off in the perspective that I was saying before. The can then looks like an oval.

So you really see sort of a top drawing, but you're also looking—the angle down, you're looking down the edges of the walls on one side only because the perspective brings them in on the other side, and you're looking at that cylinder as an oval, as if you'd taken the coffee can and squished it in. So then, and this is where the real kicker comes in, in order to see this as something realistic, you go up to the bottom on the wall and go off to one side on the wall, and this is where the vanishing point is. The vanishing point in perspective drawings is the point at which you draw your lines from where the object goes back, and if it went forever and ever it would disappear into diverging lines. And at that point, why, the whole thing falls into a realistic model.

Now, if you don't understand all this, it's my fault I guess for building it also. [Laughs.] It's—you got to see it to believe it. But the point is I have constructed the opposite of my complaint of 'photo-substituting-as-object', and I have created an object, so to speak, an object from a photo.

MS. GOLD: Or a drawing, really, right?

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, a drawing, not a photo, yeah—I just flipped it—as if we had a drawing and created a three-dimensional—which is what I actually did—I made it for—

MS. GOLD: So is that how you did it? You made the drawing—

MR. ANDERSON: —made the drawing—

MS. GOLD: —and then you made the perspective drawing, and then you created the 3-D model from the perspective drawing. But most people, when they create a perspective drawing they make a 3-D model to look right. [Laughs.]

MR. ANDERSON: Right, right, right, yes, uh-huh.

MS. GOLD: And do you—there's no mark in the room where the vanishing point is, is there? You should put a little foot there.

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, I think I should, yeah. I think I should really put a dot, you-are-there kind of—I don't know. [Laughs] But again, on any viewing of anything three-dimensional, it's nice to wiggle your head around, and for viewer participation it's sort of nice when they find their own place of their own.

MS. GOLD: And so, you know, I don't know if you want to lead into a discussion about functionality, but this is sort of a non-functional piece. It doesn't—I mean, this is one of your few non-functional pieces.

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, this was sculptural, and this was—hey, that's right; this is one of my pure sculptural pieces. It's only function is sitting there on the wall, because as a practical headboard, this was made of all—this is like a kid making a model airplane; all delicate little pieces where—the architectural sculpture outside, and it's very, very fragile. This is a guest bedroom, and some of their first guests thought this—lean back and read on it, and it got broken. So one thing about a master craftsman—my definition of a master craftsman is one who can correct all his mistakes. [Laughs.] So what we decided was when they had guests—the bed is on casters—rollers—it's not rollers, actually, they—I got some nice little roller ball things instead of the swivel casters which go up at an angle; this goes the way you want it. So it's very easy to pull those beds out, but to lock it in place—lock in place, whether it's in or out, I made some little wedges that were like flattened-out feet, with toes on—or wedges, and we pushed them in it to keep the bed from moving back and forth.

MS. GOLD: But those poor people who stay over don't get a headboard in that case.

MR. ANDERSON: Right.

MS. GOLD: They have nothing to lean against. But then this is not something that you have been able to photograph because it just doesn't photograph well, or could you photograph it from the angle?

MR. ANDERSON: I could. I've done that and, again—it's a moving story. And I have the photograph of it by itself in a publication. Why, it really relates to the beds also, and it has its function, so it serves its function in place there, but its—well, I guess by flipping the photograph—I guess I obviated the possibility of photographing it. [Laughs.] But, it's never been published or in exhibit, and the only ones that have seen it are family and friends. But the funny thing about it is that the owners are very involved in all aspects of craft support and collection, and they've had various positions in the American Craft Council. Sandy was in charge of some part of the just-completed SOFA [Sculptural Objects and Functional Art Exposition] show in New York.

MS. GOLD: The completed what?

MR. ANDERSON: S-O-F-A. We'll have to ask Joyce what that means; I've forgotten. So they're members of the collectors circle, and these members who have equally good collections make annual tours across the country to each other's houses, and the Grotta's house has been on tour more than once, and their collection is constantly expanding; that's why they want to see it more than once. So it certainly does exist to a broader audience, but if it didn't we'd like it anyhow; it's okay.

MS. GOLD: The Stickley biography you were talking about before the—the bibliography, excuse me, it was compiled by Mark Alan Hewitt. That's in reference to something you were talking about earlier. I was interested in seeing the knight's table that's also—the knight table. Do you call it knight or knights?

MR. ANDERSON: It is a functioning night table. It has lights for nighttime use, which we could get into, but it's spelled K-N-I-G-H-T.

MS. GOLD: All right. And what interested me about it is that it's so fanciful and almost childlike in its ideas, and not focused on the abstract movement flowing of your chairs and tables, but of the—to represent a, you know, a sort of a fanciful, childlike concept.

MR. ANDERSON: Childlike to me is a good word rather than a derogatory word.

MS. GOLD: I meant it as a good word. I didn't mean it as a derogatory.

[They laugh.]

MR. ANDERSON: No, no that's perfect, as opposed to childish, which is another different thing. And Alexander Calder was this very sophisticated sculptor that had the colored steel mobiles hanging and so on. But early in his career and most of his life he did these other things. One of the very first things he did was this little circus in Paris with all the wind-up toys made out of wire; so childlike is a good idea.

And, I don't know where humor comes in—I suppose that children develop a sense of humor early on—but I think humor is another necessary element that is sort of frowned upon in most circles. So I have a combination of the childlike and the humor, and also an interest in everything that goes around. So the knight table, structurally, again, has an architectural topographic map like the female jewelry chest was—came out of that as an operating modus—modus operandi—a technical method to proceed. And then I sort of imagined that all of these castles—the female jewelry chest—well, we haven't even gotten to the female castle I designed, but all of these castles are sort of an indication of the castle is the defense unit for the home, and the home is the place of the females. That's how I got into female castles later on.

But this particular castle, I think I tried to imagine the childlike inhabitants of it, and of course we had to have a dragon in there someplace, and so I have a little dragon in there, and with my interest in electronics and things, why, the dragon has little eyes that light up when you turn it on.

MS. GOLD: And the dragon is made out of what?

MR. ANDERSON: Everything in it is carved out of wood. I made a little clay model first to get a feeling out of what size piece of wood it could have, and it has these glaring eyes. And I'm not quite sure what kind of messes that dragons make, but I imagine they need taking care of, so there's a little sump pump down there for the dragon's use.

And we have—I like mixed media. They have a—Leonardo da Vinci—great, great Renaissance man—was into everything, and he designed a crossbow—he designed armaments of all sorts—and he designed a crossbow that was about 60 feet long for launching projectiles at an enemy castle. And in order to pull back that bowstring, why, you couldn't have somebody just go out there and grab it; it had to be pulled back, and he had a little

screw thing that you had to turn the handle to pull this back to shoot the projectile.

So I made a tiny little piece of wood and put screw threads on it so it would react like that, and then I got quite fanciful; I made the bow itself out of several different rare woods—I'm sure he wouldn't have done that—and that is firing a model of—at the time, the missiles we were using were the Redstone missile. So I was firing a Redstone missile, and that has a little LED light in its nose cone there, and, oh, a control panel with lights flashing. What else? Oh, circular staircase, yes, a circular staircase which is built into—as I put together each separate layer building it up, why, I had to have the staircase in there because that was part of it.

MS. GOLD: And this is all on the inside of the castle, which—and seen through the glass top?

MR. ANDERSON: Through the glass top on it, yeah.

MS. GOLD: And the castle itself is made out of blocks of wood?

