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Oral history interview with Arthur J. Pulos, 1980 July 31-1982 Dec. 5

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Arthur Pulos from July 31, 1980 to December 5, 1982. The interview was conducted in Syracuse, New York by Robert Brown for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
The tapes from which this interview was transcribed were copied from the original reel-to-reel tapes. Hence tape side indications do not correspond exactly with the originals. The date of the interview was not always available on these dubbed copies.

Interview

AP: ARTHUR PULOS

RB: ROBERT BROWN

July 31, 1980
Tape 1, side A

RB: Interview with Arthur J. Pulos in Syracuse, New York, on July 31, 1980, Robert Brown, the interviewer. Why don't we begin with any comment on your childhood. You were born I think near Pittsburgh, Vandegrift [sic], Pennsylvania, in 1917.

AP: Vander, d-e-r.

RB: Van-der-grift.

AP: Um hmm.

RB: What was childhood like for you?

AP: Well, first of all, I think you sort of have to know my own background for a little bit, my. . . .

RB: Um hmm.

AP: I don't know much about my ancestors, but my parents were both Greek. My father was from a place called Kalámai, on the Peloponnesus, and he was brought to the United States by his own brother, who was here working in a steel mill, had come from Greece to work in an American steel mill, around 1900, 1905. And this is when actually I think most of the Greeks came, during this period. And many of them were brought by—whatever you call them—sending people abroad to recruit people. . . .

RB: Almost like contractors for immigrants.

AP: Yeah, for people. And this town. . . . I didn't know it at the time, but this little town of Vandergrift is one, I dare say it's one of the most remarkable towns in the United States. Because it was completely planned and built before anything—and developed—before the plant started to operate. In other words, the steel company, whoever they were, the American Iron and Steel Plate Company, decided they needed a certain factory in a certain location, they bought the land, cleared it, hired a French architect, a planner. . . . This was between Apollo and Leechburg, east of Pittsburgh about thirty miles. They hired a French architect to lay out the town.

RB: Really.

AP: As typical of all those steel towns, they laid the factory down in the bottoms, next to the river, the [sounds like: Kis-kee-min-o-this] River, which is connected to one where the flood came from, from Johnstown flood, then runs into the Allegheny. And while they were building the steel plant, they laid out the town. Now the town was made entirely of interlocking circles, and each circle was planted with a different tree: sycamores on one, basswood on another, elms, maples, on and on and on. And wherever any circle intersected, they planted on the intersection, you create these odd little shaped triangular parks, and each one of those was planted with a different bush. And then they built the houses for different income levels. Certain levels were close together and so forth. Then in the process they were recruiting abroad. The town was expected to last about thirty years, fifty years. The life span of that steel mill was expected to be a fifty-year life span.

RB: What did they think would happen after that? They would. . . .

AP: Well, it would outlive its usefulness and who knows?

RB: Oh.

AP: And then they brought the people in to work, and as I say my father's brother was there earlier. Peter was his name. And then he brought my father over, as so many immigrants do. And most Greeks used to come and go to New England. They worked at Lynn and some of these other places in the shoe factories and New England factories. And I suspect he came there first and then he came to Vandergrift where his brother was working, got a job in a steel mill and he worked there the rest of his life, more or less. And. . . .
[Interruption in taping]

RB: Did you know this Uncle Peter?

AP: Yes, I knew him, I think, and he lived, they lived very much their life—this family—lived pretty much as they must lived in Greece. That is to say, they kept pigs and chickens and had a little ambaylee, they called, the little house garden behind their place. It was a. . . .

RB: Well, they were, your family, they were farming people from. . . .

AP: Well, they were all, I guess, rural people, from villages in Greece in this little town of Kalámai, at that time was a seaport, and so my dad grew up in this seaport, which I think remains a seaport on the Peloponneseus. And some of them worked around the ships. They came in and out to get produce and so forth. Some worked on the farm, so I guess my father's family had a farm that. . . . We would call it a farm, but actually it was home with a garden and self-sufficient. . . .

RB: Yeah.

AP: . . . home, like the American small farmers, you know.

RB: Yeah.

AP: And then a lot of them worked around the seaport. I think my dad worked around the seaport, and he talks of tying his clothes onto his head with his belt and swimming out around the boats of the rich English who used to come into the seaport, you know, and begging coins and all that stuff. But he was also trained apparently at an early age as a blacksmith, so he was developing the trade of a metalsmith. . . .

RB: Yeah, which would, could serve him in some usefulness in Pennsylvania.

AP: Yeah, and then that sort of made some connection for him, and he was sympathetic with the idea of working here. And I guess he had some sympathy for the craft of metal.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: But once he got here and worked in the steel mill, he did very little for himself, other than work in the steel mill as a factory hand.

RB: Yeah. What was his reaction? Did he ever tell you, when he first came to Vandergrift, this planned community?

AP: I don't think they ever sensed it.

RB: Yeah.

AP: I don't think. . . .

RB: They liked it? It was pleasant enough?

AP: Oh, sure. Well, they lived as most foreigners do, immigrants. You live in a enclave of people like yourself, so there were two or three streets where they kind of lived together, and as I remember growing up in the town there was a certain place where the Greek kids lived, which I was one. There was another place where the Italians live. And the Polish people lived over here, and the Irish over here, and each nationality that was newly immigrated, emigrated, tended to live together, for comfort, convenience, self-protection, to continue their customs. No great, with no great visions of who they were or what they were supposed to do.

RB: Yeah.

AP: It was just this was the easiest way to survive.

RB: Yeah.

AP: And they lived their own life, I think, until. . . . Till I was in sixth grade I spoke no English at all. I had been entirely in a Greek environment. [See later remark suggesting that he probably meant six years old, first grade, before he spoke English—Trans.]

RB: You went to a church school or something, is that what. . . .

AP: Oh, I, yeah, went to church school, and just, I don't know, was around home, I guess. And my mother, on the other hand. . . . My father's name was not Pulos at all. I think maybe that's important for the record.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: His name was, in Greek, Palukakos, P-a-l-u-k-a-k-o-s. And the closest translation that you can make for that in English would be, it's a dowel, d-o-w-e-l. In a sense it's the Greek word, paluki, is something that stays where it's put, this kind of thing.

RB: Hmm.

AP: And the story that they tell me about that family name was that a century before, when the Turks and the Greeks had their great war of independence, every time the Turks raided these seaport areas, they took everything they could get—young women, plus all the figs and all the olives and including all the jackasses and whatever else was out—as part of their loot. And this parent of my father, great-grandparent, I guess, would his take his jackass and go hide in the woods. So when everybody was gone, why he was the only one that sat and rode through town, so they called him the Dowel, the Paluki, you know.

RB: Hmm.

AP: So that stuck as a family name. I think everybody had names that were related to some incident in their life, of what had happened to them, or where they happened to live, or whatever. The concept of family names that we have today is not the same thing at all.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And even in the little town, in Vandergrift, as I was growing up, the Greeks that were in that community were known by something not their family name. But if a man was from Crete, they called him the [Cretikos], you know. Or if somebody was bald-headed, they called him O skeftees, you know. Or whatever. They all had names with some association with who they were, or where they were from, or what they did, you know. And the tailor was called Raftees. You'd go to Raftees. So they had names that were very real.

RB: The names were still fluid, then, the surnames.

AP: Yeah, still more or less fluid.

RB: Yeah, yeah. Were your families quite close knit? I suppose, your. . . .

AP: Yes, I suppose, except I think maybe my own particular family was a little different, for whatever reason. We had. . . . My father and his brother had a falling out, as families do, so for some twenty years they didn't talk to each other, you know. And my father had a few cronies, and we, the family had two or three families that it knew fairly well, but other than the, getting the big family together for a feast or a traditional thing, I think we had very little of that.

RB: Your father and mother and. . . . You had brothers and sisters?

AP: Yes, I had two sisters. I guess I had a brother who was born before me and died.

RB: But you were pretty close knit among yourselves?

AP: Yeah, we grew up together pretty much. I had two younger sisters. One is Maria, she's a couple years younger than I am, and another called Tina, Athena, and she's maybe five years younger than I am.

RB: Were you as the eldest and the son. . . .

AP: Yeah, and the [son].

RB: . . . was a lot expected of you? Was your father rather severe with you?

AP: I suppose. Yeah. Although severity wasn't the rule. We didn't talk about. . . .
[Interruption in taping to answer knock at the door]

AP: It wasn't a matter of severity, it's just the way people treated their children. Some people seemed harder on their kids than others, you know.

RB: Was religion a fairly important thing in your family?

AP: Oh, sure. As a matter of fact, our little church was just being built when I was born, Greek Orthodox church, and I was baptised, as I understand, baptised in the church before they had the roof on, you know.

RB: Ah!

AP: And it was a very teeny little, very. . . . In retrospect, a very lovely church. It must have looked like any church in these small villages in Greece look. And it's still, it still exists.
My mother was from Asia Minor, from Smyrna, what today is called Izmir.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And she was part of the Greeks that had lived there for almost a hundred years. And then in 1910, 1915, there was what the Greeks called the Dyogmos, which means the "chasing out." And this is when the Turks came down to the villages along the coast and literally pushed the Greeks into the sea. And my mother tells of. . . . I guessed you would have classed her today. . . . We would have classed her then, rather, as an old maid. She was about twenty-six, twenty-eight years old or something, and hadn't married. She made her living as a weaver, and she wove handspun material. . . . In fact, I think to the day she died she wore petticoats that she had brought from Greece in her trunk when she escaped of hand-woven materials and hand-embroidered materials. It was probably part of her hope chest. And we still have some of them, including some tablecloths that she made. And her trunk, with all the old pictures inside the lid and so forth.

RB: Hmm.

AP: And she woke up, apparently, one morning with no knowledge of disaster, and by that afternoon she was on a fishing boat trying to get away from the Turks. And they were killing the Greeks that didn't get on the boats on shore while she was pulling away, so she saw her priest assassinated and the rest of it. And so she was shoved off land, and they escaped. And I think her group went from there over to. . . . I don't know whether they went to Athens, or not, or yes, but I think they went, touched base on the mainland, the other part of Greece, and then they were sent to a refugee camp Crete. So I think she was in Crete for half a year, maybe, or something like that. And then she was sent. . . . They connected the families, and she had a brother in this country who happened to be living—two brothers as a matter of fact—who happened to be living in Vandergrift, and they vouched for her or whatever it is, and she was sent to the United States about 1912 or 1913. I forget the date. And I still have her papers at home. It was under the French government at that time occupied the international spot, perhaps, that one might say the United States occupies today, handling the refugees and doing this and that. And I still have her picture and her, on the papers in French and Greek. So she was brought to Vandergrift by her brother, and met my father, and I think after she was here a year they were married. And that would have been, let's say, 1915, something like that. And then I was born in 1917. But she was very much of a craftsman, I think, and—craftsperson—all her life, I think, even when her hands were so arthritic she couldn't move them, she still tried to embroider or to sew or whatever. Which is very strange, because perhaps my own original interest in the crafts and the arts, you know, comes indirectly from her, and my father's interest in metal.

RB: Do you recall as a young boy whether you took an interest in those things?

AP: Apparently I did. I have these vague memories of being told I could draw, at a very early age, and I suppose, like all children, somebody says you do something, well, you do a lot of it. So I must have done a lot of drawing—or whatever passed for drawing. I remember being in, being interested in a lot of things, [doing] whatever was important. I discovered a coping saw when I was very young, and I remember doing like cigar boxes and making tracings of cartoon figures, or whatever, these Mickey Mouses, and. . . . God, they must have looked a lot different then. And then sawing them out, you know—drawing them and sawing them out, and then painting them with watercolor or whatever it is, and then sticking them up on my wall. So these memories I remember. I remember I must have been a very good student, because I, you know, recall being praised for what I was doing at school—both the Greek school, originally, and then at what we called American school.

RB: What was there. . . . What was the difference between those two? Or was there much difference?

AP: Well, I think the Greek school, which would be the church school, was taught by the priest, you know. We used—I still have the books, as a matter of fact, my school books, in Greek of course. One would be an alphabet book, you know, another one would be a book of small, simple stories. Then you advanced from that to The Odyssey. I had The Odyssey written for young Greeks, so you studied that as if it were fact, you know. And then. . . .

RB: The relationship to this was that you'd have probably a nationalistic pride then, wouldn't this?

AP: Oh yeah, tremendous.

RB: The first grand account of the Greeks.

AP: There was a lot of it. And I had the history of Greece and so forth. Of which, we could learn a lot from, Americans could learn a lot from that kind of practice, because the thing that you read from told you wonderful stories about your past. And at one time I think I knew all the Greek gods and how they related to one another and what they did, and I don't think I ever doubted but what they were real people. They just were people. And I knew The Aeneid and The Odyssey.

RB: Didn't, though, the priest have something, didn't he have some warning that these, that we now had Christianity which had supplanted that?

AP: No, they studied those things as a very real part of their world. They didn't make. . . . I never heard that separation made. But later on you get into Christianity and you talk about the birth of Christ and so forth. But the memory of the Greeks—and I suppose you could say this of every nationality in its first generation or second generation—the memory runs deep, and the affection for her own past runs very deep, and you just. . . . It isn't a case of sort of deliberately drumming it into your head to make you nationalistic; it's a case of, it's a part of their world; it's all they know. They can't tell you about the Indian mythology or the past of Africa; they can only talk about their own past, you know, and they believe in it passionately. At that time, and perhaps even today, there was a very, very strong interest, however, in the Greek liberation from the Turks. They were ancient enemies, and so they had, their history sort of ran from the gods of ancient Greece, through the glories of Greece, to the mythologies—all the ancient mythologies—and then there seems to be a big hole, and it doesn't pick up again until about the eighteenth century, when now you're talking about the opression of the church, how they destroyed the Parthenon. . . .

RB: In other words, no mention of Byzantium, the Byzantine empire.

AP: Pretty much, no. And yet my mother was born in Byzantium. That is to say, she was born in, near Constantinople, and they had a great connection with that.

RB: Yeah, sure.

AP: But in my own upbringing, for whatever reason, there is this gap of about fifteen, sixteen hundred years.

RB: Then when you got to the Turks, what did they have to say?

AP: Well, they of course hated the Turks with a passion, and they had fought just like the American Revolution, 1826, they fought the Greek Revolution and were liberated, so all of their heroes in a sense were martyrs, pretty much—as against the American heroes, who pretty much were never killed by the British, you know.

RB: Hmm.

AP: But very much like the Mexican history. The Mexican war of independence was very similar to the Greek, in the sense that the major leaders were tortured and killed. And as Greek boy, I guess I was quite patriotic. I knew many poems about our flag, and the costumes that we wear, and what so and so did to so and so, and I still can remember snatches of songs and pieces of stories. I can't sort them out very much any more because I don't, haven't repeated them for years. And at one time—I think I must have been six or eight years old—they bought me a Greek costume, [foos-tan-ella]. It was made in Greece, with the [bench] shoes, with tsaruhia and all the [clothes], the best. The fez, you know, everything else. And I still have it, as a matter of fact. And I remember reciting a story about my costume, standing on a table or a dias, somewhere, at some Greek meeting, and reciting this story and. . . .

RB: Explaining the significance of each part of it?

AP: Yeah, which was very interesting, because the so-called Greek costume was actually the undergarment that was worn under the ancient Greek clothing. In other words, to keep from chafing your leg from the metal plates, you wore a wrap-around skirt; to keep the shin-guards from creating things, you wore a piece of velvet or thick material underneath. And every bit of your costume had had a relationship to the outer garments, the warrior's outer garments of metal—of bronze or copper, or whatever they used in those days. So it really had a lot of significance. So I remember all of that. Then I guess I was. . . . I was a pretty good student. I still have my report cards and even. . . . I guess for the first or six years of my schooling, they spelled my name differently each semester; whatever some teacher wanted to put down, they'd put down.

RB: Was this common too, that. . . .

AP: I guess the public schools were not as careful on the records as they are today.

RB: Yeah. But that was the Greek school you were talking about then.

AP: Well, no, I'm talking. . . . The Greek school knew my name, see.

RB: Oh, okay.

AP: My name in Greek actually is Athunasios Palukakos. Athun, Athunasios. And it's only when I first went to what we called the American school that my name became Arthur. I didn't know anything else to call myself, so I called myself Arthur, and everybody accepted it.

RB: You wouldn't have thought of calling yourself Athunasios, huh?

AP: It had to be something that everybody understood. . . .

RB: Oh.

AP: . . . so we had no point. . . . My nickname was Nasos, but somehow that was a family name; it wasn't a name used in public. So I got stuck with Arthur, for no reason at all.

RB: Well, you were about twelve then, when you went to the American school.

AP: No, I was about six. This was all pre-school.

RB: I see; you went from the beginning.

AP: But I continued. When I started. . . . My kindergarten was in the Greek church school, and then when I started American public schools, I went to both, on I suppose Saturday afternoon or Sunday, you'd go to Greek school once a week, and have an assignment. But I was already going to the American schools. And I learned English at school, and so forth.
I forgot to mention that my dad's name was changed at Ellis Island. Both parents came to Ellis Island. And at Ellis Island, according to what the Greeks say, the people who signed people in couldn't possibly understand these foreign languages, so they would simply put down whatever came to mind, so on the day that my dad came through they were putting Pulos down in various spellings. And the name Pulos is a suffix on a Greek name. John's son would be called John Pulos; if he was a Swede he would be called Johnson, you know.

RB: Um hmm, yeah.

AP: And then we were left with that little tail end of the name. And I had that name when I went to school, but it was spelled differently every semester almost. And then, after I was of age, twenty-one or -two, or whatever the thing is, the Immigration Bureau apparently was going back through, correcting all of these misnames. My dad, sisters, and mother had to go back to his original name. So I kept Pulos, but they went back to Palukakos.

RB: Hmm.

AP: It's a complicated kind of a thing.

RB: Now, you've mainly talked about your schooling in terms of what you learned of Greek history and the Turkish oppression and so forth. When you went to the American, the public school, these other groups in Vandergrift, you became, you got to know them then.

AP: Oh, sure, sure. And I went. . . .

RB: How was it, do you recall how this may have altered your perceptions and your. . . .

AP: Well, in various, in various ways. The public school. . . . I went to the local grade school, like two blocks from my home, and we all walked, and I suppose we fought among ourselves, as well as with the other kids. And as kids do, if you walked on somebody else's territory, you were apt to have a corncob or a stone thrown at you, so you stayed pretty much to your own area. But we didn't raid one another's areas, the way you hear of some of these neighborhoods now.

RB: Yeah.

AP: We just stayed in your own area. But in school, I was in a class, of course, with a whole mixture of kids, and got to know them, and some of them are—a good many of them, I dare say—were immigrant kids. But some of them were not. And the Greeks were very enamored of America, I must say. Maybe they were floored by it, but

they were enamored. They thought there was nobody greater in the world than Abraham Lincoln, you know.

RB: Really. Why was that? Why did they love Lincoln?

AP: I suppose somehow they must have been told that this was a country of freedom, and that the man who had freed the slaves and freed everybody was Abraham Lincoln. I remember my dad telling me almost with tears in his eyes how wonderful this man Abraham Lincoln. . . . He probably just knew the name, you know.

RB: Hmm.

AP: In effect. And even before I started school, American school, I had heard about someplace called The Liberty. And one of the older girls in the neighborhood—I would say she must have been eight or ten, if I was five, six—used to take me with her to The Liberty, and the amazing thing was that I could take books home. Years later I learned that The Liberty was the library, which was really kind of amazing, and. . . .

RB: It's an interesting misname for it.

AP: Yeah. Yeah, a curious connection, and you wonder whether it has a patriotic American connection or not. Anyhow, they used to let me take books home, before I started American school, and. . . .
[Interruption in taping]

AP: And I brought these books home, and I suppose, if you think of the librarian might have been, this would like 1923, '24, something like that, she must have been fascinated with these foreign ragamuffins coming in, and being interested in books. They used to let me take books. . . . I used to take books home, as many as I could carry, and they were all children's books. I knew where the shelf was. And I learned very quickly that they filed them according to some system, because that I had read were over here, and the ones that I hadn't read were over here. [gesturing]

RB: [chuckles]

AP: And I used to go in there and pick up a stack of eight or ten of these little books and take them all home, and I must have damn near taught myself how to read, you know, and learned a little English entirely on my own, so I dare say as a young kid, I was probably quite precocious. Because I remember. . . . You know, I don't know which comes first. Whether being praised makes you precocious, or whether precocious draws praise, or whatever it is, but I was a little, in that context, I think I was a little different than some of the other kids. And I was sort of singled out, and [if] there was a poem to be read at church, you know, or something, I got the job, you know, and I had my one or two kids that I was always competing for, for honors, as to who got to do this and who got to do that.

RB: Um hmm, um hmm.

AP: And I did. . . . I knew a lot before I even went to American public school, that I'd picked up from the books, so apparently, even though I didn't speak English, had no reason to speak it; I didn't talk to any Americans, I only talked to my own kids. And. . . . Oh, I knew a few words, like we all knew. . . . In fact, my mother told me once that the only words I knew in English when I went to public school were three words: Alloe, and goomby, and [Pitt-see-boo-loo, Pitt-sem-burro], which was Pittsburgh, the town nearby, [Pitt-see-boo-loo, Pitt-sem-burro]. But that's, I think she was being a little bit of a romantic about it, you know.

RB: Because in your recollection you adjusted quite quickly.

AP: Yes, apparently it went very smoothly and I fitted in with the other kids, the American kids, and I suppose being bright, if I was, I was not ignored or mistreated, and maybe the teacher felt. . . . I remember all of my teachers invariably with great affection. I can almost recite their names today. So apparently they made a deep impression on me. And I must have made a deep impression on them. And I can remember the first grade, you know, I can almost tell you where I sat, and what happened in the classroom, and almost the names of the people around me, so obviously it was a deep impression. My home had no books in it. It had a Greek newspaper, no English newspapers. An occasional funny paperback book that people passed around, so it was all dogeared. Some ancient story. I remember my mother reading Quo Vadis in Greek, and my arguing with her, trying to convince her that it was not a true story, and her saying, "Of course it's a true story. How could they write something if it wasn't true?"

RB: Umm, hmm.

AP: Very simple kind of philosophy of life, you know. And my home life, my mother and father, were not really very compatible with each other, and my father at one time or another I would say was about as much of a drunkard as you can be. He drank heavily. I think my mother was generally kind of gentle and long-suffering and

quite ill. She had extremely bad asthma, and I think now they know that that was. . . . They would say today that it was brought on by stress as much as anything else. And I would say that she was a soft, poetic kind of a lonely woman, you know. And that my dad is a hard-hitting, tough up-front kind of a guy, that would rather spend an evening with his friends. . . .

RB: And did.

AP: . . . than spend it with his family.

RB: Yeah.

AP: And of course all these people then—this was prohibition time—all these people made their own booze, you know. Not just the Greeks, but everybody made their booze somewhere, you know. And they made beer, and they made wine, and they made hard liquor, like the Greek ouzo, and they made. . . . Oh, upstairs, we lived in one house. . . . We [banged] around a lot; I don't think we owned any home of our own until I was about in high school, really, and the little house has been long since gone. And they, on the upstairs landing of the house, I remember, they had a barrel where they had wine working, and when it was ready, they capped the barrel and turned it on its side and let it age, and then later on they would drink it. They would buy dried grapes from California, in a bunch of boxes, and I think they all made it, you know, it's just. . . .

RB: Yeah.

AP: And my impression is they made it not to break the law; they made it casually because at home they always made their own wine. If you wanted booze you made it yourself.

RB: Yeah.

AP: You know, it's just the most natural thing in the world, the same as you put up your own pickles and dried your own figs and wove and made your own clothing.

RB: Yeah. It was [one, what] effect upon your father; he became. . . . Did he become rather harsh with you or. . . .

AP: Yeah, he was quite harsh with me. I don't think. . . . There was none of the present-day relationship of a father and son being friends.

RB: Yeah. . . .

AP: When he came from work, he sat and smoked his cigar or his pipe, or whatever he was smoking, and you didn't talk to him. If he thought you were doing something wrong, he whipped you or something like that.

RB: Do you suppose his work in the mills was rather tedious and hard?

AP: Oh, yes, I think it was. . . . He was a. . . .

RB: Pretty grueling.

AP: Well, he was a cold roll worker, as they say. He was a, after the hot rolls were done, you'd get these big stacks of sheets that have to be flattened and then trimmed. And he wore very heavy leather gloves and a heavy apron, and his job, I think almost all his life, was on the same machine type. So he was really a piece of machinery. . . .

RB: Yeah.

AP: . . . and I'm sure he had no rewards other than that. And he'd flip a piece of steel and [then, they would] trim it off.

RB: Hmm.

AP: The day I left home to go away—I left the day after I graduated from high school; I'm jumping ahead a little bit—he came out to see me as I was getting on the train at dawn, there in Vandergrift, to go to Pittsburgh. I had the address of a restaurant that might hire me, and one of my high school teachers had sent my name in for a scholarship to Carnegie Tech. Of course I had never been there and knew nothing about the place. But nevertheless I decided to go to Pittsburgh. So he walked out of the steel mill, which was right next to the railroad station, came over to see me off—he was working at night—and the only thing he said to me, he said, "Look at me." I have a feeling today he was being terribly theatrical. But he says, "Don't ever be like me." And he turned around and went back into the factory and I got on the train and left, and I never went home after that.

RB: Huh.

AP: I went home, you know, every six months or so, but. . . . I really left home on my own, but I don't think I had any money in my pocket to speak of. I don't think I had anything.

RB: [Okay].

AP: Oh, yes, I must have money, of my own, because in high school I worked at a little soda fountain, so. . . .

RB: Oh, okay.

AP: But in public school, I was into a lot of different things, you know.

RB: Was high school a time when you developed this what finally led to your leaving Vandergrift?

AP: Yeah, I think. . . .

RB: Were there things you got very interested in?

AP: Well, again, maybe I'm a teacher, because I think maybe subconsciously I. . . . I know an awful lot of my teachers. I think I listened to everything they said. It was another world for me. And if they said something about "Drink lots of water," I drank lots of water. If they said, "Don't spit on the street," I didn't spit on the street, you know. I enjoyed spelling, I enjoyed. . . . I enjoyed I think every aspect of school very, very much. I did, didn't gripe about it. I don't think I ever played hooky, you know, I didn't, I wasn't malicious. I must have been a terrible little do-gooder.

RB: [chuckles] At some point you felt that in Vandergrift, you couldn't. . . .

AP: Well, in the . . . I think [began] the difference, because I had a teacher. . . . In fact, she and I still exchange Christmas cards. Her name was Viola Sullivan then, and now is retired and lives in Florida, but I haven't seen her since I left home. But all these years we've exchanged Christmas cards. And she was the high school, public school art teacher. And I have recollections of things that I did in her class as a sixth-grader, and a seventh-grader maybe, of things I made: paper masks, [funny] little boxes—little things—that she thought were very good. I guess praise meant a lot to me, and so I remember all those little incidents with her. So when I went to high school I was already pretty well tuned in to the arts, and I took the classical course. You could either take a technical program or a classical program.

RB: Now what did the classical program consist of?

AP: Well, the classical program would be like college prep. But it had, it required, however, language, you know, Latin and French. It required mathematics, physics, chemistry. . . . Took all, took all the heavy courses. And none of the shop and other courses.

RB: And these were fairly rigorous, were they?

AP: Uh, yeah, my memory is that they were rigorous. But I really had no trouble, I think.

RB: No, you were a very precocious student.

AP: I probably had straight A's all the way through. There might have been one or two B's in my report card. They're still at home.

RB: But this was typical, even say in a steel-mill town, to have a college-prep course. . . .

AP: Yeah. . . .

RB: . . . that was taught rigorously.

AP: Yeah. I think, however, this town was rather special. We had a high school, that's still there of course, that in the twenties had a swimming pool and had a beautiful gymnasium, had home economics rooms for the girls, and shops for the boys, and our local school here can't afford those things, neither can most suburban schools, you know.

RB: Sure.

AP: So it's very well equipped high school, and I suspect that like Corning Glass down here, that the steel company, in order to get people to come and work for it, set up some pretty good facilities.

RB: Or it could have been an idealism on the part of management.

AP: Yes. Yes, I think there was this feeling, you know, for the place.

RB: Lift up people.

AP: Um hmm, yeah.

RB: Was there ever anyone in high school who would talk with you about what you were going to do with yourself?

AP: Well, I had another art teacher in high school, who, she and this Miss Sullivan. . . . No, it wasn't an art teacher; it was one of my homeroom teachers, Joanna Mertz, that I think, somewhere along in high school. . . . Well, along in high school I think I also left my Greek boyhood chums, that I spent all my time with up to junior high, and made friends with a lot of kids who were the brighter kids in class. And I very quickly became part of the high school newspaper. We had a newspaper we put out each week, and I somehow learned how to do linoleum blocks, so I introduced illustrations, and I did editorial illustrations, cut linoleum at night like mad from drawings, you know, and then printed that. And then I went on from that and the National Honor Society, and then this club and that club. I think at one time I was in every club except the sports clubs and the girls' glee club. I was very active in the glee club. So I think I made a very strong transition then, from Greece, let's say, to the United States, if that's the way to put it.
And this Miss Mertz, I think, asked me if I'd ever thought of going to college, and I think at that point in time I only had vague notions there was no college near us, nobody I knew was in college, or anything of that sort, and I never even heard the names. We knew that, the names of University of Pittsburgh and Notre Dame because they played football or something like that. But I think she sent in my name and the. . . . The normal course of events for the kids that graduated was to go to work in the steel mill. You got a job somewhere, depending on where you could get a job, and you stayed in town, or you worked in one of the grocery stores, or stables, or wherever it was. You know, you got a job. But I decided to leave town, and it must have been with this urge to do more for myself, of something. So that's why I left Vandergrift.

RB: Did you leave with a fear, or with like hope?

AP: No, anticipation, I guess. Just some kind of excitement to go to another place. I had started, however. . . . While I was in high school, I had picked up a job as a part-time soda jerk. There was a little Greek candy store called the Sugar. . . . Sugar Mill? Sugar something, I forget. Isn't it funny? And while I was there, this place got a booze license and started to sell beer. This would be like late . . . 1930 maybe. I don't know when prohibition was lifted.

RB: '33.

AP: Yeah.

RB: Yeah.

AP: All right, so that was about then. And then, I worked longer then. This was my. . . . I graduated from high school in '35, so my last few years in high school must have been spent working at this place. And I got a lot of tips from the beer drinkers and so forth, and I used those. . . . And I very quickly, I used to buy myself a bus ticket, and I think Saturday was my day off, or something of that sort, and I would go to Pittsburgh, and on my own—I don't know how or why I did this—but I found the Carnegie Museum there, and I went to all the old paleological stuff, then I discovered the art section. And I used to religiously go to Pittsburgh on the bus, get off the bus, as a high school kid, go and visit the museum, and visit some of the other so-called palaces of culture in that area, and it must have been maybe through that that I became familiar with the colleges and the universities and the [rest of it].

RB: So you already had some acquaintance.

AP: Yes, I must have had. I don't recall having the acquaintance, but I must certainly have had it. I don't know, maybe one of the art teachers said, "Why don't you go to Pittsburgh sometime and visit the museum?" or something of that sort?

RB: Did it make a, as you recall, a very favorable, intriguing. . . .

AP: Oh, yeah, absolutely. I think even before I left town, I knew that I knew that that I was a world that I enjoyed very much. In fact I think I even discovered classical music there. I think I must have it in one of these little recital halls, or something, sit around the edges. And so apparently all these things were opening up a world that appealed to me for whatever reason. And so it was easy for me then to go to college to. . . . I think that's the

reason that I didn't have any fear when I left Vandergrift to go to Pittsburgh, and when I got to Pittsburgh and went to see the man who ran this restaurant—it was in [Oakland] where all the colleges are—and he offered me a job as a soda jerk, and I went to work there, thinking, well, if I did get the scholarship, at least I would be in another world, where I could be by myself, and rid of whatever associations I had in my own hometown. And I started to work there, then in the middle of the summer I got a notice that I got a full scholarship from Carnegie, which was great, you know, for me. I just never imagined that. Conditional on my being able to pass a two-week drawing and design course that they used as an entry for all kids going to Carnegie.

RB: Oh, Carnegie Institute of Technology. And you were going to be in a design program. That's what you were. . . .

AP: I was just going to go to the art program.

RB: The art program.

AP: Yeah, I didn't know, I had no differentiation between one form of art. . . .

RB: No, no, but I mean it wasn't engineering, let's say, or something.

AP: No. Well, yeah, it was close. I think I started out with the idea that I would take engineering, and then I think before I even got enrolled I changed my mind, decided to go in the College of Fine and Applied Arts.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: At that time I also had developed an interest in theater, because in high school I had done all the sets for every play we had—theatrical musicals and so forth—and I had also participated in some of them as a ham actor, you know.

RB: Oh.

AP: So I was pretty much into the theater side, and I liked that world. And so for a while I debated, you know, "Should I go with the dramats," as they called them then, "or what should. . . ." This happened during my freshman foundation year. Then I decided I'd stay in art.

RB: Um hmm. This was 1935.

AP: Yeah. It would be '36 maybe, I was in college. And so I stayed in the arts.

TAPE-RECORDED INTERVIEW WITH ARTHUR PULOS
IN SYRACUSE, NEW YORK
AUGUST 19, 1981
INTERVIEWER: ROBERT F. BROWN

AP: ARTHUR PULOS

RB: ROBERT BROWN

Tape 1, side B

RB: Second interview with Arthur Pulos, in Syracuse, New York. Robert Brown, the interviewer, August 19. . . .

AP: Roughly speaking, yeah.

RB: [The first] time we talked you talked very extensively about your childhood of growing up in a planned steel town in Pennsylvania, and you explained how you were able to go to Carnegie. That was what, 1939?

AP: '35 to '39, yeah.

RB: '35. At the Carnegie Institute of Technology.

AP: Right.

RB: And when you went there did you have a pretty clear idea of what you wanted to do?

AP: I had mentioned that I got a scholarship, right?

RB: Yes, I think so.

AP: And then I went to, left the home the day after I graduated from high school, and in a sense never went back, and got a job working nights, and waited all summer to get into school. Finally I got in. Had to take a qualifying examination in the middle of the summer. And a two-week, drawing in the morning, and I think design in the afternoon, in order to determine the class. So it was a competitive entry, even if, although I had a scholarship.

RB: You knew you were going to go there in design, not in engineering or something else?

AP: No. Well, I had some thoughts for engineering. I was a pretty good student in high, in math and so forth, but I wanted to go into the arts, I think is more accurate, and I don't know that I stopped to think about whether I wanted to be a sculptor or graphic designer or a craftsman or what have you. I just wanted to go into the arts, and I had, like all high school kids have, a kind of a mishmash of experiences. So the, they had a freshman program that was common. . . . For a long time, I was debating going into theater, because I had done a lot of set design in high school, and was very interested in the whole thing—the lights, maybe the glamour, I don't know—and. . . .

RB: Did you know that Carnegie offered such things; they had a drama program?

AP: I knew it after I got there.

RB: Before you went there you just. . . .

AP: All I knew was that this was a school that would give me a scholarship and that meant I could go to college.

RB: Yeah.

AP: That's all. And I had been told by my high school art teacher that they had an art program, and. . . . Whereas the other colleges in the area—Duquesne and Pitt and William, whatever the other schools were—did not seem to have an art program. So they had an art and architecture and music and drama program in the same building. And for me it was an opening to an entirely new world, a completely new thing. I had never been where there was classical music being played, where dramas were being staged, where people were dancing, you know, where there was big sculpture being made. It was really a paradise, as far as I could see. And I used to sneak into the hall where they were practicing and just sit there for hours and listen to them practice.
So I worked, I had to earn my own room and board. My tuition was taken care of, and I think I had to maintain a "B" average, perhaps, or better, I forget, in order to keep my scholarship.

RB: Do you remember the coursework you had when you first got there?

AP: Yeah. Quite well. I think I had. . . . The basic program was a drawing course in the traditional sense of drawing from casts and drawing from models and drawing from still lifes. It was almost all beaux-arts. We all sat at easels and used charcoal on charcoal paper, and constructed figures, plotted perspective, and so forth. I think it was a, for me, at that point in my life, it was an excellent foundation. As a matter of fact I still have my college portfolio intact at home, with some of my freshman drawings and so forth, and they still look pretty good, in their own quaint way. And. . . .

RB: And the teaching was good? The teaching of this was good?

AP: Yes, we had. . . . I remember virtually every one of my teachers, and I would say they were, without exception, compassionate. Maybe because I was a poor kid and in a class where there were a lot of kids that better off than I was. And I had to work every night. I'd go to work at five and work till midnight or two in the morning, and sneak, do my French studies under the counter of the soda fountain where I worked, and then I would sneak a little sketching in when I could at night if the boss didn't catch me, you know, and then I would go to class in the morning, from nine, and then at five again, I'd go back to work. As a result, I didn't mix very much with the other kids; I wasn't part of the campus life, at least in the beginning. I had. . . . I forgot what I was going to say.
The kind of courses I had. I had a modeling course, I had a design course, a drawing course. A color course that consisted of learning color by studying nature and finding color in nature.

RB: Hmm, it wasn't a theoretical color course?

AP: Not at all à la, you know, Auvers, and so forth.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And I'm afraid it was a bad color course. The nature part was excellent, finding color in nature and trying to emulate the color of the skies or the range of colors in the flower, or whatever else was. . . . Excellent. But the color theory was for the birds. I mean, we had the old triadic: the primary and the secondary colors, and certain

colors you could put together and certain colors you could not, and there were so many rules connected with it that I was crippled. I think it took me twenty years to get rid of the injury that that kind of teaching had done me, so I don't, we don't do that anymore, you know. You didn't feel the color; you tried to rationalize it. You know, therefore, you know, blue and orange don't go together; therefore, God, don't use it. This kind of stuff, see.

RB: Yeah.

AP: And we had teachers that were just beautiful people. I suppose that's why I ended up in education, because I was very responsive to people who were willing to listen, you know, willing to help, without imposing on you, without beating you down.

RB: And they did that, is that right? They. . . .

AP: Oh, yes, yes. So. . . .

RB: They gave you quite a lot of latitude? They would give you some direction, but. . . .

AP: They'd give you direction. You had an assignment, and you came to class and worked on your assignment, and then they reviewed it, and then at the end of a given period of time they would collect all the stuff and they went up to the top floor. They had a kind of a long roof-top gallery, and they had a couch that about four or five professors could sit on, and they had a massier who could, who pushed them down past the artwork, and they would go, as they went along they would discuss each person's work and evaluate it. It was very much in a beaux-arts extension.

RB: Right.

AP: They were still doing architecture à la beaux-arts, although the art school had gotten away from beaux-arts type of artwork. We didn't have competitions for sculpture and one thing or another. But each professor was rather distinct. There was a big burly man named Papa Hyde, we called him.

RB: What was he?

AP: He was a painter and a very fine human being, but he looked like a great big giant bear, you know, and he had, his hobby was precision lathes, and upstairs, where he was supposed to have his studio, and do his painting, he had been doing research work on lathe mechanisms, and he had patented some stuff, which was pretty good.
And there was another old fellow that took a liking to me. I was extremely poor at the time, and I remember my glasses were broken, and he called me over one day and told me to go see a particular doctor. I said I didn't have any money, and he said, "You go see him." So the man gave me a new set of glasses.

