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Oral history interview with Raymond J.
Kaskey, 2009 June 15-18

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Raymond J. Kaskey on June 15-18, 2009. The interview took place in Brentwood, Maryland, and was conducted by Avis Berman for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Archives of American Art's U.S. General Services Administration, Design Excellence and the Arts oral history project.

Raymond J. Kaskey and Avis Berman have reviewed the transcript. Their corrections and emendations appear below in brackets. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: So this was Professor Schmertz?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Robert Schmertz, yes, of the banjo fame.

AVIS BERMAN: I guess I—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Oh, he was famous for writing these funny folk songs about architecture and Pittsburgh.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, Pittsburgh has a very rich architectural heritage, and all sorts of great architects work there. I think McKim, Mead & White didn't, but I think that's about the only significant exception. [Henry Hobson] Richardson, [Henry] Hornbostel, with all of the rich folk who built houses and businesses.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes. And they've managed not to tear a lot of the stuff down. Neglected it terribly, but at least they didn't tear it down.

AVIS BERMAN: Did you feel that the mills had a big impact on your childhood?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I don't know. They were just there; they were part of the landscape. You thought, that's what cities are like. Later on I think they did; yes, I began to look at them. And there are some really wonderful paintings in the Beaux-Arts style in the Carnegie Institute [Pittsburgh, PA] of the mills that are decorative wall panels based on the mills.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, John White Alexander, *The Apotheosis of Pittsburgh* [1905 -15], those murals.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes, yes. I didn't know his name.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, that's who they are by.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: By that time, in the '60s, they were becoming obsolete.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. No, that wouldn't have been something they—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: We didn't know that in the '50s. [Laughs.] Nobody knew it, apparently, in the '50s.

AVIS BERMAN: What were you good [in] at school besides drawing?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I guess, I was better at English and—I mean, I worked at math and science, and I was okay. I took all the math courses that were available in high school, which wasn't, I found out later, up to speed from people that went to private schools and blah blah blah. But actually, I had a very good English teacher who was very encouraging to me and a friend of mine. We read a lot of stuff that high school kids never would've read, like including *Ulysses* [James Joyce. New York: Random House, 1934] we tried one summer. But never managed that one. But, no, I was very interested in literature and writing. I used to write poetry, bad teenage stuff. But, you know.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, but you were cultivated. You were sensitive.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: So you sound like you were a good student.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: What else did you read that you enjoyed?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, then I started reading about architecture, going toward [Frank Lloyd] Wright's autobiography [*An Autobiography: Frank Lloyd Wright*. London: Longman's Green and Company, 1932], and you had to write a senior thesis, paper, I guess. It was on Wright, as I recall. Wright had died in '59, didn't he?

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hm. [Affirmative.]

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: And I was—'60 to '61, I guess, I was a senior, and Wright was still the top of the heap.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, the Guggenheim [Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY] had just opened about two years before.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: That's right.

AVIS BERMAN: Fallingwater [1934, 1938, and 1948, Bear Run, PA].

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. No, I had gone to New York for the first time in my life and saw the Guggenheim. Wow!

AVIS BERMAN: So your first visit to New York was in high school?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. It was on the way to the Newport Jazz Festival [Newport, RI], which I don't know why my parents let me go. But it was four teenagers in a car who were 17, 18 years old. [Laugh.] It was a real eye-opener. [They laugh.]

AVIS BERMAN: And anything else you recall?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, I got really drunk on the beach at Newport.

I thought I was interested in jazz in high school. We used to go to the Hill District in 11th and 12th grade, which is the location of, oh, the famous bar. I can't think of the name of it. Artists [inaudible] were always raving about it. There are two: one called the Hurricane Lounge, and the other I can't—I'll think of it later. But, yes, I was very interested in jazz. I mean, the whole Bohemian thing started to appeal to me in the 12th grade, wearing black turtlenecks and writing poetry and listening to jazz. That's when the Beatnik thing was just getting over—it finally sort of came to Pittsburgh in the late '50s, early '60s, where there were coffee houses, and you could go listen to people play, strum on guitars, [laughs] all that stuff.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, it may have been in Pittsburgh earlier, but you also had to get old enough.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes. Exactly. I hadn't thought about that in 40 years.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay. Well, that's good. So meanwhile, are you working? I mean, do you have part-time jobs? Do you have to help—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I worked in the library, public library, in—late '50s was a recession, as I recall. Pittsburgh felt it pretty badly. It was hard to get a job for a teenager. Even moving boxes in a warehouse, you had to know somebody. But, yes, the first job I had was—it was working in the library; it was part-time, lasted for about a year. But it was a good environment to be in. You had to just browse a lot of books you wouldn't ordinarily - even if you visited the library - you would know about.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, just having to re-shelve them, you would see all these ones next to each other.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, and the titles, and wonder, what's this about? Blah blah.

AVIS BERMAN: So you were reading a lot then, too.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. There were four good teachers there who were interested in helping people get out of this, kind of, working-class milieu, even to the point of lending money, which one my English teachers did when I was in college, which was really generous of her. I don't know whether my parents ever paid her back or not. [They laugh.]

AVIS BERMAN: Was that for tuition?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, and whatever. Then it was possible for a working-class kid to go to a decent college or university, you know.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, was Carnegie-Mellon where you wanted to go? Or you had no choice? What did you think you wanted to do?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I wanted to go into architecture. At first I thought I wanted to be a painter. And my parents said, no way! You'd better study engineering. Well, I'm not smart enough to do engineering. This was right after the *Sputnik* [1957], and that looked like the coming thing, which it was. So architecture seemed like the best compromise for my artistic leanings, such as they were, and being able to make a living afterwards. I'm not sorry I did that.

I think it was a good education at Carnegie for the first three years. Then it was a five-year undergraduate program. Not so hot. By then the Vietnam War was, well, really getting heated up. People were cutting classes and doing demonstrations and burning buildings, and it was really not a great time to be in school to learn anything about a profession.

The big thing that happened to me at Carnegie was I got this traveling fellowship from the Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company, which was awarded to an architecture student at the end of the fourth year, based on his past work, in the faculty's estimation, who would benefit best from it. And I got this prize [Mrs. Louise Bennett Award, National Sculpture Society, New York, NY, 1981] of \$3,000, which went a long way.

So I went to Europe for a year on my own. It had no strings attached. That's where I started doing a lot of drawing of architecture and sculpture. I used Rome [Italy] as kind of the home base. Did a lot of Italy. But, you know, the rest of Western Europe and Greece, Turkey even.

AVIS BERMAN: France?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: France, England, Netherlands. Not Germany, not Spain, not then at any rate. Six weeks in Greece, and a couple of days in Istanbul [Turkey], which is about as far east as I got. But mainly, half the time in Italy, maybe four or five months.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, that's great. So you were looking at essentially an entire country that was an open-air museum of architecture.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Exactly. I went from Sicily to Milan, a lot of places in between. So that was the best thing that's ever happened to me. [They laugh.]

AVIS BERMAN: Well, and also it is huge, I mean, for an architecture—for any artist really. Painter, sculptor, or anything.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Right, right. And I did meet a lot of other Americans there then: sculptors and architects.

AVIS BERMAN: And did you go to places—did you go to Carrara, for example?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Eventually. Not on that trip. But all the big cities and some of the smaller cities. I had a friend who was a couple of years ahead of me in architecture school who had a Fulbright there, and he had an apartment in Rome. He was very interested in hill towns. And he had a car. So we would go around looking at obscure little hill towns for their urban form, et cetera. And we eventually went around—went to Greece, from [inaudible] to cross on the ferry. I spent six weeks driving through Greece, which was another eye-opener.

AVIS BERMAN: I should also ask you, in Carnegie-Mellon, were there any other students that you've remained friendly with or friends or other people there who were important?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Kent Bloomer was my instructor in my first year. He was, like, the first year out of Yale [University, New Haven, CT]. He was a sculptor who had had an interesting academic history: starting out in physics at MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA], and winding up going into architecture, and dropping out of architecture, and winding up at Yale and doing sculpture. His only degree was an M.F.A. in sculpture. He taught three-dimensional design. The first year was Bauhaus-based, by way of Yale.

AVIS BERMAN: [Josef] Albers.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Albers then. Both instructors—the two-dimensional guy, Bill Huff, had been an architecture student at Yale and absorbed all the Albers stuff and kind of neo-Bauhausian, very rigid, kind of Swiss, graphics.

AVIS BERMAN: [Inaudible]?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, that's for sure. But Kent was more of a free spirit. But that's when I really got interested in sculpture. In fact, I almost quit architecture after spending a year in Bloomer's class. And he said, "Don't do it again!"

AVIS BERMAN: I guess, my question is at this moment is, how are you feeling about it? Do you want to be an architect at this moment?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. No, I wanted to do both. I really, in the long run, found out I couldn't. But that's what formed me, my ideas about sculpture, is how they relate to architecture. Doing the free-standing figure, you know, and the, sort of, great tradition, that's nice. I like doing that. All of my commission work has really been, how is it related to architecture or a landscape or plazas, even to the point of sort of taking a backseat to the architecture, which I don't mind at all.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, that was the tradition, that it would be integrated.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Exactly. Not clashing, as is the mode today.

AVIS BERMAN: Or even a great muralist like Thomas Hart Benton purposely would clash. He would clash with the architecture, is what he wanted to do. But previously, in the Beaux Arts, it would all be integrated. Benton would pick a subject that fit the building, but he would do it in the style that he wanted to do it.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Doesn't seem like much of a clash these days.

AVIS BERMAN: No, no. But it was different then because it moved out from the architecture instead of being more subordinate to it.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. Well, anyway, yes. And that's not a revolutionary idea. But anyway, that's—

AVIS BERMAN: So right.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Kind of breaching the bomb with me. So, you know, I did become an architect.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, right.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Paid the dues and, you know, jumped through all the hoops and got the registration [inaudible].

AVIS BERMAN: So you're AIA-certified [American Institute of Architects]?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: FAIA [Fellow of the American Institute of Architects], yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay. Right.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: As of 1992, which was—

AVIS BERMAN: But that was as an artist. But before, could you have been Raymond Kaskey, AIA?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes, yes. No, I was.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. You are a certified architect.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I did work as an architect after not getting tenure at the University of Maryland [College Park, MD]. I came here out of Yale, where I spent two years after Carnegie-Mellon.

AVIS BERMAN: At that moment, was the architectural program at Pittsburgh a good preparation?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. It was, up to the—probably about the first three years, and then things got crazy, and people weren't doing anything. And then when I went off to Europe, I had still to come back and finish my fifth year. And I did not want to be there. I really wanted to stay in Italy. If I had finished school, I think I would've. On the other hand, I was 1-A [available immediately for military service], about to be drafted, too, when I got to New Haven [CT].

AVIS BERMAN: Why did you want to go to Yale School of Architecture?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, it seemed like a way to prolong doing sculpture and not having to face the real world.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. And could you take courses in the art department?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I did. That's all I did, basically, because this program was brand new, set up by Charles Moore, and it was called Master in Environmental Design, which meant nothing—or everything. You could do anything you wanted.

So I met a teacher there in the art department, Erwin Hauer, who was a Viennese guy; came here in the '50s on a Fulbright and stayed. And he had done all the classical stuff. But he was also interested in this—well, they call it the Yale School of Sculpture. I don't know what else to call it. People like Charles Perry and Robert Engman and Kent Bloomer and Erwin Hauer all did these sort of mathematically inspired, minimal-surface kind of mathematical constructions, which were, you know, influenced by [inaudible], people like that. And I really ate that up. I just thought that was—

AVIS BERMAN: Constructivism?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: - the cat's pajamas. And it seemed an architectural approach.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: To sculpture.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, wasn't Tony Smith an architect?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I think so.

AVIS BERMAN: That's the way he went.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. I'm not sure—a kind of straight geometry; I was more interested in the sensual curvature and stuff like that. Organic, but mathematically inspired, like Mobius strips [closed, turned curve]. So that's really where I—I mean, I spent the first seven, eight years after getting out of school doing that kind of sculpture.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. At Yale, who were your other teachers besides Erwin Hauer?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, there were—well, a guy named Walter Harris, who was a planner. But, you know, that was to fulfill requirements. And I did a group thesis with some other students; we did a big planning project about the New Haven harbor, which I was only mildly interested in. [James] Jim Rosati was there; I had him—I took a class with him. He was from Pittsburgh originally. And Erwin Hauer and a couple of other guys: Charlie Wilson. They were just people teaching in the undergraduate art.

AVIS BERMAN: So you weren't there like when [Jack] Tworokov or any of those people were? You didn't interact with them? I mean, they're painting, it's true. But I'm just curious. So you weren't thinking—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, Rosati was the head of the art department at that time.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, just to also—just to go back to Carnegie-Mellon to be there for five years, how did you do it financially? Did you have scholarships?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, I had scholarships, and I had jobs at - I had summer jobs, but then I had jobs during the school year, like again working in a library, working in the Huntington Rare Botanical Book Library, which was kind of interesting, seeing those prints, rare botanical prints. And I worked in architects' offices for various professors.

AVIS BERMAN: Were you a draftsman?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. For a fellow named [Felix] Ralph [Reinhold] Drury, who was one of my professors in the sophomore year; I really liked him. He was a really good architect. I worked for him.

AVIS BERMAN: What does being a good architect mean to you?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I don't know. It's hard to say without sounding so middle of the road, but somebody who's interested in solving problems but not taking it to the next level, and has some aesthetic biases that send them one way instead of another way. And I think it was beyond the problem-solving part, getting the program right. And making pleasant spaces and that sort of thing. But sort of an emphasis on the historical aspects without any copying of historical styles. I think people like Drury and some other people there had been to Princeton [University, Princeton, NJ] and had studied with Jean Labutut, this Frenchman who was very influential at Princeton.

AVIS BERMAN: I don't know who that is. I'll have to look it up. You say Jean—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I'm not sure. Labutut, I think, is his name. Charlie Moore had been part of that group. They were interested in tradition without copying anything in particular.

AVIS BERMAN: Tradition wasn't a dirty word.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No. There were ideas there that you can lift—and feel like you're in this tradition without being, you know, like a Beaux-Arts architect, just copying things. That came later. [They laugh.]

AVIS BERMAN: Well, with painters it's okay to swipe your compositions from the Old Masters.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, exactly. I still feel that way about architecture. Vernacular architecture [use of local materials and functional form] and regionalism have a lot to offer, especially now in the energy crisis mode that we're in. Traditional or vernacular architecture solved a lot of those problems because it had to; they didn't have the air-conditioning or whatever.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes. I'm also going to ask you about Carnegie-Mellon in relation to Andy Warhol and Philip Pearlstein, who went there, even though you were not in the painting department there. Did that kind of thing filter in?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. Well, we were all in the same building. Drama on the ground floor, and the sculpture studio in the subbasement, as it always is put. Music on the mezzanine. Architecture above that. And painting and design above that. So there was a lot of interaction between painting and design students and architecture students—more so than drama students or whatever. Or music students who were off in their own little practice rooms. Yes, I mean, we—you could draw from the model. This was not condoned by the Bauhaus contingent, but you could still do it on your own time. I guess they were aware of Warhol. He had graduated in '49 or something like that.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. But he was famous in the '60s. He became so famous in the '60s. That's all.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: I mean, he'd been a very successful illustrator before. But from about '62, '63—you know, the '60s—he was, in fact, he was famous then. So he may have been the most—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Painting people I hung out with, they were interested in, like, Francis Bacon.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Some kind of expressionist, figurative stuff. I think that was—

AVIS BERMAN: Maybe [Richard] Diebenkorn or Bay Area stuff. Who knows?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, there was, yes, some people doing hard-edge abstraction. But it seemed like the most interesting painters were these kind of expressionist figurative people; they seemed to be the most well thought of in the painting department. But, yes, there was—there was some New York abstractionists contingent, I guess. I didn't really follow it all that much.

AVIS BERMAN: And so, and with your—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Pop art hadn't really made any impact, Andy Warhol notwithstanding—that I remember.

AVIS BERMAN: I suppose if he had painted a Heinz soup can instead of a Campbell's soup can, he might have been more noticed. [Laughs.]

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I don't know why he didn't, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: He wanted to be out of Pittsburgh, too. [They laugh.]

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, I guess so.

AVIS BERMAN: That's another question. When are you feeling that you really want to leave Pittsburgh?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: When I went to Italy. But then I had to put in another year. And then I spent two years in New Haven, and then got a job here teaching.

AVIS BERMAN: When did you meet Sherry?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: In my junior year at Carnegie-Mellon. She was a freshman at that time. She was from New York and very sophisticated, been around the block. [They laugh.] Pittsburgh was kind of parochial.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. And we should—the reason I am mentioning Ray's wife, Sherry, is that she's been very

important in his career in many manifestations, which we'll get to later on. And her full name is?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Sherrell, S-H-E-R-R-E-L-L, Lewis, which was her maiden name, Kaskey.

AVIS BERMAN: L-E-W-I-S?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: And everyone calls her Sherry, S-H-E-R-R-Y.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Exactly right.

AVIS BERMAN: So you met when you were a junior.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. She was in a French class, and I was in a French class.

AVIS BERMAN: Ooh la la.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, right. [Laughs.] We studied French together.

AVIS BERMAN: That's the right language for it. And so she waited for you when you went to Italy, or did she join you?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: She was still in Carnegie, had to finish her—she was in her junior year. And then she had to finish her senior year when I came back. So we both graduated at the same time.

AVIS BERMAN: And when did you get married?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Upon graduating, shortly thereafter, and went to New Haven.

AVIS BERMAN: So what would be 19—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Sixty-seven.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, we got married September 2, 1967, in New Haven.

AVIS BERMAN: And did you apply for scholarships or—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. And I had some student loans. But, yes, I had a fellowship and some student loans.

AVIS BERMAN: And what was the most important thing you could feel you got out of Yale?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Meeting Erwin Hauer and taking a class with him.

AVIS BERMAN: Can you contrast what you learned from Kent Bloomer versus what you learned from Erwin Hauer?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, Bloomer was a student of Erwin Hauer's.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: But Bloomer at that time was not interested in the figure. He was doing these hammered-metal abstractions, which played a big part later on in my life. [Laughs.] A way big part.

But Erwin had done not just the mathematical abstractions, which he was very good at, but also he had done a lot of figurative stuff, and particularly animals: birds and deer and [inaudible], but in a very abstracted kind of way. But still recognizable, not—there was so much bad animal abstraction. [Ms. Berman laughs.] I didn't know how to separate that out. But, no, he had done it in a very—let's just say a very precise kind of way. But still naturalistic.

What I learned from him, I think, most about the figure is the geometry of a pose. Not just the way you would draw it two-dimensionally, but how it unfolded three-dimensionally. And he, you know, went back and forth between abstraction and the figurative, but with the same kind of ideas about, what he called "timing," which was what you see as you move around a piece of sculpture, how an event opens up, how it disappears behind the sculpture. And I thought, wow! I never thought of looking at anything that way.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, yes, but that's classic. [Paul] Cézanne always said, "I'm looking to the left, and I'm looking to the right. And then it changes." So it's really classic when you start figuring out how to see.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, I didn't know that's what I was doing. But, yes. I mean, it was like a revelation to me.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, especially for sculpture. How you're moving around and—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: —and looking at it from all angles, which you don't do with a flat surface.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Exactly.

AVIS BERMAN: And are you drawing all the time? I mean, is that—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Not really. After that intensive year in Europe drawing, I just did architectural drawing after that. No, I really can't draw in the classic manner. I try to draw like I sculpt.

AVIS BERMAN: Which means?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, recently it means more, even though you're doing the figure - and I was very interested in the centrality of the figure when I started out - I realized that that can quickly lead to mush. That you need a certain geometry, and you can create curvature with straight lines. Which goes back to this Constructivist business anyway. So that's the way I draw, rather than to do that kind of realistic -

AVIS BERMAN: But you don't do life drawings. That was something you did as a student.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, yes. Now that we're doing some bas-reliefs in my studio, you have to have a drawing to get started, even if you abandon it later in the process. Bas-relief is a whole new area for me that I just got into 10 years ago. I mean, I had done some, and thought I knew how to do it, and that it was easier than sculpturing; it turns out to be harder.

AVIS BERMAN: Why is that?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Because there's so much—I wouldn't call it stylization. It's got to work three-dimensionally, but it can't be three-dimensional. It has to be compressed. As somebody said, bas-relief usually improves if it falls flat on the floor while you're working on it. And you've got to discipline yourself to think that way. I mean, you can't just throw it on the floor and hope that it works. [Laughs.] Although I've been tempted at times to do that. But we're getting ahead.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, that's all right. If something comes up, I'm not going to stifle a thought. So that's perfectly all right to talk about things.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I looked at a lot of bas-relief in Europe, and I didn't really get it. I thought it was just like drawing, only it had a little three-dimensionality to it.

AVIS BERMAN: [Inaudible.]

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. And what I realized recently is, it's got to work from 180 degrees. In-the-round sculpture has to work from 360. And I thought, well, if you get it right from the front, that's it. But it isn't, because you look at it from left and the right. And there are some weird things that happen if you don't pay attention to the left view and the right view. There's this compression that takes place of the three-dimensional image, and you've got to deal with it. It's got to look right.

I mean, you look at a drawing from an oblique angle, and it still looks right. Even though it's foreshortened in some strange way, it doesn't strike you as strange. And relief has to have that quality, too. It can't be extremely distorted from the side views. Ultimately things do get distorted. It depends on whether you're having high or low relief, too. So it's just complex. It's more complex, more visual manipulation than just working from a model, say. It's more than direct observation—there's a lot more invention.

AVIS BERMAN: So when you finish Yale, even though you do have this vague degree in environmental design, and you can practice architecture, do you really want to be a sculptor at that point?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. Well, that's why I went into teaching. And Kent Bloomer, who by that time had gone back to Yale, had come here to the University of Maryland in Washington [DC]—in the Washington suburbs [College Park, MD]—and said, "They're starting a new program" - the architecture school was only two years old at that time - "and they're looking for someone to teach a beginning-level, sort of basic design course like you've

had throughout the years." And he recommended me. So I did get the job here.

AVIS BERMAN: And that was in '60—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Sixty-nine.

AVIS BERMAN: Sixty-nine. And meanwhile, what about being drafted? What's happening?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, at that time I was 1-A and had exhausted all the appeals and was going to be shipped off to Vietnam. And I just happened to turn 26 before I was drafted. So that was that. But at that time I was—let's see, when did I turn 26? Forty-three—

AVIS BERMAN: Sixty-nine.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, the first year I was here teaching.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, yes. And thank goodness you were born in the beginning of the year. Thank your folks. [Laughs.]

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Right, right. I thought teaching might keep me out of the army. In fact, I had applied to the coast guard up in New London, Connecticut, and passed all the tests and everything, thinking that'd be a better deal than being drafted in to the army. But they asked me if I would service in Vietnam, and I said, no, I wouldn't. So that "x-ed" out the coast guard.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. And did you engage in any protests or marches or anything yourself?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes - but nothing radical, for sure - since I was in Washington.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, right.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. Just attended a couple of big marches.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. And when you met Sherry in college, was she a fine art major?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, she was an English major. Got her degree in English.

AVIS BERMAN: And when you were at Yale, what was she doing?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: She was working as a teacher in—first, public schools in Meriden, Connecticut, and then in a private girls' school in New Haven.

AVIS BERMAN: Meriden, Connecticut, right?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. Meriden, yes. Yes, and anyway, that's what kept us solvent. Plus, her parents lived in Prospect, Connecticut, and they would help us out a lot. Looking back on it, other than the digs we were in, we lived pretty well. Always ate well. [They laugh.]

AVIS BERMAN: And at Yale what did your sculpture look like?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: It was very influenced by what the faculty was doing, like Erwin Hauer: these minimum-surface kind of abstractions that played with the idea of inside and outside and how you got there and Mobius strips.

AVIS BERMAN: And what was the material you typically were using?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Just using plaster. Although my last year there I had done a piece in wax ,preparatory to casting it in lost wax. But by then the building was being—the building had been set on fire [laughs] at that point, the A&A [Art and Architecture] building. And I thought my wax would have melted, but it was in a garbage can full of water in the subbasement, and I was able to salvage it. I carried it around for a year until I got it cast here in—I got it cast in New York. Wasn't able to cast it at Yale. And then I did a bunch while I was here at Maryland in bronze.

AVIS BERMAN: And while you were at Yale sculpting, were you interested in trying to make connections in New York? Because Yale was always famous for networking. I was curious if you did that.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, not really. I don't think there was much interest in that kind of sculpture at that point. That was when Minimalism was getting going. All the rest, the graduate students at Yale in sculpture, were always doing boxes and, you know—

AVIS BERMAN: But Minimalism wasn't that far away from it, since there was a geometric abstraction basis to it.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes. But I never did. I mean, I was still wondering how you put this together with architecture. Ultimately, that's why I gave it up, because I could never figure it out.

AVIS BERMAN: So anyway, you got the job here, and you're living in College Park?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, in Silver Spring [MD], for a couple of years because it was close to the university. And then ultimately moved in where we are right now.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, in Washington. And I guess that's probably why I met Sherry first. I guess I met you around '74 or '75. So you were working.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Right, right. She had been in that program at GW [George Washington University, Washington, DC] with Winfield Swanson.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, right.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: She was in American Studies.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, I was teaching at Maryland, and I was trying still to, I mean, even in teaching, to bridge that gap between architecture and sculpture.

AVIS BERMAN: What courses were you teaching?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, I taught in the first-year architecture studio, which was the second year, the sophomore year, because they didn't take studios in the first year. That was a straight architecture program.

But then I was allowed to invent my own course called "Visual Design," which was a replay of what I knew in college—or what I did in college. Some of the color exercises. All that watered-down stuff. And one of my colleagues, who had been to Harvard [University, Cambridge, MA] and had gone through a similar kind of thing, we taught this together. And then the three-dimensional thing was—so what I learned in Carnegie and Yale. Would invite Kent Bloomer to be the visiting critic in this visual design business. And that had to do with, at that time, symmetry—not in the classical sense, but in the mathematical sense, which involved like 17 different two-dimensional patterns and 236 three-dimensional patterns. Geometry is associated with that. That seemed to me the bridge at that time, but it was still pretty abstract.