MR. ANDERSON: Right—yeah, individual blocks of wood glued together, layer upon layer. Which, of course, now I would not be capable on this three-foot tall—or whatever it is, two-and-a-half-feet tall—I couldn't get down in there and do all the finishing with the inside of the walls there after it was all done. So, all of these structures have to not only be constructed and sanded and fitted, but as they go up they have to be completely—finish on them and everything else.

MS. GOLD: Did you half feel like a ceramicist when you were doing that, you know, working circular like that?

MR. ANDERSON: No—well, yes. I was just going to say no, but woodwork can be a—I'm trying to think of the two words—the construction, where you're building something up, and the extraction, by taking something down. You generally think of clay, as you start with a mound of something and you're sort of removing stuff, and wood, you're starting with wood and building it up, but this isn't a true category because you already had the tree that you had to take apart to make the wood grow up. But no, the turning process was on a potter's wheel. However, your analogy is very good on the coil method, rolling out your coils and putting them up layer by layer and finishing off a certain amount as you go. So, yes, that's a very good representation.

And on a little technical note—we talk about wood shrinking—you might think there would be a problem with that glass top—that because wood is going to expand and contract, why, it's possibly going to damage the glass, but the fact that all of these are end-to-end—the blocks, they all go end-to-end, and they're not going to expand in that direction, they're only going to expand in their own width. There's only enough clearance in the glass inset top for expansion in the glass there, not the bigger amount it would have to be if it was doing like the round table you're talking about.

MS. GOLD: Now was this a commission? This piece?

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah.

MS. GOLD: So it—

MR. ANDERSON: Yes, definitely, I'm trying to—the question was I don't quite know the genesis. This is why it's nice to have Joyce to help on these things. I don't quite remember. I think that just simply they wanted a night table.

MS. GOLD: And why did you choose—I mean, you know, why did you choose to build a table like that and not a table like these ones that we're using to keep our equipment on.

MR. ANDERSON: Oh, well, it's sort of nice in any specific environment to have an unusual piece. Their environment, why, it enhanced their collection so much that there's nothing except unusual pieces. But originally this was—it isn't too much out of context for some of the other things, though, and I guess I'm entitled to be playful quite frequently; the huge quantity of things that we've done for them over the years. [Laughs.]

MS. GOLD: But you don't—your playfulness has come out—I mean, your playfulness is immense; it's clear in the work that you have seen, but it doesn't come out very often, and so I was wondering why it came out with that and with the coffee table that you made with the marble. Do you get inspired by certain clients to get playful?

MR. ANDERSON: I guess at my particular stage of development I can, to a certain extent, even on a commissioned work, say what it is that I want to do, to the extent that on people that we've worked for long-term—we're always way far behind; there's always backed up orders—I can sort of, to a minor extent, say, well, hey, they want a table now, and a desk.

We've talked about the Grottas. They want me to do a cane for their collection, and I want to do the cane—I want to do a castle on the head of the cane—but I've never quite gotten around to it, and it's there and they



remind me, and every year for the last eight years [laughs]—they’ve reminded me. And it’s—but the point I was going to make, that we have, in reality—well, okay, now I feel chair, so I’ve got inspirations on chair, so I will do—even though it’s going to be a custom chair in—as you progress to the point where you see, well, hey, someday I’m not going to be able to design, and I’ve got all these ideas out there that somebody should know about, so I just do a multitude of different designs.

Joyce and I each do our own designs and we decide among ourselves and then we—on an old client who knows they’re going to be overwhelmed with a lot of things, why, it works fine. And they pick out a lot of things. I don’t specifically remember just what—they wanted a coffee table—a night table.

MS. GOLD: Okay. All right, well, then we were going to talk also about the function, and that’s clearly—except for your headboard, I think all your work is functional.

MR. ANDERSON: Well, this is a discussion that has existed forever in a slightly different form. When Joyce and I—as two of the ten members—founding members of New Jersey Designer Craftsmen, our first several meetings were devoted to, well, are we ‘designer craftsmen’ or are we ‘artists craftsmen’? Are we ‘designer hyphen craftsmen’, or what are we? This was in the 1950s.

MS. GOLD: And the reason why you have to have a hyphen is because a craftsman assumes that you’re not actually designing the work yourself?

MR. ANDERSON: No, just seeing what a consensus was there. And this was in the 1950s, actually, and it was shortly after—this is sort of a sophomoric question, but again, we get back to you have to be careful what you call yourself because that’s what you’re going to be, and this was the important thing about it. And we decided on New Jersey Designer Craftsmen, and if we’d thought through it further, why, we might have—in today’s modality we might have decided to make some sort of acronym there that would be a word in itself, but we didn’t do that.

So this still continues to be discussed, however it’s now really the same kind of thing; it’s really being discussed in, are we doing functional things or are we doing art things? And there are craftsmen who are really definitely artist craftsmen, and there are craftsmen who are more designer craftsmen. As a woodworker designer craftsman, I make functional objects, furniture; I’m a furniture maker. And my furniture, I feel, should serve some function as furniture, not be a representation of a piece of furniture that can’t be used, because that’s sculpture, and that’s another sort of thing.

And then, also in the tradition of craftsman, throughout history they make objects that function as iconic objects. And I don’t mean iconic in the terms of the religious sense of icons; I’m talking about the contemporary sense of symbolic representations, not a specific icon. And these iconic objects are in support of my clients’ functional requirements, such as in a religious environment. Everything I’m making in the church isn’t really serving as a dining room table or a dining room chair, a lectern. They all are perfectly functional within those specific things, but the design of them is done in a manner to facilitate the transference of the objective of the particular religion there. The whole environment is aimed towards the objective of what this congregation—relation is to his gods and how he wants to relate to that. And these iconic objects in the religious environment can be crosses, altars and rails and torah holders and all the things that are functional as part of the religion.

And then, to make it a little simpler, there is another me—this is all on the function of that, and the function can be iconic. I’m the sculptor who expresses concepts only in my own mental environment. The sculpture of Eve and Adam out there is examining, really, who did come first, and I’ve done quite a bit of those things. And, on the other hand, the nice design out here, which is totally abstract and has significance only to Joyce and myself, is that it was made from the parts of the car that I raced in the demolition derby.

MS. GOLD: Yes, I want you to talk about that.

MR. ANDERSON: Okay. [Laughs.]

MS. GOLD: You want to sidetrack now and talk about the demolition derby maybe?

MR. ANDERSON: You are going to get me sidetracked. [Laughs.] But this was fun. We didn’t have television like most people did; we were too busy doing other things. And finally one of our clients was throwing out an old television set, and they had some sort of sports thing on commercial television and it was the demolition derby. And most of them took place out at Islip in Long Island, and they sort of looked like fun.

So we decided, well, you know, that might be fun to get into, and then we decided, well, you know, we have this old Plymouth that’s run out of warranty 10 years ago—10 years before. Joyce, why don’t you run in the women’s demolition derby?—which she was going to do. And we got started to do that, and then, like on other times where I’ve had problems with remembering, why, we forgot that she had a bad back, and this would not be an

appropriate thing for her to do. So I did the demolition derby as really a one-time event. But that was a great thing. The reason—these were all—the sculptures all made out of the then-metal internal window frames; all the window frames were metal in the cars inside then.

And it's a great sculptural thing. It gives me great potential for positive and negative space, and within the sculpture—now, I'm going to get sidetracked from a sidetrack—I did a sculpture out of half-inch round metal rods that faithfully traced the periphery of these solid objects there, so that within the negative space caused by the form I had the negative space between the form itself there, and an absolute replica, and it looked totally different because it was more an empty space there.

