



Smithsonian
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Interview with Jim Colclough

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Transcript

Preface

Tape-recorded Interview with Jim Colclough

at the Artist's Home in Westport, California

September 13, 1976

Willem Volkersz, Interviewer

Editor's Note:

This transcript is from a series of recordings made by Willem Volkersz over a number of years. They are not formal interviews, but rather records of conversations, often taped during photo-taking tours of the artist's studios or home collections.

The naive/visionary artists in these interviews have unique verbal mannerisms, many of which are difficult or impossible to transcribe accurately into written form. Thus, for grasping certain nuances of speech, researchers will find it advantageous to listen to the original tapes.

Our intent in transcribing these interviews was nonetheless to translate as accurately as possible the spoken word into a comprehensible written form, making changes to clarify but not to interpret. Thus the speaker's grammar is unedited. For example, "them" for "those," "themselves," and "gotta" were all transcribed as heard. On the other hand, certain changes were made for clarity: "'cause," was transcribed as "because," "'fore" as "before," "'yo" as "your," etc.

Other editorial notations are as follows: Bracketed words are of two types. Those with "[—Ed.]" or "[—WV]" are inserted by the transcriber, editor, or Volkersz. Other bracketed words indicate uncertainty: Two or more words or phrases indicate possible alternatives; "[unintelligible]" and "____" indicate words that are garbled or incomprehensible on the tape, the former being a much longer phrase than the latter; "[noise]" is self-explanatory.

Interview

JC: Jim Colclough

WV: Willem Volkersz

[**Tape 1, side A**; Volkersz' No. C2-1] [45-minute tape sides]

[This tape was recorded while WV, accompanied by his wife Diane (DV), visited Colclough in his home and later in Tuoloma Gallery where they viewed his work. Volkersz took photographs of the artist's works throughout the interview.—Ed.]

[We were standing in front of the artists' kitchen table, and I asked him about the words painted on the surface—WV]

JC: . . . I had some, this is a story connected with that. When I first moved here, all my relatives wanted to come up and visit, you know, my wife's relatives and everything. I had to do something to keep them from coming. (laughter)

DV: Did it work?

JC: Yeah!

WV: [Reading:] "Push. Go light on the grub. Eat at your own risk. Push. Visitors cost money." That's great.

JC: No, I had diabetes; the truth of it is I had diabetes and I had to. . . Go right on in and find you a chair. Sit down.

WV: This looks like your chair.

JC: No.

WV: All right?

JC: That's the one I sit in all the time, right there.

DV: You want to trade?

JC: No, this is all right. I hurt my back about three years ago, and the doctor won't let me sit in a chair like that anymore.

WV: Oh, you've got to have a straight back, huh?

JC: Yeah.

WV: How long have you been doing the pieces you've been doing? Very long?

JC: Oh, about 1961 or '62. Since I moved here. I moved in this house in 1961, then I started in on it.

WV: Where were you living before you moved here?

JC: I lived out at San Simeon where the Hearst Castle is.

WV: Oh yeah, I know where that is. What made you move here?

JC: I was the first person that built a house out close to [William Randolph—Ed.] Hearst Castle, before the state took it over as a park, right south of the town of San Simeon; it's about two miles. And the state come along, after they took it over from the Hearst's, why the state come along and down where I lived they took over a hundred feet on each side of the highway for a business section, and they condemned my house, took my house, about two-thirds of my lot.

WV: Oh, no.

JC: On both sides of the road there.

WV: Were you ranching out there, or farming, or something?

JC: No, I had sixty ton of adobe brick moved from Fresno over there, and I built adobe house for an art gallery and an antique place, and just as I got it built, why the state condemned it.

WV: Oh, boy. That was how long ago?

JC: In 1960.

WV: Gee whiz. Did they compensate you for that adequately, you think, or not?

JC: No. I was on the highway out there, and if you've ever been down there, why down where, Hearst, the Hearst estate owned about 20 or 25 miles along the coast there?

WV: Yes.

JC: And I was the nearest place to the entrance to their ranch, on the subdivision.

WV: Oh boy.

JC: And, well, they took a year. They'd have appraisers out there every few days, you know, given us the devil and everything, nearly made a nervous wreck out of my wife. And after they come out there and gave us, served condemnation papers on us, and gave us two weeks to move out.

WV: That's incredible.

JC: Oh, heck, why this highway department is just regular crooks.

WV: I believe it.

JC: And that's. . . Well, they offered to sell us the adobe house back for a dollar if we'd move it off the place and move it back on the back of the lot. But you see, you have to tear adobe house down brick by brick.

WV: Sure, brick by brick.

JC: And my wife and I did the work of building it ourselves.

WV: How long did it take you to build it?

JC: Oh, it took us a long time.

WV: You just slowly would add on to it, you mean, or. . .

JC: No, we just started in from the foundation and built the complete thing. I built one over at Fresno, 133 feet long.

WV: Really.

JC: My wife and I did.

WV: Well, were you living in the house while you were building it, sort of in one section, or something, or. . .

WV: How did you do that?

JC: I had a house trailer, and I lived in the house trailer while I was building it, and then after I got a couple of rooms built, I moved in the two rooms I had built. They're just about, well, it was finished just as they come out and condemned.

WV: Oh, gee.

WV: How did you get into building adobe houses?

JC: Oh, I traveled about 20 years working on the carnival, and I saw some adobe houses up in New Mexico and Colorado, close to Trinidad. And an old Mexican man come along and was telling me, told me that—this is before World War II—and he told me that he built adobe houses, and he'd just got through building one north of Trinidad that had waterproof brick. And he's telling me about it, and I got out to California, I decided I wanted to build a house, so I built one over at Fresno.

WV: Did you buy the brick?

JC: No, I made it.

WV: You made them, even. That's great. Now how do you waterproof those bricks?

JC: Well, you see, long time ago, they used to, the Mexicans just tromped them with their feet and put straw in them to hold them together, and the bricks weren't waterproof. But they take this umm, [pitch build?—WV; pitchblende?—TR] is what they call adobe. It's asphalt, is what it is, that will mix with water.

WV: I see.

JC: And you just put so much into each brick.

WV: And that does it?

JC: But you can take roof paint or anything, to make them. I've made them from powder root.

WV: And then did you have like a jig for making, or something like that?

JC: Well, I just first started out and made a couple of molds just big enough for a brick, and did it by hand. Then I had an old Fortune tractor, and I made a big mixer on the back of it, that would mix 15 bricks at a time. Then I made a mold for 15 bricks, and I just let it pour out in. . . It was hard work.

WV: Boy. So you must have spent like, what, several years making bricks and building your house?

JC: Well, the house over in Fresno and the one over there together. See, I first made this one over at Fresno that was 133 feet long. And I had five acres and I made 60 more ton of brick and was going to build another house on the same five acres.

WV: Oh, I see.

JC: And my wife wanted to leave there, and I did too, so we bought a acre of land over there at the entrance of Hearst Ranch.

WV: Right.

JC: Right by the ocean.

WV: Did you then use the bricks you had left over?

JC: Well, I had the 60 ton of brick hauled over to San Simeon.

WV: And then you built there.

JC: Yeah.

WV: Now is that still standing?

JC: No, see, you had to tear it off the piece of land, and some fella bought the house for—I don't know what he give for it, but not very much—but he tore it down and hauled it down _____ close to Lancaster, where he built it.

WV: Ohhh. That's real sad.

JC: That's the only reason I'm up here. I wouldn't have been up here if it hadn't been for that.

WV: How did you pick this particular town?

JC: This was the only place in the country we could find a place where we could buy cheap place.

WV: So obviously this house was here, and. . .

