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Oral history interview with John Kearney,
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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a digitally recorded interview with Judith O. Richards on March 12 and March 13, 2009. The interview took place at the artist's studio in Chicago, Illinois, and was conducted by Judith O. Richards for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Funding for this interview was provided by a grant from the Terra Foundation for American Art.

John Kearney and Judith O. Richards have reviewed the transcript and have made corrections and emendations. The reader should bear in mind that he or she is reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

JUDITH O. RICHARDS: This is Judith Richards interviewing John Kearney at 542 West Grant Place, Chicago, Illinois, on March 12, 2009, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, disc number one.

LYNN KEARNEY [MRS. JOHN KEARNEY]: Can I just say one thing? It's pronounced "CARNEY."

MS. RICHARDS: "CARNEY," sorry. John Kearney. So tell me about your family, your grandparents and your parents.

JOHN KEARNEY: Okay. That's a wild one. I was born [in 1924] in Omaha, Nebraska, and my family lived in Iowa. They were farmers. There were a lot of Irish people that came over when they were starving, and they built up a whole bunch of them that lived there. And they were doing quite well. And my grandfather - I'm jumping on the thing now. When I was born there, the reason was my father, John Kearney, the first, had a sister in that place.

MS. RICHARDS: In which place?

MR. KEARNEY: Where we went to -

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, in Omaha.

MR. KEARNEY: In Omaha. She was a nurse. And so my mother was going to have me -

MS. RICHARDS: What was her name?

MR. KEARNEY: - was about to have me. And he took her there because we didn't have any money. And so I was born on the table in the middle of the house.

MS. RICHARDS: What was your - that was your aunt. What was her name? Or your grandfather's sister.

MR. KEARNEY: I don't remember the name of his sister. But anyway, they had an old Irish lady that helped women with children when they were born. And I was screaming my head off. And she said, "What was it you were thinking? What was this you were thinking about and eating?" How does that go? "What were you dreaming to eat while you were carrying the child?" And she said - what was that?

MRS. KEARNEY: Olives?

MR. KEARNEY: Olives. So she said, "Get the biggest olive you can get that the child can't choke on it, and put it in his mouth." And that shut me up. And I've always liked them. [Laughs.] Okay. Now, then they took me back to the farms in Iowa.

MS. RICHARDS: Where in Iowa?

MR. KEARNEY: Out in the country.

MS. RICHARDS: Do you know near what city?

MR. KEARNEY: I don't remember the names. I was just a baby, you know. But my grandfather, Walter Masters, had a father that was Masters, the same name, Walter Masters. And my middle name is John Walter, and that's where that came from.

MS. RICHARDS: John Walter?

MRS. KEARNEY: Walter, John Walter.

MS. RICHARDS: John Walter. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. KEARNEY: Now, I met my great-grandfather, and he had served in the Union Army. And he was wounded in the army, and he had a lead bullet right here in his hip. And I stayed with him for three days talking. I was six years old. No, I was seven, I think. And we talked and talked and talked. And so I said to him, "Great-grandpa, how did you get into the Union Army when you were so young?" He was teenaged, too. And he said, "Great-grandson, you come from a long line of abolitionists!" I said, "What's that?" He said, "We're against slavery!" So anyway, that's where we came from.

So when my father took me back with my mother to that part of Iowa, their farms were right together. And everything was very well, very beautiful. But one day there was a storm, and my grandfather, who had three big sons, all my uncles, and they were all good horse workers, in the barns and so on. And a freak sail of ice came through the air and ruined his crop, just all over the place. And he went broke. And so all he needed to do was to sell 10 percent of his holdings, horses or machines and things, and all the other farmers came and bid.

MRS. KEARNEY: Ten cents.

MR. KEARNEY: Ten cents on the dollar, and they ruined him. So he had been trying to bring in this crop with all that, and he wrecked his lungs, his lungs. And so the doctors told him he had to go to high altitude to be all right. And so he moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico. And the whole family followed him, and they were all flat broke. They had nothing.

MS. RICHARDS: The whole family is his grandfather and his four sons and your father, which was -

MR. KEARNEY: My father, who was the Irish one.

MS. RICHARDS: The Irish one.

MR. KEARNEY: And his farm was lost, too.

MS. RICHARDS: Whose farm was lost, too?

MR. KEARNEY: The Kearney Family.

MS. RICHARDS: Your father's.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, the Kearney Family. And so when they went there, I was just a little baby. But that's when I started remembering things. And everybody had a job. There in Albuquerque they raised horses - not horses, but cows and chickens and all other things that you would want to, like, a little farm there. And so I had a job taking care of these little -

MRS. KEARNEY: Goats?

MR. KEARNEY: Goats, yes. So goats became a big thing in my art. And they were my friends.

MS. RICHARDS: Did you have brothers and sisters?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. I had one brother.

MS. RICHARDS: Older or younger?

MR. KEARNEY: He was five years older. And he had a different father.

MRS. KEARNEY: He has a half-brother.

MR. KEARNEY: My half-brother. And that man left my mother.

MS. RICHARDS: So you grew up with your half-brother.

MR. KEARNEY: I grew up with him, yes.

MS. RICHARDS: And what is his name - what was his name?

MRS. KEARNEY: Gilbert - Gil - Thompson.

MS. RICHARDS: Gilbert?

MRS. KEARNEY: Gilbert Thompson.

MR. KEARNEY: Gilbert Thompson, yes. I did freeze on that.

MS. RICHARDS: Thompson, T -

MRS. KEARNEY: T-H-O-M-P-S-O-N.

MS. RICHARDS: Okay.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. So anyway, we were there in poverty, and I went to the school there. But almost all of the schools that I was with was - were Mexicans and Indians. And my grandfather tried to get back in some with money by selling sewing machines, Singer sewing machines. But he sold them to them, and they paid for it each month. But they didn't like that. So they never paid for them. [Laughs.] So he went broke again. And so we had to do something. And my mother was getting whatever little jobs she could get. All my uncles would get jobs. They'd put all in with Grandmother, and she fed all of us, you know. Then again - go ahead.

MS. RICHARDS: Were any of your three uncles married?

MR. KEARNEY: No, not then.

MS. RICHARDS: So they were living -

MRS. KEARNEY: Not then.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, not then.

MR. KEARNEY: Not then, no. They were young. They were teenagers. Anyway -

MRS. KEARNEY: The Depression.

MR. KEARNEY: When I was working with my little animals, I could sort of talk to them. And I had a little rope on them, and I'd put them on a little stake. And we had a - where the water went by in Albuquerque, it was only about four or five feet wide. And so I would go and get things for my other pets there, and they would pull out their plugs and run away. But they wouldn't run very far. They'd run maybe 50 feet or something like that. And then they'd lay down, and I'd try to pull them like this. And so I got some ideas on how to handle them. [Laughs.] Let's see, how did I do that now? I know, I tried to -

MRS. KEARNEY: [Inaudible] Your mother married, remarried.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: That's the way you should go from here.

MR. KEARNEY: Okay. Let's go to that. My mother remarried -

MS. RICHARDS: When you were about what age?

MR. KEARNEY: - architectural man, but he never practiced that.

MS. RICHARDS: About how old were you when your mother remarried?

MR. KEARNEY: She remarried when I was about four. Was it older? Yes, maybe it was seven or eight.

MRS. KEARNEY: In Albuquerque.

MR. KEARNEY: In Albuquerque. And then we started to move back into the real world.

MS. RICHARDS: You moved away from the farm.

MR. KEARNEY: Away from the farm and so on. And so he went ahead to - what state was that in?

MRS. KEARNEY: Ohio, maybe?

MR. KEARNEY: No, no. That was much later. It was - I'll think of it. It's right across from the river, the Mississippi.

MS. RICHARDS: Missouri?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. We were near the Mississippi. And we would rent there at different places.

MS. RICHARDS: So your mother remarried a man who was an architect by training.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, yes.

MS. RICHARDS: But he wasn't practicing.

MR. KEARNEY: No. He sold materials to architects.

MS. RICHARDS: And he moved the whole family to Missouri.

MR. KEARNEY: He moved almost every year. Almost every year he moved from one state to the other.

MS. RICHARDS: Why?

MR. KEARNEY: I don't know. He was nuts. [Laughs.]

MS. RICHARDS: Okay.

MR. KEARNEY: And so anyway - but we were getting into a better -

MS. RICHARDS: What was his name?

MR. KEARNEY: Ray James.

MRS. KEARNEY: Ray James.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: His real name was Jasinski. But he changed it.

MR. KEARNEY: He changed his name. But anyway, he'd take us from one state to the other to the other, which was really difficult for me.

But going back to Albuquerque just for one thing, when I went to this first school, I was in the first class or something like that. And I had always wanted to write and draw. I wanted to draw. And also this teacher was very beautiful, and I was really hot for her, too. And so she took - once a week she had art. And so I loved that. And so she said, "We're going to have art now. And everybody have some paper here. And do something that you see around," you know, and so that. And so I took mine. I caught a grasshopper, and I had a way to make it larger that I could look through. And so I made this great big thing, and I made all of the details on this animal. It was just all kinds of things. And so she looked at that, and she went over to the door - the wall - and she put it up there. And she said, "This is really beautiful." And that was it. I said to me, "I'm going to be an artist." [Laughs.]

MS. RICHARDS: That was when you were about six.

MR. KEARNEY: I never changed.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes, first year. Yes.

MR. KEARNEY: I never changed my mind. And then we moved two more times to different states, and we ended up here in Chicago.

MS. RICHARDS: And, Lynn, you said he moved 18 times?

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes. He said that they moved 18 times, or something like that, in 18 years, because they never stayed in one place. So he constantly had to meet new school - they put him in a Catholic school that he objected to. And then he - because he wasn't born a Catholic. He was raised, you know, non-Catholic. And the new guy was Catholic. And so then he -

MR. KEARNEY: Well, when they tried to do it, to put me in one, I went there, and everything was fine. And it was a small grade. And this nun was real mean. And she had one day of the week where she was painting or drawing. And I said, "Oh, boy, this is going to be good!" And so she said, "All right now, Christ is pink, the grass is green, the sky is white, and so on." And I said, "Oh, okay." And I paid no attention at all. And I painted it like this.

And she was a great big old thing. And she came over and had a big ruler. And she said, "Brick! Put out your hands." Like this. She said, "Turn it over." And she takes it and goes bam! bam! I said, "What did you do that for?" And she said, "You didn't do what I told you to do when you painted Christ." And I said, "Would you hit me one more time, please?" And she goes bam! bam! "What did you do that for?" I said, "Now, I'm going to get up, and I'm going to go out through that door, and I'm going to my house. And I'm going to tell them, if you send me to this nuthouse, I'm going to run away." [Laughs.] So I was out. And I don't think you'll want to write that one. But anyway -

MRS. KEARNEY: True story.

MR. KEARNEY: So then whenever I got into a school, with the moving, they knew that, the person who was teaching, knew that I was a serious one. So what they would do -

MS. RICHARDS: Serious person? A serious student?

MR. KEARNEY: In art. In art, yes.

MS. RICHARDS: That must have been on your record that that was something -

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, in different places. And so they would get in touch with the next place where we were staying and telling them that I was very serious. And that was when I came to Chicago, here. And the teacher, the main teacher of art in Chicago, came there after that.

MS. RICHARDS: How old were you when you got to Chicago?

MR. KEARNEY: I was in sixth grade, I think.

MS. RICHARDS: So up to that time were there - you knew you wanted to be an artist.

MR. KEARNEY: Oh, all the time.

MRS. KEARNEY: You were older than sixth grade, Jack, because you didn't go to - you started high school in Detroit, because they were constantly moving.

MR. KEARNEY: No, this is early. This is early.

MRS. KEARNEY: He went to Detroit before he came to Chicago.

MR. KEARNEY: No, no. Detroit was much later.

MRS. KEARNEY: Oh, okay. Oh, right.

MS. RICHARDS: When you got to this - well, I want to ask you two things. How did your parents feel about your being so excited and focused on art?

MR. KEARNEY: It was all right. They knew it. It was just, that was -

MS. RICHARDS: Were they happy about it, about that?

MR. KEARNEY: They knew I was. Yes, they supported it. And when I was in this class in Chicago, they came and gave me very special things to do. But we're talking about one year or something, maybe a year and a half or something. And so I moved on from there to [Sandusky] Ohio.

MRS. KEARNEY: Wasn't it Detroit?

MR. KEARNEY: That was -

MRS. KEARNEY: You were in Ohio at one point, and then you went to Detroit.

MR. KEARNEY: Well, Detroit was the last one.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes, when you went off to war.

MR. KEARNEY: The Iowa - hmm. Anyway, the place that I went to - well, let me backtrack on some of this. With all these changing and changing and changing, there was always a bully to come. Every time I went, there would be one, a new guy. And so I'd had enough. One of my uncles was a boxer, and he taught me how to fight. And so that stopped it. [Laughs.]

I had a special way to do it. You come in, stand up, and the fathead that's taller than all the others and meaner than everybody else, he gets in, comes out, and knocks your books out of your hands, you know. And I say, Oh, here we go again, you know. And then so all the boys were just as bad. They all wanted to see a fight, and they gathered around. That was the way things were in those days. And so he taught - my uncle taught me this. If you act like you're really afraid, and you go down all the way down here like this, and get your whole body wound up, and have your hit coming like this, with it bent here -

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, and your hand in a fist.

MR. KEARNEY: - and hit it, you can knock him down. And I did. [Laughs.] So I never had any more trouble after that.

But anyway, all the time I was trying, working on art and so on. And then when I get to Detroit, I was getting up there, and that was much more sane. And I had a lot of good things happening with the art. But anyway, I was 16 or whatever.

MRS. KEARNEY: Seventeen when Pearl Harbor?

MR. KEARNEY: When the war started?

MRS. KEARNEY: Pearl Harbor.

MS. RICHARDS: Let me ask you one more question about school.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: Were you fine with reading and math and all the other subjects?

MR. KEARNEY: No, that was a mess.

MS. RICHARDS: So that added to your focus on art?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, it did. Because, well, when I went from Iowa to Chicago, I had - I think it was my sixth grade - I had that. But they, and it was legal, but they looked at the books that I had before, and they weren't up to that at Chicago. So they cut me back one. And I never did catch up on that. And that was a problem for me. But traveling all over the country like that, the only sane thing I had was art. [Laughs.]

MS. RICHARDS: So now you went to Detroit ,when you were 16 or 17?

MRS. KEARNEY: I don't know what - he was in Detroit when - and he'd lived there a couple of years, I guess.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: But then the war started, Pearl Harbor, and he enlisted at 17.

MS. RICHARDS: Right, in 1941.

MRS. KEARNEY: And he enlisted.

MR. KEARNEY: But there was one period in there where they decided to go by themselves and put me in a school, a military school, for a year.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, your parents decided to send you away to a boarding school.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, for one year they did that.

MS. RICHARDS: As a teenager.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, earlier, about two or three years before I came to Detroit. But anyway, I had a bugle there, because I was a bugler. And I was enjoying that, and that was my pet, you know. And so I carried that around with me. And then when I got to Detroit and things were going a little better, all of a sudden the war came up. And it was Pearl Harbor, and my brother was in the navy already, my older brother. He was out there in the navy for a long time.

MS. RICHARDS: Did I get your brother's name?

MRS. KEARNEY: Gilbert.

MR. KEARNEY: Gilbert, yes. But when I heard about the Pearl Harbor, I went out of the house; I went right downtown; and I signed up to be in the navy. And I had to go back and get permission to do it, and they wouldn't give it to me. And I figured out a way I could do it.

MS. RICHARDS: Your parents wouldn't give it to you?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. And so I said -

MS. RICHARDS: Because your brother was already in the navy?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. Well, no, that wasn't the thing. They didn't want - I don't - they didn't want me to go. And so I found out that if I joined a certain thing in that city, that I could go from there without their approval. So I said, okay, now I'm going tomorrow, and you either can say - give me your love, or you can say no. And they said no. Good. Go on. Go on. So then I went out, and that's where I'm going to start with the - after we quit here. There were about three or four blocks of guys going into the navy for the next day, and they're all going: "Get those bastards!" [Laughs.] And we were doing it.

So I joined them right then. And then my life changed completely. And then the next thing, I was around here in Chicago and up to the Great Lakes; that's where I was training at. And I had my bugle with me. Now I'm going to be painting that up, starting my art in the navy, and that's where it starts [referring to his current work].

Now, so I was in there, a great place there. And they were pouring in from all over the place. It was the biggest place in the whole United States. And they were trying to find out what people - who had talent, what talent they had, and all that kind of stuff. And I hadn't played that bugle for four years. And I had it in my thing, and everybody noticed it. And so the guy came through there, saying, "Where's that guy that's got the bugle?" And they all saw it there. And he said, "Do you know how to play? Let's see - "

MRS. KEARNEY: *Reveille*?

MR. KEARNEY: A particular thing, it's like morning -

MS. RICHARDS: *Taps*?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, morning *Taps*.

MRS. KEARNEY: *Reveille*, isn't it?

MR. KEARNEY: *Reveille*, that's what it is. I said, "Yes, but that was a long time ago." And it was cold outside. And he said, "Okay, come with us." And I went out there, and the man, the leader, was up on a high - what do they call them, Lynn, the head man in the navy?

MRS. KEARNEY: The admiral?

MR. KEARNEY: The admiral, yes. The admiral was out there on a big thing, and there were hundreds of guys lined up like this. And it was real cold out there. And this guy says, "Play morning colors." I said, "Oh, my God!" And I go out there, and I went, Bap bap blewit blap blap blap. Bap bap blewit blap blap blap. Bap bap blewit blap blap blap. [Laughs.] And everybody was looking at me, including the admiral. And next to me was an officer, and the officer said - anybody who'd been in college, they made an officer - and he said, after I stopped, he said, and "What was that?" And I said, "That was morning colors." He said, "Oh!" And I was so embarrassed, you know. Well, I'm going to paint that. It's very funny. All these lines and lines and lines of people were all looking at you, you know. And that was the first one.

MRS. KEARNEY: Tell them about the war, when you went out -

MR. KEARNEY: Well, that is about the war.

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, I know. But I mean, then you went out to the South Pacific.

MR. KEARNEY: Okay. Then they transferred me, after the -

MS. RICHARDS: Basic training?

MR. KEARNEY: - four weeks, yes. And I went into Mississippi. "What the hell am I doing here in Mississippi?" They said, "Well, there's a secret place." What is it? They were teaching guys how to make secret missions; this enemy wouldn't be able to know it. And I hated it, you know. You're typing like this, you know. This means something else than it's supposed to.

MRS. KEARNEY: Code.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, code. And so I had about maybe a week, a month of it, and that was it. And I was tapping like this. And I said, "I didn't join the navy to mess around like with this" - whatever I called it. I said, "I came to fight the Japs." And the guy goes - picks it up. "Come on, let's go."

And we went in, and there was a guy in there who, of the group who had - I forget how that works. He could say something to somebody and make them believe it. It's a special thing. And he was demonstrating to the other -

MRS. KEARNEY: Oh, brainwashing.

MR. KEARNEY: What?

MRS. KEARNEY: Brainwashing.

MR. KEARNEY: Brainwashing, yes. Brainwashing. And he had this one guy who was - it was easily done to. And so he put that guy, would tell him he was a board, and he put his -

MRS. KEARNEY: You mean like hypnosis?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. He put his foot there and his head here, and he just set like a board. And the guy would sit on him. Well, that guy that was the easy one, was always taking my bugle and going, Blup blup blup blup blah blup blup. And the guy that was doing it didn't like that. So he said, "If I ever see you blowing that thing again, it'll burn you!" Well, it happened to be that - he was one of the guys that was going out of there down to - all the way down to the ocean that way, to the navy. And then they'd pick out which way you'd go. So just those two guys and me and him were going there. And we were throwing our bags of things up on a truck. And so I was down below, and he was up there, that guy. And he had been told that it would burn him if he took that bugle. So I threw it to him to see if it was - he grabbed it, and it blistered his arm. And he screamed and [inaudible], you know, like this. And I got the bugle back. But I thought, this is really strange.

And then in that town in southern - you know where they hated black people - they had signs, "white" and "black" and so on. And there was one cop in the middle of this little street, and he had two pistols on him, and he was directing cars and things. And it had notches on them. And I went over to him, and I was in uniform, you know. And I said, "What does that mean?" He said, "That's the niggers I've killed." I said, "Oh, my God! What is this place?"

And then this was a government place that we were in, and they had a chain gang working there of black men. And they were breaking stones. And one of them looked like he was about 75 years old. And I walked over, and this guy's got a gun over his shoulder. I said, "Can I talk to that guy?" He said, "Yeah, he ain't goin' nowhere." And I went over to him, and I said, "What happened to you that you got in this chain gang?" He said, "Well, I got to drinkin' there, and I got drunk and told my wife when she got mad at me, if she didn't leave me alone, I'm going to kill her. And she called the cops." He said, "I was only arguing with her. And they took me and got me, and the judge said, 'Give him life.'" So all the rest of his life he was on that chain gang. And so it was really something!

Well, anyway - and where does the Mississippi end right in the ocean? What state is that?

MS. RICHARDS: New Orleans.

MRS. KEARNEY: New Orleans?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, New Orleans. That's where I went. And then they picked out who went where, and so and so. They sent me to California. And I ended up in California there at this base. And it was a training base for boats. They have these boats that have 20 men in them.

MRS. KEARNEY: An amphibious landing craft?

MR. KEARNEY: Landing craft, yes. And so they'd run around and do silly things to you. They'd say: Anybody here want to be a - how do you say it? - pilot. Anybody want to be a pilot? I thought it was an airplane. And I said, "Great! Sure!" They said: Okay. Come on, let's go. So now, here's what we do. This is the highest waves in the western world. And you have to learn how to get in and out of it without flipping it over. And so the waves are between four and five feet high, and you have to take a boat in by yourself up to the beach and land it like you were taking soldiers in. And then you've got to hold it, and you have to back it up without flipping it over. And so the first time I did it, I flipped it over, and I went way up in the air.

And so you were allowed one time. But if you don't flip it, then, for a total of five, then you can be the pilot. And then all those others will be deckhands. And so I became a pilot of it because I got the feeling for it. And we needed that when we went into battle.

So then I was shipped out of there up to other places for the navy around. I was trained in gunnery school and firefighting and anything.

MS. RICHARDS: This was all in California?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. But this one thing was different. When I was entering the navy, they said, You can join this just for the length of the war, or you can join it for four years, and you'll be a regular, not just - not the other. And because of that, anything I asked, any school I wanted to, I could get. So I got fire school. I got all kinds -

MRS. KEARNEY: He did deep-sea diving.

MR. KEARNEY: Deep-sea diving.

MRS. KEARNEY: He became a deep-sea diver.

MS. RICHARDS: You could have that training because you said you were in it for longer.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes, he was a regular. He wasn't a -

MR. KEARNEY: But deep-sea - that wasn't in the United States. That was out.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes, he went out to Guam and Saipan.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. But anyway, so then when I was trained, then I went up to the biggest, you know, where the great bridge goes out to the -

MRS. KEARNEY: San Francisco.

MR. KEARNEY: San Francisco, yes. And I went there, and there was an outgoing station that used to have big things, those buildings that they had for - they'd fly. These huge buildings.

MS. RICHARDS: Airplane hangars?

MR. KEARNEY: The ones that you used to see floating around in the air.

MRS. KEARNEY: Oh, a dirigible?

MR. KEARNEY: A dirigible. It was a dirigible, something like a block long. And that was outgoing navy. It was going - you were going out overseas with this or that. And so I was assigned to a ship there, and it was just finishing built. They were still putting things on it. These ships were almost built every day. And we had a thousand men, and 300 sailors, on them. And I was assigned to one of those ships.

And so I went in there, and the captain was a captain of a normal ship, but he was just turned in to the navy. And he had all these guys, 300 of them. And he had them lined up on this big ship. And he was trying to find who had talent and so on. And that's when it started going for me in the navy. He was saying, "Who's been a cook?" And who's been this? And who's been that?

And then he said, "Now you guys that are heavy machinery, have any of you trained here?" And a bunch of them stepped forward. He said, "Now, how many of you men have had hoist" - you know, that's how you lift huge things. Then he got about eight. "And how many of you guys have got electrical winch training?" Nobody had done it. And he said, "Anybody here would like to try to learn how to do this?" No answer. And he said, "Isn't there anybody out there that's got the guts to try it?" And I stepped out. And he said, "Do you have anything, any experience?" No. He said, "Well, you ever do anything with heavy machinery?" Nothing, nothing. "Why did you do it?" I said, "You dared me, sir." [Laughs.] He said, "Come up here. I'll teach you."

Well, you know what it was? It was a 10 - not, it's a hundred-ton chain that went around both sides of the boat. And you were up on something - stand up high, like this. The chain was that thick. And it was - and so he went up and showed me. And he said, "Now, if you want this huge ball, and this hook, if you want it go to over there, you pull this handle that way and put a little bit on this one and keep it flat on the slack end. And then when you get to the other side, then you go like this. But the master will come and say - down there you can't see it - it's coming up." And I said, "Okay." And so then he said, "Now, bring it on."

He was telling me how to do it. And so this huge ball and this big chain are right in front of me. And he said, "Okay now, pull like that." And I went and got it, and it went, Wheeeee! Over that way and this way. And they hooked onto a piece of steel as big as this room, like this. And he said, "Now, take it up." And I brought it up like that. He said, "Now take it over that way." And I did this one this way and that way. But the next thing I knew, he was practicing, and it went over him, that side.

And at that point there were these two big pieces of steel, with all these things, were right behind my feet. And I didn't know it, but my foot was in one of them. And I was going all right on this, but something started dragging me, and I slipped. And I was being pulled into that machine, and it was going to grind me up. I was that far from - I knew what I had to do to, but I couldn't reach it [the handle]. So just like this, I took off my shoe, and I batted it, and it stopped. Everybody was just terrified.

And so then I put it back down. And then I put it a couple of times, and the captain said, Okay. He's good. He'll do it. Now, I'm standing up there, and the boatswain's mate is standing over there next to the pier. And he said,

"Now, this way." And this huge thing! [Whistle.] This way. And then he says, "Up!" And it comes up. It's a five-ton - what do you call them?

MRS. KEARNEY: Tank?

MR. KEARNEY: Tank. It's the biggest tank in the navy. And he said, "Don't worry."

MS. RICHARDS: So you didn't know what you were going to be moving?

MR. KEARNEY: And so over there and back. Well, within three or four days, I was teaching all the other guys [inaudible] captain.

MS. RICHARDS: Did you have special manual dexterity?

MR. KEARNEY: No.

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, he does. Because he does - his whole life. He knows how to do things.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, with your hands.

MR. KEARNEY: Now then, they're pouring in things, getting ready to go overseas for a battle. And they were still building things on the ship.

MS. RICHARDS: So what you were doing was building the ship? Or were you loading the ship?

MRS. KEARNEY: No, they were loading it.

MR. KEARNEY: I was building things into the ship. You know I would unpack six, seven, eight down - places, and they were putting in food and water.

MRS. KEARNEY: They were loading the ship for it to sail.

MR. KEARNEY: All kinds of stuff, see.

MS. RICHARDS: Do you remember the name of the ship that you were on?

MRS. KEARNEY: What was the name of the ship?

MR. KEARNEY: I'm trying to think of it. In a minute I'll think of it. But anyway, it's a bird.

MRS. KEARNEY: The *War Hawk*?

MR. KEARNEY: The *War Hawk*, yes. It was the *War Hawk*. And the *War Hawk* was little thousands of boats we were making.

So anyway, the next day there was a big crash down in the next - there were three places in the ship. And what had happened is one of the guys that I'd just taught dropped a load of food that weighed tons and fell on somebody and killed them. And the captain said, "Take the kid out and bury him." And the guy that had done it had to go ahead and do it right this time. And so that was the way things were going.

And so then we went out and anchored the ship. And we were waiting for 500 ships to get ready to go overseas. And we were going back and forth through there, and I was trained as the pilot for the ship. And so the captain stayed out late. I didn't mind that. And the water in that, in that area, that's one of the biggest bays in the navy. And he came in; he was pretty smashed. And the water was moving. It was anchored out there about 10 miles out. And it was just him and me. And so he - and it was right at the back end of the ship; there was a door that you could open up. I went up and hooked onto it, and the water was going so high in the tide, it was 13-something. And it was going like this. And so I knew he was going to have a hard time getting off of the boat onto that. And so he stood there with one foot on the boat and one on the ship, and just as he got ready to step into the ship, it started spreading him apart. And if he fell out of there, he would've drowned. And so I put my foot in between his, the one foot that didn't have [inaudible], and I put it over like that. He said, "I'll remember that, sailor." [Laughs.] And he was a good friend of mine, but he never talked to me by name. He always called us by "sailor."

Well, then when we were only - we had 500 ships going out, and it took months to get there, three months, I think. And they all had to stay in a group. And every few minutes they all changed, like this. And that was - submarines would get them. This was the big source that broke the biggest fight that won the war, and anyway - so this was going out like this. And it was the first night out, and the first evening, and everybody was sick.

Everybody was throwing up. And down below it was - you were sloshing in it, you know. But I was up on the deck up there, taking in fresh air. So my captain came in, he crossed, and he said, "Hey, Jack, how are you?" I said, "I'm fine." And he said, "Oh, good. Look at that poor guy." The guy was way up on there, on the lookout on one side.

MRS. KEARNEY: [Inaudible.]

MR. KEARNEY: And it was going like this. You'd climb up and go this way and then this way. And he got down there. And so then I was up there, and it was going like that. And the guys were all along, puking over the side, you know. And I looked down there, and this one guy was talking to the other guy, and he threw up on his shirt like this, you know. [Laughter.] And the other one threw up in his face.