So, we—a lot of the French children came over and looked at the car, and we drove it out to Long Island, and the French children made my banner, which had my numbers, 32, which was Mario Andretti's number at that time—great racecar driver. [Laughs.] I got in there, and you had to take some of the remaining glass—the reason for taking the glass out is so that when you crash in, why, you're not hurt by the glass, so all the glass except the windshield, which is shatter-proof, and that keeps you from getting debris thrown up at you—so we had to take that out.

And I got in line—and these are racecar drivers, and mostly automobile mechanics, and real car nuts, and so on, and they're getting in line—

MS. GOLD: And one woodworker. [Laughs.]

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, I'm a woodworker. And one of them reached down where I'd been working and, what the heck is that guy doing there? And he came around, he said, you forgot your Phillips screwdriver there. [Laughs.] And they were a real, real nice bunch of guys—I mean, sort of friendly, but in the end it was the professionals that won out, of course, the race drivers. It wasn't just a demolition derby; it was also figure-eight racing and other very, very skilled things.

So, my time came and I went running over to where our crew was sitting and cut over in front of them, and all of sudden somebody else I didn't see was coming along. We almost had wiped ourselves out before the thing started. [Laughs.] And that's where I wound up later on. Joyce said, you know—this is one of the first Plymouths where the automatic transmission had push buttons; the push buttons went to cables and the cables had to go through this intricate route—she said, the first time you get hit, they're all going to get out of alignment, and sure enough—and the name of the game in this demolition derby is you drive backwards so that you don't have your radiator crashed into. So eventually, why, I had enough of the demolition derby. [Laughs.] We can go on, right?

MS. GOLD: okay, so you get your sculptural material from demolition derbies and you get your furniture materials somewhat from the woods.

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah. Well, I do wood sculpture too. But a lot of my recent work has been in sort of the gray in-between area, and that's how I talked about the hand and how it could be sculpture without it telling time, and I think that that gives me the self-examination and sitting on both sides of the fence. Why, I'd like to get into the criticism I'm doing because of that, previously, but I mentioned those things.

MS. GOLD: Do you ever write—

MR. ANDERSON: What should I—

MS. GOLD: Sorry, but do you ever write criticism? Do you ever actually do the—work as a critic of—

MR. ANDERSON: I don't like personal criticism. I have occasionally been on juries for very specific reasons, and one was that when the American Craft Council first started up, why, we were quite active in it, and I was invited to be a member of the young craftsmen's jury. And I didn't like it too much, but one of the fun things was that Paul Smith, who was director of the Museum of Contemporary Crafts, and who spends most of his professional life out there jurying people—Paul had a piece in there, so—

MS. GOLD: Paul had his piece in there?

MR. ANDERSON: Well, Paul Smith, who has juried millions—or a very large number of people—he had—and I was the woodworker representative so it came upon me to judge Paul's works. I probably had the honor, privilege, or distress, of being the only person who ever judged Paul's work. He did a very creditable thing, but I don't think he ever really got into the crafts very much. I imagine a lot of people envy me, being on the other side of the fence there. [Laughs.]

MS. GOLD: So did he get in the show?

MS. GOLD: Pardon? Oh, yeah. And he was worthy of it, and it was a nice piece, so it certainly was worthy of it. But there was—the whole dynamics in there had a certain polarization, that—now, an awful lot of our church is memorial—

MS. GOLD: In fact, we were going back to the function—

MR. ANDERSON: Oh, yeah, right. Well, one awfully little nice thing is a favor to a friend who, again, was a rather well thought of art teacher, and they had an art show, and they thought it'd be nice to have a professional come in along with their teachers. And so I was in a jury on all sorts of art, and one of the most fascinating things in the show—and it was good average student work, and I could select among them—but there was one piece that was out of sticks, sort of like a matchstick construction of a fantasy tree combined with a tree house; very inventive and very creative.

And the discussion was, well, shall we let so-and-so have his work in or not? And I, not knowing what was going on, I said, absolutely; it's really the greatest. Well, they have a word for him now, but this was a special-requirements person. In other words, he had a problem. And they just didn't quite know how—they didn't know what they were looking at, it was so great there. They said, well, it's a matchstick construction. So I was very adamant on staying with that one. But that was sort of a fun thing, but, no, I don't like to jury. I'll criticize but I won't jury.

But this other self now is that a lot of the church work we do is memorial in effect. One of the churches we worked for was actually called Christ Memorial Church. So it's not so much of a shift into pure sculpture that—for me to design that 200-foot concrete cube that is now somewhere in the competition process for the Liberty State Park 9/11 memorial. I also have a Desert Storm memorial that I designed, and this was totally for my own satisfaction, and it had some of the same elements of what it was representing there. And I've still got that in the file. Now I'm getting it ready for Desert Storm II. [Laughs.]

But, to sort of summarize that, if in general the work is always functional, why, then the worker is a designer craftsman. If it's never functional, it's the work of an artist. And there are some absolutely wonderful, elegant, non-functional craftworks in glass and fine metal, and so on, that would certainly make Faberge envious, but it has nothing to do with the Gustav Stickley or the William Morris or the Sam Maloof or me, as furniture makers. Having so said, I even have a little bit of a problem with my own definitions there on it, but that's sort of—

But now there's a third me, and we were talking about playfulness, and this is one that gets into political commentary and playfulness and so on, and in addition to Alexander Calder, why, Dr. Seuss, Theodore Geisel, who does the fun cartoon-type sculptures and sculptures as statements on life's inconsistency, and this is the childlike thing that I [inaudible]. And this—I don't know whether we want to get into the politicization of things, but—

MS. GOLD: Well, do you think of your work as having a theme of commentary, political or social in some way?

MR. ANDERSON: It comes up all the time, and our functional furniture [tape stops, re-starts] humor is normally really a no-no in political politics; it's a sure killer if you start to get humorous on the campaign trail. But anybody that's involved in public sculpture—like, we did a sculpture for the Great Swamp—great out-giving of public support to form the Great Swamp National Park to protect this whole wildlife they have in the area. They wanted me to do a sculpture that had, again, a thousand names on it; they wanted the donors names on it. So I came up with sort of an abstract skunk cabbage onto which each name, with a welding torch, was cut into it.

And that got going along pretty well, but this became a state function, and even though the gal who was a great, great—Helen Fenske—environmentalist, she wound up in being a state environmentalist, and she was an old friend ours. In fact, we saw her a couple of weeks ago. The thing got bogged down in the politics of, well, it's not going to look good to do this now, and we're still trying to get more money, and so on. So, that one sort of fell apart.

MS. GOLD: I wanted to ask you maybe before we get away from the idea of political and social commentary, do you see your just being a craftsman as a political or social commentary? I mean, choosing to spend your time making things that you could buy, that could be purchased and mass produced, you're spending hours, days, weeks on. Do you see that as a commentary?

MR. ANDERSON: Yes, I suppose it is, and the fact that this, again, isn't one of the constant things that people of my general peer group—people split off into this. There are some who have a lot of their work done by somebody else, and this enables them to create a lot of things and be able to go on to others, and that's their way of doing it. And then there are some that go over the border, as I mentioned before. So, perhaps I'm making, like once before, not a preciousness statement, but it's a little bit me, I guess that's all. I guess it's a lifestyle statement; I'm not trying to make a big commentary.

I do, in my very strong environmental awareness, in my newspaper commentary pieces, driving while phoning, and public meetings, that I do it for the logic and from the point of view of the logic and the benefit to the people rather than that it would be, your political party does this and my political party does that. So things don't get done when it's done that way. My sculpture for Liberty State Park makes a very strong statement that it is to honor the victims and our national spirit, and to rebuild our spirit in honor and not as the Lower Development Manhattan Corporation is trying to do to dishonor the victims in favor of commercial space.