RB: Hmm!

AP: And eventually I paid it back, you know. And there was a. . . . I got some WPA work, I think they had at the time, or whatever they called the student help, where you could do a little extra work and make a buck or fifty cents and hour, or whatever they paid in those days.

RB: You mean by helping some of the artists who were on the project?

AP: Oh, cleaning up the pottery lab, or something like that.

RB: Who were some of the other teachers? Could you characterize some of the others?

AP: Yeah. I'm trying to remember names. There was a Miss Murdock who was a. . . . She was the girlfriend of Gwathmey—you know the painter. Richard or Robert Gwathmey?

RB: Robert, yes.

AP: Robert Gwathmey. And she was very much in that swing of art. And I remember her. I was by impressed by all of them, because they all seemed to be artists, and they were involved in their art, and then of course from that vantage point they were all at least a hundred years old and incredibly famous, as far as I was concerned, you know.

RB: You would see their work sometimes?

AP: Yes, they had. . . .

RB: Did they have faculty shows?

AP: They did a very good job. We don't do it anymore unfortunately, but they had an annual good solid faculty show, and an annual good solid student show, and it was during school time. It wasn't afterwards for tourists to look at, you know. And the galleries were right in the building. And if you turned in a project. . . . Supposing everybody in the class were drawing milk cans, and you turned in your milk can, they would mark it that it was received and then they would also put a "placed" stamp on it, and if it had a "placed" stamp, it meant in the next show it would be shown. And then, you know, this is kind of reward for work shown. We do some of this at the university now. We have a couple little shelves, and we put stuff up regularly. It was very important for me just to get a recognition of my own work.

RB: Of course. So what did Miss Murdock teach?

AP: Well, I found out. . . . She was a general art teacher, but I found out later on she was in charge of art education. So at the end of my freshman year, when we had to decide a major—maybe it was the end of my sophomore year. . . .
Oh, we also had a wonderful man who taught art history. I think I had four years of art history, and we had a different type of art history each semester. In other words, costume one semester, architecture, city planning, you know, furniture. So it was the best grounding I think that I could have gotten. And it was all once over lightly. You couldn't cover it in great detail. But it gave me a feeling for it. In fact I still have my notebooks from those days.

RB: Did he use slides a great deal, or bring in actual things or [something]?

AP: Very bad old slides. A great big old. . . .

RB: Who was this teacher? Do you recall?

AP: Geoghagen, G-e-o-g-h-a-g-e-n, Geoghagen was his name. But he was very good. So I think I was influenced by him as far as the perspective that he gave you on things.

RB: What kind of perspective do you think it gave, as you look back then? Would he try to explain why things were done as they were, or what society was like that produced such and such a thing?

AP: For me, I think the best thing was the fact how one movement flowed into another one. How the undergarment in costuming gradually pushed its way to the surface and knocked off the outergarment, and then new ones came up through this way. How one form of architecture sort of got squeezed into another form of architecture, you know, and that there was a natural flow that they. . . . Natural, I don't know whether that's a good word or not. And also that we were very much a part of that flow. The trick was knowing what part of the flow you were. And that you weren't outside of it as a spectator, but you were also helping to create it, just as all of your colleagues were creating it. And particularly that at any one time one was a member of a community of like people, you know. That in the world there are a lot of people just like you more or less, same age more or less, working more or less with the same instincts, with the ideas, and the important thing is really to feel like you're part of that ongoing tide of evolution, if you want to call it that. I got that feeling very strongly from this flow of things, you know. I suppose there are a lot of other things we could have gotten, but I got that much out of it.

RB: Were you or. . . . Your colleagues and you were both aware of that? You say you couldn't, didn't have too much time to be around your fellow students, that. . . .

AP: Well, I didn't, and I couldn't. . . . I wasn't rah-rah. I couldn't work out, couldn't run around campus. I got to the football games occasionally. I think I may have told you the last time that I had certain traumatic experiences that happened that. . . . I lost my job in this soda fountain about half way through the semester, and went down and got a job at a hotel as a—what do you call it?—banquet waiter. You'd pick up one or two nights a week, and my mother would send me kind of cookies from home, with my laundry. I still have the laundry bag I used to send home. And I kept a drawer in this little flea-bitten room I had. I lived off-campus up under the attic with the bedbugs and the mice and so forth. And was really very hungry at times. I just couldn't go anywhere. Couldn't go to a movie. We got a football ticket automatically with our tuition, or whatever [so calls], so I remember at Thanksgiving—it must have been my first Thanksgiving—I didn't have a damn thing to eat, and I wasn't going to go home. My home was about thirty miles away. And the big football game was going on between Carnegie Tech and Pitt. This was out annual great big thing. So I stood outside the stadium and scalped my ticket, then used the money to go downtown, in downtown Pittsburgh and see The Merry Widow operetta. For some crazy reason I had to do something that was not. . . . I couldn't be with the group, you know. And then I banged around there for a while. I had a pretty rough time making my transitions. And eventually I got back into the night. . . . It almost had to be restaurant because it had to be at night. . . .

RB: Yeah.

AP: . . . and it had to be steady, and I had to get my meals. No matter what I did I had to eat. I couldn't earn money and buy meals; I had to have my meals.

RB: There weren't meals for you at the school?

AP: No, no, not in this case. Then I worked on the campus hashhouse for a while, for evenings, and I think on and off for about two years I worked in this way. And in the summertime I worked almost all night, putting money aside, and so forth, so I worked an awful lot. And managed to do my work.
I won a couple of prizes, as I remember. What are they called? A Porter Prize for Progress, if you can imagine. It sounded like a Bob and Ray joke.

RB: [chuckles]

AP: And it wasn't much, you know, like fifty bucks or something, but, Jesus, it was nice. And the recognition was important. I think that's what I needed. Then I think about the second year I became. . . . In my second year, I had a wonderful man as a teacher in design. His name was Alexander Kostellow [with accent on "Kost"—Trans.], and he and two or three others began a course in industrial design at Carnegie. And then when I left he went on to Pratt Institute and picked up the program there, and whatever reputation Pratt has Alexander Kostellow gave it the reputation. He's a remarkable man. And he was a painter. And I would say maybe a social painter. And he always painted women in white in white interiors. This was his big thing. But he got interested in design somehow, peripherally. There was a man named Donald Dohner, who had started a little teaching in design, and they graduated the first class in industrial design the year I went to Carnegie, in '35. And so I became aware of it.

RB: Now maybe we better ask [at] this point, what was the difference between industrial design and design as it had been taught in art schools?

AP: Well, design. . . . I don't know how much post experience enters into my statement, but I think design was essentially decorative design. Overall patterns, lineal patterns for friezes. It was almost all pattern work of one kind or another. Sculpting the edge of a dish to make it interesting. So it all, it was sort of art elements applied to decorating walls and ceilings and floors and dishes and. . . .

RB: It was always ancillary to the main form or structure.

AP: Yes, it wasn't solving a problem in function or need or anything like that. It was strictly decorating objects. Although we never thought of it as decoration. That was kind of a dirty word, you know. You didn't decorate, but you had a problem to solve, and that is how. . . . You have a child's dish, how do you make it look like a child's dish? What do you do with it? So that's a problem in, problem in decoration. Do you put duckies on it, you know, do you put flowers on it?

RB: And that's the way your, say, your freshman year your design course had been pretty much that sort of thing?

AP: Tended to be. Yeah. And then in the second year, with Kostellow, he opened it up a little bit. And I think by that time he was reflecting the spread of influence of the Bauhaus, although we didn't know about it at the time. In other words, make a piece of sculpture using junk. Take a piece of clay and manipulate it until it feels good.

RB: You actually did this sort of thing in his course?

AP: Yes, in his classes.

RB: Huh.

AP: And we had space assignments. Like I remember doing a stage set for Macbeth on about a one-foot-square cube with Christmas lights in it, and all of that. And so he gave us a broad range of experience from constructivistic things, to form manipulation, to textural problems, to a lot of things which broke almost completely with the traditional decorative arts movement. Now whether it was in the air and everybody was doing it, or whether he invented it, I don't know.

RB: Yeah. But here design was an artform in itself. I mean it was the complete construction design.

AP: Yeah.

RB: Not just merely applying decoration.

AP: That's right. It became a whole problem. You could call it sculpture, it you wanted, but each object had its own—what shall I say—its own goal. Not necessarily a functional goal, but its own goal. And I became aware that

they were starting programs in industrial design. Some of my classmates were taking industrial, were beginning to go into industrial design. And at that point I think I veered away from it. Because I felt that I really didn't know what was going to happen to me after I graduated, and I felt I had to have a sure thing. Besides I knew nothing of the world of products. My family was not wealthy. We did not have a car—or a telephone, or a refrigerator. In fact we didn't have electric lights until after I went to college, you know. And so the world of production and buying things was not my world. I lived in very much of an extension of the Greek peasant world, you know. So I thought, "Well, maybe education." I'd been influenced heavily by my high school teachers and my college teachers. So I put together a kind of a combination of education and the crafts. I was working as a WPA assistant in the. . . . There was another name for it but I've forgotten what it was. But I was working in the pot shop, cleaning the clay, working with Miss Murdock, who also taught the crafts. And then I met a very, very fine man, Fred Clayter, who was an English goldsmith and jeweler. And he really was a tre[mendous], absolutely outstanding craftsman. And I happened to take a little course, a metalwork course, and I remember the first thing he had us do was lay out and cut a disk out of a piece of metal, if you can imagine. And I just thought it was incredible that you could actually, not only draw a circle on a sheet of metal, but that you could cut it out. And I cut it out, and it had to be perfectly round and he made us, you know, in the old crafts tradition, he check it with calipers, and rechecked it, and you kept. . . . If it wasn't round you kept nibbling the edges trying to make it round; it got smaller, you know. And then he taught us how to make a cup form out of it, by the simple process—every kid knows it today—you just pound it into a piece of wood and it makes a slight depression out of it, hemispherical form. And I was proud of that damn thing! I think I carried it around in my pockets for weeks. I'd pull it out of my pocket and look at it and say, "Did I actually do that?", you know.

RB: [chuckle]

AP: "Can a human being really do something by himself?", you know. It really impressed me.

RB: This was about your second year?

AP: Second year. And so I decided that I would lay into the metalsmithing side of it. I would do pottery, but my major I declared as art education.

RB: Because you thought at least there'd be employment as a teacher.

AP: I felt. . . . I was told that I'd be able to teach. And I guess I'd been given the impression that maybe I had some talent for it. I don't know how they would decide this, but I thought, "That's okay with me." And I guess also my parents respected teachers very much. I think this was a "nice profession," according to them. And if you went to college or you went to more schooling than they had, you were expected to be, as they called it, a thaskalos, a teacher, in a kind of a classical whole sense. So I felt that that might be all right.

RB: Now, did your fellow students look down on those who went into education or. . . .

AP: Well, it was mostly. . . .

RB: . . . did that come much later than that?

AP: Out of thirty students, let's say, we probably had ten or twelve in education, of which nine were girls and one or two were boys, you know, this kind of thing. We had a half a dozen or so in industrial design, another half dozen in graphics—or commercial art, I guess you called it then—and a few in sculpture, and so forth. So we had a good number in education. It may also be that at that time the climate was ripe for teachers. You know, like right now it's not very ripe, and most kids don't want to go into teaching, but twenty years ago a lot of kids wanted to go into teaching because the opportunities were there. But that did give me the possibility of taking a lot of other courses and materials. And I spent several afternoons a week, I think, down either in the pot shop or in the metal shop. And. . . .

RB: Working mostly with your teachers?

AP: Yeah. Miss Murdock couldn't help much on the pottery. She knew pottery, but she didn't work at it. This was just one of these things she taught. But Fred Clayter was a good jeweler, and he had a little studio of his own there. And apparently I turned out to have an awfully good eye for—for the technique, at least. I could really manipulate the material. So he leaned on me a lot and gave me a lot of opportunities. Also. . . . That was Fred Clayter. . . .

RB: Would he talk much about what you were doing?

AP: Yeah, um hmm. I remember the first, one of the first pieces I had, when he gave me a carved coral. I couldn't afford to buy stones or anything. He gave me a carved coral and asked me to design a setting for it. And I used copper because I couldn't afford silver or gold. I think I worked most of the semester in trying to

make a simple little mount for carved coral. But I learned. And I learned the craft very, very well in those two or three years I was there, so that I could practice later on, in many areas. And metalsmithing turned out to be a perfect backup, background for industrial design. Because I found out since then that any number of prominent of American industrial designers had a metalsmithing background. Another teacher there—in particular Peter Müller-Munk, who ran an important office in Pittsburgh for years. . . . He's gone now. He committed suicide a few years ago. He had learned, he'd had a doctorate in history at the University of Berlin, and then went to the Berlin School of Applied Arts, and became a silversmith, came to this country and worked in New York City as a silversmith. In fact he did exhibit stuff for Tiffany and all kinds of stuff, and then he went from there into teaching industrial design at Carnegie.

RB: Oh, not silversmithing, but industrial design?

AP: Industrial design. And I got to know him. . . . Because in silversmithing you design objects, and then you have to execute them.

RB: Was he one of your teachers then?

AP: He became my third-year teacher in design, see.

RB: Uh huh.

AP: I also worked for Kostellow on the side. I think he knew I could use a little extra money. He had an account, I remember, with U.S. Glass and. . . . In fact, you know, one romanticizes subconsciously sometime, but I know that I designed with him or for him glassware which U.S. Glass produced for the New York 1939 World Fair. It's a glass that you can sort of see it in your memory. It's a triangular or tulip-shaped upper part that culminates in a ball of glass, and then it has a spread foot. Well, this was the trialon and a parasphere into the thing, and I remember the thing, and remember making a sample for it and working with him on it. So he shoved a few dollars my way.

RB: But you and Kostellow weren't making it in glass, were you?

AP: No, we were making the prototypes in plaster. Drawing and making them, making them in plaster, doing cross-sections of them, and then he was delivering them to U.S. Glass, and then they would figure out how to make the molds. Because it was all low-cost glass. It was pressed glass, not blown, see.

RB: Uh huh.

AP: So I don't know, maybe it was his first experience as a designer, too, because he was just getting into the field.

RB: Was he a very giving teacher? I mean, was. . . .

AP: He was a very, what shall I say, not glamorous. Charismatic, I think is a better word. You know, a very peculiar. He was, his mannerisms were very extravagant, and he had a way of making people sort of fall in love with his methodology, you know.

RB: Huh.

AP: I remember he would make fun of people who made giant renderings, and he'd go up to the blackboard, and, in great sweeping motions, he would write words like, "This is a design, an original design for _____," and he'd fill the whole blackboard with flourishes, and then way at the end he'd say, "a golf ball," and he'd draw this little two-inch circle, you know, and ridicule the rest of it. So he [was] full of tricks. And he was good. He had. . . . I know now that he had a perfectly horrible sense of form. He was essentially a two-dimensional artist, and I don't think he'd ever worked in form, so I guess I had a pretty good sense of form, and he used that in me to help him. Therefore the program with him—he wasn't in charge of the program at Tech—but the program didn't grow, his work didn't grow very well, but when he went to Pratt, his wife went with him—Rowena Kostellow—and she has an exquisite sense of form, and she got on the faculty there, and with her applying her feeling for form to student projects in vases and shapes, and his sort of philosophy of service, they created a tremendous program at Pratt that Carnegie didn't have.

RB: But this German now, Peter. . . . What was his name?

AP: Peter Müller-Munk.

RB: Müller-Munk continued in industrial design at. . . .

AP: Yeah, at Carnegie. He ran the program there until he pulled out, and I'm going to guess that would be

maybe in mid fifties. He pulled out after the war and opened up his own independent design office and didn't teach anymore, and stayed in Pittsburgh the rest of his life.

RB: But he wasn't the teacher that Kostellow was, in your opinion?

AP: Uh, not really. He was more Germanic, more—what shall I say?—dictatorial, you know. Not in any cruel way, but he just, he had to have things done a certain way. I pulled away. I took some courses with the industrial designers, but when they went fully into their major, into the third year, I went fully into art education, so I got teaching experience. They had, you had to spend a semester at a different type of school. I spent one semester in the first grade, one of the local schools, as a teacher. A funny experience for me, you know. I spent another semester in a ghetto school with a lot of strange mixed-up kids, another school in a very elegant, suburban school, a very rich neighborhood called Mount Lebanon, in Pittsburgh, and another school, of all places, in a very, very Jewish high school, you know, that observed only the Jewish holidays and so forth. And it was a good mix, actually, for getting to know people, for doing what I had to do, and so forth.

RB: What did you bring to that? Had you had. . . . What kind of training would you have had at Carnegie, or was this thought mainly to be on-the-job training in those classrooms?

AP: Well, the first assignment, you go into a classroom, and you're just a teaching aide. There was a teacher there. And you go over there and maybe two afternoons a week—let's say to this first-grade group that I worked with, you know—and you sort of help the teacher. Wipe noses and so forth, pat kids on the back, distribute paper. I really enjoyed it. It was a lot of fun, and I still remember a lot of those kids. I think I learned a lot more from them than they learned from me, you know.

RB: Really.

AP: I also learned humility with them in an interesting way, because I remember this one youngster was. . . . You were supposed to praise the kids; that was part of the rule, the game. This one kid was drawing, had drawn a big vertical black line on his paper, and a lot of horizontal bars across, and since this was Pittsburgh and there were coal mines around, I knew exactly what he was doing. And then he had put circles on the black lines, or horizontal lines, and a couple circles up at that top of the vertical line. So I proudly held up this paper and said, "Look what little Johnny is doing"—or whatever his name is—"he's drawn a picture of this wonderful coal mine. There are all the miners and the people waiting to come down." I went on and on an on. Then I realized he was sobbing, the kid was crying. And I said, you know, "What's the matter?" He says, "That's not a mine! That's my sister's wedding!" And it was, he had drawn the pews with his sister and, you know, at the head of the altar. [laughter] And that was the last I, the last time I ever interpreted anybody's drawing. And. . . .

RB: So they told you a lot, and in that way.

AP: Yeah. Yeah, it was good. It was a good experience.

RB: Did it bother you in the sense that children have a very sort of, with young ones, very unself-conscious way of expressing themselves?

AP: Yeah.

RB: Do you think that rubbed off into your own metalworking and design?

AP: I think so. I think so. I think I got a lot out of it, as an experience. And there's a certain kind of responsibility that is more than just simply delivering the product and getting it done on time, and all that, but generating a kind of empathy for the particular client. In this case this little first-grader was my client, you know. Making sure that you get along with them. And I have, I suppose, maybe I've always had, or maybe I developed it then, a kind of a way of not feeling comfortable myself unless I can put someone else at ease. And sometimes you have to do it by joking a little bit. You do it subconsciously; you never, you can't do it consciously.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: But I know that I'm very uptight unless the environment around me relaxes. So maybe I have, I developed that in these classrooms, to get people to do things, you know. And I had a fairly inventive twist of mine, that I could think of something else to do. I can always invent something. I have always, I've never had to look for work. You know, I've always had more to do than I can handle. I still am busier than I ever was, you know, as I was then busier than I ever was. So I could always come up with things. And the combination of the crafts orientation and the job and so forth, was really good for me.
In my upper years, I got quite interested in pottery. And as a matter of fact, in my third and fourth year of college, I produced pots and sent them, brashly enough, to the annual Syracuse Ceramic Show, the great ceramic show they used to have up here. . . .

RB: Um hmm.

AP: . . . and I got accepted. And I just was out of my mind, the fact that they thought my stuff was good enough to accept it. And the second year my work was selected for a North and South American tour, and it was just a little bowl, you know, about this big. [gesturing] It wasn't terribly significant. But now when I've seen a lot of these Oriental bowls that are no bigger than that, and [cherries], I thought, well, maybe somebody saw something in it that I didn't. All I was trying to do was keep it from breaking, you know.

RB: Did you apply a glaze very carefully?

AP: Uh huh.

RB: I mean did you, had you thought that out?

AP: Well, in whatever way. . . .

RB: You had really no instructor, you said. You said that Miss Murdock. . . .

AP: No, no, we took. . . . She was the teacher, but. . . . The processes are not that complicated. A small demonstration and you know how to throw, and a slip casting, and you mix glaze once and you know how to mix glaze. And then part of my job included firing the kiln, so I had that extra instruction, you see. So I did win a couple prizes there, and decided, well, I was on my way to becoming the world's greatest potter, you know. It was very simple to achieve greatness while you're still a junior in college. [chuckling]

RB: You were pretty competent by then, were you?

AP: I was. . . . Well, this I was, felt good about. Then I picked up some odd jobs. I remember a local men's club—it must have been the Pittsburgh Field Club, or something—wanted somebody to make ashtrays. They had a particular shape of ashtray, a very flat, open, black ashtray that they had in their club, and they had all been, a lot of them had been broken, and they needed some more, and they weren't being made anymore, so one of the teachers, maybe Miss Murdock, got me the contract, and I spent the better part of a summer cranking out production ashtrays. I made my molds, and I made all this stuff with it, so I was really running a little factory there in the summer.

RB: Did that get you down?

AP: Hmm?

RB: Or did you, was that good discipline? Did you see it as that?

AP: Ah, it was a frustrating job, because I couldn't, there was so much I didn't know about it, you know. I couldn't quite accomplish what I really wanted to accomplish. I was never very happy with the result, but I did fill the order, you know. And I got a couple other odd jobs. I got a job doing an altar cloth for some church. I did an exhibit for. . . .

RB: What was that medium? Weaving, you did, or. . . .

AP: No, it was sort of batik, as I remember, dyeing or something. I'd learned a lot of these odd craft techniques in the art ed course, you know. I, at one time I could use any material and any tools. It was good experience.

RB: Uh huh. I was going to ask about those courses themselves then. In part they were sort of a brief trot through of every art form?

AP: Yeah.

RB: And then you could turn around and teach the kids.

AP: What's an etching, what's leatherwork, what's metalwork, you know. And they were taught essentially as courses in technique, rather than courses in aesthetic substance. You know what I mean? I don't we worried so much about that as, what do you do with cut paper? How do you use ink? What can you do with this material? I had a painting course along the line, and I had thought at one time I was going to be a painter, but I was a terrible painter. I, the medium didn't fight me enough, you know. I couldn't stand fabrics, I couldn't stand any medium that wasn't uncompromising and very, very hard under the touch, you know, you had to push your way into it. To this day I can't handle a piece of fabric at all. I just go to pieces with a paper or any light medium. So paint was the same way. I had no touch for paint. But I, you know, you learn all this when you play with all these variety of mediums. Eventually, like the Peter Principle, you end up doing only those things that you can do. [chuckles] You get knocked out of all the other, all the other areas.

RB: But you at least tried a great many of them.

AP: Yeah.

RB: You knew, learned pretty early on what you could do.

AP: Yeah, and I think I had a good, I had a knack for learning quickly. I could grasp how something was done very quickly. And I got into batik, and I remember I made my own little tools. In every instance I made the tools that went with a particular craft. And I don't know, I don't think that that was a rule of the game. I think I did it.

RB: The teaching. . . . I mean, the course you were in, in art education, where you'd learn a little bit of this, a little bit of that, was that ever frustrating to you? Rather than getting deeply into one or two things, you were very, you were perfectly happy at trying out various things.

AP: Well, that was kind of a methods course, and it all, it took care of itself. It was a one-year or two-year course, and you went through about four methods a semester. And I guess I saw that as a package. But then my own time—that is to say, my optional time in school—was spent either in the metal shop or in the clay shop.

RB: Hmm.

AP: So I was putting all my own energy into that, see. Then in the summer of my third year, I decided not to work in the restaurant that summer, and one of the teachers suggested I might try counseling at a summer camp. And I had never done this before. I don't think I even knew what a summer camp was. But that turned out to be the finest experience of my life. I was sent to a camp right outside of Pittsburgh, in Mars, Pennsylvania, called Lillian Home, for underprivileged children and young mothers, perhaps unmarried mothers. I don't remember much. It was a social service camp. Attached to this was a small, not exactly a hospital, but a recovery center for kids that had. . . . Was it chorea, or . . . you know, St. Vitus dance, the shakes.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And so I remember getting off the train up north of town, north of Pittsburgh about twenty miles, and walking up to this place, and there was this big rambling building, a couple young college guys out back beating hell out of a piano with clubs and sticks. They were dismantling a piano. And that was symptomatic of the summer. It turned out to be a fantastic summer with everybody enjoying themselves, and I met kids from other colleges, you know, and had the summer romance, like everybody else had, and I was in charge, put in charge of a cabin, as they called it, of some thirty boys from five to seven. Teeny little kids. Most of them, maybe all of them, had never been away from home at night. And there was this, there were thirty beds in this cabin, and there were screens all around. In the middle of the cabin there was a cage, a chicken-wire cage, where my bed was and my dresser. And I was supposed to keep the kids happy, get them up in the morning. And most of them came from slum homes, much worse than anything I had ever known, and didn't know how to take care of themselves, wipe their butt, or brush their teeth. . . .

RB: Huh.

AP: . . . or comb their hair, or care. And so that made a pretty good guy out of me, because I had to wash my teeth and wipe my butt and set an example. And then we'd take them on little hikes and do things with them, and another camper, another counselor and I got together and did a lot of things together. And I became the camp character, and I. . . .

RB: Really? How so?

AP: Well, I'd introduce. . . . They were there for two weeks, so I would introduce Mexican night, you know, and whatever else was happening, and this was going to be Mexican night. And I'd get a bunch of paper sacks and have the kids split them and put them on their heads like sombreros, you know, and then we'd get the cook to put something out that was pertinent to that, and we'd sing "Ole, Ole" songs, or whatever it was, you know.

RB: [chuckles]

AP: And then another night [we'd, it would] be something else. And then we had a whole subrosa thing going with counselors: our own counselors, and counselors in other camps. So we would put on programs for one another. And in fact they did one of the programs here recently. They did "Little Red Riding Hood," a little, funny little operetta that we did. And we would put on operettas and dances and it all fit, you know, the crafts thing, the knowing the materials, and working with people, all fit perfectly, you know, absolutely perfectly. It was the best summer of my life.

RB: Really.

AP: And I got to the point where I was running. . . . In the morning they always had an assembly, “What are we going to do today?” And they had about two or three hundred kids there. They boys went up to twelve and the girls went up to twenty, and the girls lived in a separate cabin of their own, and then the mothers lived with a nurse and their babies in another cabin. And these kids, many of them had never eaten corn, for example, so you had to teach them how to [eat] corn. They had their own farm, and they used to load the table with corn. And our trick, the whole trick was how many pounds can you put on these kids in two weeks? You’d weigh them in. . . .

RB: There’s a lot of them [that were] undernourished, in fact?

AP: Right. And what’s more, they never had enough to eat at home. So the first couple of nights, you’d hear the munching, and you’d go back and you’d realize that these kids had stolen bread from the table. You’d put on the table all the bread they could eat. When the plate was empty, you brought some more. And they would tuck it under their shirts and steal it and then take it in and eat, because they felt if they didn’t eat they wouldn’t have any tomorrow.

RB: Yeah.

AP: They were like little puppies, you know.

RB: Yeah.

AP: And they just gorged themselves. And of course we loved having them gorge themselves. And then we got food given to us by. . . . Oh, let’s say some two thousand big cans of peaches for pies were in a flood somewhere, they would send them and then I and the other guys had to open them and taste them to see that we weren’t going to kill anybody, you know. And so we worked very hard, but the, these youngsters. . . . So when I came back to. . . .

Tape 2, side A

AP: . . . these youngsters, so when I came back to the campus after that summer, I didn’t go back into the restaurant, but I got a job at a settlement house as. . . . I taught arts and crafts. So again I had a gang of boys, real toughies. It was on the edge between a black and an Italian section, and they hated each other with venom. So I had to work with these people. The blacks weren’t allowed into Kingsley House at all, and so they used to throw things at the windows all the time, and they’d have running battles on the street. And these kids were funny because I gave. . . . Two nights a week I taught an arts and crafts class for anybody who wanted to come, old and young. And one night a week I had a club. Then the other couple nights I was a, did duty, guard duty, or whatever. This club consisted of boys who were younger than ten, I think. And they had very strict rules. They had to pay a nickel a week for their dues. And if you didn’t pay it, you got run out. And I don’t think. . . . I don’t know where they got the money, but they always had their nickels. And it, and then they would start always. . . . They had a two-hour meeting, so you always had a business meeting. The president, this little seven- or eight-year-old kid would call the meeting to order and then he would have a report from the treasurer, and they would count their loot to see how much money they had. That was the most important thing. And the whole idea was to build up their kitty to the point where they could have a party. So then they’d have a party, and they’d buy soft drinks and whatever, as much as they could. And their idea of a party was to just gorge themselves with everything, and pour Coke out the window. That was real living. Wasting food was a mark of great honor. And then after we had the meeting and counted the budget, they would push all the chairs aside, and I would take off my coat and roll up my sleeve, and then they would attack me. So for an hour, we would wrestle.

RB: Huh.

AP: You know, and I think in retrospect. . . . It’s just almost literally that. I retrospect they wanted to roughhouse with an older person, and it wasn’t gouging and killing or anything. Just sheer energy, you know.

RB: Yeah.

AP: And we’d go on and on and on. Sometimes I’d get them singing, sometimes I wouldn’t.

RB: Huh.

AP: So that was a good experience. And I grew up, I think, considerably in that settlement house, with the problems of people in the neighborhood and the poor and all [of] them destitute, and so forth. I think out of that I sort of decided that I really should spend less time indulging myself and put more time into what you could do for other people.

RB: But you hadn’t really spent too much time indulging yourself, had you? I mean. . . .

AP: Well, doing my craft work, you know, and so forth.

RB: Do you feel you were a, sort of a, something of a hope to some of those people? I mean, when they'd come, the adults would, would they come to you and talk about their problems?

AP: The kids, you mean?

RB: No, the adults that were around the settlement house.

AP: Umm, yeah, I had a pretty rapport with people around there. But, you know, those people. . . . Social workers have a lot of problems—themselves—or they wouldn't be social workers. But at the same time, they have this strong thrust to compassion. You know, there's no way you're going to get rich being a social worker, so you have to get your satisfaction some other way. So they were all by and large compatible. See?

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And I sat in on a lot of meetings where they spent hours discussing a particular person or particular situation, and how to handle it. It was the best training in the world for how to work with people.
So that was, I did that my third summer, and then the summer I graduated I decided that I was not going to go into public school teaching. I [didn't] know what I was going to do. I decided I was going to get some additional education. By that time I had seemed to have attracted enough attention with my metalwork and pottery, so I tried to get a graduate assistantship. And I finally got one, at University of Oregon.

RB: How did that happen? Had you heard of it, or just. . . ?

AP: Yeah, the word had come in. In fact, I had taken a job. I hadn't had any luck at all, and I had decided to take a job at—what do they call it?—Cumberland Gap, Maryland, take a job teaching in the public school there. And I rode all night to go over there on a bus, to meet this man. Got there on a Saturday, because I couldn't leave earlier. And he met me Saturday morning with his golf clubs in his hand, and said that I was acceptable. There was no problem. He didn't bother asking me anything. And he had a golf date at ten o'clock, and he, if I would sign a contract he'd see me there in the fall. So I did, and he left, and I took the bus and rode all the way back to Pittsburgh. I decided on the basis of that I would never work for anybody that didn't take the time to find out who I was.
So, happily, the following week, I heard of this thing at Oregon, University of Oregon. And I accepted it.

RB: What was it to be then?

AP: A graduate assistantship, which meant I would get my tuition, get a thousand dollars a year, and I would work on my own degree.

RB: And you're, this was in an art school that you were going to?

AP: Yeah, it was the School of Architecture and Art—Art and Architecture, at the University of Oregon, in Eugene, Oregon.

RB: And did any of your teachers know anything about it, there in Pittsburgh?

AP: No. No, all except that they needed somebody. That summer then, before I went to Oregon, I worked in this camp again, the Lillian Home. And my, I met my wife there. B.J. was there. She was a social worker, social studies person from the University of Pittsburgh. And I met her there that summer, but we didn't of course marry till three or four years later. And I did pretty much the same thing in the summer camp.
My major school work was mostly spent in extending my skills and my knowledge in this area. I'd already decided I wouldn't, probably wouldn't teach. I did pick up some other jobs, though. I did these kind of. . . . Since I obviously needed the money, if there was something that could be done where there were a few dollars, the teachers had a way of sort of shoving it my way, whereas many of the other kids did not necessarily need the money, you know.
I've lost track with most of my classmates except, curiously enough, two of them. When I came to Syracuse, years later, to be interviewed for a job, here, in '55, so that would be fifteen years, sixteen years after I graduated from college, I was driving along in front of what is now the bookstore, which was then the art school, and on the porch there was a girl that I had been to college with, Dorothy Riester, and my god, here she was. She was on the faculty here. Her husband was an engineer at G.E. She's a pretty competent sculptor. She's in Casanovia now. And we know each other from then. And then one man, a fellow named William Goldsmith, who is my age, was a college student with me. He's the senior man in an office in Chicago now. Runs an industrial design office. And is very competent. He and I have been, I think, as close as brothers over the years. There was never a problem that either one of us have that we cannot just discuss freely with one another. So he's made a, been kind of an anchor to windward for me, and I hope perhaps I have been to him. So that person in particular

has been very important to me.
And then my high school teacher, that I mentioned the last time, Viola Sullivan—Lukehart now—is still alive, and she lives in Florida. I haven't seen her since the day I left high school, but we exchange long letters at Christmas each year. I feel very guilty of not having made a special pilgrimage to see her, you know, but. . . .

RB: Of your teachers in art education, did you develop any close ties there? Seems like you were spending a lot of time. . . . Not simply in those classes: you're in the schools, your other employment, the settlement house, and so forth.

AP: I didn't, no, I didn't. Except. . . . What shall I say? I was befriended by a number of teachers. Very nice. I remember the head of the department, Wilfred [Reddio] talked to me several times. I can't remember. I may have been the only scholarship student, you know. I certainly must have been the only poor student in the group, and I certainly must have come from a pretty tough background compared to other kids. So that perhaps in that context I stood out. I had very good grades in college. I think I had A's practically all the way through except for a couple of psych courses where I got thrown out on my ass for arguing with the teacher and. . . .

RB: Of psychology?

AP: Yeah, psychology of education. I didn't like this kind of smug academic thing, you know.

RB: . . . because you'd seen how things worked out in the classroom, is that right, in this. . . ?

AP: I don't know. I just didn't like. . . . Whatever it was, there was no love lost between myself and this person, and. . . . I had a good public speaking course, an excellent public speaking course, as I remember. Beautiful course in aesthetics.

RB: Really.

AP: It's funny how well I remember so many. I can almost. . . .

RB: Was it a fairly demanding program, the art education program?

AP: I would say not, actually. But we took. . . . You were treated as if you were at a university, so there were a lot of other courses to take. I think I had a least two years of French and maybe three when I was in college. So we had a strong language requirement, a strong history requirement. We had a psych and aesthetics and philosophy requirement, you know. And I forget now, several other things, which you might not normally expect an institute of technology.

RB: What was the aesthetics course like? [phone rings]

AP: Uh, it was taught by a man named Schoen. [phone rings again] That's the man downstairs [the phone—Trans.]; he'll answer that. It was taught by Max Schoen, and it was related to, obviously, the arts, but it was related primarily to how one person reacts to the arts. Is a thing an art object if you can't see it? You know. Does music exist if you're not there? You know, these kinds of things. Do you things, do you ever do anything when you don't want to do it? Is your judgment important? These are the kinds of values that I seem to recall. He had a book; his book was called Human Nature. In fact, I still have it.

RB: Huh. It was extremely broadly taught, then, wasn't it?

AP: Yeah, yeah. And it wasn't, it wasn't dogmatic. At least the teacher was clever enough so that I never thought of it as being a dogmatic course where you had to come up with his ideas or you failed, you know. A very, very well done course. I patterned a course that I teach in the philosophy of design pretty much after that, with different, a different base, but nevertheless is a course in which I try to explore ideas without preaching them. And so it's been good for me.

RB: You had the impression he led you through things without your knowing you were being led.

AP: I suspect, as an old teacher now, I suspect he had a nose through all our rings and walked us through it. [correcting himself:] A ring through all our noses, you know.

RB: Yeah.

AP: But I didn't feel it at the time.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And so it was a very rewarding course.

RB: Did that open up an awful lot then when you turned to address your metalsmithing or your pottery or. . . .

AP: I don't know. I can't say that.

RB: You weren't conscious of it.

AP: It would be nice to say it, but I don't think I can say it. I didn't. . . . I think in retrospect I was pretty good in those areas. But I don't think I was as good as I thought I was then, you know. In other words, I was very proud of the fact that I could make a pot that didn't break, but whether it was an eloquent pot, I don't think I had that. . . . It was a subconscious aesthetic, if you know what I mean, see. And so I made a lot of things. I think the best experience was just the hands-on, constant hands-on experience in different materials that established a pretty good base for the practice of design, because it's all problem-solving. It's all having a certain objective and a certain goal, a certain deadline, and a certain commitment to somebody else. Certain finances, you know, it was all, all involved. And at the same time the industrial design program there was—it's easy to say this in retrospect—I think it was a very young program, and it was feeling its way. And as I remember, the general word was that there really weren't any opportunities for designers, for educator-designers. There were a lot of the designers in the field. This was sort of the heyday of industrial design in the country, and there were some big names making a lot of money. But for young people going into the field, nobody knew what was going to happen to them.

RB: Hmm. They thought, you got the, you were given the impression that a few people, relatively few people had a corner on it?

AP: If you were talented, you could make it, you know. I was impressed; I spent a couple of nights, one night sitting up on a bus all night to go from Pittsburgh to Cleveland to meet a craftsman-designer who had made quite a reputation for himself, and going to meet somebody else. I made pilgrimages a number of times, and I was just. . . .

RB: You would ask some questions, see them at work?

AP: Yeah, just, I just wanted to go and see somebody. As a matter of fact, just the other day in Helsinki, one of the giants of American design, who—he really is a potter-craftsman, but also has done product design all his life—was at the meeting there, a man named Victor Schreckengost, who's having a one-man show at the Everson right now, and he's still very active, very lively. He must be eighty-five or so.
I think through that whole career I had a lot of growing up to do, you know. I mean, maybe everybody does, but. . . . Growing out, I think is a better word. Growing out of one environment, one way of life, into a different way of life. And I was pretty thrilled by. . . .

RB: Like what do you mean? What, your own home life, you mean?

AP: Yeah, yeah, the Greek world that I came of, from, had an extremely strong commitment to its own religion, and if you weren't a good solid God-fearing Orthodox, you know, you were sort of doomed forever. My parents were extremely disturbed that I didn't marry a young Greek girl, you know. What's more, after I got to college, I stopped going to church completely, I switched to. . . . Well, I went to the Episcopal Church for a while. Then I didn't go, and I guess, like all kids, I went through my atheistic period, you know, in and out of that one a few times. And I didn't smoke, I didn't drink, and I wasn't a prude about it; I just didn't do it, that's all.

RB: And when you went home, you weren't quite fitting in. You were changing in front of their eyes.