JC: This house was already here, and I just, my wife put in month after they condemned us down there, drove 5,000 miles in a month trying to find a place; this is the only place we could find. We was trying to find a place close to the ocean, you know.

WV: You say you worked for a carnival?

JC: I worked on the carnival about 20 years off and on.

WV: Doing what?

JC: Well, I had three baby kiddy rides, you know, and I had a side show, and some of these mug joints you sit down in and get your picture made—at that time four for a dime.

WV: Ohhh.

JC: Now, they're about a quarter for one, or 50 cents [worth].

WV: And so did you, you traveled all over the country, or just the west?

JC: Oh, I was all up in. . . I was born back in Fort Smith, Arkansas, and I traveled up, going down on both sides the Mississippi River, and down into Georgia and Alabama, Tennessee, Kentucky, Louisiana, Iowa, Illinois.

WV: How did you get involved with that? Was your family involved with that?

JC: Naw. I was a garage man before I did that, in Sallisaw, Oklahoma.

WV: That's our part of the country. We're from Kansas City.

JC: Oh, _____. I worked there for the, on the carnival up in Missouri a lot, but I can't remember all the towns over in Kansas.

WV: Sure.

JC: Iowa, up in Wyoming, Utah, Colorado.

WV: What made you first get involved with the carnival?

JC: Well, you're not old enough to remember the Depression.

WV: No, I'm not.

JC: But me and my dad was an automobile dealer in Sallisaw, Oklahoma, selling the Starr car; I don't suppose you ever heard of Starr cars.

WV: No, Starr.

JC: Starr [Durand]. And we also sold Chevrolets and Dodges, but Starrs were the main thing. And when all the banks went broke in Oklahoma—all over the United States—we went broke too. And everybody in town owed me money and I just decided I was going to travel around, and I built a little old—I first started selling ice cream, and then I went to sell. . .peanuts and lemonade, I think, at the carnival, and then I got ahold of an old baby ride, a little train, and went traveling around. I didn't have to worry, I might not make any money, but I didn't have to worry about collecting.

WV: Right. So you were living in a wagon or something like that, or in a truck?

JC: No, I had a, the first year or two I had one of these little old army pup tents, or some kind of little old tent.

WV: Really.

JC: Went back somewhere, I started about 1930, I think.

WV: Later on, what did you have? A trailer or something?

JC: Well, I got a, the next thing I got was an old Willard-type car, a touring car, and I picked the backup—I was putting a kind of a camper on, like they have now, you know—and then I got a house trailer and an old truck to haul the stuff around on. Oh, I was traveling the way I ____.

WV: Did you travel by yourself? Did you travel with a larger carnival?

JC: Oh, I traveled with some big carnivals. I played lots all over St. Louis, all over Illinois, and Iowa. A lot out in western Missouri, but I can't remember the name of any of the towns. I can remember Pittsburgh, Kansas, and Oswego, Kansas.

WV: Sure, sure. Then did you retire in Fresno?

JC: Well, the year the Japs hit Pearl Harbor, my wife and I and the kids were up in Utah, working at the fairs, and the last fair we worked in was the Utah State Fair, Salt Lake City. And my wife's folks lived down here, out in the country from Fresno; they were ranchers. And we wanted to come out here to spend the winter, and then we were going back to Utah in the spring. But just after we got out here, the Japs hit Pearl Harbor, and I didn't go out on the road the next year, you know. I just, I stayed in Fresno. And I got a job, I went up to the Richmond and worked in a shipyard. I take it back. I went out on the carnival the next spring, but here in California. But I thought I was going to get drafted into the army, so I went to work in the shipyard.

WV: Oh, I see.

JC: And then they classified me—I can't remember, but they wouldn't call me on account of—but I got sick in the shipyards. I had too much welding, burning smoke.

WV: Oh boy.

JC: I quit and went to work on the carnival.

WV: For how much longer did you work in the carnival then?

JC: Oh, I worked off and on for several years. I had some of these photo galleries, and I operate them at night, and a Chinese penny arcade down here at Fresno at nights, you know. And then I got so I couldn't stand the public, working on the carnival, so I quit.

WV: What was the matter with the public?

JC: Well, we were working at a lot of Portuguese celebrations. And the Portuguese men, at that time, were very smart-alecky. And they caused you trouble. They'd try to slip into your show and stuff. And all these people'd come out from Oklahoma and Arkansas; they never had a nickel in their lives, you know, till the war started, and they got out here—and from Texas and back in those places—and it was all just Okies and Arkies to me, because I had worked all over that part of the country, used to live back there. And they got hard to get along with. Now I nearly had several fights, so I just got tired of it. And my oldest daughter was wanting to go to college, so we settled down there in Fresno so she could go to college.

WV: I see.

JC: She went to Fresno State down there. When you called last night, I could have asked you down last night, but I thought it was about eleven o'clock. I was going to sleep _____, but. . .

WV: I didn't want to bother you last night, you know, and it was fine because we slept in a camp out near Fort Bragg.

JC: Yeah.

DV: We were pretty tired ourselves.

WV: Yeah, we needed a good night's rest, so that's okay, that's fine.

JC: I've been gone for a month; I just come home the other day.

WV: Oh really. Where were you at?

JC: I was down at my daughter's. My daughter and her husband take a vacation every August, and I go down there and look after the place for them.

WV: Where was that?

JC: Down by San Francisco.

WV: Oh, uh huh. I'm glad I caught you. Do you have most of your work in a gallery in Fort Bragg, you say?

JC: Well, I don't make a habit of keeping it here at the house anymore.

WV: Why is that?

JC: Well, there's lots of robbing and breaking into houses here and stealing everything.

WV: Oh no.

JC: And I was gone, you know, and I keep my stuff other places. But this gallery in Fort Bragg just has about a third of the stuff for several months now, and they're getting ready to have a one-man show for me, along lately, and I'm bringing all the stuff up here for them to have a one-man show.

WV: Where are you going to have the show?

JC: Down at Fort Bragg.

WV: You said your stuff is at Fort Bragg now, a lot of it.

JC: About a third of it.

WV: And where's the rest?

JC: It's down at Fremont and some other places.

WV: Oh. What's the name of the place at Fort Bragg?

JC: [Tuolomus] Gallery.

WV: Tuomus?

JC: Yeah. T-o. . .

WV: . . .m-e-s, or something?

JC: T-o-l-o-m-a, or something [Tuoloma—WV].

WV: Okay.

JC: Yeah.

WV: Do you think they'd be open today, a Monday?

JC: I called him up last night after I talked to you, and he's going to be home, to be there today. And if you want to go down to look at the stuff. . . I've got a few pieces here that I just brought home with me.

WV: Great.

JC: Small pieces, but seeings as you're going to go down there, I'll go down with you and. . .

WV: Oh, that'd be great, because, well, I'd like to see as much as I can. I saw what was in the book.

JC: Well, I don't have a Truman anymore, and I don't have the Duke and Duchess [of Windsor—WV].

WV: They've been sold?

JC: They've been sold, or sent. . . I sold Truman in June and I sold the Duke and Duchess about a year ago. And I sold that Crucifixion; it's not in the book. And a fellow by the name of David L. Davis is the one that buys all this stuff, but he claims he's a-buying them for that Herbert W. Hemphill. You know him, or heard of him?

WV: Oh, I heard. . . He's the one that wrote that book that I saw your work in. He's the one that was the author of that book, Hemphill.

JC: No, he's not the author. A lady by the name of Elinor Lander Horwitz.