MRS. KEARNEY: That's not nice!

MR. KEARNEY: So anyway, so that was -

MS. RICHARDS: Memorable.

MR. KEARNEY: I had a lot on my mind, you know. And then when I'm on the forward lookout, I had binoculars. We were looking for submarines and things like that. And so I have never seen this, and I never - until we were in Chicago. I mean our place in -

MRS. KEARNEY: Provincetown [MA].

MR. KEARNEY: Provincetown. There's at night - if certain kinds of things are in the water, you put your hand in like that, it lights up.

MS. RICHARDS: Phosphorescence.

MR. KEARNEY: I never had seen that before, just once. And I didn't know that small whales - what are those things?

MRS. KEARNEY: Minke whales?

MR. KEARNEY: Not whales, but they're -

MRS. KEARNEY: Dolphins?

MS. RICHARDS: Dolphins?

MR. KEARNEY: Dolphins, right. The dolphins had this habit of - everybody knew it, but I didn't know it. They go across ships, like this. They love going in the front, like that. And so I'm up there in the top; it's just getting dark. Nobody can light a light at all because lookouts have - we'd be blinded by it. And looking right down over this side, on the port side, and I looked down there, and there are two objects, like this, all white. And a stream of white in the water for about 20 feet. And I was sure it was submarines. And so I screamed into the thing: "Torpedo on the port, quarter two!" And the whole place was going crazy. The captain was up in the - not the captain, but the helmsmen threw in it, and they were in a line, these ships. And if you fell off that way, it almost hit the other one. And they blew a fog horn that, Ram! Ram!, you know. And people were falling out of - it was bouncing - people were falling out of beds and breaking their arms and things like this. I said, "They're going to kill me." And so the captain had a - what do they call it? There's a name for it. Like going to a judge.

MRS. KEARNEY: Mast?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: Captain's mast.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, captain's mast. And he was breaking people's - down one, on what they were and their numbers. His officers, too.

MS. RICHARDS: Because?

MR. KEARNEY: Because this terrible thing happened.

MS. RICHARDS: That they knew it was a false alarm?

MR. KEARNEY: No, nobody knew anything about it. But the thing was - you can't do that with a ship like that.

MS. RICHARDS: I see. They overreacted.

MR. KEARNEY: It's heavily limed, and it locked [sic]. You couldn't get it back out till it stopped. And you never stop a fully loaded military machine like this.

So the next morning there was this thing. And he was breaking all these things. I said, they're going to kill me; they're going to kill me, what I did. And he said, "Mr. Kearney!" "Yes." "Did you or did you not say, 'Torpedoes on the port quarter' last night?" "Yes, I did, sir." "Did you think they were torpedoes?" "I was absolutely sure they were. I never saw anything like that in my life." And he said, "What was your rank?" And I told him. And he bucked me up. He said, "You're the only one on this goddamned ship that did what he was supposed to do!" And so anyway, that was the second or third time I got to know the captain.

But anyway, when I was going across the ocean for three months, we stopped at Pearl Harbor on our way and got all kinds of new food and everything. And we were lined up, these ships, in a long row. And some of us were floating outside. It was like a sewer. All the poop was going out right into this thing.

MS. RICHARDS: From the ship?

MR. KEARNEY: From all the ships. And we had 500 - what did I say, 200?

MRS. KEARNEY: Five hundred ships?

MR. KEARNEY: Five hundred ships, yes.

MS. RICHARDS: You mean going into the bay.

MR. KEARNEY: That bay is inside. But you come in on a river. And it's got floats. This side is this way, and that side is that way. Anyway, the ships were out there, you know.

MRS. KEARNEY: Was that when you went to deep-sea diving school?

MR. KEARNEY: That was later.

MRS. KEARNEY: Oh.

MR. KEARNEY: That was later. Now, there I was in the bow of this ship, and it was anchored. And the boatswain's mate, which I later became myself, came up there, and he says, "Where's that artist?" And everybody pointed at me.

MS. RICHARDS: How did they know?

MR. KEARNEY: I was always drawing.

MS. RICHARDS: I was going to ask you, did you keep sketchbooks throughout that time in the navy?

MR. KEARNEY: Oh, yes, all the time. I'm going to show you.

MS. RICHARDS: Okay.

MR. KEARNEY: And anyway, he said, "You're an artist." I said, "What do you mean? What do you want?" And he said, "Come over here." And the ship was like this, and it was 50 feet up from the water. And down below, I just told you what it was like, you know. So it curved like this down there. And I said, "Well, what do you want me to do?" He said, "Look at them numbers, those white numbers. They're rusty." I said, "Well, what the hell am I going to do with it?" He said, "I'll show you." So they put me in a little thing that I sit on like this. And he handed me a bucket of white paint and a brush.

MS. RICHARDS: For this, you needed to be an artist. [Laughs.]

MR. KEARNEY: I'm going to do it. Now, it was a spot from here to that window right there.

MRS. KEARNEY: Ten feet.

MR. KEARNEY: Where the numbers were. And that was down about eight feet. And so I'm hanging there. And I said, "What the hell do you think I've got, an arm that's seven feet long?" He said, "No, I'm going to give you a strap." "What's a strap?" He said, "I'll show you." He put a rope from one side all the way around up out of this thing I was sitting on and over to around the bow. And then he put three guys and said, "Hey!" But it was - they were wet, and they wouldn't go. So he says, "You two move apart [inaudible]." I go [whistle], Boom! Right into the ship. And I go ass over side with paint all over me, and I fall the next 40 feet down into the water. [Laughs.]

And I was a tough guy then. And so I swam over to a gate, and I ran up there, and he was looking for where I was. And I grabbed him, and I went, "Boom!" [Laughs.] He could have put me in the jail there for a long time for that.

MS. RICHARDS: You mean you threw him overboard.

MR. KEARNEY: He knew he messed it up. And then while we were sitting there - it was for almost a month; we were getting everything ready to make the biggest hit that we were about to do, the two numbers.

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, he went to Saipan and Tinian [Northern Mariana Islands].

MR. KEARNEY: Saipan and Tinian. Now, Saipan was about 20 miles long, and three miles from that was the other one. And what we were after was the other one; it was an airplane port. And they needed that to bomb the main area -

MRS. KEARNEY: Hiroshima.

MR. KEARNEY: - you see. And they had - the enemy knew this, and they had the elite corps guys, the soldiers, because they had to be over six feet tall, and those people were not tall. And these guys had been fighting for nine years, all over China and everywhere. Well, they were really tough guys.

MRS. KEARNEY: The marines, you mean?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. They didn't have the marines. They were soldiers. And so we arrived with 500 ships, and we dropped anchors. And we anchored 500 ships. And just the way Americans behave, the Japanese did not. There was out of this whole thing that was about four - well, let's see, how far would that be? I would say it was miles; it was about four miles that had beaches. All the rest of them were rocks and everything else. So they knew that's the only place we could attack.

And so we anchored out there, just out of the range of their guns. And we had a lot of flying planes, the big ones out there, and they were flying over for four days. And all they were doing were dropping off leaf[lets] to the people, because these people weren't the enemy. They were people that were innocent, and we told them to get out of there. We're going to blow the place up. And of course, that gave the enemy a real long time for us to set it all up. And then the day, D-Day, came. And the great fight started. And on our ship we had a box of things stretched, and [inaudible] short little piece.

MRS. KEARNEY: Now this is in your landing craft that he was the pilot of?

MR. KEARNEY: No, up in the top of the ship.

MS. RICHARDS: The ship you had a -

MR. KEARNEY: And there were straws, and there was a short straw in there, and the one who gets the short straw has to go in first. The enemy gets first shot at you. And I was the youngest one, and I got the short one. And so it was almost sure that I'd get killed. So the captain knew me, you know, and I guess he was worried about me. And so the marines - well, first we'd take our boats, and take them out and lower them down.

MS. RICHARDS: These small landing barges?

MR. KEARNEY: Small landing barges. We had dozens of them.

MR. KEARNEY: And each one took 10 men - about 20 men, yes, 20 men, marines, second marines, the toughest ones. They had fought before. And they were very famous. And so I got this load of men on there, and we took out, and they lined up, almost a thousand of those boats, facing the enemy. And they were shooting at us and so on. But we were out of range. And we got lined up, and we said, You have to stay a certain length apart from each one of them, and don't dare - if you do, if you get up in front, they'll fire, all fire, to take you off, each one at a time.

So I was taking these marines, and I had 20 of them down there, and I had a tripod fixed on so the enemy couldn't see it. And I was the only person that they could see. And we were going in close like this. And I looked up ahead, and we had these damned old battleships; some of them were rebuilt after the war. They ran them up on the beach, and they saved them. And they were too slow, and they could be shot down by an airplane. But, boy, they could sure bomb with these huge guns. The guns were about, maybe, some 25, 50 feet, like this. And they fired things, like this. And the bullets they sent were as heavy as an automobile, in each one of them. And so here I am, about one third of this one big one, and there's another one here, over here. Now as I'm coming up there, I had an order from the admiral, Nobody is to get out of there and show them their -

MS. RICHARDS: Rank?

MR. KEARNEY: - rank or anything like that. Only the pilot.

And there was a guy who was famous from Guadalcanal [Battle of Guadalcanal, 1942-43]. And I'll think of his name in a minute. And he was famous - at Guadalcanal his men didn't go over, these very same soldiers, didn't go over the logs that the enemy put down there. And so he had buckshot, and he shot them in their ass. And it was all over the United States that he had done that. And he didn't want them to just stay there like that.

And so he's sitting there, and he's showing this [inaudible], and I said, "Colonel" - Colonel Crow, that was his name - "Colonel Crow, I have orders from the navy that nobody is to appear." He just ignored me. I said, "Sir! You have to go below. You're drawing fire." He didn't say anything. I pulled out my .45, found it, put it on his head and said, "Colonel Crow, go below!" And he did. And so he went down in there with these guys. And then one of them came up. They were all Texans down there. He says, "I'm glad what you did to that sonofabitch." He said, "You going to be running a hospital ship?" "Yeah," I said. "Well, if you see him, he's going to be on his belly." And I said, "Why?" And he pulled his hand up; he had a shotgun right here.

MS. RICHARDS: At his chin?

MR. KEARNEY: Not to kill him. Just to, you know - they did it. But I didn't have it, but I knew who did.

So now he's out of my way. And now I'm going around this battleship, and it had been quiet for a while. And then I real fast got lined up with all those boats for miles and miles. Just as I got under it, broadside. They'd never done that before. All of the ships, all of the big guns at one time. Broom! Broom!

MRS. KEARNEY: The American ships.

MR. KEARNEY: Broom! Like this.

MS. RICHARDS: The American ships?

MRS. KEARNEY: [Inaudible.]

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, the American ships. And it leaned back about eight feet; it slid backwards.

MS. RICHARDS: Your boat that you're in.

MR. KEARNEY: The ship, the battleship.

MRS. KEARNEY: The battleship?

MR. KEARNEY: I was in front of it. And I was right underneath it. And it was so loud that I couldn't hear for about a minute and a half. And I was just frustrated.

MRS. KEARNEY: But the trajectory pushed the battleships back.

MR. KEARNEY: That was because the guns were over on my left side, like this. But to this day, I only have half my hearing in there. And so then I go into the beach, and the marines came up with two tanks that float. You've seen them around the country. They're not very heavy, but they can float. And they stay about that high above the water. But they can climb over anything. And they pulled up alongside of me and said, "Look, this current place right here that goes down dry like this, and underneath that is this sharp stone." There's a name that they have for it; it's white stuff. And it'll destroy any wood.

MRS. KEARNEY: Coral?

MR. KEARNEY: Coral. And he said, "If you run that boat up on there, it'll be - the bottom, the wood will be torn up with that weight in it. And you'll be right underneath where they're all firing." He said, "We're going to give you two of these tanks." And they pulled up alongside of me, and - we were under fire, too - and they got off, 10 on each side. And then they pulled up. And the one that pulled off to the left took a big hit and went down. Killed them all. Anyway, the other guys went on up.

MS. RICHARDS: What other guys?

MR. KEARNEY: They were fighting. They were getting - they went -

MS. RICHARDS: So the men on your boat divided into two.

MR. KEARNEY: Divided into two.

MS. RICHARDS: Ten went on one tank.

MR. KEARNEY: They went like this. But the enemy got this one. Now, when -

MS. RICHARDS: Now which side were you - you didn't remain on the boat. You went with -

MR. KEARNEY: I turned around and headed back to get another load.

MS. RICHARDS: [Whispered] I see.

MR. KEARNEY: But the thing was that the - let's see now, I've got to get this just right. Oh, yes. About from here to where that wall is over there -

MS. RICHARDS: About 25 feet?

MR. KEARNEY: - it got only about knee-deep. And the enemy had set this up, waiting for us, and they were throwing bombs that they shoot like this, and they can measure where you are. And all over that place they had little flags that were blue or red or something like this. And they knew that if any American got near it, they could just blow him to pieces. And so one of these marines that got out of my boat, he threw down his gear - he was up to water about like this - took off his shoes, and he ran all over that place and pulled those pieces out. And I had to turn and go back. He probably was killed. But he probably saved a hundred men.

MRS. KEARNEY: So you mean he was pulling up the markers that the Japanese were using to -

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. They had a machine. And then they'd go like this. You get right near, Boom! It would go right at you. So then I went back to the ship, and the captain seemed to be worried about me, and he leaned over the bow, and I said, "Request another load of marines, sir." And he said, "Take that man aboard. He's wounded." And I said, "Who's wounded, sir?" He said, "Don't try to be brave. There's blood dripping out of your starboard sleeve." And I said, "Oh." I had a can of fish, and I scratched my right arm. He said, "As you were." I kept my mouth shut, I would've had a Purple Heart. [Laughter.]

MS. RICHARDS: What do you mean you had a can of fish?

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, he'd opened a can of fish. In the middle of the war [inaudible].

MR. KEARNEY: It was the metal thing you twist like this. And I scratched my palm right there. There was some blood but not much. But anyway - and we were fighting then for days.

But the next load that I took back, the next day - let's go to the next day. I came in with a load. They left notes, what they needed. And it would be so many guns and some gas and all that kind of stuff. And I'd bring it up to the beach.

And this time the tide was out; it was way out. But the navy said that we were delivering things in the wrong place. So you had to have it shined up with - it was crazy, in the middle of a battle, that you'd go get the ticket [inaudible]. And so instead of just leaving it there and going, I had to go up about a block, and somebody was trying to shoot me, and I was - and they had told me what to do. You'd run this way and this way, but don't do the same way. And they can't get you in their thing, see.

So they went up there, and I had this guy, navy, who was there, who was a guy, a navy - he had a name where he was in charge. And he was supposed to sign all of the things that I had brought and that they had delivered, I'd delivered, and so on. And he had dug himself a great big hole, and he says, "Get out of here! You're drawing fire!" And I said, "You goddamn" - and I called him a coward. "You coward!" And I threw my paper at him that was supposed to clear me, you know. And everybody did the same thing, because it wasn't workable.

But then the second - the third day - we had wild one, too. These airplanes, our airplanes, lots of them, they were keeping the enemy down. And they'd come right over our heads. Neeeeeeer! Ack ack ack! You know, like this. And this one guy comes right over my head, he goes, Ack ack ack! Boom boom boom! And they get him - they got him, the enemy. But it hit him in a strange way. His plane turned upside down, and he could fly it upside down, but he can't get it to come up like this. So he didn't know what the hell to do. So a bunch of us were out there waving to him, you know. These trees, there were a bunch of these trees that were real close on the beach there. And we got like this -

MRS. KEARNEY: Landed in the trees.

MR. KEARNEY: Land it upside down, and we'll do it. So we got a bunch of guns out of there, and he comes in, Boom boom boom boom! And he's hanging there, and the Japs started shooting at him, and we're shooting at the Japs. And then he decides just to drop off. So unloosens himself, and he drops down in the bushes and

everything. He didn't get hurt badly. So we grabbed him and dragged him out to our boat. We took him to his ship, and he was out there flying the next day. And that's the kind of fighting we had.

MS. RICHARDS: Do you want to - so how long were you out at sea all together?

MR. KEARNEY: We were fighting right there for one month.

MS. RICHARDS: And then you went back to the U.S.?

MR. KEARNEY: There were a lot of things we did.

MRS. KEARNEY: He was in the South Pacific for four years.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, I see.

MRS. KEARNEY: Through the war ended.

MR. KEARNEY: And then we -

MS. RICHARDS: We should probably go on.

MR. KEARNEY: After one month, we took Tinian. It's three miles.

MRS. KEARNEY: Tinian.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, yes. And that was a wild one, too.

MRS. KEARNEY: So, Jack, maybe you want to get closer to the end of the war? Because you're -

MR. KEARNEY: Well, okay. Do you want me to finish up with that? The last thing was we had a load of stuff to take -

MS. RICHARDS: And I'm going to just pause for one second.

MR. KEARNEY: Sure.

[END OF CD 1.]

MS. RICHARDS: This is Judith Richards with John Kearney on March 12, 2009, [mini] disc two.

MR. KEARNEY: My boat was - the motor was misbehaving. That's a diesel engine. And so it was just getting worse and worse. And so there was one ship that repaired them. And so I took it over there, and I got the very first night of sleep while they tied up awhile, bunch of boats like that, and they were fixing them up to get them in the morning. And what happened was a whole bunch of us, about four boats with the same problem, got loose in the middle of the night.

MS. RICHARDS: Are you talking about the battleships?

MR. KEARNEY: No, back of another ship, a smaller ship like ours, like the one we came in, but it was just for fixing boats' motors. And so we all fell asleep. We were so happy we could sleep all night long. And we drifted over to Tinian, and it hadn't been taken yet.

MS. RICHARDS: The whole battleship drifted off?

MR. KEARNEY: No, it wasn't a battleship.

MS. RICHARDS: Or just small PT [patrol torpedo] boats?

MRS. KEARNEY: It was a boat.

MR. KEARNEY: It was just boats. They were small boats all together, a bunch of them.

MRS. KEARNEY: It's not a PT boat. It's a landing craft.

MS. RICHARDS: Landing craft.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. And so they [inaudible] over. It was the morning. And somebody said, "Oh, my God! We're invading them." And we looked over, and they were setting up guns waiting for us. And they said, "Oh, our boats don't work." I said, "Mine works, but it goes bumptydy bumptydy bumptydy. And so I'll fix it." And I turned around,

and I fell off into the water; I was so excited, you know. And then I finally got back in there, and I started the - I took it back to where it was. Otherwise we would've probably been shot up.

MS. RICHARDS: Your boat, the motor worked, so you tied the other -

MR. KEARNEY: I tied - pulled them back, because they all had to have them fixed.

MS. RICHARDS: - all the boats back to where you had been before you fell asleep.

MR. KEARNEY: Okay. Then when we started taking Tinian, the Japanese - it was a very high mountain right there. And they had holes in the mountain and had guns they were shooting, big guns, at our places. They were anchored, all these boats out there, and they were firing at them. And we could go right past there. They weren't interested at all in a small boat. They didn't want to waste a big gunshot. And I was going in there with a bunch - a load of stuff, of stuff for some people.

And when I came in, there was the smallest ship that the navy has that was trying to get a gun that was up in the hill, in the mountain. And they would come out on the railroad track, and then they would shoot at a boat, and it was the big bomb. And then they would pull back in. And everybody was trying to shoot 'em and hit 'em.

And so there was a very small ship we had. The guy gets up close - the gun was only about that big - and he's getting ready to do it. And they saw him. So they decided, Hey, we might as well use one of the big ones on this little boat. And I was right out there. And they put it down like this. And he goes, "Aieeee!" And runs into that - the way you steer it. And the ball went right through the front door, and went right out the back door, and went out behind it and landed in the water and exploded. And he got out of there fast.

MRS. KEARNEY: Go on towards the end of the war, so we can get through the war and get you home and [inaudible].

MR. KEARNEY: When we finished with Tinian, that's where they tipped the two big bombs that stopped the war. That's where they came from. Okay. Then they sent me back to where we came the last time.

MRS. KEARNEY: Pearl Harbor?

MR. KEARNEY: Pearl Harbor, yes. We went back to Pearl Harbor. They were sending all of the guys like me, who were first wave, who had gone through the first and lived, they wanted me to train those new guys how to do, and tell them what to do in there. So we were there for about six weeks or eight weeks or something like that. And I was pretty bored showing these people. And because I had said I would want to stay for four years, and I could get almost anything, I asked to be a deep-sea diver. And he said, okay. We'll ask them if they'll do it. They said yes. So they took me on. Then the wild stuff started. I was being in training. I'll show this to you. I made the drawings.

MS. RICHARDS: This is your sketchbook.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. I carried this book all through the war. So now the reason - when I say I used art for other things, too, I wanted to make sure that I was a good deep-sea diver. And you can see what these are. And I weighed 300 pounds when I'm in it. And all these drawings were done right there where we were putting it on, back in Pearl Harbor.

MS. RICHARDS: Showing you getting into your deep-sea diving suit.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, all of it.

MS. RICHARDS: Step by step.

MR. KEARNEY: Step by step. That's all that. Okay. So now this is a connection to now. I went out with the boats to the deep-sea diving school. And we had - we were going down 100 feet, out about 10 miles outside of the harbor. But first they took us inside the harbor, and they told us all the things about if you, when you went down, if you didn't keep things about you knew how many times you'd been down - how many minutes you'd been down there - when you come back, you have to go a certain way or you'll be very sick and so on. And so they were testing people - we didn't know that - for - what do you call that?

MRS. KEARNEY: Claustrophobia?

MR. KEARNEY: Claustrophobia. They were testing for it. They were training us for four weeks. They were training us -

MS. RICHARDS: Claustrophobia - being in the helmet?

MR. KEARNEY: For anything.

MRS. KEARNEY: Underwater.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. Because it's very dangerous, and they wanted to make sure that you knew what you were doing. And so right in the harbor, they had this place that they took us to, and they put us in the whole suit, and they didn't tell you what the depth was, and they lowered you over the side. You weighed 300 pounds. And you went for a long time. You could feel the rope going and going. And you weren't going anywhere. You only went in about 15 or 20 feet.

MS. RICHARDS: You mean you thought you were going far down.

MR. KEARNEY: We thought we were, yes.

MS. RICHARDS: Because there was an illusion of the rope moving.

MR. KEARNEY: And there was a rope that you had, and you were supposed to - and it was getting darker and darker, and you have to have a watch when you come up to do this, you know. And so I finally got down, and I began - it was getting thicker and thicker and thicker. And finally it was so black. It was like in a sewer, it was so black there. And we were told - they were listening to you on the radio, but you're not to talk on them. You could only use your hands to signal for certain things.

So I went down there, and then I tried to get up, because I was getting stuck in the mud - and you have to go like this with your T. You pull in, that inflates. If you push with chin, it deflates. And so every time I did that, I'd push to get some down, because I didn't want to go shooting up. And I'd go deeper and deeper into the mud. And then I realized, on one of these drawings, that I had all this stuff on me, and one of them had a wire that said, "One-ton lift." [Laughs.] So I knew they could lift me up. So I let me go real hard into the mud. And then I laid back. And it was completely dark. And I started dreaming about beautiful girls and about all of the nice things that you'd like. And birds flying up there. And then they came in with the radio and said, "What the hell are you doing?" I said, "Nothing!" He said, "Can you move?" I said, "Only my eyeballs." [Laughter.] And they said, "Pull him up!" And so they come up, and they took me out, and they put me on a seat. And all of them - there was a doctor and other people there - and they all stood there, all around. I said, "What's the matter?" They unscrewed the head. He said, "How the hell did you do that?" "Do what?" He said, "You just did the best" - what do they call that?

MS. RICHARDS: Claustrophobia.

MR. KEARNEY: Claustrophobia, ever in the navy. And I said, "How do you know?" He said, "We were following the beat of your heart and your breath, and it was normal all the way." "No, it's never been normal." So they let me stay to be a deep-sea diver. Then you saw the rest of it. And so that was - and then when they finished, they turned me around and sent me out back to sea again. And I did well underwater, like they were supposed to. And I did lots of things like that. And when I was in Guam - we had moved from there to Guam. And then we were going to hit the biggest of all. We were going to knock down all of the buildings and everything in their country.

MRS. KEARNEY: In Tokyo [Japan].

MR. KEARNEY: In Tokyo and everywhere. But we were building up a much bigger group of people to attack. But there were three things that I had to support, to do, while I was there at Guam. I had to be available for damaged ships that had been hurt underwater. And so I was. I did it twice. They came there. A ship was leaning. And, you know, they closed the doors off after they got torpedoed. And they got in there, and it was thousands of miles away before they could get them into a place - what do they call them? - where they put the ships down on the water, pump it all out. And then they can do that. Well, those were -

MRS. KEARNEY: You mean dry dock?

MR. KEARNEY: Dry docks, yes. But these people - these were big fighting ships. And so on this first one, we went out there with a group of us underneath, and we were down about 25 feet. And we were fully dressed, and we took a chalk mark, and there was a torpedo in the wall, like this. And it was about this long that we had to make a hole. And so we marked it, like this. And then they handed us a machine - our torches. They had to light it up above. We can't light it down below. And the only difference between that and the ones that we have here, there's like a cup on it, and that was just clean air coming in. And so put that up against that place where you'd marked like that. You can go around like this. And you can cut that big piece, the bad piece, out. And then you send it back up just to them. And they took it into the place where they could make a piece to, you know, to make over it.

Now that's six inches thick that that - on a flagship, like this. The one that we fixed it with was two inches. But they used that model that we took out, like that. Then they took the dead guys out of there. And then we - not then yet. But then when they brought it back, they lowered this new thing down, and we had a cannon on it, and we strapped it in around the building and put it up tight. And we had this cannon, and we fired four different ones.

MRS. KEARNEY: Like a rivet, you mean?

MR. KEARNEY: Right through the front, the one we'd just made, through the six inches in there. It took two guys on this wreck. It was a wreck that we were standing on. And then that goes through the end. And then they could take the water out of there. And then they went inside, and the rivets that we put in, we had a whole tank of them, and it tells you which engines you need. And it had a cup that unscrewed. The guy inside, he unscrewed it and then put a nut on and tightened it up. And they were ready to go back to the sea again. And that was one of the things.

MRS. KEARNEY: Are you going to end the war? End the war and get home.

MS. RICHARDS: In maybe five minutes?

MRS. KEARNEY: End the war, and then got home safe. And then go to Cranbrook [Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, MI].

MR. KEARNEY: The thing was happening - we had many more ships lined up to knock Japan down. We were just getting ready to tear that place up. And I was getting ready to get into a ship that was covered with marines, the thirds, that we had been training them. And while we were there, the bombs fell.

And then they told us - and everybody was ready, the whole - we were going to move out of there in a week to go fight. And they told us where we were going to fight and what happened. And so we were supposed to land - I was supposed to land - on a place where these airplanes that have floats on them, that there was a station like that on Japan. And there was a row of them. And I was going to attack them. And they found out that they had 30-some suicide ones on little boats with bombs in them, that we would have all been killed. And the war - well, we weren't told that the war had ended.

But I was taking a bunch of high-placed men to the ships, taking them back and forth. And this very big man was having me drive him over there. And all of a sudden this road that was maybe five miles, like this, they were all lined up, like this. And they always had to keep their steam up, so that if an attack came, they would go out. They were all going HONK! HONK! HONK! HONK! All in that line. And then we whispered, "What the hell is that?" And the soldiers were throwing their guns over the side. And they were kissing each other; they were yelling. And I said to the officer, "I think the war is over." He says, "So do I." I said, "Request to do something happy." "Okay, go ahead." So there was a thing on the diesel engine that if you clicked it off, it would go faster and faster. You could fly with that thing. So we all went [loud whistles] in and out between the shoots. Everybody was doing it. And that was the end of the war.

MRS. KEARNEY: And he was there for four years, and he was 21.

MS. RICHARDS: Wow! And you survived.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: And all at the same month, he was 21.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: Turned 21.

MRS. KEARNEY: And his four years were up.

MS. RICHARDS: When's your birthday?

MR. KEARNEY: August the 31st.

MS. RICHARDS: My daughter's birthday.

MRS. KEARNEY: Really!

MR. KEARNEY: [Laughs] Wow! The other thing -

MS. RICHARDS: So after the war, you came back to the West Coast?

MR. KEARNEY: What happened? Here's what happened. Here's what happened. I really have to tell you. This is the one that had something to do with art.

MS. RICHARDS: Go ahead.

MR. KEARNEY: Do we have some time?

MRS. KEARNEY: Go ahead.

MR. KEARNEY: Okay. Now on Guam, it's an island, a big island. And it's been in the United States ownership since the war of - the Spanish and American War. It became a part of the United States. And so there are a lot of people there all this time. And I had been there for maybe almost a year. And I was doing all kinds of things there, a lot of deep-sea diving out there. But then the citizens there are American citizens. But they don't have to go to war. And so the men in the group, if they join the navy or the army, they didn't have to leave the island. They got paid half for it, and that's the way it was. Now there was a friend of mine there who was one of those guys. But this huge navy base had fences that were 20 feet high all the way around. The reason for it was these guys had never seen a woman for years. And the way the islanders were, that if you want to have sex, that's fine. But if the baby - you're married. So they were having trouble with that, see. They wouldn't let any of us out of there.