So I don't do a donkey or elephant coffee table. It may be an appropriate environment—if somebody wanted it in an appropriate environment I might slightly consider make an anti-smoking humidifier that wouldn't open, or a handgun cabinet that couldn't be opened and maybe put some wooden handguns in, or whatever—or an ash container with no bottom for the no-smoking advocate. [Laughs.] But, I seriously don't know whether I want to do that or not.

On all of these, I've waited far too many years trying to find a non-election period that I could do a rational non-party anti-handgun column. But that's a contradiction in terms because actually there is no non-election period anymore; the campaign for the next election starts well before the current one ends.

But an interesting thing that we had was one of the ceramicists that we worked with—attempted to work with in Honduras, and he would do a certain amount of ceramic pots, but his big thing was doing political commentary. And the people go to the market and buy a little sculpture of whoever the particular politician was, and he was doing this ongoing political commentary. He didn't really even want to get into our program, but he was kind enough to let us do some experiments with his local clay, and make a couple of pots for us also.

MS. GOLD: Do you want to talk a little about your sense of spirituality and religion? And I see in your notes that you talk about—I think that your sense of spirituality, to me, comes from your quality of working with the wood and being in the woods and using the wood of the land that we had talked about before. Am I—do you think I'm wrong on that?

MR. ANDERSON: No, I think you're quite right. The important thing is that I, within my spirituality or religion is one thing, and of course church work is just loaded with religion and spirituality, and I create commissions of religious environments, and create, as I just said, the religious objects and so on for particular congregations.

But to discuss it that way is a little backwards. I'm not imposing my spirituality on them; I'm not using my religion or my spirituality to enhance my creativity. I'm not calling on some divine being there and saying, hey, let me do a good job on this church. What I'm doing is using my creativity to make objects to enhance someone else's spirituality.

MS. GOLD: Where do you think your creativity comes from? I mean, do you think that there's any—

MR. ANDERSON: I don't know. It's something that—of course, I do have a whole family background, and so on, but where did theirs come from? I have great discussions with my scientific friends, who—some are agnostics—but a lot of great artists have been agnostics. So the jury's out on that. I see a certain order, and if the scientists are right that everything is infinite—quite obviously in the old example, get a bunch of monkeys together that can push buttons on words, why certainly they could do all of Shakespeare's work in an infinite—which means forever and forever—infinite amount of time.

So the jury is out on this. And the computers have confused it because there's really very little of computer science that you can directly compare to a human being. And they're trying very hard to get computers that do their own thinking and make their own programs, and they're sort of getting there, but it's a bad way to examine it because it isn't quite like that. So, I guess if you ask me a question that—I'm going to hedge on it. I don't know. [Laughs.]

MS. GOLD: But maybe—do you feel like there's something beyond you in your creativity, or do you think you're fully in control of it?

MR. ANDERSON: No, I can—let us say I can be a very deeply religious person, that this religion and this particular god has given me certain skills, but every one of them out there is going to say, hey, you take this and go with it. So, I'm not one of the Middle Eastern religions who is looking for hour-by-hour spiritual guidance. I take what I got from wherever it came and if indeed there is a master being up there it's like, hey, that's pretty neat. So, I don't know.

But there was a recent—recent, just a few days ago—a *New Yorker* magazine review of a book that examined Gershon Scholem, the great Jewish scholar, and described that he was not a man penetrating a field of learning; he was a field of knowledge penetrating the world. I'm not being pretentious enough to say, hey, that's me, but it's sort of the insight of what I'm really thinking about here. And again, it's the historic role of the artist to create the religious work, and I'm sure some of the great Renaissance artists may not at all have believed in the

religion they were doing, but they felt that their role was to create the field of knowledge for that church.

And another *New Yorker* writer—all of this is happening in the same time period—said that “Culture is the fitness center for the soul,” and I agree with that, and I think—did I mention that with respect to the National Endowment for the Arts previously?

MS. GOLD: Yes, you did.

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, okay. So, I take that, and I also think that houses of worship are also a fitness center for the soul, and the artist, the designer—and the designers of the equipment for the heavy lifting of the spirit; sort of put different little angles on that.

And I think I already mentioned that the 9/11 memorial was for the artist, me, using my own spirituality to examine the meaning of what it should be, and to speak—and the only—the artist and the designer—the only ones to speak for those voiceless victims and heroes when designing memorials. And I wrote in one of my columns that the victims’ families and friends and the politicians and the development corporations all have agendas that preclude hearing what those voiceless victims might tell future generations. And only the artist can give form to those words. And then I wrote in another separate thing—

MS. GOLD: Why is it that you say that? What is it that the artist has that can give voice? Is it, you know, just that sort of inner ear, or the voice?

MR. ANDERSON: The training. The—well, obviously, we’ve always said the development corporation [Lower Manhattan Development Corporation] is the commercial—

[Cross talk.]

MS. GOLD: I know the other people have agendas but—

MR. ANDERSON: But why can the artist—

MS. GOLD: What is it—yes, what is it that you’re saying—what underlies—

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, because the artist, whoever he is, the artist throughout history, the world will not know very much about what was going on when a little Spanish town was bombed by the Germans during the Spanish Civil War; nobody remembered that. But everybody remembers Pablo Picasso’s *Guernica* [1937], and he had the images and the ability to do that, and—

MS. GOLD: So the artist has the capacity to take something that doesn’t exist, or that happened—and these—when I say something that doesn’t exist, the voices of the victims does not—do not exist any longer, and you can give—you can take the expression to them, and you can project them and—but do you have a sense of being able to encapsulate a kind of truth that—I mean, is that also what you’re saying, that you have [inaudible]?

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, well I’m saying two things simultaneously. I’m saying these people can’t do it. The families are probably the very worst people because their agenda is that the loved one had died, he was very important to us, and he should be represented by something, and then they start picking the somethings. Well, okay, he was in the Trade Center tower, we got to put up a tower, or whatever.

One of the very, very nicest things happened in the town of Summit here, one of the victims that called his wife to tell her he was about to be killed, and he reminded her that they had discussed that he wanted to do something for the eagles; that the eagle was a representative—and they’re free-flying, and so on. So, what she did—in these suburban communities, why, for several days after, there would be parked cars there that the victims hadn’t come home to, so she took his car and sold it and donated the money to the Raptor Center, that we were talking about there. So it was sort of a nice thing, and she really knew that.

But, politicians, of course, they sure have their own agenda. But from another of my commentary pieces I wrote right after the event, I said that it’s the responsibility of the military—I’m reading here, “It’s the responsibility of the military to defend our land, our people, and our infrastructure, using guts and guns and bullets, and it was the job of constructors to build with steel and mortar and bricks. But it’s the artists who protect and interpret and enhance our spirit, and are the managers of the images, the words, the thoughts and the sounds of freedom.”

So, I’m saying that it’s the artist that’s used to doing it. Now, of course the artist is used to doing these things; the designers, of course, they could be working for Madison Avenue, and they there are also—it’s good to talk about manipulating in their terms. But really what we’re doing is in a sense we’re managing these, and we have the perspective to know that this memorial is going to be seen 230 years from now, and exactly the same as 230 before now, why, our president, our president-to-be, got out at Memorial Park and gave his speech of “Four

score and seven years ago.” But he was making a memorial out of that. And this is the kind of thing we should consider, what people at that time in the future are going consider, and none of these people are qualified.

MS. GOLD: So, on the subject of spirituality would you also talk a little bit about your connection with the land and the environment?

MR. ANDERSON: With respect to what? I’m sorry.