WV: Oh, I saw. . . Okay, I got it confused. There's a couple of different books, and I saw you in another book then. There's also a book called Twentieth Century Contemporary. . . Twentieth Century American Folk Art and Artists, and I thought I'd seen it in that, but I saw you in the other book, then. I saw you in Horwitz's book [Contemporary American Folk Artists, Philadelphia and New York: J. B. Lippincott, 1975—WV]

JC: Yeah.

WV: Okay.

JC: Well, who wrote the book, the other book?

WV: Hemphill.

JC: I didn't know he had wrote a book about it.

WV: Yep. Well, I thought you were in it, but maybe you're not, you know. I think you're probably in, I saw you in that Horwitz book.

JC: Yeah, Horwitz's book is the one that. . . This Mrs. Horwitz's son came from New York City out. I was down to Fremont when he came. And he just popped in on me unexpectedly.

WV: How did they know about you?

JC: Well, several years ago, some way or other, the New York State Historical Association at Cooperstown heard about the stuff, and the head guy, named Jones, wrote my daughter a letter, and wanted to buy slides of all my stuff, to use it to teach folk art back there. So we sent him the slides and when this. . . My family was in Europe, and I was down there, and my son-in-law was a doctor, and his answering service called up on Sunday and wanted to know if, how to get in touch with Dr. [Roos's] father-in-law, and I said, "Well, I'm Dr. Roos's father-in-law," and she said, "Well, there's a man in San Francisco wants to talk to you." This was about one o'clock on Sunday afternoon. And I talked to the guy and he wanted to come out, and I said, "All right," and he came down there. I asked him then how he found out about me, and he said that he didn't know how they found out.

WV: Huh.

JC: But in the, if it's the paperback book you're talking. . .

WV: I am; yeah, that's the one that I'm thinking of.

JC: Well, the hardback book on the cover back there says that this man that helped Mrs. Horwitz get the book together had taught at Cooperstown.

WV: Oh, back in New York.

JC: Yeah.

WV: That's how he heard, huh?

JC: Yeah. And that's the only way I can figure out.

WV: Yeah, huh. Yeah, I teach at an art school in Kansas City, and I use these slides a lot to show my students.

JC: Well, the reason I did the statue of Truman is that he and I are distant cousins.

WV: That's right, that's what the book says. [remembering—Ed.]

JC: Oh yeah, he and are distant cousins. And the reason I did the Duke and Duchess is the Duchess and Mr. Truman and myself are all distant cousins; we're all descended on the same [Duvall] family.

WV: Huh. Did you ever meet Truman? [phone rings]

JC: No. Up till I hurt my back, I used to go back east for four or five weeks every fall, and the fall before he died why I was going back to North Carolina, and I went through Independence and went to the library, you know, and everything.

WV: Right, uh huh.

JC: And I told one of the guards I was Truman's cousin, distant cousin, and, boy, did they get polite. (laughter) Well, what I wanted to see was, what kind of statues they had of Truman back there. And they took, he took me and introduced me to the head guy, I can't remember, curator, whatever they call it.

WV: Sure.

JC: And then he introduced me to the head librarian, and they got out Truman's genealogy and everything and showed it, and I acted polite and read it, but I'd already had it, see.

WV: Uh huh.

JC: And I'd wrote to Truman once, after he came back to Independence, and asked him, I wanted to know if he was a descendant from this Duvall family, and about six or seven, about four months later, I got a letter from his cousin who lived, that lady lived across the street from him, and she said that Mr. Truman had asked her to write, and that he was descended from this family.

WV: I'll be darned.

JC: But I was wanting a letter with his signature.

WV: Sure! So you didn't get that?

JC: No.

WV: That's too bad.

JC: But I took it to the library, you know, and they only had this Iwo Jima statue out on display, and I asked the guy why they didn't have some other statue, and they said they rotated. And I told the curator about this Truman I already had carved, and he thought I was trying to sell it to him—I wasn't trying to sell it to him—and he no, they didn't have any money to buy anything with. I wouldn't want to sell it. So. . . I kind of wanted to keep Truman, but this David L. Davis, he's got a address in New York City, one in San Francisco, and he went to the San Francisco Art Institute down there. I guess you've heard of it.

WV: Sure.

JC: And at one time, several years ago, they come up and got ten of my pieces and had a show there at the Art Institute.

WV: Oh really.

JC: He went there and was looking for unknown folk artists, and they give him my name, but they didn't know how to find me. And at that time, when they took the stuff down, it was in a gallery down at Mendocino, and this lady had quit business down there; her rent had been doubled or tripled. But he got in touch with her and then he came up here to see me. But I don't know whether he's buying the stuff for himself or not, but he said that he was buying it for Hemphill.

WV: So you've had a number of shows then?

JC: Oh, I've had a lot of shows. But this is the first one-man show, though.

WV: That's great. Can you say that you make a living at it now?

JC: I could if I could reduce the prices, but I think I don't come down on the prices.

WV: Sure. So you just have to wait until somebody that is willing to put up the money for a piece.

JC: I found out that every time I try to sell something to somebody they don't want it. And I just set here and wait till somebody comes along. I've been to a lot of art galleries, up and down the coast, trying to get them to show my stuff, and not a place I've ever been to will accept it. It's these guys that come to you and ask you to show it is where you. . .

WV: That's interesting.

JC: I even quit the art association. I did belong to this Coast Art Association, and they're all jealous of each other and everything.

WV: Yeah. A lot of politics involved?

JC: And they threw me out of one show, asked me to take a piece out; they thought it was lewd.

WV: Oh no! (chuckles) Why did they think it was lewd?

JC: Well, this Coast Art Association, there's a lot of old ladies in there, and they're all, the only reason they belong to it is they think that gives them prestige, you know. And a lot of them are not painters or anything else.

WV: Sure.

JC: So we was having a show down here at Fort Bragg, and when I first took it down to enter it, why one of the old ladies objected to it then, but the head of the thing then, a lady who is an artist, said, "No, that's art," and she took it in, and then they come to me and asked me to take it out.

WV: God, incredible.

JC: What school you teaching in?

WV: Kansas City Art Institute.

JC: Oh.

WV: It's just like the San Francisco Art Institute, except it's in Kansas City.

JC: Yeah.

WV: It's a four-year professional art school. Would you mind if I took some photographs of you?

JC: Right.

WV: You could stay right there.

JC: Well, let me show you this _____ first.

WV: Oh great, fine.

JC: I'll just get it. I live here alone. [JC got up to show us the "lewd" piece.—WV] This didn't have any curtains on it then.

WV: Oh, that's a great piece.

JC: And that's, I picked that up at the dump, that _____.

WV: Uh huh.

JC: And see, these things here [eyes mounted on spring, ogling a woman in a shower—WV] And I put the curtains on _____.

WV: Oh, that's neat with the curtains. (laughs)

JC: But Dennis, these two women down there, they said that he said that he said he would take it. And I was down there yesterday, talking to him, and he couldn't remember when they asked me to take it out.

WV: Maybe I could take a photograph of that. I've got a flash on here, you know, and I could probably. . . That's great. Let's see, I've got to turn that on, get my flash going here.

JC: Even my son-in-law and daughter kind of objected to that a little.

WV: (laughter) Well, I think it's real nice. [pause]

JC: Here's one of my prize possessions. That's Boston Mountain. Do you know where Boston Mountain is, in the Ozark Mountains there, in northwest Arkansas?

WV: No, I don't.

JC: Do you know where Fayetteville is?

WV: Federal?

JC: Fayetteville, Arkansas.

DV: Oh, Fayetteville.

WV: Oh, yeah, yeah, sure.

JC: Just north of Fort Smith. That's a jointed hoop snake, from the Boston Mountains, carved on a Model-T wheel.

WV: That's beautiful.

DV: Out of wood.