And so I'm sitting there making a carving of a coconut and hanging it on the ceiling - on a thing between two trees. And I was sitting there talking to him. And he said, "Well, you look kind of sad, Jack. What is it?" I said, "I've heard from you and from others that this place has been here for thousands of years, and there are some beautiful island - beautiful places - and great things that are going on, beautiful things. But we're not allowed to go there." And I said, "I'm an artist, and I'd love to see that place." He said, "Well, how come you can't?" I said, "Nobody can do it. You have to have somebody in that little town that would invite you." They all speak English because they're raised in schools there. I said, "But they have to ask for you to come there, and it has to go through the leader." What do you call him?

MRS. KEARNEY: The command or -

MR. KEARNEY: The highest man.

MS. RICHARDS: On Guam?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: The mayor? The governor?

MR. KEARNEY: No, he's -

MRS. KEARNEY: The commander?

MR. KEARNEY: The one man that I was talking about.

MS. RICHARDS: Admiral.

MR. KEARNEY: Admiral, yes. The admiral had this rule, that they had to write and ask - to him. And so he said his sister would call - would do this - and she did. And he said, Well, she sent it out to there for almost five months. And then it came. He said - my officer said - "The admiral said - how the hell did you do that?" "Do what?" He said, "You're the only one that he would allow to ever go out to see that place." And so he said, "Now listen, here's the way it has to be. He has to take his crew; that's three guys. And they've got to behave themselves. And they've got to be in the best dressing. And you can only go six hours. And you go out there."

Well, they were so happy about that. And so we said, Okay. And so we started out, and we went out there. And we turned into this most beautiful thing you ever saw in your life. And the boat turned in, like this. This is the ocean out here, and you come in like this and turn like that and that way. And it was only twice as wide as my boat. And so we came in like that, at high tide. And we got this far. And all of a sudden something was going on. There were little kids swimming out to us. And I had to turn off the engine. But the water coming in from the incoming water just took us right up here. And right there was a big stone that said - what's his name, that guy?

MRS. KEARNEY: [Ferdinand] Magellan?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. Came here at such-and-such a time. And this is where he landed. In English. And the boat floated over here, like this, and turned, like that. And the whole town was there. Just a small town. They were all

in their fine dresses. And we were standing there in our whites, and we dropped the ramp down. And a guy came - one of their men - came dragging a girl up with him, and he said, "We'll trade you sex with this girl for 80 feet of rope." And I said, "Get off the boat. We're not that kind of thing." They were testing us; the whole town was. And so then they had a [inaudible]; they make holes in the ground, and they cook.

MRS. KEARNEY: Oh, a luau.

MR. KEARNEY: And they had cooked a pig, and everybody was in there dining. Everything was different. And there were flowers hanging all over the place in the trees. Those were fruits. They were all over the place. And all these people were very happy, and they all talked English. And we sat there and talked, you know, for the day. And it was fun.

MRS. KEARNEY: Okay. The war has to end. [Laughs.]

MR. KEARNEY: Well, anyway -

MRS. KEARNEY: Then you got home. You were on your way home.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. And then we went home there. And she said she'd like to have me come back again. And so she wrote to them again, and it was almost a year, and the note came from the admiral that, yes, you could go out. But this time they had a car back there. And just that day, right when I got - I looked out the door - there was the biggest ship you ever saw. It was a fighting ship for airplanes.

MRS. KEARNEY: Aircraft carrier?

MR. KEARNEY: And the name of it was - just give me a moment. It was a bug, was the name of it. Not a bug, but it - I know it for sure now.

MRS. KEARNEY: This is the ship that took you home to the States?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. It was the *Hornet*.

MRS. KEARNEY: The *Hornet*.

MR. KEARNEY: The *Hornet* was the best fighting ship in the navy for airplanes, and it was the fastest one. And they had, we had - you had to have certain numbers to get out of there to the United States. And if you had children and you were married and so on, you had a lot of numbers. I was very young. I had all the good stuff and the other things, but they were all leaving, and I was still out there.

And on the day that I was supposed to visit her, the day before that, it came in and said, "The ship is right out there." You could see it. They're going to take 10,000 men home for Christmas. And so I had the choice between doing that and going there. [Inaudible.] And I wanted to go home. And so the *Hornet* made the speed from there in only 15 days, and we were in Seattle. And there was a big sign out there saying, "Welcome home, boys!" And it was so beautiful. And then the ship docked, and I got out, and I lay down, and I kissed the ground, and I said, "If you ever see me another year in the ocean, I'll be crazy." [Laughs.] And so that was it.

MS. RICHARDS: And then how did you decide to go to art school? Did you always know that when you got out of the army you'd go to art school?

MR. KEARNEY: No, I didn't know anything. I didn't know anything. I went to Chicago because that's where I left from. And they were taking me out of the navy, and he said, "Mr. Kearney - " He hadn't said that for a while. "Mr. Kearney, what college would you like to go to?" I said, "Sir, I've got 300 bucks. I've outgrown my clothes. I don't fit any of them. I've gotten bigger. And that's all I've got. How in the hell am I going to college?" He said, "You never heard about the GI Bill of Rights?" And I said, "No." He said, "You had four years; you get four years of college. And you get \$500 for the schools. They almost all accept it, whatever it is. And \$500 to live on. And you can sleep [inaudible]. But the rest of it, you have to do it." And my life changed forever.

MS. RICHARDS: And so did you know you wanted to go to art school?

MR. KEARNEY: Oh, sure.

MS. RICHARDS: And how did you pick which school to go to?

MR. KEARNEY: How did I know that?

MS. RICHARDS: How did you pick which school?

MR. KEARNEY: I picked it because I came from Detroit.

MS. RICHARDS: So you knew about Cranbrook.

MR. KEARNEY: I knew about it. It was famous.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes.

MR. KEARNEY: And it had a thing about us. I met her because of that.

MRS. KEARNEY: But that was later, though.

MS. RICHARDS: So in those days Cranbrook had - right now Cranbrook doesn't have an undergraduate college program. In those days it did?

MRS. KEARNEY: It wasn't undergraduate then. It was just - well, it was a graduate - you know, it was a college. But I mean, it wasn't a high school or anything.

MS. RICHARDS: But now they don't have -

MR. KEARNEY: But at Cranbrook then, they said, What about art? And I put a pile of drawings like this, and there were some [inaudible]. And they looked at them. You're in.

MS. RICHARDS: The people at Cranbrook said that?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. You're in. [Laughs.]

MRS. KEARNEY: His drawings [inaudible]. We've still got some of those drawings.

MS. RICHARDS: And so you were there for four years.

MR. KEARNEY: Not quite.

MRS. KEARNEY: Three.

MR. KEARNEY: What happened was the girl that I was dating, who was kicked out because she wasn't doing any work, and I was having lots of trips with her and so on. And the leader there said, "She has to go." And I said, "It's my fault." And he said, "That's all right. You're doing very well, and she's not." I said, "Well, in honor of that, I have to leave. I'm not going stay here." Which was stupid on my part. I was trying to make him do it, you know. But anyway, we've retained very good friendship over the years.

MS. RICHARDS: Were there any teachers in particular who were important to you at Cranbrook?

MR. KEARNEY: Well, what's the sculptor's name?

MRS. KEARNEY: Carl Milles.

MR. KEARNEY: He was one of the most famous ones in that place. And he liked my work. He was very friendly. There weren't very many who were taking sculpture, and there were about a dozen of us. And he would bring them into their house at Christmas. They served things from - he was from -

MRS. KEARNEY: Sweden.

MR. KEARNEY: Sweden, yes. And he was really a wonderful teacher. And so one time I made a sculpture. We've got one of them at home like this, a copy of it. It's two monkeys, two monkeys hugging each other. They're actually making love, but, you know, it's just funny. And I put it there, and he had never mentioned anybody's art, any art. He saw that, and he laughed and laughed and laughed. And I said, "Oh, the great man just starts laughing at my work," and so on. And he comes over to me, and he puts his hand on my head; he said, "I am not laughing at you; I am laughing with you." [Laughs.] And, you know, he made some stuff for the art here, the artwork here. Also, Zoltan Zephesy.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes. So you very quickly decided that you were going to focus on sculpture? Did you feel that you were a sculptor?

MR. KEARNEY: I was doing everything at school, too. Silver and goldsmith. Show them your -

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, he made a lot of jewelry [inaudible].

MR. KEARNEY: I made hundreds of wedding rings.

MS. RICHARDS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MR. KEARNEY: Where's your wedding ring?

MRS. KEARNEY: Here.

MR. KEARNEY: I made that. Tell her what it is.

MRS. KEARNEY: It's only 58 years old. [Laughs.] Well, it's a, you know - you tell her. I can't. This is your interview.

MR. KEARNEY: We went to a play.

MS. RICHARDS: Wait a second. So you're finished with Cranbrook.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: At Cranbrook you did everything.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: But you left after three years because of that girl.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: And you didn't go back.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: And you stayed in Detroit?

MRS. KEARNEY: He stayed in touch with the Cranbrook people, you know. A lot of them are still our friends.

MR. KEARNEY: We kept in touch. But there's another note that I didn't tell you about. That was every summer I was free when I was at Cranbrook. And my parents had moved out in the country.

MRS. KEARNEY: Pennsylvania, they moved to Duncansville, Pennsylvania.

MR. KEARNEY: Pennsylvania. We were out in the country, and I was painting up above - they had a place up above, and I painted up there and so on. But I had a little motorcycle.

MS. RICHARDS: You had a studio up in the -

MR. KEARNEY: Up above in their building.

MRS. KEARNEY: The attic.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, and I was painting and so on. And we were only about a mile from the mountains, going up like this. And so on Saturdays and Sundays, I would get in my motor thing -

MS. RICHARDS: Car?

MRS. KEARNEY: Motorcycle.

MS. RICHARDS: Motorcycle.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. Motor scooter. And I'd go up through the mountains and go up to places that nobody does. And I was interested in the cabins that were made with axes. And there were lots of them up there. But most of them had lost their - fell down and everything. And I found this one that was so beautiful. But the roof had caved in, and the wood of the stairs and everything. And it had a little fountain coming out of the mountain right there.

So I asked the person nearby - they were related to him - who owns it? Well, that family gave up this place. They own it, but they gave it up a hundred years ago or something. And they have a big place out in the flatlands nearby. But they hang onto it. And so I called the guy, and I said, "Is there anything I can - would you let me build the top of that thing to save it?" He said, "Oh, sure. I'd love to have you do that." And we got to know each other. So then he said one time, "Why don't you buy it?" And I said, "I don't have any money." He said, "Well,

you could pay for it over a long time." I said, "Well, how much would it cost?" He said, "Well, how much could you give every month?" I said, "Fifteen dollars?" He said, "Okay." And then he said, "By the way, this has 60 acres." [Laughter.] And it had a bunch of trees. What do you call them?

MRS. KEARNEY: Black walnut.

MR. KEARNEY: Black walnut. The most beautiful - must have been about 12 of them. Big ones! And they're very, very valuable.

MRS. KEARNEY: There were hundreds of trees, but 12 black walnuts.

MR. KEARNEY: And they were stealing them in the mountains because they were so expensive. So we kept that all that time.

And when we came to Chicago, I started a gallery, the Contemporary Art Gallery. And there were only three galleries that did modern art. And now there are 80-something. And so I was in the basement of - tell her where it was.

MS. RICHARDS: But go back for a second. So you said in the summers when you were at Cranbrook, you went with your family and spent time in Pennsylvania. And you bought that house over time.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: And so after you left Cranbrook, though, you were with that other girl?

MR. KEARNEY: No, I didn't. That was out.

MS. RICHARDS: You went to live in Chicago?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, yes.

MS. RICHARDS: And that's when you started this gallery.

MR. KEARNEY: But this is when I went there, and I lived in my gallery.

MS. RICHARDS: And that was before you started Contemporary Art Workshop?

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes, it was the beginning.

MR. KEARNEY: It was very close to when that got started.

MS. RICHARDS: What year would you say that was?

MRS. KEARNEY: Nineteen forty-nine.

MR. KEARNEY: What year?

MRS. KEARNEY: Nineteen forty-nine.

MS. RICHARDS: This started in '49?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: The Workshop started in '49. But the gallery was an out - first the gallery, the Contemporary Art Gallery, and that was just before the Workshop.

MR. KEARNEY: It was in the basement.

MS. RICHARDS: That same year.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes, it was all an outgrowth.

MS. RICHARDS: So four years after the war ended.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. And it was in a very interesting place. Tell her where it is.

MRS. KEARNEY: Where?

MR. KEARNEY: Where the gallery was.

MS. RICHARDS: In Chicago, what neighborhood?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: It was on Rush Street. It was in the art area, you know, of music and jazz.

MR. KEARNEY: And I started out showing contemporary art. And somebody from Cranbrook suggested a person who was working at the Art Institute of Chicago -

MRS. KEARNEY: Peter Pollack. Peter Pollack -

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: - he was his mentor.

MR. KEARNEY: I went to see him. And I said, "Where should I go to start a gallery?" He told me right there.

MS. RICHARDS: Why did you decide to start a gallery?

MR. KEARNEY: Because I wanted to make a life making money with my art. And so -

MS. RICHARDS: So it was started -

MRS. KEARNEY: A place to live in and -

MS. RICHARDS: And to show your own work.

MR. KEARNEY: And other people's, too.

MS. RICHARDS: You know, he showed Emerson Wolfer. He showed major other artists.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. And anyway -

MRS. KEARNEY: [Inaudible.]

MR. KEARNEY: I started this place. And I hadn't been there very long.

MS. RICHARDS: Nineteen forty-nine.

MR. KEARNEY: But she went to Cranbrook. And she had a friend who was, one of her best friends -

MS. RICHARDS: I'm sorry. Who went to Cranbrook?

MRS. KEARNEY: No, I went to visit Cranbrook because my roommate from college -

MR. KEARNEY: We didn't know each other then.

MRS. KEARNEY: - lived in Bloomfield Hills. And so I went to visit her, because I was working and I had a vacation. So I went to visit her, and she took me to Cranbrook to see it. And it was there that they told me about this young man who was starting an art center in Chicago. And that's how I met him.

MR. KEARNEY: And I was teaching there, silver and goldsmithing.

MS. RICHARDS: Teaching in your art gallery.

MR. KEARNEY: In the gallery.

MRS. KEARNEY: No, it was then the Contemporary Art Workshop.

MS. RICHARDS: So Contemporary Art Gallery then changed into the Contemporary Art Workshop.

MR. KEARNEY: That's next - that's the next thing.

MRS. KEARNEY: It was part of it. It was an outgrowth. Because the gallery was here, and the building behind it became the workshop.

MR. KEARNEY: There was a barn behind it.

MS. RICHARDS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MR. KEARNEY: That you had to get into from the -

MRS. KEARNEY: Michigan Avenue. It was just off of Michigan Avenue.

MR. KEARNEY: And it was - tell her what -

MRS. KEARNEY: It was Cyrus McCormick's old carriage house.

MR. KEARNEY: It still had a wagon in there.

MRS. KEARNEY: And it had two wagons in it.

MR. KEARNEY: Right.

MRS. KEARNEY: It had been unoccupied for 50 years. And so Jack found this because he had started the gallery down below, but it was really the beginning of the workshop because it looked over on the other building.

MR. KEARNEY: I looked out the back window, and I noticed there was a broken window there that had been there for years. So it must have been empty. So I checked on it, and it was empty. And so that's how I rented it. But now we entered it from the other side, on Michigan Avenue.

[END OF CD 2.]

MS. RICHARDS: So when you were at Cranbrook, you were doing all kinds of things: jewelry and sculpture.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, everything.

MS. RICHARDS: When you started the art gallery, what was your work like then?

MR. KEARNEY: I was teaching all of the things.

MS. RICHARDS: What were your - what were you doing?

MR. KEARNEY: Look, for example, I was teaching her -

MRS. KEARNEY: No, Jack, you were also - you were painting, you were making sculpture, and you were making jewelry, all of these three.

MR. KEARNEY: Always those three things.

MS. RICHARDS: Always those three things, okay.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. But now here's the thing: I was just moving things from the gallery to the Contemporary Art up there, and I had a ladder. And I had fixed up a wire on the other street that rang a bell up there. And when she came and she rang the bell, I went [whistle] down on this ladder. And, "Come in."

MS. RICHARDS: This was the first time you met?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, yes, yes. But she said she was sent there to me by the registrar from Cranbrook.

MRS. KEARNEY: By this person [inaudible].

MS. RICHARDS: Why?

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, the registrar at Cranbrook told me about this young man who was going to start this -

MR. KEARNEY: She wanted to ask if anyplace -

MS. RICHARDS: Because you wanted to take lessons?

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, I was so in love with Cranbrook when I saw it.

MR. KEARNEY: She wanted to know if anybody -

MRS. KEARNEY: I've got to have this - I was an art student at Northwestern [Northwestern University, Evanston, IL]. I mean, that was my background, too.

MR. KEARNEY: She wanted to know if there was anyplace like that in Chicago. And this woman was a friend of mine in the office. And she told her -

MS. RICHARDS: Lynn.

MR. KEARNEY: - my name and how to reach it and so on. And she came to - and that's how we met. And so even much later, when we were in Cranbrook, I mean, in -

MRS. KEARNEY: Provincetown?

MR. KEARNEY: Provincetown. That lady came up there. She was a friend of another person there.

MRS. KEARNEY: Lily Harmon, yes.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. Lily Harmon. And she wanted to come over and see me, see us. And she came over and visited with us. And I was painting, and she saw a painting that she liked, and we were at a party that next day. So I wrapped that painting up, and I put a nice little thing on it, and when I presented it to her, and she said, "What's this for?" I said, "Read it. It's for - paid in full, one wife."

[They laugh.]

MS. RICHARDS: So you met.

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, that day, he came sliding down the wall. He came into the -

MS. RICHARDS: Dramatic.

MRS. KEARNEY: You know how you go.

MR. KEARNEY: You can run up one, but you can put your knees out and slide. That's how I got down. [Whistle] Like this, I got in there.

MRS. KEARNEY: And funnily enough, he walked in the door, I looked at him, and he was wearing overalls with no shirt. And I remember - I was, you know, a suburban lady. [Laughs.] And I looked at him, and I thought he was Chinese. I literally believed that he was Chinese. I knew his name was John Kearney. Because he has a -

MR. KEARNEY: You see?

MRS. KEARNEY: So then I quickly knew that he wasn't. But that was my first impression of him. You know my assistant is Chinese; he's from Taiwan. But anyway, that's how we met. And he was starting the workshop; the Contemporary Art Workshop is an outgrowth of the gallery.

MS. RICHARDS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MRS. KEARNEY: He closed the gallery and moved upstairs into the building. And then he started classes, with other five other guys started it.

MS. RICHARDS: So you started the Contemporary Art Workshop with other people.

MR. KEARNEY: I started it, but they joined me.

MS. RICHARDS: I see.

MR. KEARNEY: And they, one by one, dropped off, because they weren't making any money.

MRS. KEARNEY: For various reasons. Leon Golub was one of them.

MS. RICHARDS: Who were the others?

MRS. KEARNEY: Cosmo Campoli.

MS. RICHARDS: He was a -

MRS. KEARNEY: Sculptor.

MS. RICHARDS: Sculptor.

MRS. KEARNEY: And Leon was painting. And Al Kwitz, who was a ceramist.

MS. RICHARDS: How do you spell the last name?

MRS. KEARNEY: K-W-I-T-Z. And Ray Fink was a sculptor.

MS. RICHARDS: And you welcomed them.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: They were all friends.

MR. KEARNEY: They all got together, and that started the Contemporary Art Workshop as a group.

MS. RICHARDS: So you initiated it; it was your idea?

MR. KEARNEY: Oh, absolutely, everything.

MS. RICHARDS: But they came in to be partners?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes, they helped - it was partners.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, they were partners.

MS. RICHARDS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MR. KEARNEY: But they kept dropping out because they weren't making any money.

MS. RICHARDS: And the way to make money was through tuition, through fees that people would pay.

MRS. KEARNEY: No one made any money.

MS. RICHARDS: But is that what the idea was?

MR. KEARNEY: That's all they got, was to -

MRS. KEARNEY: Give them a place to work and a place to exhibit their work.

MR. KEARNEY: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: But what did you - how would you make money?

MR. KEARNEY: Oh, I made hundreds of jewelry.

MS. RICHARDS: But I mean, so you -

MRS. KEARNEY: How did we keep the place?

MS. RICHARDS: Well, I mean, initially the plan was that you'd make money by charging people to learn - to study?

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, it was going to be a school and a place to exhibit.

MR. KEARNEY: We charged a small amount to work.

MRS. KEARNEY: But the rent was \$30 a month.

MS. RICHARDS: So you charged people for studio space?

MR. KEARNEY: No.

MRS. KEARNEY: At that time, no. Well, a little bit later, yes, we did. But it was mostly the people that were working there, the students, and we had - yes, there were people; some people had studios there, but it was more, more open, instead of having separate studios, because of the configuration of the building. And then we later took over the second floor. So then it's not only \$30 a month; we owed \$60 a month. You know, this is 1949. But we could just barely -

MR. KEARNEY: It took us 15 years to buy this [Grant Place building].

MRS. KEARNEY: He never got paid.

MR. KEARNEY: We were paying and paying, and in 15 years we owned it.

MRS. KEARNEY: Not that building.

MR. KEARNEY: No, this building, this one [at 542 Grant Place, Chicago, IL].

MS. RICHARDS: How long - ?

MRS. KEARNEY: That building [at 640 North Michigan Avenue] - we were in that building - see, I was a student, and then we, after about six months of being a student, then we had two dates, and we were married 40 days later.

MR. KEARNEY: Well, let me tell something about that. She was working on jewelry, because in high school she had studied in jewelry.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes. Actually, in high school.

MR. KEARNEY: And I didn't believe in dating any of my students. And she was the only one I did. And so we talked a lot, talked a lot. And I really loved her. And so I had a lot of actors that we knew, that were in that area. And they were always giving me free things, going in there. And one day -

MS. RICHARDS: Free? You mean tickets to the plays?

MR. KEARNEY: To get in - tickets, you know. And so one of them was the alligator in this thing, and he gave me a thing that he wrote, "Just come in the back way."

MRS. KEARNEY: *Peter Pan* was the play.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, *Peter Pan*. In a huge building, you know. And so there was a guy who was helping us at the studio to make it legal and stuff.

MRS. KEARNEY: He was a lawyer.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. And so I said, "You want to go see this theater?" He said, "Well, why don't you?" I said, "Well, there are two of them." He said, "Well, don't you have a girl that would do that?" And I said, "Why would a woman want to go in the back of a building and come in like that?" And he said, "You're a damned good artist, but you don't know a damned thing about women. That you know one of the actors, and you can get in and come out so?" Okay. So we went on our first date. And then during the play in the dark - we had, way up in front - he gave us the seats. He crawls out in his outfit and says, "How's the seats?" [Laughs.]

MRS. KEARNEY: The alligator, yes.

MR. KEARNEY: Anyway, that was the beginning of it. And then we started dating. And I had - by that time I had rented a one-room apartment quite a ways away. But one of my students, a woman, had a husband who had a place. What was that? Where we went to eat.

MS. RICHARDS: A restaurant?

MR. KEARNEY: A restaurant, yes. And he always said everything would be half price. It was pretty close to where I lived. Then when we went on that date -

MRS. KEARNEY: Oh, that was the College of Complexes [Chicago, IL].

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, that's what it was.

MRS. KEARNEY: They did poetry readings there.

MR. KEARNEY: And so she said, "You've got a place where you live around here?" I said, "Look, it's a mess." I only have one chair - one place to sit. And I've got paint here and this here and so on. You wouldn't want that." She said, "No, I'd like to see it." Well, she came in, and she saw a painting that I had been painting on for a year. And I kept changing it and changing it till it was just right. It was even wet. And she looked at it, and she said, "Oh, that's so beautiful." And I said, "You can have it." And she cried, and I asked her to marry me.

MRS. KEARNEY: And we were married 40 days later.

MS. RICHARDS: Huh! So you continued on.

MR. KEARNEY: Just one more thing. That painting that I gave her was the first big win I had. There was a - tell her about what that was.

MRS. KEARNEY: That was a competition. Was that here in Chicago or New York?

MR. KEARNEY: Here in Chicago.

MRS. KEARNEY: He won a prize for \$500, first prize.

MS. RICHARDS: It wasn't a purchase prize?

MRS. KEARNEY: No, no.

MS. RICHARDS: I mean, it was an award.

MRS. KEARNEY: It was an award.

MR. KEARNEY: On the whole street of -

MRS. KEARNEY: It was on Michigan Avenue. They had a special exhibit.

MR. KEARNEY: Michigan Avenue. In each of the fancy stores there was at least one painting that won something. And they opened the Water Tower for the first time since the fire. And mine was the first one. And it's right over her bed like that.

MRS. KEARNEY: It was - the Water Tower had been closed forever. And they opened it after 50 years. And that's where they displayed the painting. But it was a competition that they had in Chicago. See, at that time there were only about three galleries in town.

MR. KEARNEY: After all this, I'm going to spend the rest of my life just making small sculpture in Provincetown and painting. And I'm going to paint everything about the World War II.

MS. RICHARDS: Hmm. [Affirmative.] Let me ask you, when you were in high school and college, and later living in Chicago, you went to the Art Institute; you visited museums?

MR. KEARNEY: Oh, sure.

MS. RICHARDS: You looked at art. In those early years, who were the artists whom you loved most, when you went to the Art Institute, and what other museums, wherever you went?

MR. KEARNEY: Oh, my, I couldn't remember, with my memory.

MS. RICHARDS: Were there particular things that were just very, very important to you?

MR. KEARNEY: I went to all of them. I went to all of the museums. And every year, when I was 12 years old, I would go down there. It was free. I followed it, all of it.

MS. RICHARDS: You went on your own? Your parents didn't have a part in taking you?

MR. KEARNEY: I went alone. I just went up there by myself. You get on the bus. It was half an hour drive. It was cheap. I think it was a nickel or something like that.

MS. RICHARDS: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MR. KEARNEY: And, no, I went to all of them.

MS. RICHARDS: When you were in 1949, 1950, early years of the workshop here, and you're doing your work, were there any particular important exhibitions that came to town -

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, I'll tell you.

MS. RICHARDS: - that you remember?

MR. KEARNEY: The zoo [The Lincoln Park Zoo, Chicago, IL] came to me and said they wanted me to make an elephant.

MRS. KEARNEY: No, no, she wanted to know about exhibitions that were in Chicago.

MS. RICHARDS: Were there any -

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, one of them would be - his memory in this area is going to be short. But we had "Exhibition

Momentum," which was a major exhibition [Contemporary Art Workshop, Chicago, IL, c. 1951].

MS. RICHARDS: In the '50s?

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes, in Chicago. And it was a show of Chicago artists that had always been ignored, because everybody left Chicago and went to New York.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MRS. KEARNEY: Which is why we really started the Workshop. It wasn't to make money. Nobody made any money - any. And they didn't do it to make money. They just did it to have a place to work and to teach and to have an exchange, to be together.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, yes. I was not so much thinking of important exhibitions that Jack had his work in. I was thinking of exhibitions that brought work from outside Chicago to Chicago, perhaps sculpture that was influential. I mean, we talked about Carl Milles. But were there other modern sculptors whose work he admired and possibly inspired him?

MRS. KEARNEY: I don't know if he would be able to say what that would be because those exhibitions were - I can't remember any. There was a [Henri] Matisse show, there was a [Pablo] Picasso show. There was all - what, honey?

MR. KEARNEY: Right on the table here is that first show that I had in my - here in Chicago.

MRS. KEARNEY: First show in Chicago?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. It was here this afternoon.

MRS. KEARNEY: I don't know which - what you're referring to.

MR. KEARNEY: You know, that shows the gallery? It was that first gallery show I had.

MRS. KEARNEY: Oh, that would have been in New York.

MR. KEARNEY: No, right here in Chicago. It was here this morning.

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, everything is still here. [Inaudible.] These are all; these are -

MS. RICHARDS: Jack, what was the name -

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, you were at the Art Institute with this; is that what you mean?

MR. KEARNEY: No.

MS. RICHARDS: What was the name of the first - the gallery where you had your first show in Chicago?

MR. KEARNEY: That's the one I'm trying to find.

MS. RICHARDS: And this is your first solo exhibition that you're talking about.

MRS. KEARNEY: This is his last sculpture that he just finished. That's in New Jersey now. It was just shipped to New Jersey. It's a life-size horse [*Racehorse*, 2009, Far Hills, NJ].

MS. RICHARDS: Wow!

MR. KEARNEY: I saw this this morning.

MRS. KEARNEY: I don't know what you're referring to, honey. I honestly don't.

MR. KEARNEY: You know, it had the -

MS. RICHARDS: Maybe we'll find it later.

MR. KEARNEY: - the first bumper sculpture was in it.

MRS. KEARNEY: That wasn't in Chicago. That was in New York.

MR. KEARNEY: No, it was one right here. All right.

MS. RICHARDS: When you were doing sculpture in those early years, was that welded steel? Or was that bronze?

MR. KEARNEY: At times, everything. Welded, a lot of bronze casting. We did a lot of casting in those years.

MS. RICHARDS: You learned casting at Cranbrook?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, we did. But it was too expensive for us for the [inaudible].

MRS. KEARNEY: When we moved from that first workshop - we were there for seven years - then the building was being torn down. So then we moved to another building, right behind the Wrigley Building on Rush Street. And we were there for four years. And then we moved here [542 West Grant Place].

MS. RICHARDS: What year did you move here?

MRS. KEARNEY: Nineteen sixty. And that's when we bought this building. At that time it was still a partnership. But nobody ever made any money. He never got paid for teaching ever. You know, we just - what he made a living at was selling his jewelry or any of his art. But he never got paid - even here for 20 years, he never got paid here.

MS. RICHARDS: When you began -

MRS. KEARNEY: He built everything in this whole building.