MS. GOLD: Your connection to the land—the land that you live on and—

MR. ANDERSON: Oh, okay. I already got into talking to the tree and reading of the spirit of the tree, and that the fact that we bring out the spirit of the wood when we’re cutting into it and liberating the spirit of the wood, in the patterns and so on. And this is something that science can’t really explain—well, yes it can; molecules got together and arranged themselves in this direction because this branch was going up there and so on, and perhaps the beauty is in the beholder’s ideas. So, I’m just not sure that I’m really liberating the spirit of the wood or just what, but it’s again, it gets intimate.

In considering some of the early church work and trying to get to understand what it is that this congregation is represented by, I talk to the religious leader, whoever the person that’s going to be there, and do great brainstorming sessions. We can’t do this with the whole committee, but we’ve learned you really have to have some designated person, and it would primarily be their religious leader. So, ideas come tumbling out. And again, it’s sort of like a kid with a truckload of Lego blocks. I mean, we have all these great things and we’ve got to be practical and decide which ones—

[Tape stops, re-starts.]

MS. GOLD: Let’s start again. I wanted to ask you how you see yourself working within the aesthetics of the time, and whether they affect you.

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, I don’t think that I fit in—I don’t think that I considered them at all. Perhaps I don’t fit in, I don’t know. That was a slip of the tongue. But they don’t really concern me at all because most of the work we’re doing now we have a little bit of control over the contiguous environment there. We may have done other pieces or—so it fits in an environment or with other pieces—not always, we may just do an individual piece, but it has really nothing to do.

As a good example of that, an awful lot of all the work of good craftsmen may go into an environment that is totally incompatible. I just saw in a magazine one of the great craft collections—they had a house built for it—and it’s a rather pedantic house. So the craftsman didn’t have control of it, but there’s a lot of other craft that fit in there.

So you really ask—it’s saying about the same question: how does my work fit into other objects, the environment that it’s going to go into? And we can’t say on the tape, well, you’ve seen my work and you know that this is the way—that doesn’t fit. [Laughs.] But it either—again, so in answering the other question about a very individualistic piece, it’s a very individualistic piece that’s an accent piece that sits in its own in the room, why, then it sits in its own.

The few examples where I have deliberately fit into other pieces have been a possibility of great experimentation, and I’m thinking now of the house that has the Mies van der Rohe couch that—and I think we’ll talk maybe with Joyce on that as part of that collection—where the coffee table was designed to be compatible with the hardness of the edge and the softness of the leather, and it came up in this combination of hard and soft in a coffee table. So that’s fitting in.

But so far as fitting into the milieu, so far as fitting into what are other craftsmen—that’s such a changeable, day-by-day—it’s, again, it’s almost like the fashion industry. And I’m not going to get on the runway with fashion models. So I shouldn’t say superciliously, I don’t care, but really, I have enough self-confidence—maybe an exaggerated self-confidence—I think what I’m doing is what I want to do, and I like what I do, and I like the way I do it, and Joyce and I, we live with this organism together, have no reason or desire to do anything else. And so if we appear dated, that’s fine.

And as a matter of fact, that’s a little about what the Bard [College] show [“Sculptural Objects and Functional Art”] that Joyce was in, they looked at us as representatives of the ‘60s. This is the period of time where the people that were active at the time, this was what they selected. They could have selected ‘70s or ‘80s or whatever, but they selected her for that. And people have occasionally looked at our furniture and said, “How ‘60s!” And we definitely have done a great deal of different work since then, so we’re advancing within our own timetable, so we’re not behind anything; we’re just different from anything.

MS. GOLD: So do you see yourself as part of a movement—of the movement of the '60s in any way, or no?

MR. ANDERSON: No. In fact, back then, like I was telling you, when we originally started out we didn't even know that there were any of us out there, and we—oh, now, when you very, very first start out, why, you tend to be derivative. I don't have any great nationalistic sense that, hey, I came from Norwegian blood so I'll do Norwegian furniture, but I happen to like some of the European—Finn Juhl and Hans Wagner, and a lot of the European furniture designers, and certainly, they must have, in my immature stage of design, done things that had some of their elements in it.

So, yeah, I don't care. [Laughs.] We, after all, have—like I said before, every single piece we've ever done has been someplace, and now we're not quite as active, so we only get a couple of major shows a year or so. But we still have—the little local paper had an article on Joyce about a couple of months ago, and we still have that ongoing.

MS. GOLD: Can you define or say what a Joyce and Edgar Anderson piece is, or what are the elements that distinguish you from other people?

MR. ANDERSON: We are so many different people that we even are different from our—I don't think as individuals our work is so different from the various periods that we can't define ourselves.

[End tape four.]

MR. ANDERSON: Did we lose something someplace?

MS. GOLD: We just need to go on a new disc. And this is disc five of talking with Edgar Anderson; and you were talking about the one-armed chair.

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, and the chairs of that time, quite rectilinear, and compared to the chairs in the other room that you've seen, this great flow of line, and a little bit of that was the advancement of our skills and a little bit of that was the advancement of our technology.

One of the great things about the chairs out there is there is a flow rounding up and over into the stretcher, and the stretcher follows up and around and into the back, and the back goes around into the seat, and the legs—and there's all this complete flow. These are designed to be—stop at the various places and—which is what almost all chair construction does—normal chair construction; the new ones are quite different.

Now, to put this chair—I'm being technical now—but to put this chair together, those stretchers, those cross pieces that go there, go into holes that are drilled oversize—this is a standard technique. And the reason for that is that there's likely to be a little variation in how the other pieces that it goes into occur. So there's leeway there so that you can move the legs in and out a little bit without them being constrained by those stretchers going around there.

And the new chair, as you go from one element to another one, each one is positively fixed with no leeway at all; any change in any one would create a gap on the other ones. And because of advancement of my skills and advancement of technology, I was able to do this more sculptural chair through a great number of different tricks—I shouldn't call them tricks; they're techniques. [Laughs.] And one of the technical things that I did was get myself a metalworking milling machine, which is very, very accurate—you can adjust things well, well more accurate than the three-thousandth of an inch that's the maximum gap that you should have in a good glue joint—and a milling machine has three axes; it goes up and down and sideways.

And we saw some wonderful milling machines in Italy on a tour we did there with some world famous designer, I recall, but I can't get—he was on the cover of *Business Week* or something like that, and they were interested in some our designs. We saw this machine that you put the work piece in, turn the lever on, turn the button on, drill holes in from the side and mortise and tenons from the back, and a decorative pattern up and down, and they were doing some decent decorative work on it.

Well, that's not for me; I'm not that production. But I did take this production milling machine that works on three axes, up and down and sideways, and you have to turn these little cranks, and you measure out on the micrometer dials for the accuracy of the metalwork. So I changed that machine to having lever operating handles, except for one of them, the up and down one, and I built it out of old gears and washing machine parts and did a good job on it. That sounded a little crude. [Laughs.]

And what this has done for me that normally when you're cutting a mortise and tenon joint, whether you're doing it by hand or doing it with a tenoning machine, why, you try to have as few tenons as possible because they're time consuming. On the other hand, when you're doing a very, very big pedestal like on, again, that round table, it would be nicer to have more of them first because, again, of the shrinkage of wood, instead of

having one big one that can shrink, two little ones, why, they would shrink less collectively.

So I built this machine so I can put that piece in and can use a milling machine to make the holes, and leave the whole thing set up, to then go to the second hole without having to take everything apart and readjust it. And this works so nicely, I managed to do four tenons in there. Where Duncan Phyfe did dowel joints, generally, and I got this greater strength out of it.

So I had this machine, and I found that I could use it to very, very accurately locate the chair leg joints—do two them instead of one—and not a round one like this but rectangular ones, two of them wedges, through a whole tricky set up. And so, in a very convoluted way, why, I'm answering your question about how our designs are different, and I'm just saying they're different than our previous designs because of that and my skills.