AVIS BERMAN: And meanwhile, in the city of Washington, are there shows?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Or what do you see? In the visual environment, what's happening, you know?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, the Hirshhorn Museum [and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC] opened up in '74.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: So that was—yes, that was interesting. But then there was always the National Gallery [of Art, Washington, DC] and all the richness of that, and looking at paintings and—then another long trip—not long, seven, eight weeks' sojourn in Europe; Sherry and I went for a summer—and started looking at figurative stuff. But what finally capped it off was not getting tenure at the University of Maryland.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Do you know why you didn't?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, because it was an architecture program, and I wasn't really advancing myself in the field of architecture. Still going on with my sucking my thumb, wondering how to bring these two things together. Which was probably the right decision on their part—and mine, although I felt screwed at the time. But it was denying—

AVIS BERMAN: No, I'm sure you must have been unhappy. But were you building anything or renovating? Did you have any jobs or commissions while you were teaching?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, I was renovating my own house. And then I was working with some of the other faculty on projects that never got built, unfortunately. And doing competitions like the Roosevelt Island [NY] housing competition, which was big in '74, '75, with a colleague of mine at Maryland. Yes, that was fun. But

that's what a lot of academic architects do, is competitions. I mean, God, after all that's how [Friedrich] Peter St. Florian became the architect of the World War II Memorial [1997-2004, Washington, DC], because he was an academic doing a competition, and he happened to win.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: So anyway, after not getting tenure, I had a year's grace. Then I went to work as an architect for one of the faculty who had left the year before or something, and he was doing a lot of work on Capitol Hill [Washington, DC] which involved doing very—not very traditional—but using the vernacular vocabulary of Capitol Hill architecture, with the bay windows and the peaked roofs and the arched openings and stuff like that, which I found very interesting at that point.

AVIS BERMAN: Trying to integrate it with the fabric of the rest of the street.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes. Exactly. Make it look like it had been there, even though it's brand new.

So while I was doing my last year of grace at the University of Maryland - which was helpful to have some money because we'd just bought a house two years before that, doing architecture and—what sent me over from doing what I was doing, I was - Sherry and I house-sat for Kent Bloomer, whose place was up in, not Madison [CT] the first time, not Stony Creek [CT]—Guilford, Guilford, Connecticut. House on the water with a studio, separate studio, looked out on the Thimble Islands [Long Island Sound]. Idyllic. For two weeks.

And since I had his studio there, and I want to play, I think, I wonder if I can do a portrait—never having tried to do that—of Sherry. So she sat for two weeks. And I struggled with that. I didn't get it finished within the two weeks. But I got hooked on doing that. And I still have the portrait, as you saw in the studio. So then I really got interested in modeling from life.

One of the things, to go back to Carnegie-Mellon and the freshman year, was we would—this was a problem that was cooked up at Yale—was to study bones, big beef bones, and cow pelvises, for the obvious lessons in form, and looking at things, learning how to see. So that I figured, well, with that background I could look at the face and do the same thing. Not doing it from the inside out, not studying anatomy, but from the outside in, what is in front of you, and can you reproduce it, either at the same size or a different size? So that discipline, and the idea of timing and looking at things that I learned from Erwin Hauer, bring all those things together to do a head. And I think I was reasonably successful.

AVIS BERMAN: Meanwhile, up to this point you had never studied anatomy; is that correct?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Mm-mm. [Negative.]

AVIS BERMAN: Did you ever study anatomical drawing? Or did you ever attempt to do that?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I did, but it came much later, unlike the academic process, where you start from the skeleton, and then you add the muscles and do that. I didn't do that until—I really can't remember. I just relied on observation more than knowledge of anatomy. Although it would've helped me a lot. But having no one to instruct me, I just did it in the way that I thought I could do it. What happened next was—I did a stint of teaching at Yale for one semester when Kent Bloomer went on a sabbatical. But that was just a distraction.

AVIS BERMAN: What did you teach?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: His basic undergraduate introduction to architecture thing, which was basically his problems that I was familiar with, and some things that I picked up at Maryland: learning how to introduce students to structural concepts, tension, and compressions, and stuff like that. Basic architectural things.

Anyway, I was still working with this fellow [Robert] Bob [Bell], who had a practice [Robert Bell Architects, Washington, DC], enough to keep the two of us busy on Capitol Hill. Ultimately we did a big project in Georgetown in about '79 and '80, when the economy was in such bad shape. But he was working as a developer architect at that point, doing housing, four or five units kind of thing. Modest scale. But it was experience.

AVIS BERMAN: What did you do on it, on this?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I would do the—as they say—do the dirty, the construction drawings. Whatever I could add to the design process.

AVIS BERMAN: What we should also—before we go a little further—is that you did do a piece when you were at [University of] Maryland; you did more than one. But, I guess, the one that still survives is *Pyramid* [1972]?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. Right, right, right.

AVIS BERMAN: Would you talk about that?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, that was a direct outcome of the Yale School of minimalist and mathematics—not minimalist—but the mathematical surface things, because I'd done these little things that were profoundly influenced by Erwin Hauer.

But while I was at Maryland, the dean had gotten about a thousand dollars to build a memorial to this architect [Herbert E. Rycroft, II] who had worked on the actual building that the new school of architecture was housed in. He died at a rather young age, in his '40s. He was from Baltimore [MD], and his aunt had given the school a thousand dollars to do a memorial to him. And I talked the dean into letting me do—they were just going to do some little thing. For a thousand bucks, what could you do? But since I had a summer vacation looming in 1972—yes, it was in '72—and an idea that I could turn one of these little things into a monument that would be a memorial—And pyramids are the early memorial form for dead people.

So I did a maquette [small preliminary model] on my own for a couple of months and came up with something that I thought I could do for a thousand bucks or with donated materials and donated labor and blah blah blah. So he let me do it. And it's still there. People adopted it as kind of a place to have their picture taken on graduation. At least they did then.

AVIS BERMAN: At the time, what did you learn from it? I mean, how did it contribute to your—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Make it big, because when you put something outdoors, it shrinks. If I'd had more money, I would've made it bigger, but you know. Especially a pyramidal form, you know, goes away from you quickly. It gets smaller faster than you think. And just a taste for construction, for actually doing it, doing something big and whaling away at it. I mean, that combined—

AVIS BERMAN: Did you feel it's too small, I mean, in terms of—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes. I mean, it could've been a little bigger. But I'm not unhappy with it.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. When you look back today, are you happy with it?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. Because we just did a little renovation of it last spring.

AVIS BERMAN: Actually, I was going to get to that. What was the material?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Ferrocement [steel-enforced concrete], because the budget was so constricted—or restricted. Building something that big in a permanent material was a bit of a head-scratcher. At that point I learned about a guy who built concrete boats right up the road here, halfway between here and Baltimore.

AVIS BERMAN: Concrete boat?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: In ferrocement.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hm. [Affirmative.]

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. You think, oops!

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, sink to the bottom of the sea. [They laugh.]

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, it's a thin shell. In fact, Pier Luigi Nervi, the great Italian engineer and architect, had pioneered ferrocement—*ferrocemento*. And this guy showed me his technique. And I thought, yes, this is what I can do to build this thing with. And, of course, it's only three-quarters of an inch thick, but it looks solid like pyramids are supposed to look—solid. But it's really just a thin shell over a plywood form. Anyway, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Did you know enough about your craft to make it so it would—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I learned by doing. The overall lesson that I've learned from a whole bunch of sources [is] that doing is better than knowing. That's always been my mantra that has led me on. It's gotten me into a lot of trouble, too. But, anyhow, I have a tendency to worry about the theoretical stuff to the point where I'm paralyzed with fear. But the thing that usually gets me off dead center is to remember: just do something, and then try to figure it out as you go. So that worked for that pyramid sculpture. That was the end of the—I didn't know it at the time—that was the end of the line.

AVIS BERMAN: But the question is, in terms of renovation or restoration, what had to be done to it?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Just cleaned up. I had this idea about the way it would integrate with plants. That really

didn't work out because I didn't know anything about plants.

AVIS BERMAN: Were there plants planted there?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, the ivy was supposed to grow up in the organic parts. It was kind of cut away and then organic fashioned from just the—it wasn't a true pyramid; it was the side of a cube or the vertex [highest point] of a cube, three sides of the cube, set up to look like a pyramid, which was a four-sided figure. But anyway. And it had this organic cut-away part which was a remnant of the minimum-surface ideas that I was experimenting with. I wanted the ivy to grow up there. But it was too hot, wrong orientation. So many of these things never work out with plants.

AVIS BERMAN: And the water can undermine—I mean, I don't know what kind of grading you had there. But did the water or the damp undermine the sculpture?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No. No, no. There was—I think the ivy would've undermined it.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Clinging to it, tearing apart the fragile ferrocement. But anyway.

AVIS BERMAN: You were saying it was the end of the line.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, for that way of working. I tried to do other things, follow up with what I learned on that. And just nothing ever really worked out.

AVIS BERMAN: One can also argue, although you didn't know it, it might have been the beginning of something, because you picked a pyramid for its historical funerary associations.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: You weren't trying to make an abstract cube that was devoid of associations because—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, I was cultivating the association because it was a memorial to a specific person. Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: So anyway. So you—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I backed into that one, I guess.

AVIS BERMAN: So you couldn't get any more work as a sculptor of monuments or of large-scale pieces at the moment. And you were working as an architect to stay alive, or existing.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, and doing my last year of teaching, when I discovered doing the figure seemed to be a great ah-ha! moment. And, of course, Washington, and looking at all the equestrian statues on every circle and all that stuff, started to look interesting to me because I'd never really looked at it before, and how to handle monumentality, as well as memorializing the events or people.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Well, at this moment, your thinking is that you want to work with the figure as a sculptor, is that—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Does this mean you had also thought, oh, do I want to do monuments—or you hadn't gotten that far? What was the situation?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, no, I realized I had to learn how to do the figure before I could do anything. That was a five-year, kind of self-instruction process. You know what they say about autodidactics—they're the worst teachers.

AVIS BERMAN: So what are you doing to educate yourself?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Just working from life, from the figure, hiring models. And I did get a break by getting a job as an instructor for a half-semester at Kansas State University [Manhattan, KS], doing the same thing I was doing at Maryland: teaching a beginning architecture course. But they provided me with a studio and models that I could work with from the art department. I mean, Manhattan, Kansas, is in the middle of nowhere—in spite of its name.

AVIS BERMAN: So that was in '78.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes. So I spent January, February, March, there, doing some pretty intensive work with the figure from models. And maybe I got one interesting sculpture out of it. So that when I came back, I treated that as a maquette that I could enlarge. That was the first time I'd—other than the portrait head—done anything bigger than two feet tall or something. And I tried to use that as my introduction to anatomy.

AVIS BERMAN: And your other pieces, do you still have those? Or are they destroyed?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, I have one of them sitting here in my studio, an enlargement to a four-foot figure that was just a standing male figure that I called *David*, because that would seem like what, you know, an obvious standing male - oh, I was very taken by Donatello's *David* [c. 1444] at that time, as swish as it is.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hm. [Affirmative.]

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: But a young male, kind of like a puppy with all big, knobby joints and everything, I found very interesting as a way to study the figure. But I don't know when I actually did an anatomical—I did an anatomical figure, but many, many years later. I still really relied on—I mean, I studied anatomy through books. And I never thought proportions were important because they weren't, really, in this abstract kind of sculpture. The question never came up: is this element related to this element correct proportionally? Because it wasn't an issue. But it is with the naturalistic figure. So that's when I started trying to learn about proportion and anatomy.

AVIS BERMAN: How about perspective?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, I always did perspective. I was trained to do layout perspectives and stuff like that in architecture school. It never occurred to me—it's something we're doing a helluva lot of right now with these bas-reliefs.

AVIS BERMAN: Because maybe that's what you were talking about, what you needed. The perspective is critical to those.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. Absolutely. And my two assistants, Joanna [Blake] and Margery [Forgues], for all their skills, they never really learned perspective, and nobody ever taught them. And I'm a terrible teacher. But we're working that out. [Laughs.]

AVIS BERMAN: Right. We should just say for the recording that these bas-reliefs that we're referring to are commissioned for the Teamsters union [International Brotherhood of Teamsters] -

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: - lobby, a frieze illustrating their history.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes. And here in Washington, D.C.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: So that would be the national headquarters?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay. That's—I won't say a private commission, but it's not a government association commission, a group.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: A union. A union job.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. [They laugh.] That's funny. Well, it would also seem to me that one must know proportion. But since you were trained in architectural, let's say abstract principles—because architecture is kind of abstract, really.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: It is. It's the most abstract art, really.

AVIS BERMAN: Exactly. Even though people don't think it is because, oh, it's a house. But it's clearly abstract. It seems to me that formal principles must have been inculcated. Or you must have gotten a lot.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I was always interested in Le Corbusier's idea of the Modulor [anthropometric scale of proportion], although it never made any sense to me. Or how you could apply it. But there's always this sneaking suspicion that the Golden Mean [Golden Section, a canon of proportion] meant something; I'm not sure that it does. But one struggled with it architecturally. And, yes, there's all this Pythagorean mysticism, which I'm kind of game for.

Well, I must say, of all this stuff that I read throughout the years, the two things that stuck with me: one was

D'Arcy Thompson's *On Growth and Form* [Cambridge, MA: C.U.P, 1917], which is a book about biology, basically, and that kind of 19th-century [inaudible], trying to apply ideas about symmetry and math to organic phenomena. D'Arcy Thompson, I understand, didn't really believe in evolution all that much; he thought that form evolved according to mathematical principles, which, for me, it does. And then the other one was - I was always interested in Gestalt psychology, too, from a perceptual point of view of how you group things and how you perceive form in an optical way, rather than this biological, deterministic way; why certain forms are big and why certain things are small. Blah blah blah. It's very interesting.

But the other book that really opened doors to me, which I still don't understand, was Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* [translated from French by Maria Jolas. New York: Orion Press, 1964]. But it never led to—I think historical associationism was not a kind of literary application. It has to do with, for Bachelard, at least in terms of architecture and probably sculpture, the meaning of up versus down, left versus right, in versus out, and the basement is different than the attic. And a corner has a lot of significance for [laughs] hiding things or whatever, or not hiding things. It's a—yes, kind of psychological reading of form.

And I think at that time Kent Bloomer was writing a book on—I forget the name of it now—with Charlie Moore [Kent Bloomer and Charles Moore. *Body, Memory, and Architecture*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977] on talking about these dimensions to space that are not just Cartesian coordinates; they actually mean something. And I think if you go back to the Renaissance theorists about the body, that is a very potent thing. Left is not the same as right, and up is not the same as down. And the midline of the body is the unmoved mover. And ideas about bilateral symmetry.

So those two books—one from the physical aspects of form and the other from the psychological aspects of form—those two things still move me to think more, think harder. If I can sum that up. [Laughs.]

AVIS BERMAN: You are—splendidly.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: So I feel exhausted at this point.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, well, let me see how much we've done. Just a couple of other things. You were formulating the idea of wanting to make figures. And was that—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Because of the, well, the physical attributes of form in the body, there was this residual idea about minimalist form and how—I mean, this is going to sound really stupid, but the conditions for equilibrium in things like soap bubbles and other occurrences in nature are things - form 120-degree joints, not 90-degree joints. Even though the right angle may be sacred, it doesn't appear all that much in nature. It's a manmade construct. But 120 degrees occurs in things - like when you bend your elbow here; this joint would be - or when you cross your legs, there's a crease here and one here and one there. And that's sort of 120 degrees. And I started looking at all those things, especially in the face, looking for things like that, trying to apply that stuff, which resulted in some pretty stiff things. Now I would know how to—I just see those things and, oh, yes. Or I can include them or not include them, but it's not like the whole world.

AVIS BERMAN: Meanwhile, you're doing something that is absolutely—might be outré, or there may be other people doing it, but you're not aware of it.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No.

AVIS BERMAN: Do you feel as if you're taking a risk? You're brave? You're crazy? I mean, you wanted to do it, but—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. I mean, it just—it was not because I was trying to grab onto the latest thing that was happening, that's for damned sure.

AVIS BERMAN: It wasn't then when you started it.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: But I thought it had enough intellectual heft to it to not just be playing around with appearances, or repeating 19th-century excesses of the figure.

AVIS BERMAN: What I wanted to ask you, in terms of a sculptor that I don't know if and when, even though the technique is apples and oranges—does a sculptor like George Segal become significant for you at any point?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Only much later, when I saw his work [*Depression Breadline*, 1999] at the Roosevelt Memorial [[Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial, Washington, DC]. I mean, he just captured the Depression. I think he boxed himself into a corner with that. It's totally technique driven, but it works for certain things, and it worked there. It was more of a theatrical thing for me.

AVIS BERMAN: You thought it was too theatrical.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes. It's sort of illustrational.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, no, it's okay. I'm just curious, because I was thinking about—because again, it's very different. He was making these sculptures he was casting, for instance, and making these situations. And it was accepted. And that's about the only one I can think of who was accepted in, shall we say, high-art circles at the time.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Right, right, right. For doing the figure.

AVIS BERMAN: Not counting [Alberto] Giacometti -

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, because maybe it was—I don't know—sort of evolved out of the idea of the armature, in Giacometti's case. Or casting.

AVIS BERMAN: And Segal, you know, Egypt.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. [Laughs.] Wrapping people.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. No, that didn't really influence me. At the same time, I was learning how to do all that stuff, how to make casts and everything and armatures; some people just stopped there.

AVIS BERMAN: And did you make new friends in the sculpture community from that?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes—yes. Yes, I guess I did. The National Sculpture Society in New York, I got into that—I don't remember when - and discovered, yes, a whole group of people making traditional sculpture. And you could do it. You could make a living at it. Some people did.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, José de Creeft—they were direct carvers, the older ones.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: There were all sorts of people there.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, I never got interested in carving.

AVIS BERMAN: Why was that?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I don't know.

AVIS BERMAN: So it's all been clay?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Modeling.

AVIS BERMAN: Modeling.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: You'd done construction.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, I think, yes. I'm still interested in construction as a mode, as opposed to modeling or carving or combining that with modeling in a kind of kit-of-parts approach, which didn't happen until later, much later, actually, in a conscious way. It certainly happens in the relief thing, where you can take a part here and go on along to the bottom, and it's totally inorganic. You just throw things together and see if you can resolve the -

AVIS BERMAN: And did you feel you were moving steadily toward - even though you might not know what it was, or did you feel you were floundering around?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Floundering, I guess, yes, is the best way to put it. Where are we time now?

AVIS BERMAN: Well, we're about probably at '79 or '80 or so.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, okay. Floundering, that was, yes, the year of floundering. I guess what focused me was the Vietnam Veterans Memorial competition.

AVIS BERMAN: And was that '81?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Eighty-one, yes. It may have been announced in 1980 or something. I spent a lot of time working on that. I had this idea that you could reference the Trojan War and the death of Patroclus—if that's the way you pronounce his name. I was interested in it from *The Iliad* [Homer], the literary point of view: rescuing the body of Patroclus, who was killed by—

AVIS BERMAN: Hector.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: —Hector. Was an honorable—you wouldn't allow your death to be dis—what do you call that?

AVIS BERMAN: Disrespected [dishonored]?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Disrespected.

AVIS BERMAN: Or not buried?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Not buried. That this was the ultimate shame. I figured that seemed to be an appropriate response to the Vietnam War as a memorial; whether you agreed with the war or not, you did not disrespect the dead. So I basically tried to update this possible classical sculpture. I thought that was a good idea. It might have been. But ironically, I just couldn't find an architectural setting to make that work. And I say ironically because at one point I had a little V-shaped wall with the names on it with the sculpture on top of it.

AVIS BERMAN: Amazing!

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Which I never—I abandoned that midway through and did something even more elaborate, which just turned out to be a kind of pleasant, gardenesque kind of thing, which was absolutely the wrong way to go.

AVIS BERMAN: And that's the way you submitted it?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: So your first—let's say your first focus—it was like you were competing to make a memorial?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. With that idea borrowed from the Greeks, borrowed literally from that sculpture by using the actual sculpture—

AVIS BERMAN: What was the original sculpture that you were—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, it's a Roman copy of a Greek sculpture that doesn't exist, which was whoever rescued the body.

AVIS BERMAN: So it would've been two male figures in contemporary dress or classical?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, contemporary. But there's a direct rip-off of the classical poses picking up a dead body.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hm. [Affirmative.]

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: But sort of half with army pants on and a helmet but no top, and a dead contemporary soldier. Anyway. But as I said, the architectural setting for it was a failure, I think just distracted from the idea. I should have just quit when I had the sculpture. The lesson I've been learning recently is quit before you're finished, because I do tend to keep on.

AVIS BERMAN: Were you ever able to use that idea again in something else you did?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No. Not really.

AVIS BERMAN: So that was the first competition you entered.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Were you bitter about the outcome?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, I was. I thought, well, for a while—

AVIS BERMAN: For your first try?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. To not even make the final cut, that was—

AVIS BERMAN: Well, how many people applied for that?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Fourteen hundred.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hm. [Affirmative.]

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Twelve hundred—1,300 and some. Whatever.

AVIS BERMAN: May I tell you that I was on another research project that was doing the first Ford Foundation grants for artists, the ones that they picked—they had 1,400 applications. And if you looked at the ones who didn't get it, one was David Smith.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Oh, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Except for [Josef] Albers, you know, almost never heard of any of the other ones.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Right, right.

AVIS BERMAN: And they gave it to Albers because he just didn't have any money, and this was in the 1960s.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Oh.

AVIS BERMAN: It always happens. The final cut was how many?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, there were first, second, and third. And then a bunch of honorable mentions, maybe seven or eight.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Maybe there were more, maybe 15 or something. Like one percent maybe. And then I thought the Maya Lin solution was—well, I didn't—I don't know. I thought it was sort of a cop-out. And it was brilliant, I have to admit.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, now you're more objective about it.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: It's also, this is an artist who would end up an architect. And also she's an architect/artist, as you were. You're competitors. So it's hard to—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I have to admit she captured lightning in a jar there, although I couldn't do that for a couple of years. But anyway.

AVIS BERMAN: No, it's good that you can—eventually, you could accept it. You're not dogmatic about it.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, no. I had been in the past. But, no, if it works on more than one level, then I think something's good. Because I think everything has to work on more than one level.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes. Right. Precisely.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: And that's why there's a lot of bad figurative sculpture around—because it only works on one, kind of imitative, level maybe. As you say, it's not very thoughtful.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes. How do you get it to be beyond imitative, to reach—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: That's the hard part, isn't it? For me, it's how it works with either landscape or architecture or as ornament, or as an extension of the building, or that there's some content there that you can reference, either historically or that says something about whatever you're trying to commemorate. Whether it's big, like World War II, or more personal.

AVIS BERMAN: Now, just to pick a couple of other big projects of the '70s.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, the Justice figures which - I've done three or four of them - I can't remember - thinking about how you make people think about justice. Not make them think: Maya Lin is always famous for saying, I don't tell people what to think; I just want to make them think. And that's where, I guess, I've spent the most time thinking about one thing, was justice: what does that mean? Michael Graves said about *Portlandia*

[1982-85, Portland, OR], giving visual access to the symbolism that's required, shall we say, for a courthouse, or a place, you know, in the genius loci [tradition of a place] tradition: a city, symbolize a city, or symbolize some aspect of justice. How do you create a visual symbol that makes this accessible without notes and knowing anything about the history of sculpture or—you have to know something to look at art, to get something out of it.

Like Simon Schama said in a recent article in the *New Yorker*, "If you're looking at a [Mark] Rothko or a [Jackson] Pollock, you have to like paint; otherwise you won't get anything out of it." In this case you don't have to like bronze, or you don't have to like clay or anything, but you have to know something about historical associations of justice or evocations of justice, like the scales and the blindfold. You have to, on the dumbest level, know what that represents.

So I want to play with that obvious idea, like I did for the courthouse, by making the figure to scale and combining that with Aesop's fable about the tortoise and the hare [*Justice Delayed, Justice Denied*, 1993-95, Albert V. Bryan Federal Courthouse, Alexandria, VA]. Two different ideas that would be combined: "justice delayed, justice denied" means you're entitled to swift justice.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, No, you're not saying "justice triumphant," [laughs] at all.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, no. It's just trying call into question, what's the right way to think about it? And there's no answer to that.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Well, I think this is where we'll stop for today. Thank you very much.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: This is where I've got to stop.

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AVIS BERMAN: This is AVIS BERMAN: interviewing Raymond Kaskey on June 16, 2009, for the GSA Archives of American Art Project, in his studio in Brentwood, Maryland.

We had left off in 1981, when you did not get the commission for the Vietnam War Memorial, and that had focused you, you said, on doing a piece of public sculpture. Was there some sort of crystallization there: Oh, this is what I really want to do? This is the main thrust of what I want to do? Or was it—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, it looked like [laughs] really like the end of the road, because I didn't know how I was going to make a living at that point, because the architectural work had dried up. The interest rates in 1980 were like 19, 20 percent. And the project that I was working on with Robert Bell was over. It was an actual luxury to do the Vietnam Veterans Memorial competition, considering the amount of time I spent on it. But I don't know how I could stay so focused when I'm not making any money. But anyway. Yes, I would say it gave me a taste for doing that.

And then I read about—got the RFQ [Request for Qualifications] - yes, that's what it was, a Request for Qualifications, for a competition to do a sculpture in Portland, Oregon, on the new Michael Graves City Hall addition, City Hall Annex [Portland Building]. I'd read about it in the National Sculpture Society news bulletin or something like that. And I thought, well, what have I got to lose? It's a matter of sending in slides and a résumé, six examples of your work.

I had done a piece of sculpture called—I called it—the *Corner Caryatid* [1980], which was a relief sculpture that turned the corner. It was one of those experiments to see if I could do a relief in two different planes, because I hadn't seen anybody doing that. I think it was a successful piece, and I managed to get a prize at a National Sculpture Society show for it and all that. So that was one of the ones I put in the submission, along with four or five others. I don't remember what they were. Possibly the Vietnam Veterans Memorial submission—or at least the figurative part of it.