AP: I had changed, changed dramatically. And when I would go home, occasionally—very rarely as a matter of fact—I got, it got rather boring because my father was very proud of me, and so he'd immediately walk me around town and show me off to his cronies. And that really embarrassed the daylights out of me, so as a result, I went home less and less. And the question always was, "When are you going to marry? Why don't you marry a Greek girl? Do you go to church, or don't you go to church," you know. "Have you forgotten your ancient heritage?" And these were all emigres, remember, that remembered, lived in that world, see.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: To this day I have a problem here because the Greeks are still like that in this community. And they know I exist, but they consider me a traitor, pretty much. They call [ah-loaf-EE-loas, alofilos], which means "he with, he of another religion, of another following." It's more than strangers, almost alien, you know, because I have left the church, I have married a foreigner, I live with the foreigners. You know, these people still live in Greece.

RB: That wasn't simply a, immigrants, their fearfulness of the effects of American culture?

AP: No, no, no. No, it was just the native. . . .

RB: It was a strain. . . .

AP: . . . pride in holding on to what they know, what they love, you know. And I don't fault them—at all. It's just for whatever reason. . . .

RB: You drifted away from it, or did you reject it?

AP: I never rejected it. I just found other things. I never rejected it. I still love it. I still know many of the songs. I have a shortwave radio at home. I listen to Athens every night, you know. I keep up my Greek. I like the music. [No], I think I like everything about it. Except I'm not a Greek Orthodox. I'm a Unitarian, whatever that is. Which means I'm really nothing. You know. [mild chuckle]

RB: Heh.

AP: And I sort of live in my world. And the college helped do that. Of course my dad, I remember, you know, said somewhere along the line that, "Now that you've gone to college we've lost you." And I don't know whether that's a compliment or a curse.

RB: They weren't aware that in, back home the educated Greek would also have been lost to a degree, wouldn't he, to his village? He might then have lived in. . . .

AP: Yes, I think so. Well, of course.

RB: But they weren't away of that maybe?

AP: Well, I think the gap between what these people were and an educated Greek was much, much greater. Because a majority of them never had the equivalent even of a junior high school education in their own countries. They learned to read, and that was about it. You know what I mean.

RB: Right.

AP: And therefore the thought of going further, spending not only twelve years in school, but fourteen and sixteen and eighteen just takes you way beyond anything that they're familiar with. And I don't. . . . They used to make sort of cynical references to the wealthy English that used to come to Greece, you know, almost as if they were royalty and way outside their world of living, you know. I think they . . . well, I know they respected me, and they admired me, and they bragged about me, and for quite a while anything that happened to me was in the local paper, and so forth. And I was probably the only one of that entire generation of first-born [Americans—Trans.] that ever went to college. You know, most of them went into the steel mills, or the grocery stores, or whatever.

RB: Yeah. And yet you said the first time that your father didn't want that life for you either.

AP: That's right. So it was a. . . . That's why he said, "We've lost you," you know. There was a strong—and still is—a strong ethnicity underlying all this. It's easy to convince yourself that maybe some of these interests that I have come from that ethnic base, from what my parents were, or thought they were, or did not know that they were. You know, I'm a believer in that kind of extension.
But the college, Carnegie Tech was a good school. It was equitable. I corresponded with many of the teachers for quite a number of years, you know. Occasionally when I did something I let them know, or if I was in town. But I never really went back to campus. I never went back. . . . Maybe twice in my life I've been back.

RB: The campus life was never a very important thing to you, I guess, because you really scarcely mentioned it.

AP: Yeah, right. Oh, during, for one semester, I think, when I was working at Kingsley House, I joined a fraternity, because I wanted to see what that was like. Alpha Sigma Phi, I think it was. And I guess I despised it. I wasn't a good fraternity boy. I didn't fit in. I came in too late, you know what I mean? If I'd've come in as a freshman with my own gang. . . . I had a little cubbyhole where I tried to work. And I couldn't stand the rah-rah, you know, and I couldn't stand the kind of organized horseplay. I liked horseplay, but not that kind.

RB: Yeah.

AP: And I was there a semester, and I pulled out and went back to me little shacky room, you know. And I had, I guess, like most kids, I had a girlfriend my last couple years in college, and she was a motherly type. She had adopted me, and did all kinds of things for me, and tried to see me through, and so forth. And I finally had to break that off my last year.

RB: You didn't need a mother at that point, huh?

AP: I had grown up. [laughs] Maybe, maybe I did need her, you know. I don't know.

RB: But that was a good school. I mean, it didn't make you feel down—that you were poor. . . .

AP: No, not at all.

RB: . . . and that [you] were a first-born immigrant. No?

AP: Not at all. I don't know what the magic was. There were other. . . . I wasn't the only poor boy in the class. I remember a Jewish boy, Morris [Kirschenbaum], who is now president of the Pittsburgh School of Art, an independent art school—and a quite a good school, as a matter of fact. He and I started together, and his father ran a junk shop, where you could go an buy all kinds of bits of plumbing and fittings and so forth. He invited me home for Thanksgiving my freshman year, and [I—Ed.] went there and found that his family lived upstairs over the junk shop. And what's they'd had a fire that had burned out most of the upstairs, so now they were crowded in two little rooms at the back, and his grandmother had been burned to death in the front room, and the bed was still there. And I found this horrible, but they were surviving.

RB: Yeah, yeah.

AP: You know, they were survivors, and they put on a little Thanksgiving dinner and they were very kind to me, and I was very impressed, as a matter of fact. And then he dropped out after that year, because he couldn't afford to stay in school anymore with the fire and all that. Went to work for his dad. But now today he's got a nice business, you know, done very well.

RB: Um hmm, um hmm.

AP: So I guess I did meet all kinds of people.

RB: Did you while you there go to. . . . Weren't the Carnegie annual shows very important?

AP: Oh, yes. I forgot to mention that. I spent. . . .

RB: Were they. . . .

AP: I spent a lot of time there. I knew the pain[ters]. . . . I could still recite probably forty or fifty of the painters that were famous then and. . . . John Steuart Curry, and Henry Lee McPhee, and Leon Kroll. . . .

RB: You would [meet] them or at least see them at the openings?

AP: No, I think, I went, I didn't go to openings. I wasn't at that level.

RB: Yeah.

AP: But I went to, when the annual Carnegie exhibition opened, I went to the opening, and I drank in all the art. And most of it, in retrospect, were regionalist art. You know, it wasn't abstract art at all. Kuniyoshi had some stuff there I remember, and. . . . I memorized a lot of the paintings. You know, I can still play them in my mind like one plays a record, you know, and see them. So they meant a lot to me.

RB: Did they, in what way do you suppose, since you had given up painting?

AP: Well, I had nothing but respect for that as a craft, you know, and I just couldn't see how anybody could do it, because I simply could not do it. It was wrong for me in a way because that entire school of painting at that time was figurative painting. Scenes. The Wyeths were there. The Father Wyeth was always there, and everything was people and landscapes. Virtually no evidence of any abstraction. The abstract artists simply weren't part of that world—to my knowledge. Either that, or I didn't see them. You know, I can't remember any of them.

RB: Yeah.

AP: Therefore it was a bad experience for a designer. It was a great experience for one's sensitivity, let's say. But you couldn't get this abstract sense of order, this technological relationship of ideas, or if you want to call it that. But it wasn't. . . .

RB: You couldn't get that at those shows?

AP: You couldn't get it at the shows and there was no place else to see it. And yet, my God, by the thirties, these movements were roaring through the rest of the world.

RB: Hmm.

AP: They just hadn't been allowed into the Carnegie.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And I didn't know it. And I don't think I ever had a modern art course. For all the art history that I had, I don't think we ever got as far as the Armory Show. You know what I mean? I don't remember Picasso, Matisse, Cezanne, all of those people. I became familiar with those people in graduate school. But in terms of educating my own personal sensitivity—or satisfying my hunger—this worked well. The same way with music. A lot of music played, both at school and the concerts around town, and I liked music very much, but I heard very, very little avant garde music, extremely little. I heard the same potboilers that one hears on our local classical music station, you know.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And it's all good music. You can't fault it, but it's not much of a challenge, see.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: So I guess that's about it as far as the college stuff is concerned.
[Interruption in taping]

RB: . . . could say more about Alexander Costello. He was [Persian] and [immaculate], but you were saying he. . . .

AP: Oh, he was full of these kind of idiosyncrasies that made him a delight for all the students. But he left Carnegie. . . . We used to say "Car-NAY-gee" incidentally; now we say "CAR-neh-gee." He left Carnegie to go to Pratt, after Dohner died, I believe. Partially in frustration because it was obvious that this painter, who was not really a designer, was not going to be allowed up into the program, so he went to Pratt and he blossomed out into an excellent teacher. And he and his wife built that program up to what it was. It's nothing like that now. Then he started to attract money. One of his students had been William Mitchell, who became director of design for General Motors, following Harley [Arrow]. And he began to tap some of the industry spigots, so he was getting money at Car. . . . at Pratt. . . .

RB: Pratt.

AP: . . . to do major projects with his students. In fact, they had a research lab of sorts going. I don't know what it was called, but it was really rolling. Then the other faculty began to close in on him. "You know, you can't do that. You can't bring money in without sharing it with us. You can't do this, you can't do that." And he got very, very frustrated and very disturbed because they were cutting off what he was building, which was really tremendous. And I met him [but] for the last time at Aspen, Colorado, the second summer that they had the Aspen [conference, Conference]. And I remember he and I had a rather warm relationship, and we rode up to the top of the ski lift, sat up around this, back from other people. And he was near tears, and he said he was going to have to leave Pratt because they had become too much for him. And that he had been offered, or was thinking about an offer from the University of Washington. He wanted to put as much of the country between himself and them as he could, and then I think within six months after that he died of a heart attack. And it's sometimes too bad in academia that success breeds contempt, you know [chuckles], that if you're doing your job right, those, there are enough other people who will [start] to knock you down. And I think they ruined a perfect man. Well, that's all I wanted to add.

TAPE-RECORDED INTERVIEW WITH ARTHUR PULOS
IN SYRACUSE, NEW YORK
AUGUST 19, 1981
INTERVIEWER: ROBERT F. BROWN

AP: ARTHUR PULOS

RB: ROBERT BROWN

Tape 2, side A (cont.)
[From here to the end of this tape side was transcribed from a replacement tape recopied from the original interview tapes.—Trans.]

RB: Continuing the interview, it's August 20, 1981, in Syracuse. Today we want to talk about your going to the University of Oregon. . . .

AP: Oh, yeah.

RB: . . . where I think you went in 1940, or something like that?

AP: Fall of ‘39.

RB: And you went there for graduate study. . . .

AP: Right.

RB: . . . in industrial design? No.

AP: No, I got a. . . .

RB: No, that was later.

AP: I got an assistantship in, just in fine arts in the. . . . It was in the college of architecture and fine arts, I guess. So I got an assistantship in the college. And I went out there. . . . I think I got it on the basis of my schoolwork in ceramics primarily, because when I got to Oregon. . . . This was a year of the ‘39
World’s Fair, you know, so you could buy a ticket for ninety-nine dollars that would enable you to start anyplace in the country, go to both of the fair cities—San Francisco and New York—and back to your hometown, which was a pretty good deal for ninety-nine dollars, so I rode a bus from Pittsburgh to Oregon, and then the following spring I went down to San Francisco and then back to New York, and then home, took in both World Fairs.

RB: Oh, you did take in the World’s Fair? [chuckles]

AP: Yeah. That was the ticket.

RB: Oh, boy.

AP: So I. . . .

RB: So you went out there, you said, without knowing much about the university or program or anything?

AP: Not really, except that they had an art program, and they had some design, and after I got there I met the woman who, that I was supposed to work with or for my masters degree, and she was in charge of all the arts and crafts—the weaving, the ceramics, the jewelry, whatever it was.

RB: What was her name?

AP: Victoria Avakian, A-v-a-k-i-a-n. I think she had a masters or something from Columbia University because there was some kind of a connection there. I can’t quite remember.

RB: But was she a craftsman herself?

AP: Yes, but I would say, as I found out, not really a very strongly active craftsman. She’s one of these people that had done it and now was teaching it, you know. And. . . .

RB: Sounds like it was going to be more of the same you had at Carnegie.

AP: Yeah. Almost the same. And I suppose that’s why I got the job, because she was a woman and she needed somebody to stack the kiln, and help prepare the glazes and so forth. And so she met me and. . . . I felt pretty cocky because I was an easterner, and she was just a lowly westerner, although she was much older than I was. And I stayed near the campus in one of these places where you got a room and then you ate dinner sort of next door in kind of—what do you call it?—meal table, with a bunch of other. . . .

RB: Oh, like a boarding house almost?

AP: Yeah, boarding, yeah, boarding.

RB: So it was different from Pittsburgh, wasn’t it?

AP: Yeah, it’s much different, much nicer.

RB: Small town. . . .

AP: Lovely. I was terribly impressed. It was a lovely town, and the smell of. . . . It was fall, the smell of burning wood was in the air. They used wood for fuel for houses. And it was like being in a country camp, you know. And it was quite folksy. There was a millrace running through town. There was a. . . . I would say at that point in time, it was as handsome a leftover nineteenth-century town as you could find, you know.

RB: Hmm.

AP: The university was quite small. It was very comfortable. They had a good architecture department, probably better than the art department, all things considered. The head of it, the grand old man, and whose name might come to me before we finish . . . had worked for a number of years with Frank Lloyd Wright, and he was a single-tax fanatic. And he used to hold open court in his house once a week and try to sell this point of view.

RB: Huh.

AP: And there was a driving interest in the architecture out there, moreso than even at Carnegie. They had a good program, but these people were more . . . not entrepreneurs, but they were more open, more exciting, young architects. And I mention a lot about them, because I've got, I got along very well with them, and I got to know them quite well, and so forth.
And I taught two courses. One was a metal course, metalwork class. And the other was a course in basic design, foundation design.

RB: Hmm.

AP: And I had my own classroom, and it was really very nice.

RB: Were the students pretty well prepared, or at least receptive?

AP: Pretty sharp, pretty sharp students, pretty open. I guess part of it, I was much closer to their age, and we got along just with no problems at all. And I did a lot of experimental projects, actually. I remember certain structural problems I gave, certain analytical problems that I gave the students. And I invented problems along with the students, for them to solve in design, reflecting maybe some of Kostellow's teaching. In other words, we didn't teach anything by the rules or by what had been done before. We just decided what would be a challenge, you know, and that's what we did.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: Things like balancing, balance three different materials around a point, you know, on a nail. And the trick was what could you balance? You could balance an enormous ball of cork with a little drop of lead, you know. And creating structures in space. We built kites. We did a lot of things. I enjoyed that class.

RB: And that was the design class.

AP: Um hmm, design class. And then I had a metal class, which was just more or less of a traditional learn how to saw and file and bend and solder and set stones and things of that sort.

RB: Now these were undergraduates you were. . . .

AP: Yeah. Yeah, they were all in somewhere in the mill, going their way through school.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And I had a couple of. . . . I was still doing some exhibiting, I think. I remember I was. . . . At that point in time I was. . . . Pottery was, ceramics was my main interest. In fact, I made, I remember, Paul Bunyan and his blue ox. Made them, I think the ox was about three feet long, about like that [gestures _____ feet—Ed.].

RB: Huh.

AP: And I had brass balls on the top of his horns, and Paul Bunyan was about that tall, about twenty, thirty inches.
[Interruption in taping]

RB: Who were some of the, your other colleagues out there?

AP: Well, my. . . . I won't be able to remember all the names.

RB: Yeah.

AP: But there were some nice people. It was a comfortable place.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: There was a Nolan Zane, who was. . . . He taught art history and so forth, a gentle man who had been to the Orient for a while, and in a sense never came back, because he wore slippers and robes and even grew a little

Chinese-like goatee, and so forth.

RB: Hmm.

AP: He was interesting.

RB: That sort of Orientalism did [creep up], you found on the West [Coast—Trans.], and it began, beginning to. . . .

AP: Yeah, I think so. It was pretty strong.

RB: Yeah.

AP: Then there was a big Swede who was a painter, a very nice guy. And. . . . He let me share his studio for a while, and he and I used to play a running game of chess, where we'd keep a chess board on one of these drawing stools, and whenever he got around to it, he'd make a move, and when I got around to it, I would make a move, and sometime there'd be minutes between them, and sometime weeks, you know.

RB: [chuckles]

AP: And it was kind of fun. I enjoyed that.

RB: Do you remember his name?

AP: Ohhh, boy.

RB: But was he fairly well known at that time. . . .

AP: At that point in time.

RB: . . . in the Northwest?

AP: Yeah, he was a fairly well known painter and he died, I think, while I was there, and his widow opened a little shop, and I made a lot of ceramic things for her shop, including. . . . I did. . . . He had a kind of a Scandinavian country house designed for him, with a lot of tile fireplace thing, and I did all the tiles for it, and fixed it up.

RB: Um hmm. So when you say you were in a workshop, in those days you were doing mainly ceramic. . . .

AP: Yeah.

AP: Primarily ceramics.

RB: You had a kiln then?

AP: I was using the school kiln. . . .

RB: Oh.

AP: I was firing the kiln, you know, I was doing all. . . . I was sort of a jack of all trades in the pottery.

RB: Were you keeping up with what other people were doing in pottery?

AP: Pretty much. I. . . .

RB: Looking at the magazines of those days?

AP: Yeah. I was exhibiting, up and down the West Coast. I exhibited at the Carnegie show, at the Syracuse show after that. I had this big ox and Paul Bunyan that I said. Eventually I showed at Pittsburgh. They had an annual—Associated Arts of Pittsburgh. I won. . . . I forgot to mention, I think, when I was in college and afterwards, I think I won prizes three or four or five years in a row with ceramic sculpture. I was particularly, got particularly interested in ceramic sculpture. I did. . . .

RB: That was fairly rare then, wasn't it, ceramic sculpture?

AP: No, I think it was for a brief moment there. Right through the World's Fair for about five years, the ceramic sculptors, who did whimsical figures and so forth, were very popular. I think it was an outgrowth of the Wiener-Werkstatte in the kind of crafts they had, because some of these people had studied there.

RB: Hmm. And they had a shop in New York, I know, at one time. . . .

AP: They probably did.

RB: . . . for such products, without that. . . .

AP: Yeah. And they had. . . . In the Fair in ‘39 a fellow named Wayland Gregory did some big terra cotta cherubs representing the Adams that were really very handsome things, and I knew, oh, a dozen, let’s say: Russell Aiken, Thelma Frazier Winter in Cleveland. That whole area interested me, the sculptural approach.

RB: Were these some of the people you’d gone to see when you were a student?

AP: Yeah, yeah. Thelma. . . . Ed Winter was an enamelist, Thelma Frazier Winter was a ceramic sculptress. I visited them both in Cleveland. Victor Schreckengost we mentioned the last time. He was also a ceramic sculptor.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And these were all whimsical, rather fat little figures, suited for terra cotta, you know. And the, I did a series of figures based on the Spanish revolution, or whatever it was, in the mid thirties. I did a group of sort of angry peasants, people with angry gestures as. . . .

RB: Hmm. You were aware of that Spanish civil war.

AP: Yeah.

RB: There are a number of, particularly New York, artists who have, painters and so forth. . . .

AP: Oh, I was very aware of it. As a matter of fact, I think in college I was. . . . We had something floating around called Veterans of Future Wars, and this was the passivist movement of the times, and I was a member of that. We were very proud of yelling protests and in college I was very much against war. Whenever they had the ROTC parade in front of our building, why those of us who were up in the art building used to take some of these draperies that they hung around models, wave them out the window, and ridicule the military. When they came in after us, we’d all scurry. We were cowards, I guess.
So I was active in that there at Oregon, primarily ceramics, then I got a job somehow with a new group in Portland that was called the Oregon Ceramic Studio, and I did a lot for them. I can’t remember. . . . I must have done it over the summers. But I designed a mark for the organization, and in terms of the way marks are today, it wasn’t much of a mark, but nevertheless it consisted of three pillars of wood that went straight up off a building and then had some woven wood through them so it looked like a piece of weaving. And then I built the kiln, built most of the kiln myself. It was a walk-in kiln so it was a good size, five and a half feet or so, five feet high and arc, and I laid all the firebrick inside of it.

RB: Did you have any experience doing that?

AP: I had rebuilt a couple of kilns at Oregon. A ceramic engineer had designed the size of the burners and the flues and that stuff, but the actual building and testing and sealing and so forth, I did. So I really was in to it pretty deeply.

Tape 2, side B

AP: . . . and I was making and selling little things in ceramics, so I showed in the Syracuse show from there, and in the Carnegie shows, and some other shows on the West Coast.

RB: Were they quite receptive in Oregon to the arts and the crafts?

AP: I think so, yeah. But California was very, very big on the crafts, and some of it washed off onto Oregon. Oregon was a little more country, you know.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: But it was a respectable business out there, and lots of people were doing it. Life was a little bit easier apparently.

RB: Um hmm. Did you maintain your eastern cockiness while you were there?

AP: No, I very quickly, I think, fell into the way of life. One of the things I liked about it was that when I went out there I started completely fresh. You know, nobody knew me from Adam.

RB: Yeah.

AP: Nothing at all about me. Therefore whatever I did, whoever I was, was a fresh personality. And I don't know whether it was deliberate or not, but I felt that way. And I moved into the. . . . They had a faculty, men's faculty club. There were several rooms upstairs, and I moved from this boarding house into the faculty club, and had a room upstairs for the remainder of my first year and through my second year. So I got to know a lot of faculty in different departments. Some of them had cabins on the West Coast, or cabins in the mountains, or different things. And it's great country, Oregon, you know, absolutely great. Go down the coast and catch crabs by ourselves just in the shallow tidepools, you know, all you could eat, and people would boil water along the coast, and for five cents you could dump your crab in and cook it.

RB: Hmm.

AP: And we used to go skiing up in the Three Sisters mountains, a place called Voodoo Bowl. We'd start out early on a Sunday morning with an old car, half a dozen of us, and a five-gallon can of hot oil. We'd go up into the snow belt, to this place called Voodoo Bowl, where they had erected a couple of pulleys and a rope and had a little donkey engine up there. We'd pour this warm oil in the donkey engine, and it would warm up the engine. We'd start the engine. While some were doing that and setting the rope, others would pack down the slope. And then we'd ski for four or five hours, and then drain the engine again, you know, and start back home, and about half way down the mountain there were hot springs. In the snow there'd be these [ponds] of steaming water, and we would strip down to our swimming trunks, which we wore, and then we'd swim there for an hour or so, bask in the hot water like a sauna, you know. Then get back in the car and go home. So it was, the place was full of this activity.
I did a lot of bicycling. Another fellow and I opened up the first hostel route in the Northwest. We some. . . . When I was. . . . Before I left college I had been intending to go hosteling, and I was going to hostel around Europe. There was a boat at that time that took hostelers and their bikes for very low cost, and then the war came along and it sort of knocked that all out. So another fellow and I took off. I don't know how we made all the connections, but they sent us the paperwork and the materials and everything else, and in the summer we took off and wandered through, between Eugene, Oregon, diagonally northwest through back roads searching for tracks, and we set up a route. Two circle routes, one going northwest and then down the coast and back to Eugene, another going Eugene down to the coast to [Abbeyville] and then down and back up the Rogue River Valley and back up. We cleaned chicken coops, we cleaned out lofts, we set up paths, we did everything.

RB: Oh, you would find people who had something that people could stay in. . . .

AP: Yeah.

RB: . . . [and] make arrangements?

AP: Yeah, the idea was you had to have. . . . Preferably you'd try to have places that were not less, not more than fifty miles apart. Fifty miles meant three hours of brisk bike-riding, or five hours of casual riding. So you'd sort of gauge your time. When you got near that area, you'd ask around, try to find someplace, and if you found a farm, let's say, in one case, that had a chicken coop they weren't using, then you'd talk them into setting it up, and you arranged for them to get all the blankets. They were supposed to provide a blanket per hosteler.

RB: Hmm, did these people know about you before you arrived?

AP: No, but we had lots of literature, and we left it and so forth.

RB: I see.

AP: Another time we set up a hostel, some tents, in a field, a pasture where there were bulls, and it was kind of a problem. Another time we did it in a houseboat, another time in a loft. But we did a lot of pioneering. And many of these trails were really pioneer trails. They were not roads that had been cut through with bulldozers and so forth; they were just a track.

RB: You mean you were going like hikers paths? You were bicycling on?

AP: We were bicycling. . . . No, no, they were wagon paths.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: We didn't do any hiker paths, you know. They were all wagon things, although some of these people got in and out with Model-T's and old cars, you know.

RB: Hmm.

AP: And then we went all the way to the coast and then down along the coast, using the beach as hostels, and then back up.

RB: And the idea was for a warm summer weather, that this would be mainly for young people to. . . .

AP: Yeah, anybody. You could do it now. You can go thousands of places in the country, you know, and we opened up the ones in Oregon, and it was kind of fun. I don't if they're still running or what the situation is, but. . . . So we had a lot of this kind of adventurous outdoor living. I like the outdoors, I spend a lot of time in it, and that was good country for that.

RB: What was your academic _____ there, because you were. . . . Weren't your working toward a. . . .

AP: Yeah, I was working on a. . . .

RB: . . . supposed to be working on a degree?

AP: I started out the first semester to do a masters in ceramics, and I was going to do actually consumer goods ceramics—you know, pottery for the average home.

RB: And there were teachers there? You've mentioned the. . . .

AP: Avakian was the only one, and she ran a pottery kind of as a craft class, and my interest was in moving it to another level. And then along the line I got, I decided that pottery wasn't it for me.

RB: How do you suppose that came about?

AP: I don't know what triggered it. Actually I. . . . Oh, I was teaching the metal class. . . . Avakian was teaching the pottery, and I was sort of a jack of all trades in the pottery, but working with the metal interested me, and I got more interested on my own. Also Fred Clayter, the man at Carnegie, had given me. . . . He was very shrewd. As I left Carnegie he gave me a set of silversmith's tools. He gave me a saw and a chasing hammer and a bunch of blades and a few other tools that I still have. . . .
[Interruption in taping; probably the end of the original tape side. Also note that the replacement tape here merges with the original tape sent to the transcriber—Trans.]

AP: . . . gave me all these tools, and I used them in the class, and I got pretty good at it, and then I was teaching the metal class and demonstrating and I got more and more interested. And then I decided that I was going to switch my thesis and do it on ecclesiastical silver. All of a sudden I, for whatever reason. . . .

RB: By "thesis," you mean you had to do a historical study?

AP: Well, you do it two years at Oregon. You did a two years' thesis for your graduate degree.

RB: Yeah. But I mean this didn't just mean making ecclesiastical silver?

AP: In my case, yes. I. . . .

RB: Oh, I see.

AP: I wrote a proposal and it consisted of doing first of all a study of historical church silver, and then American church silver, and then to design and make a piece of, a chalice, myself.

RB: What do you suppose led to that interest in church. . . .

AP: I don't know, actually, because as you know I had pretty much given up. . . .

RB: You had broken away from church-going.

AP: Yeah, I guess I thought, well, this is a—what shall I say?—a dignified and perhaps proper thing to do in terms of making silver. I wasn't going to make a compote for fruit, or something for wealthy people, or a trophy. I thought that
in churches you need ceremonial wares, and perhaps this was the thing to do. And it wasn't Orthodox or Catholic or anything; it was just ecclesiastical silver.

RB: Now did you have a teacher for silversmithing at. . . ?

AP: No, actually I was my own teacher.

RB: [Oh. Huh.]

AP: It was very interesting. I learned all those processes that I did know myself. . . .

RB: How did you go about learning [them]?

AP: Well, I began to buy some books.

RB: Yeah.

AP: I snooped around. I'd go up to Portland, Oregon, to where the jewelry repair people were that. . . . Every city has its little diamond setters' corner, and I snooped around there, and learned about things. Then I, between my first and second year at Oregon, I took another trip. That's when I went to the two world fairs, coast to coast. And by that time I had done enough research that I kind of knew where certain pieces of silver were. And I had agreed to do a historical overview of silver, of church silver. So I visited any number of rather well-known churches—Catholic and other Christian churches. I didn't do any synagogues. And I talked the people into letting me handle this stuff. I got interested in Liturgical Art Society. I don't know whether it's running any more. But I got to know those people.

RB: Well, did you stop by in New York on the bus?

AP: Yeah. Visited them. And I measured some church silver, I visited some places that actually built or repaired or plated church silver, and I got a pretty idea what it was, what it was all about. Or thought I did. And when I came back to the West Coast after the summer. . . . That's the summer I met my wife. I went back to Lillian Home, this children's camp, worked there I think two weeks maybe, and then continued my trip, and went back to the West Coast.

RB: Did you happen at that time to ever stop by and spend some time with some silversmiths?

AP: Yeah, as a matter of fact I did a lot of that. Whatever name I had I'd visit.

RB: Yeah. Do you remember some of them you went to see?

AP: I'd have to stretch my imagination to remember.

RB: Yeah.

AP: There was one who was well-known in Los Angeles. I visited him.

RB: Were these fellows. . . .

AP: My memory on names isn't what it ought to be, I'm afraid.

RB: Were they pretty innovative, or were they pretty traditional?

AP: No, I don't think so. The church silver business, I think that's one of the things that interested me: It was quite conservative. And I thought that it ought to be possible to do some interesting things.

RB: You mean you thought you could be. . . .

AP: Well, I wanted. . . .

RB: . . . .stand out by not being conservative?

AP: I don't know about being a standout, but I thought it would be a challenge to see what one could do.

RB: Okay.

AP: And so I learned a lot about the different types, the monstrance, the crosses, the. . . . I forget the things that you. . . . The missal stand and all the rest of it. And you'll see that later in my career this kind of knowledge came up again in several different ways. And so I went back, in a sense, with all the raw material to do a thesis, the historical part. And I wrote the thesis. I still have it, "The History of the Chalice," and so forth. I traced an awful lot of famous chalices on tracing paper and included them in my thesis. And then I, wherever I could figure out the construction methods, I put the construction analysis in the thesis.

RB: Hmm.

AP: Then when I went back, I think that fall, the first thing I did was design a chalice, and then I proceeded to build it. And it had enamel on it, and it was all silver, and. . . .

RB: Had you ever done anything that complicated?

AP: No, not really. I had made some small pieces at school in pewter, a salt and. . . . A sugar and creamer set.

RB: Which you had raised, or. . . .

AP: Well, the kind of knowledge I had at that time was not raising; there wasn't forging. These are things I taught myself later on. Mostly it was constructing things out of sheet metal, wrapping sheet metal and soldering it, and then reshaping it somehow. I learned to raise much later on.

RB: So you were not doing the traditional techniques, then. You were, just sort of ones you taught yourself.

AP: Yes. Oh, I was doing the technique that a lot of job shops were doing.

RB: Uh huh.

AP: That is to say job shops did not raise as much they tried to construct things out of sheet metal. In one case you can make whatever you can make out of paper—you can duplicate it in metal—in the other case you have to stretch and form the metal. And I hadn't been through that process yet. So mine was mostly sheet metal construction. Except for small parts. And I had a chalice that had a cone-shaped top, and it had a band around the top to reinforce it, and it had a stem which was like a cross in cross-section. . . .

RB: Um hmm.

AP: . . . and then a domed bottom, and then it had a sphere representing the earth. In the center the knob that you grip, you know, and then around it were four panels, one for each of the four Apostles. The thing was loaded with religious connotations and. . . . And I made a paten to go with it, you know, that sits on top. . . .

RB: Were you pretty pleased with the result?

AP: Not as pleased as I should be. It was a good piece of craftsmanship, but I think I fell out of love with the design a long time ago, a long time before I finished, and as a matter of fact, I've since destroyed the thing. I decided it wasn't worth keeping as a record. I have pictures of it, but it wasn't that, it just wasn't that good. It was, it was a kind of design I don't do anymore. That is to say, thought out on paper, and then doggedly forced into form, instead of growing out of process and so forth.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: But nevertheless I used it for my thesis. And Avakian was my advisor, but she knew much less about metalsmithing than I did, and all she did was sort of guide me as to making sure I'd get the thing done on time, and asking questions, and she was a very fine person. I had another man who taught a seminar, which was probably one of the important things I ever did and took, and that was a fellow, a landscape architect, named Fred Cuthbert, and he taught the graduate seminar for the college. So I was in a class with painters and sculptors and craftspeople and architects and planners and all the rest of it. And the particularly good thing about that class was that, perhaps in his infinite wisdom or out of laziness—I'll never know which—he let us decide what we were going to do. And we decided to pick a whole variety of fields in which we felt rather ignorant, and that would deal with the creative arts, and become knowledgeable in the talk, and so we took poetry and history and dance or ballet, and we took the whole group of subjects—jazz was one of them—and we ran the course ourselves during the year.

RB: Did you have other people come in to talk to you about some of those things?

AP: No, what we did, I think, was we'd take a subject. . . . If it was poetry. . . . It was all modern; we weren't going to deal with any history. So each of us would go out and try to find, by talking to people, what was considered to be the most exciting modern poetry. Who were the exciting people? Then we'd bring our contribution to class and read our poetry to one another, you know. And that was fun. I think I, I learned probably more about the arts in that one seminar than in any other course I ever took.

RB: There was a lot of discussion and argument?

AP: Yeah, yeah. It was fun. And then the painter Motherwell, Robert Motherwell. . . . I don't know whether you've heard of him, but he's a fairly well known guy.

RB: Oh, very well known now.

AP: Yeah. Well, he was, he had just come back from Europe then, and Lance Hart was the Swedish artist, and Bob Motherwell's parent or father was head of Wells Fargo Bank, or some such thing, and he was very wealthy,

and Lance Hart knew his father, so when Bob came back from Europe all fouled up one way or another, why he, they made arrangements for him to come to Oregon and sort of—what shall I say?—vegetate for a while while he got himself back together again.

RB: And he did. . . .

AP: He taught a course. I don't know what his problem was, but he was, at that point in time he was out of sorts and one thing or another. But he was quite well off and he taught a course. . . . I don't know what it was, whether it was another seminar or whatever it was, and he was about maybe five, ten years my senior, not much older than I was.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And I took the course and we discussed modern painting, primarily. And used to go over to his apartment and listen to classical music, and he had a whole ambience about him that was really kind of interesting. And I think I knew him, at that point in time—I haven't seen him since—but at that point in time we knew each other quite well.

RB: Was he a. . . .

AP: [So.]

RB: Was he someone that. . . . You got on well together right away?

AP: Quite well, and he was painting à la. . . . Not [Raoul] Dufy, he was painting sort of sunny scenes à la Impressionists on balconies overlooking the Riviera, you know.

RB: Uh huh.

AP: Color kind of things. Really, in retrospect, rather insignificant.

RB: And he was not [lost]. He wasn't painting the local scene or anything?

AP: No, no, he was just sort of living in this wonderful French period, I guess. And I had several pieces of his work. I have a whole trunk full of things that. . . . I used to exchange my work in metal or ceramics for artwork, and I had a whole bunch of stuff, and I lost the trunk somewhere along the way. . . .

RB: Okay.

AP: . . . in shifting from Oregon back east and then the war and so forth.

RB: But he was. . . . Was he fairly good as a teacher?

AP: Umm, he was provocative, you know. He argued well. He could use the language a hell of a lot better than I could, and he was probably deeper and more, much more intelligent that I was, so I thought it was good, whether he was a good teacher or not.

RB: Did you learn for the first time about contemporary, some contemporary work in Europe?

AP: Yeah. Mostly I think from that kind of contact.

RB: Yeah, and because you, at Carnegie you hadn't really and you'd only seen it at the show.

AP: No. Carnegie was quite stolid. So I think the modern stuff came from there. Probably. And yet that was more of a backwater community, if you know what I mean, than. . . .

RB: Sure. But maybe just his, his, an exceptional circumstance of his coming around.

AP: Well, yeah, perhaps.

RB: But he was just there for a year, your second year or so.

AP: I. . . . I can't remember whether it was the first year or the second year. It could have been the second year. Then I also got interested in Little Theater, because I'd been in theater before from high school, and there was the Eugene Little Theater Group. And I got very active in that. And I was sort of a stage manager and design director, and I did sets for, I forget, Three Men on the Horse, and not Tugboat Annie, but you know the story about Anna and the tugboat captain and the Swedish captain. . . . I've forgotten the name. But there were several plays that this charming little theater that they had sort of put together, and it was theater for the

community. So we did, I think, four productions a year, and I fell right into that and had a. . . .

RB: Hmm.

AP: It's amazing how many things I got into there. I was in that for two years.

RB: You used it for set design.

AP: Yeah. Set design. I think I did a few walk-ons, you know, where. . . .

RB: Uh huh. So did you sketch things out very much beforehand, when you did set design?

AP: Yeah, and then build them. I talked it over with the director who was there, whoever was directing the play, whether we wanted the ship profile on the left or the right. We had no money, you know. We'd build them out of cardboard, and wood that we scrounged, and canvas that we made flats with, and so forth. And I guess I was a willing worker, so that whether they were good or not. . . .

RB: Well, your course requirements, then, really weren't too severe, were they?

AP: Well, I think. . . . I can't remember precisely what I had, but I had the main thesis course, and then I had a couple of academics, and that must have been about all I had.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And. . . .

Tape 3, side A

AP: All the way through that, I paid for my keep by running the kiln, you know, keeping the kiln. Every time it was full I would fire it and glaze some of the stuff and so forth. So between that and the ceramic studio and the Little Theater group and some of this camping and outdoor stuff, I was pretty active for two years.

RB: [Sure.]

AP: I really flowered as far as learning a lot of stuff, you know. Then I got interested somehow. . . . An architect named Pietro Belluschi was, had come to—what was it? University of Washington, I think—and through some of the local architects I was, had a contact with him. He did our Unitarian Church here in town, as a matter of fact. Overviewed it, without my being involved. When he came to town I was on the board that was building the church. I was very surprised to find he still remembered me as a kind of a snotty college kid. But I did some designs for him, for sanctuary lights and things of that sort—sort of strange shapes on paper, and they were designed so that they could be made out of wood and metal, kind of arts and crafts stuff—for some of his churches in the Northwest.

RB: He was getting commissioned then, apparently for. . . .

AP: Yeah, and at that point in time I thought, "Well, maybe that's what I ought to be doing. I ought to sort of go into this custom building—not only ecclesiastical, but ceremonial wares and so forth—designing them and either building them myself or having them built, you know, and so forth.

RB: What was he like to work with?

AP: Very easy. I don't think I had any problems with it. I don't think he paid me more than just a token payment, but that wasn't important. The important thing was doing something.

RB: But you did your work apart from his office then?

AP: Oh, yeah, yeah. I'd get. . . .

RB: You'd just send everything up?

AP: I'd get an idea of what he was doing and. . . .

RB: And then you'd send it up to Washington to him?

AP: And then—yeah—provide a bunch of sketches for him, and he would decide what he wanted to use and use them or not use them. He may have paid me, but if he did it was sort of a token payment. I was too impressed, I think, with the idea of just doing it. Didn't, I don't think the money meant, at that point in time, it didn't mean anything to me.

RB: Did you yourself ever think of doing much in wood. Because he was doing, or designing quite often in wood.

AP: I never really liked working with wood. I. . . . Wood, it doesn't offer enough resistance. You know. And metal I think it was perfect for me as a material.