MS. RICHARDS: What year did you begin showing at ACA Gallery [New York, NY]?

MRS. KEARNEY: Nineteen sixty-two.

MS. RICHARDS: Okay. So that's too far ahead. We don't want to go too fast.

MR. KEARNEY: We had many shows there, though.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: But going back a bit to the '50s: So during the '50s, you were working here, making jewelry, making sculpture. When did you start going to Provincetown?

MR. KEARNEY: That was with [Richard] Florsheim.

MRS. KEARNEY: We went to Provincetown - the first year we went was 1958.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh. And how did -

MRS. KEARNEY: Jill, our daughter, was born in '57, and she learned to walk in Provincetown. She was just learning to walk.

MS. RICHARDS: Shall we talk about Provincetown, or should we go back to Chicago in those early years? Is there more that you want to say?

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, in Chicago, looking at -

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: Stuart Brent, he showed - I guess that'll kind of give you some chronological stuff.

MS. RICHARDS: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] Oh, yes, Stuart Brent Gallery [Chicago, IL], 1952.

MRS. KEARNEY: That was - Stuart Brent was a bookstore. But, you know, there weren't any galleries. And then Fairweather-Hardin [Fairweather-Hardin Gallery, Chicago, IL], he had a show at the Fairweather Hardin [1965]. He also had two exhibitions at the Chicago Public Library, Chicago Cultural Center in 1953 and 1960.

MS. RICHARDS: Design Center Chicago [1952].

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes, that was on the South Side, and that was -

MR. KEARNEY: This is what I was looking for.

MRS. KEARNEY: Oh.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh!

MR. KEARNEY: That was the first gallery.

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, you know what? This doesn't have a date on it, and I can't tell you - this was in about late '50s.

MR. KEARNEY: And the biggest art collectors in the city at that time, Seymour Oppenheimer and Robert Mayer, bought one of my pieces.

MS. RICHARDS: Hmm. [Affirmative.] That's not on your list of exhibitions.

MRS. KEARNEY: Isn't that funny? It's not on there; I should put it on there.

MR. KEARNEY: There were only three galleries like that.

MRS. KEARNEY: This had to be in about the '60s, because he didn't start making bumper sculptures until -

MR. KEARNEY: Because there is a bumper sculpture there.

MRS. KEARNEY: These are all bumpers.

MS. RICHARDS: This looks like the '60s.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes, I think it was 1960, because this was the first -

MR. KEARNEY: You can have that. We've got a lot of copies of it.

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, she doesn't need them, but she can certainly have it if she wants it [inaudible].

MS. RICHARDS: So as you were working as a sculptor - there's jewelry; there's the painting; there's the sculpture. Were you working on them all at the same time?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, always.

MS. RICHARDS: Always. And did one inspire the other?

MR. KEARNEY: Absolutely.

MS. RICHARDS: How did they work together creatively?

MR. KEARNEY: Absolutely.

MRS. KEARNEY: One of the things that he learned at Cranbrook is that the jewelry making, he could see you could sell that, and he knew that then he could survive. Instead of having to be a waiter, you know, in a restaurant or something, he could survive by selling jewelry. But he never compromised the painting or the sculpture. He didn't compromise the jewelry either. But people just buy jewelry a lot more readily, you know. So he supported -

MR. KEARNEY: That's what kept us eating, while we had children.

MRS. KEARNEY: It supported, because nobody was -

MR. KEARNEY: Tell her how many rings I did - I did hundreds, wasn't it?

MRS. KEARNEY: Oh, yes. Must have been hundreds.

MS. RICHARDS: And did you sell them yourself from the Contemporary Art Workshop?

MR. KEARNEY: Oh, yes.

MS. RICHARDS: You didn't send them to any other stores?

MRS. KEARNEY: No.

MR. KEARNEY: They came to me.

MRS. KEARNEY: No, no. It was [inaudible].

MS. RICHARDS: All custom.

MR. KEARNEY: The thing that's different about mine is I never made the same thing twice. Somebody would come in here and say, "Oh, I want to get married. Will you make me a ring?" I said, "How did you meet each other?" And they would say, "Well, I met him on a bus." Then I said, "We're going to make a little bus." Show them yours.

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, this is *Peter Pan*, see. It shows the - it's kind of obscure. But this is Peter Pan because we went to the play, you know.

MR. KEARNEY: And I made - every one was different.

MRS. KEARNEY: And the Archives [Smithsonian Archives of American Art, Washington, D.C.] are getting - he saved all his designs. So we have a box like this with all his designs.

MS. RICHARDS: When you were - what part did drawing play in your process when you're thinking about the sculpture or the paintings or the jewelry?

MR. KEARNEY: It's all the same. For example -

MS. RICHARDS: But did you start out doing a drawing and then making a painting from the drawing?

MR. KEARNEY: See this thing up above there? I built that. That was for jewelry. And I would go, and in one day I'd teach silver casting up there, painting down here - or painting in there - and sculpture here. And I had a waiting list for three years. And I would teach each one.

MS. RICHARDS: A waiting list of students?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: [Inaudible.]

MR. KEARNEY: To [inaudible], I would only take eight students.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes. He had really few students, yes.

MR. KEARNEY: They became our friends. Those were our friends.

MRS. KEARNEY: So he always made jewelry. Even children of people would come later and say, "You made my mother's wedding ring. You have to make mine." Or something. But all of his jewelry was just like a little piece of sculpture.

MR. KEARNEY: Her grandmother joined my class. [Laughs.]

MRS. KEARNEY: Basically. Yes, my mother and my grandmother both took his classes from him. But sculpture and painting were what he really loved doing. The other, he didn't do just for the pleasure of it. Painting and sculpture were more really what he was doing.

MS. RICHARDS: The sculpture has always been involved with animal forms or the figure or some kind of abstracted actual forms that you see.

MR. KEARNEY: Mostly true but not always.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] How did that - your involvement with the figure with animals?

MR. KEARNEY: I raised these animals as a child.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes.

MR. KEARNEY: They were my friends.

MRS. KEARNEY: See, here's a typical goat.

MR. KEARNEY: [Laughs.]

MRS. KEARNEY: That's in bronze.

MR. KEARNEY: I understood them, and they understood me. And I liked that. I have one at the museum here. What are those two in [inaudible]?

MRS. KEARNEY: Oh, the Field Museum of Natural History [Chicago, IL] has a sculpture of his.

MR. KEARNEY: And they have three pieces, don't they?

MRS. KEARNEY: Two.

MR. KEARNEY: Two, okay.

MS. RICHARDS: Did you draw from life or all from memory?

MR. KEARNEY: Both - anything. But somebody said once, "How do you do so many things?" I said, "I never run out of that." I can think of it every time, a dozen things.

MS. RICHARDS: So would you be working on more than one painting at once?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, yes.

MS. RICHARDS: And more than one piece of sculpture?

MR. KEARNEY: Oh, sure. I was doing from one to the other all the time.

MRS. KEARNEY: One of the things he did was - he built a bronze foundry here. We had it in the building just after we came here in 1960, and it was in the back of the building. And so we did some of the castings here - I can show you - were cast in our home.

MR. KEARNEY: We had to close, though, because the women upstairs that were painting didn't like the smell of it.

MRS. KEARNEY: The fumes after a while. So we -

MR. KEARNEY: So we just had to give that up.

MRS. KEARNEY: So maybe about five years.

MR. KEARNEY: We have a big furnace down in there in the ground.

MS. RICHARDS: In the early years then, was most of your work cast bronze?

MR. KEARNEY: They were all that.

MRS. KEARNEY: Oh, yes, yes. Actually the early works were usually bronze. And then in the '60s was when he - it was in Provincetown where he went to the dump and found all these bumpers. And that's what got him starting working on - he often did kinetic sculpture in Provincetown, which he showed in -

MS. RICHARDS: I want to ask you one more question about Chicago, and then we're going to go to Provincetown. In Chicago, who were some of the other artists whom, you know, whom you were friends with, who were important parts of the Chicago art scene with you?

MR. KEARNEY: Oh, my, we had so many. I don't know where to start.

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, one of his closest friends was Richard Florsheim.

MS. RICHARDS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MRS. KEARNEY: And Claude Bentley.

MR. KEARNEY: He got us to go to Provincetown.

MRS. KEARNEY: He's [inaudible] because he's terrible about remembering people's names. Claude Bentley was one of his close friends. And Bob Katzman.

MR. KEARNEY: In Provincetown -

MS. RICHARDS: Did all the artists in Chicago live in one neighborhood?

MR. KEARNEY: No.

MRS. KEARNEY: No. Chicago was always pretty -

MS. RICHARDS: So it was hard to have an artists' community because people were all spread out?

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, we built our own. That's what the workshop was.

MR. KEARNEY: They lived where they could pay - where they could afford to pay it.

MRS. KEARNEY: And rents - well, when we were first married, we paid \$38 a month rent for our apartment, which was one room with a bathroom down the hall. It was like a dormitory because all the other artists - Claude Bentley lived there. Seymour Rosofsky was another artist that lived -

MS. RICHARDS: How do you spell his last name?

MRS. KEARNEY: R-O-S-O-F-S-K-Y. Seymour.

MS. RICHARDS: R-O-F-F-K- No.

MRS. KEARNEY: Rosofsky. R-O-S-O-F-S-K-Y. I'm just - can't do that [inaudible].

MR. KEARNEY: Studs [Terkel], who just died, was a very close friend of ours.

MS. RICHARDS: How did you meet Studs Terkel?

MR. KEARNEY: Oh, about 30 years.

MRS. KEARNEY: We've known Studs for about 40 years.

MR. KEARNEY: Forty years, maybe. He used to come and sit with me at my art fairs and just talk. We were long - good friends all over.

MRS. KEARNEY: He was one of our closest friends.

MR. KEARNEY: And when our daughter was getting married, we told him she was getting married. He said, "Oh, I'm going to come. Where is it?" We told him. And he didn't get it right. He said, "I went out there; there was nobody there." I said, "Well, that was yesterday you were supposed to be there." Oh. And then he came over with a pile of his books and gave it to our daughter, like this. A real character.

MRS. KEARNEY: But he lived out - we met him long before he moved, where he lived on our street; he was about three doors down from us.

MR. KEARNEY: He bought one of my sculptures.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes.

MR. KEARNEY: Both he and I, our sons had the same name.

MS. RICHARDS: You said your daughter's name was Jill?

MRS. KEARNEY: Jill.

MS. RICHARDS: And what is your son's name?

MRS. KEARNEY: Dan - Daniel.

MR. KEARNEY: And he had a Dan, too. And so when I made a Dan for myself, I made an extra cast on it, and he saw it, and he bought it. And when his father died just this year, we said, "Do you still have it?" And he said, "Yes, they left it for me. It's right there."

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, Dan is still - his son Dan is living in his house.

MR. KEARNEY: He was a character, and he was great fun.

MS. RICHARDS: So you said that it was Richard Florsheim who was responsible for getting you to Provincetown.

MR. KEARNEY: He was very important in that.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: How did that come to be?

MR. KEARNEY: He taught here. And his family was very wealthy, but he wasn't. His father wanted him to go into the business, and he wouldn't do it.

MS. RICHARDS: Is that the shoe business?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, that's the shoe -

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, no. It was originally the shoe business, but then his father took the money from the shoe business. He owned all the Checker Cabs and everything. They called him the Transportation Mogul in [the *New York Times Magazine* when he died.

MR. KEARNEY: When he died. And our daughter was only one year old when we went there.

MS. RICHARDS: So he had been there and encouraged you to go out there?

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, he was going there all the time, and we got sick and tired of hearing him talk about Provincetown. We said, The heck with that; we'll go. So we went, and the first time we went, we stayed forever.

MS. RICHARDS: So you just closed up the workshop?

MRS. KEARNEY: No, the workshop continued.

MS. RICHARDS: Was it in the summer?

MRS. KEARNEY: No, no. We kept it all continued because we had studios. We had about 20 artists who had studios in the building.

MR. KEARNEY: It wasn't hard to get them to stay.

MS. RICHARDS: So what year was it? Was it in the summer?

MRS. KEARNEY: What?

MS. RICHARDS: That you went to Provincetown.

MR. KEARNEY: Always in the summer.

MRS. KEARNEY: It was 1958.

MS. RICHARDS: Three months.

MS. RICHARDS: Nineteen fifty-eight. And you went out there, and you found a place to live?

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes, we rented houses there forever.

MR. KEARNEY: But then we finally bought one. And then we built - I bought half an acre, which nobody has a half an acre. And then I built a wooden building. And from that I built a concrete building. So it has three buildings on it. And we use that all the time.

MRS. KEARNEY: But it's not adjacent to our house. Our house is on Commercial Street. That's on Aunt Sukeys Way. So we're on the east end, first block of town, east end. And we actually bought the house that was another artist friend of ours, who was a WPA [Works Progress Administration] artist.

MS. RICHARDS: What's that name?

MRS. KEARNEY: Joseph Kaplan.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. KEARNEY: Did very good painting.

MS. RICHARDS: Kaplan with a K?

MRS. KEARNEY: K. And he was a well-known painter in New York, actually.

MR. KEARNEY: We had so many old-timers that helped us when we were there. They'd invite us to all their parties. Most of them were Jews, and they had been having a rough time all their lives. And when they came to the United States as artists, they struggled. Most of them were in New York and so on. But when they came, they

went to Provincetown. And they were all wonderful people, and they had music in their houses. And none of them had children, because they couldn't afford it.

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, some did, you know.

MR. KEARNEY: They took our two kids - they were theirs. They just - that was family.

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, we were a little younger than the rest. The people that were really our closest friends were a little older than we.

MS. RICHARDS: Who else was there whom you first met when you came who were important to you?

MR. KEARNEY: There are so many, I don't know where to start.

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, he's not going to be able to -

MS. RICHARDS: Do you remember Myron Stout?

MRS. KEARNEY: Oh, of course. Myron was a good friend. And he was an amazing artist. Leo and Blanche and Tony Vevers and -

MS. RICHARDS: Wait, Leo and Blanche -

MRS. KEARNEY: Manso.

MS. RICHARDS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MRS. KEARNEY: And Tony Vevers and -

MR. KEARNEY: What about the great painter?

MS. RICHARDS: How do you spell Vevers?

MRS. KEARNEY: V-E-V-E-R-S. And then, you know, Robert Motherwell was our closest friend.

MR. KEARNEY: Robert Motherwell was my closest friend.

MRS. KEARNEY: Jack spoke at his funeral.

MR. KEARNEY: We were with him when he died.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: You met him in Provincetown.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes, we met him. Because we knew him long before he was living across the street from us, because he was there. Robert actually, I think, went to Provincetown before we did, but we didn't know him immediately.

MR. KEARNEY: He was a philosophy student before he became a painter.

MRS. KEARNEY: And a really marvelous -

MR. KEARNEY: And I was one of the very, very few people who he'd let in there when he was working.

Really interesting. He was upstairs, and he had a big space. And he painted on the floor. He had a long broom, and he'd paint like that. And every once in a while when he was taking a big painting, and taking [it] out somewhere, he'd call down, "Jack, come up and help me." Well, one day I was walking along. I had just been welding, and I was walking around on steel - just like you would have - when you're going to go out and play golf. It wasn't a place you would want to walk on, in the studio floor. So here he has this painting that's about 10 feet long, and he had one end of it, and I had the other. And he was backing up like this, and I was [inaudible]. And he was jerking back and forth. And he said, "Will you cut that out! I walk on them all the time!" And there were all these drawings that he had made that I was stepping on.

We spent many nights sitting there, talking about art and science and beauty and all kinds of stuff.

MS. RICHARDS: So, and at first, did that have, being out there, impact your work and what kind of paintings and sculpture you were making?

MR. KEARNEY: Did he?

MS. RICHARDS: Did being in Provincetown have an effect on what your sculpture looked like and your paintings?

MR. KEARNEY: Everybody affected everybody else. You learned -

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, so not only - what I should be asking is, how did the other artists impact your work?

MR. KEARNEY: We were all talking about what we were doing. They would come and see it. Robert Motherwell, when I built the big one of concrete, and it was from here to over there, we needed a place to put water in, like this. And he had a sink. So he gave it to us. He came over to see it. And he looked around at it, and he looked at my studio and so on. And he said, "You know I know a lot of sculptors. But," he said, "you've got it. I know sculptors" - and she was standing there - "I know sculptors who would kill to have something like that." And she said, "He did." [Laughs.]

MS. RICHARDS: What piece was that that you were talking about?

MR. KEARNEY: It was the sink that he gave me.

MRS. KEARNEY: He just gave Jack a sink.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, I see. I see.

MR. KEARNEY: He was looking at the studio, and he gave us other stuff, too.

MRS. KEARNEY: He was very generous.

MR. KEARNEY: But I made things for him, too.

MS. RICHARDS: Were there particular artists there whose friendship and whose work had an effect on your work?

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, one of them was, I would say, Gerrit Hondius.

MR. KEARNEY: The old guys like that.

MS. RICHARDS: How do you spell Hondius?

MRS. KEARNEY: H-O-N-D-I-U-S. Gerrit is G-E-R-R-I-T.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. KEARNEY: His family, for 300 years, had been painting.

MRS. KEARNEY: [Carel] Fabritius and [Hendricus] Hondius were both relatives - forebears - of his.

MR. KEARNEY: And I would sit with that guy when I was painting, and I'd say something about a color. And he would go over and go [snapping sound], "There it is." And he was right. And I learned. Yes, that's true.

MRS. KEARNEY: But there were tons of artists in Provincetown, including his wife.

MR. KEARNEY: Wonderful pianist, and she taught musicians. And they would invent -

MRS. KEARNEY: Paula [Hondius].

MR. KEARNEY: They'd have us come there -

MRS. KEARNEY: She was a concert pianist.

MR. KEARNEY: - and listen to her play. And then one time they said, "We need a piano." And I said, "I'll get you one." And I found a neighbor who had a [inaudible] piano. And he said, "How are we going to get it here?" I said, "I'm a sculptor. I can do it." [Laughs.] And so we, four sculptors, we carried this piano in.

MRS. KEARNEY: Oh, this was for Gerrit - I mean Jacob, Jacob Druckman?

MR. KEARNEY: No.

MRS. KEARNEY: The piano was for Jacob, wasn't it?

MR. KEARNEY: No. It was for the other one, the kids. I mean the one I was just talking about.

MS. RICHARDS: Gerrit?

MR. KEARNEY: Whose family goes back 300 years.

MS. RICHARDS: Gerrit, Gerrit Hondius.

MRS. KEARNEY: Oh, you mean the piano was for Paula?

MR. KEARNEY: We brought it in and gave it to her.

MRS. KEARNEY: Oh. Well, later on you got a piano for Jacob Druckman, who was a composer, a very close friend of ours. His wife, also - Mickey, Murial Topaz, a dancer.

MR. KEARNEY: Druckman was writing modern music, and his wife was very much involved in it. They were one of our closest ones.

MRS. KEARNEY: They're both dead.

MR. KEARNEY: I went to him one time, I said, "Are you having a hard time?" He said, "I want new sound." He said, "I want something that never makes the same sound ever." I said, "I can do that easy." He said, "Okay, go ahead and do it." So I went to the dump, I got a big barrel, and I put it on an axle. And I had a trapdoor in it. I packed things inside of it so it wouldn't be real [inaudible]. And then I filled it with ping-pong balls and rocks and everything you could imagine. And then I found a motor down there that you could make it go slow or fast as you turned the barrel. And I brought it over there, and he said, "My God! It's true. And it never does the same thing again." He said, "But the trouble is it has a grinding sound - Shhhh. "I'll fix that." So I fixed it.

And then after he finished it, we took it all around the town. We'd have musicians try to play it. We took it to the museum and so on. And then finally we just gave it to him, because nobody else could use it. And then once he called us in Chicago and said, "In Chicago there's a dancing" - what was the group?

MRS. KEARNEY: The Joffrey [Joffrey Ballet, Chicago, IL].

MR. KEARNEY: The Joffrey was there. He said, "You go there, and you'll see you've got to go to see it." And we went there, and they were dancing, and they were going, Bong ding ding ding bong! It was mine. Ding ding ding ding bong. And on and on.

MRS. KEARNEY: [Inaudible] sound.

MR. KEARNEY: So that's what I call [inaudible]. We did a lot of that.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes, we were - when we lived in Europe, they came to visit us, too.

MR. KEARNEY: I did a Happening that was really famous there. A friend of ours -

MRS. KEARNEY: Let's stop a second - now how much longer -

MS. RICHARDS: I think that this is a good moment to stop now.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes.

[END OF CD 3.]

MS. RICHARDS: This is Judith Richards interviewing John Kearney at 542 West Grant Place in Chicago, on March 13, 2009, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, disc number one.

So, John, you wanted to get back to Provincetown.

MR. KEARNEY: Okay. A long time ago, we were getting ready to go from Provincetown to Italy on a grant from the United States and Italy, for a year. And we were having a show out in the yard.

MS. RICHARDS: Is this the first time you went to Italy?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: The first grant, that was in 1963?

MRS. KEARNEY: Sixty-three is when we went, yes.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. And so we had a whole bunch of my stuff out in the yard, and a lot of people were there to see it. And a woman, Francoise Gilot, was there. And I didn't know that she was - who she was. And she was brought there by a very - who was that guy that brought her there?

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes. He was an owner of -

MR. KEARNEY: From New York.

MRS. KEARNEY: I can't - it's right on the tip of my tongue.

MR. KEARNEY: She'll think of it in a minute. But anyway, she looked around and looked around. And she says, "Oh, I love this work! Do you have anything else?" And I said, "Yes, in the house." And so she went in there, and she came out with a sculpture that I had made out of silver. It was a jumping animal. And she said, "Oh, I love this. I am a painter. But I will buy this, or I will swap with you." And I said to this bright, great man who came -

MRS. KEARNEY: Oh, Sylvan Cole, who owned the AAA Galleries in New York.

MR. KEARNEY: He said, "If I were you, I would trade." [Laughs.] And so then she became a very close friend of ours. And when we went to Europe, she gave us a list of how to find her when we get there, because we had a car, and we were driving all around when the kids weren't in school. And we went to France. And she was in lower France. She had just left a great artist [Pablo Picasso] a year or two before. And the girls - his two children were - what age were they?

MRS. KEARNEY: Paloma [Picasso] and Claude [Picasso].

MR. KEARNEY: They were teenaged.

MRS. KEARNEY: This is in Vallauris [France].

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: She was a teenager; Paloma was maybe 15 or 14.

MR. KEARNEY: That was where Picasso was working before. And his car was down still below. And so she let us have a nice meal with her. Then we went down to the sea and swam with his kids. And we came back, and we had a nice outdoor luncheon. And there was a great big plate that had a crack on one side of it, and she had some food on it. And it was an original Picasso. [Laughs.] And she was using it that way, you know. And anyway, we've kept in touch with her.

MS. RICHARDS: Have you been to her studio in New York?

MRS. KEARNEY: No.

MR. KEARNEY: Never got there. But she said, "If you come to New York, we have a house there."

MS. RICHARDS: An apartment.

MR. KEARNEY: "We have your sculpture in there." And I just thought you should hear that one.

MS. RICHARDS: Did you meet the man she married, [Dr. Jonas] Salk?

MRS. KEARNEY: Salk?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: Jack did; I didn't.

MR. KEARNEY: I was knocked out over that. Do you know who he was?

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, Jonas Salk.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, and I had a nice long talk with him. And I said, "My God! When I was a kid, everybody was sick; they're dying and so on. And you stopped that." And I said, "It was so nice." He said, "That's wonderful. But I don't want to talk about it." [Laughs.]

MRS. KEARNEY: We even got a painting from Francoise, which we have. She made the swap.

MR. KEARNEY: Oh, yes. She also said it - who was that in Paris that would like to see my -

MRS. KEARNEY: Alexander Calder.

MR. KEARNEY: She said she would introduce me to him. But I never got there again. So I didn't. She said - she thought that he would like it. So that was it. But anyway, that was the first time we went to Italy. And we went there on a ship.

MS. RICHARDS: So shall we go to the time in Italy and go back to Provincetown [inaudible]?

MRS. KEARNEY: Oh, you can go to Provincetown and then Italy. Or, you know, why, we always went back to Provincetown anyway.

MS. RICHARDS: Okay. You decide.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: You can talk about Italy.

MR. KEARNEY: Okay.

MS. RICHARDS: Sure. First time you went to Italy.

MR. KEARNEY: Well, anyway, that first time, we went across the ocean with the kids, and it was just wonderful. And when we got there in Italy, we had - we were going to a house that was rented, and it was a sixth walk-up.

MRS. KEARNEY: Sixth floor.

MR. KEARNEY: And it didn't have any heat; it was very simple, and we lived in it for a year. We had a wonderful time.

MS. RICHARDS: Now that was not - was it in connection with the American Academy in Rome, that visit?

MRS. KEARNEY: No, that was much later. Way later, the Academy. It was through the Fulbright award and a grant from the Italian government.

MS. RICHARDS: Okay.

MR. KEARNEY: And I met quite a few artists there. But this one here.

MRS. KEARNEY: Right there. Oh, that's Oreste DeQuel.

MR. KEARNEY: He was a great artist, sculptor.

MS. RICHARDS: Hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. KEARNEY: We've become very great friends. And he said, *due fratelli internazionali* [two international brothers]. I lived at his house when we went there, and he stays here when he was here. He worked in sculpture here and there. And he was one of the best in Europe. He's the only sculptor I ever met that always won in everything; he entered for the *premio* [prizes] of Italy.

MRS. KEARNEY: He worked with stone.

MR. KEARNEY: And he was also a very interesting man.

MS. RICHARDS: So you met him in Rome.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: He was living in Rome.

MR. KEARNEY: What country was he from?

MRS. KEARNEY: He was from Yugoslavia.

MR. KEARNEY: From Yugoslavia. And he was there, and he was fighting the Germans when they were there. And he was famous for killing the officers of the army of Germany. And he had medals from all over the world for what he did.

MRS. KEARNEY: He spent two years in jail, too.

MR. KEARNEY: He was a very interesting guy. But anyway -

MS. RICHARDS: So how long did you spend in Rome? You said one year.

MR. KEARNEY: A whole year.

MS. RICHARDS: And where did you work in Rome?

MR. KEARNEY: Well, I had a studio with him. He had one -

MRS. KEARNEY: No, first, Jack, you were at the foundry; you worked in the foundry.

MR. KEARNEY: Oh, the first time, yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: Nicci Foundry.

MS. RICHARDS: How do you spell Nicci?

MRS. KEARNEY: N-I-C-C-I.

MS. RICHARDS: And so you were making works in bronze.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes.

MR. KEARNEY: Mostly bronze, yes. And then the -

MS. RICHARDS: How was your work affected by being in Rome?

MR. KEARNEY: It was - I had wonderful things there. I went to all the museums there. And I loved the ancient artwork.

MRS. KEARNEY: Etruscan.

MR. KEARNEY: I got a lot of ideas from it that way. And I had two shows in Rome, didn't I?

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes.

MR. KEARNEY: And they accepted my work very well.

MRS. KEARNEY: For ACA, you had a show there and one in Venice [Il Canale Galleria, Venice, Italy, 1964].

MR. KEARNEY: And one gallery was Americans that only showed Americans in Rome.

MRS. KEARNEY: It was Schneider, Galleria Schneider [1969, Rome, Italy], up on the Spanish Steps.

MR. KEARNEY: And they said to me, "We've had the most Italians here - came to your show - more Italians than any ever did. How'd the heck you do that?" And I said, "It's very simple." I said, "This man here made this, and so-and-so, he did that and that." So I let everybody know how skillful these guys were and who it was who did certain kinds of things, of casting. But they didn't know that I had already been casting right here. And so -

MS. RICHARDS: In Chicago.

MR. KEARNEY: This group, this family that had been 500 years they'd been making sculpture in bronze. And the grandfather, well, he was in charge of everybody. Everything he said, they had to do it.

MRS. KEARNEY: Dimitri Hadzi is another artist.

MS. RICHARDS: Could you spell that?

MRS. KEARNEY: Dimitri Hadzi? He was in Rome the same time we were.

MS. RICHARDS: Spell his last name?

MRS. KEARNEY: Hadzi is H-A-D-Z-I. He's a Greek, but he taught at Harvard [Harvard University, Cambridge, MA] later. He was -

MR. KEARNEY: So I said one time, I want to have this and that cast pushed in with metal on the thing. And I need

it to have it this kind of a way. And he said, "Well," he said, "if you do it that way, if it doesn't work, you don't have to - I mean, you'll have to pay for it, and you don't get it, you know." And I said, "Well, if that is the case, sir, I will tell you where to put the studs." And the guys in the foundry [laughs] - he's the master, you know. And I said, "Then I'll pay for it." And so about six weeks later I went in there, and all of them in the place, the whole family were all laughing, you know. And the old man was really pissed off a little bit. And he showed it, and he said, "It's very good." [Laughs.] And then all of the other guys said, "*Maestro! Maestro* Kearney!"

[They laugh.]

MS. RICHARDS: Did you speak Italian, or were you learning at that point?

MR. KEARNEY: Some of it, you know.

MS. RICHARDS: Did you learn it over the years, all the times you went there?

MR. KEARNEY: What I needed to do - to speak - I did. But they would laugh at me the way I talked. And I talked all the time -

MRS. KEARNEY: His friends in Rome, all the sculptors or painters were our friends. Well, Wolf Kahn was there then, too.

MR. KEARNEY: What?

MRS. KEARNEY: Wolf Kahn.

MR. KEARNEY: Wolf Kahn?

MRS. KEARNEY: Kahn. Well, you don't remember.

MR. KEARNEY: That name remembers.