And Michael Graves saw that and liked it and decided that I should be one of the semi-finalists, of which there were five chosen to do a maquette. You had to drive up to Princeton and talk to Michael Graves about the project. I had already started, and I already had my idea, which I did not want to tell him. We just talked in generalities. But this was one of those times when the idea came right the first day I walked into the studio to think about it. I had a studio at that time just north of Dupont Circle on Wyoming Street above a carriage house, second floor of a carriage house. And I never had a phone there, and I decided, well, since I'm going to be in this competition, I'm going to get a phone put in here.

So I was just waiting for the telephone guy to come, when I, in flipping through the [H. W.] Janson's *History of Art* [Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1969], I saw the image of [William] Blake's *The Ancient of Days* [1794], if that's what he called it. I don't remember. That's what the title was in the book, but I think he probably called it something else. And it just struck me as this is the image that I can work with.

I mean, I should go back and say, in the requirements, you had to—you didn't have to do a figure—but they did show you the city seal of Portland that had a woman in a neoclassical dress, a round, 19th-century piece of graphics, holding a trident to symbolize the sea trade and fishing industry. And a bunch of other stuff on it, you know, sort of typical—the only thing missing was the hammer and sickle. But there were sheaves of wheat in the background, so it wouldn't have been inappropriate. But commerce and industry. They called it Lady Commerce. And Michael Graves had re-christened her *Portlandia*.

So I thought, yes, this is a pose I could transpose into *Portlandia*. I just liked the geometry of it. Prior to that, I had done a copy, actually, of [Auguste] Rodin's *Crouching Woman* [c. 1880-82], only I used the male model because that's who I had available. And that was a similar kind of folded-up pose. And I figured—naively as it turns out—that this folded-up pose, kneeling pose, could be a large figure without being a tall figure. But it really had a lot of mass to it. At any rate—so I actually I flipped the symmetry around. And instead of a long beard, I substituted long hair on the woman. And the figure is reaching down with one hand—I put a wheat wreath in that hand and used the trident in the other hand. And it had an interesting sort of triangular geometry. It wasn't actually there in the Blake thing when I got down to modeling it with a model and discovered some things from, you know, other views that were equally interesting as the frontal view. So, literally the first day, I got that pose. And then it took two months to work it out and get it cast and get it sent in on time.

The budget was tight. Everything about the building was kind of minimal in terms of budget. They wanted a rather large monumental sculpture for \$200,000, which sounded to me like an enormous amount of money. But as it turns out, it wasn't, for what I proposed. But that's another about which—a later story. So the jury met and looked at all five submissions. One of the other finalists was a guy named Richard Savini, who was actually a painter and a friend of Michael Graves, who was teaching here at Catholic University [Washington, DC]. Michael was holding out for his submission because he included a lot of kind of motifs that Michael Graves used in his architecture. However, the good citizens of Portland, the rest of the people on the jury, did not like his proposal at all and liked mine—I mean, it boiled down to the two of us. So instead of picking one or the other at that point, they gave us all jury comments to listen to.

AVIS BERMAN: Just between the two of you or all five of you?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, just between the two of us. They narrowed it down to the two of us and said goodbye to the other three.

AVIS BERMAN: Do you know who the other three were?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Penelope Jencks was one. One of the Frudakis family, Anthony F-R-U-D-A-K-A-I-S [Frudakis], was another. And then there was a group project from Boston, who had a kind of corporate-sounding name or initials which I don't remember.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: So they were definitely out. So they sent Savini and I back to the drawing board—literally. One of the comments made was that my wheat wreath looked funereal. So basically, I just got rid of it—or put it on the building behind her in an upward-facing wreath instead of downward, drooping wreath, which I had to agree did look kind of funereal. But Richard Savini totally self-destructed at that point. I mean, he just listened to all the comments too much, I think, and when we came back to present, Michael couldn't back him anymore. So I won at that point.

But one of the things I think that helped me win was I had proposed doing it in polyester resin and fiberglass. Because it was so big, it was thought—correctly—that you couldn't do it in metal, casting metal. I'd even gotten a price from a foundry in Italy, and it was already over budget before even I did anything.

In the meantime Kent Bloomer, my mentor and guru, suggested that I try doing it in hammered copper, the way the *Statue of Liberty* [1886] was done. So I went up to his place in New Haven, and he gave me a weekend-long primer in how to hammer metal. And I thought, well, yes, this seems possible. So I proposed that as [inaudible] another sculpture. So I think that helped me win the project. And I proposed a schedule of 18 months, which I figured, all right, [I] can stretch the money out to last that long and materials and blah blah blah.

Well, as it turned out, it took almost three years. And I would've gone belly up and had to lose my house and all that to finish the project but for the good citizens of Portland again. A man named Charles Hall, who was starting his own advertising business, decided to start this crusade to bring *Portlandia* to Portland to raise more money. Because it was a One Percent for Art program. They could not budge on the budget because—

AVIS BERMAN: So that was a—if GSA didn't run it, it was a GSA-type government project.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. It was a city, city/county government. But when the budget numbers are fixed,

they're fixed. No cost overruns allowed. So Charles Hall managed to get a newspaper campaign going, and he did manage to raise, I don't know, \$15-20,000, which still wasn't enough. But more importantly, we got all kind of donated services, like free transportation on the railroad from Washington to Portland, which was a huge, long journey, fraught with peril. There was a heat derailment on the train about halfway there, which came within one car of derailing where *Portlandia* was in the chain. Anyway, I didn't know that until we unpacked.

And then I spent three months in a shipyard putting the pieces together and finishing the thing, basically because we were never able here to put it together in one piece because they didn't have enough ceiling height to do it. It was shipped up the Willamette River on a barge, totally free, and put on a truck on a Sunday morning, and streetlights and traffic lights moved out of the way, and take it through the streets. Ten thousand people showed up, and—

AVIS BERMAN: Tom Wolfe wrote about it ["The Copper Goddess." *Newsweek*, July 14, 1986].

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Tom Wolfe wrote about it, which really was a bit of good luck.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes. Have you ever met Tom Wolfe?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes. We corresponded after that. I had met him in person. Talked to him on the phone, met him in person at [Frederick] Rick Hart's funeral. But that was, well, that was in whenever.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes. No, that a great article. I remember it. You know, only he would call it "the huge cuprous index finger."

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: [Laughs.] Yes. And the then-mayor of Portland, Bud Clark and his signature "whoop whoop" cry. So that was—that launched my career. It almost sunk me, but it launched me.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. First of all, you went to see Michael Graves. So it sounded like he, as the architect, had a lot of power, as opposed to the good citizens of Portland, about shaping the decision.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. Well, some people on a jury thought—whatever the architect wanted was okay with them. And he did turn into an advocate.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, I was going to ask you: what was it like to work with him once you were the declared winner?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Fine. He got on board right away. He had to come down to my studio—I had to get a new studio, obviously; couldn't do it in this carriage house—to okay the copper once I got going into the copper phase, which took a couple of months, about six months, to get going. And he was fine with it. As he said at the dedication, both the building and the sculpture are better off for each other, which was the idea. A nice thing to say.

AVIS BERMAN: But when he said, "Call it *Portlandia*," was the idea to make a female—in the original request - was it to have a female? Is that what they wanted?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: That's what he drew.

AVIS BERMAN: A female figure.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: On his competition-winning rendering of the façade, he had a kind of—oh, one could say it was kind of just a female version of the Rockefeller [Center, New York, NY] *Prometheus* [Paul Manship, 1934], just, like, typical architectural fuzzy kind of drawing. But it would've been—it was an enormous—bigger. So I took that message to heart, obviously.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, right. No, it was just something—it was a placeholder there.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: But he wanted a female figure. And had he called it *Portlandia* already?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes. He did. So it would've been dumb not to do a figure called *Portlandia*. And everybody—the other four—did obviously, do that.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes. Man, but for a National Sculpture Society bulletin, you probably wouldn't know—it's amazing.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. Right. I wouldn't have known about it otherwise.

AVIS BERMAN: And what happened at this time is that a whole idea of architecture was changing.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: At that time.

AVIS BERMAN: And artists were doing more things. If not figurative, they were—you know, someone like Richard Fleischner, they're interacting with the land. They're making architectural pieces, but they're site-specific experiences - as opposed to plopping on the plaza - was really coming into being, too. Were you aware of these kinds of currents?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Absolutely, yes. Well, Postmodernism is now turned over [inaudible]. But then it was the hot new thing, and people were interested in historical association and ornament. Unfortunately, they did it in a most [inaudible], most people. Or the cheesiest way. So it didn't really last all that long, all that interest, maybe 10 years.

AVIS BERMAN: It's just like the International Style; the great examples are great. But then all the developers did that the crummiest way possible, too.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. But maybe in the long term it sparked interest in regionalism and vernacular architecture and being contextual.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Which is still going on pretty strong, especially here in Washington.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, I would think so. Robert Venturi was advocating that kind of thing, too.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: In early—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, really, yes. I mean, in '65, or before that, he was being—I mean, he was the first.

AVIS BERMAN: It had to come to architects looking at art in a different way, as opposed to something completely subordinate. Or having a feel, again, for something—you know, historical is okay. And it was more than okay; that would be a real enhancement to do something to do with tradition.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, the building instead of, as you say, the plop thing or—

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Or just something. *Sturm und Drang*

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: —*something that's at odds with the architecture.*

AVIS BERMAN: *I guess I want to ask you when you figured out how to bid or how to figure out a budget accurately so you wouldn't go through the financial Sturm und Drang every time?*

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, [laughs] it was a big lesson right there. I don't know. I knew what the hard costs would be. In that case, I did all the fabrication myself. But I soon learned—when I should have known from architects and architecture—you try to pass off a lot of costs to other people in the forms of bids that they have to honor. Everybody does it, obviously - to getting work cast in metal or other materials or carved or even constructed, to use a foundry or some kind of other fabricator.

AVIS BERMAN: Excuse me. I think someone wants to talk to you. I'll just pause this.

[Audio break.]

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. No, I had to have a bigger space to do this. I still have now a larger space. So I have a better handle on the fixed costs. And it's still always a mystery how long it's going to take me to do something. Now I just try to pad it as much as possible. If I think it's going to take two months, I figure four months because it's always longer than you think. Or you run into problems. On the other hand, if it takes a month, and you figured four months, you know, you're home free.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hm. [Affirmative.]

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: But you have to make enough money to survive the down times, like any business. I don't know. Try to figure it like a contractor would; it's a business. It's not like you're some mad scientist in the attic and can have unlimited amounts of free time.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Now, I think it was in '83 you founded Kaskey Studio [Brentwood, MD]?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: And what does that mean?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: In order to do *Portlandia*, I had to have assistants. And I had, well, two long-term, but several, maybe half a dozen, passing through for a summer or part-time or whatever. But basically I had two people: a guy named Michael LaSalle, who was a sculptor from the Maryland Institute [College of Art] in Baltimore, who proved to be equally adept at hammering copper; and then I had another guy named Greg Pettingill, who was more of a mechanic, machinist, welder, constructor type guy, craftsman, who kept the tools running. And as it turns out, we did a helluva lot of welding for the armature and sides.

Yes, that started me off on this path of running a studio, which meant I would always have one or two or three or maybe four assistants. Over the past 25 years, I don't know; I've had a lot. So I've had to shift my mode of thinking about that: you know, who does what. And how to control the end product and what it looks like. You get people who are very talented, and maybe they do great portraits or something. I try to utilize their particular skills. But I don't think there was a project that I've done without at least one assistant. And I've done about 20.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, they're always so big, of course.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: They're all labor intensive. So what typically are the roles of the assistant?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, as I said, whatever they do best, I want them to do. But it depends on what we're doing. If it's like a big bas-relief project, there's a lot of drawing and a lot of looking at photographs or doing research, and getting all the material assembled. And they do that. If they draw better than me, they do the drawings or the watercolors or whatever it takes to get an approval. But if it's three-dimensional, freestanding or whatever, I try to do the maquette without any input. They'll do mold making or model building or whatever, to get the presentation for a competition.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Or for approval. A lot of these projects involved approval from committees or commissions. There's a lot of presentation work prior to getting into actually doing the job. So it's nice to have help.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hm. [Affirmative.]

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: And then, since I started out, the computer has become a big deal. I'm a very late adapter and not very well adapted. So people with computer skills have proved very helpful.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, I don't know if you've seen this, but there's a computer program that essentially works like a pantograph [drawing instrument for enlarging images]. It just takes something little, and you spin it on a little rotisserie, and the computer does all of the dimensions.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: We have done that in stone. A place called Digital Stone Project in [Mercerville] New Jersey. Yes. It's pretty amazing stuff. So that has—yes, that has kind of cut out some of the need for assistants, actually. As we speak, I'm having some figures enlarged right now in Styrofoam that we will just put clay over and do the finish work over - very thin layer of clay over Styrofoam, which saves you a helluva lot of work.

AVIS BERMAN: And easier to transport—lighter, too.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes. Absolutely. You can mail things, you know, by UPS [United Parcel Service]. So, yes, that started the whole idea of a studio of—which means many hands, you know, do the work. I used to try and finish everything 100 percent, but the projects got too big, and I just can't do it anymore.

AVIS BERMAN: And where do you find most of your assistants?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Word of mouth. My studio's next door to an ornamental plaster studio which was started by an Italian immigrant in the '30s; now it's carried on by his sons and their sons. They've always hired a lot of different people, and I've managed to steal them away a couple of times. And that's proved very good. Or there are schools that still teach the traditional skills that I can call up and say, do you know anybody who would like to work? And that's worked out.

AVIS BERMAN: And when you go to a place, do you ever pick up any local assistants on site?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, but it's usually for a couple of days, not to do an installation. More often than not

they're riggers. I did a job in Shreveport, Louisiana, [*Justice Victorious*, 1994-95, Federal Courthouse,] where I hired a local artist to install some bronze numerals, which was part of a piece for me. But I think that's about the only time, I think, that I actually employed another—oh, no. In Portland, I hired a woman who was basically a jeweler by profession, but a painter and a sculptor part-time, too, because she was small and fit inside some tight spaces in there. Yes, she worked part-time for three months, the whole time I was there. Yes, I'd forgotten about that. And it turned out to be a really good experience for everybody.

AVIS BERMAN: Now at some point, I guess, Sherry begins managing your career more actively? Is that correct?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. She was doing it informally, sending out the RFQs and the invoices and the résumés, and keeping all the clippings, the publicity stuff together. Yes, she did that. Well, beginning with the end of *Portlandia*, she managed to get it published in *People* magazine ["I Love My Wife But Oh, You Replica!" *People*, v. 23, October 21, 1985], which I had, you know, come on, give me a break. But it turned out to be a really good thing because I got another job from that, which I never would have thought in a hundred years.

AVIS BERMAN: I guess studio manager might be what we're talking about.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. We did do a project together after that for the Federal Reserve in Florida [double eagles, Jacksonville, FL], she being painter and gilder. It was basically a graphic thing done in gold leaf. And we did do a competition for a Vietnam veterans memorial in Pittsburgh; came in second. But that's like being vice president; it doesn't count. Yes. But in the last, oh, I don't know, three or four years, she's been busy trying to keep her own career going.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. So has anyone—do you have anyone kind of in charge of that administrative and publicity work now?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, Johanna, who's been here for eight years. Between her and I, we do whatever is required. She has more computer skills than I do, being half my age. So that's been a big help.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. If you could only hire a nine-year-old, that person would be even better.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Exactly. Right. Like Frank Gehry, a smart 14-year-old.

AVIS BERMAN: What do you think makes a piece of art "public"? Do you think it's the location or the patron or the essence or what?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, all of that. But the number one thing in my mind is what Michael Graves had said to me about *Portlandia*, or said to the audience at the dedication: that *Portlandia* gave the citizens visual access to their own symbolism. I took that to heart. That you try to make it accessible through visual means, not pandering, but try to make it not so obscure that people will think, duh, what's that about? [Frédéric Auguste] Bartholdi had said about his work, don't shy from the obvious. That doesn't mean there aren't subtleties there, but the subtleties are formal things for other artists to see. Maybe the symbolism or the imagery is obvious. You're commemorating an event or a place or some historical allusion or something that people—some people—know how to read. So that's what I try to do. That's what I think [is] what makes it public, as opposed to a large piece sitting out in the rain, which isn't necessarily "public."

AVIS BERMAN: And what if there's something that has all those things and communicates that, but what about—does it have to be at a certain site? Does the site have to be central?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, I've tried to, yes, get some inspiration from the site. I'm trying to think of some projects that were just kind of struck by the site. Do you have that résumé here?

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, yes, I do. This goes from earlier to later.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Right.

AVIS BERMAN: I know sometimes you have to make the site better, unfortunately.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, you do. Well, this piece I did, which was my first GSA project, the monumental urns for the National Building Museum [formerly the Pension Building; *Boundary Markers*, 1992-98 Washington, DC].

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, that was before the Law Enforcement [National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial, 1990-91, Judiciary Square, Washington, DC]? But it's—okay.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, that was after it.

AVIS BERMAN: But, okay, you can talk about that. I just wanted to make sure I was correct.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, this was not a GSA project.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: It was private.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: There, the sculpture, the frieze by Caspar Buberl [*Pension Building Frieze*, 1883], in front of the Montgomery Meigs [Pension Office] Building [1881] was the inspiration in terms of material—or at least material color, and just the size of the figures and the function of the building, to announce that it was the National Building Museum and not the Pension Building anymore. So I would say that was the purest inspiration by the site. But I really haven't had any projects that are just in nature or a park.

AVIS BERMAN: I just meant some terrible place. In other words, not even in nature. I just meant there was something that really needed help in terms of site that they—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, there's always that. That's making the silk purse out of the sow's ear. See that again. [Laughs.] The one that I did for the Olympics [portrait of Olympics founder Pierre de Coubertin, 1995-96, Olympic Centennial Park, Atlanta, GA], that was just like dropping things [in], because everything was highly temporary. Ultimately it did get moved to a park, but I've never seen it after it got moved.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, *vis-à-vis Portlandia*, looking at it right now, is there anything you'd improve or change?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, no, I wouldn't. It's still my favorite. [Laughs.]

AVIS BERMAN: It's still your favorite of all of them that you've made, you think?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Probably.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hm. [Affirmative.]

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I mean, there's probably some views that make me cringe. But nobody has noticed that but me. No, I still think that was—I mean, it was such an ordeal. [Laughs.] I just never forget it. And to get it done and to have it acclaimed like that, that was one of the best things that's happened to me. So maybe it isn't the best piece I've done, but—

AVIS BERMAN: It was certainly pivotal.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. Oh, for sure.

AVIS BERMAN: Almost the most pivotal.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Because it really maybe focused you in thought; okay, now I've really—this is what I want to do. And now I've got the chops. [Laughs.]

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes. Right. Because that was inventing the whole process every step of the way. There were just so many damned surprises there.

AVIS BERMAN: I also think it's very interesting when you use the word "inventing." It seems that even though you may take a pose from here or traditional motifs or use a certain guide, it seems that you invent symbolism. In other words, you don't take it wholesale from what's there.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, no. I'm glad you brought that up because I do try to make it fresh, like the Justice figures, using those concepts, the blindfold and the scale, but giving that some new life, not just holding the scale; it's been done and done and done.

AVIS BERMAN: I was actually thinking in Chicago [IL]—in the Harold Washington Library - to have a wind spirit of Chicago. Of course, Chicago's the Windy City, but to have a kind of a wind god was an unusual idea, even with all that sculpture and all that architecture there.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, yes, nobody else has done that in Chicago, that I know of.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, which means something else I had forgotten to ask you yesterday in terms of things that you were looking at. You had mentioned the first time you'd been to New York, but going to Chicago, did—or if—the architectural and artistic heritage of Chicago have an impact on you, if that was something when you were

younger, if you had gone there or seen anything?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: When I was a student at Carnegie-Mellon, we had a class trip to Chicago and looked at the Frank Lloyd Wright stuff. Well, a lot of stuff. But nothing stands out. The idea of ornament, I think, was—

AVIS BERMAN: [Louis] Sullivan, of course.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Oh, yes, right. But that was just, like, 1965-66. It was just beginning to dawn on people that this is pretty powerful stuff and not just old hat.

AVIS BERMAN: And there were the great [Ludwig] Mies van der Rohe buildings, too, of course.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, we met Mies.

AVIS BERMAN: Really!

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: That was 1966 or '67, around then. He was in a wheelchair.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. He had terrible, terrible arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis. So that was really just a year or so before he died.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. And he told this story about when he left Germany—or in Germany, he had 3,000 books, presumably about architecture, art, and, well, his education. And when he left, he took 300 with him. He stopped in New York. He was there for a while. When he left New York, he took 30 books with him to Chicago. And he said, "What is the moral of the story?" He said, "Put trash in the wastebasket." [They laugh.] Which I thought, yes, that's a pretty good story. You know, you spend your life listening to others' opinions or reading about art or architecture, and mostly you have to jettison that if you're going to make any progress on your own.

AVIS BERMAN: Especially someone in his case, who was paring down and paring down to essentials.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, I think he just pared it down about as far as it could go.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes. But he always used things—like he used elegant materials. He might have a plain design, but he made it warmer; he made it different.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, subtlety was his virtue, and elegance.

AVIS BERMAN: That was amazing that they had the connections to get a meeting to meet Mies.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. I don't know how that happened. We were just a bunch of kids. You know, that was memorable.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hm. [Affirmative.]

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: He was still smoking a cigar, you know. [Laughs.]

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, those were the days. Everyone was smoking then.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Me, too, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Okay, now what I want to do is go on and discuss kind of the genesis of things and the problems and the challenges, and how you—and kind of move through project by project. Not every single one of them.

I was thinking we could go—now this one—the Department of Agriculture commission [*Demeter and Cows*, 1987, Maryland Department of Agriculture headquarters, Annapolis, MD]. I'm picking that one because I think that it hasn't been discussed too much.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. It came at the end—just before I left for Portland to do a—well, it was the collaboration of a landscape architect and architect. This was one of these ameliorations-for-the-neighborhood kind of projects. It was an urban park. The landscape architect is named [James] Jim Urban. [They laugh.] He was the landscape architect for the police memorial as well.

We had come up—and there was another artist involved, too. So there were two sculptors, an architect, and a landscape architect, plus the client. It was to design an urban plaza that was bounded by a colonnade, which we—or I—designed in collaboration with the landscape architect. And then there were two pieces of sculpture: a fountain by this other sculptor and a big bas-relief by me. And for some reason or another, because of the fountain, I guess - I forget what the imagery of the fountain was, but some kind of nautical theme, reference - [it]

was decided [that] that's what the imagery ought to be and the glue that holds it together.

So I came up with a large face in a shell that represented Neptune. I mean large: 10 feet wide and six feet high. And then the columns, invented a column capital; it was a play on the Ionic column capital. But it was like you saw a chambered nautilus in half; you'd get this [inaudible] spiral. So I used that as well as a column capital. It was meant to be gardenesque. So, you know, it had these kind of light, humorous motifs to it. And I think it was fairly successful. It's still there and still used.

AVIS BERMAN: But what about this *Demeter and Cows*?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Oh, I'm sorry. That was, yes, I was coming with the wrong project.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay. Well, what are we talking about with the Neptune and the—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: That was this colonnade with capitals, Hampden Square [1985-86]. I'm sorry; I got off on the wrong track.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay. Well, what is Hampden Square? Where is that?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: That's in Bethesda, Maryland.

AVIS BERMAN: That's okay.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, the *Demeter and Cows* was a competition to do something for the Maryland State Department of Agriculture headquarters. I thought of a classical—the goddess Demeter was the obvious thing to do - sort of a reclining classical figure. That's where the site offered a lot of inspiration because it was a kind of a —not a porte cochere [roofed covering from driveway to building entry], but a drive that came off the main road and exited you at the other end. So on either end I put guard animals, which were cows, as opposed to dogs or lions or whatever. So it was a bit of a humorous—

AVIS BERMAN: An agricultural guard. [Laughs.]

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. Yes, this was another one of those happenstance things. I was looking for a model. Sherry and I were walking around Du Pont Circle, and she ran into this model that she had seen at the Corcoran [College of Art + Design, Washington, D.C.] when she was taking a class—who was pregnant. And I thought, yes! That is a symbol of fertility if there ever was one. And she was willing to model. So we have a pregnant Demeter. And that was just one of those lucky [inaudible].

AVIS BERMAN: And they—that was accepted.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. I'm surprised—a nude pregnant woman.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, that's unusual.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. I wonder if you could get away with that now in New York? But in suburban Annapolis it didn't raise any eyebrows.

AVIS BERMAN: And so they didn't want her robed at all?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No. No, no. Her belly was very prominent; her breasts were bare. Because it was classical-looking, I guess, they figured, well, let him go. [Laughs.]

AVIS BERMAN: But as with—as what happened in the 18th, 19th century, throughout.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. Right.

AVIS BERMAN: Throughout history, that—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, but if it had been a nubile young woman or something -

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, exactly. It looked contemporary.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. You probably wouldn't have gotten away with that. Because when I did this sculpture at Shreveport, Louisiana, of the Justice figure [*Justice Victorious*, 1994-95, Federal Courthouse], I had one bare breast on it, and the judge said, like, no way that can be in front of my courthouse. And the funny thing about that was I'd already done the full-size enlargement with the bare breast, and I had carefully worked out the rest of the drapery to look—to flow right and still leave the breast bare. I didn't want to redesign the drapery because I'd already spent way too much time on it. So I put a kind of ribbon across the breast.

And when I took it to the foundry, this foundry in Baltimore, and they made a mold on it - normally when you de-mold, some of the clay comes off. And on a half-clothed figure, you wouldn't have a very finished body under that clay drapery. But when they took that off, the ribbon came off in the mold, and there was a perfectly formed breast under there. [They laugh.] Which surprised the mold-maker, because it was a last-minute addition.

But anyway, going back to the *Demeter and Cows* thing. Yes, I think people understood it as a somewhat humorous piece, not too heavy-handed. They liked the symbolism. They got it.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. And who would have been your judges here, or in other words—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, there was the head of the Agricultural Department, whose memorable comment in the press was: "That ain't no naked lady. That's art."

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, was that Earl Butz? No.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No. No, no. This was—he was the U.S. under [Richard] Nixon, yes. Nixon was long gone by that time.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, right, right.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I don't remember his name. He was the state department, not the—

AVIS BERMAN: I can only think of James Watt.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: But he was gone.