MS. GOLD: And also, I was just going to ask you how your design process has changed over the years. And I guess that's sort of answering that too, how it evolves with your abilities and your tools.

MR. ANDERSON: Yes, uh-huh.

MS. GOLD: Or are there other changes that you can also—

MR. ANDERSON: Well, the round—are we still on?

MS. GOLD: Yeah.

MR. ANDERSON: Okay, the round table top, whereas I was telling you how it had to have this slip joint in it—and we'll talk more about it later on, I guess—but there I made some jigs, metal things that you set up with clamps and so on, so I could make the two or three that we had on order there, but they're still available for any more they want.

And here again, it gave me a great deal of accuracy on cutting them and making them very, very accurate. Those wedge-shaped pieces of that table had to be glued together individually, so here we're looking at, say, a triangle, and we have to put a clamp across the triangle, and it's going to slip off. Well there's tricks, we can glue an extra part on it and so on, but I decided that that wedge-shaped piece, all it had to know is the force is coming from where the clamps should have come. So what I did was make two perfectly rectangle metal pieces fastened to a heavy metal base that would go where the edges of that piece—where those clamps would have gone, and then, since the piece didn't know where the force was going to come, it just had to be pushed out against them, and I went all the way out to edge of that and made a device to push it into the wedge, in other words, thinking of it as a wedge-shaped slot that you're pushing a wedge in to expand it, you have it on the edge, which is pushing it out on the side.

Well, I made up some clamp devices that had a hex-head bolt on there that I could take a socket wrench to screw this multitude of them—three or four or five or six or however many were needed there—but they had to be done equally and evenly because there were—each one of them had some dowels, and you had to line up those boards, so I used a torque wrench. And a torque wrench is what a machine shop uses, and as you turn it you get a reading on the needle on how tight that is. So I used the torque wrench to adjust each one of these so it all came up to the same reading, and I did a test to see what that should be to get a good glue joint. So here again, the technology—my technology had influenced the way I did the design.

MS. GOLD: Yeah. You know that also leads to—what do you see—a question about wood itself. Do you see the wood as—I mean, why wood; why did you choose wood as your means?

MR. ANDERSON: I got into this complicated conversation on additive and subtractive work, that the different crafts have different degrees of how much you're putting on and how much you're cutting off, and wood had a nice combination of it. Here I take the trunk and I'm cutting it away into pieces, and I have these separate pieces to deal with, to do—not under the pressure of a glassblower, who has made up his mind what he wants to do, but he's got to very, very quickly execute it, very, very—he also has to have help on it too. Ceramists have to be quick-decision people. So I have the benefit of both additive and subtractive, and a little bit in metalwork.

Now, metalwork enables you to do skinny structural things, and great, great strength. And you're not constrained like wood is that you just have to have a certain amount of bulk there to have a proper glue joint. So metal gives you more freedom, but it's difficult to make warm and friendly and comfortable furniture out of metal. You make office chairs out of it, but the wood is expressive of a home environment. We work in all sorts of environments. So it's just simply a preference, plus the fact I had probably more experience in wood than anything else.

Then again, it's a little bit of the supply thing. When you're into welding, why, you've got to constantly get new tanks of welding gas—we have both electric and gas welding for our welding here. And I think I've exhausted



that one. [Laughs.]

MS. GOLD: Another question that I wanted to ask you about—be sure that I asked you about was this: what is the importance for you for having had a partner in your work, to work as a partnership? I'm wondering—

MR. ANDERSON: Well, for the particular partner, extremely important that we are on the same page in the big picture. We're never on the same paragraph [laughs] but on the same page on where we're sort of vaguely heading. And that's just an absolutely incredible life partner in our life and in our business. And this, if split off into two separate entities, would reduce the compatibility on both, whichever. And there have been husband and wife—the Eames, Ray and Charles Eames, they—a guy and a gal—one of the post-Bauhaus. They were a design team. And—I think I have this right—I think they split up in their marriage but they still continued as business partners.

And perhaps the strain of constantly being with someone else is a little bit too much. We a little bit inhabit our own envelopes when she's on the lathe and when I'm working on some of the machines, and we tend to—we certainly don't keep our nose to the grindstone; we're certainly doing all sorts of other things. But someone can call up and say—ask something and I'll say, I'll have to figure out what—I'll have to talk to Joyce about that, and she's busy now. She's right there, and she could interrupt it—

MS. GOLD: I don't think you're the first husband and wife team that did that!

MR. ANDERSON: No, I didn't intend that it was a put-off; it's just that we're a little isolated there, and I'm sort of—I'm me over here, and she should have picked up—I guess I presented that as a put-down, and I guess I'm getting now a little confused on where I was headed there. But, yeah, it's been a—it's influenced our work a lot, and I'm glad we're doing it.

MS. GOLD: How long—do think it was easier to just start in this sort of netherworld of designer craftsmen because you were a team?

MR. ANDERSON: Think it was easier to start?

MS. GOLD: Yeah.

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, I suppose so. Let me come back to that. I've got to go.

[Tape stops, re-starts.]

MS. GOLD: You wanted to talk a little bit more about—

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, okay, well, there's two contributing things here, and having a permanent partner all the time—one thing is I like things permanent, and we've been in situations—we were going to Honduras, why, we get totally absorbed in the environment, and we're very much at home there and completely in it, and then we can leave and leave that behind, but I also like a sense of permanence.

But when we first started out, we each had our own specialties, and over the years, why, as we've learned more who does what, we have separated off, so this is what you could say is a unit organism that we've joined together that indeed there are certain things that since one or the other has been doing it for so long they are now an essential part of the other's. So it's in our lifetime experience, our lifestyle as well as our work, and it's just a—probably any partner, any place, do that.

MS. GOLD: So Joyce, when I asked her about the partnership, she said, well, it was really your business and your work, and I wondered if you had a thought about that.

MR. ANDERSON: No, it's—she, yeah, I couldn't do it without her, her particular skills, and then the specialties that we have gotten into, just the physical things, with my bad ears and my bad numbers memory, why, she's the one that makes the appointments. And with my being able to still climb heights that she can't get I'm the one that does that, so there's that kind of a division. And she provides a certain sense of stability and leveling that I would probably not maintain myself. I don't mean I get unstable [laughs]—to question, well, hey, is this what you really think you want to make, and that kind of thing.

MS. GOLD: What about the, what about her development as a designer? Was that difficult for you, or in any way a threat that some—she was saying—

MR. ANDERSON: No, no, no way at all, not a threat—because we are listed, even in the phonebook, and specifically listed as Joyce and Edgar rather than Edgar and Joyce. And she has—I don't know if she's told you about it or not, but she has certain very highly-regarded skills in just the business of doing business. She was in one of our—we deal with several different lumberyards—

MS. GOLD: Right, she talked to me about it.

MR. ANDERSON: She told you about her—the order that they didn't send the amount of stuff that they were supposed to, and when we called up—we called up the owner, who was our contact person—oh, they were giving us a little trouble at the desk and he said, no, if Joyce says that that's what it is, that's what it is. And she can count lumber; she's good at measuring lumber. She did the final numbers crunching on, for instance, the quantity of concrete for the studio floor, and the concrete mix, it came quite a bit extra, and just exactly the amount that was over what she had ordered, and that kind of thing. She's extremely good with number crunching.

MS. GOLD: Okay.

[Tape stops.]

[Ms. Gold asks about teaching experience off the tape.]

Tape re-starts.]