JC: Yeah, the snake's out of redwood.

WV: That's really nice.

JC: That's one of these Ford wheel off about a 1914 or '15 Model-T Ford.

DV: Do those snakes really do that, they put their tails around, or not? Or is that an old. . .

JC: Well, I'll tell you. This is the story about that now. See, my grandfather lived out east of Fayetteville about 50 or 60 miles, way up there in the mountains. He had asthma back in Ohio, and they told him to come out there on account of his asthma. And in 1925 (chuckles)—this is a good story—in 1925, I was living in Sallisaw, Oklahoma, and my oldest daughter, who lives down there at Fremont, was just three or four months old, and it was 160 miles from where I lived in Oklahoma to where my grandfather lived. And it took us a half a day to go 150 miles, and it took us a half a day to go the other ten miles; the roads were so bad back then. This was way back when there wasn't any filling stations everywhere, and we ruined a tire _____, and we didn't have any spare tire and we couldn't find a spare anywhere, and I had the car jacked up (laughs), and I went back, I walked back to this place called Kingston, Arkansas. It was only just a mile or two from there; that's where the bad road starts out, [Strickler?—WV], Arkansas. You can look on the map and see these towns there. And they said I'd have to go clear back to Fayetteville, Arkansas, to get a tire. And just about that time, as I was a-walking back there, this hoop snake was a-rolling along the. . . (laughter) And on the spur of the moment, I run and grabbed it and it was long enough to go around that wheel. Now the wheel was already jacked up and I just put him around the wheel and stuck his tongue in his mouth, and he thought it was another snake he had swallowed and he tightened up around there, and I let the jack down (laughter), so I drove him up to my grandfather's and back to Fayetteville.

WV: Oh really!

DV: Oh really?

WV: That's beautiful. Oh, that's great.

JC: But I'll show you this other stuff I got in here.

WV: What are these things here? Oh, they're. . .

DV: Abalone?

JC: Made out of abalone [shell].

WV: Hmm.

JC: I made them, but I quit making stuff out of abalone since the dust was so bad.

WV: What was so bad?

DV: The dust.

WV: Oh.

JC: You have to grind those wheels and stuff.

DV: Yeah.

JC: Did you ever see a rolling washboard?

WV: Uh huh.

DV: Yeah, I've seen those.

JC: Where the roller rolls this way?

WV: Her grandmother had one.

DV: My grandma had one.

JC: That'll roll?

DV: Yeah, like this.

JC: Sure enough? Where'd she get it at?

DV: I don't know. She's had it as long as I remember.

JC: Does it look like that?

DV: Yeah, something like that. I remember it, I don't remember exactly what it looked like, but I think it rolled.

JC: Did it have a tin back in it like that?

DV: I'm not sure if it had a tin back.

JC: Does she still have it?

DV: No.

JC: Oh.

WV: That's a pretty unusual one, though, isn't it? You don't see them too often.

JC: I know, that's, I traded a fellow a car back there a long time ago for patent right on it and I made them. And that's the first one ever made.

WV: Really!

DV: Huh.

JC: Way back in the Depression.

DV: Well, my grandparents homesteaded out in Montana. Maybe that's where they got it. I don't know.

JC: Well, I found out later there was somebody making them in Illinois someplace, but I made them in Oklahoma, and I went broke trying to sell them. I was selling them for 50 cents apiece at wholesale, and I couldn't find anybody that could sell them, you know. . .

WV: Oh, yeah.

JC: Here's a little old [turning] plow I made when I was about eleven or twelve years old.

WV: Really, and you still have that. Isn't that great.

JC: See, I'll soon be 76 years old.

WV: Seventy-six? Are these paintings? Oh, no, they're not. [Reading signature:] Betty. . .

JC: I didn't do that.

WV: That's your house, isn't it?

JC: Yeah, there's a story connected with that, the reason I had some woman to paint the house, because, well the statue I carved is down at Fort Bragg, but see I've lived in this house since 1961, and three or four years ago a man told me that before I lived here there was a family lived downstairs that had three or four kids and a whole bunch of goats and a dog and stuff. And said they let the goats stay in the house all the time. And when they'd go to eat, why, he said, there'd be a long line of them around this table, and said the goats in the house and the dogs had a front feet on the table eating with them.

WV: Oh, that's incredible. (laughs)

JC: And I'm going to try to designate this house as the first historical house in Westport. And I'm not very good on painting myself, so I got this woman—she'd just learned to paint—to do that.

WV: How old is this house?

JC: It was built in 1905.

WV: Did you do this?

JC: No, my granddaughter did this, but my daughter picked this up in a second-hand place down on the Mexican border.

WV: That's a nice little painting.

JC: Here is a. . . This mule, if this thing is hooked up to a 12-volt battery—you push this this way—and it will go "hee-haw, hee- haw." And it's so loud it'll nearly run you out of the house. (laughter)

WV: What makes the sound?

DV: Is it a recording or. . .

JC: No, it's something I picked up and put in there.

WV: Ohhh.

JC: But you have to do it that way, but it has to be hooked. . .

WV: Ohh.

JC: And the story of this is. . . [pause] You see, way down there on the beach where that little cabin comes the house, little cabin is?

WV: Right, straight down there?

JC: Yeah. There was a fellow had a Appaloosa stallion there in a little corral, you know, and this happened three, four, five years ago, when it happened. And there was an old mule in the pasture, and a young Appaloosa mare, and the old stallion got jealous of the mule and the mare, and he broke out of there and he kicked the mule and run him over the beach, the bank, and killed him. So I made this like this, and this is supposed to be his coffin, see.

WV: And you press this in here. [Reading:]

'Twas an old mule that had an affair

In a green pasture with a young mare.

Then came a stallion with lots of fire

Who also had an uncontrollable desire.

Then came the deadly duel
Between the newcomer and the mule.
The stallion made a terrific lunge,
The mule's finish ended with a fifty-foot plunge.
All you who read, do not laugh.
Take heed, for this also may be your epitaph.—Ed Toney

JC: I got a fellow here in town, I was telling him I wanted a poem for that, and he made that up.

WV: He wrote that up?

JC: Yeah.

WV: Gee, that's nice. That's a real nice piece.

DV: Is that your goat down there?

JC: No, I just let the neighbor. . .help eat the vines down. This right here is in that book.

WV: Oh, right. I saw that. Oh, that's nice.

JC: See, you do it this way here, and the man shovels.

WV: That looks like an outhouse to me.

JC: Well, long years ago, that's the way all these little towns used to, you know, they had a man go round about midnight.

WV: Oh really, and. . .

JC: Yeah, and with wagon and clean out. . .

WV: Clean them out, huh?

JC: Here is a, this right here is a. . . My grandfather Colclough [sounds like call-cloe—Ed.], or my great-grandfather Colclough, one or the other, had slaves, back in Tennessee. And my dad has told me, or I should say lots of times, that they had a nigger man that was a blacksmith that they paid \$1500 for, and this is a. . .

WV: That's him, huh.

JC: That's him.

WV: Boy, that's beautiful.

JC: When you take this little piece off here, why you crank it, you know what I mean, ____ this. . .

DV: That's nice.

WV: Yeah.

JC: And, uh. I made several pieces that represents the signs of the Zodiac, and here's a Gemini, and here's a Gemini, and here's Gemini twins; they're fastened together see. [speaking of three objects—Ed.]

WV: Oh, yeah.

JC: And when they was a-making the movie Cleopatra, I did this from a picture of Elizabeth Taylor.

WV: Oh really.

JC: And I've got a life-size statue just like it, only it's life-size. It's in Cairo [Illinois—Ed.], only it's painted. And I think it's says Cairo Cigar Store, Tobacco Shop, or something on it. And I worked in Cairo, Illinois, and that's what. . .