AVIS BERMAN: All I can think of are real yahoos. I can't remember this particular one.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, he was for the State of Maryland, not for the U.S.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, oh, okay.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: And he was a fairly funny guy. So anyway, that was that.

AVIS BERMAN: And then you had your first—you had the first piece in Chicago which was *Gem of the Lakes* [1987-89, Lobby, 311 South Wacker Drive, Chicago, IL], and that sounds like a private commission?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, that was for a developer, Lincoln Property Company, out of Dallas. The architect on that was Kohn, Pederson, & Fox; they, at that point, were not doing what they're doing now, which is, well, I don't know if it has a name. But they were kind of still in a Postmodern period at that point.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. That was fashionable then.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. And could tolerate having that kind of classical image fountain. They were very gracious and let me design the fountain inside, because they had already designed the fountain when I got called in by the developer, who wanted something more traditional, I guess. And used the sort of cliché figure of sitting on broad shoulders. But actually, *Gem of the Lakes* was a reference to, again, the city seal of Chicago, which had a little figure on a shell like a putto. He was supposed to symbolize, like, the pearl in the oyster. That was meant to recall Chicago being the gem of the lakes—if you can swallow that. So that was the title. I did a big heroic figure in a shell and had the other references to the wind in the drapery. Drapery is good for that, to create motion. It's not just to clothe the offending parts.

AVIS BERMAN: Were the architects annoyed that the developer had called in an artist?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, no. As I said, they were very gracious. No, go ahead. I mean, reconfigured the fountain, turned it into a large shell and put the figure on it, did some ancillary things with the water that were references to the pearl in the shell.

AVIS BERMAN: Now what's the difference at that point, what's the big difference—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Their work was mechanical-looking. And, yes, I think, my job was to animate with either animals or people and drapery. But anyway, go ahead.

AVIS BERMAN: I was going to say, at this moment, what is the difference between working for a corporate client versus a government, either municipal or federal?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I think you're freer, ironically, actually, working for the government or municipal—they seem to have less—want to have less—input in what it is. Whereas corporate clients, either the boss or the

boss's wife or somebody has this idea that it's going to be this or that. Or they don't want anything controversial. They want some eye-candy because maybe an ordinance is holding their feet to the fire, and they have to put this art in there. So they want to have the least controversial thing. Which explains why there's so much abstract art, because people may not like it, but they're willing to—if-that's-what-they-want-I-don't-care kind of attitude.

AVIS BERMAN: So they need it as an amenity—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: —to push the project forward.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: And, okay, we'll give you this so I can have 50 stories higher.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. Exactly. Which is not a great way of doing it.

AVIS BERMAN: But that's what happens. And then they try to—then the developers try to get rid of anything that they promised.

Now, do you consider—I'm not saying this sarcastically because I don't know; I want to pick something—do you consider the fountain, the figure of Queen Charlotte [1987-88] for the airport [Charlotte Douglas International Airport, Charlotte, NC], an important commission or not?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes. Yes, it was a competition, a three-person competition: Maya Lin and, oh, what's her name that does the stone? She was married to—

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, Elyn Zimmerman.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Elyn Zimmerman. She dropped out midway through the competition, so it really came down to me and Maya Lin.

AVIS BERMAN: So this wasn't an open call.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No.

AVIS BERMAN: They just—they asked the three of you.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Which is a different [inaudible].

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. They had come to Washington and talked to an art consultant named Lee—I can't remember; she just died about five years ago. I've forgotten her name. Anyway, she gave me a call and said—

AVIS BERMAN: Fleming?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Lee—no.

AVIS BERMAN: Kimche?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. McGrath—Lee Kimche-McGrath.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. And she recommended me and Maya Lin and Elyn Zimmerman. The only reason she recommended me is she read the client's mind pretty well and knew that they wanted something figurative. So in a way it was, you know, a no-brainer. She said, "Oh, you're going to win this." "But I haven't done any. How do you know I'm going to win this?" Because I think she knew they wanted something figurative, and the city—they call themselves the Queen's Table, the group, after Queen Charlotte.

So, yes, I did Queen Charlotte. And, you know, I made her the centerpiece of a fountain. But the pose was an acknowledgment that she's this 18th-century queen in the middle of an airport parking lot.

AVIS BERMAN: Married to [King] George III.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Exactly. And I tried to make it unstable, like she was being held up by the wind, and hence the falling of her backwards kind of pose. And used the directions of the compass to lay out the fountain,

because the direction the wind's coming from is really important in an airport. So I tried to tie those disparate things together.

AVIS BERMAN: And what were the main problems or challenges of this commission?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Getting the pose right. I mean, I went through a gazillion ideas, and then I just couldn't nail it—like *Portlandia*, the first day—for two months. And doing various studies of how to do the column.

Columns are kind of a problem: you don't want to just do a post sticking up. But then you don't want—I didn't want to do a classical column; that would have been totally out of place. I wound up doing this twisted column that was based on a kind of star-shaped element that could be read as traditional; looked like it had emphasis, but it didn't because the spiraling twist to it. Yes.

And the installation was a bear because I had ruptured a disc in my back about three weeks before that. So I did it from a wheelchair.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hm. [Affirmative.]

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Which was—well, anyway. Just the usual crap.

AVIS BERMAN: It's unusual that an American city—of course, it was named Charlotte then—but that they would want to commemorate the wife of an English monarch, especially the king who was on the throne during the American Revolution.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Right. And they were avid revolutionaries in North Carolina, too. In fact, they claim they had a declaration of independence before [Thomas] Jefferson wrote the big one. But, yes, they identified with that.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay. I'm just probing that because that seems so unusual for iconography.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, that's their history. Well, of course, they named it after Queen Charlotte well before.

AVIS BERMAN: Exactly. But it's funny that they would still—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: They wouldn't have changed it.

AVIS BERMAN: No, that they didn't want, say, a spirit of Charlotte as opposed to a literal Queen Charlotte.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, in my mind it was the spirit because it was not a portrait by any means. I mean, I had a young woman modeling and it was sort of based on her.

AVIS BERMAN: A few times Sherry modeled for you, most importantly in *Portlandia*. Are there other pieces that she has modeled for you over the years that I'm missing?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes, yes. The *Justice* figure in the New York courthouse [1995-96, Federal Courthouse, Foley Square, New York, NY] has her face on it, although it was in blindfold across the eyes. But she's recognizable. The Portland thing was not a portrait of her. It was just inspired by. But this was more a literal portrait. And then I did a piece for GSA in Corpus Christi [TX], where it was a big bas-relief that had a central figure of a lawyer in there in front of a jury [*Power of the Law*, 1999-2000, Federal Courthouse]. That was her. But, as I said yesterday, on this Teamsters project, we use ourselves a lot because we're here.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Not necessarily because I want to put my mug in there, but if you need somebody, you're right there. Hopefully, it's just a hand or whatever.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: You get tired of doing your own face.

AVIS BERMAN: Absolutely. Now, how was that piece received in Charlotte?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Very well. Yes. Well, I'll tell you it was very well received because they gave me another, even larger commission two years later when their next project came by. The mechanism for funding these projects, Queen's Table, was a group of a hundred people, couples usually, that had money or some money, who could contribute a thousand dollars a year to fund projects. So this was like a three-year project because it was 260-something some odd thousand dollars. And they liked it well enough that they decided to give me another

one, which turned out to [be] a four-year project, the *Four Figures in the Square* [1993-95, Charlotte, NC]. They wanted a more historical commemoration of activities that made Charlotte into a city, like textile manufacturing and transportation network or hub.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, so that's the *Four Figures in the Square*.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: And gold mining, which occurred there in the 1830s, which led to the founding of a mint there, blah blah blah. Now, of course, they're the biggest banking center in the U.S., so they wanted some figures that would speak to that. And there were three things—the fourth thing, we couldn't have a parallel activity. So we just called it "the future," which was the child—mother and child—which is the obvious future. Anyway, so that was something I tried to do in a classical—well, taking the idea of a herm man [square pillar topped with bust, usually Hermes]. Or whatever you call it.

AVIS BERMAN: A what?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: A herm, you know, that the Romans used, a kind of architectural member that turns into a half-figure on top to mark a crossroads.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: So I tried to do a contemporary version of that that had, as the figures, a black man, representing the workers that built the infrastructure for the transportation hub, and a textile worker, who are generally, like, poor farm folks coming to work in the city, and a gold miner from the early 19th century.

AVIS BERMAN: I had no idea there was gold in North Carolina.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Neither did I. I don't think there is much anymore. They don't do much gold mining. It predated the California Gold Rush.

AVIS BERMAN: I guess you didn't have a farmer, a farming representative?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, we didn't. We didn't. I wonder why we didn't.

AVIS BERMAN: Maybe because it was supposed to be because Charlotte was a city, even though it used to be surrounded by farms. Who knows?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, it would be to grow the cotton for the textile mills.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, and you had to do that. And tobacco. [They laugh.] Maybe that's why.

AVIS BERMAN: Because like tobacco farming—you're right. [Laughs.] Someone smoking. Have Bette Davis.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Right.

AVIS BERMAN: So, yes. I think that may be the answer. It might have been too fraught to use either tobacco or cotton because we would've had slavery; you would have had smoking. And that would've been—it was in the '90s anyway.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Right. Then slavery, smoking—

AVIS BERMAN: So, I guess, in general, when you look at these, yes, it was definitely well received, and they were happy with your work, as you said. So they raised more money. But how do you judge if a piece has been effective, what you think it's effective?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I guess, if people get engaged and try to figure out what it's all about. And hazard a guess, however far off the mark. Well, then there's me: you know, does it work—

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, that's what I mean.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: —formally? Could I have done better? Is the skirt too close to kitsch? You want to get close, but not go over the line. You want it accessible, but not too accessible.

AVIS BERMAN: Not corny.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. Exactly. And, you know, there is that line you can cross over all too easily with the figure. Yes, there's a lot of bad figurative work. And you certainly don't want to be in that company.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, it isn't even sometimes that things are bad. All of a sudden it's just some guy high up on a plinth [base]. It's like a statue. People forget that the piece is there.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Right.

AVIS BERMAN: It isn't, it's sometimes bad; it just fades away, or it's not compelling.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Right. Well, like so much of the equestrian stuff in Washington, you know, nobody knows who they are anymore. In fact, some of them are quite good, like the, oh, the Sheridan sculpture by Gutzon Borglum in Sheridan Circle [1908, General Philip Sheridan, Washington, DC].

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, that's wonderful.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: That's quite a great composition. Very unusual horse and rider grouping. But does anybody notice it going around the circle? I doubt it.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes. No, it's very hard. If they're noticing it too much, they're having an accident.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Right.

AVIS BERMAN: Unless you're walking.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. But that one is not on a high plinth either.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, it's unusual: it confronts you.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Meanwhile, now you're getting a lot more practice in using bronze—I mean, you're getting more chances to cast in bronze. Are you changing your idea of how you want to use it in terms of patina? In terms of your material, in that particular material, are you changing ideas about it?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: It changes my ideas about the finish of the piece, the tools that you use when you're modeling in clay. I usually go directly from clay to the lost-wax casting, or even sand casting directly from the clay - not that I do the casting - because it's fresher. Rather than making a plaster cast off the original clay. There's only one original, and that's your clay. Everything else is a copy.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: But I want the least number of iterations in there before you get to the bronze. One of the most memorable things Frederick Hart ever said was, "Clay is the life, plaster is the death, and stone is the resurrection." You can substitute bronze for the resurrection if you wanted to, or anything else. But when you see your piece cast in plaster, it does look dead. And it's sometimes, wow, did I do that? So I just try to skip over that. And I've changed the way I finish things now from earlier, where I tried to have a lot of really rough texture and gouge marks or scratch marks. I used to use a wire loop that had little wires wrapped around it, and that made a scratchy thing. I used to like that. I don't like that anymore.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, I guess so. You're talking about more of an expressionistic finish. And why do you think you've evolved in [inaudible]?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Because it looks better in the final after you do the patina, I think. I want more contrast between parts. It's that simple. And in figure sculpture, people look at the face, and they look at the hands, because that's where they convey the most meaning to most people. So I will probably spend more time on those areas, although sometimes an elbow to me is as interesting as the face. So I don't necessarily spend more time. But it might be more refined, the face. But I find other parts more interesting, like the knee or the elbow. The joints in general is where the energy is in a piece. But people don't really get that, I don't think. One of my all-time favorite paintings is the—shit, I can't think of the name anymore. You know, the Baroque bad boy.

AVIS BERMAN: [Michelangelo Merisi da] Caravaggio.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Caravaggio. He's got a *Deposition [from] the Cross* [c. 1600-04].

AVIS BERMAN: *On the cross, yes.*

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: *The elbow is sticking straight out at you. I mean, it's like the high point of the composition. Wow! Is that daring, or is that daring?*

AVIS BERMAN: *Well, Caravaggio was so sculptural, too.*

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: *Yes, yes. Fantastic! But things like that just really leap out at you. You think, yes, I could do something with that.*

AVIS BERMAN: *Yes. Now do you have a foundry in this country, or does it all—you've mentioned Italy. Does your work go to Italy?*

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: *Not at all. Especially not now. It's not cheaper to go to Italy. It's cheaper to go to China. But I've only done that once. No, I have a foundry in Chester, Pennsylvania, that did my first big piece, which was the Chicago fountain, Gem of the Lakes. They really lost their shirt on that one, like I did on Portlandia. But they didn't complain, they did a great job, and I've been with them ever since.*

AVIS BERMAN: So they've learned how to bid, too.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, they have. And they did the baldachino [ornamental canopy] and the bas-reliefs [*Naval Aviation* and *Battle of the Bulge*] in the World War II [Memorial], as well as a bunch of other projects. And then there's a foundry here in Baltimore that I use once in a while, but they tend to be a little more expensive.

AVIS BERMAN: But why might you use them? What specialty would they have that the one in Pennsylvania wouldn't have?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Nothing. No more. I mean, I think the one in Pennsylvania is set up better, and they do sand casting, which is often cheaper, especially for monumental pieces. I don't think the one in Baltimore does sand casting, just lost wax.

AVIS BERMAN: And what are the two foundries, what are their names?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Laran Bronze is the one in Chester. L-A-R-A-N, and the one in Baltimore is the New Arts Foundry. The problem with doing things overseas or in China is you can't hop over there to do the wax inspection or work on the wax [inaudible] or do the metal inspection. Especially in China. You practically just have to stay there for the whole process, which I understand some sculptors have done. The prices are half of what they are here.

AVIS BERMAN: But then getting there and staying there. As you say, if you had only that to do, that might be possible.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: And I don't want to put my foundry out of business.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, also, you'd have very little recourse if it went wrong.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, that experience—I just had that last summer. They didn't put a base in it so I could mount this piece, because they said they didn't have the stainless steel or something.

AVIS BERMAN: Are you talking because China had used so much?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, no. The piece I had cast in China.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: They said, we don't have that material to do this armature inside to mount it to a base. They just sent it back. The contractor who was building the swimming pool found somebody to weld a plate onto it, and that's not the way I would have done it. So—

AVIS BERMAN: Right. So that was your one experience of using a Chinese company?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. But I had stuff carved in Italy. One can travel there, and when lunchtime comes around, that's a good place to be. And we were casting in Germany back for the Chicago Public Library [Harold Washington Library].

AVIS BERMAN: But you would probably go in for the Chicago Public Library—for a project like that you would probably protect it if something like that happened.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Oh, absolutely. Yes. Actually, the contractor had the contract with the foundry. The owls were cast in aluminum in Münster in West Germany. They did a terrible job, and the contractor had to do all this remedial work back in the States, which was a real shock. German craftsmanship is supposed to be the greatest in the world.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, maybe not for this. Do you think we should stop today? Because you said you have to leave early. It's about 10 of five.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes. That would be good.

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AVIS BERMAN: This is AVIS BERMAN: interviewing Ray Kaskey for the Archives of American Art GSA Project, on June 17, 2009, in his house in Washington, D.C.

I want to ask a couple of other things first that I had made some notes on last night, before I begin. But I was curious if, besides the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, were there any other important commissions that you didn't get? Or commissions you remember as memorable that you didn't get?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Absolutely. I mean, you only get one out of five, one out of 10 jobs, whether they're competitions or just interviews. But the one that sticks out, because it's the most recent one, was a statue—if I may use that old word—of Helen Keller that was to go in the Statuary Hall in the Capitol [U.S. Capitol, Washington, DC], which was a competition held about three or four years ago.

I had come up with something that I thought was absolutely brilliant. [Laughs.] And when I presented it to the people—it was sponsored by the State of Alabama—to people down in Montgomery [AL], I had one of my assistants do a PowerPoint presentation that showed the sculpture in context. We had gone to the Capitol and photographed Statuary Hall and put it right there in context. And then the commission realized that some of their members had never seen Statuary Hall. So instead of them making a decision, they decided to postpone it until they could all get up to Washington and see it. And then they went and picked somebody else [Edward Hlavka, *Helen Keller*, 2009].

AVIS BERMAN: Yours was too good for them in that regard. Well, what was your scheme that you thought—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, it was—I mean, the big moment in Helen Keller's life, at least according to the movie, at any rate—was when she discovers that this symbol, W, stands for the water that's coming out of the pump. That is a big breakthrough in her life. So that's the moment I tried to depict—as a young girl making the sign with one hand for the W, and her hand on a pump.

And the other hand—it sounds corny, but just the geometry of the way it worked out on the base, we were able to include a kind of little bas-relief in stone in the base that was based on a photograph of Ann Sullivan and Helen Keller in kind of an embrace. But signing to one another. And it had a couple of levels of imagery on it. I thought it was very rich, and at the same time [a] very strong composition in terms of geometry. And different than all the other worthies in the Statuary Hall. But sometimes you win some, you lose some, and some get rained out.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Well, and maybe it was almost too different for them. In other words, I'm not criticizing you, but maybe they thought they wanted a statue of Helen touching a face. I mean, did they want a grown-up one?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I don't know what they wanted.

AVIS BERMAN: Maybe they took something more conventional.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I never saw the winning solution.

AVIS BERMAN: As you said, you tried to be different. But I don't think—are there any images of children in Statuary Hall?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, there're not.

AVIS BERMAN: No, they're just all—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: There are hardly any of women.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: There's the Elizabeth Cady Stanton and that group in marble, which looks like a big marble sarcophagus [Adelaide Johnson, *Portrait Monument to Lucretia Mott, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Susan B. Anthony*, 1920]. In fact, I don't know of any other—

AVIS BERMAN: No, no. But that's interesting because probably no one else is depicted as a youth. But that was

when her breakthrough was.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: But anyway.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, anyway, you don't get, as I said, but one out of five, if you're lucky. That's considered very good.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay. Well, what I think that we should start discussing are some of these— your work in Washington, I mean, a really big commission after *Portlandia*, which was the *Lions* for the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial at Judiciary Square. That's a big permanent piece in Washington. And by the way, at my hotel, I discovered today they have pictures of that—photographs - on several floors, of those lions.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: That's nice.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes. All of a sudden, now that I'm so attuned to this, it's everywhere. Maybe this is a mistake, or it may be when it - the sculpture for the Harold Washington Library—did they start at the same time?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I think—yes. That came before.

AVIS BERMAN: Which came first? We should do the one that came first. You've got these two for 1990 and '91, I think.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, they may have been running concurrently.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, of course, that can happen. It's interesting that they are concurrent, and maybe it's just a false conclusion or coincidence, but I was going to ask you what you felt the role—because in both of them the role of animals is prominent in your work.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, they're a default position if, being a figurative sculptor, you can't use the figure for whatever reason the client or commissioning body doesn't want the figure resorted to, to using animals. It's not that I'm an animalier, by any means. But I do what's necessary.

For the police memorial, the police unions and groups that were the sponsor for the memorial really wanted to have a sculpture of a man in blue. And the Fine Arts Commission [U.S. Commission of Fine Arts], I think, let me know not too subtly that, you know, in the light of what happened with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial with [Frederick] Rick Hart's addition of the three figures [*Three Soldiers*, 1984] and then the women's group [*Vietnam Women's Memorial*, 1993] by Glenna Goodacre, that there's no end in sight to additions to the memorial. They did not want a representative figure because it wouldn't—number one, it wouldn't be representative; everybody would want their group to be represented. And that's a big problem with doing the figure - who do you represent? Especially in America, this polyglot country that we are now. There's a danger if you left somebody out. Or for reasons of political correctness, you can't have one figure to represent the country. So the allegorical animal was the answer.

The way it actually got approved by the groups, police groups, was very interesting, because they didn't get the allegorical thing, using a lion as a symbol of courage and protection and guardianship. Or the idea of a guardian animal, period. There was a woman on the committee who was head of a group called Concerns of Police Survivors. She was the widow of a policeman who had been killed in the line of duty. And when I presented this, there was a lot of grousing: like, it's going to look like the entrance to a goddamned zoo. And blah blah blah. And she got up and said that her children were reading C. S. Lewis's—

AVIS BERMAN: *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* [New York: MacMillan, 1950].

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes. And the idea about a lion as a guardian figure was very comforting to them and blah blah blah. Well, it got real quiet after that. And somebody had the presence of mind to say, let's take a vote. Then, of course, nobody was going to turn her down. [Laughs.] So the lions passed. And it had no problem with the Fine Arts Commission either.

AVIS BERMAN: Let's go back to the beginning and how you got that particular commission. Were you selected or —

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, the architect was a classmate of mine at Yale. That was a no-brainer. He was actually a year behind me, but I knew him. And he had—

AVIS BERMAN: What's his name?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Davis Buckley.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hm. [Affirmative.]

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: He is very interested in sculpture, one of the few architects that—a minority of architects who realize they can't do everything themselves, and that the kind of wider expression that you get by incorporating sculpture into the composition needs to be a collaboration with somebody who can actually do the sculpture. So he had promoted me for the job to the client. And it worked out well.

AVIS BERMAN: So he had followed your work? Because what you were doing at Yale was different.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, very different. No, no. He's here in Washington, so he knew my *Portlandia* sculpture. Actually, I hadn't done a whole lot of things after that, two or three projects.

AVIS BERMAN: A couple of things in Washington, and as you mentioned, Hampden Square; there was Annapolis; there was Chicago.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Right. Where I used animals. Yes. Right. I was concurrently doing the Chicago Public Library. So—

AVIS BERMAN: Right. And I don't know if he thought you were going to use animals in that either.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, we did use owls [at the Harold Washington Library].

AVIS BERMAN: As you said, it was a default position, since originally you thought it was going to be a figure. But by then there was enough that he would've— I mean—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: So you got the job through the architect. In other words, you didn't have to go through a competition for that.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No.

AVIS BERMAN: And then let's just talk about the role here of when you're going to make something in the District of Columbia - since so much of your work is here - where does the Commission of Fine Arts, where does that fit in? What happens?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, it depends on whether it's in the monumental core or other areas that the Fine Arts Commission has a say over. In most public spaces they do anyway. But I want to go back to—before we get to that.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Getting a job directly, like because you know the architect, or he's a friend of yours, is not just back-scratching, but it does allow you to collaborate. And the client, I think, is part of that collaboration. I think it's a much better way of commissioning public work than [if] some anonymous committee picks you, and you go off to your studio and come back with something with no contact with anybody. I find that—maybe it's because I was trained as an architect and you have to work that way - I think it results in a much better piece of art. Because sometimes the client can be right, and you can be wrong. Anyway, then there is the commission to consider, which is kind of like a client because they're a group of nine or 10 people who are accomplished professionals, and they all have their opinions and biases. Fortunately for me, J. Carter Brown, who was the chairman at that time, liked my work, not that it greased the skids necessarily, but it didn't hurt either.

AVIS BERMAN: At the time, who were some of the other art professionals on the commission?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: That goes too far back.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay. That's all right.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I can't remember. You can find that out.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay. I just wondered. Because the other thing is, I don't know about other people applying, but it isn't just [that they] like your work; they would actually even be able to go see it or understand what it would look like, too, besides the pieces that you were showing them. If you are a veteran sculptor on the scene, one would think, oh, they can look at it. It just isn't that you had a track record, they could judge other things aesthetically because they could see that you were able to handle such projects.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: True. No, it would give you a leg up in their confidence in you. In this particular case, this was right in their front yard, because they meet in the old Pension Building. So the plaza was Judiciary Square; they're going to look at it every time they look out the window. So, yes. You had to get that right. [Laughs.]

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Were they the ones that told you that you had to make animals? Or it was the—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Nobody ever said that in so many words. I think Davis had gotten that message from the ether, you know.

AVIS BERMAN: And how did you come up with the concept once you realized that a figure or a group of figures couldn't represent everything adequately?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: It's hard to remember. I think Davis and I had talked about what animal. What would be appropriate? The lion is as old as the Gates of Nineveh as a symbol. So, I guess, that was—that was fairly easy to come up [with], that idea. What actually made it work, I think, in a richer way—and I think it was my idea, although I'm not sure—was, because of the way the architecture was laid out, the Memory Wall, or the wall with the names of the slain officers on it, was flanked by a bench on the other side. And you could create some kind of tension by having one lion, an adult lion, on one side and a group of cubs on the other end—side—facing them, and kind of create a gateway, or at least a little point where you could squeeze the circulation, now, to make people stop. And my assistant at that time, George Carr, had come up with the idea of the sleeping cubs nose to tail, based on an English animal sculpture of two sleeping dogs - which he modeled and didn't get any credit for because nobody ever asked me about it. But, yes, so it was a collaboration between the architect and —

AVIS BERMAN: I think the cubs are what make it different, because otherwise, the lions are in different poses. But in terms of guardian lions, they're used in China all over, and there are two in front of the New York Public Library [Edward Clark Potter, *Patience and Fortitude*, 1911, New York City].

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Sure.

AVIS BERMAN: And two in front of the Art Institute of Chicago [Edward Kemeys, 1893]. And they work really—they work well. But these make it so it's not just a straight replication.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, no, no. And that was the breakthrough, I think, to have the sleeping cubs on the other side. It made it more specific to this memorial.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, right. To pair—as well as vigilance. And did you just go to the zoo and watch lions?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: As you pointed out, there are so many sculpted lions around, and quite a few in Washington, too, yes. We photographed every stone or bronze lion we could find. We did go to a zoo out in Maryland somewhere [Maryland Zoo, Baltimore] that had one pathetic, flea-bitten lion in a chain-link enclosure that you could get up next to without losing your life. And then I did get behind the scenes at the zoo. The head of the—

AVIS BERMAN: - the National Zoo [Smithsonian National Zoological Park, Washington, DC].