MS. RICHARDS: He's a painter.

MRS. KEARNEY: He's been to Provincetown, too.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, yes.

MS. RICHARDS: How did you meet the Americans? You're talking about American sculptors and painters in Rome?

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, everybody gravitates to each other.

MR. KEARNEY: Well, there was a place.

MS. RICHARDS: Around a gallery, around the American Academy, or -

MRS. KEARNEY: There was no - it would've probably been at the foundry mostly.

MR. KEARNEY: There was an American painter that was there. And he knew everybody there.

MRS. KEARNEY: Oh, Ted Sumner.

MR. KEARNEY: Ted Sumner, yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: He and his wife were on a Fulbright. So the Fulbright - you'd meet everybody through the Fulbright Programs.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: And they would have parties, and they would have exhibitions and things.

MR. KEARNEY: I said to him, "I want to find a place like" - this is when I was alone - "I want to find a place in the area where artists work. Where can I find something?" He said, "You couldn't find anywhere there. But there's one guy that could tell you, Oreste DeQuel."

And I went in there, and I had a book of my stuff. And he took me up to his sixth-floor walk-up. And then he said, "Let me see that." And he took the book, and he turned it page by page by page, like this. And then he said, "You sleep there, and I sleep here while you're here in Rome." And that's how a friendship started.

MRS. KEARNEY: Now was this - this was after we had come back, and he went back to Rome alone.

MS. RICHARDS: You came back with the kids.

MRS. KEARNEY: I came back with the kids and so did he. And then a few years later - actually, we went back to Rome in '68 and '69, as well. And then he met Oreste. But then when he went back in between times on his own to do casting, then he would stay with Oreste.

MS. RICHARDS: So you went the first time on a Fulbright.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: Then you went on your own, specifically to use those facilities, the castings that you couldn't do here.

MR. KEARNEY: We had also fallen in love with Rome.

MRS. KEARNEY: And Italy.

MS. RICHARDS: But you would have to be separated at that point, when he went by himself.

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, yes. I was back home. Well, our kids were in school, the Francis W. Parker School [Chicago, IL].

MR. KEARNEY: Every day when I was working, she had a big bag of things to look at. And she walked all over Rome and went to every place. It was so beautiful.

MRS. KEARNEY: And he had a show while he was there. He had a show - he also was doing kinetic sculpture then.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, yes. You wanted to talk about the kinetic sculpture.

MR. KEARNEY: They loved it, the kinetic sculpture.

MS. RICHARDS: And was that welded sculpture?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. And there were two big places. One of them was where [Benito] Mussolini used to speak to the people. There was a museum out there.

MRS. KEARNEY: That was Palazzo Venezia he had a show with, a group show ["American Fulbright Artists," Palazzo Venezia, Rome, 1964].

MR. KEARNEY: And I had a whole bunch of things that made noise, that you'd press it, and it would sing and do things. And they loved it. And then another time was in -

MRS. KEARNEY: Venice?

MR. KEARNEY: Venice, yes. And that was funny. We had a little car that we had, and I had a whole pile of this machine stuff up there. And I had a gallery there that was going to take my work, right on the Canal.

MRS. KEARNEY: It's still there. It's called the Il Canale [Venice, Italy]. It's right next to the Accademia [Galleria dell'Accademia].

MR. KEARNEY: Anyway, and the kids were young. And we got up to the water, and we didn't know how to get from there with all this stuff. And so they had these boats, you know, that you go like this. And so I said to this guy, "Can you take us and all of this stuff?" He said, "We can carry pianos." [Laughs.] And so he put all this stuff on there. And while he was going like this, it was going, YING YING BOOM BING OING OING. And we're going - all these people are looking at us as we go by. And we came to a big arch where he was going under. And two guys were up there, and one of them says, "*Che fai?*" [What are you doing?]. What is it? "*Pazzo Americano*" [Crazy American].

MRS. KEARNEY: *Pazzo Americano*.

MR. KEARNEY: *Pazzo Americano*. And that was really funny. And then we took it. And then these people loved it. They'd come down with the boats, and they'd get out, like, and go in it and ring the bells and things like that. We didn't sell anything, but we had a wonderful time.

MRS. KEARNEY: Also when you met [Joseph] Hirshhorn, and his wife was there, and you went to the Biennale [La

Biennale di Venezia] with - what was her name?

MS. RICHARDS: Olga.

MRS. KEARNEY: No, this was an earlier one. Olga was, I think, the last one. This was - she was much younger. And she was crazy about Jack, too.

MR. KEARNEY: And she insisted that I come to be with them. And they were having problems.

MS. RICHARDS: This is - which trip is this?

MRS. KEARNEY: I'm trying to think. This had to be that first trip. Because, yes, it was the first trip.

MS. RICHARDS: You mean '63?

MRS. KEARNEY: Or '64, yes. Probably '64. Because we went to Venice then. I don't think it was '68-'69.

MR. KEARNEY: But the three of us had dinner, and they were both of them arguing like crazy. [Laughs.]

MS. RICHARDS: The Hirshhorns?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. [Laughs.]

MRS. KEARNEY: It was for the Venice Biennale, so it was either - that's always in even years, isn't it? Sixty-four, wasn't it?

MS. RICHARDS: Not necessarily always in even years.

MRS. KEARNEY: No?

MS. RICHARDS: With [Robert] Rauschenberg?

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes, probably. I didn't get a chance to go because I was in Rome with the kids. And he went up. No, we went up there, because I remember Danny was in the gondola with the sculpture. It's funny, you know, so many years in Rome, they all begin to blend together. But I'm not sure what year that was. Anyway, it was Brenda, Brenda Hirshhorn.

MR. KEARNEY: Huh? Yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: Brenda was her name.

MR. KEARNEY: And his other wife was -

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, Lily Harmon was our very close friend.

MR. KEARNEY: She was a very close friend of ours.

MRS. KEARNEY: Was I think maybe his first wife? I'm not sure.

MR. KEARNEY: We had dinners together all the time.

MS. RICHARDS: In Rome?

MR. KEARNEY: No, here in the United States.

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, Lily was in Provincetown and New York.

You know Lily Harmon. She's dead now, but - everybody's dead in our career. But Lily was married to Hirshhorn. And in fact, the house in Provincetown, which [Norman] Mailer ended up living in, and now it's being transformed into the Mailer Foundation, was Lily Harmon's house and Hirshhorn's house. And then she divorced him; she had five husband - he had [inaudible] four wives.

MR. KEARNEY: It was the only brick house on the water.

MRS. KEARNEY: And we knew all of these people. We knew everybody's friends and relatives.

MR. KEARNEY: The whole line of artists, they were all friends of ours. They still are, the ones that are still alive.

MS. RICHARDS: So would you like to talk about how you met Norman Mailer and your adventures with him?

MR. KEARNEY: Norman Mailer? We were invited to a party, and he was very wild at that time.

MS. RICHARDS: This is in approximately the late '50s?

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes, the late '50s. Yes, we only saw Norman in Provincetown. We never had a reason to see him in New York because we - whenever went to New York, we were doing other things.

MR. KEARNEY: He would have parties that went on to morning.

MRS. KEARNEY: They would start at midnight!

MR. KEARNEY: And the heavy drinking, and there was fighting, too, and things like that. And when I was there, there was an Irishman with him, Irish speech. And he was kicking this Irishman out of there. And I said, "What are you kicking that Irishman out for?" He said, "Well, he was [inaudible]." "Well, you shouldn't do that to him." So he went out and got him back in. And then he got into a fight. [Laughs.]

MRS. KEARNEY: They were the wild days.

MR. KEARNEY: But, you know, that was some of the stuff. But we were at many, many of his parties.

MRS. KEARNEY: And he was at ours. I mean, we were very close friends, and all his kids.

MR. KEARNEY: And he was - it was amazing. Outside of the house there's a rope that he could walk on, and he walked on that rope. And he was very good at it.

MS. RICHARDS: You mean like an acrobat?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, he loved fighting, you know, prizefighters. Robert Motherwell's wife, Renate [Ponsold Motherwell], who's our close friend, took a photograph of him doing that, walking on that rope. She's still my best friend.

MR. KEARNEY: They were our two closest friends. She still is there in Provincetown.

MRS. KEARNEY: I was a trustee of the Motherwell Foundation, the Dedalus Foundation [New York, NY]. I just resigned a couple of years ago. But from the time of its beginning, I was a trustee of Robert's estate. But Mailer was - we were with him through all his wives, Beverly [Bentley] and -

MS. RICHARDS: Did he come to your studio?

MR. AND MRS. KEARNEY: Oh, yes.

MS. RICHARDS: And see your work?

MR. KEARNEY: Oh, they all did that.

MS. RICHARDS: Did he -

MR. KEARNEY: They went back and forth all the time.

MS. RICHARDS: Was he friends with a good number of artists? So the artists and the writers were very intertwined?

MRS. KEARNEY: Oh, yes.

MR. KEARNEY: Oh, yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: That's always true.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. They always get ideas from each other.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes, we knew him for years.

MR. KEARNEY: But the biggest thing that I did there was with cars, the Happenings. And this is the big thing, and this is covered in this paper here. A friend of his across the street knew that I was working with sculpture.

MRS. KEARNEY: That was Danny Banko. He was a poet.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, Banko. Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: Sorry, what is his last name?

MRS. KEARNEY: Banko, B-A-N-K-O, Danny Banko. He's dead.

MR. KEARNEY: And his car was broken down.

MS. RICHARDS: He's across the street from you, on Commercial Street?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. Right across -

MRS. KEARNEY: Across from where Norman lived at that time. He lived in many different houses. We all did.

MR. KEARNEY: "The damned car is just busted! I don't know what to do with it!" He said, "Can you do something with it? Can you make something with it?" And I said -

MS. RICHARDS: You mean make a sculpture with it?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, as a sculpture. I said, "If it's dead, let's bury it." And he said, "Where?" I said, "In your yard." He said, "Okay." Then it started. There were hundreds of people came there for this. We dug - there were only three shovels. And we were digging and digging and digging and digging, and everybody was drinking and laughing and so on. And waiting to put that car in there.

So when we finally got to that point that we were so close to the ocean that you're starting to get water down there, so we said, "Oh, we can't get much more," like that. But then they said, "Well, let's pass the hat and get some money and have somebody bring a machine over here and dig this thing." And they dug deeper and deeper. And then finally they said, "Well, that's all we can do now."

And then we all got a hold of it and pushed the car in backwards like this. And it flipped up like this, at an angle like this. But it wouldn't go down any farther. It was sticking up, like that. And as it went in, the windshield wiper started going, and somebody said, "It's alive! Kill it! Kill it!" So we broke that you know. And then we passed the hat for more drink and [inaudible]. And all kinds of people would make a speech about the death of the car.

MRS. KEARNEY: Another poet, Eddie Bonetti.

MR. KEARNEY: And it was a big event.

MRS. KEARNEY: A poet that died.

MS. RICHARDS: Bonetti?

MRS. KEARNEY: B-O-N-E-T-I. I don't know if there are two "N"s or not.

MR. KEARNEY: And then we filled it, filled it up, and it was just half in and half out.

MRS. KEARNEY: Oh, and Heaton Vorse was there, Mary Heaton Vorse's son, you know, V-O-R-S-E. Mary Heaton Vorse was the person who gave the first [Eugene] O'Neill show - plays - in Provincetown. You know, everybody - we were all involved with all of those things.

MR. KEARNEY: And they all spoke about death of cars, really funny things. It went on all day long. And it was famous. And then it stayed there like that, for about 10 years, I think.

MRS. KEARNEY: But you made an earwig out of it.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. The woman next door didn't want that thing there. So I said, I'll make a sculpture out of it. So I put heads on it and things like that. And that settled it. But then -

MS. RICHARDS: You put heads on the car?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: A kind of a bug; the earwig is a bug.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: It looked like a bug [inaudible].

MR. KEARNEY: And then somebody else bought the building later, much later. And they wanted to get it out of there. And my friend over there, Lynn, got it stopped from [inaudible]. Do you know which one?

MS. RICHARDS: Prevented it from being excavated and removed.

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, you're not talking about Norman.

MR. KEARNEY: Norman, yes. It was Norman that did it.

MRS. KEARNEY: Oh! Yes, Norman would.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, he saved it twice. But then finally they dug it up and took it to the dump. And then for some strange reason, alongside of our house, pieces of cars kept coming and coming. And apparently that was people bringing it back from the dump so that I could work with it. And it was a very big event in Provincetown.

MS. RICHARDS: At the time you called it a Happening. At the time it was -

MR. KEARNEY: A Happening, yes.

MS. RICHARDS: Did you think of it as an art event?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. And before that, the reason -

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, everything an artist is involved with is an art event. [Laughs.]

MR. KEARNEY: I had the car of the other one.

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, he also did a car with Beverly Mailer, Norman's third wife.

MR. KEARNEY: She bought it in Europe. She loved that car.

MRS. KEARNEY: It was a Citroen from France.

MR. KEARNEY: A Citroen, yes. And she was always having trouble with it. And so they finally gave up on it, and they asked me to make art out of it. So we took it to the dump - not the dump - to a place where they fixed cars. And I had them take the wheels off, like that. And then I had a big speech. There were lots and lots of people there. And then I cut up all the pieces, and we gave them away to people to hang on their walls.

MRS. KEARNEY: Because the car had originally been Ernest Hemingway's car or somewhere.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, it had a history. And then when she said that, he got mad because he knew that she had an affair with him. [Laughs.]

MS. RICHARDS: You mean Mailer got mad because he knew Beverly had the car because -

MR. KEARNEY: Before he married her, though. Anyway -

MRS. KEARNEY: He made a sculpture of it to go outside.

MS. RICHARDS: So what about your work with bumpers? Is that starting around the time in Provincetown?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, it started in Provincetown this way. In those days they burned the dump. And all the sculptors could get clean steel down there when it got cool. And so you could see the smoke out there. And so this was one of the times. And there was a big burning out there. And then it was down to a white smoke, like that. So I went over with the car, and there was a -

MS. RICHARDS: This was common practice for sculptors, to go to the dump after that?

MR. KEARNEY: Oh, yes. There was a whole pile -

MRS. KEARNEY: They do it to this very day.

MR. KEARNEY: - of bumpers. And also - but mostly bumpers. But I picked them all up and took them to my place where I was working. And I threw it on the ground, and it looked like a woman dancing. So I made one. And that was the first one that I showed in Chicago, after I made it, because we'd go back and forth. And do you have that thing here?

MRS. KEARNEY: Which one?

MR. KEARNEY: The one that shows that - I thought you had it right there.

MRS. KEARNEY: Uh-uh. [Negative.] And it shows what?

MR. KEARNEY: The first one I had - show I had, early.

MRS. KEARNEY: I'll find it, Jack.

MR. KEARNEY: Okay.

MS. RICHARDS: When you made the sculpture out of those bumpers, was that the first time you made sculpture from found materials that way?

MR. KEARNEY: No, I used to use, for all kinds.

MS. RICHARDS: And did you know other sculptors who were making -

MR. KEARNEY: We all did, with whatever they could find. Anything that we didn't have to pay, because we didn't have any money. But those early days when we had those Happenings, there's always a poet there who makes a poem. And everybody was having a wonderful time. But that was the oldest piece that we had.

MRS. KEARNEY: I don't know where it is.

MR. KEARNEY: It was right here.

MS. RICHARDS: Did that piece have - what title does that piece have, the first piece?

MR. KEARNEY: What?

MS. RICHARDS: The title of that first piece?

MR. KEARNEY: What I named it? I didn't give it a name.

MRS. KEARNEY: That didn't have a name. But the next one that he did was called - he called it *Joan of Park* [1965]. [Laughter.]

MR. KEARNEY: Something like that, yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: I have to find that little thing.

MR. KEARNEY: Then we had [Walter] Chrysler there. And Chrysler was a -

MS. RICHARDS: The Chrysler Museum [Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, VA].

MR. KEARNEY: - real crook. But he liked my work. And there was a gallery in Provincetown just -

MS. RICHARDS: What was Chrysler's first name?

MRS. KEARNEY: Walter.

MS. RICHARDS: Walter, right. And this is before he started the museum there?

MRS. KEARNEY: No, he had the museum.

MR. KEARNEY: He had the museum there.

MRS. KEARNEY: That was the first one. And then this was *Joan of Park*.

MR. KEARNEY: Why don't you give her that thing?

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, she doesn't know what to do with these things, I don't think. I certainly can.

MS. RICHARDS: I think the Archives would like it.

MRS. KEARNEY: I've got barrels and barrels of stuff for the Archives, which what's-her-name, Liza. She said - was it Kirwin?

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: She came out, you know, spent a lot of time with us.

MS. RICHARDS: Thank you.

MR. KEARNEY: Sure.

MRS. KEARNEY: The other artists -

MS. RICHARDS: So wait, you were talking about Walter Chrysler.

MRS. KEARNEY: Oh, Walt -

MR. KEARNEY: Okay, Chrysler was a real character. There was a gallery there that's not there anymore. What was that one?

MRS. KEARNEY: East End Gallery [Provincetown, MA]?

MR. KEARNEY: What?

MRS. KEARNEY: The East End Gallery?

MR. KEARNEY: East End Gallery, yes. And I had all these things. I had a washing machine I got at the dump, and I hand cranked it, and it would make noises and things like that. And other things. And one of the things that I had there was a woman on a bicycle that was pushing, going like this. And she's trying to stop herself, and she goes like this. And every once in a while, she shuts herself off. And so people like that. So Chrysler comes in.

MS. RICHARDS: All made out of welded steel?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. And it was in there. And Chrysler came in there, and he really liked it. So he borrowed it.

MRS. KEARNEY: This is at the Cultural Center [Chicago, IL] show here.

MR. KEARNEY: He borrowed it for a -

MRS. KEARNEY: Oh *The Chicken Age Machine* [1962]. That's what you -

MR. KEARNEY: *The Chicken Age Machine*, that's what it was.

MS. RICHARDS: How did it - why was it called *The Chicken Age Machine*?

MR. KEARNEY: Because all these people were digging holes and hiding. And here I came back from the wars.

MRS. KEARNEY: Oh, people making those underground -

MR. KEARNEY: And we thought that was ridiculous.

MRS. KEARNEY: Bomb shelters.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, chicken age, as in -

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes, he thought that was stupid.

MR. KEARNEY: *Chicken Age*. He got that one. But this was a different one.

And so he said, "I'll show you where to bring it." So I said, "Do we want to go in my car or your car?" He said, "No, we'll go in my car." So I went outside, and there was a big new Chrysler there. And I thought, Oh, that must be his. So I opened it up and set it. And he said, "That's not my car!" I said, "Oh, excuse me. Which one is that?" He has an old junky car that was hanging over, like this, and it was backfiring and so on. And so I get in there, and the springs are shot. And there's a hill, if you ever saw that place. It went up like this and over and around. And he did it two, three times to find a parking space. And I said, "Well, there were plenty - you went over several places on the sides." He said, "My brakes aren't working." [Laughs.] So we go in, and he wanted to - he didn't want to pay that much.

MS. RICHARDS: You went into his home, you're talking about?

MR. KEARNEY: No, the museum. And he didn't want to pay that much money, you know.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, he didn't negotiate the price until he got you to bring it to the museum.

MR. KEARNEY: But he said, "If you give it to me at a lower price, I'll put it right here where my best sculpture is." So he did that.

MRS. KEARNEY: [Inaudible.]

MR. KEARNEY: And then I made this for him on a bicycle, riding a bicycle, a woman, who's trying to shut off her -

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes, you told her about that.

MR. KEARNEY: But when I put it on the lawn, people would come and push a button, and it would do this. And right next door was an elderly lady with an old hat that she was sleeping in. One morning I went into check it. She was out there, and she says, "You know ever since you put that damn thing, my radio doesn't work!" [Laughs.] And I said, "Oh, yeah, that caused all of that. I'll change it." [Laughs.] When we couldn't get it any other way, the cops let us push it down the street all the way to the museum.

MRS. KEARNEY: What a parade!

MR. KEARNEY: We had a lot of fun.

MS. RICHARDS: So you accepted Chrysler's offer to reduce the price if he put it in a prominent place?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, yes. You had to.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes.

MR. KEARNEY: But he only paid for like one of them, I think. He never paid all of his things.

MRS. KEARNEY: He paid for *The Chicken Age Machine*, and he bought a couple of bronzes, too.

MS. RICHARDS: That he never paid for?

MRS. KEARNEY: He ultimately ended owing - and then, of course, the museum closed, and all that stuff went to - was it Virginia?

MS. RICHARDS: Norfolk?

MRS. KEARNEY: Norfolk. Norfolk. And then later that whole collection that they had down at Norfolk, which was his wife's - [Jean Outland Chrysler] I think. Anyway, they de-accessioned it all. So a lot of it came back to Provincetown. And the artists all were complaining because they had not been paid. So the artists all, like Celina Trief and a lot of people, said, "Don't bid." Because they were having an auction in town. They said, "Don't bid because I'm going to buy my own work back, and I don't want to pay a cent more." So we bought back the - or was it Berta [Berta Walker Gallery, Provincetown, MA]?

MR. KEARNEY: Berta bought it back.

MRS. KEARNEY: Berta bought back *The Chicken Age Machine*, which was one of his best pieces. It's fabulous, fabulous. And then Berta ultimately gave that to our daughter, because my daughter buys a lot of art from her, big time. So she gave this to Jill.

MR. KEARNEY: One time I made a bucket. In a bucket I made - a thing from the sea would climb up and out and look around, and then come back down in. Because I saw one doing that. And I said, I can make one like that. So you'd plug it in; you'd put it there. It went like this, and then went back down in there [*Crab*, 1966].

And I went in there, and he was sitting there selling that thing at the entrance. And I said, "You want to see something interesting?" He said, "Yes." "Can I plug this in?" "Sure." I said, "Now press that button." And it went up [whining sound]. He said, "I've got to have that!" So he bought it, but he never paid for it. [Laughs.]

MS. RICHARDS: When you said he was a crook, is that what you meant?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: That he didn't pay for the art?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. [Laughs.] Right.

MRS. KEARNEY: He was a controversial figure, really. But he loved art, and he loved artists, and, you know, he

was also gay. And in those early days that was hard.

MR. KEARNEY: Well, who isn't?

MS. RICHARDS: So he was appreciated and tolerated.

MRS. KEARNEY: Oh, yes. Everybody, you know - anybody that loved an artist's work, you know, was not too bad.

MR. KEARNEY: What he normally would do, he'll see somebody painting a painting, somebody -

MRS. KEARNEY: Hirshhorn was the same way.

MR. KEARNEY: And he'd go there, and he'd say, "I want to see your work. I want to see all of it." And he'd say, okay. And then he'd say, "I'll give you \$500 for all of them." He'd say, "Oh, well, we can't do that." He'd say, "Oh, too bad." And he'd leave. And then they'd say, "Okay, take it" [laughs]. But anyway, Provincetown has a lot of characters.

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, I don't know if you're going to go back to Rome or anything.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, I was just thinking about that.

MRS. KEARNEY: [Laughs] Because we can go back to Provincetown, because that's - the major influences in his life are Rome and Provincetown. And Chicago and the workshop.

MR. KEARNEY: Now there was the other thing that made the barrel with sound. What's with that?

MRS. KEARNEY: You told her about that yesterday.

MR. KEARNEY: I didn't say who it was for.

MRS. KEARNEY: Jacob - well, yes, you did it for Jacob Druckman, and you told her that.

MR. KEARNEY: Well, I did. And it ended up with dancing to this sound.

MRS. KEARNEY: The Joffrey Ballet music.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, the Joffrey Ballet.

MRS. KEARNEY: A program called *Valentine*.

MR. KEARNEY: It never did the same thing. But he put it on a machine, and then he could use it. Then he made it. He was a close friend of ours.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Do you remember - you'd made the kinetic work; you made electrical work forever? Or did it - do you remember when that started [inaudible]?

MR. KEARNEY: Every once in a while I'd do that, you know. And I showed you the sound on this one.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes.

MR. KEARNEY: And the big ones back there have beautiful sounds. They go, BOING BOING BOING, like that. [Laughter.] And she always thinks I'm nuts.

MS. RICHARDS: What part does the sound play in your work? I mean, do you - is that an objective when you begin making a piece, that it's making sound? Or does it evolve as you're making it to some [inaudible]?

MR. KEARNEY: I like the sound. But I can tell when a piece is going to have a nice thing. Then I try it. And then I make two or three of those, you know.

MS. RICHARDS: So it develops as the work is developing. Initially you're not making work that's going to make sound.

MR. KEARNEY: No, no, no.

MS. RICHARDS: But as you make it -

MRS. KEARNEY: Not like [Jean] Tinguely.

MS. RICHARDS: Right. As you make it, then you realize this piece has a potential.

MRS. KEARNEY: But back to Rome, you had a show at the ACA Gallery in Rome for one thing, which was nice. Well, they had a -

MS. RICHARDS: How did you -

MR. KEARNEY: They had it in New York, and then - and so they gave me that first show.

MS. RICHARDS: How did you come to show at ACA Gallery in the first place?

MR. KEARNEY: In Italy?

MRS. KEARNEY: Probably - oh, I think Roz [Rosalind] Roose in Provincetown.

MS. RICHARDS: Roz Roose?

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes, Roz Roose.

MR. KEARNEY: Roz Roose taught everybody.

MRS. KEARNEY: R-O-O-S-E.

MS. RICHARDS: Teacher?

MRS. KEARNEY: She was a bon vivant in New York, and everybody loved her. She was a painter. She was also a - they did a 17-page article in *The New Yorker*, a profile of her, you know, a few years ago. She's dead now. But she knew everybody in the art world with a certain - like the Sawyers were friends. Chaim Gross. And Chaim Gross is another person that influenced Jack a lot.

MR. KEARNEY: I went to Rome - went to-

MRS. KEARNEY: New York.

MR. KEARNEY: - New York to get a gallery. And I was going -

MS. RICHARDS: What year was that?

MR. KEARNEY: This was very early, long, long time ago.

MRS. KEARNEY: Nineteen sixty-two.

MS. RICHARDS: Did you go with any introductions? You just went cold?

MR. KEARNEY: We didn't have any, no.

MRS. KEARNEY: Just Roz Roose.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. That's what I'm going to -

MS. RICHARDS: That's short for Rosalind?

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes.

MR. KEARNEY: That's what I'm about to say. Anyway, she was the only one I knew that would have some information. And when I went there - we knew other people whom I called to say, Hello; I'm in town. And just stop in. But she said, "What are you doing in town?" And I said, "I'm looking for a gallery." She said, "How are you doing it?" And I said, "Well, I have packages; I'm going to go and show them." She said, "You'll never get one that way." She said, "How could it?" And then she said, "But who is having - "

MRS. KEARNEY: Chaim Gross.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: Chaim Gross.

MR. KEARNEY: That was Chaim Gross. He was moving from one gallery to another. And he was having a party. And she said, "I'll get permission for you to go there." So I went there, and almost everybody there knew me.

MS. RICHARDS: And what was the year? This is at his home?

MR. KEARNEY: In New York City in 1962.

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, it would've been at Chaim's home, I guess, which is in the Village [Greenwich Village, New York, NY].

MR. KEARNEY: No, it was a rented space that he had.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes, but ultimately Chaim lived in the Village. It's a museum now.

MR. KEARNEY: Anyway, we went in there. So I was sitting around there, and every one of the guys that was there knew I was a painter. And they said, "What are you doing?"

MRS. KEARNEY: Sculptor, you mean.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, sculptor or both. And, How are you looking at it? I said, just like that. And they said, Oh, you can't do it that way. And they said, Now, there's a guy here who has a gallery, and he really would - we'll talk to him. So they went over and talked to him.

MRS. KEARNEY: It was Sidney Bergen.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: Sidney Bergen?

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes, he was the ACA Gallery.

MR. KEARNEY: And then he said, "Okay, I'll go and see you." And we made a date. And then the next guy I saw, Sol Wilson, I say, Yes, I was here. I didn't tell him I was going to do that. So they went over and told me to talk to the same guy. And it ended up that all of them had [inaudible]. And he was getting sick of it. So he said, "All right! All right! You come. But I'll tell you one thing. I never pick - take - it off of the street. But I listened to 15 other guys saying that they want me to look at your work."

MRS. KEARNEY: These are all Provincetown people who live all over Manhattan, you know.

MR. KEARNEY: And it's very difficult to get a New York gallery.

MRS. KEARNEY: Raphael and Moses Soyer, you know - there were Hondius and Sol Wilson.

MS. RICHARDS: Sol Wilson?

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes. And Joe Kaplan. These were all -

MR. KEARNEY: I traded with a lot of people.

MRS. KEARNEY: Jimmy [James] Lechay.

MR. KEARNEY: I made sculpture for a lot of painters, make a face or a head in process.

MS. RICHARDS: So you went to Sidney Bergen.

MRS. KEARNEY: Bergen.

MS. RICHARDS: Bergen, right.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: The ACA Gallery. And what happened when you went there?

MR. KEARNEY: What?

MS. RICHARDS: What happened when you went to see him?

MR. KEARNEY: He did very well.

MRS. KEARNEY: No, what did you do when you got to the ACA Gallery? He offered you a show.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. He gave me a show.

MS. RICHARDS: He looked at your -

MR. KEARNEY: And I had many shows there.

MRS. KEARNEY: Every year, just about.

MR. KEARNEY: And they still have some of my work there.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes. With Jeff Bergen.

MS. RICHARDS: You were pleased with that relationship?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. He sent his son here a couple of times to work, to learn how to do things.