RB: You like that struggle, sort of extracting something from a very sturdy material.

AP: Yeah, I like to hit it as hard [as] I can and see what happens, you know. And wood requires a different kind of affection, actually. I think if had gone on, along that line, I would have probably ended up being very similar to the arts and crafts Scandinavians, who really—and even some of the Italians—who work out things by their hands or in their own shop, and then they find a manufacturer who will manufacture it, and it's customized and exhibited, and then they might sell it, you know, and so forth. I think I was on that track at the time, although I didn't know about the. . . . I don't know whether I knew about the Scandinavians at the time. I think I did. I had become familiar with Jensen's work particularly, and with the French office of Puiforcat, which really was very important to me a little later on in my life, and I think I had begun to learn about, about. . . .

RB: In metalwork, that was?

AP: Yeah, yeah. They, it's, they're the. . . . You know George Jensen's work; well, in Paris the Puiforcats were the equivalent of Jensen—and then some. And the son had become—young Puiforcat, Jean—had become—I think his name was Jean—had become interested in dynamic symmetry, Jay [Hambidge]'s dynamic symmetry, and he was designing very ultramodern French products using the rules of dynamic symmetry. And I got into that, you know, as a sort of a geometricity kind of thing, and I was using it in some of my own shapes, fussing with it, and I thought I had found, finally found the answer to good design, and I guess I was angry because we hadn't been taught this wonderful method in school. Since then I know better, but at the time I thought it was. . . . And Puiforcat was the one that was doing it, so I respected him.

RB: It seemed to work at that time for you?

AP: Yeah.

RB: It was a great, a great sense of order, and at the same time it was. . . .

AP: Yeah, it's realizing that there is an undercurrent of order that you can build on, see.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: It doesn't have to be completely intuitive, which is the way I sort of had been taught at Carnegie, but it's. . . . Only intuitive design counts, that you don't apply any intelligence to it. You just sort of feel your way to an answer, and if you're sensitive enough the answer is correct. Well, dynamic symmetry seemed to suggest that you can start out with the correct base and hope that somehow you'll turn it into art, you know. [chuckles] Almost like approaching the door from the other side.

RB: So after those two years you'd gone through a great deal of, a variety of activities.

AP: It was a good experience, excellent. Plus the fact that I really had matured. I was on my own, I was earning my own living, and I had made the transition away from public school, from home, and so forth.

RB: Yeah.

AP: At that time I still wasn't particularly interested, I don't believe, in becoming a university professor. It was just another way of expanding my own abilities.

RB: So when you finished it was 1941, your master's degree?

AP: Well, I finished in. . . . Actually I finished in. . . . That's right, '41, and at that time I think I and a lot of other young people were pretty well convinced that it was just a matter of days before war would start. So in my last spring semester, I began to take a course in aircraft metalwork that Boeing Company was offering right in Eugene in one of the high schools at night. And I thought that, "Well, if we're going to go to war, I really should do something that I'm better apted to do," so I decided I would, instead of going on to, going back east and trying to earn a living as a designer, craftsman, what have you, I would go to work at Boeing. So I took this trade course and learned how to handle aluminum in an aircraft way, with brakes and punch presses and so forth. I also learned template layout—how to lay out parts, how to allow for bend allowance and expansion and contraction, how to plot rivets and the transfer of loads, and all the rest of it. I learned to craft pretty well, and I fully intended, at the end of the summer, to go to Renton, to go to Boeing, and take a job. That was my whole ambition. And to become an aircraft metalworker, I guess. And in the process I became fascinated with aviation, and everything connected with it, and I thought there was nothing more elegant. . . .

RB: So yet another interest [that cropped up].

AP: . . . than the skeleton. . . . Yeah, my mother used to say I'm chasing all the rabbits and I won't catch any, and I think she's right, you know, in a way. So. . . . Then one day the—this was, must have been August—the person who was running the school called me and said that he had selected me to fill a government order for someone to teach aviation metalwork to aviation mechanics at an airforce base, Army Air Force base at that time. And therefore instead of going to Boeing he recommended that I go to this airforce base as a civilian employee to teach aircraft metalwork.

RB: So all this superseded your previous interest in ceramics or in. . . .

AP: Yeah.

RB: . . . metalworking. . . .

AP: Yeah. The war had started the. . . .

RB: Well, it started in the fall, only.

AP: That's right. It started. . . .

RB: December. Even before. . . .

AP: No, that was Pearl Harbor, but '39 the Germans had already marched into Poland and Europe was already burning.

RB: It was very much in the air and. . . .

AP: Europe was already burning and I was convinced, as I think most people were, that it's coming, you know.

RB: Yeah.

AP: So. . . . And he said, "This is what we'd like to have you do." And I asked him where the place was, and he said it was Chanute Field, Illinois, which was right outside of Champaign-Urbana, Rantoul, as a matter of fact. So in mid August, I think, I packed all my things and went to this Army Air Force base as a civil service employee to teach aviation metalwork. But it was a whole new world, you know, a whole new world of GI's and bureaucracy and everything that goes with it. And I rode a bus, and I think during the last leg there was another young man on the bus with me, and it turned out he was going to the same place, and he was going to teach navigation. He was an astro . . . astrologer, astrophysicist, or something in college. So we were both going, and we went to, got to Champaign-Urbana, and walked the streets, I think, in Urbana and found ourselves a room in just an ordinary house. And then we were commuting from there to Rantoul, which was about twenty miles away. And they were just cranking up. They were just turning this little base into a, an Air Force training ground.

RB: Umm.

AP: You know, they were bringing in, they were bringing in GI's from all over the place. And they were all GI's to be trained. No, as a matter of fact, some of the first people we had were cadre. These were sergeants and civilians. They were being trained to be teachers, not only there but at other bases.

RB: Huh.

AP: So the whole thing was gearing up, you know, for war just as fast as it could, and my specialty was sheet metal.

RB: And you were perfectly willing to go to Illinois after the, how much you'd loved the Northwest, with the coming of the war.

AP: Well, there didn't seem to be any place to go.

RB: Yeah.

AP: I mean. . . .

RB: And you wanted to be in the war effort.

AP: Yeah, actually I did.

RB: Did you change your mind from when you were back in Pittsburgh in the. . . .

AP: The civil thing. Well, I was caught up in the tide, I guess, that said that these guys had been doing some pretty evil things, and if somebody didn't stop them, they were going to take everybody over.

RB: Yeah.

AP: And, you know, the wars of drum were beating awful loud. [probably meant to say "drums of war?"—Trans.] Loudly. And somehow pacifism seemed like a very shallow reason for staying out, and I feel differently now than I did then, but. . . . I can't remember but I think the reports on the atrocities were all over the place, you know. The war for Britain was on, or whatever, and they were really massacring the world, or so it seemed. And every once in a while there's an old film on television that ends up with the American flag flying and the noble gesture of the planes fly off to certain destruction or to glory, you know, and I get these old twinges of having. . . . It looks, the propaganda looks so shallow now, and I remember tears in my eyes when I saw the planes fly off.

RB: It didn't take very much then, to set off your emotional state?

AP: Well, everybody was caught up in it. It was going to happen. So I was at Rantoul there, and as a matter of fact, I remember, I was. . . . They had three shifts going, you know, three eight-hour shifts, and I was on a shift that was starting, I think, at six in the morning till two in the afternoon or something like that. I was in the car with a bunch of other guys who had come in from all over the place, and we were on our way out to Chanute Field when we heard the radio announcement of Pearl Harbor. And that of course immediately changed . . . whatever; it was different; immediately changed it. And then we really started teaching. . . . As a matter of fact, I did a lot of work for them because the combination of my art education maybe and these other skills, I realized that the teaching materials that they were using were terrible. You had to teach people, let's say—kids, you know. I mean, farm kids and God knows where, you had to teach them how to handle sheet-metal machines. How to shear a piece of metal, how to use a box and pan brake, how to use beaters, how to use slip-roll formers, all those machines. And yet the illustrations that were in the handbooks were very, very bad illustrations, so they'd tell you to look at the control, and you couldn't even see the control. The photographs were so bad. The papers was fuzzy, the quality of illustrations was impossible.

RB: So you were able to upgrade those?

AP: So I, I redrew them. I drew a whole series of them, and as a matter of fact years later I found a manual and some of my drawings were still being used and they'd been. . . . The source of the drawings has long since been forgotten, but there's my drawing. There's my box and pan brake with the control showing, you know.

RB: So there were, there was a lot that needed to be improved when. . . .

AP: Yeah. And so we did that, and we invented some techniques, and we got rid of some old methods of teaching sheet-metal work that did not apply to aircraft metal work. They used to train them, sheet-metal workers like you train tinsmiths, to make oil cans and pans and things of that sort, of which there was really no need in the Air Force.

RB: It was [much different], wasn't it?

AP: Yeah. Sheet metal consisted of, aluminum sheet metal consisted essentially of very flat pieces with turned edges, designed in such a way that they wouldn't crack under stress, and we were teaching not only construction of aircraft but also battle-damage repair. So you had to teach, if you've got a certain stringer that braces the inside of a fuselage, and it carries a certain load, and it's severed, that load still has to continue past the point of severance on down or the plane will fail. So it takes a certain. . . . You figure that that's like water running through a beam, and you have to take that water by means of rivets and divert it into another section, and take it across the break, and then bring it back in again, and continue it. So plotting the rivets, and the distribution, and the patches, and all of that, was its own thing.

RB: Now these people weren't themselves going to build aircraft were they? Were they going to make [them]?

AP: No, but they had to know how, they had to know how an aircraft was built. . . .

RB: [Yeah, because. . . . Have to get. . . .]

AP: . . . because basically they were going to do field repairs and battle damages, see.

RB: Yeah.

AP: And they had to know how to modify an aircraft. . . . If suddenly you find you had to carry, let's say, a load that was twice as much as it was supposed to carry, then you'd have to figure out what kind of a platform to put it on that would carry the extra load.

RB: Weren't there some engineers from the aircraft industry that also came in on this, or was it mainly. . . .

AP: Umm. . . .

RB: They were too [much] [involved]. . . .

AP: Much later, when I went into officer training, there were, but at that point in time it was all rather, oh, sort of a show-and-tell business. You do it by certain rules of thumb, you know, and you accept rules of thumb. You could calculate the cross-sectional square inches of a particular member, and replace it by an equivalent cross-sectional square inches. You know what I mean? And so it would be relatively. . . . God knows. We just assumed it was relatively safe.

RB: So you were really. . . . It was an artisan job, really.

AP: At that point in time.

RB: Yeah, really.

AP: An extension of the traditional tinsmith's work—[oofers] and so forth—turned into aircraft metalwork, being used for repairs.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And then I was sent to a lot of places. I went to places where they made sheet metal parts for engines, and radiator tubes, and a lot of it. I got quite an engineering-related training.

RB: And you were. . . . Were you quite interested in that? Engineering?

AP: Well, in high school I had been good in math and things of that sort, so it really felt good to me. I had considered engineering in passing, so. . . . I liked materials. I liked the challenge of machines. I was an industrial designer but didn't know it, you know. All that fascinated me. And I did a good job. I ended up as head of one of the divisions. I ran my own courses and had other people working for me.
And then I think in the middle of. . . . We were supposed to get released. I was civil servant, and we were supposed to get released and sent off to officer's camp or military training and then go overseas, and that was all right with me. It didn't. . . . I expected it, you know. It was. . . .

RB: You mean they would, they'd need these, this training overseas as well?

AP: Yeah. And they also needed people in the field. They needed lots of people.

RB: There weren't enough of you, right?

AP: There weren't enough, no. I mean, we had these three big hangars [that] were full of shops, you know, going like mad, cranking out graduates. Every month I think there was another batch of them went out. And then they announced one day that they were going to send a group of us off to a university to train officers in aircraft servicing and aircraft maintenance. So suddenly I found myself, again as a civilian, shipped to Yale to run an officer's, not ROTC, but to run a training program to be part of a cadre for training program for Air Force engineering officers.

RB: Hmm.

AP: So it must have happened. . . . If I went there in the fall of '41, it must have been the winter of '42, then, that I went to Yale in the mid-winter.

RB: Why had they selected Yale, do you know?

AP: Well, I guess they were putting these programs in all these schools, and the Yalies as such were a pretty small group, you know, at that time. Most everybody was in the military.

RB: And you were trained to teach them. . . .

AP: Yeah, I went there with a group, and I was to head up the sheet metal or the aircraft metal repair group, or. . . . I forget what they called it.

RB: But this was. . . .

AP: Aircraft frame engineering, or something like that.

RB: This was to teach people who would supervise workshops later.

AP: Yeah, or who would supervise, well, field repair installations, officers.

RB: There wasn't, you didn't have an [stops] at Yale or anything?

AP: No, they took an armory—I think it was called, not [Coltart], but Colburn, or something like that—out on Whaley Avenue, just off Whaley Avenue. And they took that armory and turned that into the shop, so there was a group that dealt with engines, another group that dealt with propellers, another group electrical, hydraulics, and I. . . .

RB: The distinction between that and Chanute Field in Illinois was that here you were training officers to be supervisors?

AP: Right, right. Teaching them the principles, plus the engineering backup.

RB: Yeah.

AP: There you were training the artisans, the people who would do the work with their hands.

RB: Right. So at Yale you would have had engineers as well?

AP: Yeah, we had some engineers. We had quite a mixture of people, and many of them were already college graduates or at least college students that had enlisted and they were going to be used at a slightly different level.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: So. . . . We had quite a heavy program there, as I remember. And so I was at Yale I think probably about a year. And there again I joined a little theater group, combined with the Yale. . . . There was. . . . What did they call it? The New Haven Town Players, I think. And it was in New Haven Theater. I mean, excuse me, Yale University Theater Group plus a few citizens like myself, plus a few others, and we would put on plays, rehearse them, and then take them to the airfield, Chanute Field and other places, to the barracks, to the day rooms and put on plays for the GI's, you know. And it was a wacky time. It was really a lot of fun. And I can remember a few of the ones that we did and it was sort of our nighttime hobby, if you will.

RB: Huh.

AP: And during the day we ran this program and. . . .

RB: You had little time for any other social life, or anything.

AP: No, I think we had girlfriends. By that time B.J. and I were corresponding a lot, and I don't think I. . . . No, she came up to visit me once while I was still at Yale. And then I had an apartment.
I have, there were several other people there who were really perhaps more, better trained for this activity than I was. One of them had been supervisor of vocational education for the New York City technical high schools in metal. Another guy had had mechanical engineering somewhere. So they were. . . . I'm the only one that came out of the art, out of the art field. But we got along pretty well. These were the days of rationing, and we were real—what did they call them?—4-Fs, you know. We weren't draftable, we couldn't get released, and you just had to stay there and do your job.

RB: But you were in the military [now] by then, were you?

AP: No, I was still a civilian. I think also. . . . Somewhere along the line we got to flying as a civilian. Maybe it was still back at Illinois. They were already beginning to send back pilots that had served their missions, and they would come back, and they would get retrained as engineering officers, or ground officers. But they had to put in a certain amount of flying time a month in order to get their flight pay, so these guys would check out these trainers, these two-seat trainers, out of Chanute Field and go up to put in their time, and as soon as they got out of sight of the field they would dogfight. And I used to go up with them, and it was really exciting. I tried to be a flyer at one time, but I had very bad eyes and so forth, and there was no way, but I'd get up there with these guys, and they would lock wings, so much so that I'd be in the second seat, and the other guy's wingtip would be denting the metal right next to me, and then the guy would go like this [gesturing] and the two of them would flip upside down, peel off, and chase turkeys. This was funnier than hell. They'd go zooming over a field and all the turkeys would go crazily across the field and die against the fence, and then we'd all get reprimanded. And they'd go into spins. These guys were so hyped up, you know, they really were. They were just. . . . I think they were dying to die, you know.

RB: Hmm.

AP: And they did all these things with one another, and of course I loved it. Once I got over my sheer terror, you know, the first couple of times, they just couldn't do anything that would frighten me. I had a wonderful time flying with them. I didn't do any of that in Yale, however, because we had a very little training base, not a flying base.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And then one day I learned that—must have been '43 then, something like that—they announced that. . . . I'd learned that I was going to be released from my GI job, from my civilian job, and I had the option of enlisting or going back home and waiting to be drafted. That wasn't much of a choice. So. . . . It must have been '43. So I enlisted immediately and. . . . It had to be '44, because B.J. and I then decided to get married, and I got married, and we went. . . . This would be January '44. When did the war end, '45?

RB: '45.

AP: Yeah, January '44. And I was sent from Fort, from New Haven to Fort Devins for my GI training, but before I went we came up here, right up to Lake Placid, honeymooned at the Lake Placid Club, by somebody that we knew. And then I went back, and went into service. I spent my first night in service in the dead of winter, end of January, early February—it must have been early February—in civilian clothes, with my light shoes and light coat. . . . I, like all free citizens then, I thought wearing your own clothes was the most important in the world, and being in uniform was a terribly degrading experience. So the first night in Fort Devins I found myself pulling a plow, snowplow, shoulder plow, to the officers' quarters to clean the sidewalks for them. [laughs] And I became a buck private. And at that point in time it was still a general army. It wasn't anything. . . . And then I worked my way into a job as a runner for the dayroom, you know, so you could sit there next to a pot-bellied stove and keep warm, and then run pieces of paper around camp, which was. . . . You set new values on simple things in life in those environments, and so. . . .

RB: I doubt . . . you weren't then called upon to use your skills at all, were you?

AP: No, I was just a runner. And then not only that, I found it was great wearing a uniform. I didn't give a goddamn what happened to me.

RB: Huh.

AP: I just relaxed. They could fire me, they could do anything they wanted to. They couldn't hurt me. There was nothing degrading. You know, they'd get you up for KP, get pushed around by people who had far less education than you did. . . .

RB: Why do you suppose you took that route rather than in civilian life?

AP: [laughs]

RB: After the intense work you'd been doing and the skill you had _____?

AP: Yeah. I don't know. It was a different world, it was a different world. Then I got sent from there, however. . . . I finished my basic training at Fort Devins, and then I got assigned to the Air Forces, so I think the strings were working, because several of my colleagues that I knew as civilian employees were also dissipated, went to different parts of the country, and suddenly we showed up, in Miami Beach, in a hotel, as Air Force GI's. So whoever pulled the names from the hat had decided that these people with this background with this mix of experiences should go into the Air Forces. And we ended up in a ratty hotel, not one of the big ones, you know, running up and down the stairs, doing KP, marching out down the street to do drills and shoot guns and whatever else we had to do. And then I finished my basic training, but I hadn't been assigned to anything, and I thought, "Well, Jesus, what's going to happen now?" They started me through basic training a second time, and I soon learned that if I stayed in the hotel and came down the inner stairwell, I could, after the troops, the recruits marched off to their basic training field, I could slip out the fire escape door in trunks and go down to the beach and spend the day at the beach, so long as I got back in time for the final call. And I think they knew it; they just didn't give a damn, you know.

RB: Yeah, because there was no point in taking you through it a second time.

AP: Yeah, I mean, I was a damn nuisance by that time.

RB: Huh.

AP: So then, lo and behold, I got shipped back—oh, I've got to go—I got shipped back to Yale, this time as a

candidate. . . .

RB: Officer's candidate?

AP: Yeah, to go through my own course and become an engineering officer.

RB: Huh.

AP: [laughs]

TAPE-RECORDED INTERVIEW WITH ARTHUR PULOS
IN SYRACUSE, NEW YORK
DECEMBER 8, 1981
INTERVIEWER: ROBERT F. BROWN

AP: ARTHUR PULOS

RB: ROBERT BROWN

Tape 3, side A, continued (December 8, 1981, portion)

RB: December eighth. We're continuing interviews with Arthur Pulos in Syracuse, New York, Robert Brown the interviewer. We've been talking in some detail about your, the time in World War II. Could you perhaps begin today by summarizing your assessment of what it meant to you and to your subsequent career?

AP: [rifling through papers?] Well, I finished. . . . I'll just wrap up the remaining time at Yale quickly. I finished my cadet training at Yale. . . . I forgot what I said before, but at any rate, I was first a civilian instructor for the Air Forces, then some of us had been trying to get released, and finally I was released and then drafted almost immediately. B.J. and I were married in '44. And then I went down to Opa-locka, Florida, as a cadet trainee, first a GI trainee, then a cadet trainee. Now then as a GI Air Force trainee. And then up to Yale, where I was teaching as a buck private the same courses I taught before, and then I was sent from there to Texas, aviation cadet—this must all have been '43—or '44. And I was in Yale, I was in Texas, I think when VE Day came, when they. . . . Not when VE Day, but when they invaded Europe.

RB: Oh, when you, in Texas and those other places, could you apply any of your skills, or was that one of. . . .

AP: No, strictly aviation cadet. Although I was assigned to an engineering cadet. I was to do engineering, so the metalwork and knowledge I had came in handy. And then after service there, I was sent back up to Yale, and this time I was a cadet, aviation cadet. So I went, I covered every phase there. And I went through the program at Yale. And from there I was commissioned in. . . . My wife came up—I think I mentioned that earlier—and lived with me, and then I was commissioned I think in December of '44. All this happened in one year. Then sent back to Chanute Field where, right near Champaign-Urbana, where I had been a civilian instructor.

RB: Um hmm, right.

AP: And again I went back into the teaching program. And by that time it was VJ Day, and after the VJ celebration I was shipped abroad to be part of the occupation army.

RB: Where?

AP: In Europe.

RB: In Europe, huh.

AP: And I guess we all understand that we were going, most of us were going to go on to Japan.

RB: That was VE Day.

AP: I mean VE Day was in, at Illinois. . . .

RB: Then you went to Europe.

AP: Then after VJ Day. . . . What was VJ Day?

RB: Victory in Japan, in August.

AP: Well, that was after I came back from Europe.

RB: Well, you were just in Europe very briefly.

AP: I was in Europe, yeah, from the fall of ‘44 until VE Day, because I was back home by VJ Day.

RB: What did you do in Europe?

AP: Well, I was sent over there. . . . We landed at LeHavre and we rode a troop train with troops. I took a group, a squadron, or whatever you call them, of GIs with me. We went across Europe and we were the first group to go into a fighter, German fighter base, at Fürsten-Felbruck, which is still there, as a matter of fact. It’s used as an air base. And it was right next to Dachau, and Munich was all bombed. It was, you know, a lot of things out of tune at that point, particular time. Then from there I was shipped to England and was put to work helping close down air bases. This was after VJ Day.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And we closed down the base at Bovington, I remember, just outside of London, north of London. And from there I was sent back to Wiesbaden in Germany, which is just outside of Munich, and I was information education officer for the Air Force. . . . Well, one of the Air Force groups, I can’t remember [which].

RB: What did that mean?

AP: Well, it meant. . . . On one hand it meant taking care of GIs that were taking school courses and they were going to continue their education while they were in service overseas. These was a replacement. . . . This was not a replacement depot, but this a time when they were replacing the European soldiers with new recruits. And then I also conducted training programs for the Air Forces. Maybe it’s a program in new safety methods, or some kind of a program. And then I would put myself on orders with Air Force headquarters, and I would travel to Vienna or to different air bases around Europe.

RB: You could put yourself on orders?

AP: Well, I would write the orders for myself and then it would be passed up the line and the other officers above me would also put themselves on my orders, so the three of us would take off and go to Capri, for example.

RB: Oh, really.

AP: [chuckles] Well, but we were coordinating it. . . .

RB: So you were enjoying yourself.

AP: At that point in time I was. It was still fairly hazardous. There was a lot of. . . . The worst hazard was displaced people milling around, angry with the world and grabbing whatever they could get. And. . . . But I think I was in all the major cities. Then, in. . . . At that time, however, in. . . . The war was over, of course, so I went and saw the French silversmiths office, Puiforcat, in Paris, P-u-i-f-o-r-c-a-t, that I had been enamored of before because they used dynamic symmetry—the son, Jean Puiforcat had been using dynamic symmetry before the war as a mathematical method for developing proportions of modern silver. And I wanted very much to work with him. But the son was in Mexico, had left before the Germans invaded France. And he was in Mexico but the old man I believe was still alive, or I was talking to the man who founded the business, a wonderful silversmith, probably the best, the most dramatic in Paris. The French equivalent, let’s say, of George Jensen. And. . . . Not the most prosperous. Christophe would be the most prosperous. That would be like the Tiffany of France. But Puiforcat would be like the Jensen: very elegant, modern, as well as historic stuff.

RB: Hmm.

AP: And I kind of made a deal with the old man that he would take me in as an apprentice after the war if I came back, and so forth. I felt good about that. Then when I was in England, I visited—oh, I spent many free times that had—at the Victoria and Albert Museum, going through old silver and old metalwork and so forth.

RB: By then were you determined to a silversmith after the war?

AP: Apparently. I knew that I was going to concentrate on metalwork after the war. I did go up to Stoke on Trent and these, the pottery towns. . . .

RB: Um hmm, because you still had an interest in ceramics.

AP: Yeah. Generally I wanted to design and build prototypes of, for pottery for manufacture. I don’t think I was so interested at that point in time in doing it as art pottery. But I was very interested in applied metalwork and applied ceramics.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And then I got orders to come back, and I got back to the United States. . . . It must have been.—times get awkward now—but it must have been the summer, the late summer of. . . .

RB: 1945.

AP: . . . .’45, ‘45. At that point in time I still had a, the opportunity of going to Oregon as a junior instructor, teacher, because I had left my graduate work there. I think I mentioned that before.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And I had a chance to go out there. And then I also had a chance to go to University of Oklahoma, I think, or some place like that. Not the University, but Oklahoma Tech, one of the other schools. There was a job there. And then I also. . . . Ray Faulkner came through there, who was on his way from New York to Stanford, to run the art department. So he interviewed me at. . . . B.J. and I had a little bungalow. We had a son then, Christopher.

RB: Where were you then?

AP: In Champaign. . . .

RB: Oh, you were back in Illinois.

AP: Yeah, back in Illinois. Because when I went overseas I left B.J. and my son in Champaign-Urbana.

RB: Yes. Right.

AP: They kept this little bungalow that we had. And when I came back from overseas, well, we went on living there.

RB: And Faulkner talked with you . . . ?

AP: He came to visit me, and I was very anxious to go to the West Coast, because I had done graduate work in the area. However, there was no hope of a place to live. He himself had rented a hotel room for six months—had prerented a hotel room—so he’d have a place to live. And there was no promise. And I guess I chickened out. I decided that I just. . . . Well, I didn’t want to do it. So I went across the street, virtually—we lived about three blocks from the University of Illinois campus—went in and saw the dean of the college, Dean Rex Newcomb, who was really an architect—general historian, I guess he was. And he was delighted that I was interested in the job, because they were looking all over hell for teachers. So he took me over and introduced me to the head of the art department, the new head of the art department, a man named Frank Roos. Both men are since dead. And Frank Roos offered me a job on the spot as an instructor, so I. . . .

RB: Hmm, in what?

AP: Well, just an instructor in art. And I had. . . . I think the salary was something like twenty-five hundred dollars a year, which sounded glorious to me, because I remembered in my college days we said, the general feeling was if one could ever earn three thousand dollars a year that’s enough to have a house and a wife and car and a family. I don’t know where that sets today, but that was big money. So I felt pretty good about the twenty-five hundred dollars. I took the job and started almost immediately, so it must have been August when I got there. And I think the first year, first semester, I taught courses like general drawing, and perhaps a design course for freshman. I was just sort of filling in around the edges. But I think I was thrown right into the maw of education without much briefing. And I guess I rather enjoyed it. And the first, our first year there was a very lonely year, ‘46-’47, because it’s one of these towns that. . . . Well, maybe it’s true of all college towns. Everybody knows each other, and therefore they have all their own circles, and outsiders have to work their way in, you know.

RB: Yeah. Were your. . . . Was Roos a nice man to work with?

AP: Actually he turned out to be quite a difficult man, and even while I was an instructor I became part of the group that some people called The Assassins because we found out quite inadvertently from one another that he had been abusing the people. He would get you in his office, and then kind of upbraid you, you know. It was very hard on people. The man was intelligent. He wanted to do a good job. There was really. . . . He just had this personality problem. And I think after about the second or third year I was there he was dismissed or demoted, and they brought in a new man as head. Somewhere in between there I began teaching. I think first of all I began teaching a ceramic course as a general craft course. And helped to promote the development of a ceramic program. I can’t remember that they even had one before I was there. But they bought a small kiln, and then some equipment, and then I had a lot of students. And then I added a metal course. And so I taught one ceramic course and one metal course. And then I taught a course for occupational therapy, general crafts—

leatherwork, everything you can imagine.

RB: What was this for? Disabled veterans and. . . .

AP: Basically, and for nurses. Nurses had to take an occupational therapy course and. . . .

RB: Yeah.

AP: I think there was also specialists in O.T., as they called it in those times.

RB: And you were able to move from metals, ceramics, to leather, because you'd done a bit of all that at Pittsburgh and. . . .

AP: In a way, as an undergraduate.

RB: . . . Oregon as well.

AP: Yeah, and. . . . But there's no mystery to these crafts, and you can move from one to the other. So I sort of had the crafts program under my belt. There wasn't a major in it. It was just a crafts program. We didn't have majors in pottery or anything. Then I moved. . . . After the second or third year there, I began doing a lot. . . . I was doing some exhibiting: I was doing some big ceramic sculpture things, and sending them off to shows, and I think I began to get some recognition. There was some of my work that was illustrated and one thing or another. And then I started to do more metalwork. And, again, exhibiting, joining the local craft groups. And then I developed the idea of a sophomore course for industrial designers that would give them experience with material, with all the materials. Prior to that they could take a course in ceramics or a course in metalwork, but they couldn't take a course that was tuned to industrial designers.

Tape 3, side B

AP: This was similar to a course that I had taught at the University of Oregon, a general design course for undergraduates. So as it worked out, it became a requirement for second-year industrial designers. The remnants of it are still here at Syracuse. That sophomore work that's in the cabinets in our department really basically has its origins, a lot of it, in projects that I developed at Illinois, following projects that I developed at the University of Oregon. So there's a progression there.

RB: And you would take them their first or second year at Illinois?

AP: Second year. They'd take a foundation year, and then they'd get a course in which they became familiarized, familiar with machines and how things are made, and how form is determined by the tool that makes it. You know, sheet metal has to be [used] a certain way, castings used a certain way.

RB: Now this was, these were people that were mainly were going to be industrial. . . .

AP: They were going to major in industrial design.

RB: What had industrial design been at Illinois to that point?

AP: Well, they'd had a program there—I think since '48—and the program was headed originally by Hudson Royscher, who himself was a silversmith, and started the program in '48. And then he himself went to the West Coast to Chouinard and then another man named James Shipley, who was from Cleveland Institute of Art originally, and went to General Motors, and then he came down there to take over the program. During the war, he stayed out of the war, and sort of taught at school. And, but they hadn't done much in the area of crafts. It had been, I suppose, without really knowing, I think they concentrated primarily on the traditional way of doing design, doing paper design.

RB: Paper design, huh.

AP: Building models out of whatever materials were available.

RB: Did you see this as a weakness?

AP: Oh, yes. I think I was convinced that you can't design without actual direct experience in materials. And that was the whole idea.

RB: [Was] this accepted very readily by Shipley and the others?

AP: Apparently it was accepted. Well, not apparently; it was accepted. It was made a requirement in the

program, and so it's fair to say within two years or three years after I was there all sophomores in industrial design were taking the course. And the head of design now at Illinois and several other schools were students in my sophomore class.
And then we went up one more level and taught specialized courses. . . . I'd better not say this. I can't whether we did. . . . No, I think I didn't, but I continued to refine that sophomore course. And eventually. . . . We were not teaching. . . . I had, I brought in a couple other faculty members to help teach the crafts.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: Bacia Stepner and then, I forget, somebody else. His name will come to me in a minute. And they taught, one taught ceramics—after the other—and I guess I handled the metalsmithing course and the design course: design workshop we called it. So I became in effect, found a home with the industrial design faculty. And then had Jack Christian taught until last year—at San Jose, he taught. And then I was there. . . .

RB: Do you think it was partly because in place, whereas the crafts departments were just beginning, they were just adjunct to that department.

AP: Yes, probably.

RB: The circumstance at Illinois that. . . .

AP: Yeah. I think also my own interest had drifted away from doing just pottery and stuff. I [had] pretty much stopped doing pottery, and I began to take orders for metalsmithing and do work for people. I began to exhibit. And for, and my. . . .

RB: Were you becoming increasingly interested in, say, in metalsmithing or silversmithing as it could be applied in design. . . .

AP: Well, I had. . . .

RB: . . . to be applied in the industrial world?

AP: I guess there were two streams working. One was the stuff I did with my own hands. I set up a shop for myself; right next to the little bungalow that we lived, there was a garage, and then in the basement of the garage was a furnace that heated the whole group of bungalows, about eight of them. Above the garage there was a room; there used to be a little apartment up there. And I talked the landlord, a woman who owned the place, into letting me use that to set up a shop. I set up the shop for myself to do metalwork commissions, and in return for which I fired the furnace and kept the place warm, you know. And that was a good deal for them and a good deal for me. So I was running that little shop and. . . . So on one hand I was executing commissions for metalwork and designing the stuff, and on the other hand I was, had become increasingly interested in the theory and the philosophy of design for products. So I was running two streams, I think, at the same time.
In this old record [the papers he's searching through—Trans.] of mine, I also got involved in enamel. I think that was a result. . . . Oh, I know. Somewhere along the line I got invited. . . . How did that happen? Two or three things there that run together in my mind, but one of them. . . . I got invited. . . . I met Schmeekebier.

RB: Laurence Schmeck. . . ?

AP: Yes. Now I don't know how I met him, but I met him somehow. And he invited me to go to Cleveland to teach metalwork one summer. So I went to Cleveland with my family one summer and taught metalwork. Now I've got my dates screwed up. But somewhere along here also I was invited to go to Oregon also. I think that's a couple of years. . . . Not Oregon. I'm sorry. Denver, University of Denver, to teach crafts one summer. So you know how you do it. You rent your house to somebody and then you rent somebody else's house.
Oh, I know what happened. I exhibited some metalwork in a competition and I won a prize. As a result of that, I was invited to go to a silversmithing workshop that was being conducted at the Rhode Island School of Design by Handy & Harman.

RB: This was in the early fifties, probably.

AP: Yes. I guess that's about where that works.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And I went to that workshop and. . . .

RB: Was that quite a large thing?

AP: There were about fifteen smiths, and they brought a man named Eric Fleming—Baron Eric Fleming from

Sweden—over, and it was run by Margret Craver. I think we've talked about her.

RB: Hmm.

AP: And Margret Craver was working for Handy & Harman in development areas. She ran the program, he was a teacher, I was one of the students, and I learned forging from Baron Fleming at this school. We were using the excellent smithing facilities that were still in existence at the school then. The equipment must all be stored somewhere, but it was the best I've ever seen. So I got very interested in that, and I made a lot of friends in the sort of metalsmithing community.

RB: Um hmm. What was Fleming like as teacher?

AP: Uh, he was, he was good. He had. . . . I think he was a conservative, but let's say superb, craftsman. His thing is all in the sweet, somewhat sentimental Scandinavian style, but he was a court silversmith to the King and Queen of Denmark or something. . . . No, Sweden, I guess he was.
And I know the first piece that I made there, incidentally, was a kind of a standing cup, which was then exhibited afterwards around the country, along with the others, and subsequently purchased by the Newark Museum of Fine Arts. And I think my silver is there. And I was surprised to find out that later on my teacher in college, Peter Müller-Munk also, not only was a silversmith, but he had silver in the Newark Museum, so we're part of that permanent collection that's there.

RB: Hmm.

AP: Now it must have been as a result of that that I was invited to go to Cleveland. That's right, because I met Fred Miller, who was a silversmith from Cleveland.

RB: Well, some of these fellows were already into their careers, weren't they?

AP: Oh, yeah, yeah.

RB: Why would they come to such a workshop? Because this Fleming was deemed an even more advanced master?

AP: I suppose you could say that. For most of us it was a chance to get some training that we may have never had, you know. Maybe it was also just a lark. Two weeks off in the middle of the summer, or sort of all expenses paid, you know, and whatever it was.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: So it was really a good program. So I think that's what led to my being asked to go to Cleveland to teach the following summer. I'm pretty sure that was.
Then at that point I picked up knowledge of enameling. And I did a lot of experimental work with the students. I had a great program that summer. We were playing with various ways of making jewelry, you know, and we would pour molten metal into wax, and it would harden in the wax and create exotic shapes. Or we'd pour it and do one thing or another with it. And my wife still wears a pin that you'd think it was a heart that was carefully chiseled out and worked out, you know, but it's just a lump of silver that I cast, you know. So there's. . . .

RB: In Cleveland there were some prominent enamelists, I believe.

AP: Yeah, Ken Bates was there. He's top man. And he had just completed a book on enameling. And I picked up a lot from him. I can't remember off hand the names of the other. . . . Oh, Ed, Thelma. . . . Ed Winter and Thelma Winter, top notch people, beautiful people, and I got to know them very well. We communicated. . . . For the rest of their lives we were in correspondence with each other. And they were very. . . . In fact I went with Ed. He had one of the best deals going, that was. . . . Ferro Enamel, I think was a company in Cleveland, and Ed Winter. . . . They had to keep their kilns running all night, so he made a deal with the company to let him, them, him use their kilns at night. So he could buy big sheets of copper, you know, two- by three-foot panels, sprinkle enamel on them according to a design during the day, fire them at night, see, work on them the next day, to put on some more enamel. And he did a lot of ceremonial exhibit pieces.

RB: Hmm.

AP: I exchanged a lot of silver with the Cleveland artists, with painters and sculptors and, you know, enamelists. We had a. . . . The Cleveland group was probably one of the best groups in the country at that time.

RB: You mean the art community?

AP: The whole art community. They were. . . .

RB: To what could you attribute that, do you think, looking back?

AP: Somehow, I don't know what the magic is. . . . First of all, the May Show helped, but they in turn made the May Show.

RB: The May Show being the regional show. . . .

AP: The regional show.

RB: . . . at the museum.

AP: There was [a] competition between them, but not, let's say, of a vicious nature.

RB: You mean between what, the art schools?

AP: The artists.

RB: Oh.

AP: All, the entire art commission, art community. They, if you went into one artist's house, you would see examples. . . . It was like a museum or gallery of all of the other artists' work. So everybody was displaying everybody's work. Well, somehow this had a beneficial effect on the community, you know. Now you wouldn't see that here at Syracuse, and you don't normally see an artist with a room full of artwork by other artists.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And while they made noises at each other and competed, they were still very good friends. And Victor Schreckengost is one of the men who was in the forefront of that group. That's where I met Victor.

RB: Schreckengost, what was he then?

AP: Well, he was an industrial designer, one of the early industrial designers, I think from the mid thirties or late thirties. He was also a superb illustrator, [an, and] artist, and particularly he was well-known for his whimsical ceramic sculptures—like cartoons in ceramics. And they're beautiful pieces. He's as sensitive a man as I know actually. And a complete contradiction between his cartooning approach to ceramic sculpture and his almost crystalline approach to drawing. His things look like Feininger, Lionel Feininger drawings. Excellent man. He's someone that you should talk to, because he's quite well along.