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: - the National Zoo let me come in to photograph lions in the internal cages where they feed them, and you could get right next to them, with a chain-link fence between you, which was awesome.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, yes.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: In the old biblical sense. Because they're just like a force of nature and totally heedless on any human scale that you can think of. [Laughs.]

AVIS BERMAN: Well, and also to just smell them; you said they were so close. And of course, they could have smelled you—I mean, meat. [They laugh.]

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Scarier. The male lion was easy. The female lion was a real challenge to come up with a pose and a mask that was equal to the male, because the male has the big mane, and it's just a bigger animal. The breakthrough came with that when I was in Oregon at the Maiden Bronze Foundry, which is outside of Portland, for some other reason. I don't know, I was working on a *Portlandia* maquette, and they had discovered a maquette by Phimister Proctor of—

AVIS BERMAN: Alexander Phimister Proctor, right.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: A *Tiger* [1910], which is used on the [Piney Branch] bridge here in the 16th Street—one of the bridges over Rock Creek, I think. And they had it there just sitting in the foundry. So I made a copy of it while

I was there, you know, about one 10th the size. And I used that as the inspiration for the female lion. I mean, it was a tiger; I converted it to a lion.

AVIS BERMAN: He was a great sculptor.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Oh, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: He did all the stuff for the Bronx Zoo [*Eagle*, 1901; *Monkeys and Ape*, 1901; and *Elephant and Rhinoceros*, 1901, New York City], the *Princeton Tigers* [1908-12, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ].

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: The *Buffaloes* [1914] on the Q Street Bridge [*Q Street Buffaloes*, Washington, DC].

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: He was a fantastic animalier. So that's where the female came from, not from life but from another sculpture.

AVIS BERMAN: Sculptural ancestry.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Absolutely. Yes, you don't know where things are going to come from, which is what makes it interesting.

AVIS BERMAN: Also just to be out there at the right time. But also just to see it, get it, too, and just be able to be like a sponge and to be open to absorb it, as it were.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, because you don't know what you need until you see it. [Laughs.] Ah ha! That's what I needed.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. As Branch Rickey always said, "Luck is the residue of design." [They laugh.]

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Oh, right.

AVIS BERMAN: Anyway. So is there anything else we should say on that? Is that commission holding up well? And are they interested in conservation and everything else?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. Oh, yes. Well, now it's under the care of the [National] Park Service, which has done a really good job of maintaining it. It's a bronze sitting on a stone base, and originally we didn't seal it right at the foundry. It was bleeding, oxidizing under the stone. So we had to come back and hot-wax it in situ, which was kind of hairy because you're heating up the cast, but you don't want to spoil the stone at the same time. So anyway, it was a technical problem that got resolved. But, yes, it's looking good.

AVIS BERMAN: So let's now go on to another—a huge, highly conspicuous commission, which was the Harold Washington Library of Chicago, which we should definitely go into from day one, how it happened and got you represented big-time in the city.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, that was another case of knowing the architect. Although I personally didn't know [Thomas] Tom Beeby, who was then the chairman of the architecture department at Yale and the architect of the building; he had engaged Kent Bloomer, who I knew from day one—

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: —from my freshman year at Carnegie-Mellon to be the sculptor for the super-scale ornament on the library, which at that time was still an unresolved competition because there were four or five other architects involved. It hadn't been judged yet.

AVIS BERMAN: So was Beeby assembling a team?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay. In other words, you were all going to be on under his entry.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: You weren't entering individually.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, no. We're part of the Beeby team. And ultimately, he won the competition. He had these elements in there: an acroteria, the stylized Greek palmetto ornament [acroterion, ornament at the apex of a pediment], as well as some owls as symbols of wisdom, which is because their eyesight is so great, they can

see far. That's the definition of wisdom, seeing further than most people can. As well as some other ornaments. Bloomer and I were in charge of that, and Bloomer did all the stylized ornamentation, and left the animal stuff to me as well as—and I proposed these rondelles that—oh, we went around and around on a lot of that ornament. Like, should they be portraits of famous Chicagoans? Or should they be this or that? And ultimately—and I think I proposed the Windy City thing because the budget wouldn't allow 20 different portraits on there, but we could do one and make 20 casts. So it became a repetitive element.

Then the other symbol, again I milked the city seal. [Laughs.] "Force and Content" was the motto of the city seal as herbs and [audible], city in a garden. I guess you could take it to mean that Chicago is the city in the garden of the great Midwest, which is the breadbasket of America. Or used to be thought that. And that this face of the corn goddess, again, Demeter, became part of the decorative scheme, the ornamental scheme, which featured corn panels, these vertical strips, spandrel panels [e.g., curved, corner space between arch and enclosing rectangle]. And that was kind of a terminal element there.

And there was the guilloche, which is the ornamental band that, like a big rope, ties the building together at the ground level, which is a conventional ornament, but I think we added something to it to make it a little more unique. And then the voussoirs, the [wedge-shaped] stones in the arches, carried that theme around. A lot of this stuff was influenced by [Louis] Sullivan.

AVIS BERMAN: Absolutely. You can just see it. But it works. And certainly—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: And trying to make it fresh and new and still have those themes related to the Midwest. I don't know. It still astonishes me that he won that competition, because at that time Chicago was not in that 19th-century mode anymore. Not that this is a 19th-century building. It's a classical building done in the late 20th century, which makes it different than a classical building [that] would've been done in the 19th.

AVIS BERMAN: But Postmodernism had been accepted.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, that's true.

AVIS BERMAN: Or enlightened historicism.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, this is a better term, enlightened historicism, although on the back side it's pure museum curtain wall, which was kind of sweet and sour. [Laughs.]

AVIS BERMAN: Well, all I can say is that side is never photographed.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, no, it isn't.

AVIS BERMAN: So one wouldn't know from the media. But you said that the architect had the idea of the owls, right?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes. No, he had it pretty well programmed. It was our job to give it some reality.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, did that stifle you a little bit, that you weren't coming up with the idea of the owls, or, I mean—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, not at all, because the way he had done it was totally picture-book cutout, conventional stuff just as a placeholder. So there was plenty of freedom to do it however we thought was best.

Like the center owl, which was perched on a book, came about because the client, who was a private developer, and Tom Beeby had come to my studio. On the way there we decided to stop at the Library of Congress [Washington, DC] to look at the iconography there, which is incredibly rich. There was a book sculpture on the door [central bronze door by Frederick MacMonnies], and the client said, "Oh, my God! We've got to have a book." Where can we put a book in here? So the owl is perched on a book [Frederick MacMonnies, *The Art of Printing*], the center owl.

And as an interesting aside, when the dedication of the library—actually, the owls weren't there yet because of some technical problems; when the library opened they weren't finished yet—but I met Saul Bellow there at the dedication. Or rather my wife introduced me to him because I was too scared to go up and introduce myself.

So I explained the business about the owl on the book. There was a debate on whether the owl was taking the book out or bringing it back. [Ms. Berman laughs.] And the joke was, he was actually stealing the book. And Bellow chuckled and said, "Yeah, that's Chicago." And then after I read *The Adventures of Augie March* [Saul Bellow. New York: Viking Press, 1953], he makes a living at one point by stealing books from the public library and selling them to university students. So things like that have a lot of resonance that you don't know about.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Of course not. You didn't think about it when you—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I mean, it makes you feel like you're on the right track somehow.

AVIS BERMAN: It's a marvelous serendipity there.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: In a way a totally abstract sculpture would never bring up. Although formally it might be nice and right and strong, but those associations wouldn't adhere.

AVIS BERMAN: No, no. Especially this taking over, this stealing the—no, this story never would have come—the whole, the thing that amused him never would have come up, and why. But if you hadn't met him, you might not have read the book.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Oh, I was a big fan of Saul Bellow. I've read a lot of books.

AVIS BERMAN: Exactly. You're extremely well read, but I wonder somewhat if you would pick that one or something had triggered it - to read that one later on. But that's just kind of fun, too. How much, if not in collaboration, how closely were you working with Kent Bloomer?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Oh, very closely on the acroteria and the owls, because they had to literally fit together structurally, physically as well as iconographically. These are cast things that were modeled in clay and then enlarged and cast. His were all constructed and fabricated. They're 120 feet in the air, so you really can't tell the difference, but I think if the owl had been fabricated and constructed, it would've looked differently. So there's a little bit of a disconnect there. But we did have to work pretty damned closely formally to get these things to look like they were made by one hand.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. And I guess I would say by now you know how to have control over your area of the commission. I wondered when you had—not that you were dumb before, but smartened up enough, that you'd experienced enough—oh, I made a mistake, or I should have done that. But when you really began to know how to negotiate your contracts and what to do.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes. No, I had had enough of that experience. In this case, we were both—Bloomer and I—were just responsible for the design and fabrication of maquettes. The actual manufacture was contracted. That was taken over by the contractor, who then kind of shopped the world for, I hate to say, the cheapest price, which had the advantage to us of having to go to Italy or to Germany or to Vienna or wherever these things were being fabricated, which hasn't happened since, but—

AVIS BERMAN: [Laughs.] Right, right. Well, I just meant, in general, is, when did you to learn how to get enough control over your project? Of your area?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, I think after the *Portlandia* experience, you know, I was—I don't know. I guess, it makes you more cautious in one way; in a contractual way it makes you more cautious. It gives you a sense of your limits. And hopefully doesn't make you afraid to do anything.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Now was there disgruntlement in Chicago that a non-Chicago firm and a non-Chicago team—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, Beeby is from Chicago.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, I didn't realize that.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Even though he was at Yale, he was a Chicago architect. That's where his office was.

[Telephone rings.]

AVIS BERMAN: Do you want to get that?

[Audio break.]

You had told me that Beeby was from Chicago, which I didn't realize. I had asked if that was a problem that it was a non-Chicago—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, the competition was controversial, and there was a NOVA program about the whole competition called *Design Wars!* [aired October 19, 1989], which was about the controversy of the competition. Like, are we going to go with kind of a Miesian modern building, or are we going to do something that Beeby thought was more in the Chicago tradition of Louis Sullivan and all the other great architects in the 19th, early 20th century?

Anyway, the program aired before the—I guess it was after the competition was decided, but before we really got started. Vincent Scully, the architectural historian from Yale, was interviewed extensively on that program. And I think he might have smoothed the way. I can't remember whether this program chronologically occurred before the competition was decided or after it was a done deal. But there was a lot of grousing from other Chicago architects like Stanley Tigerman—this is 19th-century pastiche. I don't know what he was calling it. Yes, it wasn't smooth sailing.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, I didn't realize that there was a controversy. Now, I would've guessed simplistically that there would have been a lot of input from the African-American community.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Because of Harold Washington.

AVIS BERMAN: Well—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: As Beeby pointed out, they had some interaction with Harold Washington. I don't know at which point. But Harold Washington was very interested in classical architecture. So I don't think there was any —

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, I don't mean about modern or not, but representation of, maybe, African-American artists. There are some on the interior I know that—the portrait heads and things like that.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I think that was one reason not to do the portrait heads. The exterior iconography is fairly standard.

AVIS BERMAN: What I remember, at one point, and it was just after Washington died, what I remember of the controversy is an art student at the Art Institute of Chicago School. Remember he painted, like, this outrageous full-length—it was Harold Washington in a dress or a bikini or something [David Nelson, *Mirth & Girth*, 1988]. He painted Harold Washington in drag. And that really convulsed this community.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes, yes. I'm not sure that had anything to do with the library, though.

AVIS BERMAN: Because it was kind of—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, I remember that.

AVIS BERMAN: —outrageous sort of portrait that people got angry about.

Did you have any interaction with some of the artists who worked inside the library, like Houston Conwill?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, no, no. That stuff on the interior was, I think, the public art program, the One Percent for Art program. So I don't think they had any interaction with Beeby either. I thought the stuff that they did up on the Winter Garden level, the big letters on the windows, just really obscured the architecture in a kind of unfortunate way.

AVIS BERMAN: It's interesting that you say the client, the developer, the architect. Was there a public process here in terms of—at all?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Not that I'm aware of.

AVIS BERMAN: Even though it was a public library?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. I'm not aware of any.

AVIS BERMAN: Or citizenry involved?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I can't speak to that. And since I don't remember any, I wasn't involved in any.

AVIS BERMAN: And is there anything, looking back, in terms of your work that you would improve or change on that commission?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No. I'm quite satisfied with the way that it all came out.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. I'm not asking that as a criticism. I'm just looking—because sometimes you have different thoughts about things as you go on. Has the public responded to the pieces in any way that you know of?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: The few times I've been back to Chicago, yes, my contact is cabdrivers. They are enthusiastic about it. And it did get a rather thoughtful review in the *Atlantic Monthly* by Witold Rybczynski ["A Good Public Building," August 1992, 84-87], which I thought was kind of heartening. I think the substance was,

as a species of public buildings, this was a very successful iteration of those sort of classical public buildings.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes. He's a very respected and highly intelligent writer and critic. So that is something.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, I was heartened by that. And I guess there were other reviews that were uniformly positive.

AVIS BERMAN: I haven't seen any either. I'm just asking you. As time goes on, certain things happen or certain—and the fact that the cabdrivers even know it is something.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, everybody's an architecture critic in Chicago on that scene. [They laugh.]

AVIS BERMAN: True.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: It's an interesting city.

AVIS BERMAN: Now I think that we have reached what I think is the first—no, no. We have reached the first GSA. Now was *Hand of NOAA* [1990-91, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration headquarters, Silver Spring, MD], a GSA commission here, with the—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, no. That was a private commission, although maybe the building itself—I don't know. The building may be leased through GSA, but they had no interaction there.

AVIS BERMAN: That was a very unusual piece for you to do. I would say I would not be able to recognize that as being by you, just because of the way it's a fragment; it's something different. And I just—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, I'm a problem-solver. [Laughs.] And so I don't have a recognizable style or theme that keeps running through work. If I have to do an animal to make this thing work, then I do an animal. Or a fragment? Yes, I can do that. And this—yes.

The way this came about was, I don't know, where do these ideas come from? This is the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and for some reason I wanted to do a hand holding a plumb-bob because that was like the perfect tool, that always works and points to the center of the earth—infallibly. Well, how am I going to do this? I just had a big hand holding a plumb-bob. Everybody thought that was really weird. Then I looked into the—it was a competition. The other competitors had done more traditional, small, like just over life-sized figures or whatever, and this sort of grabbed people's attention, the huge hand.

But then the logo of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, henceforth known as NOAA, uses a seagull as an emblematic animal because it's at home on land and the air—I mean, the sea and the air—which is the purview of the agency. So I thought, well, yes. I could get a seagull in there. Then there was the idea of Noah releasing the doves after the flood.

[Audio break.]

How to do the seagulls with the hand? For that inspiration I looked to the Merchant Marine Memorial here in Washington on the GW [George Washington] Parkway as you're coming from the airport [Navy-Merchant Marine Memorial, Lady Bird Johnson Park, Arlington, VA], which has a flight of gulls flying over a breaking wave, which are all interconnected by their wing tips. And I thought, yes, that's—I can combine that with a hand and have this pond, the hand of NOAA, and it all came together there. And it's a fountain, so there's water; they're over water. Or at least the fountain's working till it started leaking into the garage below, which is now being remedied, I'm told.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes. Now didn't Jim Sanborn do something similar?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, next door in a different part of the building, a large wave pool [*Coastline*, 1993, NOAA, Museum of the Sea, Silver Spring, MD].

AVIS BERMAN: And does that connect with your piece in any way?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, no. In two separate plazas, really. I mean, you can't even see both in the same—standing in the same, you know, at one spot. They're totally different. His is kind of wild and woolly, because the wave keeps slopping over the edge [laughs] of the boundary, as it were. Mine is a much more sedate kind of fountain. It wouldn't even have to be in a fountain. But it does add something to it now, depending on the symbolism of the bird, the seagull.

AVIS BERMAN: I was surprised, if it's a government agency, when you said, no, it wasn't GSA or—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: It's just that I don't know what the administrative arrangements were. A private developer built the building and then leased it to this agency.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, I see.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: So the only interaction was with the developer.

AVIS BERMAN: I see.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: And an art consultant named Francoise Yohalem. I think it's H-A-L-E-M.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Anyway, she got me involved in this project.

AVIS BERMAN: So, I guess, that's another question: do art consultants find you?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Or do you send things out to them?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Both, yes. But she's here in Washington, so she knew me from *Portlandia*. She had been the one that got me the job for the Hampden Square thing years before.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, okay. So she was—right. She was familiar with you. And then we have the *Three Ministers Kneeling* [1992, Civil Rights Historic District, Birmingham, AL].

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. That came about through Barbara Fendrick, who was at that time my agent.

AVIS BERMAN: Does that mean she was your dealer, too? Or when you say agent, was that something different?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, she never actually sold a studio piece for me, so I wouldn't call her my dealer. No. But she was the one who put me on the GSA Slide Registry, as it was called then. And was the reason that I got that first GSA job. But, yes, I could say—more an agent than a dealer.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, I guess so. Did you have to compete for that or did—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Which?

AVIS BERMAN: The Civil Rights -

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No. There was another level of consultant, from New Orleans [LA], who was in charge of the art for the whole project, whom Barbara had known. He had the wonderful name of Grover Mouton III. [Ms. Berman laughs.] An old New Orleans family. Yes, that's how I got that job. But there were other artists involved in that project.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, there were a lot of—Maya Lin has the Civil Rights Monument [Memorial, 1989, Montgomery, AL] there, too, of course.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: But that's in Montgomery. This is in Birmingham.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, excuse me. Okay. So this was a different—okay. Yes.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: She had the Martin Luther King one in Montgomery; I've seen that. In other words, there were groups—they hired X number of artists?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, there were, well, maybe there were two other or three other, whose names escape me. One was another client of Barbara's who was from Texas, from El Paso. And, oh, that black artist that did the work in the interior of the [Harold Washington] library in Chicago [Houston Conwill, *Du Sable's Journey*, 1991], what's his name?

AVIS BERMAN: Houston Conwill.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. He had teamed up with an architect from New York, and they had proposed something that ate up the whole fee just for the design phase. And the mayor said, forget it. And I think Grover

Mouton, who was also an architect/artist, had taken over that job, which was the centerpiece of this plaza, the Kerry Ingram Park [Birmingham, AL]. So there were at least two others.

AVIS BERMAN: And again, was this something you had to go before the citizens or anything, or—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: They had decided that my piece was going to be based on this famous newspaper photograph of a civil rights march that was being led by Martin Luther King's brother [Alfred Daniel Williams King] and two local ministers from Birmingham: [John] Porter was one and [Rev. Nelson] Smith [Jr.] is the other; and I can't think of their first names, both of whom are dead now. All of them are at this point. But it was controversial not because—do you want to go into this story or not?

AVIS BERMAN: Why not? This is history. History isn't the way it should be; history is the way it happened.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. There was a famous newspaper photograph. I think it was from 1962 or '63 of a march led by these three ministers: Smith, Porter, and King. They were stopped by the police, and they are photographed while kneeling and looking like they're praying. But when I interviewed Porter, he said, "No, we weren't praying. We were trying to figure out what to do next and how to keep our heads from being bashed in with a billy club." So that was—I was just told, we're going to do this based on this photo and use the portraits of the three. So I had gotten very far with it. I had a small maquette. And I decided part of it would be that we would do it in stone and do it in Alabama limestone to make it have more resonance with the local thing. In the back of my mind it seemed like the appropriate kind of resonance to have there.

But the Reverend [Freddie Lee Robinson] Shuttlesworth—he's still alive now—had said that the two local ministers, Smith and Porter, for reasons I don't know about, I'm not privy to, were traitors to the civil rights movement, and that if their visages appeared on this sculpture, he was going to withdraw his support from the project. And the mayor at the time, Mayor [Richard] Arrington, who was a black man—it was his whole idea to do this—backed down and said, okay, we're not going to do these portraits on there. We're just going to do generic black people. And that was very controversial.

So I had already done the portraits—not very well - from the crummy photos. Although Porter did come to my studio when he was in town for a Baptist convention. But, you know, he just sat for some photos for an hour or so. So they said, okay, and we were already starting the carving. But the heads were just roughed in, so there were no features. So I used two of the people that worked at the Cathedral Stoneworks [Washington, DC], where we were carving the piece. We had brought this huge block from Alabama up here to Washington and did it at Cathedral Stoneworks, which no longer exists right now but was there to supply stone for the National Cathedral here. And there were two black guys who worked there, so I—

AVIS BERMAN: Were they stone carvers?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: They were more laborers. You know, they did what needed to be done. They were not carvers. No, it was done by two stone carvers from the Cathedral, Joe Moss and Malcolm Harlow.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, I just meant the ones whose likenesses you took, if they were stone carvers.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: They worked there, but they weren't skilled carvers.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: They were more unskilled labor. And they had great faces. So two of them were these two guys. And the third was some young black guy who had bought a car from one of my studio mates and turned up at the studio to talk to the studio man. And I asked him if he would model. He was kind of suspicious about that. So he brought his girlfriend with him.

AVIS BERMAN: The crazy louche artist; they're so decadent, yes.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Right. So I think I just photographed him, and he turned out to have a great face. So that's how these faces got on there.

Now, 18 years later, I got a call just the other day from the Reverend Smith's nephew, who made it his—not his life work—but his duty, I guess, to set the record straight, that these were supposed to be his uncle—one of whom was his uncle. So he interviewed me again by phone, and he wrote this article. Shuttlesworth has sort of mellowed, apparently, and said, yes, that's who was supposed to be on there. [Laughs.] So it did come back 18 years later.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. In other words, the project wouldn't have gone forward if you had put recognizable faces.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: That's what I was led to believe, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hm. [Affirmative.]

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: But I think it became a better piece of sculpture because I was able to use people, real people there, whom I had better access to, for a longer time, to do the portrait heads.

AVIS BERMAN: So Smith and King were both dead by the time you did that?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I don't know when Smith died. King had already been dead when I started.

AVIS BERMAN: Or King's brother.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I'm sorry, King's brother.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: And just had a couple of bad photos, family photos. The other two were still alive, but I never even met Smith. Maybe talked to him on the phone. Porter was the only one that I actually met.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, it's so interesting because had you not told me this, I was going to say, how did you do your research on this, on figuring out this? Were you able to take liberties with the composition from the newspaper photos?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: A bit. Yes. But it was definitely a grouping of three kneeling. And, I think, as I recall, the position, the central figure holding a book and looking up while the others are looking down in an attitude of prayer, was maybe my liberty that I took with it.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hm. [Affirmative.]

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I don't have a photo in front of me so I can't talk to that.

AVIS BERMAN: And did you have to really show them praying even though they weren't?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I mean, it had to look like the newspaper photo to that extent.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. I guess they were praying, as you say, maybe praying to survive. Or just thinking, how are we going to get out of this? [Laughs.]

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. Well, it's interesting because just recently I read an account of [Théodore] Géricault's *The Raft of the Medusa* [1819], which was based on—they didn't have newspaper photos at that time, but - accounts and, I guess, sketch drawings of that. And as a departure from the historical, what actually happened, and what he made out of it was, you know—

AVIS BERMAN: Well, of course. I know he did interview people, Géricault did. It is a perfect pyramidal composition when you're—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: And there are all these buff bodies, and these are people that are supposed to be starving, and resorting to cannibalism to stay alive. But now that's what it looks like. That's what—

AVIS BERMAN: Well, there were so many like that [John Singleton Copley] *Watson and the Shark* [1778]. Watson didn't look like that in the oil painting. That's why it's art and—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Right, and not journalism.

AVIS BERMAN: There are so many of these, you know. [Francisco de] Goya made his so much better than what happened as well.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Oh, sure.

AVIS BERMAN: I mean, one would hope. Especially if you're not there. Isn't the famous reply, when people ask for accuracy, was Leonardo [da Vinci] witness to the Last Supper?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: [Laughs.] Right.

AVIS BERMAN: So there are so many things that one can say. [Laughs.] I think we are actually now at your first

GSA—the building commission, or the *Justice Victorious* [Shreveport, LA]? I mean, these are both—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, this came later. But this was so long.

AVIS BERMAN: "This" being?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: This was first.

AVIS BERMAN: *Justice Victorious*?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, the urns for the Building Museum—

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hm. [Affirmative.]

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: —was my first GSA commission. And earlier than any of these others, except that they didn't get installed for two years afterwards because of some controversy where they're going to be placed on the site.

AVIS BERMAN: Then let's start discussing this because it is important. And this is called *Boundary Markers*.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: And you had mentioned getting on a GSA Slide Registry. Was that the process at the time?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, it was. And that was due to Barbara Fendrick just putting me there.

AVIS BERMAN: That would have been, you know, as many slides of as many different projects? Or a résumé?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: What did you—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, a résumé and as many slides as were appropriate, as much work as you had done. And then I don't know what the deliberations were internally, but I got picked for this project. And it being my favorite building in Washington, I was really ecstatic about being picked to do that.

AVIS BERMAN: And once you were picked, then did you do a design—let me just pause that.

[Audio break.]

So they said, we'd like you to do it. And then you had to come up with an idea?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. Basically they wanted a sign that announced that this is now the National Building Museum and no longer the Pension Building. So I had to incorporate those three words, National Building Museum, into the design.

I spent a couple of months floundering around on that, trying to come up with an idea. And obviously, I was influenced by the frieze, the Civil War frieze by Caspar Buberl—however you pronounce his name. And I wanted to utilize terra cotta as a material and match the brickwork and the terra cotta color. As it turns out, it was too expensive and too much of a limitation for what I came up with to use terra cotta. So it's done in glass fiber reinforced cement [GFRC] that looks like terra cotta. But the brickwork is pretty much a kind of historical match.

At any rate, the idea that finally came about was to try to make a play on a classical urn that would incorporate the themes that would announce that it's the Building Museum, which was to use workers holding up a giant plumb-bob. So I got to use my plumb-bob after all.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, yes.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: It's a tool that we use all the time in sculpture. And as I said, it's the simplest tool that always works. But in this case it stood in for a classical urn supported by workmen and workwomen—if that's the term.