WV: Uh huh.

JC: And this is more Zodiac critters and I don't know what they're going to be. But this little thing right here [referring to Wages Creek sculpture—WV] is. . . Here's another story that I heard about Westport. Did you come in from the north?

DV: Yeah.

JC: Well, right back up here a little ways is a little creek called Wages Creek, and some, several years ago there was a college professor or somebody in [Calico], Oklahoma, had ads out here in the paper, wanting to know if there ever been any Cherokees end out here. And I got to inquiring about it and wrote back and told them that there had been Cherokee Indians out here. And then an old man here told me about, he said that this creek that's called Wages Creek, he said long time ago there was a Cherokee Indian came from Oklahoma out here and he settled back up this Wages Creek and he married a native Indian out here. And this native Indian woman, he was gone one day, and she ran off and started back across the mountains afoot to her folks. And he come home and found she was gone, and he got on his horse and followed her and caught her over here about 10 or 15 miles, and tied a rope around her neck and made her walk all the way back here. And he took her down at the mouth of Wages Creek and made her dig her hole in the sand, and he buried her up to her neck. They said this is a true story.

WV: That's amazing.

JC: And then he threatened her that he would let the tide come in and drown her unless she promised not to run away again. Had her, she had her hands tied, you know, and she couldn't go. She promised to stay there.

WV: Oh, so that's the piece.

JC: That's the reason I did that.

WV: Isn't that great.

JC: You just want the slides to teach with, or do you want to write a story, or what?

WV: No, to teach with primarily. I may sometime decide to write something, but at the moment I just use the slides to show students, but I do some lecturing about folk art.

JC: Yeah.

WV: Boy, these are just so beautifully made. You must have a real mechanical kind of inclination to know how to make all those things.

JC: Oh, I used to run a garage or we. . .

WV: Of course, yeah.

JC: When I was a kid we repaired the thrashers and everything in it. We had a general repair shop. We used to build milk wagons or buggies, everything.

WV: Are most of your pieces for sale?

JC: They're all for sale.

WV: Can you give me some idea, like how much a piece like that would be? Is that a real favorite of yours?

JC: I don't remember what I got it, I don't remember what it's listed at.

WV: About how much.

JC: I just don't remember. I've got a list someplace but I don't know whether it's down at my daughter's or here, but. . . Tuoloma is going to have all the stuff down there, and then he's got a list price on what he has down there. He's got a cigar store Indian down there, life size, and he's got a half-man, half-woman down there that's about life size. And I've got a great big extra-tall cigar store Indian down at my daughter's that I'm going to bring up when we go down there. She's got this tall one of. . .like this down there. And I've got a pirate down at my daughter's, about this high [gesturing—Ed.]. And I've got a spur down at my daughter's that's about this high; it's called Paul Bunyan's Spur, you know. And let's see what else I've got down there. Well, down here at Fort Bragg I've got a Minotaur.

WV: Really.

JC: It's half man, half bull and bone adze split this way, about this high [gesturing—Ed.]. And I've got a take-off on Romulus and Remus down at Fort Bragg, which is in place of a wolf nursing the kid, about a half pig, half girl nurses.

WV: Where do you, do you read a lot so that you know all these mythological stories?

JC: Oh, I just remember most of them from when I went to school, when I was a kid.

WV: They make you read them in school. That's why you remember them.

JC: Yeah, a long time ago. And a lot of this stuff I picked up from traveling around here and these people talk. Lot of this freak stuff was from working on the carnival. That's where I got the idea for the half man, half woman.

WV: Sure.

JC: Half woman, half woman is split this way, ____ ____.

WV: This way. Gee, that's real nice. Do you think it'd be possible for me to carry a couple of these pieces outside to get better light on them? Or would you mind?

JC: Yeah, you can if you want to.

WV: I can get better light on them, photograph them better outside.

JC: Which ones do you want to take out?

WV: Well, I'd really like to take this one out [honey dipper—Ed.] and maybe the blacksmith there, you know.

JC: We have to carry this one out underneath. You can get that one over there.

WV: Okay. Maybe I can carry. . . Can I carry this one too?

DV: You want me to carry that one, Willem?

WV: Yeah. Thank you.

JC: I couldn't figure out how to make a sandy beach, and just finally glued the sandpaper on the thing.

DV: That's a good idea.

[Interruption in taping while carrying the stuff out.]

JC: Since I hurt my back I have a hard time getting around.

WV: How did you hurt your back?

JC: Oh, my folks were in England and they wanted me to, I was down at their house, and I had to meet the, go to San Francisco airport, about ten o'clock one night. They had called up from Los Angeles and said if I would leave for the airport at the same [time] I'd get there at the same time they did. Plane had to turn around and go back to Los Angeles, had engine trouble, and in place of driving away back down to my daughter's and I just stayed in the airport, set in a chair like this about three or four hours. . .

WV: Ohh.

JC: And when they come, I had a pinched nerve in my back. I had to stay in bed five weeks.

WV: Oh no. Why don't you set that down for a minute and hold this, or you can hold both. [arranging the photograph—Ed.]

JC: There was a man here not long ago from Louisville, Kentucky, that had seen the book and stuff, but I was gone that day.

WV: Oh really. Let's see, that's still not the best kind of background. I wonder if there is a better background

we can find, but that's real hard.

[Tape 1, side B; Volkersz' No. C2-2]

JC: . . .and _____ here and I was back here and I was talking to this man, some of his relatives, and that was the first time they'd ever heard about him being drunk that way.

DV: _____ (chuckles) [pause in conversation]

WV: Where do you get most of your wood?

JC: Down here on the beach. Whatever washes in on the beach.

WV: So it's all driftwood, huh?

JC: Yeah.

WV: So your materials don't cost you too much.

JC: This last year though it was hard to get; there wasn't any washed in last winter.

WV: Really. You mean you didn't have very many storms, or what?

JC: There wasn't many storms, and the woods, the logs and stuff, some of these big statues that I do are out of big long logs. I have to cut the things out of logs, and these rivers and creeks are all getting kind of cleaned out, just. . .

WV: Oh yeah.

JC: I could have got some this winter, but before I hurt my back I didn't have to depend on other people. Since I hurt my back all these people [who] come here if you need any help why they will help you get logs and stuff, and everyone I mentioned it to last winter, they made some kind of excuse.

WV: Oh no. See, you want to put this little piece down there? Here, put it here on that. . .

DV: Shall I put it here?

WV: Yeah, that's fine. Boy, that's a beauty, isn't it?

DV: Yeah, I like that little wood.

WV: Gee, I like that.

JC: There's one down at the gallery down there that's _____ a Cherokee Indian _____—it was during World War I—was captured by the Germans over in Europe, you know, and he was strung up by his thumbs, [wanted] to make him _____. He never did tell. Or he said he didn't. I've got a little [one] down there _____ him. And I've got a statue of. . . Wasn't it St. Peter that was crucified, beat up?

WV: Is that who. . . Yeah, let's see.

JC: Yeah, I've got one of him.

WV: Well, I've got some shots of that.

JC: _____ Zodiac figure down there _____.

WV: Huh.

JC: This man that came here and bought that. . . He didn't come here; I met him down at Walden Creek. _____. He said he was going to offer it first to the _____, International Folk Art Museum in Santa Fe, New Mexico. He said they were, he said he was. He tells me all the time if it weren't for him, _____.

WV: I don't know. I don't know him, so I can't really tell.

JC: He also told me _____ out there _____, but he said that the _____ Crucifixion I did, which is

about four feet high, was _____ [technique] _____.