MR. ANDERSON: Okay. In our craft schools, why, we started out rather early on being associated with them and had long-term involvement with Peters Valley since its inception, and early on we were—

MS. GOLD: Tell me—I'm sorry to interrupt you, but tell me what Peters Valley is.

MR. ANDERSON: Oh, Peters Valley was the result of Tocks Island dam that was announced to cover a whole big area on the Delaware River; and the government kicked out all the people that were there and bought their property, and they fought for years and years and they couldn't get it back. So in order to make peace with the community when the dam was not built, why, they had various art and other things there, so we created a little art—a rather large craft community at Peters Valley. And the government owns the buildings, and the Peters Valley itself supplies the equipment and the students and so on.

So it's been a rather important—of the crafts—it's smaller than Haystack, for instance, but well recognized, and we grew up there—when we used to have two-week summer courses instead of just the weekend summer courses they had, and Joyce would be there on some of them. I was on the board of directors for several years, and Peters Valley was very much a low-budget operation at the time, so there was much hands-on work for the board of directors. Some of the students that we had in our two-week courses actually became woodworkers, and some of them are recognized woodworkers—[inaudible]—very much additional education in the field.

MS. GOLD: So from these two-week—

MR. ANDERSON: From these longer workshops that we conducted there. And we had—we've done—our involvement in these things—we've done a very large number of weekend workshops and lectures and seminars and symposia in colleges and in museums and craft schools and in religious environment conferences, so I've had a great deal of involvement out there in the community or the other areas out there.

One real neat one was at the Philadelphia Museum College Art, which later became the Philadelphia College of Art where I taught at later on, and there was a symposium there. Three of us: Rose Slivka, who was the editor for *Craft Horizons*, and Edgar Kaufmann—Edgar Kaufmann was the owner of the Frank Lloyd Wright Fallingwater, and was a prime mover at the Museum of Modern Art.

So, being unsure, why, I wrote everything out, I practiced it, and I read my presentation, and it was all right. Rose Slivka came out with this whole huge box of three by five cards, and I think she usually does this, and just shortly before, she picked a card and picked a card there, picked a card from someplace else that was pertinent to the particular audience at the time.

MS. GOLD: So she had her—she knew what she wanted to talk about—

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, there was a particular theme that we were in, and she just had her three-by-five cards indexed to be able to do that, because she's frequently out speaking. Edgar Kaufmann got up there without any notes and gave this beautiful, ongoing, flowing, very succinct thing; gave a wonderful presentation.

MS. GOLD: Some people can do that.

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, I can't; I do wander. But, I don't know, maybe Joyce told you about this one, about taking the picture—there was a dinner afterwards, and we had some of our objects there in a display with John Tripp [ph], I think had some of his stuff there, and Emil Milan. We had some furniture, and Edgar Kaufmann was quite short, and the photographer said, well, we've got to get you equal here, so Joyce took off her shoes, and Edgar Kaufmann got up on this little six-inch platform that one of our chairs was on to make them equal height.

[Laughs.]

But Edgar Kaufmann was Joyce's—and Edgar Kaufmann were dinner partners at the dinner afterwards, so Joyce said, well, now the state of Pennsylvania—whatever it was—the Fallingwater Trust or Pennsylvania Trust has just acquired your building now, and I'm sorry that you don't have it anymore. At long last I'll be able to go see it. And Edgar Kaufmann said, but, my dear, you could have seen it anytime. [Laughs.]

MS. GOLD: Was he flirting, or do you think that that was true, that he would—did he have an open house?

MR. ANDERSON: No, see, in the past she could have come any time.

MS. GOLD: Could anybody have come, or just a certain select—

MR. ANDERSON: No, not quite the level of restriction that that the house that we were looking at the other day there. Oh, no, I assume he had the same problem there, that with a Richard Meier house and a Frank Lloyd Wright house you want to have people come all the time. It was an incredible, great experience, and I recommend anybody to go on that tour there; it's a real wonderful thing.

Now, I was later, at the Philadelphia College of Art, a visiting lecturer for several different semesters, and these were temporary things, but generally when they had some particular problem. One time the head of that department fell down a flight of steps after drinking too much of something that he probably shouldn't. He broke his leg, so I had to go in there. And another time the head of the department was off on a Fulbright and all these kind of things.

I didn't always—I didn't necessarily become the head of the department, and I was teaching—I had to restrict myself to senior and graduate students because I just don't have the teaching skills with the freshman to be able to do it. So that was great. And "Visiting Lecturer" was my title during these periods of time, which gave me a full professor's salary, and it also gave me a parking space that others didn't have as part of the deal.

MS. GOLD: That can mean a lot in a—

MR. ANDERSON: Oh, in Philadelphia, yeah. In fact, they got me in trouble that the parking space was within this—it was actually an old factory—a shoe factory. It was very limited parking space with the upper echelon, and one of the much higher ranked people than I didn't—they didn't give me his space but they put him more on a floating basis there, and when he discovered that—when I was head of the department I was down there for two days in a row, and when he saw me walking from my department he said, how did you get here? And without thinking I said, oh, my car is parked over there. He said, over where my parking space is? [Laughs.]

MS. GOLD: Oh, dear! Do you find that you learn from teaching?

MR. ANDERSON: Oh absolutely, in three different dimensions. One is that when our questioners are ourselves, and to a certain extent, our clients, nobody's really going to really come out and say, well, now, why did you really do this? And with students, when you're showing the slides, why, positively they don't hesitate in the slightest: well, what was your thinking—asking the kind of questions you are—what went into the process on this? And this sort of awakens you to—like you have here, you've brought to surface things that, hey, I've never thought about that; I should've.

And then the interchange—one of the great things on a craft school environment, or even within a university craft department is the interchange amongst the students themselves. And in the Philadelphia College of Art that was particularly pertinent because to get into our department they had to go through the sculpture department, so they also saw what the sculptors were doing. So that was a great part of that.

I've talked to other craft centers, I've had some classes up at Brookfield craft centers and some others, and then workshops all over the country where a small local group would have us and they would send out advertisements to other craftsmen, and they'd have paid admission for—to see us out there.

MS. GOLD: But you yourselves were self-taught—

MR. ANDERSON: Pardon?

MS. GOLD: You—both you and Joyce are—well, you weren't really totally self-taught because you took all these classes.

MR. ANDERSON: Oh, yeah, and my architectural background and my technical background, the technical school I—there were some instances that when the instructor wasn't there, why, they let me fudge it just to keep the class going. Joyce would talk about the things that she definitely knew about, and in particular, like Trenton Museum, for instance, when they had show down there, why, there was a whole lecture series on that with slides

and so on, and she would handle one whole subject and I'd handle another subject.

MS. GOLD: Do you—being someone that has taught—you've taught yourself a lot of the specialized techniques that you need. What do you think the value of learning yourself is versus the value of, you know, getting it in the classroom?

MR. ANDERSON: In, say, a university environment, why, there are liberal art universities that accept painters and sculptors with dirty hands but have a little problem with blacksmiths and woodworkers, but that isn't necessarily bad because, as a well-rounded person, why, a university education and a history of art and design and so on is great. But I see that in the schools; I see a lot of the refugees from those courses after they graduate from them, then they want to get a more technical and design education.

So a problem with universities is that a lot of them are awfully incestuous in that there are teachers who are teaching teachers that are going to be become teachers, and so that gives them limited outside world experience. And in what I just described as a wonderful thing of interchange in the students, why, then it becomes a grating kind of competing on that—why, then it's a little bit my ego against your ego against—rather than—and me versus someone else rather than me versus me. I like to judge myself by me.