AVIS BERMAN: Workers.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Workers, okay. Black, white, male, female, you know, try to cover the waterfront there. And since the plumb-bob couldn't be supported by a line, I added the hook from a crane, a skyhook, which was not an impossible way. So it added a sort of humorous or light touch to it.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. The hook to nowhere.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. And used rigorous tools, shackles, and all these themes from the building arts to try to create a classical urn - a rope and shackles and hooks and plumb-bob - and whip it all into shape with the image of an urn that would mark the boundaries of the property. Which was why it never got installed for two years - because the street, which I believe is F Street, in front of—that goes between Judiciary Square and the building—was to be closed to vehicular traffic and just be a pedestrian street. And these were going to mark that and be a gateway on either side. But the DDOT, District Department of Transportation, wouldn't make a decision on that for years. So we had the things in storage. Ultimately, the trustees of the Building Museum, led by the architect who was on their—I can't think of his name—said, the hell with it; let's just put it on our property on the four corners, which is why they wound up there and ultimately did get installed.

AVIS BERMAN: And you also designed this wonderful round, solid-looking column, too.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: More solid than you'll ever know, because the engineer at GSA thought it had to be able to withstand a bomb. It's engineered and built for the ages.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, that's good to know. Actually now, one thing the GSA is very interested in knowing about work is that they had not asked— clearly, all the materials are documented, but in terms of conservation, how you want this to look, and what shape is it now? And is there anything about conservation, or is there anything here in terms of those issues that they have to deal with in 20 or 30 years?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: There shouldn't be. Maybe GFRC as a material hasn't been around all that long, so nobody really knows how long it's going to last. But the Pension Building is 140 years old—130 years old - so the brickwork is still in good shape. And there's no reason why the brickwork shouldn't be the same here. In terms of maintenance, it probably needs to be washed. There's the rain shadows that make dirt run down the GFRC sculptural part. But I would just say it needs to be washed. Not power-washed, just washed occasionally. Otherwise there shouldn't be any maintenance.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, that's good. And it says here that the figures were modeled after photographs of construction workers found in the archives of the National Building Museum.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Some of that. And there's a lot of—the kind of other image that occurs in here is of the hoppers that pour concrete. They're like an inverted cone that has three supports around the edge. They're picked up by a crane and then opened up to dump concrete up on the building or something. It has that image. So that was in the back of my mind, which I thought was a nice double entendre.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, right, because the reason I'm asking you that is that that's what the photo—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: There were some photos that had chimney pots originally that no longer are on the Building Museum nor the Pension Building, that were designed by Montgomery C. Meigs [architect of the Pension Building, c. 1885]. So, yes, there was that.

AVIS BERMAN: I know, but—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Not so much the workers but the whole [inaudible].

AVIS BERMAN: So this is a mistake in what they've written, that the figures—the reason I was asking you is because it sounds so much that you do model from life and from photographs to get what you need, because it just said the figures were modeled.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, they were modeled from life.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Not so much from photos. But the thing that came from the archives of the Pension Building was this cement—concrete—hopper and some roof chimney top ornament that Meigs had designed that was reminiscent of this.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay. Now does the Fine Art Commission figure in here?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: They did. They did. Yes. Again, it was on their property. Yes, I got an easy pass.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, I guess, the process is the GSA came and selected—there was no competition. They had their internal process, and they asked you to do this.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Exactly.

AVIS BERMAN: And then they asked you for maybe a design first and gave you a design fee? Is that—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, I don't remember how that worked. No, I think it was—we have a fee, yes, of X dollars.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: And we want this to announce that it's the Building Museum, and you take it from there. So then I proposed this after several months of false starts and blind alleys, finally came up with this. And they liked it pretty much right away.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. What kind of deadlines do they give you for you to come up with the idea?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I don't recall. Or maybe I was allowed to propose in a—it usually takes me a couple of months. I always want a couple of months. Even if I get the idea on the first day, it still takes awhile to make it believable.

AVIS BERMAN: It's hard to believe the government would want something in haste anyway.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. As it turns out, it languished in storage for two years before being installed.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. So then you make this design, and the people at GSA really like it.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: And then does it go to the Fine Art Commission?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: And they like it. And then does it go to the Building Museum people? Did they have to look at it, too?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, I think they were on the—I don't know how they were involved. But, yes, they did have to like it. They may have been involved at the beginning stage with GSA, on that approval. I'm not—

AVIS BERMAN: I mean, it seems to me that this—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: —sure.

AVIS BERMAN: —might have been a slightly easier approval process because you didn't have to go before judges or administrators. In other words, Building Museum people would have more art and architectural experience than most government building users, or the ones who determine that. So—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, I think that's true.

AVIS BERMAN: Also, what did you find that having the government as your client was like, because I think this might've been the first one to have the U.S. government as your client.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, it was.

AVIS BERMAN: And how that differed from your previous experiences.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, it was smoother than some subsequent government ones. On the technical aspects, as I said, the in-house engineer for GSA was quite a stickler for detail and overbuilding, which caused some heartburn. Ultimately, it worked out. I mean, it's built for the ages now.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hm. [Affirmative.]

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Even though we're not sure about GFRC as a material.

AVIS BERMAN: And was it economics that led you to that material?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: That and because during this process, I had contacted Gladding McBean in [Lincoln] California. They are the big terra cotta—they'd been around since the building of the railroads in the 19th century, when this huge clay deposit was discovered in California, which they're sitting on top of. But they've been doing these terra cotta roofs and ornament for over a hundred years. I went to them to see if we could do this in terra cotta, and they said, yes, we can do it, but we reserve the right to make our own molds and eliminate undercuts and blah blah blah. To me, it sounded like they were going to modify the image beyond

recognition. And it was expensive. So I decided that we can't use actual terra cotta; it's just too limiting for this application.

AVIS BERMAN: I think it gains from having the cream and the brick to have the different colors.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Oh, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Than having it all in red, shall we say.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, no, they would've matched the frieze color. We would've had the brick and the frieze color. It would've looked like this, but it would've been a lot less articulated and more stylized than I would've been comfortable with.

AVIS BERMAN: It wouldn't have been your hand.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. Exactly.

AVIS BERMAN: Now how did this fit in, did you find, with your work? Or what place do you see it as having in your work right now?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, it was the most integrated piece of work between sculpture and architecture, I think, than I've ever done before or since. And the fact that [Robert] Bob Stern, who was then the—well, still is—the dean of the [Yale] School of Architecture, but is on the Awards Committee for GSA, gave it an award [U.S. General Services Administration's 1998 Design Award]; you know, I think he recognized that. So I think it was the most successful integration of ideas about—I mean, it's just an architectural, well, boundary marker, which is an old classical architectural feature. The integration of image and the sculpture and architecture and the materials all work out very well.

AVIS BERMAN: Was this your title, *Boundary Marker*?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: And on the titles, do you come up with your titles?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Usually. Sometimes it's harder to come with the title than the sculpture.

AVIS BERMAN: You're telling me. The same thing happens with writing articles—books, too. It is hard because you want it catchy but not annoying.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Right.

AVIS BERMAN: You want something that in a few years or whatever you'll still like the title instead of cringe.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Right.

AVIS BERMAN: Also, have you ever been, in some of your projects, responsible for the inscriptions of anything?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes. Actually this competition that I won for the Carter Woodson thing [Dr. Carter G. Woodson Memorial, Woodson Park, Washington, DC], I came up with one of his quotes ["Truth comes to us from the past, then, like gold washed down from the mountains"]. But that may never get built. [Laughs.]

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hm. [Affirmative.]

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: That's the only one I can think of.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Because some of them, of course, have inscriptions. Sometimes they just have writers—sometimes they're quotations from the person, but sometimes there are people who write inscriptions. I mean, this is good. But it used to be, for example, with Rockefeller Center [New York City], they had one guy who did all of those inscriptions.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I didn't know that.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: All right. Let's begin *Justice Delayed, Justice—is that the next one?* No, sorry, *Justice Victorious*, the Shreveport one.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, *Justice Delayed, Justice Denied* actually came before that.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay. I was just looking on your chronology here. So, okay. Yes, I see. It's *Justice Delayed, Justice Denied* came—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, that, that was my inscription. [Laughs.]

AVIS BERMAN: I'm amazed that they gave you such a title that was not, as I said, not *Justice Victorious*. But they were giving you a title that could have negative connotations, that they let that stand.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, that's an interesting story for that particular court—known as the Rocket Docket among lawyers.

AVIS BERMAN: What does that mean? I mean, why is it that nickname?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Because they don't brook nonsense there. It's in and out, from what I understood. It's an in-joke among lawyers. But I didn't know that at the time.

AVIS BERMAN: This time, you were picked for this commission by the GSA.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: And you came up with this concept immediately? And how did you—what was your research here?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, there's a longer story [laughs] to this.

AVIS BERMAN: This is good. This is the place for it.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I had won a competition in Prince George's County, where my studio is located, Prince George's County, Maryland, for the county courthouse several years before this, to do a sculpture in front of the new courthouse addition there. And I had come up with a figure in a sundial supporting the stylus of the sundial, and around the rim of the sundial, I had the inscription, "Justice Delayed, Justice Denied," which had something to do with time, which ties it in with the sundial.

AVIS BERMAN: Ah!

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: And at a time of budget cuts, the people in Prince George's County decided no, they couldn't do this because they were firing teachers and policeman and blah blah blah. And how could they be seen spending money on something as frivolous as art?

So the idea of the figure supporting the sundial actually split into two ideas for me, which showed up later in Shreveport as the sundial. The figure supporting the sundial was very similar to what I wound up doing here in Alexandria, and the idea of justice delayed, justice denied. I talked to my lawyer about what's a good, catchy Latin phrase that I could use for this sundial prior to this. And he said, well, justice delayed, justice denied is not a Latin or Roman concept of law. It's an Anglo-Saxon. So you don't want to do it in Latin. It's an English idea. So do it in English. So I kept this idea here of justice delayed, justice denied, and remodeled the figure to look like it was in motion, while precariously balanced on one foot, which brought up the idea of the balance scales. The body would be the balance in a precarious balance, and the traditional blindfold to symbolize impartiality.

But there was an arch in the building that was—actually, the building was already under construction at that point. And there was no provision made to put up a several-ton sculpture on there. And I redesigned the arch to include this imagery of the Aesop fable of the tortoise and the hare, which is kind of the opposite idea of swift justice; that slow deliberation is another way to think about the fairness of justice, which is an opposing idea to the, you know, you're entitled to a swift trial, blah blah. And I just glommed all those elements together. So the swift justice is resting on the tortoise, which is the symbol of slowness. To my surprise, nobody questioned any of that.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, here, since you weren't coming in at the beginning of the design process, did you have conflict with the architect about coming in and having to do this?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, they were on board. It was just a structural problem - how are we going to support this - which we didn't have originally. Which was a technical problem that got resolved without too much heartburn.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, when you said that justice delayed is justice denied is not a Roman concept, but an English, what was the—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I just wanted some inscription in Latin.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, I know, but I just wondered why was it not Roman? That's all.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Oh, I don't really know. No. I never inquired beyond that with my lawyer. He said, it's really an Anglo-Saxon concept.

AVIS BERMAN: That justice is—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: That you're entitled to swift justice, you know. You can't be held indefinitely without—

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, I see.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: —being charged and blah blah blah.

AVIS BERMAN: Exactly.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Without a trial. As opposed, you know, the—

AVIS BERMAN: But nobody objected to the title.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No.

AVIS BERMAN: That's fascinating. Only because you're saying, hey, this is the place where people aren't getting justice if it's delayed.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. Right. No, nobody did. And as I said, the lawyers' informal name for this particular court was the Rocket Docket because people were processed rather—maybe with unseemly haste; I don't know. It's what they named it. Later on, the trial of Zacarias Moussaoui, the convicted terrorist, his French lawyer objected that they didn't have enough time to prepare the case. And I thought, well, yes, there's the imagery; it's reinforced by events.

AVIS BERMAN: That justice delayed can actually be a positive concept, too.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, right, with deliberation.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Slow deliberation is as important as a swift trial.

AVIS BERMAN: Rushing it through. And were there any difficulties here in the construction, the installation?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, a lot. Everything got done twice.

AVIS BERMAN: Why?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, because things never fit the way they're supposed to, for one thing. Yes, we installed the arch first, way ahead of the figure on top. And for some reason, the first time it got installed, it was too low. So we had to come back and un-install it, and put a bunch of band-aids in the back. And reinstall it.

And then when we came to install the figure, because it's under the portico there, it couldn't be lowered onto the pedestal with the structural column, pipe column, inside directly. It had to get close and then be swung in and let down, which is not the way to do anything. And when it got to within two inches of where it was supposed to be, it stopped going down. And we couldn't pick it back up again because we had to let gravity swing it down into place, and there was no way the crane could have done it. We could have done it if we'd come back another day with some different equipment, blah blah blah. And the crane people were anxious to get the hell out of there. Why it didn't go down will remain a mystery. So we had to come back with a band under the toe there. And, you know, you can't tell. Only me and the foundry guys know that [they laugh]. But, yes, there was a lot of heartburn in that installation.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Now—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: It still looks fine.

AVIS BERMAN: And did you have to go before the judges or the people using this?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No.

AVIS BERMAN: You didn't have to meet with anyone?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Never did. The people at GSA handled that. And apparently, there was no—

AVIS BERMAN: Fascinating!

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. I know, it's too easy.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, I only say that because other artists I've talked to who have had courthouses, it's always difficult because the judges have opinions about art, and it's never—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Oh, well, yes. On subsequent ones I've experienced that.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, right.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: This one just went—Justice Delayed, Justice Denied; it went very zizz, right through it.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Well, maybe that's why you didn't have to meet with the judges. You got your title and everything, too.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: But are they—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: The judges were made aware of what was going on by the people at GSA. But they just said, okay.

AVIS BERMAN: And they liked this idea of the balance—well, it's very unusual to have movement or to have such an active statue.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: I think that's really one of the real achievements of that.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: And now it's used every night on the news—not every time—but every time there's a show trial at the Alexandria Courthouse, it's always, like, the lead-in, kind of, logo thing. Particularly on WETA, which is probably a violation of my copyright.

AVIS BERMAN: [Laughs.] Well, do you have a copyright on this—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: —when you're doing this for the government?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes, you do. The government grants you the copyright. I mean, they couldn't violate their own laws.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes. Well, maybe to make—you could make additions or images of this. I only say this because it's out in the open air; people can take photographs of it.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. Right. Exactly. But they can't profit from the photographs.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hm. [Affirmative.]

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: At least not without my permission. The client can use it for their own purposes. But this isn't the client using it. It's television stations.

AVIS BERMAN: Are they using it for a station logo, or just to shoot—to stand for the court?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: To stand for the court. They'll either take a photo and use it, take it out of context and—like the other night when they were talking about the nomination of [Supreme Court Justice Sonia] Sotomayor, they had a little blurb of this in the corner of the photograph with her.

AVIS BERMAN: It has nothing—she's probably never even set foot in that courthouse.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: It stands for justice in the courts, which is gratifying that they recognize that.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, I see. They are now using that as a generic shortcut signal for justice.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: I see what you mean. Because she would've—you would have used a New York court emblem, but I see.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: And I have sold, as you said, my original maquette, which is like 16 inches tall, in bronze, which I have the right to do.

AVIS BERMAN: Do you have to turn over maquettes to—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, they have the original maquette. Yes, you turn them over. And they do display them in their offices, which is nice. They're not just stuck in storage forever.

AVIS BERMAN: Let me see. And in terms of this, in terms of conservation?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, in terms of conservation, I'm not too happy, because the judges decided the thing looked dirty, and they hired a conservator without my permission and changed the patina. Now you can't see the damned thing against the black glass.

AVIS BERMAN: What was the tone of the patina originally?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, she was a brownish-green. But it was brighter. And every time a conservator comes around to Washington to do something, it turns out to be shoe-leather brown on patina. Why that should be, I don't know. But, I mean, it's—

AVIS BERMAN: But the conservator did not consult you?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No.

AVIS BERMAN: Isn't that—and did the government pay for this?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, or your—I don't know who paid for it. I guess GSA paid for it.

AVIS BERMAN: So they did that. So this has been re-patinaed in a color you don't like or a value or whatever?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: The value's too dark. It just astounded me that they would do that. But again, I think going back to judges being opinionated, they just thought they probably had the right to do that.

AVIS BERMAN: So, yes, they did it—they didn't do it in the beginning. So that wasn't a conservation measure. That was just the judges didn't like what they—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, they thought it looked dirty or something. And since it was appearing on television all the time, they thought it should look better, in their opinion.

AVIS BERMAN: It could've been lighted differently at times; that would've been a better way. So that they've changed the bronze, the appearance of the bronze. And in terms of anything else for conservation? Anything special for—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, all bronzes should be washed and waxed at least annually to preserve the patina, if you don't want it to oxidize and run down the side of the building or the pedestal or whatever. They often don't. Or they'll wait until it looks terrible before they do anything. That's the typical pattern.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, is this now irrevocably damaged? Or can that be taken off to get more to what you want?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, I don't know exactly what they did. Obviously, you're not going to sandblast it and start over. I mean, you could. But I don't think anybody would be willing to pay for it. And then you would have to cover up the glass and the stone to—I don't really know. I'm not happy with the way that played out.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes. Well, this is good to know, is that they came back after the fact and did something like that, that it was allowed.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. They wouldn't even give me a phone call or a heads-up.

AVIS BERMAN: And where do you see this in your body of work? Or how do you see—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: It's probably my second favorite piece after *Portlandia*, as a freestanding figure. Although I like the Building Museum one a lot because of the way it works architecturally.

AVIS BERMAN: And was this an advance in something you had done at this point?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, no. Maybe it was the largest cast-bronze figure at that point, and now I think maybe it was the first bas-relief of any size that I'd done with the hare.

AVIS BERMAN: I just wondered, because it seemed also to have importance of the way the piece is balanced like that. I think it's just very unusual to get movement—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: —out of the traditional something; someone who's often just sitting or—I mean, a sculpture that's usually majestic but not active.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, yes, that's true. That's true.

AVIS BERMAN: Motion.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I tried to get some motion in there and have a good model, a dancer model who would hold a pose like that.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hm. [Affirmative.]

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. Sometimes the model suggests the idea, which is nice when that happens.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Okay. Well, I think we should quit for today. And thank you very much.

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This is AVIS BERMAN: interviewing Raymond Kaskey on June 18, 2009, for the Archives of American Art, GSA Oral History Project, at his studio in Brentwood, Maryland.

A general question that we haven't discussed—I mean, it's come up. It's a typical dilemma which you've run into, not just for public art, but all artists, that art, it's not perceived by society at large as being essential. When you're working on these, either in talking to people or—how do you counteract this?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: [Laughs.] That's a tough one. I don't have to actually face the public in that regard. Mostly a private client comes to me, and there's no problem; they don't have to justify spending the money or "wasting the resources" to anybody. The GSA projects are pretty much insulated from that kind of criticism because mostly they're buried in the budget of the building. Which, as far as I'm concerned, [is] as it should be. I make every attempt to make it integral with the architecture or the landscape architecture—whatever—so it's not sticking out like an add-on. But, yes, some of my projects have been put on hold, if not actually killed, by that. And that'll be ongoing.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Well, I just wondered also if, when you are at some point in a process with people, if you had to face communities who say that sort of thing, either courthouse people or anything else. I just didn't know if there's been an instance when you've had to justify—to a larger public - to have to justify anything.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, not face to face, as it were. Once people are on board with them, this project is going to go ahead. Then there's a lot—particularly with figurative art—there's a lot of back and forth about the content and who gets represented and how they get represented and should black artists only do black people, and all that kind of thing. Yes, I've run into that, that's for sure.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Also, a lot of your work has been done in Washington, where a lot of the buildings are strong on the Beaux-Arts tradition. But in other places, do—a place like a modern city—provide spaces for figurative public art? Or do you think that a lot of the modern cityscape is hostile to that?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, some of it is. I haven't particularly run into that. A lot of my private commissions and GSA commissions have been in the South, which is more conservative, I guess. Maybe not Atlanta [GA], but cities throughout the rest of the South are more open to that kind of imagery. So I haven't really had a problem.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, it's not so much, I mean, the imagery, but I meant the architecture of the city, unless they're building the building from the ground up where you're asked to put something in there; that's what I meant.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, I can't think of any examples.

AVIS BERMAN: Cool. I was just asking in your case. There are no right or wrong answers. I just want to find out what happens, so we—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, actually, I'm thinking of something I went through here in Washington in a very historic neighborhood, the Eighth Street Corridor, which was one of the oldest commercial streets in Washington, on Capitol Hill, doing a study with the landscape architect [James] Jim Van Sweden for a group that included the Marine Corps Headquarters there—Barracks, I'm sorry - and merchants and private citizens who had some interest in the history of the street. Some people wanted something that would respond to that, where there was a strong contingent of other people who just wanted to plop down some big, stainless-steel, 40-foot-tall piece of sculpture that had no reference to the street or its history. I didn't get the job. As far as I know, the job hasn't happened. But they were adamant that this was going to be forward-looking like that—in their minds. So, now that you reminded me. [They laugh.]

AVIS BERMAN: So this is one you didn't get. And they picked a large abstract piece as far—or do you know who the winner was?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No. I think that they didn't raise the money, or they lost interest, or the project died for one reason or another. Or maybe it'll surface five years from now.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Certainly the economy could have had something to do with this.

Let us go on to the next GSA commission, which I believe is the one in Shreveport. Now, is this—I see this is either titled *Justice* or *Justice—I see Justice Victorious*, and I see *Justice* as the sundial. So what do you—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Oh, well, I don't know. They're kind of lame titles.

AVIS BERMAN: I just wondered if there was one that—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: The *Justice Victorious* would be a little more appropriate because it has this avenging angel image, which, as I've mentioned previously, was the residue of the Prince George's County Courthouse piece that never materialized - which actually did years later, but as a totally different project [*Three Horses*, 1995-97, Tricentennial Commemoration, Prince George's County Courthouse, Upper Marlboro, MD]. It had nothing to do with justice images.

So this is the central figure in a sundial, which supports the stylus of the sundial—or stile, whatever they call that element [gnomon] - that was utilizing the more traditional elements: the figure holding the scale, with the sword in the other hand, which symbolizes the power of the law and the enforcement aspect of the law, without which the balanced judgment wouldn't mean a thing if you didn't have the power to enforce it. The addition of wings is not so much an angel, but the kind of winged victory.

AVIS BERMAN: The *Winged Victory of Samothrace* [c. 220-185 BCE]

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: That's what—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: To add some chaos to the confusion of images.

AVIS BERMAN: It makes it a really nice balance that comes out, in terms of the triangle. It makes the composition [inaudible], I think.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: It just gave it more body.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. And is this the one in which you had the wardrobe malfunction?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, right. [Laughs.] Exactly.

AVIS BERMAN: It seems to me the ribbon is back; the breast seems to be somewhat covered or pretend there's a little more drapery in—I don't see a naked breast, do you?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No. There definitely isn't one, but that was due to the wish of the chief justice of that courthouse [Hon. Tom Stagg, Chief Judge, U.S. District Court]. Although in New Orleans—I mean Louisiana—I thought that they'd be a little looser, but maybe just in New Orleans.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, I don't know. I guess the governor wasn't judging it then. Then it wouldn't have been okay. [They laugh.] So the process was, you were asked to do this by GSA? Or what happened?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: How did this come about?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, I was picked by GSA and then went through the interview process with the chief justice and others on the committee: I guess the architect of the building, representatives from the GSA, and perhaps a community representative. I don't know.

AVIS BERMAN: And did they ask you for a statue of Justice, or did you come up with a—when were they interviewing you, had you made a proposal or have anything?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No. Not for the first interview. I think when I saw the site, the sundial was inspired by a way of organizing the site. It seemed like a device that would keep the sculpture from being like a piece of plop art in the middle of a plaza. It was a plaza on two sides occupied by the building, and the other two sides were open to the street. And there was a bus depot across the street. It was not a great site.

In order for the sundial to function as a sundial, I had to turn the figure around facing the building, which caused a lot of heartburn there. But the justification was, it's the only way the face can work as a sundial. So that when you come out of the building, the sculpture is facing you instead of, like, standing on the corner looking at the building. Normally the sculpture would be facing you as you looked at the building. So that made it a little bit different. But, as I said, the sundial, with its circle on the ground and the big stylus 40 feet long, gave you a chance to make something big enough to hold the space. The figure itself would not do it. It would just be kind of lost in an ill-defined space.

AVIS BERMAN: And they saw this logic of this?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. Or at least the architect did, and the GSA representative did. I'm not sure the justice did—the chief justice did. I don't think—do they call a—well, whatever his title, Chief Judge.

AVIS BERMAN: And that was the one who also called for more clothing.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: But do you feel that the sundial, that they had responded, that they enjoy the idea of the sundial?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: It was pointed out to me that it doesn't work - [they laugh] - by a movie company that wanted to use the image. And I said, well, it's because we're on daylight savings time. You can only make it work for six months out of the year.

AVIS BERMAN: Is it true that it really only—does it—will it work?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: It's close. I mean, we did shoot—had a survey shoot the North Star. You can't make it any more accurate than that. But, I think it is a little slippery. It depends on the latitude of where you were that will determine the angle of the stylus, blah blah blah.

AVIS BERMAN: Of course.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: And if you're off a little bit, well, then it's off.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Maybe this is what I was driving at before. Sometimes modern buildings are a little bit—a modern city, sometimes it's the way it's laid out or not zoned, this is what I meant, maybe a hostile space for public art. I didn't mean just figurative.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, no, no. This is a pretty good example of it.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Shreveport went down economically when the oil business took a tumble back - well, not this one but the previous one. So a lot of missing teeth and boarded-up buildings there in Shreveport. It's not a great site. Yes, you could call it a hostile site.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. As you said, ill defined. And then you had to put a lot more in it to—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Overcome that.

AVIS BERMAN: And—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: But the sundial was - originally Paul Manship had done one [*Time and the Fates*] for the [New York] World's Fair back in 1939, and had figures holding up the stylus. I can't remember what the theme was. It was a classical theme. And that was the inspiration for that and the Prince George's County thing that got

transferred to this.