WV: Boy, you're really getting around.

JC: And he said that this Duke and Duchess was at the museum in New York City.

WV: Gee. I don't know. I haven't been in New York for years, but if I come across it, I'll let you know.

JC: Yeah, I sold it to him about a year ago. He's got a California sales tax permit, but I get letters from him from New York all the time.

WV: Yeah, he probably has offices in both places.

JC: Yeah. Well, did you see that pretty calendar in there on the wall, over the top of the TV?

WV: No.

DV: Yeah, I saw that.

JC: You see that? Well, he sent me that for a Christmas present and he said he produced that.

WV: Oh really, I'll have to look at that.

JC: And not long ago I got an announcement from a Mexican artist in San Francisco who was having a one-man show in Chicago, and this man had helped him to do that.

WV: He's getting around.

JC: That picture in that book there of Harry Truman [his sculpture—WV] is the best picture I've ever had of Harry Truman.

WV: Where was it taken? Out here?

JC: Taken down in Fremont, at _____.

WV: Yeah.

JC: I can't _____.

WV: Do you have a gallery in Fremont, do you say?

JC: Who me?

WV: Yeah.

JC: No, I just let them have stuff down to leave at my daughter's.

WV: Oh, she lives there, yeah.

JC: I was afraid to leave stuff out down there.

WV: What kind of tools do you use?

JC: Chisels, rasps, bow saws.

WV: Do you work inside the house?

JC: Downstairs. Want to see where I work?

WV: I'd love to see it, sure.

JC: _____ . I don't want people to think that. . .

WV: Oh, I'd like to see. I'm an artist and I know what a studio is like.

JC: Oh, you can just leave that.

WV: Oh, okay. [pause]

JC: . . . _____ place where I _____.

WV: I'm going to get another roll of film. I'll be right back, okay.

DV: Okay.

[Interruption in taping]

JC: . . . back in that old house where my mother was born, and I got a piece of cherry wood and a piece of black walnut off of a farm where one of my cousins lives, which is just a few miles from where my mother was born. And whenever I can figure out what I want to do, carve out of it, make something.

DV: Yeah, they're beautiful woods; they really look nice.

JC: Yeah, but see this wild cherry back there grew over this like wild everywhere. And I got to the California border, they almost took it away from me.

DV: Oh, you mean for the vegetable. . .

WV: Oh, sure. They do that, don't they?

JC: Yeah. This is the handiest thing, this [barrel] with this old cushion on it. These big figures, you know, that are life size, I just lay them up on here and I can turn them over and do them any way I want to and cushion keep them from getting scratched up.

WV: That makes a lot of sense. The big pieces, you suspend them there.

JC: Well, after I hurt my back, the doctor told me I couldn't lift, and so I made that to lift the heavier pieces with.

WV: Right.

JC: I can lift them up and get them on here, and after I get them on here, you know, I can stand up and turn them around.

WV: That makes sense. It's a nice little workroom.

JC: I'd give you a good piece of driftwood if you had a place to haul it.

WV: Oh, that's a nice piece.

JC: I used, my wife _____ the way we used to pick up a lot of driftwood. But I can't, people think you can sell driftwood and make big money out of it, but you can't.

WV: A lot of people are trying, I notice.

JC: There's some old wagon, old time wagon seat springs I picked up back. . .

WV: Oh, yeah, I've seen that, yeah.

JC: And I've got an old-time child's coffin that is about, looks like it's about half copper down at Fort Bragg that I picked up Tulsa, Oklahoma, and it's got some kind of a creature I carved on the side. It's about that long [gesturing—Ed.], and it's got the body of an armadillo and all kind of—it's a freak outfit. And down the end of this casket, you can work a lever that way and a flower comes up out of its navel.

WV: Oh, that's great. Some of these pieces must take you quite a while to make.

JC: All those big cigar store Indians takes me about six weeks.

WV: That's not that long!

JC: It's only whether I work all the time. Sometimes I get out of the, there's four or five weeks, three or four days or a week or two weeks, I can't think of anything.

WV: I know what that's like. That's happened to me! (chuckles)

JC: But I started to make stuff out of junk, and it's too much work and nobody likes the stuff made out of junk.

WV: They like your carvings better.

JC: Yeah, wood carvings. Here's an old time boat motor, you know. Real old timer.

WV: Did you go around to some junkyards to pick up some stuff, or just find it?

JC: I found this laying out behind the, somebody hauled it up, put it out behind the store down there.

WV: So you don't make too many pieces out of junk anymore now?

JC: No.

WV: How long ago did you make those pieces upstairs that are made with the springs and the one you had in that show that they had to take out?

JC: Oh, I made that one with the springs about four or five years ago.

WV: Yeah. Did you start to carve when you retired, pretty much?

JC: Oh, when I worked on the carnival once, I carved a mechanical village, you know, on a little platform and all the figures about this high, but all I did was just kind of made a rough head and then I put clothes on and stuff.

WV: Did you crank something to make them move?

JC: I had an electric motor underneath of it, and everything would work, you know.

WV: Oh, that's nice.

JC: And I don't what, can't remember what happened to the figures, you know the pieces.

WV: How long ago was that that you made that, you think?

JC: Oh, that was way back in the thirties somewhere.

WV: Oh, but then you didn't make any since, until you started up again?

JC: Not till I. . . The only thing I ever carved was when I was living down at Fresno, I carved a two-headed snake head. And I just carved the head, and it was about this way, you know. And you can make both tongues stick out.

WV: Oh, that's nice.

JC: And when I left Fresno, I didn't think I'd ever do anything like this, and I give it to an old man on the highway up to Yosemite, who was trying to put in a museum, and he never did get the museum in, and I went back three or four times in the last three or four years, trying to get him to give it back to me, and he said he'd leave it to me in his will. (laughter) Three or four months ago, somebody sent me a Fresno paper saying that he had died.

WV: Ahh.

JC: But I guess the woman that inherited didn't see the will or something.

WV: Oh you haven't heard. But then did you think, when you started up again, did you think that you could sell these and make some money, or did you just do them to pass the time, or what made you start them?

JC: Well, all my life I've wanted a cigar store Indian, and I never. . . I found ones that are made out of papier mache once. They're life size, but it's just didn't have all the paraphernalia on it.

WV: Right.

JC: And he wanted a hundred dollars for it, and I didn't want it because it wasn't an authentic. . .

WV: Sure.

JC: Down at Fresno. So I decided to carve one. The first thing I did was carve this half man, half woman. And because I knowed people on the side shows that claimed they were half men and half women.

WV: Right.

JC: And it's got the best arms and legs and hands of anything I've done. But I didn't know anything about anatomy, you know, and I was beginning to study anatomy.

WV: How? From books or just look at. . .

JC: My son-in-law's an orthopedic surgeon.

WV: Right.

JC: I read his books.

WV: Ahh.

JC: In one of his books I found out that Anne Boleyn, Henry the Eighth's second wife, had three breasts.

WV: I'll be darned.

JC: So I carved her bust, without, you know, the head cut off here, with three breasts. But it took me about three years to figure out how they should go.

WV: Right. (laughter)

JC: Now you're an artist, and you might believe this, but nobody else does. I had to meditate on it, see. And my ancestor—I've traced it back, the Colclough line, to way back in thirteen hundred, twelve hundred something—and my ancestor was captain of Henry the Eighth's honor guard.

WV: Ohh.

JC: And he was around the castle, see.

WV: That's great.