MRS. KEARNEY: He had twin boys, and one of them came - was a student at Antioch [Antioch University, OH], and he came here as a co-op student, as an intern. He subsequently died. His twin, Jeff Bergen, now runs the gallery. But you had many shows there. The other person that was influential to Jack is Hudson Walker.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. He was a really -

MRS. KEARNEY: Huddie was one of our very best friends.

MR. KEARNEY: - was a wonderful person with me.

MS. RICHARDS: And how did you meet him?

MR. KEARNEY: Well, I'll give you an example.

MRS. KEARNEY: In Provincetown.

MR. KEARNEY: I was - his family still lives in that house. And it's only about three houses away from us. And so I got to know him very well.

MRS. KEARNEY: You met him, really, through Florsheim.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, through Florsheim.

MRS. KEARNEY: He was a very good friend of Florsheim's.

MR. KEARNEY: And so I was talking to him. This was a very important thing. I said, "You know what's so terrible in Provincetown? It's famous for people, like artists and musicians and people, came here, out in the open spaces with natural light, that today nobody can stay there. But they have the cabins that they used to make from floated-up wood and things like that." And I said, "Now if people go out - artists come here and sleep out there, they arrest them, take them 50 miles away and put them in jail. And so on." And I said, "Something should be done about it."

So he said, "Well, what do you think we should do about it?" I said, "Well, the way the streets are here" - the second street over at that time was owned by all the people on this side, and all this empty space there. And I said, "We should get some big piece of that space, and you could make garage," - they have garages they put together quickly - "and we could put them in a circle, and we could put a fountain in the middle. And we could let them come in and just live here." Then he thought that was a good idea. And he decided we'd get that going. But we had to find the guy to do it.

MS. RICHARDS: In other words, you wanted to make it possible for artists to live in Provincetown for very little money.

MR. KEARNEY: For artists to come for the summer, for the summer.

MRS. KEARNEY: Winter or summer. Which is an outgrowth of the Fine Arts Work Center [Provincetown, MA].

MR. KEARNEY: And then I found a guy who said he would pay the money - oh, no, he owned the land.

MRS. KEARNEY: Arlie Sinaiko.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, Arlie Sinaiko.

MS. RICHARDS: The name?

MRS. KEARNEY: Arlie Sinaiko, A-R-L-I-E Sinaiko. But he didn't eventually develop it.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. Let me finish.

MRS. KEARNEY: It went into the Fine Arts Work Center instead.

MR. KEARNEY: So we had the money to do what we said. And he had said that he would give us the piece of land there. And then I said, "Okay. Well, we're ready to go." And he said, "Well, I've decided that you have to have - we have to have - somebody pay to take care of this place. And we have to raise \$10,000 a year." And that blew it. And so I went back to him and told him that it's out. And then he, in the paper he said, "The only person that I know who has tried to help those people is John Kearney." And later he paid the money for what we have now.

MRS. KEARNEY: The Fine Arts Work Center.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: Which was an outgrowth of that. It's a fabulous place.

MR. KEARNEY: Actually, it was my idea. But it was a good -

MRS. KEARNEY: He doesn't get credit for that.

MRS. KEARNEY: It was Huddie [Hudson Walker]. Huddie developed - put the money up in that Day's Lumberyard.

MR. KEARNEY: He thought about it, too. But that was the only place he could've gone. But we had so much fun in that town.

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, back to Rome. [Laughs.] If we ever get -

MR. KEARNEY: [Inaudible.]

MRS. KEARNEY: How many other artists in Provincetown that were like Buggy Boghosian [Varujan Boghosian] and Bob Beauchamp, both of whom -

MR. KEARNEY: Beauchamp I knew in - he went to Cranbrook.

MS. RICHARDS: What was Buggy's actual name?

MR. KEARNEY: Varujan.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: And Beauchamp, he was a friend of his at Cranbrook. That's B-E-A-U-C-H-A-M-

MS. RICHARDS: -A-M-P?

MRS. KEARNEY: It looks like Beauchamp.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes. And the first name?

MRS. KEARNEY: Bob - Robert, Bob. But we never - we were at his wedding. His wife, Nadine, is still there. He's dead. Everybody's dead. [Laughs.]

MS. RICHARDS: So let me just ask you about the car bumpers again. So these car bumpers initially came from the dump in Provincetown.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: But they became a very important element in your work.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: And that you continued to use when you were in Chicago.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. What I started to do, I went all up and down the Cape [Cape Cod, MA] to where they worked on cars. And they used to give me those pieces. If somebody bumped a bumper and it got bent, they'd take it off, throw it out, get a new one, and put it there. And so they'd have a pile of them. So they knew where I worked - I knew where they were. I could call them on the telephone, and they'd say, Oh, I have four or five, or something. And I brought them like that.

MS. RICHARDS: And you had a pickup truck?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, we had a car -

MRS. KEARNEY: We had a van.

MR. KEARNEY: - that was big enough to do it. And we had a trailer, too. But the trailer's where we put the stuff. But eventually I was going very far away to get it. And there were places where they repaired, in the big cities around there, and there is where I could get big ones. And so I would go there, and I would make a deal with them: I'd take a ton of them, and I'd give them a sculpture afterwards. It worked out very well. And I -

MS. RICHARDS: And these bumpers were - have various finishes on them.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. They were very good up to 1984. And after that it, was junk. Nothing is any good after that. But it weighed 50 pounds on each one. So you got a hundred pounds of bumpers. Imagine how much gasoline that burned up. But the very first cars that were here had springs on them. The springs for bumpers were the same springs that were on the car, like this. And the old, old ones there, they could go and bump into a wall, and bounce out at five miles an hour or four miles an hour, and it would bounce out, and it wouldn't hurt it. You do that with a modern car, you'd have about \$5,000 in damages.

MS. RICHARDS: So these bumpers that you collected had some raw steel finishes, some chrome finishes?

MR. KEARNEY: They're different in some ages.

MS. RICHARDS: And what did you -

MR. KEARNEY: I don't take certain things that - you see this big sculpture here [*Egret*, 1991]?

MS. RICHARDS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MR. KEARNEY: Right here. This is an old one. Yes. And they would put it on the roof -

MRS. KEARNEY: But it was destroyed.

MR. KEARNEY: - of their house and didn't do anything for all those years. And so they brought it back in to fix it. And some of them didn't last. They didn't fall apart or anything. But they - it had funny things on it. So we replaced that.

MRS. KEARNEY: He hired somebody to repair it.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, I didn't.

MRS. KEARNEY: He isn't doing that now. He doesn't.

MS. RICHARDS: So were the - did you look for particular finishes on the bumpers? And then how did you decide what kind of finish to put on them yourself?

MR. KEARNEY: Well, I have an idea about something this way; I go and look for something that goes that way.

MS. RICHARDS: Curve down.

MR. KEARNEY: And if one goes this way, I do that way, see. And then I cut it out, and weld it, and so on. I had just a natural feeling for that. And I trained my assistants how to do that, too. And now that we're giving up here, we're going to take 20 barrels to Provincetown that are cut up into just to fit in [inaudible]. And we're going to have 10 barrels that we keep here in Chicago if we run out. And the reason you need more of them like that is one will have small pieces, another one has long pieces, and other ones have round pieces. And then when I'm looking for something, I know where they are now. It's much easier. But you have to have a good change of it.

MS. RICHARDS: Variety.

MR. KEARNEY: And then you want something for the leg, it should be shaped like this. And then if you want something that's rounded for a foot or something like this, you have to find a piece like that. So we've cut up all the pieces so they fit in barrels. And that's going to keep it going. I'm 84 now, and I think I can go about five years, I think, on what is left here.

MS. RICHARDS: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MR. KEARNEY: But I'm also going to be painting. And I haven't painted for almost 50 years now.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes, he stopped painting in the '60s, really.

MR. KEARNEY: But I made some great prizes when I did.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes, the National Academy [National Academy of Design, New York, NY], he won their prize [1953].

MR. KEARNEY: In New York, I won. And I got things here, a big award here in Chicago. Tell her about that.

MRS. KEARNEY: You already talked about that yesterday.

MR. KEARNEY: Oh, yesterday.

MS. RICHARDS: Let me just once more ask you about the finishes on the bumpers.

MR. KEARNEY: Okay.

MS. RICHARDS: Sometimes they're chrome; sometimes they're raw steel?

MR. KEARNEY: They're all chrome.

MRS. KEARNEY: They're all chrome.

MS. RICHARDS: Right. Did you send them to be re-chromed?

MR. KEARNEY: No, no.

MS. RICHARDS: So they're only just as you found them and polished.

MR. KEARNEY: Just whatever - just as they are.

MRS. KEARNEY: Then he would get them, the bumpers that were reconditioned. He'd get reconditioned bumpers from these bumper-people who did nothing but sell bumpers. And the back part of this building was from floor to ceiling with bumpers. [Laughs.]

MR. KEARNEY: Bumpers that are bent - bumpers that are bent, doesn't bother us. We can use that form. But if it's cracked, we don't want it. But the -

MS. RICHARDS: So you never added anything to the surface except to polish it and clean it.

MRS. KEARNEY: He would cut the shapes out and put them together, welded them together.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, yes.

MS. RICHARDS: Do you want to go back to Rome?

MRS. KEARNEY: Sure. Go back to Rome.

MR. KEARNEY: We went recently.

MS. RICHARDS: Well, you went in '63, and then you talked about going yourself.

MRS. KEARNEY: He went alone a few times, two or three times, and he would stay with Oreste. But we went back for '68-'69.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MRS. KEARNEY: Just the first time we went -

MS. RICHARDS: As part of the American Academy in Rome?

MRS. KEARNEY: No. We just went on our own.

MR. KEARNEY: We've been there three times.

MRS. KEARNEY: We lived in Trastevere [Rome, Italy]. Milton Heald had an apartment. He was a sculptor.

MS. RICHARDS: What was his last name?

MRS. KEARNEY: Heald, H-E-B-A-L-D. Milton Heald. He was an American who also taught here at Harvard. But he lived in Rome for many years. And so when they came back, we took over their apartment in Trastevere. And our kids went to school in the Overseas School in Rome [American Overseas School of Rome]. And, you know, it was just the world's best place in the world. We were there for a year. And then we traveled a lot, all the time we were there, too, whenever the kids were -

MR. KEARNEY: See, we had kids in the Overseas School in Rome. And in the summer we had this little car and a tent on the top of it. And we went, oh, as far as Greece on this side, and how far did we go the other way?

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, England. We went to Yugoslavia and -

MR. KEARNEY: England was just - this was really funny. We were in France, and we wanted to go to England. And they had an airplane that took cars. And we came over there, and we said, "How do you do that?" And they said, "Well, you get in the plane, and we take the car and put it in the back. But only small cars." So we had a small car. And so we got in there, and we took off, and we landed. And 15 minutes later in the south of the country, and they're standing there. They said, "What car is this?" And I said, "It's an American car." "Oh, where did you get this car?" And they went so on and so forth. And so they went and looked through everything, you know. And then they said, "Is there anything else we can do to help you?" And I said, "Yes, you could take that damn sticker off that says it's German." He said, "Oh, I'm sorry. We can't do that." [Laughs.] But anyway, we had a lot of fun with that.

MS. RICHARDS: Were there any particular travels that influenced your work?

MR. KEARNEY: Greece. Greece is incredible, just incredible! The wonderful, wonderful places! And the great stone that's there. The ancient stones that were used in Italy that are no longer available were all from Greece. And what's that stone in Italy that we got?

MRS. KEARNEY: Oh, carrara marble, carrara.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, it's - we could buy it in Rome, but just small pieces. It's what all the great sculptors made use of. I've got some pieces of this marble.

MS. RICHARDS: So did you work in marble?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, sure. I work in everything in the sculptures.

MS. RICHARDS: Did the working in marble begin when you went to Rome?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: You hadn't worked in marble in the U.S.?

MRS. KEARNEY: No, he did some carving when he was at Cranbrook, though, in stone, but very little. It was more -

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: And so what you're talking about experiencing in Greece, did that affect the kind of carved work you did when you went back to Rome?

MR. KEARNEY: Oh, everything does, everything. Everything, you learn.

MS. RICHARDS: That's kind of a subtractive way of working as a sculptor.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. Sure. But that kind of -

MS. RICHARDS: It's the first time we talked about that.

MR. KEARNEY: That kind of stone - that kind of stone, you chip it around until it's rough there. And then you take two pieces of the same thing and finish it that way. That's the only stone that you can do that with.

MS. RICHARDS: Did you study with someone to know how to -

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. What was the man's [inaudible]?

MS. RICHARDS: I'm going to just change this.

[END OF CD 4.]

This is Judith Richards interviewing Jack Kearney, March 13, 2009, [mini] disc two.

So we were talking about the marble.

MR. KEARNEY: This marble was shown to us at the school. And he turned the light off, and he showed how the light went through it.

MRS. KEARNEY: It was pentellic marble.

MR. KEARNEY: Pentellic marble, yes. And this marble was what he used like that.

MS. RICHARDS: Carl Milles?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, Carl Milles. And I made a sculpture with one of them. And he never talked about anybody's work - never, he did. But they had one of a monkey or whatever it was.

MRS. KEARNEY: Honey, you told her this yesterday.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, yes, we talked about the monkey yesterday.

MR. KEARNEY: Well, okay then.

MS. RICHARDS: But so when you went to Greece, you were -

MR. KEARNEY: We saw the marble there. And there was a big marble there, so we stopped.

MS. RICHARDS: Quarry?

MR. KEARNEY: Not a quarry. It was just stone right there.

MRS. KEARNEY: A mountain, [laughs] but it would be a quarry.

MR. KEARNEY: And there was sculptures in the yard. But the sculptures were metal. So I went in there hoping that they would be able to speak English, and they did. And the sculptor - his wife spoke English. And he didn't use that marble that was falling off. He was using metal. And I asked him why. And he said, "Oh, everything is marble. I don't want to have anything to do with it." [Laughs.] And I took a couple of chunks of it, and put it under the seat, and took it back to the United States and used it.

MS. RICHARDS: Did you think about the fact that, at that point, contemporary sculpture - sculptors were exploring materials and using the bumpers and the kind of uses - metal was, you might say, more avant-garde than using marble.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: It was a minor thing in his career.

MS. RICHARDS: Did that cause you to hesitate to use marble?

MR. KEARNEY: It doesn't bother me at all. No, I like to work in that - any material that can be made into sculpture. It's just more interesting to do different things.

MS. RICHARDS: Did you ever carve wood?

MR. KEARNEY: Oh, sure. Yes. But it's not as - it won't last as long as - wood won't last that long.

MS. RICHARDS: When you think about the metal works with the bumpers and all of those pieces, did you -

MR. KEARNEY: If they take care of it -

MS. RICHARDS: Did you plan them ahead, through drawings?

MR. KEARNEY: No. It's very spontaneous.

MS. RICHARDS: So, in a way, like the Abstract Expressionists.

MR. KEARNEY: Oh, yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: He started down here, worked up. He never even did drawings.

MR. KEARNEY: I can just see it.

MRS. KEARNEY: Thinks three dimensionally.

MR. KEARNEY: I can take a piece like this, and I can see the whole thing. And I was born that way.

MS. RICHARDS: So you get the idea in your mind, though, at first, of what you want to do? Or does it develop as you're working?

MR. KEARNEY: No, it just - I say to myself, "Well, I'll do something today." You walk along, and you see something, a piece of bumper. You say, "Oh, that looks like something." And then you get something else. And before you know, you've got the whole thing.

MS. RICHARDS: So it's more spontaneous.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. And it gets more interesting that way. It doesn't get just blah.

MRS. KEARNEY: One thing you used to do, though, when in making larger bumper pieces, larger ones like that big -

MS. RICHARDS: Dinosaurs [*Tyrannosaurus Rex*, 1988]?

MRS. KEARNEY: Like this big - like this horse.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: He would draw the outline of the -

MS. RICHARDS: On the floor.

MRS. KEARNEY: On the floor.

MS. RICHARDS: With chalk.

MRS. KEARNEY: With chalk.

MR. KEARNEY: And it lay flat, sideways. And I just chalked that car. Then I'd make a row of those bumpers there. But that's just the body. And then I made that whole half size. Then I flip it over and work that way.

MS. RICHARDS: And you're working with assistants, right?

MR. KEARNEY: Sometimes and sometimes not.

MRS. KEARNEY: Earlier, he did totally himself except for - when bronze casting, you have to have multiple people. It's only been in the last, say, 10 years that he's had people working full-time. His current person that works with him, John Keith, he really taught him to work. He's like one of our kids. He's the same age as our kids.

MS. RICHARDS: So your use of assistants, that changed because you had more money, or because you physically needed help, or because you wanted to make things happen faster and you could with assistants? Why did you choose to not use assistants and then use assistants?

MR. KEARNEY: It just - one is as good as the other as far as I'm concerned. It's the way you feel that - and I get most of my ideas in dreams. And I've always done that. And I can wake up and think, "Now, I'm going to remember that." And I go back to bed. And put some more in there! And sometimes I'm almost all night long I'm doing it. And it's just the way I live.

MS. RICHARDS: Has it ever put you on the kind of schedule where you go to bed late, and you stay in bed late in the morning with these dreams?

MR. KEARNEY: No, no.

MRS. KEARNEY: Early riser, always. Six o'clock, he's up. And he's an early-to-bed guy.

MS. RICHARDS: Let me go back to the question of assistants one moment. Some artists don't want to have assistants because they want to be alone with their thoughts. And they reluctantly have assistants because they physically - they're doing something that requires two people.

MRS. KEARNEY: They need it.

MS. RICHARDS: Did you feel that way?

MR. KEARNEY: No. I can do it alone, or I can do it with a dozen people. But when I make those big dinosaurs, I needed a lot of help on that. And they weighed way up in the tons.

MS. RICHARDS: When you cast work, you have the opportunity to make more than one casting of a form.

MR. KEARNEY: Very rarely do I.

MRS. KEARNEY: Very rarely.

MR. KEARNEY: I almost never make the same thing, two of them.

MS. RICHARDS: So all, most all, the castings exist as just one piece.

MRS. KEARNEY: There are probably only four or five pieces in his entire career where he did more than one piece.

MS. RICHARDS: And why is that?

MR. KEARNEY: Well, one time I came back from Mexico, and I had a shape that I liked. And I made three, four of those things. But they weren't exactly the same.

MRS. KEARNEY: So one of the pieces [*Starving Bitch*] that they have at the Museum of Contemporary Art [Chicago, IL] - it's a bronze - that he made two pieces of. I don't even remember where the other one is. He did four pieces of one other piece. Almost never.

MS. RICHARDS: He didn't want to invest the money in making a second bronze?

MRS. KEARNEY: No, no. It's just that he wanted to make another new one. A lot of artists, a lot of sculptors - Hadzi was one of them - they would do multiples of their work, and it was money. We were never after money. Money was never - that was the last thing in his mind, was the money from it, literally, ever.

MS. RICHARDS: Sometimes, though, you could have your work seen in to places if you have two copies, as well.

MRS. KEARNEY: That part of his life didn't exist. That's what I had to do for him. He never really thought about -

MR. KEARNEY: I'm a weirdo. I'm not the same as everybody else.

MRS. KEARNEY: He's a maverick. He doesn't fit into the mold.

MS. RICHARDS: Did you think about the [inaudible] of having your work seen, having an audience seeing it, how they would respond?

MR. KEARNEY: Oh, yes.

MS. RICHARDS: So you did care about having it seen?

MR. KEARNEY: Oh, I cared what -

MRS. KEARNEY: He didn't make an effort to make it happen.

MR. KEARNEY: - that people like it. But at the same time, somebody could say to me, Oh, that stinks. I'd say, "What the hell do you know?" [Laughs.] But they don't say it. But you can tell if somebody doesn't like it.

But all sculptors have a certain kind of a thing that's their thing. Most of them do, anyway. But I keep changing all the time. And I enjoy that. And a lot of it is in the material that I have. I can look at something and say, well, I can do this and that with that, but I can't do this and that.

MRS. KEARNEY: One thing, when he was in Rome at the foundry, he worked a lot with clay, and then it would be cast from the mold, the lost-wax process. Most of the time, never - didn't work a lot in clay. But a few times, the larger pieces. Most of the time he worked in wax. He was really - wax was one of his best developments.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. I had friends who owned those companies, and they let me use their big equipment and all that. And they gave me very reasonable costs. And one of them, the boss came here and worked with me. And he did some of his own stuff. And they let me use their equipment, and I could make the biggest damned things. And they were very inexpensive. But now that material costs four times as much as it did then.

MRS. KEARNEY: This is the wax.

MS. RICHARDS: The wax costs four times as much?

MR. KEARNEY: The wax does. Not the wax, the bronze.

MS. RICHARDS: The bronze, yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: The casting.

MR. KEARNEY: This is the kind of - you can warm that up and bend it, put it into different things. I'm going to do some of that this summer.

MS. RICHARDS: In Provincetown?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. But my assistant, I have to pay him a fortune to do it. [Laughs.]

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes, he can't see - well, we did our own casting here for a while, and they were larger pieces.

MR. KEARNEY: Well, we have this great big furnace down there. And we had a crane that comes out, with a heavy hook to pick up the thing. And we did that early on. But what happened was we had all these studios upstairs. And these girls up there would come in going, COUGH COUGH COUGH. "That's terrible." And so we just had to quit.

MS. RICHARDS: You know, speaking about the girls, I wanted to ask you - you're talking about all these artists in Provincetown, and they're all men.

MRS. KEARNEY: Oh, well, there was Lily Harmon.

MS. RICHARDS: Were there women artists, too, [inaudible]?

MR. KEARNEY: Oh, there were a lot of women.

MRS. KEARNEY: There weren't so many.

MR. KEARNEY: But they don't usually become sculptors.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, so most of the people you're talking about were all sculptors.

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, Raphael Soyer was a painter. He did -

MR. KEARNEY: They're more likely to paint than they are to make sculptures, because it's heavier, and it's hard work.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, most of your friends were -

MRS. KEARNEY: Mostly the painters. No, Beauchamp was - Boghosian did sculpture and painting. And Chaim Gross was a sculptor. There weren't many women artists, and that was pretty obvious, all those early days. Lily was one of the few. There would be a photograph of the Provincetown Art Association of all the artists. There'd be 30, 40 men and one woman, Lily Harmon. You know, that's the way it was in those days. But you must have experienced that yourself as a painter.

MS. RICHARDS: Well, there were a lot of girls when I was in school.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes? Well, yes, but you were a generation much later. I mean, you're the generation of our children.

MR. KEARNEY: I think things are changing. Women can do anything they want now.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes, I know. But in those days -

MS. RICHARDS: So some of these men were married to artists, but you didn't see their work; they weren't involved in showing it?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: Or they weren't artists?

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, people like [Edward] Hopper, his wife [Josephine Nivison Hopper] was a painter, but people didn't pay much attention to her then. [Phil] Mallicote's wife was a painter, but people didn't pay that much attention. Phil Mallicote. And there was Edwin Dickinson. All these people were there when we were there. Their wives were more help. Every artist needed a wife. I would've loved to have had a wife so I could do the work. [Laughs.]

MR. KEARNEY: When I was teaching sculpture here at this table, about half of them were women and half were men. But what was really interesting is her mother and her grandmother both had classes with me. I had so much fun with them. And they were good. They were the kind of things - they made things at home - if you have that feeling of design and so on. But they were good at it.

MRS. KEARNEY: But in Rome, the thing that - being at the foundry was the most important thing. And then just traveling and seeing sculpture. Like the Etruscans were very - he was deeply influenced by the Etruscans.

MS. RICHARDS: Were there other contemporary Italian artists besides DeQuel?

MR. KEARNEY: Any women, you mean?

MRS. KEARNEY: No.

MS. RICHARDS: Were there Italian artists working in Rome who you remember meeting and whose work impressed you?

MR. KEARNEY: I'm not - a lot of them. But that was friends of Oreste's. Oreste had a studio there that was 350 years old. And I shared it with him.

MRS. KEARNEY: Oh, it was older than that?

MR. KEARNEY: Was it? Much older, I guess. It was ancient.

MRS. KEARNEY: There was an atelier there that - what was the name of that guy who did some of the, not casting, but he'd do the mold making? You know, Annichiarico Studio in Trastevere?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, but I don't remember.

MS. RICHARDS: So what happened when they - I'm sorry to skip around. Back to the bumpers.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: You said after 1984 they changed - they started making them of plastic or junk.

MR. KEARNEY: It was junk! It was half as thick.

MS. RICHARDS: So did you have enough good ones stockpiled to keep -

MR. KEARNEY: Oh, yes. I went all over the country with a big trailer, and I kept tons of it. And as I said, I'd give them a piece of sculpture for it.

MRS. KEARNEY: He swapped a lot.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, for that.

MRS. KEARNEY: Artists always swap a lot.

MR. KEARNEY: And they were very happy to do that. And I did it all by myself. I'd throw it up there. But it's one piece at a time. But the good ones were thick. And that's why they last so long. Now, the reason that a lot of mine here were very good was that it went out of business of having that kind of bumpers. And they had a lot of new ones that never sold. And so they would have them in there, and then those ones I would give them the better deal out of. And it was with each group of what we did. And they knew me.

But I had a funny, funny thing one time. I went into in Provincetown; I went past the college where my daughter was.

MRS. KEARNEY: Harvard.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, yes. And we were paying so much money there, and it was only a mile or two [from] where I had this pile of stuff. And I went around the building, the whole place -

MS. RICHARDS: The whole college?

MR. KEARNEY: So I drove it all around twice just so I could say to my daughter, I said, "I went around your house two or three times." "What'd you do that for?" I said, "I wanted to see where my money was." [Laughs.]

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes, she was -

MR. KEARNEY: We were paying a fortune for having her there.

MRS. KEARNEY: Not compared to now. She graduated magna - with Caroline Kennedy, who's one of her friends and still is. They were in the same class.

MR. KEARNEY: They both graduated [together] because of their names.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, yes, Kearney, Kennedy.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. And the family of theirs and ours were sitting in chairs outside. And we got to know them.

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, Jill knows -

MR. KEARNEY: She did.

MRS. KEARNEY: Her husband grew up with the Kennedys, too. So they're all a big part of her life.

MS. RICHARDS: So were there other places you traveled in Europe - you mentioned Greece - that had an impact on your work?

MR. KEARNEY: Other people?

MRS. KEARNEY: Other places.

MS. RICHARDS: Other places that you traveled over the years.

MR. KEARNEY: We went to every museum of any importance in every place we went in the summers.

MS. RICHARDS: Did you ever get up to Sweden and to see the Milles Museum [Carl Milles Museum, Stockholm, Sweden]?

MR. KEARNEY: No, we never did because we were told it was very expensive. And we didn't have that kind of money.

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, we rubbed nickels together to survive, as all artists do.

MS. RICHARDS: There was *Europe on \$5 a Day* [Arthur Frommer, Frommer's, New York: originally published 1957].

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes, that's one - when we were there, they still had some of those old books. [Laughs.] But we traveled a lot. And then afterwards, since, after our kids were out of college, we traveled all over the world. We've been to Tibet and to China twice. We've been to Egypt twice. We've been all over Turkey several times.

MS. RICHARDS: And have any particular experiences during those travels had an impact on the way your work looks?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. Rome was.

MS. RICHARDS: But not the Far East or Asia?

MRS. KEARNEY: Oh, yes, Asia.

MR. KEARNEY: But Greece was so - amazing what those people did.

MRS. KEARNEY: But she's talking about when we traveled to Turkey or Thailand or China, Egypt, those things.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, I always get ideas. They do different things. But they give you something that you can work on, but not just the way it is. And they see art as something else. It's religion, something like that. I'm not interested in that. But I found that, probably, China was one of the best places. The really old China had such wonderful art.

MS. RICHARDS: When did you go to China?

MR. KEARNEY: We went three times, didn't we?

MRS. KEARNEY: Twice we went to China.

MS. RICHARDS: And where did you go?

MRS. KEARNEY: Oh, all over, the traditional places: Beijing and Xian, you know.

MS. RICHARDS: And this was awhile ago?

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, we went to China the first time the year after the Tiananmen Square thing, whenever that was.

MS. RICHARDS: Nineteen eighty-nine.

MRS. KEARNEY: Was that -

MS. RICHARDS: I think so.

MRS. KEARNEY: And then 14 years later we went again; that was only a few years ago.

MR. KEARNEY: It was a completely different place.

MRS. KEARNEY: It was like two different countries.

MR. KEARNEY: In that time. When we went there the first time, there were no cars. There were millions of bicycles going [inaudible]. And there would be, like, 20 bicycles this way, all going this way, the same speed. And then they would work their way slowly, and they'd get out somewhere else. And once in a while a bus or a truck would go through. And they're all dressed like soldiers, everybody. They all ate in the same place. They all had the same kind of a house; it was very small. And they were just very different people. The next time we went, everything crazy! The girls -

MS. RICHARDS: This was about 2004?

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes.

MR. KEARNEY: You know how the girls leave a space naked here, like this?

MS. RICHARDS: Around their midriff.

MR. KEARNEY: They all did that. And they were singing American music, and American music was coming out of everywhere. And they're all dressed differently. And they never had any high-rises. You wouldn't believe your eyes! You'd go out where it used to be just country, country, country; there would be 10 miles of high-rise, like downtown. Ten miles!

MS. RICHARDS: Did you meet any Chinese artists on either of those trips?

MR. KEARNEY: No, no.

MRS. KEARNEY: First time, we met one in Guangzhou [China], but he was just doing watercolors. It was hard to meet, you know. I'd like to go back and be on our own. We took each time - we went with the American Museum of Natural History [New York, NY] once, and we toured all over Southeast - we went to Vietnam.

MS. RICHARDS: Also with the museum group?