RB: Hmm.

AP: He's sort of come back out of the seclusion the last few years, and we've running into him in shows all over the world. We saw him in Helsinki this summer. Then. . . .

RB: So you were. . . . What was it about enamel that attracted you at that time, do you think?

AP: Well, first of all, it was a lot of fun, you know. And it was a very hot craft at that time. Everybody was doing enameling, just like a year ago or so everybody was doing macramé. Then it fades. And you could buy the powdered enamel. I still have several hundred pounds, I think, of powdered enamels that I bought. And you could buy them, copper trays, and just sprinkle it on, put it in an oven, and fire it. So it was a quick and dirty and exciting way of doing things.
Then I think. . . . I guess it was because of a connection with Cleveland, that then I was invited the following summer to go to the University of Denver. And I went to Denver, to teach design and crafts, something in general. Vance Kirkland was head of the school there. And Vance I think was from Cleveland, so there was a connection. I think he recommended. . . . Schmeck must have, Schmeckebier must have recommended me to Vance. And. . . .

RB: What was Schmeckebier like to work with that summer? Was he around much then?

AP: Yes, he was a, say the sort of the great father figure for the artists. They all. . . . He treated them like his children.

RB: Though he couldn't have been much older, if any, than some of them.

AP: No, perhaps not. But he pushed them around a lot. His philosophy was "keep them hungry and they'll work hard," you know. "Don't get them a place to sit, and they won't loaf," you know. They resented him a little bit, but they depended on him, because this was a private school, the Cleveland Institute of Art, and they were all on an hourly salary more or less. I'd better not be too specific, but my impression was that you were paid for the

day that you worked, you know.

RB: Hmm, a wage.

AP: And artists trying to earn a living, it was awfully nice to have a couple days a week when you could teach, and I suppose at that point in time their independence was more important to them than security, so that didn't bother them, you know. So they hustled. I think he was good. He was a good catalyst.
[Interruption in taping, probably in response to the sound signal (a timer?) heard here—Trans.]

RB: He was. . . .

AP: Schmeck was a catalyst for the Cleveland art community. He kind of put things together, you know. He filled his home with Cleveland artwork. I mean he was very proud of it, you know. So I don't want to call him a bad man, you know. He was a very good man.

RB: He was a taskmaster, though?

AP: A taskmaster, and he knew how to handle artists. You know? And when I went out. . . .

RB: [Did he]. . . .

AP: Go ahead, please.

RB: Yeah. Their bill, their showing things in their house: Most communities you say artists are more jealous of each other and. . . .

AP: Tend to be.

RB: . . . bad mouth each other?

AP: And they don't exchange. I tried some exchanges when I first came here to Syracuse, and I did a couple of them, but the response I got from others, "Well, I have a gallery in New York. I'll have to talk to my gallery dealer." "My paintings sell for ten thousand dollars, and could you give me the equivalent value in silver?"

RB: Hmm.

AP: And so they had gone commercial, in a sense.

RB: Yeah.

AP: And I lost interest. I decided not to play the game. But to Cleveland, they just. . . .

RB: They were doing it out of friendship, huh.

AP: No argument. They just changed, you know.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: I got two or three excellent paintings from people, with no folderol and no fuss. Schmeckebier even and I exchanged. He gave me an ape that he called. . . . The head of an ape, which is really a rather horrid thing, but quaintly charming. Almost like folk art. He liked to sculpture. He cut it in walnut. So he gave me that and I made a free-form candy dish for him that kind of stands as a spider. It's a wild but really quite a modern thing, very unusual thing.

RB: And all of this was just one summer, teaching in Cleveland.

AP: Yeah, I had a. . . . Well, the exchange didn't happen one summer.

RB: Yeah, okay.

AP: That was later. But these experiences happened one summer.

RB: Well, you were, according to your record, a Ford Foundation fellow in '52 and '53.

AP: Yeah, so this was before that.

RB: So that was when you were. . . . Could you travel during that, or was this something that's a, take a year off.

AP: Well, I. . . . The Colorado experience must have been fifty. . . . Forty-nine, maybe. Just before that. And as a matter of fact, when I went out there, I invented an enameling kiln, which was really rather clever, in retrospect. To buy an enameling kiln in those days, you had to buy, maybe you had to pay fifty or a hundred to a hundred and fifty dollars, whatever it was, with a door and everything. So what I did is I found that I could buy a box of ordinary insulating bricks made of asbestos fiber, the kind you would put around the inside of a furnace.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And I found that if I stacked them right, I could stack them with one row of bricks making the hearth, standing on the long dimension on edge. . . .

RB: Yes.

AP: . . . making the hearth, two rows. And then I could stack others up the sides, and then bridge them across the top, and build the box. Then I found I could go to the, to a Sears Roebuck and buy the kind of coil, heating coil they used to have in ovens, for heating coils before these [Calrod] elements came in. And I would buy a length of that wire the equivalent to what you need for a 110 plug-in. And then I would just simply connect the wire to a 110 cord, one end, and the other end to the other end of the 110-volt cord. And I'd spread the spring and use bits of the same wire to push a clamp into the brick, to hold the wire up. So I would put that around the inside, and then I'd plug it in, and I'd have my furnace. And what I did is I had this class of about twelve people in Denver—twelve or fifteen people—and I bought, had them each buy a box of bricks, a piece of wire, and we all made our own furnaces, and within a week we were enameling. Well, that started an enameling craze in Denver, and people were working those kilns day and night, cranking out things. By the end of the summer I think we had a big sale, and they sold a bunch, you know, for a few bucks each.

RB: [chuckles] But there were no fires or anything.

AP: No fires. And it was a great experience. I got to know a lot of the Colorado people.

RB: What did you like about Colorado?

AP: Well, the things everybody likes about Colorado. The country, first of all. And every weekend—we had a second child by then, Maria, so it had to be '49 or so, '50 maybe—we would take off and go to a different part of Colorado, so through the summer I think we saw all of Colorado, virtually. We were there before the rush, so that they were still opening up settler's cabins, or miner's cabins, and we were in Cripple Creek once when they were opening a place right across the street from us, and we went over to snoop around, and they guy gave us a gold-mining pan that I still have. And that's a long story, but it's fascinating, the way these teams of professional people would get together, pool their resources, track down the ownership of a house, buy the house, you know, eventually work it out, open it, then they would sell everything that was in it. So they would, somebody would come in and make a bid on the clothing; they'd sell them the clothing. Someone else the furniture. . . .

RB: You mean these were all. . . . When Cripple Creek closed down, they just shut up houses.

AP: Yeah, all over that section. There were houses back in the woods and everywhere, and they were buying them. . . .

RB: And then selling the contents.

AP: . . . and selling the contents, and, you know, it was really quite a sport.

RB: Hmm.

AP: Also I went. . . . Come to think of it, that summer I went to Aspen. This was the. . . . It must have been either the, must have been the second Aspen [conference, Conference], maybe the first.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: I can't remember. I think it was the second, because the [Eero—Ed.] Saarinen Tent had just been put up. So that was my first exposure to design on the national scale.

RB: Hmm, and were these. . . . What kind of people were there? Very elegant international [figures]?

AP: They had to be. . . . Internationalism had not become terribly important yet, as I remember. It was mostly nationally known designers, let's say. And they had a heavy connection with Herbert Bayer. I remember we went to Herbert Bayer's house, and also had a party at Gary Cooper's house. There were all these people just beginning to recognize. . . . And Aspen itself was also just being opened. There had been very little new building, like you see now. There was certainly no honky-tonk. And I forget who we met. Oh, I met, I guess I met the

Paepkes there.

RB: Yeah, the patrons of the spot.

AP: Yes, right.

RB: Yeah. What were they like, do you remember?

AP: I was very enamored, you know. I mean they were real wealthy people that had all this money and everything, and I was just a poor little college teacher. So I don't remember much beyond my awe of them, you know. But I enjoyed that, and that did, that also helped form my own ideas about what I wanted to be as a designer and so forth.

RB: What were some of the things you learned, do you remember, at Aspen that year?

AP: Well, the obvious, that design was a lot bigger than I thought it was. That there were stars in that business that I didn't know about; I hadn't heard about them before, you know. And that the potential for design was enormous. That. . . . I remember Bayer, and feeling that. . . . They were very proud of some work he was doing for, I think a cosmetic company, promoting it as something great that had happened as a result of Aspen and so forth. And I remember being terribly unimpressed by what he was doing, and feeling that that European—if that's what it was—Bauhausian, I guess you'd say today, approach to commercial marketing was just not going to go in this country. I felt it was misdirected.

RB: Really.

AP: Yeah. It was a piece of artwork that he was creating, and no matter how talented it wouldn't touch anybody's button, in terms of. . . .

RB: Purchase?

AP: . . . in terms of desire or interest or anything. It was just a piece of artwork. It was too cold and unfeeling, in my opinion.

RB: But he didn't sense that?

AP: I doubt it. I doubt it. And I think he was into exhibits. You know, he was a wizard of an exhibitor. He came over to do the Bauhaus exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art in 1928, so this is ten or twelve years later. . . .

RB: It would have been twenty years.

AP: He had done a number of exhibits. He'd done an exhibit, Colorado Springs, on the West Coast, Northwest Indian people; it was really quite a dramatic hit. It's curious, because on exhibits he had a great sense of showmanship. On graphics, he was very formal, very. . . . Germanic, I guess. He invented a typeface, you know. He had certain clean sense of order in typefacing. But when you shifted it to commercial art, if I can use that word in almost a negative sense, he lost it. He could do exhibits, which in a sense is showmanship. He could do graphics as a kind of formal intellectual exercise. When you try to put the two together, he seemed to lose it. This was my feeling, although I respected the man, of course, and I still do.
And I. . . . Some other things happened in Cleveland that summer, in Colorado that summer that were very important to me, but I just can't recall them at the moment.
Anyhow, I went back to Illinois, and by this time I was getting pretty involved in design activities. I was going to meetings and participating. I had. . . . In fact, I don't know how this happened, but I was put on the second, a committee for the following year's Aspen Conference. I must have either spoken up at the meeting, or somebody recommended me, so sometime between that summer and the next spring, I went up to the Container Corporation several times. . . .

RB: Paepke's place.

AP: Hmm?

RB: Paepke's place, in Chicago.

AP: Paepke's place. Egbert Jacobsen was the director of design at that time. Bayer was sort of living in Colorado under Paepke's sponsorship. And Mrs. Paepke has some strong stories to tell about that whole experience of the Bauhaus coming. I talked to her at great length some time not so long ago, and it's not all as neat as it appears to be. Like a. . . .

RB: Oh, there were certain kind of maneuvers, I mean a little bit of manipulation?

AP: On both sides, you know, and it'd be nice to know that history. She said she would tell me all of it if I would call her up sometime, but I never have.

RB: Hmm.

AP: But nevertheless I went to the meetings at Container Corporation, where they were planning the next Aspen conference, and I guess that's where I met Dave Chapman for the first time, a Chicago pioneer industrial designer.

RB: And that had quite an effect on you?

AP: Yeah, this all. . . . Every one of these experiences was opening me up. I must have been like a sponge. It was opening me up very quickly.

RB: What was Aspen planning to do for the next year? Did you. . . .

AP: Well, I was disturbed because I had the impression originally. . . . I suspected first of all that it was a, the whole enterprise was intended to build up the holdings of the Paepkes and their friends in Aspen, and to generate the future of the Aspen ski runs. And then I found out later on. . . . Some of us hoped that they would have the next one on the East Coast, you know, up in Massachusetts somewhere, and then possibly go back to Aspen the following year. Well, it became pretty evident that they weren't going to go anywhere.
Oh, I remember also at that Aspen conference that Alexander Kostellow was there, who had been one of my teachers at Carnegie, and the lift had just opened. We were using it for summer tourists. They hadn't had a snowfall on it yet—I don't believe. And we went up, took a ride up to the top, and Kostellow and I, I guess, he being Persian and I being Greek, had a certain affinity for one another, whatever that means. Anyhow. . . . And I had worked for him when I was in college. He took me around the back and was telling me how unhappy he was with Pratt.

RB: Hmm.

AP: And that now that he'd begun to draw money from industry for projects in graduate work and research, the rest of the faculty was closing in on him, telling him he couldn't do this and couldn't do that. And he was about to leave. He was, he had already either looked or was going to look at an opening at the University of Washington, to take over and develop a design program. And I have a feeling this unhappiness that he had developed for his colleagues at Pratt led to his heart attack, which occurred I think within a year after that, whenever that was.

RB: Oh, did he die?

AP: Yeah. Which was a great tragedy, because I had a great deal of affection for the man. So, so many things happened to me at Aspen, and at, in connection with Denver that summer.

RB: So the, being involved and planning that next conference was a mixed blessing then, was it, because you saw. . . .

AP: I saw the. . . .

RB: . . . for some reason the Paepkes wanted to develop Aspen, and you felt perhaps they should be going to different places then.

AP: Yeah, I guess I was interested then as I am now in things being broader and being more international and not being so what I thought then was so blatantly self-serving. But perhaps they weren't, you know.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: I feel in retrospect that the dream has turned a little bit sour, you know. Aspen is still very popular. They fill it every summer. It's a hell of a tourist attraction, you know. But somehow it's fallen into a pattern that doesn't mean much to a lot of us anymore. Most of us don't go, you know.

RB: You mean. . . . You're talking about the conference itself.

AP: Yes, of course, of course.

RB: Hmm. But the Paepkes owned a lot of land there and were developing the whole community, right?

AP: I think they were. I don't know exactly how, but I think they had a heavy hand in it, you know.

RB: Yeah, yeah.

AP: And it was a pretty good deal.

RB: Well, you were mentioning earlier. . . . You had of course your artwork line. Now you're moving toward, into all these design circles.

AP: Right.

RB: What was the, was beginning to more and more attract you toward industrial design?

AP: Well, a couple of things. I think the. . . . I don't know. I guess I smelled the fact that in the United States there was no place for a good silversmith.

RB: Hmm.

AP: You know, that the companies. . . . I had made contacts at one time or another. I don't know what my. . . . I've lost my chronology here, but I won some prizes, one of them given by Towle, on silver, with a pattern called Concave, which was quite successful, and a year or two later they came out with a pattern called Contour, that smacked an awful lot of my design. I remember complaining to Schmeckebier, and he says, "Don't worry about it," he says, "Art, you own the well. You don't have to worry about what they do to your design." Well, I didn't like that particularly, and. . . .

RB: [chuckling] He said, "You own the well," but what good was it doing you?

AP: Well, he was treating me like an artist, you know, he said, "You can always paint another picture. Let them have it."

RB: Yeah. Umm, umm.

AP: I was in the, involved in international competition on that one, but that must have been a little bit later. That must have been '55, maybe, on that one.

RB: But you were beginning to sour a little on the. . . .

AP: Yeah, I was doing a lot of commissions. I was doing, oh, gosh, I must have been doing fifty, a hundred commissions a year, working in the shop.

RB: In Illinois, in this same time.

AP: All the time, cranking out something, you know. I did a set of pewter for a church, for a chapel in a church near campus, candle holders and a big bowl. They had to be sort of nondenominational. I did a big silver cross and candlesticks—quite modern—for another church. I think it was the First Presbyterian Church. I did sauce boats, and trophies, and flower bowls, and cigarette boxes, and. . . . A lot of people came and asked me to do things for them, so I was fairly busy doing it. I invented these sort of "Mobile Earrings," I called them, and I had all kinds of designs. I had somebody working for me. In fact, I had a young woman named Arlene Fisch, who was a graduate student at Illinois at the time, working in my shop, and I'd make patterns in wood of what I wanted, and she'd wrap the wire around them, and solder them and finish them. So I would make half a dozen sets of this and half a dozen sets of that, and then I was selling them in [Amberg-Hurst]. . . . Was it Amberg-Hurst or [Baldwin-Kingry]? Amberg-Hurst was California. I was selling them in shops. I was following the pattern of Ed and Thelma Winter, of Mike and somebody or other in Chicago, who made glass, small glasswares, by just taking sheets of glass and melting them down into a depression in a piece of fired pottery, that would make ashtrays and cigarette boxes and so forth.

RB: Um hmm, um hmm.

AP: And these were all craftsmen who were edging off into industry. There's a whole group of people like that, you know. Bennington Pottery is another one today.

RB: So they. . . . Were you, were others crying that you were a sellout to artists?

AP: Well, I was. . . .

RB: Because there was some tension at that time, wasn't there?

AP: Yes. Oh, yes.

RB: Are we artists, or are we mere craftsmen?

AP: Enormous tension. I became very active in the American Craftsman's Council—and again I don't remember the date—and was. . . .

RB: Well, you were a trustee. . . .

AP: What year?

RB: . . . in '55 to '57.

AP: All right, so that was about the time I left Illinois, you know. But I became very active. I was president, I think, of the Midwest Designer-Craftsmen. I went to the annual conferences that the American Craftsman's Council had. And I guess I was the one that was out of tune, because as I remember all of the others—the weavers and the potters and the, you know, the woodworkers and so forth—were all moving in the direction of being artists. They wanted to do unique, one-of-a-kind objects.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And they saw their products actually. . . . It happened first to the potters. But they saw their products primarily as an artform. That's what it was. The fact that it happened to be a vase was incidental, you know.

RB: Um hmm, um hmm.

AP: And I guess fundamentally I didn't. . . . Well, you might say I envied the fact that they were doing that. But it wasn't good enough for me. It wasn't enough for me. It was too self-indulgent. I felt that what we needed was better daily silver, we needed better furniture in our homes, we needed better pottery, you know.

RB: Yeah.

AP: That we abandoned pottery companies and simply tried to do all this other stuff, so the entire arts and crafts community, let's say, sort of left the applied arts and crafts behind and moved into art.

RB: Um hmm, with. . . .

AP: And some of them did it very successfully. Voulkos, Peter Voulkos. . . .

RB: Sure.

AP: . . . became a very, very good sculptor—basically, you know.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: Lenore Tawny, in fabrics, invented the whole idea of space weaving of fabric, so. . . .

RB: Um hmm.

AP: Arlene Fisch, my former student, developed body jewelry, and now she's internationally famous and quite well known in the area. So a number of them made the transition and became excellent artists. I couldn't. I just, it's not in my heart. Maybe I'm not enough of an artist. Besides, I had somewhat soured on doing silver for people. They, they'd bother me to try to fit what they liked or what the didn't like. . . .

RB: Yeah, accommodating yourself to their. . . .
[Interruption in taping; probably the end of the original tape side]

RB: Continuing the tape with Arthur Pulos, December 8, 1981.
[Another interruption in taping]

AP: . . . an idea of some of my activities, let's say about this time. So can I summarize this?

RB: Certainly, we're looking at what? Financial statements of. . . .

AP: Yeah, I have my annual records.

RB: This is mainly as it applies to your silverwork, not. . . .

AP: It applies to all of my activities, everything I was doing, at this particular time. And so I have a list of the items, what I called the items, who they were sold to, whether it was for an exchange, or whether it was a

straight sale. And I think after all, after working for an entire year, I made about five hundred and eighty dollars. Which is about what I charge for a day's consulting today. [laughter]

RB: Then. . . .

AP: Talk about a. . . . It was a lot of money for me.

RB: And they weren't paying. . . . But you were just saying before we stopped for a moment, that you were beginning to sour on working to order of a customer.

AP: Yes, I didn't think that I could continue long. I wasn't going to take the art route, and I wasn't going to continue to do custom work—on this, of this order—even though I liked doing it. I mean, I. . . . It. . . . I guess. . . . Ethically it didn't, it was bothering me. It too self-indulgent, you know. It was doing things I liked to do.

RB: That was bothering you.

AP: Yeah, in a way, I think.

RB: You weren't going along with your contemporaries—say those in the crafts council, or the ones that I think became the predominant element in the crafts.

AP: Yeah. It's possible that I wasn't good enough, you know, just fundamentally that I'm just not an artist, and that it wasn't important enough for me to do what I wanted to do and then just put it up, you know.

RB: What really was mattering to you was trying to produce better products or be instrumental in improving design for the general public?

AP: That's right. I guess that's. . . . I was, I had gotten a taste of industrial design, and I thought that was much more meaningful in our world. You have to remember also that this was during a period when there was a great rush in the United States to build homes, to buy cars, to have products. That people had money. This was the first decade, you know, in the first decade after the war, and the pipelines were far from filled, you know, so that the need seemed to be there. My own fam. . . . My own personal need, as well as my. . . .

RB: It was there? [chuckles]

AP: You know, I needed things. And design then was kind of important, in a, some excitement about a show at the Museum of Modern Art, modern furniture, Charlie Eames. I had gotten into something interesting at Illinois, too, and I was beginning to sell furniture. Don't ask me how I got into it.

RB: Your own make, the furniture you'd made.

AP: No, no, furniture for Knoll Associates.

RB: Oh.

AP: I was becoming an area representative for Knoll Associates. I started out by buying a couple of pieces for myself, and there was a good discount on it, so I could afford a nice piece for myself. But then I found that they also gave my name to others in the area who were interested, and they would come and I'd show them the catalogue and all the rest of it, so I was becoming a merchant of another type.
But I have here a list that's a, of one year, of stuff—I'm not going to read all of them—but they included mobile earrings, pendants, cufflinks, pins, bracelet, tieclip, wedding rings. . . . I was making wedding rings like mad for young people, obviously, who were being married. A serving set that. . . . I did salad servers and things of that sort. Cufflinks, earrings. First prize at the Wichita Art Association, for a set of long spoons that I called beverage spoons, and instead of iced tea spoons, you know, you could use them to stir a drink as well, made out of a piece of silver wire. And the man who gave the prize to me at Wichita—that was the biggest craft show in the country—was a man named Rudolf Brom. He was from Holland, and he bought the set for a museum in Holland, in Utrecht, where I presume they still are.

RB: Hmm.

AP: As a result of that, I got several orders for other sets, and I spent all my free time pounding out spoons. They were forged, you know, by hand.
I did a necklace with jade. I did a cigarette box. More earrings. White gold. Here's a set of beverage spoons for Brahm that I was mentioning. I did some repair work. I did a ceramic. . . . Oh, I did a big ceramic rooster for fun. It must have been about two feet in diameter, the body. It was a great big thing. And it was smashed in shipping, so all I got out of it was seventy-five dollars from Railway Express.

RB: Huh.

AP: Let's see if there's anything other than jewelry. But there must be about three hundred items on this list. At least there's three pages of them.

RB: This was for just one year, huh?

AP: About a hundred of them maybe. Um hmm. And there's some more spoons that I made for people.

RB: What year was this?

AP: 1950. And let's see if there's any trips. I joined a number of other associations. You know, AAUP [Association of American University Professors?—Trans.], College Art Association, New Orleans Art Association. I joined any group where there was a chance you could show work. I even joined the New York Society of Craftsmen, from Illinois, because they had an annual show in New York. So I guess I got heavily into shows.

RB: So in a sense there you were trying to be an artist, with a career as an artist?

AP: It seems like it, doesn't it? No, no, these were shows. . . . I was just making jewelry and showing it. Now. . . .

RB: Um hmm. And jewelry to you was a business, practically.

AP: Tended to be. Yes, I. . . . Well, you can see from the records I kept and so forth that I was treating each piece sort of serially. I would design the original, work it out. I would sketch it, just like an industrial designer, then I would make a prototype, and after I made the prototype, I would make some simple jigs to reproduce it, and then I'd either reproduce a number of them, or I'd have somebody else help me reproduce them. So I was already acting more like a manufacturing designer than anybody else.
I also realized that you can't do that for long. You can make half a dozen copies of something. You might make a dozen. After that, if you want to make any more, you'd better go into production. You'd better find manufacturers with casting equipment and turn it. . . . To sit there and make serial products by hand doesn't make any sense after a while. So I got out of that.
In '51, the same thing continues. There all sorts of orders here from different people. Let me see if there's anyone I knew.

RB: Was much of the work local? I mean, for people right there in Champaign-Urbana?

AP: Yes, and it shows. I just noticed to my surprise that a man who is now a very good friend of mine—Eugene Smith, the designer from Bath, Ohio, near Cleveland—bought some of my pieces, and he was only a name. He just bought it from a show, and I got the name.

RB: Hmm.

AP: So I was beginning to sell in these other shows, too. I'd sell a couple things here and there. . . .

Tape 4, side A (December 8, 1981, cont.)

AP: I was selling. . . . By 1951, I was selling furnishings for Herman Miller, for Knoll Associates, design places. . . .

RB: Were they. . . . Did you know much about them? Had you ever visited them?

AP: Well, they were in. . . . I hadn't. . . . Oh, I'd visited the showrooms, possibly in Chicago.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: But they were very much in design press. These were companies that really got going, at least in modern furniture. Herman Miller was an older company, but Knoll Associates, Hans Knoll, had got started just about that time. And they were in the air as modern shops, and these were the days when there were a lot of so-called contemporary shops around. In fact there was one remnant here when we first came, and it's gone. Well, they would be the equivalent of. . . . Not Cambridge Seven, but what was the one in. . . . Design something.

RB: Design Research.

AP: Okay. Well, that's an extension of the so-called Contemporary Shop, and of course that's failed; the one in Boston has failed. But they were design places where they would have nice modern things, and where you could show things and sell them on consignment. You just put them in there, and if they sold, you got a percentage.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: I also became active. I did some lecturing. I went to conferences, either on design or crafts. And my sales again that year included again almost the same list of things I had before. But I had a lot of fun. I named all these things. I had a pin called “Sea Beast,” you know, another one called “Scimitar.” Something called “Prairie Chickens.” “Bristles,” “Twists,” “Dragonflies.” I still have some of these samples that I made. They were. . . . The “Mobile Earrings” were particularly very handsome. They were very lively, you know.

RB: These were something you said you invented. They were. . . .

AP: I didn’t invent mobiles, certainly, but I invented a way of making earrings out of them so that they were always moving on a person’s ear.

RB: Hmm.

AP: They were really kind of nice, and. . . . In fact, a couple of years ago I took some sample pairs down to Mexico. I have a good Mexican friend and architect, who said he would find a Mexican to make them. And I thought, “Good, we’ll start making some of them in Mexico, and we’ll sell them at some exclusive shops, like the ones in Cancun, you know, and so forth.” Well, they made about a dozen samples for me, and they were so badly made that—they’re very delicate to balance and to make them work—that I decided I didn’t want to sell them, so I kept them all, got out of the business.
I’m looking for products that might be larger than the little things. Little things sold well. They were only ten dollars, fifteen, or twenty dollars, and I think even in those days they were cheap. I made ice tongs, did some enamels—a bunch of enamels. Did a lot of flatware: ladles, spoons, I did a bowl, made ashtrays, a relish dish, a children’s set. There’s the altar set. I sold some flatware at a Philadelphia Art Alliance. I was exhibiting. . . . I think I was exhibiting at every show that would let somebody like me show. So this was still, I was still at Illinois.

RB: Huh.

AP: Now this [list—Trans.] can go on, so maybe I’d better cut it a little short.

RB: Where are your. . . . You mentioned earlier you were developing a philosophy of design, or you were very. . . . At that time, what would you say it was? And you were eventually going to drop all this, too.

AP: Yes, um hmm. Well, I think I was being more intrigued. . . .
[Interruption in taping (to answer timer again?)]

AP: I had become more intrigued with manufacturing and selling and the industrial side. Of course this parallels my teaching experience, so they were going together.

RB: Yeah.

AP: And since. . . . When I made one pair, I would make another one, and in a way the time that it took me. . . . I was spending a lot of time on design, and I didn’t associate myself with the arts and craftsy group. I didn’t wear arts and craftsy clothes, I didn’t like the life, you know, and so I think I was more tuned to the drier business world, perhaps, although I didn’t think of myself as a businessman. And I just. . . . I don’t think I ever wore the arts and crafts clothing, you know, the rough handknit clothing and let my hair grow long and do all that. I didn’t fancy myself as one of that group. I didn’t think of myself. . . . We didn’t use the word “hippie” then, but I didn’t think of myself as belonging to that group.
We had built—my wife and I. . . . Well, we’d gotten to know an awful lot of people—you can see—by this time—on both sides—and had built quite a. . . . I think it’s fair to say we were well known. There were a lot of articles in Crafts Horizon magazines of the period. And American Artist. Not a lot, but I was in there quite a number of times, being involved in one thing or another.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: Either lectures or what have you. And I think when I started to go to the national American Craftsman’s Council meetings, my lectures, likely as not, was that the craftsmen had to become designers, and they had to get with it, and that everybody deserved good things, and that they shouldn’t be quite so self-indulgent.

RB: Do you recall what their response sometimes was to that?

AP: Yeah, not too favorable. I was leaving the fold, you know, and. . . .

RB: Did any craftsmen ever come up to you and discuss this at length?

AP: Yes. Yes, I had some discussions about why I was doing this, or what I was doing. I think Mrs. Webb and that group saw it as a kind of a, not a threat, but didn’t like that approach.
Another person who’s made the transition very well is Jack Lenor Larsen. I don’t know if you’ve collected him,

but he's a tremendous man. He's done it in his way much more successfully than I have, because he went straight into the business side of it, and held on to his sensitivity and craft. I don't think he would win many prizes for exciting weaving today, or anything; he's just straight businessman. But he's shrewd and sensitive and worked it out very well. So he and I, I think, went roughly parallel paths.

RB: Um hmm. Did you know him at that time?

AP: Yes, yes. Jack and I. . . . I think I knew the whole community of designer-craftsmen.

RB: But you and he would discuss this sort of thing in the fifties?

AP: I can't remember whether we discussed it. I think in a sense we were. . . . It's easy in retrospect to see what was happening, than it is to say I was very aware of it, and this is why I did everything.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: I think you just sort of reacted.

RB: Who were some of your close craftsman friends at that time, in the fifties?

AP: Well, Fred Miller of Cleveland I knew very well. I'll have to think a minute, because names tend to disa. . . .

RB: Did you. . . . Was Fred Miller quite outgoing? Was he. . . .

AP: No, he was a quiet kind of a type. [Wilts] Harrison was a very burly guy from El Paso. He was a strong guy. He was a very good friend of mine.

RB: He was what, a silversmith too?

AP: Yes. Voulkos I knew. We had some very good discussions with Voulkos along these lines.

RB: But he was going to go the artist route, right?

AP: That's right. He was already on his way.

RB: Hmm. Was he fairly self-promoting, or was he simply discovered, or. . . .

AP: Well, he was very. . . . He's a very interesting man. He told me once that he got into ceramics. . . . He used to go to a settlement house in Montana somewhere—I don't whether it was Butte or somewhere, where he was brought up—and learned to pot as a kid. And he would see these pots in the magazines, pictures of them, and he just assumed they were big, so. . . . And he's a burly guy. Arms like a stevedore. He thought that what you and I. . . . I remember we talked about the Charlie Binns famous cookie jar that's probably no more than ten inches high. Peter thought it was probably three feet high, so he set out to equal these people. So from illustrations he was trying to throw the biggest goddamn pots that he could throw, handling more clay than any human has to throw and putting both his long apelike arms inside and pulling up the clay. So the first three or four shows that he appeared, when these enormous pots showed up, he just took first prizes everywhere, and immediately demonstrated his mastery of the craft. Well, I think when he found out how easy it was to be number one, he began to think more like an artist, you know, see, and he started to chop the pot up and put them together into different shapes, and then went into more and more sculpture.

RB: Um hmm, um hmm.

AP: He's a good man. I had some very good times with these people. I have absolutely no regrets, and they taught me a lot, and perhaps in a way I taught them a lot.
I also spend more time on my design than I think some of these people did. A lot of it was—I'll call it empathic, like a pot tends to be done on the. . . . A pot tends to be done on the spur.

[End of tape 4, side A; side B is blank]
TAPE-RECORDED INTERVIEW WITH ARTHUR PULOS
IN SYRACUSE, NEW YORK
MAY 10, 1982
INTERVIEWER: ROBERT F. BROWN

AP: ARTHUR PULOS

RB: ROBERT BROWN

Tape 5, side A
[This tape side appears to have skipped at least some time in AP's life over the previous tape side—Trans.]

AP: They were. . . .

RB: . . . continuing a program, a broad program.

AP: That's right. Well, however, that group had decided that Dick Koontz would be the head of the department, and he was running the program. And at that point in time Schmeckebier was insisting that everyone in the school should have a common program, number one, and these fellows were insisting that the freshmen should have their own program. They wanted a program that included math and mechanical drawing and science in the freshman year. And Schmeckebier and these fellows could not agree. In addition to that Schmeckebier, who loves silversmithing, was trying to find a silversmith to bring here to open up the department of silver crafts. They had pottery and a little bit of metalwork that was being taught by one of the women that was here. But primarily the school was into ceramics. They had the annual ceramic shows that I used to send to, as I think I told you once, and won some prizes.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: I have records of that here.

RB: Yes, you did, yeah.

AP: Well, so Schmeckebier wanted to open up a silversmithing department. But he remembered me, and so he asked me to come up here [Syracuse University?—Ed.] and head up the silver department. I had in the meantime learned of Antonin Heythum's death and learned something about the program, and I think when I came up I came up with an interest not particularly in the silver department at all, but the possibility of taking over the industrial design program. I had grown enough in that field and had done enough work that I felt competent in the field. So it just so happened at that particular moment in time the entire department, faculty, in industrial design had resigned. All four of them had threatened the administration and said, "If you don't give us our, the kind of program we want, we will quit." Well, nobody threatens an administration, so the administration accepted their resignation. So suddenly like. . . .

RB: Schmeckebier was trying, had tried to curtail that program.

AP: Yeah. Well, he wanted it to be like the Cleveland Art School. A common program for the first two years, and two years of design.

RB: Yeah, yeah.

AP: And I came in in like June perhaps, May, June. The academic year at Illinois was is finished. And I think I was an associate professor at the time. And I came in told Schmeckebier that I was really less interested in the silver than I was in the industrial design program. Well, that got him immediately out of a dilemma. So he pushed through my appointment as head of the industrial design program. And then the following year he built up the silversmithing program, brought an excellent craftsman here, who's now since gone to the University of Washington.

RB: Who is that?

AP: Oh, I have to think of his name. John something . It'll come to me in a minute. A good craftsman. He did the chancellor's medal, you know, that he wears.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: Interestingly enough, the chalice that this university has was done by Hudson Royscher, the craftsman who went to Illinois before Shipley went to the West Coast. He went to teach at Chouinard. Well. . . . And Hudson Royscher and I competed to get the job for the chalice on campus, and they picked his design over mine, and to my undying regret, because I had some terrific ideas. But they were not in the tradition—the head on top and this. It was to be a staff of something or other.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: I have all the drawings. They were some lovely, lovely drawings. I still like them. I look at them once in a while and say, "Damn it," you know.

RB: But that was not to be your future.

AP: But that's right. That's right.

RB: And instead you were. . . .

AP: I was going to do it on commission, but I wanted to head up the department of design.

RB: And you were given, in effect had carte blanche.

AP: That's right, well. . . .

RB: Was this department under Schmeckebier as dean of. . . .

AP: Yes, he was director of the School of Art, and it wasn't a department. We had no departments then. It was a degree program, a degree program. Five-year program leading to the Bachelor of Industrial Design. See?

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And it was, the structure of the program was good. Illinois, for example, has still not achieved in twenty-five years that kind of a structure. And so it was well in advance of most of the schools. However, under Heythum, you know, the program was not developing really, despite what people think, may think. In other words, the students were not learning how to draw. They were being directed by shop men, industrial art types, you know. I have a whole collection of the drawings and things they left behind, and they're all on about the high school level. So nothing was happening, but they had developed a fierce allegiance to Heythum, you know, and wanted to make it work. Well, of the four. . . . The three left: Dick Koontz, Hart Keilor, and a second man left. A third man left. The fourth man stayed: Joe Kowalski. And he was sort of a shop man.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: He stayed, stayed for a year, and helped see me through the first year.

RB: You mean, he was a fabricator, or he was a _____?

AP: Yeah. You know, in industrial arts in high school days, where you learn how to make furniture on a bandsaw?

RB: Yeah.

AP: These were that type of a man.

RB: Uh huh.

AP: He knew equipment, he liked equipment, he liked materials, you know. But he was not terribly scholarly, you know. And I had nothing against the man. He was okay. He stayed on for a year, and then he left to join his cronies, and he went off to some place in Pennsylvania that makes, made at that time storm windows out of aluminum, and doors, you know, this kind of business.

RB: Yeah.

AP: And also, at the same year that I started, Schmeckebier hired another young man named Donald Waterman, who was a Cleveland graduate—since Schmeckebier was there—but had been working in Mexico for two or three years as a furniture designer, with his wife and baby. So Don Waterman came, and I came, and with Joe Kowalski we took over the program. But we were despised by the students. There were hate messages all over the place. I was threatened, at being a traitor for having come in. They wanted nobody to come in. They wanted to prove to the administration and the Schmeckebier that they were wrong, you know. The faculty that resigned had taken their case to the students, created an enormous local. . . .

RB: Resentment?

AP: . . . brouhaha, you know.

RB: What was. . . .

AP: One of the graduates in the area even sent his diploma back to the chancellor and told him to go to hell and things of that sort.

RB: What was the, do you think, the root of their beef, aside from personality, [apart, far] from. . . .

AP: Well, it was the fight between Schmeckebier, and the fact that the administration would not give—meaning Schmeckebier and the chancellor and so forth, Crawford and Tolley—would not let them set up their

independent freshman program. Now point of fact, with history, these people were right. They should have set up their own freshman program. We still do not have a freshman program that we control. Our freshman program is controlled by the artists because they're in the majority, and to them a freshman program consists of painting and drawing. There's no technology in the program. It's an extremely permissive program. That means that each person does anything they want to do, and a good percentage of the faculty are grad assistants who just came out of another school, and they're put in there to teach drawing, and if the guy doesn't like drawing, they paint. It he thinks they ought to work on their own, he says, "Just do whatever you want, and I'll see you at the end of the semester." So the freshman year here, for us, you could say is wasted. Except, however, in its defense I have to say that it does shake out the people a lot. Those who have no, nothing going for them themselves leave, you know, and those who are determined to be artists or to be designers will stick it out. So that's the best thing I can say for it.

RB: Really. You mean because those that are less talented despair, or if they're given too much freedom, or. . . .

AP: No, so many kids. . . . Our art education program in high school are really terribly weak, and most of them come in with art that they've been spoon fed. The teacher says, "Well, use this crayon and draw on this piece of brown paper. Draw your shoe." The kids draw the shoe.

RB: And they don't know what to do with the lack of supervision here.

AP: That's right. See, so everything is spoonfed, every assignment. They hand it to them plus the result. It's the traditional way, the worst way in the world to teach.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: Learn by imitation is a lousy way, I think, to teach creative people, you know.

RB: Um hmm. On the other hand. . . .

AP: You can teach mechanics that way.

RB: . . . if you'd had your, what you preferred during your years here, you would have taken them in hand that first year. Those who were going on to industrial design.