AVIS BERMAN: Clearly, you had a theme that you were going to do Justice. I mean, you were going to do that, and you had this sundial idea. Was there any other research that you did for this?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No. No, I think that was it.

AVIS BERMAN: And in terms of conservation, are you aware of what's going on here [inaudible]?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, I don't. Yes, the sundial stylus and structural support are painted steel. So that needs to be maintained. And the usual maintenance for the bronze, like waxing it annually at least. But I'm not aware of what they've done.

AVIS BERMAN: So you haven't been back there since.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, no.

AVIS BERMAN: And let me see. Would you change or improve either the piece or the process?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I don't know how I would have a say in improving the process. Now, I don't mind interacting with the—unlike the Alexandria courthouse, this was more interaction with the judge and part of his cohort, which, other than the wardrobe question, was basically - that was the only objection that I had to overcome. So I felt pretty good about it.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Was the budget okay?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. It was a complex installation job because of the way I chose to locate the sundial. It was right over a drain that drained the entire plaza. I had to do all kind of structural and technical mitigations to make that work, and doing it long distance from Washington with a firm in Shreveport just posed a lot of technical problems. Which managed to work out, to my surprise, very well. So anyway. Yes, it was a technical—a lot of back and forth on that.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: And then when I installed it, it was like 120 [Fahrenheit] degrees in the summer. I nearly had heat prostration. Anyway, that's just a war story.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, right. Now, when you're installing it, do you bring your own crew, or do they always have to supply the local labor?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I had to supply the local labor. This was one project I did employ a local artist to install the bronze numerals for the sundial, and he helped facilitate things. But, no, I had to hire all local people to—

AVIS BERMAN: Is that a rule in GSA commissions, as opposed to people, say, here? I realize you have a lot of work in Washington, so you could bring whom you wanted. But elsewhere, do you have to hire people there?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, I could have hired people from anywhere, but it made sense to use local people. I'd have to pay to bring them there and keep them there and pay the hotels and all that.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, that's true. But sometimes if you feel that the most—in other words, someone who's local, how do you test out the skills so you know that they're going to be competent?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Take a chance. I talk to the architect and the contractor of the building. The contractors don't want to be bothered with stuff like this; it's just a last-minute pain in the ass for them, but the architects are usually helpful.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Let's now talk about *Power of the Law*. Are these two commissions; are these two together? [Looking at photographs.]

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay, okay. This is—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: That was in Corpus Christi [*Power of the Law*]. This is in Santa Ana, California, the Ronald Reagan [*Power and Wisdom*, 1995-98, Ronald Reagan Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse].

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, this is the Reagan Courthouse. So this is *Power and Wisdom*.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: And this is the *Power of the Law*?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: And was there another one that—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, there was a female figure.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay, they did—I don't have an image of that. They didn't give me one.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, you can look on my website later.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, right. Okay. So this one, let's talk about the same thing. You were selected, and then you went out to Santa Ana and—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: [Inaudible.] And then I came back, and I made a maquette. There were two choices of site. One was on the side of the building, and the other was the steps of the main entrance. And I chose the side thing because I wanted to make a little fountain there. That was an option that the architects had given me.

As the central figure in the fountain, I was going to use a figure of Saint Michael, the archangel, as one of the prototypes of all the Justice figures that came later, weighing souls in the balance and all that. And that's when the shit hit the fan, because you cannot use any religious references in a public sculpture these days, in spite of the fact that Santa Ana, California, is largely Hispanic, and there's religious symbolism all over the place there, storefronts. Anyway. And I think even the Mexican flag has some—well, I'm not sure about that.

But anyway, I presented this maquette, and that was roundly rejected immediately. Which [laughs] kind of surprised me. But in retrospect I shouldn't have been. So I went back to the alternate site, which was two plinths on either side of the main staircase leading up to the entrance.

And this is a very contemporary building—to bring that back to your earlier question. So there was not really—I mean, it was more like, I want to say, just traditional 20th-century thing. But it's more like putting up a guardian figure on either side of the stairs to the entrance. And they don't necessarily—I guess that's a time-honored way of doing it, and it's not out of character with a contemporary building, shall we say, even though you see more of it in Beaux-Arts buildings or earlier.

But since I had the chance, then, to do two figures here, I took those traditional aspects, the scholarly, the knowledge, the weighing judgment aspect of justice, and cast that as a female figure, allegorical female figure. I used birds as part of these subfigures here to represent these attributes, and the female figure was intertwined with an owl supporting a book. Then the male figure was this eagle attacking a snake, which I think was some reference to the Mexican flag, which I didn't know at the time.

AVIS BERMAN: You're right!

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: The snake is coiled around a sword, the snake being—the poor snake being the symbol of evil.

AVIS BERMAN: So he has the forbidden knowledge.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Exactly. So they are ambiguously seated or rising figures. I'm going to try to make it not a traditional seated figure, but not a standing figure either. Something like, what are they doing? Are they rising? Anyway. So I split those into two images.

AVIS BERMAN: And how did you arrive at the male pose?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: By putting a model on a bicycle, which gave me that kind of—is he seated or not seated? I posed both the female figure and the male figure on a bicycle. It's an idea I was playing around with in one of my studio pieces. People on bicycles are interesting. It's not something you see a lot of [laughs] in figurative sculpture.

AVIS BERMAN: I can't think of one.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, me either.

AVIS BERMAN: But it's true. You don't slump the way you are in a chair, because your legs are moving.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. And you lean forward. In this case he's leaning forward on the hilt of the sword, and the female figure's engaged with a book on her lap.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, looking at the male figure, I was very interested in the gesture of the right arm the way it was. So I'll tell you what I think, but why did you decide to do it that way, other than maybe for formal reasons?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, probably mainly for formal reasons. But what do you think of that?

AVIS BERMAN: Well, I see two works by Michelangelo. I see the *David* [1501-04].

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: That's always good. [Laughs.]

AVIS BERMAN: Right. [Inaudible] sculpture. And then I see the same gesture in the painting, *The Last Judgment* [Michelangelo, 1541]. The main figure, they have the same gesture.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, yes, now that you mention it, *The Last Judgment*, because as other people have pointed out, the Christ figure in *The Last Judgment* has that ambiguity. It's like—is he rising up, is he seated? And what's he doing with his arms? You're right. I was looking at that. [Laughs.] Glad you saw that. I think the way that he's leaning is a little more relaxed and like the power is latent there. He's not wielding, cutting somebody's head off with a sword.

AVIS BERMAN: No. But I'm thinking about David with the—you know, [inaudible] that same—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, in this case he's holding the back of the drapery up. There is a problem with, you know, doing the nude in public sculpture, as you might guess. You really do have to cover up the male genitalia these days, which is fine with me. I mean, it's a difficult sculptural problem.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: And how to begin and end the drapery is always a challenge. So—

AVIS BERMAN: Well, look, the sword stands in for the phallus anyway in this particular piece.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: As does the snake, yes. Right. Well, I think that is more interesting, more subtle than just having, you know, here it is folks.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, I agree. I'm not criticizing. I'm just saying that you are—you dealt with it. You just dealt with it in another kind of way.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. Which I think is more subtle. It's harder to be coy, if you want to call it that.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Now again I have to look at the female figure. But did you have critiques from people who were saying, oh, the male figure is the active one, and the woman is more passive, in terms of she's reading, or she's less active?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Nobody—I think that's true, but nobody said that that's either positive or negative. It's just the way it is. You know, one is contemplative, and the other is active.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. As opposed to the Shreveport Justice figure.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Like, as you say, has the more Amazonian quality to it.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, it could have reversed it as well, I guess. But then a woman would have been perceived as a harpy. [Ms. Berman laughs.] You can't win sometimes.

AVIS BERMAN: No, no. You can't. I'm just asking you. And this proposal with these two figures, was that accepted without alteration?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes. Nobody—in fact, one of the justices bought one of the maquettes because he liked it. Or maybe two, I don't know.

AVIS BERMAN: When you say maquette, wouldn't all the maquettes have to go to the GSA? Or were these something that you made afterwards, an edition?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I made an edition afterwards.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, okay.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: GSA has some of the maquettes but not others. I don't know. They didn't seem to have a consistent policy. Maybe if they liked one, they kept it. If they didn't like it that well, they didn't. I don't know.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. I'm just guessing that they probably, if they claim to own the maquettes and studies, that might be part of the condition - not a studio piece you made after it, though. I'm just asking you that.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I don't know. I don't know.

AVIS BERMAN: But when you have these maquettes, do they ever ask you for them?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. They have the original maquette for the Alexandria one.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Not the Shreveport, not this one. Unless they do, and I've forgotten.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, by the way, this is—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Because I don't have the male one anymore. I don't know what the hell happened to it.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. By the way, you had asked, because you were interested in seeing some of the sculptural maquettes and models for the New Deal sculpture projects at SAAM [Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC].

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: And I talked to Virginia Mecklenburg [Senior Curator, SAAM] yesterday. She says that in the Luce Study Center [Luce Foundation Center for American Art, SAAM, Washington, DC] on the top floor, where anybody can go, they have them all; they have them in there. You can get to them.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Oh, great, great.

AVIS BERMAN: Now, in terms of the space here, besides what you said, was that a difficulty? Or was there—what were any other challenges to this, or problems?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, no. They functioned in a pretty traditional way, being guardian figures on either side of the staircase as you walk up. That was a no-brainer once I got off the Saint Michael kick.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, right. And in terms of conservation, was there anything special? In 50 years, what do you want it to look like?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, if they don't wax it, it'll just have the green oxidization, which I like. Most people think it looks, as it runs down over the stone, looks bad, but I don't. But I don't think GSA will allow that to happen unless their budget is severely cut or something.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, that's another question. When you have these projects, do they build in a budget for maintenance?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I don't know. I assume they do because up till now they've kept up with it. Although as happened in the Alexandria courthouse, I don't know who paid for that, the destruction of the original patina—which the judge obviously thought was an improvement. Maybe GSA paid for that; I don't know.

AVIS BERMAN: Or the budget within the courthouse.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Who knows? Because it wouldn't—you didn't do it so long ago that it was "necessary" to do it at all.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, no. It just needed to be washed and waxed, not re-patinaed.

AVIS BERMAN: No, I'm just trying to find out. So there were no villains on this piece in particular?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, not at all.

AVIS BERMAN: And you remain happy with it?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, I do.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay. No, it's not about having regrets. I just thought sometimes you think, oh, I could've put this on, or maybe I had an idea about it later. I'm just curious.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, I have had those second thoughts, but not on this one.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, no, I had one second thought about the female figure, because I struggled with the right arm on the book, which you'll see later. It wasn't apparent on the maquette, but when I blew it up to full size—because they're eight-foot figures, over-life-size figures—couldn't get it right. It looked too short, and then it looked too long. It looked too short and looked too long. I think I finally got it acceptable. But afterwards I realized it was just in the wrong place. I should've crossed over to the other side of the book, which would improve the composition about 100 percent and would've obviated that problem of proportion that always—because I think it was a foreshortening problem, the way you looked at [it]. If you made it the right length by measurement, it was right by measurement. But it was wrong visually. So, yes. That was a regret.

AVIS BERMAN: And what was the inspiration, or the research, behind the female figure?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: There wasn't any particular image. The problem was a formal one of intertwining the legs of both figures with the birds in a way that didn't look weird, like they were sitting on a bird's head or something. And the scale clash between the figure and the bird. And obviously I used, I guess, a barn owl, which I had used on the Chicago Public Library.

AVIS BERMAN: Also the book, too.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes. So you throw all those things together, which are different scales, so it looks like realism, but it isn't realism. It's more surrealism. But, yes. No, that was kind of melding those things together. And then, I guess for the head, it came out a French, Marianne [national emblem of France] kind of thing with a revolutionary headdress on.

AVIS BERMAN: Like a Phrygian [liberty] cap?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. Well, it was drapery. The photographer that I had hired to record all this saw that right away. I don't think anybody else did. But maybe he's just more tuned into that.

AVIS BERMAN: And was the female figure half sitting—was that the bicycle [inaudible]?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, she was put on the bicycle, too.

AVIS BERMAN: And did she have full robe?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, she has bare breasts there.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hm. [Affirmative.]

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: But it had to be more classical, which meant looking like she was wearing a bra without wearing a bra.

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hm. [Affirmative.] [Laughs.]

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Or just smaller breasts. More classical, that's all. That seems not to offend people, because it's not realistic, which is fine.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. And I know you can do both, and clearly it's the situation. But how do you feel when you are making a figure that will be clothed? Do you prefer the classical draperies? Or how do you feel about contemporary costume?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Contemporary costumes are really hard to do—at least men's. If you're doing a portrait like I did of [Arthur] Art Rooney [1990, Three Rivers Stadium, Pittsburgh, PA], the Pittsburgh Steelers owner, you had to do him in a suit. When I did Pierre De Coubertin for the [1996 Summer] Olympics, he was in a turn-of-the-century suit. To get anything formally interesting, that is—maybe it's impossible. I don't know. There's this Beaux-Arts sculptor here—I think he's from Philadelphia [PA] originally—that did, oh, did one of these Civil War memorials [George Gordon Meade Memorial, 1927] here in Washington, Charles Grassley. He just flatly said, "I

don't do suits."

AVIS BERMAN: [Laughs.] Oh, Grafly.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Grafly.

AVIS BERMAN: Charles Grassley is the [U.S.] Senator [from Iowa]. [They laugh.]

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Oh, right. Well, it's close.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes. Exactly. He probably doesn't do suits either in terms of his sculpture.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I haven't done any women in anything but drapery, which I prefer. But now, on all these bas-reliefs that I've done, which are contemporary clothes from the '40s, '50s, 1900s, all up to the present, including UPS [United Parcel Service] uniforms—but those are not like real bodies with clothing on them. They're in bas-relief. They're more—I don't know what they call them. Hybrid figures. Because you can't play around with the drapery in ways that depart from the body, whereas a freestanding, over-life-size structure, I've never tried that, and I hope I don't have to.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes. Exactly.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: But, yes, the classical drapery is more expressive. You can have them windblown. Or, well, like I did with the *Portlandia*.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, right. It's also suddenly if you have to do buttons and cufflinks and all sorts of—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes, the details.

AVIS BERMAN: It makes it more literal, I guess. With classical robing, it doesn't have to be detailed in a pedantic way.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Exactly.

AVIS BERMAN: Put zippers and this and that [inaudible]. Because it is—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, somebody said, if you're going to do a business suit, you've got to do it like a suit of armor. It looks seedy if you start to show the body underneath it. It's like their clothes are wet or something. Or, as somebody else said, the opposite, if you're going to do somebody's suit, you've got to make it like they slept in it for three days, where you get all the wrinkles and everything.

AVIS BERMAN: Why is that?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, it's more like drapery.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, I see, I see.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: But I don't know. I've never—well, my latest, I did this maquette for the Carter G. Woodson Memorial. He's in a suit, but he's seated. I think it's got some interesting folds to it that you can make bolder than they would be in reality.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes. Well, you have to put him in a suit. You can't put him in a toga. [Laughs.]

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. Exactly. Or nude, like some people try.

AVIS BERMAN: [Laughs.] Right, right. So I think—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Although George Washington in a toga I still kind of like [Horatio Greenough, *George Washington*, 1840]. [Laughs.]

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Well, but that was someone they would have believed—it wouldn't have been ironic then.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No.

AVIS BERMAN: The other thing is the culture has so moved on, that to put someone in a toga is a joke now.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: So that would be very difficult. It'd have to be total irony. You're like John Belushi if you do that.

[Laughs.]

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, you know, [Antonio] Canova did one of Frederick, the king of Sicily [[Ferdinand IV, Naples] or something. Did him as Minerva, the goddess of Wisdom. And in it he just looks like an old man in drag. But this was not ironic. This was—

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Well, that's the whole difference. If you believe in it, then it's very—if everybody believes in it—it's different.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Exactly. Yes, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: But now it would be impossible.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Exactly. Yes. It's a problem. [Laughs.]

AVIS BERMAN: Is there any other comment that you want to make about the Reagan Courthouse in Santa Ana?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, I think we've covered that.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay. And, I guess, the next one—now, this looks like a more modest project, which was—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: That was Corpus Christi. That's not on there.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, okay.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: This is a GSA courthouse in Corpus Christi.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay. Well, I think I have it on my GSA list. So let me—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, there was another. There are two of them, two of these rondelles that are—

AVIS BERMAN: Okay. Yes. They don't have anything. Yes, this is just the U.S. Courthouse. And they don't have too much here. When was this done?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Ninety-eight, '99. Or maybe it's 2000. It was a low-budget job, so one of my least favorite jobs. It's an interior piece, and there was a lot of input from the architect and the judge there. The judge wanted to show the jury process, so there are two eight-foot-diameter rondelles, one showing a jury deliberation in the jury room; the other showing the jurors listening to the arguments in a courtroom, you know, with a lawyer in the foreground.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, which is the one they have here.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, and that's a portrait of Sherry there.

AVIS BERMAN: The lawyer?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. Anyway, you can't see it. And it was a strange kind of Procrustean bed [arbitrary scheme or pattern], forcing all these figures into two circles, which I don't think is particularly successful in this one. The other one, with the jury table around there, worked better as a composition. But it was a—well, it was a departure; I'll say that, because I've never done that composition with 12 or 13 figures in it. Let's just say it was a challenge that I sort of rose to.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, you were chosen, and then you went there and—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, I proposed to do something else entirely, which was a family group: a mother, a father, and child. I really don't remember why I chose that. I don't know. Maybe the interior of the courthouse was that, you know, the family—

AVIS BERMAN: Maybe it was family court or something?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: It turned out that the interior space that I'd planned to do that in was one that the public rarely went to. So they wanted to do something in the lobby.

AVIS BERMAN: That was more visible.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: More visible and had to be on the wall. It had to be a bas-relief.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay. So had you proposed a bas-relief originally?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, it was in a round group, four of them the same—two groups, whatever—a repetition. They were architectural—I don't know what to call them. They weren't like the figures in Union Station [Washington, DC] there that are just repetitive figures—

AVIS BERMAN: Yes.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: —to accent the architecture. That's what I had in mind, but that's what got thrown out. And I came up with this. I arbitrarily chose the circle because it's a strong gestalt. But it was hard to stuff it with that content.

AVIS BERMAN: And did they determine the content?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, it had to be about the jury, yes. So you had to have 12 figures in one, and 12 plus a lawyer in the other.

AVIS BERMAN: Now, in retrospect, was that—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Then they had to show the composition of the community, Hispanic and white and black. So it got pretty overdetermined in my opinion.

AVIS BERMAN: And in retrospect, had you not taken the rondelle form, would it have been better?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Probably, if I'd gone with a rectangle or something. But in terms of the space, the rectangle didn't seem like the right shape. So it was a tug-of-war. But it would've been easier to compose, for sure.

AVIS BERMAN: And where was the architect here in this process? What was he asking for?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, he was pretty opinionated, Warren Cox.

AVIS BERMAN: Warren Cox?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, Hartman & Cox. They're here in Washington. And I respect him as an architect. I think he's one of the best in Washington. So obviously, I wanted to [inaudible].

AVIS BERMAN: Let's just take a rest for a minute.

[Audio break.]

So I was asking you about the rondelle composition. And then you were saying that the circular form was better on the wall. And in terms of this format, had you had the idea of having 12 and 13 figures in it? Was that a—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, it seemed like that was the only way. It wasn't anything anybody said. But if you're going to represent the jury system, you needed the *12 Angry Men* [movie, 1957] scenario.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, right.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: All you needed was Latina women and everything else to satisfy the diverse population in south Texas.

AVIS BERMAN: What was the other guidance that you were getting, or the input that people thought you should have in there?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Oh, well, mainly the composition of the people. And the total rejection of my first idea. [They laugh.] That was the big—

AVIS BERMAN: Right, right. So within this, is there anything, do you think in retrospect, you could have changed to make you happier with it, other than if you weren't doing your original idea?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, yes, probably if I had thought more carefully about the composition in a rectangle, it would've been a lot easier to compose. Particularly, this one was a lot of difficulty.

AVIS BERMAN: This is the lawyer facing the jury.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. Because people sit six in front and six in back. And that should've given me a clue. [They laugh.]

AVIS BERMAN: How did the judge feel about that? Do you know how he felt about the results? Was he unhappy?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: He wasn't unhappy, no. He thought it was okay, as far as I know.

AVIS BERMAN: You said he was not happy?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, he was not unhappy.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, not unhappy. Oh, okay.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, I didn't have much contact afterwards. I had sent my assistant down to do the installation inside. They had an accident—the local, the building contractor, did the installation. But I don't know, the guy that was installing it, with a forklift or whatever it was, backed into the X-ray machine there that they had on the door, which is a horribly expensive thing, and smashed it [they laugh] and added something to the installation costs.

AVIS BERMAN: Now this says materials, "mixed materials." And then it says "polyester resin reinforced with fiberglass."

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, that's what it is.

AVIS BERMAN: And why?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, that's what the budget allowed. It was an indoor piece, and I tried to make it match in color and texture some of the material of the building, exterior materials of the building, which was cast-stone and brick. The whole job was a low-budget job, you know, with the courthouse. And I know from talking with the architect that the value engineer had gotten all the expensive materials. This occurred at a time before 9/11 but after the attack on the, you know, was it '92, the original attack on the—

AVIS BERMAN: I think '93 was the first attack on the Trade Center [World Trade Center, New York City].

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: And when was the Oklahoma federal building [attack; Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, Oklahoma City, OK, April 19, 1995]; that might have been in between?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Possibly so. GSA was building these things with bomb-blast security in mind. So I think midway through this project they had to beef up the structure incredibly, and that cut into the budget.

AVIS BERMAN: And in terms of conservation on this, what—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Shouldn't be anything. It's indoors and dusted.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, right. Just checking there. Do you feel that it has impact in the site?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: To tell you the truth, I haven't seen it installed, only in photos. The photographer that I hired from afar failed to show any of the context. So in these photos you can't tell how big it is.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes. Or there's no sense of it being on a wall anywhere. It just looks like it's an object; it could be in the studio, for all that.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I know. It could be 12 inches across instead of eight feet.

AVIS BERMAN: So, okay, by and large, this was not a great experience then.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, it wasn't.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. And is there anything that GSA could have done at all in terms of improving any of it for you?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Some of the people, as I recall, at GSA weren't even happy with the building, thought it was too retro. I actually liked the building. I think it was very reminiscent of Karl Friedrich Schinkel's 18th-century architecture, which I was very sympathetic to. So, no—I don't know. They might have intervened to give me a freer hand.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Are they aware of those sorts of field conditions when that sort of thing happens? I mean, they have known in terms of progress that the original piece was rejected. But do they monitor what's going on, the dialogue?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: They do. I think it was Alicia Weber [Chief, Fine Arts Program, GSA], maybe, who was the

person whom I'd dealt with on others, like the Alexandria and the Shreveport.

AVIS BERMAN: My question is, does the artist go to GSA when the architect wants this, and the judge wants this?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I think they butt out on that. They let the architect get what he wants. Or the judge. And judges usually do get what they want.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Well, do you think they should be supporting the artist more in these sorts of dialogues [inaudible]?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes. I think they probably should.

AVIS BERMAN: Maybe you haven't needed it that much.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, not until this one, in retrospect. But it's a good point.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

I've been telling you I must ask you about the World War II Memorial commission that you got, although I will preface it by saying that you have been interviewed extensively about it. There's a very good one in the issue of *American Art* in Summer 2004 [George Gurney. "Sculpting the World War II Memorial: A Conversation with Raymond Kaskey." *American Art* v. 18 no. 2, 96-105]; George Gurney did an interview with you. So there's a lot I'm not going to cover. Not that I don't recognize the importance of it, but I think you said it and said it quite well already.

Nw, looking back—and you had five years, and you had a celebration—where do you place this commission in your body of work?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, near the top. I think *Portlandia*, which was my first and largest figure, although that's not necessarily important, but still one of my most memorable projects and experiences; and this certainly would—I wouldn't put it second to that. It's equal to that. This was an eight-year-long slog through way too many approval meetings and contentious public meetings. So as an experience, I'd put it there [laughs], at the very top. Just in terms of sheer quantity of stuff that we had to crank out, it's the biggest project and maybe the most cast bronze in one place in the U.S. I don't know. But, yes, it's just overwhelming, actually.

AVIS BERMAN: I'm skipping forward because there are some other questions. When you realized you were going to be doing this, did you realize how overwhelming it was going to be? Or how big it was?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, no. I mean, it kind of grew like topsy, because not everything was there in the original proposal that won the competition. As you know, I got on the team in the second go-around of an open competition when they were then boiled down to six semifinalists.

I got onto the Friedrich St. Florian team. He had proposed that there be four large allegorical groups there. I did a maquette for one of them, for the final go-around in the competition. But then that scheme, after it won the competition, that scheme got modified to meet these objections about being too big, in the middle of the access between the Lincoln and Washington Memorials. And those four groups disappeared. It wasn't obvious what was going to replace it until the scheme got more consolidated, which took about two years. So I was just sitting on my hands.

AVIS BERMAN: So you had nothing to do with the larger scheme, in contributing to that or making suggestions? Or yes?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I did. But not until two years later, when the preliminary approval was granted. And like *Portlandia*, the biggest piece in there, the baldachino, which Friedrich had asked me to—he didn't ask me to design the baldachino; he just had a victory wreath inside the memorial arch, and he asked me to come up with a way of supporting it that it didn't look like a chandelier hanging from the ceiling. And I proposed the columns and the eagles and the ribbons to hold this up, which was quite a big departure from what he had—a minimal thing. I thought it animated the whole thing instead of just being an architectural doodad. It was an idea I got, like, on the second day, just like *Portlandia*. Everybody, including the Fine Arts Commission, liked it right away, even when they saw my crude little study for it. I wouldn't even call it a maquette. So, but that was a huge piece in itself. But then—

AVIS BERMAN: But to do X number of them, like four?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, two, but there are four eagles on each one. They were repeats. And then all the rest of the iconographic stuff, the ropes and the wreaths on the state pillars, and the stars and the flagpole bases,

became a real collaboration with Friedrich and I. A lot of back and forth. Barbara Lee Diamondstein and J. Carter Brown, of course, who had an opinion—strong opinion—about everything. And after this sort of euphoria and free pass of the baldachinos, there was a lot of hard slogging then, and back to the drawing board.