MRS. KEARNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Let's see, that was our 50th anniversary, wherever that was. We went to Laos and Vietnam and Cambodia, and what was the other?

MS. RICHARDS: With the museum group?

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes, that was great.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, we had a really enjoyable trip.

MS. RICHARDS: - [Inaudible] for that trip, I guess.

MRS. KEARNEY: [Laughs] No. And then we went to Tibet the last time.

MR. KEARNEY: Tibet was wonderful.

MRS. KEARNEY: And we went to India. We stayed at that Taj Mahal hotel [Taj Mahal Palace & Tower, Mumbai, India].

MR. KEARNEY: That one where the people got killed.

MRS. KEARNEY: It turned out we stayed there before that.

MS. RICHARDS: In Mumbai?

MRS. KEARNEY: In Mumbai, yes. And traveled a lot, you know. And Egypt was - we've been to Egypt twice. We're very deeply involved.

MR. KEARNEY: That place was strange.

MRS. KEARNEY: My granddaughter lived in Cairo and went to the American University in Cairo [Cairo, Egypt].

MR. KEARNEY: That country was strange. They were burning their people along the waters.

MS. RICHARDS: Egypt?

MR. KEARNEY: No, India.

MS. RICHARDS: India?

MRS. KEARNEY: India, where they -

MR. KEARNEY: And they'd all be there and the family and firing, burning their friends - their relatives. And they were throwing them into the ocean - into the river. And then they'd drink the water out of this where they'd throw all these bodies in there. You'd go, Oye! [Laughs.] How do they stay alive? I don't know.

MRS. KEARNEY: Very different.

MS. RICHARDS: So you went to Rome many times, and including in the '70s, the late '70s. How did your experience change over the years when you were there? Did you see things changing? Did you feel your relationships -

MR. KEARNEY: Not so much as - a little, but not so much as anyplace else.

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, when he went to the Academy [American Academy in Rome, Italy], we were lucky to go there, about four times, maybe five, I can't remember. And we would stay there for only one month; we were visiting artists, both of us. And they would give us a studio to work in.

MR. KEARNEY: For how long was each of the -

MRS. KEARNEY: About a month was the extent of it. One time we were about five weeks.

MR. KEARNEY: She was in heaven. But we ate together with all the fellows.

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, everybody in the Academy is -

MR. KEARNEY: And they were all talking to her.

MRS. KEARNEY: - well, my idea of heaven, most glorious. Have you been there?

MS. RICHARDS: No.

MRS. KEARNEY: It's - well, you have to go. It's just - it's an academy, you know. And so there's -

MR. KEARNEY: We could look right out of our window and see the central part of Rome. It's beautiful there.

MRS. KEARNEY: - the Vatican.

That experience is so unbelievable because of the cross-fertilization of all the other disciplines. There are not many artists. They only take about four artists at a time, sometimes only two, which I object to. But the rest, you know, are art historians, which I'm very interested in. But it's just the interdisciplinary thing is so great. There's

lectures every day. And then they take you on field trips into the Vatican where you can never go normally. And it's just wonderful. And Pina Pasquantonio is the woman that was so helpful.

MS. RICHARDS: Could you say that again?

MRS. KEARNEY: Her name was Pina Pasquantino, P-A-S-Q-U-A-N-T-I can't do that without a pencil. But she was sort of the -

MS. RICHARDS: Say her name one more time?

MRS. KEARNEY: Pina Pasquantonio. She was sort of the registrar there and sort of kept everybody together. And she was - each time we went, there was a different person, the head of the academy, you know, from the United States. Like James Melchert was one, one time. But I've forgotten some of the others who were. There was somebody -

MR. KEARNEY: Everybody there was brilliant. It was just amazing.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes. But, you know, there's music and -

MS. RICHARDS: Had you met James Melchert, as a sculptor; had you met him before?

MR. KEARNEY: No.

MRS. KEARNEY: I had. I had because he was at the - what is it? - the National -

MS. RICHARDS: NEA [National Endowment for the Arts]?

MRS. KEARNEY: NEA. And we had an NEA grant here, and I had talked to him a few times, and we were turned down a few times. Because they always had to do things three years ahead of time, and I couldn't do that. So I knew him. But he was very nice to us.

MR. KEARNEY: When she was in Rome, she always had a big bag of information. And I'd be working, and she was going everywhere in Rome - everywhere!

MRS. KEARNEY: Including the market.

MR. KEARNEY: You couldn't find a place that she hadn't been.

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, it's like - there was a little book that the Academy put out - I've forgotten what the name of it is, but we were both in it - of favorite places in Rome. What is that called? *City Secrets*, it's called, of Rome [*City Secret: Rome*, Robert Kahn, ed., New York: The Little Bookroom, 1999; also, *City Secrets: Florence, Venice and the Towns of Italy*, Robert Kahn, ed., New York: The Little Bookroom, 2001].

MR. KEARNEY: But the way they treat sculptors in the quarters where we stayed - when I went with Oreste, they knew the sculptors because their clothes were like this. They're called "Maestro." The most wonderful to them are sculptors. And I just felt wonderful. And everybody knew me, you know. And when I was with Oreste and I was talking in their language - trying to - we were having a drink of wine or something, and all these other guys are listening. And I said, "You know, my wife said this new car I have out here, I shouldn't have it right out there because somebody's going to steal it," or something like that. And the two guys came over and said, "Giovanni, we all see these crooks. We know who they are, and we all go - " [gestures]. [Laughs.]

MS. RICHARDS: Shakes his finger.

MR. KEARNEY: They're not going to bother you.

MRS. KEARNEY: It was a lovely place.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: The other thing is he brought Oreste DeQuel, he arranged for him to come here to the States, and he got him a job teaching at the University of Iowa [Iowa City, IA], where Jimmy Lechay was at the time. Jimmy was in Provincetown - or Wellfleet [MA] - in Provincetown in the summer.

MR. KEARNEY: And they loved him.

MRS. KEARNEY: He taught at Iowa. And so Oreste came.

MS. RICHARDS: When was that? When did he teach in Iowa?

MRS. KEARNEY: Who?

MS. RICHARDS: You said -

MRS. KEARNEY: Oreste?

MS. RICHARDS: Yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: I can't think what year that would've been.

MR. KEARNEY: That was a long time ago.

MRS. KEARNEY: It was a long time ago.

MR. KEARNEY: I would say about 20 years ago, about 1973.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, in the '80s?

MRS. KEARNEY: Probably. It was whenever Jimmy was there. And then Jimmy retired from Iowa. And then he moved permanently to Wellfleet.

MR. KEARNEY: I drove him down there, and his wife.

MRS. KEARNEY: I've forgotten what year that was. It might have been in that book. Might be.

MS. RICHARDS: When you, in the early years of the Contemporary Art Workshop when you had these four other artists who worked with you -

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: - did each of you play a particular, a different role. For example, what did Leon Golub do here?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, we all did different things.

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, Leon was a painter, and he taught painting.

MR. KEARNEY: Golub was one of the kind of people that would talk, that nobody understood. [Laughs.] And they thought he was brilliant for that, you know.

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, he was. [Mr. Kearney laughs.] Well, see, he left the workshop when it was still in that first building, because then he went to New York and then to Paris. And he lived in France for a couple of years and never came back to Chicago except to show his work. So that was - but he taught painting at the Workshop.

MS. RICHARDS: And the others, all of you, did different parts?

MR. KEARNEY: Now, when we were in the other place and he was teaching women painting, and it was summer and it was hot, and he said to them, "Just paint with anything! Paint with anything!" Like what do you mean? He says, "Well, use syrup or use bananas or" - or this and so on. And the next time he came in, we're all sitting there, and he said, "What's the matter?" We said, "You sonofabitch! It's spring, and all these bugs are in here. You were telling them to put food on the damned thing." And he said, "Oh, I hadn't thought of that." [Laughs.]

MRS. KEARNEY: Now Cosmo Campoli, who was a wonderful sculptor, was here the longest as a partner. And he taught sculpture here for years and years and years. Until he was not all that well mentally at the end. He often taught at IIT [Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago], the Institute of Design. And so he was put on disability there and never had to teach again. But he continued to work on his sculpture. He was a great sculptor. And everybody - when he died, people just wept.

MR. KEARNEY: We were casting back there with that big - we'd pour 300 pounds, and that's, whew!, kind of tricky. But as I said before, it made too much smoke, and we couldn't do it anymore. But he made some big ones.

MS. RICHARDS: When you founded - I'm sorry.

MR. KEARNEY: I cast one big piece; we have it in the yard. It's a mother and child, of Lynn and her baby. And it's life-sized [*Mother & Child*, 1961].

MS. RICHARDS: When you founded the workshop, I know one of the most important goals was to provide a place for young and under-known artists -

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: - to show in Chicago. Was the teaching part just a way of paying the bills? Or was that a key goal also, to provide this kind of teaching?

MR. KEARNEY: It was a multiple thing. We were so worried about paying the rent, and how do we fix this? This broke. It was expensive. And how do we pay [for] it? And we struggled for years. And after 20 years we owned it. And the ones that couldn't take it anymore had left.

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, we became a nonprofit organization, and then we raised money with grants.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. KEARNEY: Nobody was making any money from it.

MS. RICHARDS: Are there other - over the years I notice the Art Institute, the Chicago Art Institute, has a school. Were there other art schools in Chicago where the kind of students you had could also go? Or were you really the only place that you could go?

MR. KEARNEY: We were the only place like this.

MRS. KEARNEY: But these were nondegree kind of classes. But people - that was the least important thing that we did at the Contemporary Art Workshop.

MS. RICHARDS: The teaching?

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes. It was a source of some income to keep the workshop going. But these were adult education kind of classes. You don't get a major artist out of these kinds of classes. The Art Institute, the School of the Art Institute, does. And it has major, major -

MR. KEARNEY: We were different.

MRS. KEARNEY: The people there have big, longtime relationships.

MS. RICHARDS: Providing the studios for artists and the exhibition space.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes.

MR. KEARNEY: We were different. I only took eight students, never more. I had a waiting list for more than three years most of the time. And that was all I could handle.

MRS. KEARNEY: That wasn't the focus. The workshop mostly was the studios, the 20 artists that had studios here as soon as we had this building. And we had the gallery, and that's for Young Emerging Artists [exhibitions], which we've done forever, curated hundreds of them.

MR. KEARNEY: And when you have two or three of your people are welding, you've got to really watch, you know. You've got to grab it when something is wrong. Fortunately, we didn't have anybody burn themselves or anything like that. But it would have been easy if you didn't pay very close attention. And that whole wall over there, that you see those things, they're fireproof. And they were all welding in there. Boy, I was rushing around.

MS. RICHARDS: How much of your time did you spend teaching versus time for yourself to do your own work?

MR. KEARNEY: Well, I taught for about four hours.

MS. RICHARDS: Four hours a day?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. Four hours in one day, yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: I would answer that question that the teaching part was the most minor part of his time. He taught here. The classes weren't every day.

MR. KEARNEY: You know, it's so far back, so long ago that we've forgotten -

MS. RICHARDS: Well, how long ago did you stop teaching?

MRS. KEARNEY: Oh, it's got to be 20 years. I mean, that was the most minor -

MS. RICHARDS: I'm just trying to get a sense of how much it disrupted his work flow.

MR. KEARNEY: It was -

MRS. KEARNEY: He mostly worked on his sculpture.

MR. KEARNEY: It was very simple. I was making -

MS. RICHARDS: So a few hours a week.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. We had paid for this building. That was what we struggled for all that time. Once that happened, I didn't really have to worry about it. And then I said, well, "I'm sorry to have to tell you this, but I can make a lot better money just working on my own. And I loved teaching you, and I'm going to have to let you go." And they were all friends. It was very sad. But it made it a lot better work for me.

MRS. KEARNEY: But the workshop survived. The money that kept the workshop going was the studio fees, which were always half of what people were paying anywhere else. And then [inaudible].

MR. KEARNEY: It was \$15 a month, wasn't it?

MRS. KEARNEY: What? Oh, the studios now, the current studio fees are about 300, \$350 a month. Which is still about half of what people pay elsewhere.

MR. KEARNEY: But it was very little when we first did it.

MRS. KEARNEY: That's what kept the workshop going, was the funding of that and my grant writing. And then we had fundraisers, you know. So that the teaching was never really a support of the workshop.

MS. RICHARDS: What about the jewelry making? Did you do that primarily to earn money? Or even if you weren't going to sell it, did you still want to make jewelry?

MR. KEARNEY: Well, it's two things. We needed to have the building, and I had to work on my own stuff, too. So those were the two deals that I had to do.

MRS. KEARNEY: He didn't make jewelry to keep the workshop going, though. Because that money from jewelry just went into his pocket. It didn't go into the workshop.

MS. RICHARDS: But did you make jewelry because you loved making jewelry, regardless of the income, or was it an income-producing activity?

MR. KEARNEY: Both. Both, but it wasn't as interesting to me as sculpture. But it was - what I made, and everything I ever made, there's only one of a kind. Every jewelry piece of silver and gold, all are different. And most people can't do that.

MRS. KEARNEY: People came to him. He never went out looking to find people to make jewelry for. Everybody just came to him.

MR. KEARNEY: Mostly I was making wedding rings. And sometimes for men and mostly for women. And they would sit down with me, and I'd say, "Now how did you meet?" And they'd say, Well, we were at a dance, or something like that. Well, then we'll make you a dance. So I took a piece of gold and a piece of silver like this, and then I made a gold piece of that and welded it together, and fixed it. And then, boy, they just loved it. But every one was different. Lynn had a pile of them she just gave to the - where did you give that to?

MRS. KEARNEY: Give what?

MR. KEARNEY: All those -

MRS. KEARNEY: All the jewelry - you mean the designs?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: No, we still have them. They're going to the Archives.

MR. KEARNEY: The Archives.

MRS. KEARNEY: Liza [Kirwin] wants them.

MS. RICHARDS: They want your jewelry designs only.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes, we've got a file about this big. It's jammed full. And they're all - those are the designs.

MR. KEARNEY: Are they still here?

MRS. KEARNEY: They're at home.

MR. KEARNEY: Oh, okay.

MS. RICHARDS: So did you draw the design, show it to the client, get their permission and -

MR. KEARNEY: No, I just sat there and -

MRS. KEARNEY: In front of them.

MR. KEARNEY: I just sat right there.

MS. RICHARDS: And then they said, Yes, I like the design.

MR. KEARNEY: I just sat right there and drew it.

MRS. KEARNEY: A very crude drawing.

MR. KEARNEY: And they said, Oh, yes, they'd like that. So I made it.

MRS. KEARNEY: But what's it - Liza wanted these. And so I set them aside. We've got boxes and boxes and boxes and boxes of all his archives. They'll bury them with us. [They laugh.] But she said she wanted them. And she said to start sending them. But I didn't know - I have to get rid of the Contemporary Art Workshop first. I can't do both.

MS. RICHARDS: I'm going back to your exhibitions at ACA. That lasted until around 1979, I think.

MR. KEARNEY: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MS. RICHARDS: The shows. And what happened? Why did you stop showing there?

MRS. KEARNEY: Don't know. I guess - I mean, it wasn't that they said we don't want to show you anymore. I guess -

MR. KEARNEY: Well, it was a lot of work. You had to make a whole bunch of stuff and go there and put it up.

MRS. KEARNEY: He was showing elsewhere, you know, here in Chicago.

MR. KEARNEY: I didn't have to go so far away.

MS. RICHARDS: Wasn't worth the trouble?

MR. KEARNEY: No. But I don't know why I didn't do it. I just - they didn't ask me to do it. If they would have, if they had asked me, I probably would've done it. But it went from one son to the other. Sometimes they sell a lot, and sometimes they didn't sell much. Then if they didn't sell much, they probably waited longer till the next one, which is natural.

MRS. KEARNEY: He showed here; there were several galleries here that showed his work periodically. Tom McCormick Gallery [Chicago, IL] here, which is sort of a newer gallery.

MR. KEARNEY: But paying 50 percent on everything is a big difference from selling it yourself.

MS. RICHARDS: So did you feel, though, that it was worth paying that 50 percent to have your work shown in New York? Or it became - but it gradually -

MR. KEARNEY: It's the same way in Provincetown. Everybody wants - some of them make more.

MRS. KEARNEY: Mostly Jack's dealers have always given him - Jack gets 60/40. But by the time they give a discount, it ends up being 50 percent, you know, that's - when any artwork that we sold here of Jack's was solely his. But if we sold any of the Emerging Artists, we only took a third commission, for the Workshop income, not Jack's.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MRS. KEARNEY: But he always - he supported us by the sale of his work really, fully. That's where any money we had -

MR. KEARNEY: I knew how to make money. If we were short, I'd make some really nice gold things. You'd have to spend a lot of money for it, and then that would sell pretty well.

MRS. KEARNEY: Really, money was never a focus of our lives.

MR. KEARNEY: I never really have paid any attention to money that much. [Laughter.]

MRS. KEARNEY: Never, even now. But we've been fortunate.

MS. RICHARDS: There's one - it kind of relates indirectly to money - but I hear that you had a special table, that you have a story about a special table. Would you like to talk about that?

MRS. KEARNEY: How do you know about that?

MS. RICHARDS: Liza.

MRS. KEARNEY: Huh! I guess I told her.

MR. KEARNEY: About what?

MRS. KEARNEY: Our table - my table.

MS. RICHARDS: She said she'd like you to talk about that.

MR. KEARNEY: That table - oh, my God! [Laughs.] That was - do you want to tell it, or should I?

MRS. KEARNEY: You're the interviewee.

MR. KEARNEY: Okay. Her mother and her grandmother were - they loved to buy things secondhand and so on. And her grandmother saw this funny-looking chair and stuff out where they live.

MS. RICHARDS: At a second-hand store?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: It was a secondhand store down here in Chicago.

MR. KEARNEY: Well, wherever it was.

MRS. KEARNEY: It was a junk shop.

MR. KEARNEY: Anyway, she bought it.

MS. RICHARDS: When approximately was this?

MRS. KEARNEY: Nineteen twenty-three, she bought it.

MR. RICHARDS: Was it eight chairs?

MRS. KEARNEY: Eight chairs.

MR. KEARNEY: It had eight chairs, and it was very unusual because -

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes, the table was - it was Frank Lloyd Wright. You might as well mention that.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. Frank Lloyd Wright.

MS. RICHARDS: Did your grandmother know that it was Frank Lloyd Wright when she bought it?

MRS. KEARNEY: I don't think she had a clue. It was my mother who bought it.

MR. KEARNEY: When I was in Cranbrook, I went with a bunch of architects that didn't like him at all. They kicked him out.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes.

MR. KEARNEY: And he was talking to everybody there.

MS. RICHARDS: You went to see Frank Lloyd Wright when you were in Cranbrook?

MR. KEARNEY: I heard him lecture in Detroit. But anyway, I knew his work. Everybody did at Cranbrook and so on. But back to this thing. She had this in their house, this set.

MRS. KEARNEY: My mother was with her.

MR. KEARNEY: Where our son lives now. You take it over, Lynn.

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, when my mother was about to get married, and they had bought a house already - this is in about '23. And so my grandmother had seen this at Sternberg, in the junk shop, secondhand store. And she said, "Oh, Agnes, go look at the - Sternberg's got this interesting table." So when my mother went there, there were three tables and 24 chairs of Frank Lloyd Wright's, all from the same house, the Husser House. At that time she didn't know where they came from.

MS. RICHARDS: Is that H-U-S-S-A-R?

MRS. KEARNEY: H-U-S-S-E-R, Husser House [Chicago, IL]. It's famous. It was sort of a seminal Prairie School House. It was on Lake Shore Drive. Anyway, typically Wright - people that he built their houses, and he had the whole - typically, it was a turnkey kind of thing, with the furniture and the linens and the dishes all came with it. But people often didn't like it. So that house, they took these tables and chairs, and there was a piano, and there was an octagonal table and some other pieces. Anyway, my mother bought one table and eight chairs, and she bought the octagonal table and a teacart. And she paid \$25 for the table and \$5 each for the chairs, which was -

MS. RICHARDS: In the '20s it wasn't so little. But, yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, you know, it was cheap. And she had that for about 30 years. We lived in Oak Park [IL]. I grew up in Oak Park, which is Frank Lloyd Wright territory. But at the time people didn't know that Wright was, you know - some people did, but not everybody. It wasn't a household name. Anyway, she bought that and lived with it. I grew up on it my whole life. It was always in our home. And because we were in Oak Park, we all were aware of Wright's houses. The house my mother lived in had a lot of influence of Wright. Anyway, so then when we got married - I mean after we were married -

MR. KEARNEY: Wait a minute. She bought a junky one and put it up there, and put the good one in the basement all piled up.

MRS. KEARNEY: Oh, that was much later, Jack. She had the Wright table and chairs in our dining room. And then my aunt moved to California. So she liked my aunt's table better than the Wright table, so she put the Wright table in the basement and was using it to stretch sweaters on. Anyway -

MR. KEARNEY: It was standing up like this.

MRS. KEARNEY: No, no, no, it wasn't.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, it was.

MRS. KEARNEY: No, no, it wasn't. Anyway, Jack - then we were buying our first house. Our daughter was about to be born, and our son was two years old. And so -

MR. KEARNEY: Our first big house.

MRS. KEARNEY: We bought a big house in Chicago. And my mother said, "Why don't you take that old table from the basement?" I was an art major, and I knew what it was. So she said, "Why don't you take the table and chairs?" And I said, "Well, I think you ought to offer it to my brother first," who already had a house. And Dick said no, he didn't really want that. So she gave us the table and the chairs. She had lost the octagonal table and the teacart in subsequent moves early on, which we tried to find it later, but we weren't able to.

But anyway, so we had it in our house. My kids grew up on it. And we loved it. You know it was the typical straight-backed chairs. And it was the best, the best of all of it. Now, there were three tables, and she saw they had the corner lamps. One had a bunch of buttons at the end for calling the servants. So she didn't take those. Just the one that was perfect. And so then we had it for 30 years; my mother had it for 30 years.

And then this David Hanks; I don't know if you know who he was. But he was a curator at the Art Institute in the decorative arts. And I told him about the table because he had had an exhibit at the Art Institute of Chicago.

MR. KEARNEY: Nobody knew about it until then.

MRS. KEARNEY: There was a show at the Art Institute, and he had the Robie House [Chicago, IL] table and chairs there. And I called up David Hanks, and I said, "Listen, if you think that's good, you should see my table." So he

made a note of it. And then later he was the curator of a show at the Whitney [Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY] called the "High Styles Show" ["High Styles: Twentieth-Century American Design." September 19, 1985 - February 16, 1986.]. I don't know if you happen to have seen that, but it was in 1987. So they wanted to borrow my table, because David Hanks was one of the curators [with Lisa Phillips].

MS. RICHARDS: Just the table, not the chairs?

MRS. KEARNEY: No, they wanted the whole thing. And I didn't want to do that because I was afraid something would happen to it. Meanwhile, a woman named Irma Strauss, who was doing a history of Frank Lloyd Wright decorative arts, learned through David Hanks about my table. She came to see it, and she just about died when she walked in. She just almost fainted dead away because it was such an extraordinary - and see, until then, we didn't know where that table came from.

She was a very lovely woman. Anyway, she had opened a book - she'd brought a bunch of books - and she opened a book. And I just told her the history, the oral history of my mother, about where this table came from. And my mother always said, "Oh, it came from a house up on Lake Shore Drive." And I always said, "Oh, Mom, there is no Wright house on Lake Shore Drive." Well, she was right. The Husser House was built, but it was torn down in 1923. And it was the beginning - it was 1899 the house was built. And that's when the table and chairs were built.

And when Irma opened up to try to find out where this came from - because I said, Oh, my mother always said such-and-such. And she said - opened this up, and there was a corner picture of my table, because it was very significant. It had a little fretwork on the side. But the plan showed six tables, and it was a huge house. Huge! But Mom only saw three tables and 24 chairs. So she bought eight chairs.

Anyway, that documented where it actually came from then. So Irma did a whole history about the table, and it's been documented all over the place. Anyway, so that's when she, you know, talked to David Hanks. David had not seen my table yet. But then, what was the name of the - I'm trying to think of the director of the Whitney, Tom somebody.

MS. RICHARDS: Armstrong.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes. And so Tom wanted me to lend it. And they begged me. And I said, Well, okay. If you take it in a pressured truck and crate each chair. And they did that. And it was the centerpiece. It was the center of that show, that "High Style Show." It was *the* focus. And every newspaper, the *Times* magazine, everything; it was all over. And I had lent it anonymously, because I didn't want everybody to know about it. Because, you know, we go to Provincetown every summer, and there this table is.

MR. KEARNEY: We tried to get, but we -

MS. RICHARDS: Because it would be left alone in Chicago, this table. You don't want anyone to break in, right?

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, we rented our house always. We always rented our house because we knew our house would be -

MS. RICHARDS: With that table there.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes. Because we had to, or we'd be robbed if nobody was living there. Because we have a very nice house -

MS. RICHARDS: Did you ever take precautions to preserve the surface of the table with renters there?

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, we always had - we had a table pad that I always kept on top of it when we weren't using it.

MS. RICHARDS: The chairs could've gotten banged up.

MRS. KEARNEY: No, they were in very good shape.

MR. KEARNEY: It was in very good shape.

MRS. KEARNEY: And, you know, we took care of it.

MS. RICHARDS: Miraculous!

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes. So then everybody then - what's her name? - Nancy, I want to say, Druckman, at Sotheby's, curator there. Anyway, everybody came to us and wanted to buy it.

MS. RICHARDS: But how did - you were anonymous, so how did they find out?

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, I finally, you know - of course, Armstrong knew who we were. I went to the opening; it was really exciting. Jack didn't go, which is too bad. He didn't go. But anyway, then people started approaching us. They wanted to buy it. And I said, No, I didn't want to sell it. And then Christie's wanted to put it at auction; so did Sotheby's. They all flew out here to talk to me because they wanted it so desperately. They were going to take the table, and no - and if we sold it, they wouldn't take an interest, you know, a seller's -

MR. KEARNEY: Didn't you send it to New York first?

MRS. KEARNEY: Sure. It was in the Whitney.

MR. KEARNEY: Okay.

MRS. KEARNEY: Anyway, so finally David Hanks, who was a private curator of Tom Monaghan, who was the largest collector of Frank Lloyd Wright's decorative arts, who'd all his life been a follower of Wright, he owned Domino's Pizza. As yet we have never bought a Domino's Pizza to this day. Anyway, David Hanks came, and he said, you know, that Monaghan wanted to buy it. And I didn't want to sell it. But I certainly didn't want to put it at auction, because I was afraid it would be separated, and one chair in Japan and one in Greece or something. So we didn't want to go that route at all. Didn't want to sell it.

MS. RICHARDS: Because they didn't - Sotheby's and Christie's - didn't tell you that they would require it be sold to one purchaser?

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, that never came up because I just - I don't know. We didn't talk about that, actually, now that you mention it. But in any case, they begged me to sell it. But I said no.

And so then David Hanks came, and he said that he had this client - and we had heard about him, but I never would have pursued him in a million years. My roommate from college lived in the same area, and she told me about him. I said I wasn't interested. But he came, and he offered us what was it? We ultimately - he paid us \$1.6 million. And actually more than that because he paid us over a five-year period. So we got at that time an interest rate for 14 percent. So we got a lot more money.

MR. KEARNEY: Let me step in there for a minute. I would take the money to the bank once a month or something like that. And this guy said, "Did you win the - "

MRS. KEARNEY: The lottery?

MR. KEARNEY: The lottery? I said, "Well, sort of." [Laughs.]

MRS. KEARNEY: So anyway, that was -

MS. RICHARDS: That was some kind of record for that table?

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes, it was a record.

MS. RICHARDS: So did it become known publicly?

MRS. KEARNEY: Oh, yes. I mean, it was all over everywhere.

MS. RICHARDS: Even though it was a private sale -

MRS. KEARNEY: He loaned it to a private museum.

MS. RICHARDS: - it became known.

MRS. KEARNEY: Oh, everybody knew it, because he was very -

MR. KEARNEY: It went to several museums.

MRS. KEARNEY: - proud about his collection. He built a museum in Grand Rapids [MI] for the -

MR. KEARNEY: It was out in California when we were once there.

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, that was later. But he built a museum. He also collected classic cars like the - he paid \$8 million for a Bugatti car. Anyway, we went to the opening of his museum, and it was again a -

MS. RICHARDS: What year was it that that table sold?

MRS. KEARNEY: That we sold it? Nineteen eighty-seven, I know it was, because it was the year my brother died, and I felt so bad. Because we had the funeral in our yard, and I put the chairs upstairs. I didn't want anyone to sit on the chairs, because Monaghan was going to pick the chairs up. And I thought, oh, my God, it'll be this time when somebody spills some acid or something on the table. So I covered it up, and we put away the chairs. And then they shipped out.

And, you know, for years I was so sad, because I missed it. But anyway, that was pretty interesting. But then about a few years later, we were in Provincetown; I got a phone call from my daughter. And Jill said, "Mom, did Monaghan pay us?" She used the royal "we" there. "Pay us all the money he owes us?" And I said, "Well, yes, Jill." I said, "Why do you ask?" And she said, "Well, look at the *New York Times*." And here I opened the paper, and it was the Sunday paper. And here Monaghan had put it at auction because he'd had some reverses in his finances. And he put it at auction at Christie's, and it went for \$400,000. [Laughter.]

MR. KEARNEY: You see how smart she is?