AP: Only in the sense that I would have started them on some of the skills that they need. In other words I would have taught them drafting, something about materials, something about science. I would have also kept the free-wheeling art courses, because you can't do one without the other.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: But this way, when we get them in, they have had the free-wheeling art, but I can't put them on a board for a year and doing anything serious. So we have to do experimental exercises with them to familiarize them with materials. In other words, I'm teaching, in a sense, the second year at Illinois in the second year here, when I could—because Illinois also had that first year of imitation program—where actually I could be teaching our people in the first year, and then we would be one year ahead in skills and attitudes and so forth. So we lose a year, and in effect what we have then is a full four-year program in industrial design, whereas Illinois has a full three-year program. Because they too lose the first year. See, where we're losing is relative, you know.

RB: But you, so you were never able to alter that freshman. . . .

AP: For a while we had it altered. For a while, Waterman and I and some others, we established an executive council in the School of Art. We changed the structure of the freshman program, had enough votes to change it. So it was beginning to do what we wanted to do. But then the artists sort of coalesced again.

RB: Why were they determined not to let you have your own program?

AP: Well, they want a common program in the freshman year, and if it's to be a common program they want it to be a common program for the fine artist.

RB: Why did they feel there must be a common program? Schmeckebier himself wanted that.

AP: Yeah, it's the tradition, you know: All freshmen in liberal arts take more or less the same pattern. All freshmen in science take the same pattern. And it's a bad tradition. I've been pushing for a two-track system here, without much success. And it's hard to break the hold of the fine artist at the university level at the schools—for a lot of very human reasons. An artist—a painter and sculptor and a printmaker—cannot go out of school and earn a living. Except in very rare cases. So they always say, "Well, do anything. Just be an artist. But do anything to stay alive. And if you make it, start to sell and get a gallery, then you'll be okay." Education,

however, is a perfect place for them. So these, the most talented artists at schools always look for an assistantship at some other school. It used to be, a degree. . . . To get a masters you went one year. You could take thirty credits in one year and get your masters. But that meant then that this talent that came in, you use them to teach. Well, that's cheap teaching. You pay a teacher, you pay an assistant professor, or something like that, $15,000, but you pay one of these kids $3,000, you know. And two of them make up one, so it costs the university $6,000. And they have no tenure or anything, but they like it because now they've moved it from thirty credits in one year. They said you can, you must take your thirty credits over two years. So now you get two years of teaching. . . . You see what I mean? That low cost. . . .

RB: Um hmm, you get them at that cheap price for two years.

AP: At the cheap price. But as far as the young artist is concerned, it's terrific. They've got a job for two years, that they couldn't possibly have anywhere else, and an opportunity to grow at the same time, see. So for them it's perfect. For the administration it's perfect.

RB: Because it's cheap.

AP: The person who suffers is the student.

RB: The freshman student.

AP: They're the one who gets cheated. Once in a while they get a rare person who's talented and empathic and a great teacher, but in most cases not. See, so these kids are not getting what they pay for. Now they've even changed it from thirty credits, they've changed it to sixty.

RB: Hmm.

AP: So now this graduate assistant can be here for four years, see, you know. And now they get four, they've got a job for four years, a chance to grow, and the university has a teacher who at least doesn't have to be reeducated each year. He's got four years, in a sense. So now there are far more of those. I cannot get a graduate in design to take a teaching assistantship.

RB: [Why?]

AP: It's impossible. They go to work. They can walk right out and earn fifteen, twenty, twenty-five thousand, and they don't need a temporary job to tide them over. What they need is experience. See, so it's impossible to get a designer.

RB: But the fine artist is another matter.

AP: God, they get a hundred and fifty, two hundred applications for a dozen openings a year.

RB: Sure.

AP: You know, stacked like this.

RB: Yeah.

AP: And they're delighted to come.

RB: Another thing, that freshman program probably is in a way more geared to the painting-sculpture-printmaking _____.

AP: Absolutely, absolutely.

RB: So in effect, they do get a foundation. . . .

AP: They get a great foundation.

RB: . . . that's fairly _____. . . .

AP: Right.

RB: Potentially it could work.

AP: Right.
[Interruption in taping]

RB: When you came then to Syracuse, what kind of a program did you plan? Did you work on this closely with Schmeckebier, or you were to bring in your [conceptions]?

AP: No, Schmeckebier didn't. . . . Maybe partly as a result of the protests, Schmeckebier had nothing to do with the program. In other words, the question of a common foundation year was retained, and I didn't argue with that.

RB: Okay. But you had them for four more years.

AP: Yeah, but we ran, I ran the whole four-year program, and so what I did, I kept the basic framework of Tony [Heythum's], but I made a slightly different division in the focal point for each year. The sophomore. . . .

RB: Could you describe that maybe?

AP: Yeah. The sophomore year, the second year, was devoted to design fundamentals and skills. And for us that meant. . . . Well, I invented a course. These again are extensions of my Illinois work. I invented a course called Machine Form, where we taught form—which still goes on now, and is taught to all our majors—we taught the shape of things. Not in terms of a sculptor taking a piece of clay and modeling it, you know, and creating a shape and then trying to duplicate it, but in terms of creating shapes only with machinery. In other words, put a piece of wood on the lathe and make a shape, you know. So that it's strictly a lathe-made shape. Do another one: Use a band saw, use a drill press, use a milling machine. So in the same time as they were learning to create an elegant form, they were also learning what the limits are of a machine. So they were using a machine that they had never used before, in many cases, to make a product. Not a product, but a piece of sculpture.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: So we created a lot of very handsome shapes directly out of the process. And that still goes on. And that's become a very important part of our learning.

RB: Maybe at this point, what was it in general, if you can generalize the background of these undergraduates.

AP: Umm. . . .

RB: Or was there any. . . . In terms of education and preparation.

AP: The majority of our students come from what I'll call the greater New York area. One third of our majors are from New York, one third from the peripheral states, and one third from around the country and abroad. I suppose that's probably true of every university. Our biggest draw is the New York City area, and this represents by and large a. . . . This is an expensive private university, so this represents by and large an educated, aware community of students, most of whom come from the professional worlds—of course some from medicine and science—but an awful lot of them from the business world. You know, from the children of Wall Street people, of merchants, of the theater, of people in architecture. So our draw brings in a group of kids who are already quite aware. Not. . . . Completely different from the University of Illinois kids. We had some Chicagoans, but we had an awful lot of students who were from farm families, by an large, and no matter how prosperous the farm, they were not necessarily culturally tuned.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: Well, a lot of these kids are, and even if they are there are some in the class who are not, they pick it up pretty quickly from their colleagues. So this gives us a better starting point. Some of them have art in high school; some don't. Art in public schools is the disaster, as far as I can see, and it doesn't matter to us. But they do have to show portfolio and show us their work. And then we also don't accept them automatically. At the end of their freshman year, they have to show us a portfolio in order to be admitted. So they could come to school to study industrial design, and not be admitted because their freshman work doesn't show the imagination—even though it's work that we would normally have given them—it doesn't show liveliness of imagination, dedication, spirit, so forth.

RB: And in a way that formless first year that you've criticized has its, the merit of sifting out those. . . .

AP: Yes. I think so.

RB: . . . show some spirit and _____.

AP: Right. That's why I said I can only be half critical of it, see.

RB: Yeah.

AP: And they work very hard to get into the program. We take about one out of three, so we'll get a hundred and fifty, hundred and sixty applicants. No, no, excuse me. Fifty or sixty applicants. And we'll take—in industrial design—we'll take twenty, see. So we get in a lot of problems with parents and so forth, but that's the only way we can do it. Our school is only a certain size. So our classes are quite select in that context.

RB: When you started there were only the two of you: Don Waterman. . . . Well, Kowalski for one year.

AP: Three of us. Now we have four, four of us, plus a couple grad assistants, that don't handle a class but support a teacher by gathering material and doing things. So. . . .

RB: Machine Form then was the basic _____, a very strong sophomore year course.

AP: Right. That we instituted. And there are other manifestations of it. For example, to teach them economy of means, I'll give them a piece of material, maybe foam core—this is paper with a foam center, cardboard—and have them make something out it without throwing anything away. So they have to cut and bend it, and not waste and material. Or we'll give them, on the basis, we'll give them a block of wood, and say "Using only the bandsaw, chop this up into pieces, so that every piece is just as elegant as every other piece." So they'll cut shapes so there's no waste, because that's economy of means. See, these are processes. But through the year, we spend one semester in what we call subtractive, or deformative, projects. Subtractive is when you cut something and throw it away; what's left is what you keep. Like a _____ sculptor in a stone is a subtractive artist, you know. Or a deformative process, where you deform something: bend a piece of metal. You deform it, but you don't throw anything away. And then. . . . And these are all "morphous" materials. That is to say, they all have a, they all have a recognized form before you start, as a piece of wood, a block of steel, that's an object. And at the end of that semester they've learned all about the basic machines that either deform or subtract material. In the second semester, we deal primarily with amorphous materials. Like clay, automotive clays, clay that's soft when it's a certain temperature and hard at others. Or plaster, or plastics, acrylic resins, and so forth. So one semester is hard materials; the second semester is soft material. By the end of the year they've gone through the whole spectrum of materials that they would use in products that they'll use to work with in models and so forth, and through all the machines. See, so in that context it's really a terrific program—for anybody for that matter.
They take another course in, we call it Drawing and Presentation, because communication is an important part of design. So communicating your ideas to others is important. You've got to learn to put ideas out quickly, you've got to learn to record your thoughts, you know. Be able to show them to others. You can't show somebody an object that's in your head. It's very difficult. So we use drawing. But there we have, again, an inventive approach to drawing. We don't teach drawing in a traditional art sense where you put up a model and draw it, or a still life, or a structured perspective, or anything of that. We do an awful lot. . . . We do empathic drawings, as, "We're going to draw bottles today. Your group is going to draw bottles for cosmetics, and your group is going to draw bottles for medicine, and your group is going to draw bottles for soap, or cleansers. Now draw freely, the way you feel about these things." And then we put them up and scramble them and say, "Now, pick out the ones that were for cosmetics. Pick out the forms that were for medicine." Because the drawing should have some meaning, see. If a kid can't put that idea across, he's not putting any empathy into his work, as we say. We do. . . .

RB: Then there's no models.

AP: No. Right out of their head.

RB: Their model is whatever they carry from their baggage from the past as a. . . .

AP: Yeah, we don't draw from any models.

RB: That's their model, is in their head.

AP: Then we also give them projects like, give an assignment in class: "Everybody draw a one-pound-of-butter carton. Just the volume." Then we put them up, you know. [grinning] And you never saw such. . . . In your mind you know exactly what a one-pound carton of butter looks like. You know exactly what a half gallon of milk looks like. A can of beans, you know. A bottle of beer. These are items, things we've seen all our life. And you put them up and you can't imagine how far off they are, you know.

RB: Hmm.

AP: And it shows that the connection between their fingertips and their mind hasn't been made yet. See what I mean?

RB: And yet it has been, if they're trying to express and [chase] the product that goes in something. To that. . . . That's a more general. . . .

AP: Well, one is empathic, see. . . .

RB: Okay.

AP: . . . and we don't care what the shape is or the size.

RB: Oh.

AP: The other one deals with a sense of scale and a sense. . . .

RB: And memory.

AP: . . . and memory for form, see. And then. . . . Of course even if the draw the volume perfectly, there's a relationship between the size of the paper and the object. If you draw a pound of butter this size on a little piece of paper, it'll look like a building. If you draw it this size on a great big piece of paper, it'll look like a toy block.

RB: [chuckles]

AP: So there's a definite psychological relationship between the size of the object and the size of the paper. And a point of view. If you draw a pound of butter from a worm's-eye view, from down here, it'll look like a building. See what I mean? If you draw it as if you were a mile in the air, it'll look like something that fell on the floor. You tend to see objects from wherever your eye level is. You see things on tables or on floors, as so far away from you. Also the rate of perspective as an object gets close to you, perspective gets distorted all the more. As an object approaches a horizon it flattens out. Well, I see this tape recorder normally at two to three feet away from me. If I draw the perspective flat, it'll look like it's far away and therefore bigger. Do you understand?

RB: Um hmm.

AP: So you learn to locate things in space on the basis of how far they are away from you, and to a relative size in their relationship to a piece of paper. Now that's communication. And it's. . . . I don't want to say it's an artform because it's really more communication than art. So they drill in this, see. So we're drilling one semester on that, and the next semester we drill them in color, in texture, and under lighting conditions. "Draw something. . . ." Like one of the last assignments that Proko gave was delightful. He said, "Think of an insect." Say, "Okay, I've got an insect." "So what have you got? You've got a bee. And what have you got?" "I've got a. . . ." this and that. "All right, now I want that object to be transformed into a mechanical construction that is floating in space under moonlight." So what was a praying mantra [sic, probably means "praying mantis"—Trans.] suddenly turns out into a robot, you know, with mechanism, and you have to light it as if you had the light of the moon on it. And we got some beautiful things, you know, lovely things. And it's fun.

RB: Sure.

AP: See, it's just fun to do it, and we'd put them all up. By the end of the year they're drawing like fiends, you know.
Then we have another course called Technological Principles of Design, when technology enters in. They work one semester on statics, the next semester on dynamics. Static things, like a piece of furniture is static, you know, an automobile is dynamic, let's say, a gear. And we invent projects that will make them interesting. We'll do a. . . . For statics we'll give them straws and tell them to build the highest structure they can that'll hold a pail of water, out of straws. And we give fifty percent of their grade for the height of the structure, and the other fifty as to whether it holds the pail of water. Well, you know, you can lay them all flat on the floor and it'll hold a pail of water, so that's not a problem. The question is can you stand the straws on end and hold the pail of water. And of course we get things that are five feet tall, beautifully. . . . And they have to be constructed logically. They can't just pour a lot of glue on them. In other words, how do you put two straws together at a right angle? See. And how do you bend them, what happens to them? So this is learning structure, static. And then we have a real of fun. We take this bucket of water, set it on top of each one. The kids all shake and we go like this, and once in a while we'll throw water across the room, you know. [gesturing, probably to indicate putting the structures through a stiffer test than necessary, just to tease—Trans.]

RB: [laughs]

AP: These are the sort of things. Or we give them mechanisms, like, "I want you to take a Ping-Pong ball and put it on a structure that's attached to the wall, and let it go, and I want the Ping-Pong ball to hit the floor exactly one minute after you let go of it. So they make tracks, you know, on the wall: places to stop, things to do, and so forth. And the Ping-Pong ball is working its way through these little contraptions, and we're watching the watch, you know. Hit's the floor and we time it, see. We build kites. We do all sorts of things. Build clockworks, mechanisms of various kinds. And it makes an art, in a sense, out of science. Teaches them technology at the same time.

One year we had wonderful projects. We had them make a racing vehicle that operated with a mousetrap, using the spring on a mousetrap to release something. And they had to make gears that would transpose the very slow release of this to high speed to have a race. And then we made a motion picture of these things moving across the gym floor up there. And they moved. . . . Did you see Star Wars, any one of them?

RB: Um hmm.

AP: Remember these big vehicles that moved through space?

RB: Um hmm.

AP: In the movie. . . . They looked just that. Great big things you've never seen before, inching their way along, you know, while the wheels are whirling, going like mad, you know. That was fun.
So that's a whole year of technology, communication, and form.

RB: Now are they taking science courses alongside of this?

AP: They have to take. . . . Well, in addition to that, they have to take nine credits—three courses—in the sciences, physical sciences, three courses in the behavioral sciences—sociology, psychology, and so forth—and nine credits in the humanities—literature, poetry, philosophy, history and so forth. So this balances out their program.

RB: Does that work out fairly effectively, those courses outside your area?

AP: We think it's good. I'm a great believer in it, as a matter of fact. So. . . . It's a university, not a trade school. You're going to be an educated man or woman, not just a mechanic, and if you're not interested in literature and history, I don't want you. If you have no sense of form, I don't want you. If you've never made anything before, I don't want you. If you're complacent, I don't want you. All we want are unhappy people that have always been trying to make things.
And they get into the spirit of it, really, and they have a hell of a lot of fun. I wish I could show you some of the stuff that they've done.
Oh, good, just happen to have some right here. The top is a little nomobile we do with rubber bands. There's a tensegrity structure here. A sophomore clock, a fifth-year taxicab, some other projects. You can't tell much about them, but the student just brought in a set of slides to give me. And they also, along with the process, they all take photography. They learn to light their own pictures and to take them, and it's to try to do a good professional job out of them.

RB: And by getting into these very basic things. . . .

AP: That's the second year, yeah.

RB: . . . they're able when they're given, eventually. . . .

AP: Assignment, right.

RB: . . . when they have a client, they'll know enough of. . . .

AP: Well, we never repeat a project, see, so we might repeat the principles, but each year the faculty has to reinvent a way of teaching mechanisms or a way of teaching form, a way of teaching economy of means, or a way of teaching how to use plaster. So the risk of failure is just as much on the back of the teacher as it is the student. And once in a while we all blow a product wide open, you know. The mask that's here was a mask for a future game, made out of fiberglass in the materials course.
So that's a long discussion, but that's one year, see.

RB: Huh. This opens, loosens them up, doesn't it?

AP: That's the idea, see. In that respect it borrows from the first Bauhaus, which said we have to reinvent what we're doing. They can't find examples of this in a book. They can't go anywhere for guidance. There's only one place they're going to get it, and that's out of their own mind. Outside of that it just simply does not exist. That's the reason for that.
That's a unique program. We've been copied an awful lot around the world, and, what's more, the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design established minimums for design education as a result of a seminar I had here one summer, up in the Adirondacks with a group of educators from around the world. And we established international minimums for industrial design, that are basically based on this program, plus that of two or three others who came. In other words, we made a consensus. So that today, if you're going to be an industrial designer, half of your credits have to be in what we call "formation"—how to make things, building things—one fourth in information—just the acquisition of information—and one fourth in communication—how to

photograph, how to make sculpture, how to draw, and so forth. And that's the acceptable minimums for design education. And our own society has accepted them for schools in the United States. So we've had quite an influence in the American system of education.

RB: The information course, information gathering, is that something they learn after their sophomore year?

AP: No, they're taking it right along with it.

RB: How?

AP: They take a couple of electives a year. They have three courses in their major. That's three, six, nine credits. And they have two other courses in peripheral areas: marketing. . . . They have to take marketing, they take economics, they take psychology, and then they take science courses and history, so they add other courses.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And in the upper division they also take, I mean, with me. . . .
[Interruption in taping]

AP: . . . take these outside courses and build them up as they're going along, you see.

RB: In their memory, in their repertory.

AP: Yeah, right.

RB: But this, it also teaches them how to go for information in. . . .
[Interruption in taping; in the following section a steady low-pitched knocking or bumping is heard throughout the conversation.]

AP: . . . take these outside courses to add to their knowledge, and they build them up as they go along, by the time they finish. In the last year they take a course in philosophy and history from me for one semester, and then a business practices course. So our sophomore year, as I said, is mostly theory and experience with materials and machinery, you know, and skills.
The third year is devoted to the relationship between the man, a human being, and a product. Entirely. We don't care about marketing. We don't really care, necessarily, how it's made, as a major course in design, but how do people feel about things. How do you sit on a chair, how do you grip something, you know, how do you hold something, what do you see when you see? A whole human engineering ergonomic relationship. We talk about anthropometry, static anthropometry, and that is, it's what we're involved in right now: sitting. Dynamic anthropometry: the motions you go through when you go in and out of a car, or shave, or do anything. And ergonomics, a study of work. Is it better to push than it is to pull? Which way should you turn? You know, the whole idea of how people interact with products. And through the year we do simple exercises that familiarize them with these things.

RB: Do they build things, or just. . . .

AP: Yeah. They make handles. . . . We'll give them a problem: Do a handle for a hammer, do a lever to do this product, you know. The little clock that you saw would be project: How far can we see something? How big should the numbers be? What's the logical angle, you know, so forth. They might do a dashboard for an automobile or, better still, they might do a control station, or a keyboard for somebody on a computer, or something like that. So it's all man-object relationship through that whole year.
With that they take a, they begin a course in materials and methods. They study. . . . I think the first semester they study metals—the manufacturing processes of metals. What is a metal? How do you manufacture it, and what's die-casting, what's gravity-casting, what's extruding, you know, what's forging, stamping. So they have a text. They visit plants. We design, they design objects. They might do a knob for a door. But they have to make the original pattern, they make the match plates, they go to a local foundry, and cast their object and finish it to look like the real thing. But it's usually knobs and doorstops, nutcrackers, and things that you can really relate to directly. So they see an object that they have conceived end up as a final product, and then they can relate to it like any citizen relates to a product. We don't worry much about its salability, or its costs, or anything. We just worry about can you make it? Does it fit a human being? Is it right aesthetically and physically and so forth.

RB: So you carry them a bit beyond that sophomore year

AP: That's right.

RB: . . . when they first explore materials and [basic]. . . .

AP: This is mostly applied stuff. We've done things like. . . . If you only have one arm, one hand, how do you

crack an egg? Develop a gadget to crack an egg. You know. If you have an arthritic hand. . . . One year we had them all working with some arthritic people, and they took plaster casts, and then designed a pen that you could hold if your hand is crippled. You know, if you've got a hand like this [demonstrates—Trans.], how can you write to somebody, you know. Well, now the nurses strap on pens, you know. Well, we made little gliders that you could slip a pen into and write with, see. So we'd do things like that. A lot of prosthetic devices. It's easy—because you're dealing with man-machine—it's easy to do that sort of thing.

RB: And those are extreme cases, of course.

AP: Of course.

RB: But then they're also learning how to do it with. . . . They're beginning to learn the best contour for a handle for a fork. . . .

AP: For normal, for anybody.

RB: . . . as opposed to a spoon.

AP: Sure, sure. And we do a lot of this kind of stuff.

RB: You're refining from what they learned the previous year.

AP: Yeah. Taking the abstraction and transforming it into a problem.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: If they're doing a door handle, I don't want to talk about economy of means. They know they shouldn't waste any material, you know, see. . . . They know they should make it directly. They know what they can make it out of.
And we also. . . . Well, then we have the materials and processes courses. And we have a course in graphics. We're introducing a new major slowly, but now we have a course in communication graphically: signage. See, how do you say toilet so that anybody in any part of the world knows what it is? You know, without English, see. We've been entering an annual competition each year for, with a company that does, puts out guidance posters for public schools and so forth. You know, want to be an aviation mechanic, or a nurse, or a plumber, an oil well digger, whatever, and these become great exercises for us to do a poster on. We did one this year. . . . New choking posters. We made a study of the choking poster that says you. . . . You know, this method for helping people?

RB: Um hmm, um hmm.

AP: Well, they're very bad posters, awfully difficult to read, and if you're in serious trouble you could die before. . . .

RB: . . . you've read them.

AP: A person could die before you could understand the poster, so we said, "Make it communicate." See, so this gets them thinking. You know, things like that. Graphics, symbolism, labels, packages. We'll give them a package, like we'll do a. . . . Going back to the drawing [sketch] the following year, do a package for one quart of cleanser. Got to hold exactly one quart. Easy to handle. It's got to stand out on the shelf with all the others, and be effective. . . . But particularly: easy to handle and look like a cleanser package. So they all go out and bring in what the packages they think are most significant, whether they're cleanser packages or not. Then we analyze them as to which is most appropriate and which isn't. Then they use that as a base and develop their own package, see—their own container, rather. Then they make a model, and then we immerse them. They make a mark as to where it should hold one quart, then we immerse it in a flask of water to see if it displaces one quart of liquid. And it's graded, things like that.

RB: Hmm. That's all in the third year, the second year of the design program.

AP: Third year, second year of our design program.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: Fourth year is all the relationship between a product and its industry, and the public, and the company. So that's all. . . . Has to do. . . . I mean, obviously it still has to do with theory; it still has to do with people. But we will study a company like, let's say, Sunbeam, as a company, and they'll get to know the company, the markets that they're in, what people think about the company, what do you expect from them. And then we'll say, "All right, that company is going to manufacture a celery chopper," you know, "which nobody's ever seen. It's okay.

It's got to chop celery. But it's got to look like it was made by Sunbeam." So they start to invent the product, you know, and make it look like Sunbeam. Or we'll take a product and say, "This product is now made by Skil Tool, like a hand drill. It's going to be private branded by Sears and Roebuck. We want you to modify the form so that it fits the Sears and Roebuck philosophy of merchandizing." So they end up. . . . They do analyses of the volume of a market, and how much distribution is, and where it goes. What is the trend of the field? What's the public expect? What would you look for if you were buying a celery chopper, you know. And then we come up. . . . The vacuum cleaner here, this carry-around vacuum cleaner, was a fourth-year project, came out of that [class].

RB: Plus you have, you've gotten the material from that company, so you know what their image is.

AP: Yeah, very often. Well, they go out and get it. We're also. . . . For example, we just did walkie-talkies, and General Electric gave each of the kids the guts of a walkie-talkie set, and they put a new shell on it. And it had to fit a certain price level in the G.E. line, because General Electric produces, does a line basis, and they're run by marketing. Some companies, the design is run by engineers, and it's a different game. So they do that, see. And that's a big course.

RB: And they learn that certain companies are salesman-led, and others are more technical staff, machine people. . . .

AP: Right, right. And some companies are very liberal, some companies are conservative. Some companies have a certain posture. The student might along and say, "Well, I'm going to change the public impression of a company with a product." He may work on that, and then we evaluate it according to the brief that they draw. So we have that course. . . .

RB: You mean brief that the company has drawn up, or that they, the student?

AP: We draw up on the basis of our interpretation.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: We invite companies in, but it's always a touchy game, you know, a little bit.
Tape 5, side B
[There's quite a lot of leader (blank tape) at the beginning of this tape side—Trans.]

RB: . . . how they get to that. How are the students, by this point, feeling when they come up against companies with their own set ideas and all?

AP: Well. . . .

RB: Do they get hostile toward them, or do they get perplexed or frustrated?

AP: They can. They get all of those things. But so do designers.

RB: Yeah.

AP: And we say this is a little bit like a doctor. A doctor has to study his client, you know, his patient. . . .

RB: Yeah.

AP: . . . and you prescribe according to what you think is best for the patient. If you happen to like blue pills, you don't prescribe them to somebody that needs red ones. You prescribe for the patient. You may feel differently, but if you're going to work for this client, you've got to fit their need—and their client's need. In the end the public is important. You fit their need. If you feel the company needs redirection, you've got to present a strong enough case to help them be redirected, you know. You just don't. . . . You cannot ignore your client that's, the person that's paying for it, you know, the consumer. And it makes design very tough. They find themselves. . . . Suddenly their free-wheeling imagination is sorely inhibited. But most of them—well, not all of them—but most of them end up being sympathetic with the problems of the company, trying to help the company.
Then we also take a course in corporate identity. And that is again selecting a company or an agency, a public agency, and developing their graphic program: their mark, their image, their truck signage or building signage, and producing a corporate manual that they company could use as a guide. [So] they do that. We do an environmental problem. It's a work-station problem, which is a major work station. Like a nurses' station in a hospital. Or the taxi dispatcher's station that has all the equipment, you know. And this is all human engineering, putting equipment together, so forth. It's one step above the third-year exercise, see.
The fourth year. . . . The fifth year is a systems year, and what we try to study is the fact that products are basically parts of larger, elements in a larger system. And the analogy I use with them is a product's like the point of a spear. It's not the spear. It's just the point, that's all. Without that point, you really don't. . . . It's impossible to conceive a spear without a point, but without the spear behind it, the point doesn't exist either. So

you've got to think of each product as being part of a larger system, that has its own energy inputs, and its own thrust, and its own vested interest, and its own bias, and its own materials. You know, you go on and on with analogy, and they begin to understand. So you can assign them a problem, a systems problem, of a larger scale. Like last semester I said, "We're going to do a transportation problem. Divide yourself up into five groups. So each group decide what area of transportation is there that needs attention of a designer, where you think you could do something." Well, they studied postal delivery vehicles, one group. Another group studied taxis. Another group studied an emergency health vehicle. Another group studied a robot vehicle, you know, a vehicle that runs on tracks. And in the end they decided taxi was the most. . . . Oh, they. . . . No, there were two projects. One half decided to do a taxi, and the other group decided to do the postal delivery, under the new system of delivery. Well, they studied a whole complex of how mail is handled, how it may be handled, what happens when we go to the nine-digit system, what is automated mail—you know, the whole thing. And they rode around with some of the mailmen, they sorted mail, they did all kinds of things. And they come back with a big report of what the problems are and in the delivery of mail what kind of a product might be developed that would be an improvement over what we have now. And I gave them a next-generation project. I said, "I don't want fifty years from now. I want to know what is the next logical step in mail delivery, based on the fact that a lot of it is being computerized, and you ought to be able to. . . . Now the mailman has to go to the mail station early in the morning, do his own sorting, get it organized, bag it, and get it ready, put it in a little truck, like a child in the little paper, cardboard boxes, and handle it. So they were trying to find a better automated system. And they did fairly well with it. And then they produced the model and the illustrations and the backup. So they understand the product beyond the company—see what I mean?—in this larger context.

RB: You mean as opposed to the specific thing for Sunbeam or Sears. . . .

AP: That's right.

RB: . . . that they did that the year before?

AP: That's right.

RB: One particular appliance.

AP: Now it's a product for an entire industry, see.

RB: Yeah. It would be as though you were to take all celery cutters, and just study the celery-cutter problem.

AP: Or if you were to be in charge of nutrition in a major hospital, you know what I mean? Or school lunches. We did school lunches one year.

RB: So that would be all things: implements to presentation.

AP: And the people that use it, and how they're going about it, you know, the whole idea of what you do. The school lunch business was a terrific study we did one year. I don't know where you train people, you know, for this kind of thing, but it is the next up for an industrial designer, see.

RB: This would give them potentially the more administrative. . . . They could cut across now, working from product to product _____. . . .

AP: Yeah, and a surprising number of our people do that. They go out and they become problem solvers, and they work very well. You know, I don't want to make any percentage separation, but I'm surprised how many of our people are in positions of authority, or manage their own businesses and so forth, because we teach primarily, I think, how to approach, how to identify a problem, you know. I tell them that the problem is the problem. The solution is easy. If you can define the problem, the solution is inherent in your description of the problem. So that's not it. The problem is the problem. How can you look at the world around you and see a problem?" See? You know, and that's essentially what that's all about.

RB: Well, you said you also give them a philosophy course this last year.

AP: Yeah.

RB: And what, of what sort is that? Is it applied or. . . .

AP: Well, I do it from an American. . . . It's a philosophy of design course, and it's the philosophical of my study of history. I take a string of philosophers and writers that I think have had high impact on American attitudes, and I try to show them. . . . I start with Adam Smith and [Barter, barter] and division of energy and so forth, you know. And then I move from that to Tench Coxe and Alexander Hamilton, because of what they did in transforming this country from a pastoral paradise to industrial country, balanced with agriculture. I move from that to de Tocqueville for his sharp opinions of Americans. I go from that to Horatio Greenough, because of Greenough's

philosophy of the Americans—and function as form, you know. And I go from that to Thorsten Veblen, because of his concepts of conspicuous waste—conspicuous consumption, which I make into conspicuous waste, you know. And then I go from that to Lewis Mumford and then I go to several other people, depending on the mood of the class. Sometimes it's Percy, Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance, or it's Toffler's new book or something like that. And so I just go from publication. . . . We read a good part of each book that I give them, and do an essay on the subject related to contemporary design, and we talk about them. And usually during the end I have them do a. . . . They write an essay at each stage, and then I also ask them to do a typeform plate. We believe that every product is in a state of evolution, and at any one time it has a certain typeform based on its technology. So like that radio you were looking at this morning, I might say, "This radio was produced between 1932 and 1936. They're all one-molded piece of a thermo-set plastic. Not thermo plastic, but thermoset." And I say, "You have to treat that like, well, like wine. The wine goes, the grapes grow every year, but every once in a while you have a great year, and that's a vintage year. Well, this particular typeform was made between this period, more or less, and this period. What I want you to do is pull out of that the particular product which best represents that era in form—the typeform—and then I want you to make an illustration out of it. Photograph, take it out of a magazine. And tell us why you think it's a good typeform. So they do an outside exercise on the typeform.

RB: And so in the process they learn more of the attitudes, the outlook of people at that time.

AP: Um hmm.

RB: Or our own time, if they do something contemporary.

AP: Of our own time. Well, I say, "It's easy to look in the past and see the typeforms, but look around you today and tell me which of the cars on the streets is going to be recognized fifty years from now as being the acme of 1980 automobiles."

RB: Um hmm. Regardless of whether it's the fine design or the deplorable.

AP: No, it doesn't matter, it doesn't matter. "Which is today's typeform?" And they find you can't see it.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: I show them old products like I have and then say, tell them why I think they're typeforms. And then they write an essay. They write a senior thesis on some subject of importance. The impact of automation. Or the bottle bill: Is it good or bad? Whatever subject they think is relative to design. It's a. . . . I enjoy the course very much.

RB: So you're a. . . . It's a philosophy course, but those readings you just mentioned, that would be mainly by observers and analysts, compilers of their day. . . .

AP: Yes, right.

RB: . . . with implied outlook and philosophy on society.

AP: Yes. Yeah, we're adding the philosophy.

RB: You're adding the philosophy.

AP: We're adding the philosophy.

RB: Do you lecture commonly quite a lot in that course?

AP: Yes, I lecture. . . . Well, we meet twice a week and I usually lecture fully for one hour, the first hour. Hour and a half. I usually lecture for the first hour. And then we talk for the last half hour, ask questions and so forth. And I go from one piece of writing to the next. And once in a while if I've, if I've given a lecture abroad or done something, I'll substitute my lecture and give them the same lecture I just gave someplace else, talk about them. I've enjoyed teaching that course. For me it's been a very good one. And essential to, I think, designers.

RB: What is the effect on many of the students, of what you're saying?

AP: How can you tell? How can. . . .

RB: Can't tell, because this is their last. . . .

AP: How can you tell? I think they like it. I think they like it. I think. . . . I mean, we have lots of good conversation about it, and I try to make them aware of design.

That's the first semester. The second semester: straight business practices, law.

RB: What is that, taught in a business school or. . . .

AP: No, I teach it, see. I shouldn't teach it, but I do. But I teach contracts for industrial designers, law, patents, liability. Also how to set up an office. How do you plan your work? How do you make estimates? How do you determine what to charge, or what your taxes are? In fact I just tell them how I run this office, as if this was the best one in the world. But I use it as an example, and tell them everything I know about it. One of the few schools that does it, as a matter of fact. Others say, "Well, they're going to learn that out in the field." I don't believe in that, and I think they enjoy doing. . . . In the meantime, they also do a resume, they do a letterhead. I set up a problem and have them write a letter of application. I set up problems for, tell them to find a prospective client and how would they approach them in a letter, you know, and so forth. So that they go through the whole thing.

RB: Through these four years there's a continual movement from the broader—and even theoretical—right back down to the specific and very direct and applied.

AP: Yeah, it goes sort of from the abstract—you know, both skills and theory—to extremely practical—if you want to call it that—man-machine, practical in terms of industry. And in the fifth year it starts to separate again. In the fifth year, philosophy goes off into the wild blue yonder and business practices goes right down to the cash box, you know, see. But both strains are important to them.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And they do a portfolio to show their work and so forth. So. . . . That's a long talk, but that's the essence of the course.

RB: Do you find by the end of this education, are there some who would rather be "artists," in quotes.

AP: Some who will be artists. You know, they always were and I'm not going to change them. I've got one girl now who I think. . . . I don't think she's ever going to practice design. But she's going to do some awfully nice things, whatever she does. And as far as I'm concerned that's okay, you know. I know another guy in the class who's going to be a business. . . . He's going on now to get a business degree and he'll be a businessman of some kind. That doesn't bother me particularly. I think is room for all types. You can't make them into one type, see.

RB: [Hmm. No.]

AP: But as far as a combination of a liberal and practical education half way between art and science and technology, you know, and culture, it's hard to beat this kind of a program. It's generalist in character. That is to say, it's not art, it's not science, it's not engineering, it's not history. It's none of those things, and yet all of them. You know, see, and I. . . . If a student really wants to be any one of those things and nothing else, they came to the wrong school. Or they should go on and get a degree in another area, if they want to be specialists. But I think a designer is a broadly educated person.

RB: Now this. . . . You've seen the effect of your curriculum which you developed here spread. You've already mentioned it to an extent.

AP: Yeah, yeah, I've seen exercises. . . . Since I've lectured around the world, I find our—very often—our, what we do as a classroom exercise gets picked up somewhere else, and it becomes a part of their program. You know, and sometimes I wonder, "Well, are they really following the whole pattern, or do they just see an exercise and say, 'That a neat one. I'll give that exercise'?" see.

RB: Well, you've been involved for twenty-odd years at least internationally as well as nationally in design education.

AP: Yeah.

RB: How did that come about? Through your own curiosity or. . . .

AP: Uhhh. . . . We've had a lot of grad students, as you know, from abroad.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: I don't know. I think when I was, when I went into the service, and I was stationed in England and Germany for a while, I visited whatever schools, design centers, factories I could, just out of curiosity. And also I had this silver interest, which sort of led me into an interest in foreign silver people, silver manufacturers, and so I got to

know some of those people. And when I did my thesis on ecclesiastical stuff, I wrote back and forth to a lot of people and got to know some people. So I guess I had already developed a healthy interest in [them]. As a craftsman, you could hardly avoid the foreign craftspeople—you know, from any part of the world.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And when I went to, became active in the American Society of Industrial Designers , I was asked to go to a meeting, a [first] [Dixon] meeting, which was held in Venice in '62, I think. It was not the first one that they ever held, but the first one I went to. This was about the third one. So I went to Venice as a representative of the IDSA, with B.J. And on my way there, we went by way of Stockholm and Copenhagen and Milan, and each one of those places I managed to look up people whose name I either knew or factories whose work I knew. So I got to know them. And then at Venice, I became quite active on the education thing, and was selected, elected from the education council of about six people. So I guess that was a beginning. And I got to know a lot more.

RB: So it was partly getting to know people, but was it also their. . . . Did you learn quickly that there were a great variety of ways of approaching design education, design?

AP: Yeah, sure, sure there were other ways. One of my closest friends was Misha Black, who was really the godfather of design education in England, a remarkable man, who's died not two or three years ago. And he's a very wise intelligent man, and he ran the school—the Royal College of Art—and went from architecture into practice of design. Set up a very successful office in London and ran the Royal College of Art program. And I was there several times, got to know him, and he and I did a lot of corresponding. Shared writings, you know, and the rest of it.
And then I got to know Tomas Maldonado, who was Italian. An Argentinian who went to Italy, who moved to Germany, who ran the school at Ulm, which was the postwar equivalent of the Bauhaus. He ran the school at Ulm. They've asked me to go there to teach, the year before they were closed up by government, just like the Bauhaus.

RB: Hmm.

AP: And the school was canceled, but again through there I got to know a lot of people. I think I got to know—what shall I say?—the elder statesmen of design education around the world, and we shared enough ideas. . . . We established a council that had international meetings in Bruges, Belgium, in old Germany, in Buenos Aires, one in Syracuse, and out of those we came up with these academic minimums that were then published and distributed around the world as a guide.

RB: Um hmm. In most countries are they governmentally sanctioned groups or sponsored groups that control design education?

AP: I think the United States is probably the only one that does not have a government involved. Like, I maintain that just as we have a separation of church and state, we also have legal separation of state and design.

RB: [chuckles]

AP: The government. . . . Because it's business, the government doesn't do anything.