AVIS BERMAN: With? Back to the drawing board with -

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: With those other elements—the wall of stars didn't materialize just like that. We'd gone through what Friedrich had proposed, a cenotaph [ceremonial tomb], and—what do you call it?—an eternal flame. And then this kind of blasted landscape to represent the destruction of a war. And blah blah blah. We had to make maquettes for all this stuff and bring them out for discussion and approval or disapproval. Then the bas-reliefs, the 24 bas-reliefs, were literally a last thought. It was not there till, I don't know, maybe six years later, you know.

AVIS BERMAN: And meanwhile, are they enlarging your budget because you're doing more and more work? Or did you have one bid that was supposed to stand for everything?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Oh, I would've really lost my shirt if—

AVIS BERMAN: Exactly.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: —that were the case. No, once we got the approval—I mean, there were two separate budgets for me: one to produce everything but the bas-reliefs; and then a bas-reliefs—since they came much later, had a separate budget. I had even asked for an extra year beyond the deadline for the dedication of the memorial, because I had no idea how long it would take to do them. And they granted that. We installed the last three panels two days before the dedication, so I didn't need that extra year.

AVIS BERMAN: That was great.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. No, it would've been anticlimactic to do that afterwards.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. It was great to push, and having those reenactors probably really moved things along.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Oh, we'd never do it without them. So—

AVIS BERMAN: So tell me about Friedrich St. Florian. What is this guy like?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, he's very interesting in that he is a totally contemporary architect. Being Austrian, he also is pretty well steeped in, not just classical architecture, but everything in between; particularly you might want to—or think of the Viennese [Wiener] Werkstätte period. Or the Vienna Secession, which, to my mind, was the last really convincing integration of architectural ornament and sculpture. I think he has that in his bones, even when he's trying to be very contemporary. And I think he realized that, on this site, that one had to pay some abeyance to the classical style. He's been accused of doing stripped classicism, which is now a pejorative term, but back in the '30s when Paul Cret was doing it, everybody thought it was the cat's pajamas.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, also not just the other memorials, but the buildings lining the Mall [National Mall, Washington, DC] are all in an older style, too.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, exactly. The competition-winning idea was to depress the plaza, in order not to break the vista, but to create a space at the same time it was defined, so it wasn't just a way station between the two major memorials. That was strongly influenced by [Gian Lorenzo] Bernini's Saint Peter's [Square, 1656-67, Rome, Italy], at least the original evocation of it. Later I always thought it resembled more the Piazza del Popolo[']s neoclassical layout, 1811-22, Rome, Italy] with the ramps coming down on the side. But you know what I mean.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: There's a lot of historic precedent there, without being slavishly copying anything. I think it came natural to him, even though in his other work he was, you could almost say, radically contemporary, his earlier work. He was very sympathetic to my work, and it was a true collaboration, like Henry Bacon and Daniel Chester French, in a different, in a more classical mode.

AVIS BERMAN: So you were able—you didn't have major stumbling blocks with him?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No. I think we—it was us against them.

AVIS BERMAN: "Them" being—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: The whole rest of the world, the Fine Arts Commission. Oh, no, I think J. Carter Brown was the biggest advocate for this. There were members of his commission who were not so much on board maybe, and other commissions, the Park Service and the National Capital Planning Commission.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, J. Carter Brown, it's great that he was president because, of course, he had tremendous prestige.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Exactly.

AVIS BERMAN: Was there anyone else on the Fine Arts Commission that you felt was as qualified as he was there?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Not with the breadth and depth of his experience and knowledge and enthusiasm. But there were some helpful people, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Who were the other helpful people?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Harry Robinson, who was dean of the School of Architecture at Howard [University, Washington DC]. And David Childs, who was not on the commission but was on the original jury, of SOM [Skidmore, Owings & Merrill].

AVIS BERMAN: Yes.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Now the architect of Freedom Tower [One World Trade Center, New York, NY].

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: He was very helpful. We would have—what do you call it?—well, they call it a charette [demanding architecture student assignment]. But with members of the original jury in New York occasionally, Hugh Hardy and Adele Chatfield-Taylor and David Child and [Robert] Bob [Campbell]—the architecture critic for the Boston [*Globe*] paper; he was on the original jury.

AVIS BERMAN: Is that Robert Taylor? No.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, Bob—I can't remember his name. Anyway, they were all helpful. Then, of course, the vast public meetings where, you know, a lot of opposition -

AVIS BERMAN: [Benjamin] Ben Forgey [architecture critic, *Washington Post*] has always been a fan of yours.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Sure. No, I got a lot of support from Ben Forgey. But we were talking about the commission.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: The Arts. And there were—I would have to look up the names. There were two women there that were, by and large, pretty helpful. The names escape me now. Then the client, the American Battle Monuments Commission, we met with them more than with anybody else. The original Site and Design Committee had four members, and the chair is Ambassador Haydn Williams. Without him, we wouldn't have gotten that site. He was a real powerful presence representing the client. He had a lot of opinions. Fortunately, he and Carter Brown respected one another and got along very well.

AVIS BERMAN: Because it's a huge, huge site!

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: It's enormous—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: —in terms of the space that it was given.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, it shrank from the first competition-running thing, which I thought was more powerful than what actually got built. But that's the way things go.

AVIS BERMAN: Because I thought—as someone who sees it as a spectator—it sure looks expansive to me in terms of how big it is.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. Well, as Carter Brown said, "It will look like it had always been there." And, you know,

I think it does fit in beautifully to that [inaudible] scale.

AVIS BERMAN: Do you remember, in terms of specific sorts of opinions that he had, in terms of guidance, that influenced the sculpture?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, this gray, twisted-rope motif that goes through there that's meant to symbolize the bonding of the nation, I must have gotten a dozen studies on that. It progressed from a bas-relief in stone and granite to a freestanding bronze twisted rope, with about a 10 tries in between. And every one of them did not satisfy him until he got what he wanted, which was transparency in that balustrade [row of small posts supporting a railing]. Unfortunately, he didn't live to see it in reality [d. 2002]. The final maquette was taken to the hospital, from which he did not emerge. But he gave it his blessing.

AVIS BERMAN: Was he composed enough to see it and like it?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes. I mean, I didn't talk to him personally. But before he got really ill, I would sometimes take maquettes to his house in Georgetown [Washington, DC] where just he and I could talk, and he could unload his opinion.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, and he said, I don't want this. Could he give you a reason?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, he was very—as you know—he was totally articulate. Yes. No, it was quite an honor to be interacting with him at that level. But he was a big fan of the baldachino right from the get-go.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, right. And that was—and did he suggest the bas-reliefs?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, it was Friedrich. Friedrich had three different ideas there. Well, originally those walls, as you go down from the 17th Street entrance, were meant to symbolize the six services with service seals and their flags. The Park Service nixed that as too many flags and too much stuff. So the six services got represented on the flagpole bases, which was another thing that I went around with a dozen different studies. And it did get better—I think. I know it did.

But I'm not even sure Carter Brown was in the picture when the bas-relief came up. So Friedrich had these walls open to whatever he thought he should do there. He had three suggestions, one of which was a frieze sculpture with figures in it. At that point we had no figures at all in there. It was just the allegorical ropes and wreathes and eagles and ribbons. So I jumped on that. I definitely wanted to do that.

Then it took us a long time just to come up with a storyboard, because how, in this vast event, how are you going to boil it down? The most interesting suggestion came from a fellow named John Hart, who was one of the architects of record with Leo Daly's office. He said, "Well, I think the theme ought to be the transformation of America caused by the war." And I jumped on that, too. I thought, yes, that's a great idea because that limits it, because this is an American war. I'm not trying to tell the story of World War II. I'm just trying to commemorate the impact that it had on America. And that allowed you to include the home front and women and blacks.

AVIS BERMAN: Children.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: And children. Although we did throw out the Victory Gardens and the scrap drives [citizens' homefront-economy war efforts], which were in there originally. I don't know. We had to go through the army and navy historians and everything else. Of course, they wanted more battles and blah blah blah.

AVIS BERMAN: What I've looked at also, you did not put recognizable people in there like, say, [Dwight D.] Eisenhower.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No portraits of anybody.

AVIS BERMAN: That was probably a good idea because then—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, yes. It would be hard to pick them, and where to stop? We're trying to commemorate the American people, not the few six leaders or whatever.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, right. And the soldiers and—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: And Roosevelt has his own memorial.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Well, and then you'd have to have the other Allied generals and all sorts of other things that would be very—[General George] Patton, or do you have—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Right, right.

AVIS BERMAN: It would be strange.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. Well, we did include some Russian soldiers, I think, last panel.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, I know. *Meeting at the Elbe*. Do you know one of the ones who was there for that? Roy Lichtenstein.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: You're kidding!

AVIS BERMAN: No. He was in World War II, and he met the Russians on the Elbe [River, April 25, 1945].

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Wow!

AVIS BERMAN: Mm-hm. [Affirmative.]

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I would've put him in. [Laughs.]

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, exactly. That would've been fun.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: I've even got a picture of him in his G.I. helmet—smoking.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, of course. Everybody smoked. But we were able to get some smoking in there.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Well, of course.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Could the war have been won with cigarettes?

AVIS BERMAN: Or trading for cigarettes.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: No, it was good not to put the leaders in, because even though it was American, would you have [Winston] Churchill with—it would've gone on and on.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, and there was some discussion about tributes to the Allies, and we had done some studies, just panels, that would have had inscriptions about the Allies. Even that got nixed.

AVIS BERMAN: Right, right. Even with a broad subject, there have to be limitations. Now, I wanted to ask you—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, that was my first maquette and—

AVIS BERMAN: And the Victory figure. And that never went in anywhere.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No.

AVIS BERMAN: I also thought it was very interesting when you're talking about the oak leaf to symbolize the military and industrial strength. And the oak leaf cluster was the decoration. So did you use those sorts of motifs of decorations in there? Or just more naturalistic?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Much more naturalistic.

AVIS BERMAN: And then there was something else that I wanted you to explain. What's the word? It was about—oh, isocephalic.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. Well, that was the biggest battle we had, besides the episodes of the storyboard; in the end, Ambassador Williams and I sat down in the Cosmos Club [Washington, DC] and finalized it.

AVIS BERMAN: The storyboard?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. Without any more input from historians or anybody else. But, yes, I was taken by the Civil War frieze on the Pension Building from my previous experience working around there.

Isocephalic just means equal heads. The bodies are all the same size; heads all line up. And insisted this is what we do for this, instead of having big dramatic battle scenes. That we keep the figure as the primary compositional element and the same size throughout, which precluded everything that had to be related to the

[Audio break.]

AVIS BERMAN: So when we left off, you were talking about how you wanted to make the figure development the most important element in the bas-reliefs.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. Unlike, say, the [United States] Navy Memorial here, where they have 20 bas-reliefs, and they're all different scales, and big battle scenes and close-up scenes; there's no unity to it. I thought, since the subject matter is so different from panel to panel, that the figure should remain the unifying element, and that things like tanks and planes and blah blah blah should be scaled to the figure and not overwhelm the figure. The dimensions of the panels, the proportions in the panels, were such that you're really pretty constrained.

AVIS BERMAN: They're the size of those plasters in the studio, right?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Right, right.

AVIS BERMAN: So they're long, but they're not that high.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. Right. And it does lend itself to a kind of processional composition, which is a classic.

AVIS BERMAN: It's like the *Bayeux Tapestry* [c. 1070].

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Exactly. Or the Parthenon sculptures [447-32 BCE].

AVIS BERMAN: Because it's a long, unfolding narrative, although it does have a beginning and an end.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes, it does. It does proceed chronologically from Pearl Harbor [Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, HI, December 7, 1941] to the V-J Day [Victory over Japan Day, September 2, 1945] on the Pacific side. And Germany declaring war—or the Lend-Lease Program—through to meeting on the Elbe.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Now—oh, I wanted to ask you if [U.S. Senator and World War II veteran Robert] Bob Dole had an input into this as the chief fundraiser for this?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, no.

AVIS BERMAN: Or was he interested in any of that?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, he just stayed out of that completely and did his job as a fundraiser, which he did a very good job of.

AVIS BERMAN: Super!

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, he did not insert himself in any way into the content or the design, which was nice.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes. Because sometimes that happens.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Sure.

AVIS BERMAN: And were there any other people who were involved on some level like that who did attempt to give opinions?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I think it was pretty much the same cast of players throughout, the Site and Design Committee of the American Battle Monuments Commission. But the original ones who really set the tone and were there at the beginning were replaced when the [George W.] Bush Administration came in. That was 2000. They weren't immediately replaced. But by that time we had most of the approvals. Ambassador Williams and his three colleagues, whom we'd met with innumerable times and interacted with and set up the storyboard for the bas-reliefs and saw all the development of, like, the Wall of Stars and almost everything, they had to leave. Then General [Paul Xavier] Kelley, the commandant of the Marine Corps, became the chairman of the new Site and Design Committee, which really didn't have any continuity with the old committee. They just took the attitude of, our job is to get it done on time and on budget. And they didn't—

AVIS BERMAN: So now, did 9/11 [2001] have any impact on this?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, only in the sense that it had impact on the rest of the country and stopped things in their tracks for a while. But, no, I wouldn't say in terms of content.

AVIS BERMAN: And also the new administration—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, and security became an issue, although I think people realized that you couldn't

really secure a plaza, unlike a building. So there weren't \$50,000 popping over the place. Not yet anyway.

AVIS BERMAN: And when you say the change of administration, as you say, they were pretty amiable and efficient. But was there anything that you noticed that was different, that made a big difference?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, politically, George Bush did want to see it built sooner rather than later, perhaps because his father [George Herbert Walker Bush] was a well-known flyer in World War II. For whatever reason, he did put a stop to the legal challenges—

AVIS BERMAN: Made by?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, this group called the Community to Save the National Mall or Our Mall [National Coalition to Save Our Mall], Judy Scott Feldman's group. I think that was the main group.

AVIS BERMAN: Is that Washington-based [Rockville, MD]?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. Well, she is.

AVIS BERMAN: Have you met her since?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Not since these public meetings. I wouldn't say I met her. She just was there trying to make her case against building it there.

AVIS BERMAN: I just wondered if you thought—if you knew—she had changed her mind or not.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Not to my knowledge, no. But she's still active in other parts.

AVIS BERMAN: Is she a preservationist in other words?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: You could call her that, yes. She was an architectural historian that was teaching at American U [American University, Washington, DC]. I wouldn't call her a preservationist, per se.

AVIS BERMAN: In terms of Friedrich St. Florian—and here was someone who was probably not nationally known, or just known to the architectural community—was there difficulty that someone that people had not heard of got the commission?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I think—No, I don't think so. It's an open competition. I mean, certainly, not even the difficulty that Maya Lin had when she won the Vietnam Veterans.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: The only thing that was—he's a naturalized U.S. citizen from Austria. So that did not go down well, especially with the—well, it was used as a club, actually, from Judy Scott Feldman and her crew. The first question that reporters asked when they announced the winner at the National Press Club [Washington, DC] was, what did your father do during the war? And apparently he was some kind of engineer that worked on a dam or something during the war. He was not involved in any incriminating activities.

AVIS BERMAN: When was Friedrich St. Florian born?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I think he was about 10 years old when the war was over, or during the war. So I don't know exactly. In the '30s, obviously.

AVIS BERMAN: And when did he come to this country?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: In about 1950, '51. I think it was—I don't know if he was on a Fulbright. I don't remember the circumstances. Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: So he's been here a long—I mean, if you—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: He's been here longer than he lived in Austria.

AVIS BERMAN: Not only that, he was probably used to fielding that question by then.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Oh, yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Because it certainly would have come up long before this.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: It did. It did. Right, right. No, I don't think there was any opposition to him because he

wasn't known.

AVIS BERMAN: I guess, as you say—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, to take one step back, I think originally GSA was not going to hold an open competition. They were going to hold an invited competition like they're doing now for the Eisenhower Memorial [Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial, Washington, DC], and invite six of the usual suspects and pick one. And the AIA raised a huge ruckus—this has got to be an open competition. This is too important to leave it to you to pick six people. So what was the architectural community going to say after Friedrich won? Because they got it their way.

AVIS BERMAN: I'm not saying that they had a favorite. But I think that's also true if we're talking about the American people and democracy, it was also fair to the commission.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. And it was blind for the first go-around. No favoritism. Yes, Maya Lin—well, that was only a one-stage competition. And winner-take-all at the end.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. Now in terms of your work, from working on the World War II Memorial, what do you feel you learned as a sculptor and how—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I learned a lot about bas-relief on the job [they laugh]. Because I thought I knew something about bas-relief from a couple of attempts, but I did not. It was a rocky start. I had three assistants, some of whom had more experience in bas-relief than I did. So that helped. But, yes, I was introduced to the real difficulty of bas-relief, which I'm convinced is harder than three-dimensional sculpture. But that aside, I felt like I could handle any size project after that.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes. You probably won't—one should never say never—but you probably won't get anything as big as that.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No. No, that'll be the biggest thing I'll ever do.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. And then the other—I don't mean to have this be a ghoulish question, but I don't know if you were thinking about these sorts of things when you were doing it. Maybe you were just powering ahead to get it done and to get it right. But this does give you immortality, because it's never going to be knocked down. They're on the National Mall.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, at least not in my lifetime. No, you can't think about that, you're right. You have to just put your head down and try to get the job done right, because otherwise you'd be frozen on the roof, paralyzed.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. What is everyone going to think, or what it may be. And why would you say having the heads—having everything isocephalic—was a big battle?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, because a lot of people wanted these big scenes, big tanks and ships and planes and bombs going off. And Pearl Harbor. And we spent - oh, I did a dozen or more different sketches on how to portray the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor without showing the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. And finally settled on Sunday morning or Sunday dinner with the family, the extended family—grandma and grandpa and mom and dad and kids and baby—listening to the radio. But that was not obvious.

AVIS BERMAN: That's suggesting, as opposed to literally describing.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, a lot of that relied on suggestion.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. I think it was an excellent decision. I think it made it more original in terms of what would happen, as opposed to formally being interesting.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes. And the V-J Day one was another difficult one because of the masses of people in Times Square [New York, NY] and other places throughout the U.S. I decided to just kind of go back and make it more symmetrical, like a little neighborhood scene, urban scene, without the hoopla—as much of a hoopla.

AVIS BERMAN: I think that's interesting because it was so clear that the bas-reliefs would be—the decision was about what would be included. There could be 500 scenes—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Exactly.

AVIS BERMAN: —that could be dealing with it, and they might all be legitimate. So when you and the ambassador just sat down -

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, at the end. We'd gone through the Victory Gardens and threw that out. And the scrap drive, and threw that out. And some of the other ones, like women in the workforce, got diluted because one of the women on the Site and Design Committee thought my original sketch of women polishing nose cones, they looked like cleaning ladies. And I thought it was a really great panel, but she wasn't buying it. Then the military historians weighed in, and they wanted more battles. We did put in D-Day [allied invasion of Normandy, France, June 1944]; it's hard to leave that out.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes, yes. I saw you had liberating a concentration camp.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, no, that's a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp.

AVIS BERMAN: Oh, okay.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Because that's on the Pacific side, although people do confuse it because people were starved there, too. And the Battle of the Bulge [unsuccessful major German offensive, 1944-45] got put in because that was such a big deal. I mean, it looked like the war was going to turn around.

AVIS BERMAN: Well, do you think having—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Dropping the atom bomb [Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, 1945] was left out.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well again, the theme was the transformation of America. That's why we had women going into the workforce and into the military and blacks being, not integrated, but allowed to be the army. That didn't happen until after the war. And Ambassador Williams wanted something at the end about the GI Bill [education benefits for veterans], which would've been good. It would've been a nice finish. But, you know, just didn't have the room for it.

AVIS BERMAN: After you got this, what happened vis-à-vis your career after the memorial was finished and dedicated?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Nothing in particular. [Ms. Berman laughs.] No. I mean, there's only one job like this here you're going to get.

AVIS BERMAN: You are working at the moment on bas-reliefs for the national headquarters of the union, right? The Teamsters union.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Don't you think that what you learned about bas-relief and contemporary clothing in World War II is feeding into what you're doing right now?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Absolutely. It really made it possible to do this—a lot easier than the first time around.

But as far as people knocking the door down to commission me to do things, that didn't happen. And it didn't happen to Friedrich either. Probably his involvement is even more specialized than mine, as an architect. I'll still do commemorative sculpture like I'm doing for the Teamsters, but I don't think he'll be doing a whole lot of memorials.

I did get another job directly as a result of this, which is a [Mount Pleasant] War Memorial in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, which is across the harbor from Charleston. And that was directly due to this group coming to Washington and seeing the World War II memorial. I took them around and showed them around my work, and they hired me outright to do a war memorial.

AVIS BERMAN: What war?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: All wars, from the Revolutionary War to Iraq. It's a single allegorical figure.

AVIS BERMAN: Because also, it seems to me, with the union there, they're not wearing suits; they're wearing more informal clothing.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Work clothing.

AVIS BERMAN: Work clothing. Now, that looks like it's a little easier to do, because it can be looser.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Or more interesting.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Oh, absolutely. And this goes from 1900 to the present. Mainly they're male figures; not a whole lot of female figures. But work clothes are, you know, more sculptable than suits are. And older clothing, which is loose and baggy, and people wore hats, fedoras, and, you know, what we used to call bums' caps.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes. Right, like working—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Yes.

AVIS BERMAN: Workers' caps.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Which is more interesting.

AVIS BERMAN: Now did you ever—when you did the bas-relief, obviously, it's dimensional, but did you ever look at murals as any kind of inspiration?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I've tried. I've tried looking at Diego Rivera's stuff. But his was so—

AVIS BERMAN: Crowded?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Crowded and had more painterly composition, proportions; they might be vertical spaces or square. Whereas this was, by the space, limited to, again, to this long, skinny processional thing, which I'm getting used to working with now. And, again, went back to the isocephalic idea, with the figures being all the same size. So those murals—I did look at the Mexican muralists [Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros, and José Clemente Orozco] because I've always admired them, that clash of different things all thrown together and somehow resolved.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I look at that and say, I wish I could do that. But the proportions are so different.

AVIS BERMAN: Yes. I wondered if the union people had hired you from looking at the bas-reliefs on World War II.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Not directly. I was hired by the design firm that was redesigning the lobby. They had known my work from World War II.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. What is the architectural design firm? Who is it that's working on this?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Teamsters?

AVIS BERMAN: Yes.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, it's a firm called MFM Design [Bethesda, MD]. They're exhibition designers, but they have architects working for them.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. It looks terrific in progress. Are there any special challenges that you're finding?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, the challenges were getting, again, the storyboard nailed down and everybody on board, not making boo-boos; like Mr. [James P.] Hoffa wouldn't allow us to show anybody smoking a cigarette, which everybody did until 20 years ago, especially workmen. Things like that.

AVIS BERMAN: Right. So for the World War II Memorial, naturally, you had hundreds of books and access to photos from the war.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: In the archives, the National Archives [Washington, DC].

AVIS BERMAN: And was there anything comparable that you had for this?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Not in scale. But, yes, they do have an archive, and they published a book for the hundredth birthday, which was in 2003, I believe, which proved to be the source of maybe about half the images we used [*100 Years of Teamsters History: a Strong Legacy, a Powerful Future*. Philadelphia: International Brotherhood of Teamsters; DeLancey, 2003]. If not images, at least those ideas had to be depicted.

Some of them are outright images you could use, which is what happened with the World War II thing: we went through thousands of photographs at the National Archives with the help of a curator there who was a World War II freak, luckily. And she culled this out of millions, probably, of the Office of War Information photos, boiled it down. Then sometimes you just look and, wow! This image just jumped right off the page at you, and it was

copyright-free. And then sometimes you had to invent the whole thing. And the same thing here, which meant literally posing it with models or whatever, just to have something to draw, if you couldn't use photos from the past.

AVIS BERMAN: What's also nice about both of these is that, with the Teamsters, you didn't have to make people really beautiful or idealized, because it would've failed.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: I know. It's just who they are. Although one problem with the isocephalic idea is that it is sort of a Procrustean bed: tall people have to be shrunk, and then short people have to be stretched. It does weird things to the proportions, like heads get too big, too small. And keeping everything on an even keel, while not taking the life out of it, is a challenge, yes. I forgot about that part.

AVIS BERMAN: Right.

Well, looking back at where you started as an abstract sculptor and now here you are, I don't know if we've missed anything or any general reflection you would like to make about—

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, I accomplished more than I ever dreamed I could have 30 years ago, or 35 years ago, when I was just sort of sucking my thumb and trying to figure out where to go next, after I had run the abstract stuff into the ground. I just didn't seem to have any juice anymore. And started off just hoping I could make a credible figurative sculpture. That took five years. [Laughs.] And then that wouldn't go anywhere either until I won the *Portlandia* competition. That was a trial by fire.

AVIS BERMAN: That was good because you didn't know the pitfalls, so you were unafraid.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Exactly. Too dumb to fail. [They laugh.] In current terms. So, yes, the World War II thing's been the peak of my career. Now I'm looking forward to retiring, but not really.

AVIS BERMAN: Do artists retire?

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, not really. But I wouldn't mind doing some more personal work, studio work. I've tried interregnums between projects, have kept up doing studio work. But there's not a whole lot of interest in that, that I've found—or in my work.

AVIS BERMAN: You also have to really go after it with galleries with the same intensity that you do the other projects. And you may not have time either.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, no.

AVIS BERMAN: You have to devote full time, so much time, to do that, too.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: Well, and also I think there is an invisible wall between the studio/galleries scene and this public commission stuff. The gallery/studio people are just not interested in—maybe because it isn't saleable. Like original maquettes, nobody cares about that until you're dead for 50 years, and then, oh, yes, we found this original study that he did for this and that. But not now.

AVIS BERMAN: I don't think you have too much regret about that.

RAYMOND J. KASKEY: No, no, no. It's what I wanted to do, and I succeeded beyond my wildest dreams. So I've got no complaints.

AVIS BERMAN: Okay. Thank you very much. You've done splendidly.

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