JC: And then he was Elizabeth the First's captain of her band of pensioners, and she sent him to Ireland to put down an Irish rebellion over there in Wexford County, where—I've forgotten his name now—Wexford, Ireland. And she gave him 13,000 acres of land and a castle, an old abbey, for doing this, and then he lived in Ireland the rest of the time. But his son I'm descended from stayed in London. So I think that Anthony must have known how, from court gossip, how she looked. [said with a grin in his voice—Ed.] So I carved it. And I wanted to put the English flag on it, and back at that time, they didn't have the same flag they've got now.

WV: Right.

JC: And I did a lot of research and I found out that the flag of St. George is the one they used then, so I covered, I painted the flag of St. George on all three breasts, and on one shoulder and on her back.

WV: Great.

JC: And then I poured a can of blue paint—she was bound to be blue-blooded, you know. . .

WV: Right. (laughs)

JC: . . .on her, up on her neck and just did it run where it would.

WV: Ahh, that's nice.

JC: It's down there at the. . .

WV: Oh, is it?

JC: No! It's down at my daughter's. I didn't have room to bring it up the other day.

WV: Oh, fine.

JC: But since then I've found out that she also had extra fingers and extra toes, and that was the reason she wore gloves.

WV: Ahh. She really was a freak, wasn't she?

JC: Yeah, she was!

WV: Gee. So some of these pieces have real personal meaning to you, because you're. . .

JC: Most all of them do.

WV: Uh huh. That's terrific.

JC: If you ever see any Colclough china, the. . . If you ever find the history of the Wedgewood family, that made all that Wedgewood stuff, you know?

WV: Um hmm, sure.

JC: They Colclough family taught the Wedgewoods the pottery business, and the Colclough and this Wedgewood were brother-in-laws. And I can't remember whether a Colclough married a Wedgewood or a Wedgewood man married a Colclough girl; I can't remember. And the Adams china, back at the same time, they were all three brother-in-laws. And one of the Colcloughs were over in England not long ago, oh, several years ago, sent stuff he'd copied out of this Wedgewood history. And when this Colclough died, he willed all of his pottery equipment to the Wedgewoods, this Wedgewood guy. And they still make Colclough china over there, but it's not made by the. . . The company that bought it out is—I can't remember the name of the company now. But I have Colclough cups and saucers up there [upstairs—Ed.]. My daughter has been to the factory over there.

WV: Really, oh. So she's been collecting that.

JC: Yeah. She also has one piece of Adams china. Let's go back up there and I'll show you a Colclough cup. [while moving upstairs:] Made by Colclough, _____ dinner set.

WV: That's a fine door.

JC: Well, I think these Indians and stuff, this is where _____ things _____ _____.

WV: How would you like to stand in front of that door and let me take your picture in front of the door?

JC: Let me get my stick [his cane—WV].

WV: That's real nice. Why don't you look at me? That's better! That's real nice.

JC: Would you like to take a picture in front of my house?

WV: Sure!

JC: Could you take a picture of that thing down there, back where this. . .

WV: I'll tell you what, I'll send you some prints of this, if you like. [moving outdoors]

WV: That's real nice. Boy, that's beautiful with the flowers on there.

JC: Well, I can't keep up the place since I hurt my back. I did own all that lot out to that fence. It was just too hard on me to keep it up, so I sold that piece of land.

WV: Okay. I'm going to put in another roll of film. I guess you don't have to worry about a flat roof here; it doesn't rain enough probably, or. . .

JC: Oh heck, it rains a lot in winter.

WV: Oh, does it?

JC: Forty or fifty inches in winter, but this last winter it didn't rain about half that much. Oh, it slopes, you know, it's not. . .

WV: Oh, there's a bit of a slope to it?

JC: Yeah.

WV: Because I think that you'd almost need a gable roof out here. These goats yours?

JC: No, they're. . .

WV: Oh, they're the neighbors.

JC: They belong to a man down at Fort Bragg, but he's the guy that owns this little water system I'm on here, and I turn the water off and on for him when I'm here, keep the tank from running dry. We're putting in a water system and a sewer system. They're working on the sewer from, they've got the sewer line all in, but they haven't got all the works in out here, and they're putting in the water line now.

WV: What?

DV: Hummingbird.

WV: Oh, really?

DV: It's up in the fuchsias.

WV: Oh yeah, there he goes, yeah.

DV: Boy, the goats keep the blackberry vines down, don't they?

JC: Yeah, that's the reason I got them over here to ____ ____.

DV: Yeah.

JC: It's a lot of work.

DV: That's one way to keep it. . .

JC: I used to can a lot of blackberries, but I developed diabetes. . . [Considerable moving-about noise intervened—Ed.]

WV: Oh. Oh no. (laughing) Shall we carry these back in?

JC: Yeah. I've had that virus pneumonia and I've had diabetes. I lost 33 pounds in two weeks' time.

WV: Oh, no.

JC: And I hurt my back.

WV: Good lord.

JC: And then last fall I had a cancer on this lip and had to have it cut out, and I had a cancer on this lip. . .

WV: Oh no.

JC: I had to got down and stay at, four or five weeks and have it burnt off at Oakland.

WV: Oh, no. I'm really sorry to hear that. [pause]

JC: ____ ____ I just thought I'd ____ down there, and ____ out kind of like a _____. And all they done, I just had it _____. Here's a knot off of a thing I. . .

WV: That's a real nice one.

JC: Here's a piece I, it's _____, it washed in on the beach.

WV: Oops, _____ that something there.

JC: And that looked like old. . . See, that's split. The other side looks just like it, just looks like [Abraham—WV] Lincoln.

WV: Oh, that's amazing. Hah. You found that as is?

JC: No. The other half of it there, and then I sawed it in two.

WV: Oh, I see.

JC: I'll call up Dennis and see if, be sure he's. . .

WV: Okay. [pause]

JC: . . .like this. You gotta add a lot of stuff in there.

WV: Yeah. That's true. I'd sure like to help you if I were around, because I really, really enjoy your. . .

JC: Did you ever go to that War Eagle Arts and Crafts Fair down in Arkansas?

WV: No.

JC: The biggest arts and crafts fair in the United States. . .

WV: Really!

JC: . . .is down out east of Springdale about 30 miles, or out around Huntsville somewhere. They put it way on a big farm out there. You ever hear of Mendocino [California—Ed.] down here?

WV: Uh huh.

JC: Well, they have a small one down there, but this one back there. . .

WV: Is real large.

JC: . . .at War Eagle, held close to middle of October, and they bring two, the time I was there, they brought two big circus tents out there, and it's all inside, you know, and then they have some big buildings. And thousands of people there.

WV: From all over that area bring in their arts and crafts.

JC: Well, I've seen cars there with California license on them, and Missouri license, Kansas license.

WV: Which is the calendar you were talking about? Is it that one?

JC: Oh yeah.

WV: Oh, yeah.

JC: All this stuff is done by one man, painted. But this man, Davis, said he's the one that. . .

WV: The Americana Calendar.

JC: Yeah.

WV: Oh, they're nice prints.

JC: I get this antique magazine back in New York City, and I've seen some ____ ____ [unintelligible passage].

WV: Hillcrest and Abalone.

[Interruption in taping]

[We visited the gallery in Fort Bragg, which carries JC's work, and stopped to discuss his cigar store Indian in the entry.—WV]

JC: . . .this over on the right-hand side, some way or other it all split off and I had to redo it, and make it left handed.

DV: What kind of wood did you use?

JC: Redwood.

WV: Do you carve most of your things out of redwood?

JC: Yeah.

WV: It looks like it. It's easy to carve, probably. It's probably soft, isn't it?

JC: Yeah, and you get that out of the heart of a redwood, it's a lot easier to carve.

WV: And then, do you use the enamel paint?

JC: Yeah. I first soak it in linseed oil.

WV: Why is that?