RB: And that has its perils as well as its blessings, huh?

AP: Yeah, yeah. Well, the sad thing is that they country has fallen completely out of tune with international trends, and we're being swamped with foreign products, and have no market abroad for our products, mainly because of the myopia of our government and the manufacturers. Now they're trying to scramble to change, but they're not ready to change, you know.

RB: Yeah.

AP: The memory of their old successes hangs, weighs heavily on their mind.

RB: And despite the fact you and many others have turned out superbly trained designers, they. . . .

AP: Ah, we're only a small piece. . . .

RB: A handful in the sea of mediocrity.

AP: Yeah, we're such small pieces in that pie, and until management becomes sensitive to it, determined. There's signs of it. You hear this Yale having a little course, and somebody lecturing at Harvard, and. . . . But I've never even been able to even a crack. . . . Across our campus I haven't been to able to. . . . In all the years I've been with whatever reputation I have in design, the business school, which cranks out MBAs by the hundreds,

has never once exhibited any interest in design as any kind of a force in their business.

RB: Hmm.

AP: You know what I mean? And we've had a whole string of illustrious people lecturing here. Our business people. . . . I say they're myopic; I'm sure they know what they're doing very well, but what they don't know is how to relate that to the culture. Last year the Japanese government, for example, had a seminar—I think I mentioned it. They invited me to lecture to the Japanese industrialists and the design directors on creativity in industry. Can you imagine the American Association of Manufacturers inviting a Japanese here to lecture to them on creativity in American industry, you know? We're so short-sighted the thought would never even occur. . . . Even the word creativity wouldn't occur to these people.

RB: Or it has a very particular meaning. . . .

AP: Yes.

RB: . . . as a sort of a. . . .

AP: How to make a buck.

RB: Yeah, how to make a buck, right.

AP: You know, so they miss. . . . They miss it. Foreign industrialists have a stronger cultural sensitivity, I think. Not that they go to opera and ballet, you know, but the culture of their country is important to them. It has a culture, and they take it as their sense of responsibility, you know, and it's not myopic. It doesn't deal with whether it means money for them. You know, like the guy from G.E. here told me the other day that they had instructions to become better-known in the community because G.E. needed a better press. It wasn't a question of the manager of the company becoming better known and interested in the museum and doing things, you know. For them it's the current thing to do. It's like washing your front doorstep, you know, see.

RB: Um hmm. [both chuckle] But you now have practiced for some years, since '58 or so. Was that. . . . I think you've said it was the reason. . . . At Illinois that wasn't possible. . . .

AP: Right.

RB: . . . to have a design practice on the side. You did have your silver workshop.

AP: Yeah, but these were commissioned things. . . .

RB: Yes.

AP: . . . and you didn't publish a piece of paper that says, "I'm in business."

RB: The university simply did not want that. They thought they would lose something of you?

AP: They made. . . . What they did was made noises in my direction that said they thought the stuff I was beginning to do wasn't really appropriate.

RB: Hmm.

AP: And I felt, instead of them saying, "Geez, it's great," you know. "Our musicians give concerts, our architects build buildings, you should design products." Instead they said it was a little bit on the shady side, and it probably going to interfere with my work, and what's more I was going to take business away from practicing designers and it might be bad political, politics with the state, you know.

RB: Hmm.

AP: Research is all right, see, but practice as practice was questioned.

RB: What were some of those. . . . What were you beginning to design then? What kind of products?

AP: Well, I already mentioned this church stuff.

RB: Sure.

AP: And that was just a small beginning, but there was another group that had a contract with Borg-Warner, and I think I was. . . . I designed a whole series of registers for heating systems. You know, different types for different applications. And this was, I was doing it while I was still in Illinois. I hadn't mentioned it before, but

beginning to do a lot of that kind of stuff—accessory parts for other industries. And this was another thing they didn't particularly like.

RB: Um hmm. But when you came to Syracuse, this was an agreed, that it would be okay.

AP: Yeah. Well, I don't have it on contract, but Schmeckebier was pleased, said, "Well, bring your work with you and continue to do it." Which I did. Although at first I wasn't going to open an office. I was just going to continue to do commission work. And. . . . However, I got called by several companies in the area, and asked to do things for them. I also got involved selling furniture at one time. I was selling high-level furniture, like Herman Miller, and Knoll Associates, particularly at Illinois. I was looking for the first contract with, that I did here. It must have been '55, '56. [looking through papers—Trans.] It was Pass & Seymour. Most of it was local companies. They'd call me, but when I first. . . . The first big job I had here was with Porter Cable, used to manufacture power tools here. And one of them, the chief engineer, saw some of my silver work in an exhibition and called me up and wanted to know if I'd like to design some power tools for them. So. . . .

RB: Really based on the contours and the shapes?

AP: I guess. He saw the shape and curiously enough my teacher at Carnegie, Peter Müller-Munk, had been their designer. He was. . . . Syracuse. . . . When I came, Syracuse was being farmed by designers from Chicago, from New York, from Pittsburgh, and from other cities, who were coming here, meeting with the companies, and taking their work home. Raymond Loewy was doing the work for Carrier Corporation. Lippincott Margulies was doing Dietz's Lanterns. Müller-Munk was doing Porter Cable. And there was no design practice as such here at all until after I was here. So I'll take part of the credit for it. But it was also the times as well. And soon a couple of my, our. . . . Not my graduates but graduates who graduated before I did [probably meant came—Trans.] opened up an office here in town, after I was in practice, and then some others, and now I think I counted over a hundred designers within a radius of fifty miles, which is more than most companies [possibly means countries? —Trans.] have all together, you know.

RB: Yeah.

AP: So we've got a lot of designers around. This [document, contract—Ed.] was '58, the Dietz Company. I was making things for them, Porter Cable, Pass & Seymour, Kent Company, I was doing commercial vacuum cleaners, for them. . . .

RB: Was there any difference then when you incorporated in '58 as. . . .

AP: . . . United States Rubber. Well, I started out, I sort of slid into it sideways and backwards. And you know you get called to do something, and you do it, and then you need a little help, and you look around and you ask a colleague, and pretty soon my staff up there were all working for me on a part-time basis. And I was paying everybody the rate and so forth.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And then it started to get a little bit out of hand, and we got into an argument as to who, how we're going to do this, and I began to realize that you can't do it and be on campus and do it with your colleagues because it creates too many problems. So I guess I pulled out completely. And so did they. We decided to do it apart, and I started to do this work on my own. I hired one of my own graduates to work with me. We had a little place over on [East] Tennessee Street, further out, where I was, had a card table in the back room and a couple trestles and did design work. And then at that time. . . . There's such a thing as an unincorporated business tax law in this state that says if you're not incorporated. . . . Says architects can't incorporate, for example, because they have to be liable for what they do. The other side of that record says that if you earn eighty-five percent of your income from products you must pay a tax, an unincorporated business tax, if you're not incorporated. The presumption taken all together is that if you're incorporated you're not a professional. That's a presumption. Well, I and others talked about it, and we realized that it would be much to our advantage to be incorporated, and let whether we were professional or not take care of itself. So I incorporated in '58 and became an employee of my own company. And it's worked fairly well. I can do what I want, you know, and just let the income carry itself, and these fellows that work for me make more money than I do, as employees of the company. And it's given me a base from which to do other things.

RB: So is that. . . . Would you say you've spent, over the years since you've incorporated, or even before, maybe a third of your time here at Pulos Design Associates?

AP: Possibly that.

RB: Or all of that?

AP: Yeah, I would say. . . . Well, with the school I have three full days of teaching at school during the academic year. The other two days are my own.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: Usually if I'm in town on Monday and Friday, these are my days. I usually go to school in the afternoon, you know. If I'm out of town, I'm just out of town.

RB: But let's. . . . The school there, evidently then, right away saw the benefits to themselves of having a professor who was right out in the profession, surely.

AP: I think so. I think so, yeah. They haven't. . . . It's worked well—as far as I know, you know.

RB: Yeah.

AP: I did try to start a research element inside the university before I opened my office. I worked very hard to get them, to convince them to help me set up, that I wanted to design research, and not contract work, you know. And get money to do basic research, whatever that would be. Well, that's a little bit less understandable in the arts than it is, let's say, in science. Although the university is heavily oriented to research for whatever reason, I couldn't convince them on the value of my doing research.

RB: Hmm.

AP: Or doing research. And after being rebuffed a couple of times, why I finally decided I'd better just practice on my own. That also helped me split off. My notion was that I and the faculty would each bid and get contract work and do stuff. I got one contract, I remember, with U.S. Rubber Company to design new boots made by slush molding to get rid of the traditional way of building boots. So we did some work on that. And I got a contract with the Boeing Company, before the 707 was manufactured, to work with them one summer—and I sent a faculty member out and a student—on developing a bunk for long flights on jet aircraft. In the end they decided not to put the bunk on there. But we worked on that. And I made a private study for them on an internal design group vis-à-vis an outside industrial designer. So these led me to think that there was a lot of potential there. And it would have been a good idea, I think. And if it had worked, today there be a research institute in the university—on design—and probably PDA wouldn't exist. But I sort of rolled with the punch.

RB: Have any other schools ever created design institutes?

AP: [shakes head no]

RB: They really haven't?

AP: No, they've tried.

RB: There are so-called ones here and there, but. . . .

AP: Yeah, but they're really not the kind that would actually take on. . . . You know, an engineering institute you can understand. . . .

RB: Yeah.

AP: . . . but the actual design development. . . .

RB: Very often, it seems to me, these [are] centers for advanced this and that, in the arts at least, are really simply collections of celebrities. . . .

AP: Something of that sort.

RB: . . . which are sort of an ornament to the institution.

AP: Right, right. Or they'll be specialists. Like Harvard had an Institute of Public Health. For a long time they had a man named Ross McFarland, who has taken on very, very good contract work—studying, let's say, the cab for a truck
driver, and safety. And he'd get money from the Transportation Department, in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, to do all these studies.

RB: So they're income-generators, in a way.

AP: Yeah, income-generators.

RB: Or subsidizers.

AP: You see, you can get money in the specialized area.

RB: Yeah.

AP: You can go after a specialized area, and give it all the dignity of fundamental research, and you can get funds. If you try to do it on a generalist basis. . . .

RB: Which is what you want to do.

AP: Right. . . . you can't find an income source that will give you money generally.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: If you try to do it on nutrition, they'll say, "Well, what do you mean by nutrition?" See? So it was, it had its own problems and perhaps it was unnatural to do it. Many other countries have research institutes as part of their government thing, you know. In Poland they study clothing, for example, or they'll study children's furniture. In Sweden, well, they'll study things on a larger scale.

RB: And here no.

AP: But we don't do it.

RB: Huh.

AP: And even the industries themselves don't do it. I can't imagine, let's say, the clothing industry getting together and studying safety clothing—as a study. You know what I mean? They simply won't put their funds together. The government might force them to do it.

RB: And then they do it. . . . As soon as the government pressure is off, they revert to their own. . . .

AP: Yeah, it's just like is happening now.

RB: . . . getting short-sighted. . . .

AP: That's happening right now, on safety and a lot of other sort of thing.

RB: Yeah.

AP: It's a, this is an, off of a, a tenuous connection between. . . . [timer goes off again] A tenuous connection between business, private industry and government as to. . . .

RB: Yeah.

AP: You know, this is not clear, see.

RB: Yeah.

AP: We. . . . I guess it's a standoff where they don't mesh very well, see.

RB: Yeah.

AP: In other countries they do mesh very well, and the governments do have a strong interest.

RB: But here, industries are jealous of each other.

AP: Yeah.

RB: They don't want to combine to study anything.

AP: Can you imagine the automotive industries getting together to study the problems of transportation? Conducting their own study, arriving at standards, you know what I mean?

RB: They can't see that some basic standards and truths might emerge that would benefit them all.

AP: Yeah.

RB: Then they can run back to their particular design workshop and create a Chevrolet that looks different from

Ford. . . .

AP: Well, the funny thing is they stand off from each other, and your products all end up looking alike anyhow.

RB: Because they spy on each other.

AP: I think so, I think so.

RB: Partly that's it.

AP: Yeah.

RB: Did you ever think you'd get into such broad-based issues—and applications as well as issues—when you came out of Carnegie?

AP: Hardly. I mean, one doesn't think of these things. Until it's too late to do anything about them.

RB: But you asked a lot of questions early on, didn't you?

AP: I suppose.

RB: You were curious about a great many things.

AP: Yeah. I suppose. I think designers are probably all like that. You get involved in things and people, and it's hard to see them as separate, you know. Again, it's like, if you weigh me against Wendell Castle, Wendell Castle is far more important than I am, because his thing is tangible. It's in the specific area; you know what he does. You know what I mean?

RB: Hmm.

AP: And what he does has physical entity, and it's valid, and it's a marketable commodity. All right, well, none of these ideas that I have are a marketable commodity.

RB: Well, they have helped others to market their commodities.

AP: Yes, I know, [exactly].

RB: Is that what you mean?

AP: Yeah.

RB: The distinction. . . .

AP: But they have no definable entity. It's not a piece of pottery, it's not a sculpture, it's not a specialized vehicle, you know. It's, my expression comes through my clients, particularly.

RB: Has that ever, has that bothered you periodically, from time to time?

AP: I don't think so. It's just not my nature. I mean, I. . . . Like all people, I think I can do that. I've done enough exhibition. . . .

RB: Yeah, you have.

AP: . . . work and I can do it. It's not that important to me. That's all. I, you know, I just, I keep saying, "Well, I'll do it someday when I feel like it." But basically, if it were that important to me, I'd be doing it now.

RB: You think it in fact really isn't important generally?

AP: Oh, I can't say that. I think certain talents, it's anything they can do. I can't, I don't deny them their rewards, you know. I think they're lovely people.

RB: Um hmm. But you have this sense of this sort of humane, this interest in the bettering of the quality of society. . . .

AP: I suppose.

RB: . . . a broad-based thing, don't you?

AP: I think that's. . . . That's what my motivation is. And, you know, you kind of think, "Well, in some way or

other, I am." If the students are more conscientious, if my clients are happy with the products, you know, if. . . .

RB: Um hmm.

AP: Excusing the young girl. [perhaps referring to the bumping that's going on during the conversation?—Trans.] If the products work. . . . This is an anonymous field, see. It's. . . . Nobody cares who designed that product. It doesn't mean a damn. I can't imagine this organization giving me a gold medal—you know what I mean?—or putting it in a museum. It's. . . . Tomorrow the product's gone; it's volatile. It'll be replace by another one.

RB: Can you ever see the day. . . . I know you've said that as far as you can tell the artist does not function very well as a designer—or as a problem-solver.

AP: Yeah.

RB: Can you ever see the day when an artist might be? You, let's say, as a silversmith, as you were say thirty years ago,

AP: Yeah. . . .

RB: . . . making beautiful forms. That somehow that would effect in itself the upgrading of taste and sensitivity?

AP: I don't know how to answer that.

RB: Well. . . .

AP: You know.

RB: As you said earlier, it's the designers who are really have the impact.

AP: I think in the areas in which. . . . I have to separate areas which are devoted to expression from areas that are devoted to service. I think there are two really quite distinct things. I think. . . . I don't know if I mentioned this before, but I think in a school there's—in the arts, the arts as I know them—there are really three areas of education. One is the area of scholarship: philosophy, history, ethics—all of that. And that needs considerable attention in this country. It's a very. . . . Oh, shall I say, a flat area right now, you know. A second is the area of. . . . Scholarship and design, I mean. [referring back to the first area of education.—Trans.] The second is the area of expression, pure expression. And Wendell Castle and others are involved in expression; this is what's important. And a person like that has to sort of dance to their own tune. It can't. . . . You know, they've got to listen to what they think is important and say it the way they think is important, and live with it. That's valuable and it's important. And then there's the area of service, and that happens to be my area, you know. I lean a little bit into the scholarship as much as I can. I've been into the expression bit—none of us is pure, you know. But the area that means the most to me is the area of service. That's the area of, let's say, of the fewest tangible rewards, but perhaps the greatest intangible rewards—if you can make broad statements of that sort, you know. And it's an area that I think is needed. People understand artists in a way, and they understand scholarship in a way, you know. But the area of service through the arts is an area that is a little bit less tangible.

RB: But you hope that your book, which'll be like, not a memoir, but an attempt at a history of design in America will. . . .

AP: Yeah. For me that's very important. . . .

RB: . . . bring that out.

AP: . . . because it covers that from all sorts of directions. You know, it's. . . . As I read the galleys, you know, I'm beginning to be embarrassed by the insistence with which I keep hammering on this idea, and I can imagine that somebody else is going to read them and be bored to death with it, you know, because it goes on and on, and I'm feeling awkward about it right now.

RB: Yes, but it's a point that's, as you said, that people aren't, of which they aren't too conscious, so it bears a repetition.

AP: Yeah. Yeah, I'm hoping industry will, somebody in industry will read it and be affected by it, you know, some scholar or history will be, read it and be affected by it, that it would help modify the basic points of view.

RB: And then expressive artists also, perhaps.

AP: They too, you know.

RB: Um hmm.

TAPE-RECORDED INTERVIEW WITH ARTHUR PULOS
IN SYRACUSE, NEW YORK
DATE???
INTERVIEWER: ROBERT F. BROWN

AP: ARTHUR PULOS

RB: ROBERT BROWN

Tape 6, side A
[I suspect from the change of recording timbre and the reiteration of topics that this was recorded some time other than the previous tapes. Also, is it possible that this discussion was being held in front of a group of students? Later it sounds as thought it's just being recorded in Pulos's house, with the family going in and out.—Trans.]

AP: . . . you know, pretty much veered off into the silver and ceramics, and I ran those shops at Illinois, and gradually began to get into more product work. But. . . .

RB: You mean in your teaching you stressed it yourself?

AP: Well, I invented a course. I forget, it must have been about 1951, maybe, '50. I invented a course called a Design Workshop, which was required of all the industrial design majors. And it was more or less a combination—I may have mentioned this before, so forgive me if I repeat myself.

RB: No matter.

AP: But it was a combination of what I knew about the Bauhaus, what Alexander Kostellow had taught at school, what I had experimented with when I was at the University of Oregon, and it was an idea for a course that dealt with form—the relationship between form and material and process—and also where every exercise was a new exercise. It was never a repetition. So that you could never pick up an example from the previous year and use it. You always had to start fresh.

RB: Would you give them, began with a problem set that they had to try to solve.

AP: Yes, a problem of sorts. It might be make this form on a particular machine, or make a handle for something, you know, related to a product, you see.

RB: Uh huh.

AP: "Do a doorknob. . . ." I did a lot of things like, "What can you do with string and stones? Make something with string and stones." "Make a hanging structure that hangs from a single point but is still a structure." Today they would say these were exercises in tensegrity and they're a combination of Alexander Calder and Buckminster Fuller, but I think in those days I wasn't terribly aware of these people, and they were just things that were fun to do in classrooms.

RB: But these were each things that set the students back on their heels, right? I mean, they were, they really had to do some pretty fundamental thinking?

AP: Yeah. We had to think for ourselves. And that was the whole idea. In other words, the philosophy was that design was a process of taking a problem and freely conceiving a solution to the problem—without, let's say, borrowing the solution from the past. Then the idea was to exercise the students' own creativity. I did not follow the traditional practice of teaching then—which is still followed I'm sorry to say in many cases—where you simply go through a catalogue until you find an interesting piece of work and you show it to your students and say, "Let's all make one of these." So the students do a mobile one week and the next week they do a calder, you know. I mean, a calder one week, the next week they do a George Segal plaster figure. The next week they do a Rivera, you know. . . .

RB: So that was more or less the traditional way of teaching design?

AP: It seemed to be. To build. . . .

RB: By imitation, perhaps?

AP: By imitation, you know, by copying the past.

RB: Uh huh.

AP: And I felt, as I guess I still do, that in the art world, particularly, the—what shall I say?—the wreath of victory goes to the person who invents a unique form of expression, like the [Trova] thing I have on the wall there, you know.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: You must develop your own school, your own style, see. So that was important, and I felt it had a place in design—if you're going to use new materials, new techniques, new processes to solve, in a sense, problems. So this is what we did.

RB: And yet at the same time they had to know their material and also to think in terms of production.

AP: Yes, now in this context it had an echo of the Bauhaus that was sort of the hands-on process of learning as against the "mind-on" process, you know. Get your hands dirty and work with it.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And it was also an extension of the philosophy of learning by doing, which is the old craft tradition. You know, learn to shape a piece of metal by pounding it, or by bending it. So the transformation, really, was from learning by doing to eventually doing by learning, you know. To get to the point where you really know what the nature of piece of wire is, or you know what the nature of paper is. And by knowing it, you've learned it by doing it. Now you can design for paper, or you design for wire, or wood, and have a certain empathy for what can be done.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: That's in complete contrast to the notion of designing on paper, and drawing chair forms, or drawing lamps, and making pictures, and then having them transformed into material by somebody else.

RB: And also in contrast to the traditional craftsman who learned by doing but he. . . .

AP: Sure.

RB: . . . I mean, he continued to do, right?

AP: Right.

RB: Depending upon the past or what. . . .

AP: But the traditional craftsman learned by imitating.

RB: Yeah.

AP: There's a real difference between learning by doing and learning by imitating.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: In other words, his master would give him a pattern and say, "Now push this pattern into sand. When you get it pushed in, take the pattern out, and now pour molten silver into the sand and see what you get." You get a leg for a coffee pot. Well, that's sort of learning by imitation, you know.

RB: Right.

AP: Not questioning the process or the methodology or experimenting, see. Not allowed to take a chance. Yeah.

RB: Then to jump ahead, something we discussed earlier: "They must develop their own style," you said, "but with their feet still firmly in production." Is that correct?

AP: Yeah.

RB: How did avoid them becoming too precious in their attitudes?

AP: Well, as we discussed earlier about the fact that a lot of these craftsmen have gone on to become artists, they have become sort of precious in their attitude, you know.

RB: Um hmm. Did you recognize that as occurring in Illinois and. . . .

AP: Well, it was happening to me, you know, and in all this production I was talking about, all this jewelry and stuff I was making, I found this change occurring in me also, to try to avoid preciousness, so. . . . “Preciousness,” I don’t know how we define that term as against. . . . Is preciousness the flip side of production? You know, I don’t know. It could be, in many ways. And doing something with the least amount of energy with the highest degree of result, you know. You could say, “Well, that’s production,” you see. And. . . .

RB: So you were yourself split at that point.

AP: Yeah, beginning. . . .

RB: Your artwork was tending toward the fine-art object.

AP: Yeah, well, I found myself being torn between doing fine-art objects, you know, for show, for winning prizes, doing a coffee pot or a vase, because I wanted to make it a certain way, you know, and not really caring, to trying to search out a need or something like that, and fulfilling it. Or working with other people, you know. It’s like some of the contemporary artist-craftsmen, if we can use that word, serve themselves first and then other people, you know, and that’s the way it’s supposed to go. Well, I think the designer serves other people first and then himself, so you have to search out the most logical, direct way of providing them with the particular service that they need.

RB: Yeah. Well, at Illinois, what was the climate there—the industrial design department? What did they. . . .

AP: Well. . . .

RB: Did you have as your program, I mean, how did your program as you’ve described it a moment ago, fit into that?

AP: Yeah. Well, the program at Illinois had been started, first of all, in the arts and crafts tradition, in the late thirties, let’s say, by Hudson Royscher, I think who was a silversmith himself. Ended up in California being a silversmith, teaching design and silversmithing. So he started the program in ‘37 or ‘38. He was replaced when he went to California by Jim Shipley, who came out of the Cleveland School of Art by way of General Motors, who brought in the General Motors sort of philosophy of form based essentially on drawing. You sketch an automobile and then transform your sketch into clay, you know, and then transform that into mechanical drawings, and make a product. So it was a problem in two-dimensional shape being transformed into three-dimensional form. And a lot of the ID programs at that point in time were just that. The only one that really remains that way today is the Art Center Group in California, which basically is a formalistic school, paper forms. And they match the automotive industry, which one of its big problems, I think, is because they think on paper, and don’t think in terms of needs and forms of materials, you know. And so Jim brought that in, and the students primarily would make renderings. They would get an assignment to do a vacuum cleaner, let’s say. They would make sketches of vacuum cleaners until they got a shape that was reasonably attractive. When they did, then they’d make a big airbrush rendering of it, and a section drawing, and that would be in effect what you would show the client. These were great, the period ones: style as style was important, see.

RB: Um hmm, um hmm.

AP: Well, what I injected was this idea of working from the materials and the problem up to form. So form was the result of what you did, and not the original goal. See, the form came last. So I would say in that sense maybe I’m more closely aligned with the functionalists than I am with the formalists.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And silver is a particularly demanding medium, because it. . . . Form is what makes it go. You know, you buy a vase, or your buy a coffee pot, or you buy whatever, and you’re more enchanted by the form than you are by whether the fork fits or not. Do you know what I mean?

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And it’s the gleam of the material, the glitter of the [radii], the decoration, and all of that. And it’s a very. . . . It’s a formalistic material.
Wholly apart from that, I know it, however, as a remarkably [ductile] beautiful material to work with, you know. It’s almost like working with a liquid, it’s so pliant, as is gold. And so forth.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: But that’s not the way the trade sees it, see, so I was torn between doing, being asked to do candleholders for a church, you know, and between doing a candy box for somebody, doing a vase or a ceremonial piece, or I did baptismal basins. I don’t know if I told you all this.

RB: Where the form was paramount. . . .

AP: Paramount, that's right.

RB: . . . the potential of the material you needn't entirely bother about. . . .

AP: In a way.

RB: . . . except as a means to achieve a certain aesthetic.

AP: Right, and even today, you know, they will draw a form and then translate that into silver, see. Whereas a lot of my work was, I was working from the material up to a form. And these are the pieces I won some prizes for. I won a whole series of prizes—and for flatware and hollowware and the State Department bought some of my stuff.

RB: Is this because they were. . . . Do you think they were quite different or. . . . How did they emerge? There was no particular style in the end, or how would you generalize it?

AP: Well, I think for a while there I really—I don't mean to be immodest—but I think I was doing some genuine pioneering. I was sitting in my workshop letting my hammer and the materials tell me what the shape of a ladle ought to be, you know, and telling me what a coffee pot or a vase ought to be, and I was creating unique forms, which were very dramatic. And they have since. . . . Oh, I don't know, this early drawing of some flatware I won some prizes and competitions and so forth. And this was done. . . . Oh, this is later, about ten years later, but I was evolving forms for myself from the. . . . The Scandinavian, curiously enough, Tapio Wirkkala, had seen some of my work, and he's my senior and by far my mentor as far as work is concerned, so I'm a very pale echo of this man, this great man's talent. But he in turn was inspired by some of my work, I found out recently. I spent some time with him this summer and found out that he had seen some of my work in Craft Horizons and in the traveling American show, and the way I was approaching flatware was. . . . Let's say he was sympathetic with that, but he was also working in the same way, so without being aware of it we were running more or less neck to neck, except he was in a climate that was a hell of a lot more receptive to what he was doing than the climate in which I was working, and I eventually had to abandon it because there was nothing there for me other than smug self-satisfaction. And I wasn't about to let it become an artform, just a pure artform for me, you know. But anyhow, in those courses, the projects that I invented, a whole series of designs, eventually worked their way up from the sophomore course into materials and processes courses at the third-year level. And I had the students designing and building full-scale furniture, and metal products and lamps, directly from experimenting with the materials. And we were beginning to produce some pretty nice things. And. . . .

RB: What forum did they have out there? Were there annual shows, or. . . .

AP: Yeah.

RB: This was fairly isolated then. Would you. . . .

AP: Isolation is relative.

RB: Do the students. . . . I mean, did people become aware of what was going on there?

AP: Yeah.

RB: Maybe you showed. . . .

AP: Pretty well. I did very well. I think my records would show that I was getting a lot of recognition. The department was getting recognition. And the architects at Illinois had started. . . . This was a good design era. This is '45 to '50, '55, when there were good design shows in New York and in Chicago, and Ed Kaufmann was running them, and I was asked to send some stuff to the shows. And then the architects were putting on their own annual exhibitions called For Your Home, where they showed young couples recently established after the war. How to furnish their living room, how to do their carpets, you know, how to live in small spaces, that we were talking about, and so forth. So. . . .

RB: Yeah. Um hmm.

AP: And I was beginning to get a fair amount of commissions out of this kind of activity.

RB: Plus you were submitting to exhibitions.

AP: Oh, yeah, I was winning. . . .

RB: You were receiving prizes [from] _____. . . .

AP: I think I won prizes. . . . First year back from the service I think I won first prize at the Wichita. . . . In those days, the big annual show for craftsmen was the Wichita show.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And I won it with a set of—oh, I won either two or three years in a row—a set of flatware that I designed. Maybe I described it last time. Long thin spoons, I called them beverage spoons, and I got several orders for them, including orders from a Dutch museum that apparently still has. . . . I don't know where it is anymore; it's in my notes. But they bought a set of these long beverage spoons, that were sort of like stirring for iced tea or sodas, you know.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And I made them out of wire. . . . I mean, I forged them out of wire. So I won that, and then I had a coffee pot. And then I was invited. . . . That was later. I was invited to the Brussels fair [World's Fair?—Trans.]. Now when was Brussels.

RB: '59, I think.

AP: '58.

RB: '59, '58, [right].

AP: And I was invited to send some stuff to the Brussels fair. I sent a big martini pitcher, with a stirring rod with ebony and so forth. And a beverage pot: a coffee pot that could also double as a pitcher, with a side handle on it. Rather elegant shape, and I still have photographs of it somewhere. And when the show ended, people raided the exhibit, and they stole the martini pitcher that I made. And it was already sold to somebody and I had to remake the damn thing. And all I have left now is. . . . I kept an oar. . . . I called it an oar; it was like a big paddle that you used to stir the martinis with. And I made a lot of flatware for people. You know, special orders: punch ladles, and so forth.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: So I was developing. . . .

RB: And the. . . . Well, back to that question of where you were: In the fifties, it didn't. . . . University of Illinois, or you just mentioned Wichita, were centers, were they? I mean, potentially they were. You mentioned a show in Wichita, and to an extent it was eclipsed later, when it went to East and West Coast, the major exhibitions, the major patronage.

AP: Yeah, well, I think about that time also the American School for Craftsmen was developing.

RB: Yes.

AP: Developing a lot [frontality], and the American Craftsmen's Council, ACC, became important.

RB: Yes. Yeah, I wanted to ask you about that. You were a trustee from '55 to '7. . . .

AP: Um hmm.

RB: . . . and you had been involved before that with them?

AP: [nods assent]

RB: Could you describe your contribution through the American Craftsmen's Council?

AP: Yeah, well, let's see if I can recall it. I think as result of my winning some of those prizes, I was invited to participate in the craftsman's workshop that Margret Craver was running for Handy & Harman, you know, and so I was selected and I went there.

RB: Right.

AP: I think it was there where I became part of, let's say, the rather small but nevertheless valid community of national silversmiths. There was a guy from the West Coast, and Texas, and Margret Craver, and Fred Miller, and about a dozen or fifteen of us. Alma Eikerman, from Indiana. And we got to know each other as a community, and through that, I believe. . . . And I think I went back a second year. I went back twice, I think. It's hard to

remember. And I lived in Providence that one summer, with my wife and son.
And it must have been out of that that I got invited to some other shows and became part of the American Craftsmen's Council. And I don't know exactly how I was elected to the Board of Trustees, but I went to all of their seminars. They had one in Lake Geneva, they had one up here on Lake George at a place, and they had another in [Asilimar] in California.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And I think in all of those I sort of headed up the metals section. I did the. . . . Brought together the speakers, and the issues, and the discussions, and I think if you look in the minutes of those meetings you'll find whatever. . . . I don't remember what happened there, but I was there.
And about that time, I got to know Dave Campbell quite well. And I became. . . .

RB: Who was director of the [Craftsmen's]. . . .

AP: . . . very good friend. Yes. He came from the New Hampshire Guild of Craftsmen. And he and I became very good friends, and I used to stay in his apartment in New York when I went, and we did something down here at Alfred once, and I remember how frustrated this poor man was by the fact that Mrs. Webb's great dream was starting to run dry.

RB: What do you mean by that?

AP: Well, that her idea of reviving native American craftsmen as journeymen and as masters and so forth wasn't quite working, and her inability to see the need for this transition. . . . He was designing at the time America House. They had started on America House, and they were going to buy the building across the street. And then the museum. . . . His own apartment was about two doors from the Museum of Contemporary Crafts. He and I tried to convince the craftsmen to change the name into the Museum of Design. We wanted to call it the Museum of Contemporary Design. Because it was a museum of contemporary, modern art, we wanted Contemporary Design. We wanted to change the name of the American Craftsmen's Council to the American Designer's Council, hoping that it would just open up in this other direction. Well, Mrs. Webb and the other strong people. . . . And Jack Lenor Larsen was on the group at that time, as well as some others. They simply didn't agree with us. You know, it was going to be craftsmen in the historic tradition, and I think in some ways. . . . I think in some ways this broke Dave Chapman's heart. He's head of the, he had. . . . Not Dave Chapman.

RB: Campbell.

AP: Campbell.

RB: Yeah.

AP: He had a larger vision of what it could be, and. . . .

RB: And was seeing that by being craftsy they were cutting themselves off?

AP: They were drawing in all these. . . . I was going to say "retirees," which isn't a word I should use anymore, but they were drawing in the retirees and the dilettantes and people who liked the equipment more than ideas, people who surely wanted nothing to do with human need and industry and so forth. They wanted to practice the art as a hobby—basically as a hobby. I remember one man in Detroit. He had more equipment in his basement—a wealthy man out in Grosse Point Farms. . . . He had more equipment in his basement than I've seen everywhere, and what he did was bought equipment. He made an occasional little spoon. But there was a lot of that kind of dilettantism. And it was destroying the craft, you know. We had. . . . At the time there were a lot of contemporary craft shops, you know, contemporary art shops: [Baldwin] Kingry in Chicago, I remember, and. . . . I can't remember them anymore, but there were a lot of them where you could go and buy handwoven fabric and you could buy silver and furniture and so forth. I think Dave and I saw eye to eye, in that we wanted to elevate that to become the equivalent of the Scandinavian shops, you know, with fine silver or fine jewelry, fine fabrics, elegant furniture—done by Americans not as an artsy-craftsy thing, but done to make a living, you know, basically.

RB: Mainstream shops?

AP: Mainstream, and not for teachers to play with during their summer vacation, and not for courses for kids to take in school. I had become very anti craft education. Because I was leaving it myself, I guess it was easy.

RB: Um hmm, um hmm.

AP: So Dave and I saw very much eye to eye. And of course it didn't go that way so today we have the Jean Paul Smith, I think that's his name, and the Lloyd Herman. And if you'll forgive me for being cruel, but these people

are dilettantes. They work very, very hard. But they're completely out of the mainstream. They have nothing to do with what's actually happening.

RB: That's partly owing to the fact that a lot of your fellow craftsmen, and they use the word with themselves, moving toward being artists, right?

AP: That's right, that's right. I think they're. . . .

RB: . . . and not concerned. . . .

AP: It all fits. I'm the outcast.

RB: Yeah.

AP: You know, I. . . .

RB: It wasn't just Mrs. Webb, or just the. . . .

AP: No, no, it was becoming an art.

RB: . . . dilettantes themselves?

AP: Pure art. Well, a combination, really.

RB: Right. It was a very powerful. . . .

AP: Dilettantism and the idea, "Well, let's play with this thing, you know. Let's do a show on bread. Wouldn't that be fun?" You know, "Let's do a show on foam. Wouldn't that be fun?" And then organizing the, trying to organize the craftsmen to prove that bread is fun.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: You know, that's the dilettantism, as I call it. And it's done because you need to attract crowds. You measure your success by how many people walk through the door. . . .

RB: Yeah.

AP: . . . how many inches you get in a newspaper, you know. And what level you occupy at this sort of precious level of where the crafts are. And that's not arts, that's not the arts and crafts movement, you know. It was a much deeper movement than that. So this dilettantism is one aspect of it.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: The other aspect of it is the strongest craftsmen, who really used the dilettantes to get some exposure, then moved out as fast as they could into the art world proper.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: You know, and grew past the dilettante, even though they would accept a show at this gallery or that gallery. They became working artists in their own right—and good ones. So I take. . . .

RB: But freelance [then]. . . .

AP: Yeah, like an artist, like a painter.

RB: . . . and not generally influential, except as younger ones tried to imitate them.

AP: That's right. They developed their own school.

RB: Yeah.

AP: Wendell Castle, you're talking about. Peter Voulkos, you know. . . .

RB: But not known to the general public, because they're not shown in mainline. . . .

AP: No, no, not at all, not at all.

RB: It's the mainline exposure that. . . .

AP: Virtually no influence in their. . . . They're working with a particular medium has virtually no influence on society or the trade. In other words, Voulkos's work in clay is not reflected—in any way that I can find—in the commercial industry of clay-working and so forth. Wendell Castle's work in wood is not reflected. About the only one who made the transition—handsomely, I think—is Jack Lenor Larsen. Probably the most astute of all of us. He made the connections, transformed his hand-weaving thing, got people working for him, made connections in Thailand, or wherever it was, and brought stuff and built a shop, developed a line, became a merchant—you know what I mean—and maintained it very well. That's about the only area that I can think of where there has been a distinct and good transition. And I respect Jack very, very much. I could not do it in silver, I couldn't do it in jewelry. Those industries. . . . Even though I won prizes. Even though I won prizes put out by the jewelry industries themselves. By the silverware industries themselves. They could not make the transition.

RB: Yeah, because those were merely publicity things for them, you might say, weren't they?

AP: That's right. Half-hearted attempts to show that they're really interested in the art. And they're still doing it. One of the worst things that goes on is the annual Silversmith's Guild competition, you know, that the kids enter, and they have an annual prize and so forth. In the meantime, the industry goes on producing its own. . . .

RB: Sure.

AP: . . . junk, without being. . . .

RB: Um hmm, um hmm.

AP: You know, it's like. . . .

RB: And you saw. . . .

AP: It's like going to church on Sunday, you know, and being a criminal all week. [laughs] Is about the way that goes.

RB: And you saw this happening when you were on the board of the crafts council. . . .

AP: Yeah.

RB: . . . even back in the fifties.

AP: Yeah, I was really a rebel. Because I wanted to change it, and there was no way I could change it. I suppose it was. . . . My own work was changing, and I was beginning to work on commissions other than just straight jewelry commissions. I did church crosses and silvers and. . . . I mean, and chalice and bowls and all kinds of things.

RB: You mean. . . . What you're saying is commissions that would get out to a general population. . . .

AP: Well, for example, there was a. . . .

RB: . . . such as church.

AP: Yeah, there was a group at Illinois. . . . Since my own graduate work had been in religious thing, even though I'm really quite irreligious in the classical sense, you know, the area interested me—at a particular point in time, very, very much. And I tied in with a group at Illinois called Creative Buildings. Did I tell you this the last time?

RB: Hm mm.