As a matter of fact, there was one of the East Coast art schools that had a craft department, and he was talking about who he would employ as teachers in the craft department, and he said he would employ only qualified craft teachers, and by that he meant those with advanced degrees. But then he also—Joyce with her advanced degrees and her Phi Beta Kappa and her honors, she applied. Why, he would be turned down on it because he was a very sexist, anti-female for woodworkers, so—

MS. GOLD: Well do you ever feel that you would've—do you ever go to these programs—or in the past, have you ever gone to these programs and looked around and said, boy, I would love to take a class like this or be in this kind of environment?

MR. ANDERSON: I suppose I might—you mean be a student rather than a teacher there?

MS. GOLD: Yeah.

MR. ANDERSON: Oh yeah, sure, because—yeah, I think so, particularly in the craft schools like Peters Valley, Haystack, or whatever. But, yes, the places that I've been, yeah. Now, in my popping in and popping out and having a rather free association with Philadelphia College of Art, why, one time the head of the whole dimensional design department suddenly died, and they asked me if I wanted to be the head of the whole department, and I said, well, if I did, I would do it only it were removed from the industrial design department.

Now, RIT [Rochester Institute of Technology] is under the industrial design department, and Tage Frid has done a wonderful job at getting the hands-on thing. But in very broad, superficial terms, why, industrial design is more about drawing versus the hands-on, and they couldn't do it then, but they did do that later on. So, in any event, I was saved with having to make that decision.

MS. GOLD: Okay. And you were going to talk about people that have—classes that have visited here, right?

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, we've had—we, just numerous times, had groups of people, anywhere from the local Boy Scouts to area groups that have smaller craft organizations, college art classes from local colleges. And we have gone out and talked to some of these colleges also. They come up and—plus, we even had a Greyhound Bus coming up here one time from one of the lower East Coast states. And that's a very good experience for them to see a hands-on—and the environment and so on.

And as a result of this, we've gotten feedback from several of the visiting students that made some very definitive decisions in their life based on this, and one of them was Paul Sisko, who may have been into sculpture over at Montclair State College. And he said on the basis of what he saw here he decided to become a furniture guy. And he's now a furniture designer/craftsman, but he's also doing large-scale metal sculpture too. But he very frequently, in interviews with him, as some of my apprentices do, gives credit that, well, we learned with the Andersons.

MS. GOLD: Do you want to talk about your apprentices?

MR. ANDERSON: Yes. I think the two major ones we've had, one of them was Larry Hendricks—he was here for about a year. He had gone into the Navy after getting a general education, and when he—before going into the Navy he said, well, when I come back, whenever it is, I'd like to be an apprentice. So we said, fine. So he kept upgrading, and he sent us some of the jewelry he made out of—I've forgotten what—on shipboard, and when he visited one of the Gulf states, why, he had seen some little boxes made out of hair, or some fiber like that, so he made one himself and sent it to us.

So, he was with us for a long time, and we were probably his primary—so far as I know his only education in the craft field. And he's become quite a successful wood designer/craftsman in Connecticut. When he was here—they moved here to be near me—and his wife Marilyn [ph] got a job as a school teacher, and her classes would be over prior to Larry leaving here, so she would stay here and listen to the radio and listen to the classical music on WQXR, she was pregnant at that time with Chris, who became a musician and a composer professionally, and Marilyn says that he really got his musical talent here while she was listening to WQXR. [Laughs.]

MS. GOLD: So what does it mean when you have an apprentice? Is that a help to you?

MR. ANDERSON: No—yes and no. Certainly another hand is invaluable, and saving my getting a stiff back and doing the things that they're qualified to do; so yes, there is a very plus benefit within the skills that they have.

But I also take it as part of that they should not only be working there, getting the technical skills, but I take the time to give a rather minimum amount of design skills, which of course they're absorbing and seeing in everything we're doing.

And they—apprentices want to come to absorb our lifestyle, so that has benefited them—but when we total it up at the end of the month—we don't—but whenever we figure it out, we have made less money on the work that we have done than we would otherwise for correcting the mistakes, for taking the time to teach them and so on. But it's a fair exchange. They don't pay money and we don't pay them, and this varies greatly in the whole field. There's other arrangements on this.

MS. GOLD: So do you—in the past do you sort of think a few times over before you decide to take on an apprentice?

MR. ANDERSON: Oh, yeah, they have to have certain really definite criteria: that they're going to be worth the investment in their time, that they're going to succeed in what they're doing. And Bob Sperber did this. He came on for a long period of time and there were incidences that got him into investigating metalwork, one of them being that when his car warranty expired he wanted to know what garage mechanic to go to, and I said, hey, let's look at this ourselves and see what we can do.

And I had him help in building some of the machines, but this guy had enough metalworking experience so that when he went to RIT he could take a double major: woodworking and metal. And for his metal thesis project, why, he designed a portable chainsaw mill, and his fellow students liked it so much that they ordered a couple—four or five of them, so he was really, as a student, in mass production on these already, and then he decided he wanted to explore that further, and then he came and worked here on the metal machines after he graduated, and he's the one that got me started on having a chainsaw mill—he said, well, I'll show you; let's go out and kill a tree.

MS. GLD: Can you describe what a portable chainsaw mill is?

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, I'll describe a regular chainsaw mill and you go to a place and you put your huge log on a carriage, and the carriage moves forward with this log clamped down, and it goes through the circular saw that—round here the smaller ones are six feet in diameter, this huge—[makes sound of a saw]—sawing, and as it goes through, why, the plank drops off and you scurry around get it off and stack it, and so on.

MS. GOLD: But that's a regular mill.

MR. ANDERSON: That's a regular saw.

MS. GOLD: What's a chainsaw mill?

MR. ANDERSON: okay, the chainsaw mill is taking two of the biggest

chainsaws that are available and using—putting them on one chainsaw bar, instead of having the head and the bar—which is what the chain goes around—with one saw, you have two sawing engines on either end—big—and the chain goes in between them, and clamped to this thing is a mechanism that has rollers on it that can be raised and lowered that after you once establish a clean surface on the log, why, you determine how thick you want to make the plank, and you just set up the adjustment.

The one I have, I can make it 15 inches thick and thirty inches wide, which is a massive piece of timber, but—or I can cut anything down to a half-inch. So you cut off that one and then that gives you this level surface that you pre-establish. You decide what angle you want to cut, what the material wants to look like when it comes out, and the beauty of it is that you can go in places that the trucks that the tree men have frequently can't go.

So we used to get involved in—like the lady in Princeton that had seven walnut trees that were shading her

tomato patch, and she wanted them to come down, and they're also acid for some fruit, so here we had these beautiful things, but she didn't want to the trucks to go in there, the tree men's trucks; so we said, okay, we'll fell the trees and we'll cut them here.

MS. GOLD: So how do you carry the mill? How does it—

MR. ANDERSON: It's portable; it's not bigger than one guy and one end; it's not bigger than two chainsaws, actually. Very lightweight frame, and it's a wonderful device. So, he's—now the competition was a mill—a band saw mill that had a track it ran on, which also very portable, but a much bigger, more expensive piece of equipment, and they became more practical, and Sperber was getting tired of doing them anyhow, so he's gotten into other things: timber frame houses, and now he's finally getting back to—he's always done his wonderful furniture—he's finally getting back to that.

And we've had other short-term apprentices and—

MS. GOLD: That little jewelry box I think I—

MR. ANDERSON: Pardon?

MS. GOLD: That little jewelry case that you have—

MR. ANDERSON: Oh yeah, that Bob Sperber has, yes, that was an example that he did.

MS. GOLD: With hinges, wooden hinges—

MR. ANDERSON: Yeah, he also, after he left us, he studied with Krenov, Paul Krenov [*sic*]. I don't know—a great

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]