JC: Oh, it keeps it from. . .

WV: Cracking.

JC: . . .from cracking so bad.

WV: Yeah. Do you have to buy your paints?

JC: Yeah. I don't paint everything, though.

WV: I noticed, yeah. That's real nice.

[Some noise while changing location]

JC: That Crucifixion, I posed for it; the half-man, half lady, I posed for that.

WV: You mean you sort of look at your own parts of your body, things like that?

JC: Well, I get the mirror, you know, and see, I never studied anatomy or anything. Let's go in and meet Dennis.

WV: Hi. [speaking to Dennis—Ed.]

DT: I can't remember what your name is.

WV: I'm Willem Volkersz.

DT: Hi, Dennis Tuoloma.

WV: Hi, this is my wife Diane.

DT: Nice to meet you.

WV: We heard about Jim, or saw him in that book by Horwitz, and I've been recording folk art over the last couple of years, had some grants and things, and we're on our way from Seattle to Kansas City, thought we'd stop by, spent a couple hours with him this morning talking. And I'm real glad that he was able to tell us about your gallery.

DT: He has quite a few interesting pieces around.

WV: Sure does. He's a. . .

JC: He doesn't believe all the stuff I've done.

DT: Oh yeah? (laughter)

WV: That's what you think.

DT: I don't if I believe it all. I just take it all in, you know, it's all interesting whether I believe it or not, you know.

JC: This is. . . Have you ever been down at the Silver Dollar Cave down south of Kansas City?

DV: Yeah, Missouri. Not in the cave, but we've been down by that Silver Dollar City.

JC: Did you see that mule train there?

DV: No, we've been by there.

JC: Well, that's the only place in the western part of the United States I know where there's a mule swing.

WV: A mule swing, that's real. . .

JC: This is pre what they had before America.

WV: Beautiful.

JC: Only the ones I've seen, I never did see one that they was nudes riding around on it. (laughter) But you see, long time ago, they had a man set up on here with a fiddle or something, you know, or [in] one seat, but most of them set way up on here. He also drives the mule. Sometimes they drive the mule or the horse. These little things here are Zodiac figures.

WV: Yeah, you were telling us about those.

JC: Yeah. I [didn't] see [Miss Perce] out there. Did she get well all right? [speaking to DT—Ed.]

DT: Yeah, yeah, she's _____. A little [shell] girl. Well, I've added three more to my collection here today. I'm working on a bicentennial exhibit for the schools here, and we've been getting autographed covers, and I sent covers to all hundred United States senators, and as of today I've gotten seventy out of a hundred returned, in two weeks.

WV: That's amazing. That's an excellent record.

DV: That's a really good. . .

DT: There are three here today that I got from Hubert Humphrey. Some of them have taken the time to write letters and everything.

[More noise intervenes]

WV: So that gave you the idea.

DT: It's _____, which is not that _____ . But I haven't gotten any, either of them from Arkansas, California, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Tennessee.

JC: Get any from Oklahoma?

DT: Yeah, both of them have come back. No, I take it back. [Dewitt] Bartlett sent it back, and the other one is [Delman, Dauman] [isn't] back. And some of my, you know, I sent more than just the one cover. Like John Glenn, the astronaut, I sent him three, and he autographed all three.

JC: Did you get the governor of Oklahoma?

DT: I just mailed to all the governors on Friday, so by Wednesday, now, there should be some response, because on these original ones, when I sent them out on a Friday, the following Wednesday I got twenty of them back all at once.

WV: Oh, here's the one. That was _____ feet.

DT: Actually, if it's easier to photograph those outside, just go ahead and move it somewhere else.

WV: Isn't that great? [reading:] "Everybody likes peanuts. Carter for President." Look at that. That's great.

DV: Is that your most recent piece?

JC: Yeah, that's the last thing I did.

WV: These are then out of separate pieces of wood, and then they're glued on the base?

JC: That donkey and that peanut is all of the one piece, and the ear.

WV: Right.

JC: And the elephant and the. . .

WV: The thing you sit in.

JC: . . . _____ and the part of the _____ [throne] separate. They're trying to put, break off easier if I'd have made it, you know, the grain goes the wrong way.

WV: Oh, right. Oh, there's the book; you're selling them here.

DT: Oh, I just ordered these copies _____ .

WV: Yeah. I got a presentation copy, luckily. I didn't know it was in hardbound too.

JC: Yeah, the publisher sent me a hardbound copy.

WV: Yeah, that's nice.

JC: That's the one that I was telling you about that ____ ____.

WV: Yeah. Oh, that's wonderful. Boy, that's a beauty.

JC: This one here is in the book.

WV: Let's see. Move this stand slightly.

JC: I guess it's pretty similar to. . . [some conversation between JC and DT ensued—probably about local matters—that was too far from the microphone to be heard—Ed.]

WV: Let me see. The backs. . . What are you saying?

DV: What language are these in?

WV: Oh, I don't know. Oh, I think he's Finnish, because I saw things about Finland there. [pause] Oh, that's the coffin you were telling me about.

JC: Yeah, see this. . .

WV: Oh, look at that.

JC: That's the body of a, a composite of a whole bunch of stuff. That's the body of a, see how the shell comes around like an armadillo? [noise] ____ have a grave robber, show a bunch of armadillos, you know, and called them grave robbers.

WV: How did you do the carving inside? Do you have a special tool for that?

JC: How do you mean?

WV: Oh, the little, I mean, the dotted lines, around the breast, for example, and on the stomach here.

JC: Oh, just a chisel.

WV: Oh, I see.

JC: I picked this coffin up in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

WV: Where did you find it?

JC: Well, my sister-in-law back there deals in antiques, as a sideline, and she and her husband, or my brother, were at an antique auction someplace, and some fellow brought this and tried to auction it off and the auctioneer wouldn't accept it. So he claimed they got it, or he claimed he found it up in the attic of an old mortuary they were tearing down around Tulsa someplace.

WV: Oh, it's beautiful. Yeah, that'd be hard to photograph.

JC: Yeah.

WV: That's beautiful. When did you do this?

JC: Oh, I don't know whether the last time I was back east or the next to the last time that they gave me the coffin, about four or five years, five or six years ago.

WV: Is this one here yours?

JC: Yeah, I did that.

WV: Nice.

JC: I tried to make a couple or three things out of it. [noise] That's abalone shell, the dust, too much; I just can't stand it. [pause] My dad's ancestors' name was Holdren.

WV: Holden?

JC: H-o-l-d-r-e-n.

WV: Oh, Holdren. I don't recognize the name, but it easily could be Dutch, yeah. Were they right from Holland, or were they Pennsylvania Dutch?

JC: Well, they came over to Pennsylvania and then they stayed there three or four years and they went out to Ohio.

WV: Have you been able to sell a few pieces for Jim? [speaking to DT]

DT: We haven't sold any of his yet. Now, of course, I've just had Jim's work in here not for too long. I handled it—a number of years ago I had a gallery around the corner over here and handled his work. But we haven't had it here too long.

WV: A year or two?

DT: We're doing his first show.

WV: You going to do a one-man show?

DT: Yeah.

WV: Fine. When is that going to be?

DT: Well, we're not sure yet. Just as soon as he has a chance to get the other pieces together. He has some things down in, I guess at his daughter's down in. . .

WV: Like within the next year or so.

DT: Yeah, oh yeah. It'll be, yeah, probably within the next few months, I imagine, three or four months.

WV: That'd be real nice to see a whole collection. Do you have a mailing list? Will you send out an announcement for that?

DT: Oh yes.

WV: I wonder if you'd send me an announcement for that?

DT: Yes.

WV: I can write it down. If. . .

[End of interview]