MRS. KEARNEY: I always do things this way. But it was a totally innocent thing. I mean, who knew? And the thing was, he was the biggest collector. You know, that was the problem. There wasn't anyone else. Barbra Streisand and - what's her name? - Oprah Winfrey, whatever, were the only other people that were at that league. And since he was our biggest collector, there wasn't anybody going back to buy it. So he made a [inaudible]. But in the meantime he had sent it around the country to museums, showing it in various places. And we saw it. We were on our way to China, in fact, and we stopped in Seattle and went to the museum, and there was my table and chairs. I almost wept. [Laughs.] I couldn't believe it!

But anyway, it was an interesting thing. And I still don't know exactly who bought it, but I think it was a guy in New York, whose name is Daniel Wolf, I think, who's a major collector. And this is all - I've got to pursue this; it's funny that I haven't. I've got to find out who really has it. I think it was this person who, I think, is married to - what's the name of the sculptor that -

MS. RICHARDS: Maya Lin.

MRS. KEARNEY: Maya Lin, right.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, she's married to Daniel Wolf.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes. And I think she may have the table. But I've never pursued that. I think Daniel Wolf bought it. And I know that he's married to Maya Lin. And the way I found that out, someone gave me a book about the White House, for some odd reason, and there was a picture of Maya Lin and Wolf coming down the stairs. Because at that time I didn't know he was married to Maya Lin. And then I realized that's why he bought it. He must have bought it for her. You know. And he's much older than she, I'm pretty sure. Isn't he? So maybe he didn't buy it. But someone told me that and so - and I don't know if Christie's will ever tell us. They don't usually do that.

So, in my heart, I think it must be sitting in her dining room. [Laughs.] I don't know. And also he's a big - does a lot of gifting to the Metropolitan [Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY], I think. Doesn't he have a whole room or something there?

MS. RICHARDS: I don't know.

MRS. KEARNEY: And I thought, well, eventually it maybe will get back there, which would please me a lot, because that's where it should be. It's still the greatest. And Irma Strauss always thought I should give it to the Art Institute. I didn't feel like I could do that.

It didn't change our life. The only thing - it did allow us to do a little of that traveling that we did at that time. But we were always traveling before that. We had already put our kids through college. I mean, we'd already done everything on our own, with just Jack's making sculpture. So it didn't change our life. It helped me - helped our children.

MR. KEARNEY: [Inaudible] the best schools. Really good schools. It was wonderful.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes, but we'd already put our kids all through college and through Parker [Francis W. Parker School, Chicago, IL].

MR. KEARNEY: Parker, they went both [inaudible].

MRS. KEARNEY: Parker's a private school here in Chicago, which is the best in Chicago.

But anyway, so that was the story of that. It's an interesting story. And when we were in Rome - I'm trying to

think of the architect [Vincent Scully] who taught at Yale [Yale University, New Haven, CT]. Why can't I think of his name? Because I just adore him. And he was also a great lover of Frank Lloyd Wright. He's written several books on architecture. He was at the American Academy when we were there. And I had sat next to him. Anyway, when he found out about my table, he was just floored, because that was a wonderful story about Frank Lloyd Wright. So, you know, we've been lucky all our lives. We've been blessed with a lot of good things.

MS. RICHARDS: When you go back to Provincetown now in the summer, have you met any of the younger, the new artists who are there, since some of the artists -

MR. KEARNEY: Oh, sure.

MS. RICHARDS: - whom you used to know aren't there anymore?

MR. KEARNEY: Oh, sure. They come to the studio on Aunt Sukey Way. And we have a lot of them come to visit us.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes, they're there at the studio a lot. And there are, you know, a lot of the -

MR. KEARNEY: It's well known there.

MRS. KEARNEY: - younger artists there. One of the things that has been a big factor in Provincetown in his life is a club called the Beachcombers, which is a male chauvinist pig - I don't know if you've heard about the Beachcombers, but it's all artists, just artists of any discipline, music -

MS. RICHARDS: But only male artists, do you mean?

MRS. KEARNEY: Only male, yes. Which, when we were young, every Saturday night the Beachcombers have dinner; somebody cooks. They have a building that's right on the water. It's right next to - right across the street from where the Provincetown Art Association is.

MR. KEARNEY: Almost all artists, writers, poets.

MS. RICHARDS: And they made a policy of only having men as members?

MR. KEARNEY: That's been that way for a hundred years.

MRS. KEARNEY: Started by Eugene O'Neill.

MS. RICHARDS: Provincetown Playhouse.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes. Well, O'Neill, all his first plays were performed there. Mary Heaton Vorse, all those. So these artists, Edwin Dickinson, you know, they were - Mallicote, Hopper, all these people were Beachcombers.

MR. KEARNEY: They were old-timers. I was very young at that time.

MRS. KEARNEY: So he's still a member. Now our son joined it. I always, in the early days when the kids were young, I hated it, because Saturday night was a time to have a party.

MS. RICHARDS: You mean, every Saturday night he'd go off?

MRS. KEARNEY: Every Saturday night. Unless there was a real party we were invited to.

MR. KEARNEY: Once a year they had a big party for everybody.

MS. RICHARDS: So when you go to Provincetown, when you went last summer, do you go there every Saturday night?

MR. KEARNEY: Not every one, but almost.

MRS. KEARNEY: Almost every one.

MS. RICHARDS: And what happens?

MR. KEARNEY: Oh, it was very funny. They have a great sense of humor.

MS. RICHARDS: So there's dinner, and is there a speaker?

MR. KEARNEY: They have a standing thing. It's the best or the worst place to eat, depending on whether or not

the guy that's cooking is drunk or sober. [Laughs.]

MS. RICHARDS: You mean for a hundred years they always have a person who's an alcoholic? [Laughs.]

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes, that's [inaudible].

MR. KEARNEY: One time I was cooking for all of them, and they have this old stove. And it was almost empty of gas. And I turned it up, and it just keeping going lower and lower and lower. And you're supposed to serve the food at five o'clock. And at seven o'clock, I was still trying to get the damned water to boil. And everybody was getting drunk, including me. And I was making spaghetti. And all the spaghetti that was in there just turned into a big lump like this. And so I set the thing out, and they were all raising hell over waiting, you know. And I put the thing out. I chopped it up into pieces and served it to all of them. They still talk about that's the worst goddamned meal they ever had. [Laughter.] And it wasn't my fault.

MRS. KEARNEY: He'd cook every summer, once a summer.

MS. RICHARDS: What do you like to cook?

MR. KEARNEY: I don't remember what I cooked except for that one thing there.

MRS. KEARNEY: He's not known for his cooking.

MR. KEARNEY: I always did something simple, you know.

MRS. KEARNEY: But that's a club that he always enjoyed. And there always were artists, you know. [Inaudible.]

MS. RICHARDS: So it's still going today?

MRS. KEARNEY: Oh, yes.

MR. KEARNEY: What's that?

MS. RICHARDS: This club is still going today, I mean.

MRS. KEARNEY: The club is still going today.

MR. KEARNEY: Oh, sure it is. Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: And do you have to apply, and is there a membership committee, so that you may or may not be accepted?

MR. KEARNEY: [Inaudible] Someone brings a visitor. They always have visitors like that. And if somebody wants to be one, they say, "Okay, we'll talk to him." And then they go through this silly thing of, why do you want to do this? And you have to say, because I'm out of my mind or such like that. And if you keep being serious, they'll keep you there all night. And then finally when you get mad, then they'll say, okay. We all vote. And they all say, No! Then that's it. You're welcome. Now you're in.

MRS. KEARNEY: It's an anti-club club. I mean, it's against everything.

MR. KEARNEY: But when we came there - when I first came there - the real old guys were there. They were, you know, up in their 80s and stuff like that. And they were heavy, heavy drinkers. And then out there on the deck, these two old drunk guys, they were drinking out of these whiskey bottles like this. And they were talking to each other, and they emptied them. And then they turned around like this, and they threw them over the top, out into the ocean there. But there was rocks there, and the tide was out, and they went, Crash crash. Broke the glass, you know. And so I said to the guys that were running it, I said, "Will you tell those old sonofabitches to stop that because I have to get glass out of my kids' feet every time somebody does that." And he says, this old guy says, "Oh, that's nothing." He said, "When we were first here, we had a hard time making them to stop shooting their .45s at bottles, throwing them up in the air." [Laughs.]

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, that was before his time.

MR. KEARNEY: Long, long, long before my time.

MS. RICHARDS: I'm going to change discs now.

[END OF CD 5.]

This is Judith Richards with John Kearney, March 13, 2009, [mini] disc three.

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, it was a place where people worked, very seriously worked. But they also played hard. And there were a lot of poker games. Although Jack wasn't a big poker player.

MR. KEARNEY: Well, just to give you an idea of what they're like, Conrad -

MRS. KEARNEY: Conrad Mallicote?

MR. KEARNEY: Conrad, you know him. He runs the thing, really.

MS. RICHARDS: Runs the club?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, he sort of runs the club. And one time I read in the newspaper that a certain kind of table that you play pool with, was very old, and it was from the - a hundred years old or 200 years or something. And they described it like that. And I looked at it. The next time I went up there, there was one there in the club. And it's worth thousands and thousands of dollars. And I said to him, "Isn't that amazing how valuable that is?" He said, "That's just nice. But just don't tell anybody." [Laughter.]

MRS. KEARNEY: Because he didn't want to tell anybody.

MR. KEARNEY: He didn't want anybody to know it.

MS. RICHARDS: It's still there?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: So you said your son is now a member.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes, he joined last summer.

MS. RICHARDS: Are there dues that you have to pay?

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, \$80 a year.

MS. RICHARDS: And do you have to be a creative person, a writer or an artist?

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes, absolutely. You have to be.

MR. KEARNEY: And then you pay for your meal.

MRS. KEARNEY: Only artists, painters, sculptors, writers, musicians.

MR. KEARNEY: They take up, I think it's \$10, and they use that for the food. And then somebody has to, usually two guys, cook each week.

MS. RICHARDS: Were there any other kinds of associations organized?

MRS. KEARNEY: The Art Association, Provincetown Art Association. He was a trustee of that and vice president of that for years; so was I. And it's now called the Provincetown Art Association and Museum. It's over 75 years old and probably close to a hundred years now. And it's become much more museum-oriented than it was. In the early days, it was really an amalgam of artists that did everything.

MR. KEARNEY: They made it much larger and spent a lot of money on it.

MRS. KEARNEY: Raphael Soyer was another person that Jack had a lot of -

MR. KEARNEY: I knew all of them.

MRS. KEARNEY: - relationship. And Raphael Soyer, Jack did a portrait bust of him. He did that of a number of people, including Sol Wilson.

MS. RICHARDS: Did you do that from life, have the person sitting there?

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes.

MR. KEARNEY: They just sat there, and I took a torch, and I took a weld with a piece of steel, and I made a certain thing. I did all that from [inaudible].

MRS. KEARNEY: Did it with welding rods.

MR. KEARNEY: So when it was finished -

MS. RICHARDS: So it was a line?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, with rods.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes, completely.

MR. KEARNEY: And when I do that, they say, "That's incredible! That's incredible!" [Laughs.]

MRS. KEARNEY: So then Raphael did a painting of Jack, which we have, and which he went to New York to sit with him. You know who Raphael Soyer is. The painting is this wide and this high. It's a big painting.

MR. KEARNEY: I did that. I made him, too.

MRS. KEARNEY: No, he did you. Raphael did you.

MR. KEARNEY: How did you think I got it?

MRS. KEARNEY: No, you already said that. You did one of Raphael.

MR. KEARNEY: That's right.

MRS. KEARNEY: And you did it also of Sol Wilson.

MR. KEARNEY: And my daughter and my son, they're trying to fight over who's going to get that.

MS. RICHARDS: [Laughs] Did you start those, doing those wire - I guess you might say wire - soldering steel - at some point spontaneously, just had the idea?

MR. KEARNEY: I did a lot of it early on.

MS. RICHARDS: Did you see Calder's pieces that he did similar?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: Calder was a big factor in his career.

MR. KEARNEY: I didn't ever see him personally, but I had the possibility if I ever went there before he died, that he might like me. But anyway, I had things like that all the time. I can make a portrait of somebody with just a torch and a piece of wire. I haven't done that for 20 years now.

MS. RICHARDS: When you were painting 50 years ago, I'm thinking, whose paintings were, do you think, had a big influence on you when you were -

MR. KEARNEY: Had what?

MS. RICHARDS: When you were painting, were there specific painters whose work was important to you, had an influence on you?

MR. KEARNEY: No, I didn't have anybody else's in mind. I just wanted to do it the way I wanted to do it. But I worked mostly with a knife. [Makes whistling sounds.]

MS. RICHARDS: Palette knife.

MR. KEARNEY: And I won quite a few things on it. I like things that have a fresh look to it. And I'm going to be similar when I'm going back [to painting]. But this time I'm going to do the whole war and everything that happened. And I can remember that - I've been sitting up half of the night refiguring out exactly how I'm going to do certain things, how I'm going to show how things happened in a battle and things deep in the water, like 100 feet down in the ocean. And what happened down there.

MS. RICHARDS: Have you been making drawings?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, making rough drawings of it.

MS. RICHARDS: It's a great series!

MR. KEARNEY: I've been working on it just recently. I've got an example here, I think. [Sounds of things being moved around.] This is the first one I'm going to do. And this is just - I'm trying to get the feeling of this.

MS. RICHARDS: This is an ink drawing.

MR. KEARNEY: These figures of men. And what it is, is in Detroit, when I was there when I was 17, and Pearl Harbor was that day; the second day, I was down there going into the navy. And that was a downtown area.

MS. RICHARDS: Hundreds and hundreds of men.

MR. KEARNEY: There were hundreds of guys out there, including me. [Laughs.] And I think a lot there - and you're going in with your regular clothes and long hair and all this sort of thing. And you're going into the - enough - I don't have it right here.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. KEARNEY: But the buildings, they'll be taking up for three or four blocks, like this, with these guys. And then they're going to come out the other side wearing white stuff and a hat on it, short hair, and so on. And they're still going like this. And that's the way it was.

MS. RICHARDS: Do you - so this is one drawing.

MR. KEARNEY: This is not a drawing. This is - I'm trying to feel it, how we make it, what kind of form. See how I'm doing it? And then when I get the right thing, then I'll have them all doing that.

MS. RICHARDS: Do you think that you'll be making a series, planning out - you said this is going to be a big series of paintings.

MR. KEARNEY: [Inaudible.]

MS. RICHARDS: Are you going to be doing some sketches that are going to be -

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: - detailing what you think you're going to be painting, each one?

MR. KEARNEY: I'll make sketches first. And then I'll paint the whole thing. But I don't need to have it completely done. It's just, I want to get the feel of it, so - and so that's one. And then the next one, see, if I can find it here.

MS. RICHARDS: Will you be working on canvas on stretcher boards?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, yes.

MS. RICHARDS: Or on panels?

MRS. KEARNEY: You know, it's been a long time. We haven't really gotten that far because we're not - we just have to get out of this building before we get started.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes. And you'll be painting in oils or acrylic?

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, probably - I think it may go into acrylics because he's never really worked with acrylics. But at his age, I think it's - because his eyesight is so compromised. I think it would be easier for him to work with acrylics than oil. But he'll do both.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: This is another thing that he should probably tell you, a little bit about this cross that he did with the Ku Klux Klan cross. And another thing that he has done all his last 30 years is make awards for the Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence. And he's been very, very involved.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, let's talk about both of those things.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes.

MR. KEARNEY: That's famous, you know.

MS. RICHARDS: Let's talk about that first.

MR. KEARNEY: Okay.

MRS. KEARNEY: This was a sculpture that you -

MR. KEARNEY: I'll tell you what happened. There was a meeting here in the city with three women, young women, who wanted to stop murder by handguns. And one of them came to me and said, "Would you please come? We want to get an idea about how we can do something about it." And so I said, "Sure." And I went there and went to their organization.

MS. RICHARDS: What organization was that?

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, it was just the beginning. It's called the Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence. ICAHV.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes. And so then I said, "Okay. I will help you." So they said, "What can you do? How can you stop this thing?" And I said, "Well, I'll do some things for you, and I'll call you."

And then I came down out of there, this big building. And these bad guys, the NRA [National Rifle Association], who didn't want people to stop handguns, they had sent this guy to terrify these three women. And when they came out of that, on the street, he was walking and going up and taking pictures of each one, trying to scare them. And I was right behind them. And what I did was I walked up to him, like this. And he's right here. And I go right up here. And I put my nose right on his nose. He said, "What are you doing!?" I said, "You're working for those bad guys, aren't you?" He said, "Oh, no! I just work for them. I just work for them." I said, "Well, you shouldn't be doing that to these ladies, you know that." "Oh, all right!" [Inaudible.]

MRS. KEARNEY: Jack, you're getting far afield.

MR. KEARNEY: Well, anyway -

MRS. KEARNEY: What you did was you made awards that were given to people.

MR. KEARNEY: Okay. That's where I started.

MS. RICHARDS: When did they come to you? How long ago was that?

MRS. KEARNEY: It's got to be 30 years.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, a long time ago.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, a long time ago. So then we had a meeting. And they said, "Now, we need some publicity for our organization." And I said, "Okay. Here's what we do." As a sculpture, we do it from the Bible. You go and get a plow, and what was the other thing? A plow and, oh, yes, and a sword. But just get me a big one. And then I'll make this sculpture. How did he say that?

MRS. KEARNEY: Jack, you made your awards that were given to people who did the most to prevent handgun violence.

MR. KEARNEY: This is what I'm getting at, though. So they got that, and then I had them give me 75 guns that the city burns, and I would destroy it, and weld it inside of this low -

MRS. KEARNEY: Hammer your swords into plowshares. That's what you did. That was a big sculpture.

MR. KEARNEY: So I made a big sculpture out of burned-up guns. Anyway. And they used that for their place. And then I made for them, ever since then, the gift to the person who does the most to stop handguns in the whole city and eventually in the country. And from that three girls, it now is thousands of people. And I was the first male in their group.

And then I started making the awards, usually two or three each year. And what it is, I take the hand of a woman, a bronze-cast hand like this, and they get from the city all of these guns that I chop up into pieces. And then I weld them onto this piece, and it goes on a marble base. And it has a bronze thing that says why they got this for doing something. And it's been going on for maybe 35 years.

MRS. KEARNEY: About 30 years.

MR. KEARNEY: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.] And now there are thousands of people that are members.

MRS. KEARNEY: But you have to tell her the people who get these are people like [Massachusetts Senator Edward] Ted Kennedy or [New York City Mayor] Michael Bloomberg.

MR. KEARNEY: Mostly senators and congressmen and all that. And when they had the last two big meetings they had here, they made me stand up and say, "There he was at first. And thank you." And the senator from Illinois said that.

MRS. KEARNEY: Dick Durbin.

MR. KEARNEY: Thank you for this and for helping. But anyway, I love that thing, and it's something that I believe in. But it's not going to stop them all.

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, the people there - every year, there'd be some congressman or senator or like Arne Duncan, who was just named the president's head of education [Secretary of Education]. He got one last year. For, you know, anything that they've done do try to stop handgun violence.

MS. RICHARDS: So you make these pieces, one at a time, each year?

MRS. KEARNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: You don't stockpile them, make several?

MR. KEARNEY: Two to three. Depends on how many they want.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, I see, a year.

MR. KEARNEY: But I only charge them for the material, nothing else. And I think - that's something that I really feel good with.

MRS. KEARNEY: And this other thing.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes.

MRS. KEARNEY: This was something that happened just this year. A person that Jack knew, whose name is Reverend Forshey -

MR. KEARNEY: He was famous.

MRS. KEARNEY: - was a Freedom Rider, you know, in the South.

MS. RICHARDS: What was his last name?

MRS. KEARNEY: Reverend Gerald Forshey, F-O-R-S-H-E-Y, I believe.

MR. KEARNEY: It was in the two - both papers here.

MRS. KEARNEY: And he brought - this is in 1962, I think it was - he brought this cross that had been burned in the garden of one of the universities or colleges in Mississippi, burned, you know, by the Ku Klux Klan. And so his friend, who was a minister at this school, gave Reverend Forshey the cross. And Forshey gave it to Jack and said, "Can you do something with this?" And so he then made this -

MR. KEARNEY: Let me take this.

MRS. KEARNEY: - this piece of sculpture.

MS. RICHARDS: This is welded?

MRS. KEARNEY: No, it's bronze.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, bronze.

MR. KEARNEY: I believe in using art for goodwill. And this was one that I really, really liked. So I realized that these people who put this on this people's yard were white. And they probably were Christians. And Christ wouldn't be interested in killing people. [Laughs.] So to embarrass them, I made a bronze piece that was like a black man getting beaten down. You can't see it on that, but it's just dark there.

MRS. KEARNEY: It's a very tall - that's the cross.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. KEARNEY: And he's being hung. And so it was 30-some years ago, and I never heard anything about it. But when he talked to me the next time, he said, "It's going all over the United States. It's famous." He said, "It really embarrasses those bastards." So I'm very proud of that.

MRS. KEARNEY: But it just surfaced this last winter. I don't know what the date -

MS. RICHARDS: The paper's dated October 6, 2008.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes. Well, we didn't see it since 1962. We'd forgotten about it. And all of a sudden it shows up, this Forshey, before he died, and he gave the sculpture through his bequest and through his wife to the Chicago Temple here in Chicago. And so all these people from Mississippi that were involved in it in the first place came up, and they had like a three- or four-day symposium about it. And there was the sculpture. Now it belongs - you know, when he died - we didn't know that he'd had it all those years, and now it belongs to the Chicago Temple, which is a Methodist church.

MR. KEARNEY: When they put it here, we went over to see it. And we told them that I made it. And they asked me to go up and speak to the people.

MRS. KEARNEY: And they had loads - the mayor was there.

MR. KEARNEY: And there was this whole bunch of people. And I said, "When I was seven years old, I met my great-grandfather, who fought under [Abraham] Lincoln and was wounded in battle in the South. And I asked him why he went to war when he was so young." And he said, "Young man, you come from a line, group, of - "

MRS. KEARNEY: A long line -

MR. KEARNEY: How did he phrase that?

MRS. KEARNEY: A long line of abolitionists.

MR. KEARNEY: Abolitionists. Yes, that's what it was, of abolitionists. And I said, "What was that, Great-grandpa?" And he said, "We were against slavery." And that's where I'm talking about art and doing something, you know. And I feel really good on those things.

MRS. KEARNEY: That was so funny, because we hadn't even thought about this since 1962. Then this year, it shows up.

MR. KEARNEY: I only charged him for materials. I didn't make any money out of it at all.

MRS. KEARNEY: You must have cast it yourself here, because I don't remember that.

MS. RICHARDS: I understand that a very recent group of your works is also much loved by a different kind of group of people, the *Wizard of Oz*.

MRS. KEARNEY: Oh!

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: Which you just finished recently, right?

MR. KEARNEY: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: In a park nearby.

MRS. KEARNEY: It's right around the corner here. We should take you over there to see it. It's -

MR. KEARNEY: It's four people.

MRS. KEARNEY: There's the Tin Man, and -

MS. RICHARDS: What inspired that project?

MRS. KEARNEY: A woman came to Jack about it.

MR. KEARNEY: Wait a minute, wait a minute.

MRS. KEARNEY: But a woman who had a lot of money - this used to be old houses that were torn down, and they made this wonderful park.

MR. KEARNEY: Let me tell it.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes, it's your story.

MR. KEARNEY: It was about 40 years ago this woman came here and said, "I'd like you to make sculptures of the four big figures there. Could you do that for me?"

MS. RICHARDS: For the *Wizard of Oz*?

MR. KEARNEY: *Wizard of Oz*.

MRS. KEARNEY: This is Dorothy and Toto.

MR. KEARNEY: I said, sure, I would. And it was even more than just those things. But she said, "All right. I'm going to fix it up, and I'll have you do it." But she died. And nobody said anything. And almost the same period of time, some people came over here, and said they found where she was willing to pay for it, but she couldn't do it and so on. But we've decided we would like to ask you to do it and give it for us. I told them how I would do it. And again, I didn't make any money on it.

MRS. KEARNEY: Oh, well, you got well paid for that.

MR. KEARNEY: Oh, that one I got paid for, I guess.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes.

MS. RICHARDS: So you started out with one figure, and you gradually added all four?

MR. KEARNEY: They had to raise the money. They had to raise the money, and it took 10 years.

The first one was the Tin Man. And I made it in Provincetown. I made all of them in Provincetown. And the people noticed it. They could tell what it was by seeing it. And it was pretty large, and it was sitting up high. And there was a man with his young daughter, was looking over the fence. And said, "Can we come down and look at it?" And I said, "Yeah." And it was just the day that I finished to make the piece. But I needed to clean it up and so on. But I said, "Oh, sure." And she was about seven years old. And then she whispered something to him. And he said she said to tell me that you forgot the most important thing. And I said, "What's that?" "He went to get a heart." And I said, "You're right! I forgot." So I said, "You bring that girl in here tomorrow, and you'll see a" - what kind of steel?

MRS. KEARNEY: Stainless steel?

MR. KEARNEY: - "stainless steel heart." That's what it was. And they did. And she came, and she was so happy. And I told that to about 500 people, and they all clapped, you know. And each year we have a band from the high school over there with about, what, 50 people at the dedication?

MRS. KEARNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative], 50.

MR. KEARNEY: And they played for each dedication.

MRS. KEARNEY: Marching band [inaudible].

MS. RICHARDS: So after the Tin Man, what came next?

MRS. KEARNEY: Cowardly Lion.

MR. KEARNEY: Cowardly Lion was next. And then after that was the Scarecrow. And then it was Dorothy and Toto.

MS. RICHARDS: Are they permanent?

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes. They're all bronze except for the Tin Man, which is steel.

MR. KEARNEY: Yes, 13 acres.

MRS. KEARNEY: It's right around the corner.

MS. RICHARDS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MRS. KEARNEY: A block away.

MR. KEARNEY: But the last time, when I had all these people out there and I was speaking to them, and a lot of kids were right there where the thing was, and I said - let's see, I want to get exactly how I said that. Oh, "I've been lucky all my life. And if you go over and pet that dog, you'll be lucky, too." And then went, WHOOSH WHOOSH WHOOSH WHOOSH! And the city photographed all of that. And people are coming and petting that dog; it's going to be like Lincoln's nose. And it's famous.

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, now it's a big tourist attraction in Chicago.

MS. RICHARDS: What caused that woman initially to want the sculptures of the *Wizard of Oz*?

MR. KEARNEY: She didn't tell me.

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, there are people who are nuts about it, you know.

MR. KEARNEY: She just said she wanted to do it.

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, L. Frank Baum lived on the street behind here.

MS. RICHARDS: Oh, that explains it!

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes. And so she somehow must have known that. And so that's when they tore down all these houses - it was like urban renewal - they made this huge park out of it. It's a wonderful little park, great flowers.

MR. KEARNEY: It's 13 acres.

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes. Right in Lincoln Park. So they named it Oz Park. And that's how that all of a sudden became that. But the one thing like this -

MS. RICHARDS: Is there a statue of L. Frank Baum?

MRS. KEARNEY: No. But see, this was the *Time Out Chicago* article of the "40 Great Outdoor Sculptures that We Love" [2005]. Their favorite ones for this magazine, and number two, Jack's. This here was "One Man's Trash: the Tin Man, Cowardly Lion, and Scarecrow by John Kearney." That was nice.

MS. RICHARDS: Great.

MRS. KEARNEY: The interesting thing is - you know, we've been married 58 years, soon 59. And for the first 48 years, the first 45 years, let's say, he never talked about the war. Never! Never! And all of a sudden it was like the 60th anniversary, or 50th anniversary, of the war - and this is typical of all the people his age - they weren't talking about it, ever. I mean I never heard these stories until suddenly all of this started coming back. They buried it.

It's really a remarkable thing. It just wasn't there. They had turned it off, and they went on with their lives. And then when they were sort of middle-aged, later middle-aged, suddenly - you hear this again and again about - I've talked to other people whose fathers had exactly the same experience. Unlike Vietnam veterans or now the current ones, because they came home, and they had a victory, and they put it all out of their minds. Because all that was so traumatic, so horrible for them, that they just - they buried it. And now he talks about it all the time, as if it was yesterday.

MS. RICHARDS: Making up for lost time.

MRS. KEARNEY: But it's really interesting because he just went on with his life, and he just was talking about art, and his whole life was totally -

MR. KEARNEY: But there's one big difference - we really won. [Laughs.]

MRS. KEARNEY: Yes.

MR. KEARNEY: There was no this or that about it.

MRS. KEARNEY: But, see, everything Jack did, he did it really on his own. There were many friends of ours who would say that if they ever got stranded on a desert island, they would want to be with Jack, because he could do anything. I mean, he can build anything. He could create anything. He was just, you know, did everything. Now it's not as easy for him. But that's the kind of person he was. And it was a spirit that he had - that he still has. He has a spirit of determined to be happy because he had such a terrible childhood. He had a very unhappy childhood. And his parents were just awful to him.

MS. RICHARDS: Kind of miraculous that he came out with that attitude.

MRS. KEARNEY: Well, it was in spite of them, you know. And my family became his family because they were so loving.

MR. KEARNEY: When I stopped off of that boat when the war was over, I had 300 dollars, and I was alive. And I was so happy, but I had no idea what I would do. And then the GI Bill was told to me. I didn't know about that. And so they said that I got for four years, I would get \$500 for the school - and most of them accepted it - and \$500 to live on. That was a lot of money in those days. And my life was completely changed then.

MS. RICHARDS: Yes, yes.

MR. KEARNEY: But it took a little while to get straightened up.

MS. RICHARDS: Well, a few years. It's really been great to hear about all these stories. That's very lucky.

Well, this has been wonderful. Thank you very much.

MR. KEARNEY: You're welcome.

[END OF INTERVIEW.]

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