AP: Well, it was run by a young architect named John Eberhardt, who went from there to big things nationally, and for a while he ran the environmental college at Buffalo. I don't know where he is now. He brought Rayner [Banham] over to work with him, and he's now. . . . Washington, I believe, somewhere, and I hear of him every once in a while.
But he and a couple other guys founded something called Creative Buildings. And what it was was an A-frame and I think—I'm going to guess—that it was about a fifteen-foot equilateral triangle, a-frame, made of timber, and each bay, each frame was about nine feet apart. So you could put two of them together and create an eighteen-foot-long shelter, with a door at one end and a stained-glass, as it were, at the other. So they were like prefabricated churches. And they were selling them in sections—manufacturing and selling them in sections—to a lot of the small congregations that were just springing up at the end of the, after the second world war. And they sold, I know at one time they sold the idea to the Lutheran Synod, and I think that was probably their big achievement. And there dozens of those things ordered and delivered all around the country, and these people would use them temporarily until they got their own church built, and then I don't know what they did with them.

They also sold them to the NIKE, to the government, and they were installed as chapels in the NIKE stations across the northern Canada—or wherever they were.
Well, I tied in with them, and I was the metalsmith. And I designed and made all of the metal appointments. And I worked them out, and, for example, a missal stand was a z-shaped piece of metal with a notch on the end that you could put on the altar, and put your Bible or your Torah or whatever you wanted to read on it. I designed candleholders that were quite modern, a kind of an x-shape with a saucer on top with a candle. I designed bowls by making big brass bowls that were spun so that they were round, but then slicing the top so that it had a curve on it. And I did door handles; I did lamps. I did a whole series of products for them. They were pretty good, really, and in fact I gave a couple to the museum here, I believe. When I came to Syracuse I had some left over. Well, to do them I had to find a manufacturer, and I found them in Indianapolis, or in Chicago, or whatever, and the manufacturer then would make, would spin the bowls, you know, out of brass, and then he'd have them plated in bronze, see, and they'd trim the edge the way I wanted. And I would order them in quantities of ten or twenty or whatever. So I really had become a manufacturer of a whole line of church appointments. So that's again an extension of the metalwork into. . . .

RB: Oh, this was moving you out of the unique object, art object context into something broader.

AP: Right. And they were very, very nice-looking things. They look a little bit stylistic today, but at that point in time. . . .

RB: But this helped convince that you wanted, that transforming taste or society in some measure was more important to you?

AP: Yeah, I wanted to go into the mainstream.

RB: This was going to be more important, you felt.

AP: Yeah, right. So I did a lot of that. And then I took on some commissions with other architects for different things. I did. . . . Somebody had a bathroom in the middle of a house with a big Wasco-light plastic dome on it, and they wanted it to look like it was an undersea bathroom, you know. So I decided to do it all in four-inch copper tiles that were enameled. So I found a manufacturer in Indianapolis who would stamp the tiles, found someone else who would put the base coat of enamel on them, so that they all had the first coating of enamel, and then I got a couple young people, maybe students of mine—I can't remember—and we sprinkled the glaze on them, and I created all this underseas kind of waves of water and blues and greens and whatever. And the whole. . . . When you walked into the bathroom, it was as if you were under this water. It was kind of wild, you know.

RB: [chuckles]

AP: I wonder what it looks like today. But I did that, I did a whole bunch of these kinds of things: special fixtures, special lamps, and I was definitely moving out of the unique one-of-a-kind tradition. In fact, when I came to Syracuse, I still had contracts from. . . . I remember a church in Pittsburgh where I owed them some candleholders, and I had to get them made locally, and I worked with a couple spinners in the area here, and got them made and took care of the orders, and then of course that all phased out. I think also the idea of that kind of temporary church building began to phase out, and I had, I was through with it. So I produced a lot of products like that.

RB: But for a time you were involved in working [with] very carefully designed, finely made things that, on a broad scale, however, which could reach a great many people.

AP: [shuffling papers] Yeah. That was the whole idea. And I was doing a lot of lecturing, too, at the time. I see Stembridge here was the people in Chicago that I did work for. Pequin, Illinois, I sold to a Reverend Neuendorf altar bronzes. I became active in Midwest Designer-Craftsmen. It was an organization we formed. In fact, I was president of it, and I published a little magazine. And again I still had this same interest. I got to know Meyric Rogers, who was curator of decorative arts at the Chicago Art Institute.

RB: Yeah?

AP: He was a remarkable man.

RB: Really? What was he like?

AP: Well, he interested in colonial stuff.

RB: Yeah.

AP: And he had done some very interesting things. He had measured and made drawings and proportional

studies of pieces of colonial furniture, and had then proved or tied it in with dynamic symmetry, and he proved, at least to my satisfaction, how a certain rhythmic proportion would show itself all the way through a man's work. And once you know. . . . You know, in other words, whoever one is, you have a fondness for certain proportions, you know, and anything that comes close to those proportions you respect and admire. Or when you sit down to draw a rectangle, you tend to draw the rectangle you like.

RB: So he was a man with a breadth of ideas. . . .

AP: Yes.

RB: . . . who could tie in well with designers and. . . .

AP: Right, and he was very interested in design. And as a matter of fact, he was one of the several people who created the whole contemporary movement, in my opinion, in Italy. Because after the war, the United States government wanted the Japanese, and the Germans, and the Italians—our former enemies—to be our friends—or, to put it another way around, they did not want them to become Communists. So we admitted lots of Japanese to this country, and brought them into our schools and trained them. And my school itself trained them, and we educated them in American methodology of design. And we created the Japanese design industry, you know.

RB: Hmm.

AP: And now have raised hell with our own economy. We also brought teams of Germans to this country to tour the country to see techniques. They were here on my campus. I knew a lot of them, got to meet them, have known them since then. And taught them the methodology of design—as we had learned it ourselves in the thirties and the twenties and the forties. And we also—going in a different direction. . . . I forget the man's name. Somebody in New York who had a real affection for Italy, wanted a shop that would sell Italian stuff, and he plus Meyric Rogers, plus a couple of other museum directors of the time—including also Walter Dorwin Teague—went to Italy and made the rounds looking for good things that could be sold to Americans. They uncovered craftsmen. . . . Joe Colombo, for example, was one of the persons they uncovered, and then a whole number of others. And convinced them to make modern stuff, in many cases. In fact, they would suggest, you know, to Joe Colombo, "Well, if you would make a vase, let's say, instead of a coffee pot, out of clay, we would like to show it." Or, "If you would put this glaze on that piece." So they sort of directed the style that they wanted, and then they staged a major exhibition in this country, and I will guess that it was early fifties; I can't remember the date. They staged this exhibition called Italy at Work, with a catalogue that became quite famous, and really made the Italian, brought the Italians up to date. And what's more, it gave them a hell of a market in this country.

RB: It brought them up to date because they were so pleased that there was an exhibition?

AP: Yeah, you mean. . . .

RB: Yeah.

AP: Well, it gave them an outlet.

RB: Right, sure.

AP: Here was this Italian craftsman all beat down by the war, and some of these Americans show up and say, "If you make furniture out of primavera, we'll sell all you make, and we'll exhibit it in our museums."

RB: And it's led, it led since then to younger people coming in Italy and. . . .

AP: Sure. It created. . . .

RB: . . . who were weren't simply craftsmen, but who were more design-trained as well?

AP: Right, right, you know. So Meyric Rogers was significant in that area, and he was a good man—a really very good man. Intense and. . . . And so we had, through this MDC group—Midwest Designer-Craftsmen—we had an exhibit at the Art Institute, a couple of exhibits, you know, and created a lot of activity at that time.

RB: What were some of the effects it had in the MDC?

AP: Well, first of all, it coalesced a lot of the craftsmen. You know, they were working independently, and this helped to bring them together. And out of it came people like Harvey Littleton, who went from that into glass and created a whole movement of his own, you know.

RB: He'd been in what before that?

AP: Well, he was a potter. A potter in a rather traditional way.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: As a matter of fact, I remember. . . . Well, not Harvey, but we. . . . My wife and I built a very modern house at Illinois. It was all glass, floor to ceiling glass. Like this terrazzo floors, and really a lovely place. And I had a workshop there, and I was doing all my commission work and so forth. We used to listen to Arthur Godfrey in the mornings. He had this friendly morning show. I wrote him a note one day, you know, and he was talking about he was going to Chicago, and I said, "The second most important event in Chicago, other than Arthur Godfrey, will be the show of the Midwest Designer-Craftsmen." And he read my note over the air. And we got a mob of people showed up the Art Institute. [chuckles] So I was active in the Midwest thing. [looking through papers:] Here is a Midwest Craftsmen conference in Chicago in '54. I was giving demonstrations at Indiana University on flatware. I was involved in a magazine called Cross-Country Craftsmen. I was writing articles for them.

RB: Hmm. Was that for hobbyists, or what would you say?

AP: Well, it was trying to be. . . . You know, the Craftsman, Craftsmen magazine, the [Stickley's], it was trying to do that. But again in this conflict it fell apart. It became a kind of a hobbyist magazine, and that was the end of it.

RB: But at the beginning it was trying to show them better ideas and lift them up.

AP: Right, right.

RB: Was Alma Eikerman at Indiana at that time?

AP: That's right. I went. . . . She's the one that invited me. . . . I met Alma at this silversmithing conference in, under Baron Eric Fleming, of Sweden, and I met her there, and we got to know each other, and I went over to Indiana—[burps] excuse me—and taught them how to do flatware. And I think. . . . Where was it that. . . . This was the time also. . . . It was during this era that I had a Ford grant. Did I mention that?

RB: I don't think we've talked about it, but I knew you had one in the mid, '52 and '3.

AP: Okay, well, I got a grant. . . . But I'm going to back up a little bit. I had tried to get a Fulbright a couple of times to go to France and work with Puiforcat, who had said. . . . The old man had said that they would take me into their atelier, and I wanted to learn that method. There was a tremendous history of this place, great silversmiths.

RB: A particular method of fabrication?

AP: No, they just, they were deeply involved in the whole history of the silversmithing industry, and it was particularly interesting to me because the atelier, the workshops, had—first of all, under old man Puiforcat—had made reproductions of famous French silver for museums around the world that were made by the same methods that were used by the original craftsmen. In other words, he didn't use spinnings to imitate handwork. So they had reproduced the work of Paul de Lamerie of England, and some of their own craftsmen. [timer goes off] That's for me, I guess.
[Interruption in taping]

AP: They had made duplicates of these things. This is where I got the idea that you could really make nice. . . . If you're going to duplicate things for museums at all, which I wasn't sure I believed in, you should do them in the honest way. They should be made with the old techniques so that you can honestly say, "This is the way it's made. I know. I made it." And I tried several times to get a Fulbright, two or three times. And I didn't get one. So then I applied for a Ford grant. And I got a Ford grant to study colonial and contemporary silversmithing techniques. And I went up. . . . I lived, for a year, lived just outside of Providence, northeast of Providence on one of the reservoirs. The name of it escapes me at the moment. Rented a house. And then I communicated. . . . I worked in the old silversmithing workshops at the Rhode Island School of Design, on the main floor there. They had a tremendous setup that had been built in the early twenties by the industry to train craftsmen. Not craftsmen, but laborers, you know, people who cut dies, who do metalwork in the industry. It essentially was one of these well-meaning attempts, again, to bring the industrial arts back into industry. And that program had failed, but now this room was still there, full of wonderful tools. So. . . . I had worked there under the silversmithing conference, so I got permission to work there during this year when I was on a grant.

Tape 6, side B

AP: I worked there with Waldemar Ramisch; I don't know if you know that name.

RB: Yes. He's a sculptor.

AP: And Ruth Ramisch.

RB: He was head of sculpture, at the School of Design.

AP: That's right. Well, it was interesting connections because he was a silversmith in Berlin years earlier, and his wife, Ruth Ramisch, was a very, very fine enamelist in the Viennese tradition, with layers of enamel building up to the whites, you know, whatever they call that, it was a name that escapes me. And I got to know her quite well. We worked side by side on benches, and in fact we traded work. I would make some silver backs and frames for some of her prize pieces, in return for which, she'd give me pieces of enamel. So my wife still has a Ruth Ramisch piece. Waldemar Ramisch in Germany had been Peter Müller-Munk's teacher. I don't know if you know the name Peter Müller-Munk, but Peter Müller-Munk originally studied history and philosophy at the University of Berlin. Then when he finished he went to work with Waldemar Ramisch and learned silversmithing. He came to New York as a silversmith in the late twenties and became sort of the darling of the New York jet set of the era. And he was doing a lot of silver for people. And this I didn't know at all when I was Carnegie. He was my teacher at Carnegie. You know, but he knew a lot about the material. And he did things for, oh, museum pieces. He did things on order. He did silver things for the Metropolitan Museum show of 1929 on modern interiors. It was a takeoff on the French expo of the twenties. And he. . . . Now I've got on to this. . . . Umm. . . .

RB: You were talking about Ramisch.

AP: Oh, yeah, and Ramisch was his teacher, so it was an interesting connection between him and Ramisch and the Rhode Island School of Design, and Ramisch's veering off into pure sculpture then to teach sculpture, and the fact that the equipment was still there when I went to work there. And interestingly enough, when Peter Müller-Munk was working in New York, he hired some people to work for him, and later on I found out that one of his hammer men—that meant a man who was in the back room doing the heavy work with a hammer, to make the bowls and the vases and whatever else Peter was selling—was of all people Ed Scheier, the potter, who was earning a living trying to stay alive in New York City in order to get reestablished after the Depression. And he was a hammer man for Peter Müller-Munk. So all these people all get connected again in a very interesting sort of way.
Well, I worked at Rhode Island, and also I went up to Boston and I got to know Kathy Buehler. Do you know her, at the museum?

RB: Yes, she was a decorative arts assistant or curator. Particularly. . . .

AP: That's right, curator assistant. Her specialty was silver.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And she was good enough to let me handle all of the colonial pieces that I wanted, and I think I told you I made these drawings. I have a set of drawings that are really terrific, because I made very careful cross-section drawings of all the important pieces in the collection—that, where, because of my knowledge of the process, I could find the touch marks, I could find the point which you use from which you draw your circle, I could analyze. . . . I made myself a tool so I could measure the thickness of the wall. By the thickness of the wall I can identify the process that was used. So I tracked down the complete construction of all of these important pieces.

RB: What was your purpose in doing such detail?

AP: First of all to learn silver. Then also I learned that the. . . . Is it Suffolk County, in Boston?

RB: Um hmm.

AP: Well, the courthouse there has the inventories of all of these colonial smiths, as well as all the craftsmen. They make records, you know, and when a craftsman died, they would inventory, you know, and keep the record. Well, by taking the inventories, I would know what tool they had, and by taking the tool in my mind, and looking at the piece, I could just about tell you which tool was used to make what piece, you see. You know, patterns for a handle, this or that, a certain time.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: So I did a very nice job of that relationship. In addition to that, I went to the historical society, and they let me handle all the Paul Revere material, and I went through all of it, page by page, and I made tracings of designs that he had made, and I could tell you how he built his Rococo designs—there's a certain rhythm that you use to build it—because of the way he would lay out his points with the dividers and draw the lines, and it was just a straight, mechanical almost, construction. And I got that and some tracings of spoons and other

objects that he made, which are also in my book that MIT is going to publish. Then I went from there to the Metropolitan, and I went from there to Yale. And through Kathy and some other people, I met John Marshall Phillips at Yale, who was a remarkable man.

RB: What was he like?

AP: He built the Garvan collection for them.

RB: Yes, yes.

AP: Do you know the man?

RB: Yes, and what was he. . . .

AP: Oh, he was a lovely. . . .

RB: Like did he talk with you a good deal?

AP: Oh, yeah, we did. . . . And I did some little work for him. He had a silver collapsing scale, made up of rectangular tubing that someone had given him, and the thing had broken, and I repaired it for him. And we had a lot of correspondence, and he told me about some of the silver and taught me a lot. And he let me take the Coney Montieth [silver bowl created by John Coney—Ed.] and a lot of the other stuff, Edward Winslow sugar box. I can't remember now what they have down there. But he let me handle it, and I made drawings of all of that, so I have about a hundred and fifty pieces of silver that I had drawn.

RB: And your purpose in doing all those drawings was. . . .

AP: To learn the process.

RB: . . . to learn how they worked.

AP: How they worked.

RB: Because you knew the process in general, but you wanted. . . .

AP: Well, I didn't know all the processes. You know, I was learning. This was a great learning experience for me. And I learned to forge by studying these pieces. You know, we never learned to forge at school. I never seen it. Americans at that time, if you wanted to make, let's say, a spoon, you built it by taking flat pieces of silver and soldering them all together and filing them, like carving it out of stone. Well, the smiths never did that. I mean, they took a chunk of metal, and they hammered it out. So by looking at the early tools and looking. . . . And I discovered the [Winslow] Diderot encyclopedia at the same time, and I own, as a matter of fact, one volume of the Diderot, with all the drawings of the silversmith stuff in it, that I bought somewhere along the lines, you know. And so I could take the Diderot and the illustrations. . . . Is somebody there?

RB: [Yes.]
[Interruption in taping]

AP: . . . [silver] stuff, you know, made all these drawings

RB: Yeah.

AP: And I had hoped at one time. . . . In fact, somewhere along the line, I had a very encouraging letter from the American Antiquarian Society. What I wanted to do was to do a book where we would have a very elegant photograph of the object, and then a technical analysis. Most of the books deal with the genealogy and the history of famous pieces, but they give you no information of the technical thing. And these things in a sense are very earthy human products. They're not just objects, museum art.

RB: Wasn't Katherine Buehler going to do something on the historical side?

AP: Yes, and I was going to do something for her also.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And John Marshall Phillips and I talked about that also, too, a very deep interest of mine.

RB: Um hmm, um hmm.

AP: Well, by putting together the Diderot and the inventories and the drawings of the objects, I pretty well had

reconstructed the art and craft as it was practiced. [I'll ask Marty. . . .]
[Interruption in taping]

RB: You then got quite familiar with a number of the major collections of American silver.

AP: Yeah, I'd handled them. I even went to Chicago and handled the Voorhees pieces.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: Cleveland. I handled not only colonial stuff but I also handled some of the Danish stuff, you know, and I. . . . I was giving myself a hell of a good education that year. And Marshall Phillips I remember told me that there was more. . . . Some fantastic stories. It's too bad the man died, because he knew the Massachusetts silversmiths inside out. He told me that his records showed that there was more silver had gone north with the Tories than had been left in the colonies. And that they had sold a lot of it in Canada in order to get passage to England. And he believed that there was still more silver floating around in Canada unrecognized than there was in the United States, and it was his hope to track some of it down. In fact he had tracked, I think it was a Benjamin Hurd gold thimble, that Hurd had made for his wife. He tracked it to Canada, to England, through the family there to the family of the servant—her servant to whom she'd given it when she died, and found the gold thimble in a collection of junk that this English family had and didn't know what it was.

RB: Hmm!

AP: But he was full of this kind of. . . .

RB: Lore.

AP: Lore, that's the word.

RB: _____. [laughs]

AP: So it was fascinating for me.

RB: So this was a year you really took off from work and from your leading concerns to that point.

AP: Yeah. I did all of that stuff. Then, in the process, I got a letter from somebody at Williamsburg, asking me to go down to colonial Williamsburg and help them in their development of a silversmith shop.

RB: About 1953.

AP: [looking through papers:] All right, let's see, '53, I won a Ford prize, a Brooklyn prize. . . . I'm just looking see any record of the. . . . Probably not terribly important. Virginia silversmiths, Connecticut silversmiths. . . . [That says first]. Wisconsin State Fair judging. This would be good for somebody who was interested to go through. Suffolk County Courthouse, is when I was copying this stuff. Winterthur Museum. . . . Oh, that's right. I went to Winterthur Museum and gave a lecture. And. . . .

RB: Did you look at their silver quite extensively?

AP: Yeah. I was allowed to handle it, and I see Arlene Fisch here was working for me, who is now a very well known jeweler on the West Coast.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: She's a terrific gal. She worked in my little [office]. . . . I'll have to tell you about my little workshop. Anyhow, I got a letter asking me if I would help Williamsburg set up their silversmithing shop. They were planning to open up a place called The Golden Ball, on whatever that main. . . . Duke of Gloucester Street or whatever they called it.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And I had also in the process had found drawings of shop layouts from colonial silversmiths. And they gave me the drawings of the house they way they were going to build it, and on the basis of that, and what I had seen and knew, I plotted where the forge would be and where this part would be and all of that would be. And at that point in time I was fascinated, because it was my intention—and dream—that colonial Williamsburg would use a Puiforcat, the French approach, so when they made it. . . . They would set themselves up and duplicate colonial silver with the original techniques. That's what I wanted to happen. And they hired, the summer that I was there, they hired a young man named William De Matteo whose father was a commercial silver tray maker in New York City, knew the craft the way a tradesman knows it—you know, you hammer on patterns and so forth. And Bill De

Matteo had worked with his father, but he was hired to go to Williamsburg. And when I got to Williamsburg, they brought in, they flew in, two big wooden trunkfuls of eighteenth-century silversmithing tools that apparently had been unopened for all intents and purposes since the eighteenth century. And we opened them, took out these rusty, rusty products, and from, again, from Diderot and from the inventories and my experience I identified a good many of them as to what they were for and so forth. And we identified them, then we cleaned them, which meant grinding off the rust and doing it, rehafted the handles, you know, and did all of that. Then I had them build me a forge from a drawing I made from Diderot that I'd finally realized. . . . My colleagues at the time, I must say, around the country didn't know this, because I had never seen it written anywhere. In fact, I'd seen some perfectly awful misrepresentations. Catherine Louise Avery, in the book on silver for the Metropolitan, said that the silversmith melts his silver in a skillet and then pours it over the joint to join it. You know what I mean? Well, you surely never do that. So I them build a forge following Diderot, and the whole idea was that you, to take silver of whatever you had, coins, any piece, melt it in a crucible, pour the crucible into an iron skillet, as it was called then—and a cast-iron skillet today is the same thing—or it could be a rectangular skillet to make a bar. You would pour the silver into it, and you would then turn what was just scraps into a disk of silver—you know, like letting butter melt in a pan and then you'd get something that's about a quarter of an inch thick, make a disk, or make a bar out of it. And then that's what your raw material was. There was no rolled metal, as such. Rolls simply didn't exist. Power rolling certainly did not exist.
So I would then. . . . I was going to give a big demonstration. They had all the bigshots—Winterthur—at the forge. They built the forge in a field for me using bricks made from local clay, as they must have been made at that time, and the crucible was a graphite crucible. And I had learned about using borax as a flux. And we tried to melt the silver before these people came and we couldn't melt it. Because all I was doing was putting was putting it in the forge, and then I realized, of course. . . . Oh, and I was using air, you know, from a bellows under the fire, like you do when you start a fire in your fireplace. You blow under the fire, you know. And I couldn't melt the silver. And finally I realized, I guess quite by accident, that you don't do that, that you blow—I couldn't tell this in the Diderot—but you blow air right on the crucible, and wherever you touch the crucible it gets red hot, because the oxygen—that's your fresh oxygen. . . . Now I know, of course, and I'm sure that people in the forging industry knew this long before I did, you know. But then I was able to melt silver—very quickly. Ten or fifteen minutes I could melt a pot of silver and pour it into one of these skillets. But when you pour it in there. . . . Oh, then let it cool, and then I always cold-forged metal, that is to say. Non-ferrous materials are generally cold-forged, whereas ferrous metals are hot-forged, you know. And every time I would hit. . . . I'd take the anvil and with a heavy hammer, and every time I'd hit a piece of silver, it would shatter like hitting a popsicle with a hammer would shatter, because the crystals were large.

RB: And was this during the demonstration, or this was before?

AP: No, this was just prior to the demonstration, prior to the demonstration.

RB: [chuckles]

AP: Then I remembered that in Diderot, when they showed the people using the heaviest hammers, they were always holding the metal with tongs, and I had always presumed that was so that they wouldn't get their fingers hit with a hammer. Then I realized that maybe they were hot-forging it. So I experimented casting some bars and hot-forging, and finally I realized that you could—I put this all together in my mind—that the [as-cast] condition created large crystals of freezing metal—like the popsicle again—and if you break a popsicle and look at the way the crystals come to center, that's precisely the way they go in metal, I've since learned. But if you heat it, in the heat at a certain temperature the crystals start to break up, so what was a long crystal starts to melt into two, three, four, ten, twenty pieces. At that point, if you hit it, you compress it and it's malleable; the crystals will slide past one another.

RB: Um hmm, um hmm.

AP: So I learned. . . . Ah, here it is. [reaching for illustration?] I learned that you can forge, see, then you could cold forge. And for example, here's a. . . . These were to be samples of my book that I wanted to do. And I still want to do it if I can find time to get some funding. I guess these are alternatives. But the idea was to have. . . . This is a drawing that Mark, one of my boys that worked for me. . . . The sections, through this piece, through this ancient coddle cup by John Coney, with a cast carytid handle showing the thickness of the metal there, the thinness here, the touch mark underneath, the sign of the stake, how thick it was here, you know. All the various thicknesses, and by looking at the thicknesses you can tell how the thing is made, and we wrote up the process, see.

RB: Very graphic presentation.

AP: Oh, it's terrific. And what I wanted to have. . . . This would be a double spread, see, and on the next page would be a beautiful picture of the piece, see, with half of it perhaps, a column or two, talking about the history of the piece, and you would have a record.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And I still want to do it, you know. I just haven't gotten around to it. I think I could get a good grant to do it. These drawings don't exist anywhere. I mean, I have them. Do you know what I mean? Nobody else has done them. And I've got, as I say, about a hundred and fifty pieces—Oops; it's all right [speaking of something falling, perhaps a book]—of the most important of colonial silver. It's just sitting in my file. It's just. . . . They're lovely drawings. These [the samples for the book—Trans.] are redrawn, you know, for publication.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: But I think I could show that to. . . .

RB: Certainly.

AP: . . . some organization, and they'd say, "Well, we'll fund the damn thing."

RB: And you, eventually then, were able to show process, too?

AP: Yeah.

RB: This was at Williamsburg?

AP: Well, yeah, then after. . . . After this, then I was, they had this meeting, and I took some chunk of silver, you know, melted them, cast an ingot, you know, see, in this little skillet, all ancient tools. Then I took it with the tongs and I preforged it, hot-forged it, then I quenched it to clean it and fickle, then, under their very eyes, as the saying goes, I made a fork. Just forged it out and showed how you could maneuver it, showed them how you could make the piece, see. So they were fascinated. And at that point in time, this is what they were going to do. They were going to demonstrate the old processes. They were trying to go to woodworking anyhow, because they had a very lovely man there who was building desks and things with the wood colonial tools. And sell them at whatever price it took. I mean, you could sell a thing that was made right there, you know, for thousands of dollars, as against an imitator. Well, it didn't go that way. So eventually they were, when I went back to visit years later, they were knocking out little trinkets. You know, like making rings out of horseshoe nails and junk for the kids, you know, and the scholarship was gone, as far as I was. . . . Now, since then, they have reopened another shop, and I know nothing about it.

RB: Yeah. But at that time the museum officials, at least, thought they'd like to go that way.

AP: Yeah. Well, [Meinor Wine, Minorwine, Meinorwine] Thomas—I don't know if you know this name—[Meinor Wine, Minorwine, Meinorwine] Thomas has been director of the. . . . He was at Williamsburg then, in charge of all the craft shops. He left there, went to [Dearborn] Village—or Deer Borne Village—left there, and went down to Cooperstown, where he's been head of the Farmers' Museum. He's retiring now; I think this June he's retiring. And he and I had long talks, and he was interested in that approach, which is, I would call it, the Puiforcat approach.

RB: But the, probably the economics of thing ended it?

AP: Vision. Vision. It's not economics, really. I mean, if you make little trinkets to pass out to the kids, you're not making any money.

RB: That's right.

AP: They're going to be there anyhow, you see.

RB: Yeah.

AP: And in the back of my mind, what was there was the fact that if they, these processes and the handwork technology, techniques were terrific, and if they would handle it right, they would now do what the English and what the Scandinavians had done. They would bring the great, their own great traditions up to date, and by doing it inspire others to do good work. And in [the] Puiforcat case again a beautiful example, because his son also developed an interest in design, not only just silversmithing, and particularly dynamic symmetry. . . . Gay Ham. . . . Jay. . . .

RB: Jay Hambidge?

AP: Jay Hambidge's symmetry, and Matyla Ghyka and all these others. And he had been designing modern silver in the twenties in the art deco—what now we call art deco. He was doing remarkably exciting modern silver. And Jenson, as a matter of fact, had learned his craft, part of it—George Jensen—when he studied in Paris. . . .

RB: From the elder.

AP: . . . at the turn of the century from the elder man, and gone back. So they all tie together, see, and I wanted to be, very much to be a part of that tradition, I suppose. But I was smelling out.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And the young Puiforcat was caught in Mexico during the war buying silver, and died in Mexico before he could get back afterwards. So the father was fascinated with a guy like me, who really. . . . I showed him my thesis in silver and so forth, and I guess he felt that, well, maybe something nice could happen. So did I, but since I couldn't get a Fulbright, and he couldn't afford to hire my, why it never happened. But I wanted it to happen at Williamsburg. I thought if we got the old techniques, you know, and could show what lovely things you can make, then others would be inspired to do nice things. So, that's the Williamsburg connection.

RB: Well, when that year of that foundation fellowship ended in '53, you went then back to Illinois. . . .

AP: Back to Illinois.

RB: . . . for a couple more years.

AP: That's right.

RB: And did you change your procedure in your own workshop?

AP: Completely. Well, what I did then, I created the equivalent. . . . I bought railroad iron. . . . You know, I found that a railroad track was a forging that was tough and as good as the best colonial anvil. And what's more, the curve, the upper curved surface of a railroad, is very much like the face of an anvil. That is to say, it is sharp on one edge, on the inside edge, and on the outer edge, it slopes down and has a radius on it.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: So when you're hammering on it, you hammer on one edge if you want to get a soft surface, and you hammer on the other edge if you want to get an edge. So it was very, very close. Well, I found out from the. . . . At University of Illinois they had a railroad testing laboratory, and they would get chunks of railroad iron to test them. Well, I found I could get eight- to twelve-inch pieces from them, cut off, and since the railroad track has a flange on it, could fasted it to a stump. That became my anvil. Then I bought a regular five-pound sledge hammer, and I reground the face so that it was like a colonial forging hammer with a short handle and big head. And if you take a handle like that, and on a forged rail, and you take a good steel hammer, and hit a wrought-iron rail, it'll not only sing like a bell, but the hammer will bounce up. So you don't have to lift the hammer. All you do is just start it bouncing, and it's working as if it were on water power. You could pound for hours and not get tired, believe it or not, you know. If you put a piece of silver between there, it just forges the piece of silver. So I would buy then blocks of silver—as I still happen to buy from Handy & Harman, pieces that were about an inch wide and a quarter inch thick and five inches long—and I could forge one of those into a spoon or a ladle or whatever I wanted. Like this piece is, and a lot of other pieces.
Then I. . . . Alma Eikerman invited me, after I got into. . . . That's when I started all the flatware. She invited me to go to Indiana, and I went there one summer, and I had them get pieces of railroad iron and bring a five-pound sledge hammer, and I shortened the handles—they shortened the handles.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: All my students each reground their faces, you know, see, and then we spent all summer happily forging—or three or four weeks, whatever it was.

RB: What had she been teaching? A different method. . . .

AP: Her interest was primarily jewelry, but she was teaching a method she and I had both learned earlier. That is to say, you construct, you treat metal like pieces of cardboard, and whatever you can build out of cardboard, you can build out of metal. See, so it was no forging. So I introduced the idea of forging, which grew out of studies like this, where the thick edge proves that the thing was forged from a sheet.

RB: And you found, felt that. . . . You by then were feeling that that was a more natural treatment of silver than was. . . .

AP: That's right. And it was the colonial method, and it was the easiest method.

RB: Well, the method you and she had learned was simply, what, soldering together _____. . . .

AP: You take a strip of metal, roll it into a cylinder, solder it, you know, hammer in the bottom a little, and then fit another disk to the base and build it out of sheet stock, see.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: If you assume that there is no such thing as sheet stock, you build it [in] different ways. Now, in the colonial era, all they had was skillets and thick blocks. So you take a. . . . Just picture for example, take a five-inch disk of clay, you know, or rubber, and if you squeeze the center of it. . . .

RB: Sure.

AP: . . . it will thin out the center and it'll dimple it, right? Keep doing that and pretty soon the edges of the disk will come up vertically in a cup shape, and it'll be as thick around the edge as it was to start with, and thin in the center, you know.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: Well, that's the way they made their silver. Well, that created a thick rim that was solid, and sometimes they would scrape it to put a decoration on, like in tankards that you'll see, you know.

RB: Um hmm. But you had not been taught that way at all.

AP: Not at all.

RB: And there was no teaching in that traditional way that you knew [of].

AP: Not at all, not at all. My chalice I eventually—my thesis was a chalice—I eventually was so embarrassed by the way I made the damn thing that I melted it all down. I don't have it anymore. I have a picture of it, and it's such a lousy way to teach metalsmithing that I got out of that business and so I was in to forging.

RB: Did you have in your workshop in Illinois, did you train people, were there students?

AP: I had some people working for me, yeah. And I had Alma. . . . Not Alma Eikerman, but Arlene Fisch working. . . .

RB: Was she a student at the university then?

AP: She was a graduate student. She worked in my office. We made patterns for jewelry. I was producing modern jewelry for these contemporary shops, you know, selling it on consignment. See, the Museum of Crafts and the America House, and a place in Chicago, Baldwin Kingry, a place in Cleveland. There were a bunch of places where I was. . . . You know, I was in the business. I was making. . . . I would design something, and I would make the prototype, then I would make patterns out of wood or whatever to duplicate the parts, then I would hire somebody like Arlene Fisch, and she would follow my pattern, and she would make maybe a dozen copies of something, or a couple dozen copies of something, and then I would sell them. And in my workbooks I had lists of how much time it takes to make something and so forth, so I knew pretty well what the labor was. So I was running a little factory, you know.

RB: Yeah, yeah. But you felt that that was the way to go, really.

AP: It seemed the only way, you know. And it wasn't born out of a great affection for the history and the romance of silver; it was born out of the technique that I had learned.

RB: Yeah.

AP: I wanted to use it in a contemporary way, you know. I wasn't going to reproduce silver, ancient silver. In fact, I did, however. I made some porringers for people as gifts. I did duplicate some pieces, you know.

RB: But you would leave the historical thing to Williamsburg, or something like that. They could. . . .

AP: Yeah, as history. I was fascinated by it; it was part of my craft, you kwow. And it's incredible that none of that was taught. Just as I'll bet you go up here to Rochester University, ask what they know about historic furniture, or historic silver, and the methodology, and the chemistry, and the alchemy, and so. . . .

RB: Yeah.

AP: Find they know nothing about it. They just buy the material and make something. In other words, it's an empty scholarship—for the most part, you see.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: That's what's wrong with our American tradition. You know, that was cut off, and the people that are in it don't repeat it.

RB: They work from another process though. They may be taught very thoroughly, right, but. . . .

AP: Well, yeah, they're taught the trade. The craft, let's say, not the trade. They're taught the craft. They're taught to hate the trade, the business of the field. To love the craft, without the scholarship, and without the history. See, so it's. . . .

RB: But they surely work in some. . . . They're taught a craft, so they surely work in, to master certain skills. It may not be the case forging. . . .

AP: Oh, sure. Well, they brought in—like the School for Craftsmen—first they brought in the Dane, John Prip, you know.

RB: Yeah. Well, then. . . .

AP: Then they brought in Hans Christensen. They're both terrific craftsmen, but they come from a great tradition. Prip and I compared notes one time. I learned metalsmithing for the first time in my life when I was nineteen or twenty. He started when he was twelve. He apprenticed in the Danish tradition. He knew more about, and knows more about metal today than I probably will ever know, you know, because he had that connection. Well, we don't have that in the United States. Kids go from high school to college up here, because they get interested in jewelry work in summer camp, you know, and then they make some jewelry. You know, well, I don't think you can do this without the scholarship, without the history, you know, without the consciousness.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: That's what's at stake, I think.

RB: You were by '55 thinking of leaving Illinois, or how did that come about?

AP: Well, I had. . . . We vacationed. . . . You know, from Illinois in the summer, it's an impossible place to live, so about one third of the people head for Mexico or the Lake of the Ozarks. Another third go to California or Colorado. We were in the eastern contingent. We came to Cape Cod and New England and so forth. We used to drive through this part of the country, and often thought, "Wouldn't it be wonderful if we lived out here?" Well, I was also involved in the American Craftsman's Council, so I was getting east, you know, and I had been lecturing around and doing demonstrations and so forth. So I was ready to leave Illinois. We weren't going to build a house at all, until we met a man from Boston who was a landscape architect, and he despised the Middle West, but he had spent thirty years there at Illinois as a teacher. He never owned a house. As soon as he could get away, he'd head back to Boston, you know. So B.J. and I decided, "Well, that's not the way we're going to live." So within a year, we built a house, and a little over a year later we left it [chuckles], you know, and went, came east. First it was the interest of a possibility of a job with Harold Brennan.

RB: At the School for American Craftsmen.

AP: [Yes.] But I wanted to do it. . . . I wanted to move into design, you know, not necessarily industrial design, but I wanted to make the crafts an industry. Do you know what I mean?

RB: I see. Not something. . . . Oh.

AP: Not something as an end in itself.

RB: You were going to bring. . . . Even if it were forging—the things you were doing in your workshop—it would still be geared toward production.

AP: Yeah, it would be the George Jensen tradition, the Puiforcat tradition, making things for industry, designing, you know, running a business.

RB: Um hmm, um hmm.

AP: See what I mean?

RB: Um hmm.

AP: Opening it up.

RB: And when you, Brennan brought you back to Rochester to look it over. . . .

AP: It was. . . .

RB: . . . how did it work out? What did you decide?

AP: Well, it's. . . . I knew Brennan was a graduate of my alma mater, you know. He's a Carnegie Tech alumnus and, as I recall, it seemed that they were really less interested in that than he was in the craft as a craft. And they. . . . Maybe that's a commitment with Mrs. Webb; maybe it's Harold's own opinion of how things out to be.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: But my impression is that that's, that was what was going to happen, and I didn't want that to happen. I wanted to do more industrial design.

RB: Did you talk with Hans Christensen when you visited?

AP: He wasn't there then, I don't think. I think Prip was still there.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: Christiansen didn't come till after I was here, I believe.

RB: And what did Prip have to say about the school?

AP: Well. . . . Frankly, I can't remember. I don't know if I even talked to him about this. You know, I was talking primarily to Harold Brennan. I was going to become a quasi-administrator, I guess, maybe do some teaching.

RB: Oh, I see.

AP: I was going to help him run the school, and strengthen it, but I guess I wanted more of this broader philosophy, and. . . . Not that he wanted a narrower philosophy; he just didn't seem to agree, for. . . . He may have better reasons than I have for disagreeing.

RB: Did you then look elsewhere?

AP: Well, in and around all of this, I had been invited one summer to go to Colorado and. . . .

RB: To a school there, or. . . .

AP: Yeah, I taught at the University of Denver one summer. Wait a minute. Before that, as a result of going to this Craftsman's Council, to the Rhode Island School of Design for the silversmithing thing that Margret Craver had, was responsible for, and working with Fleming, I had met Fred Miller and John Paul Miller. . . . [corrects to:] Fred Miller, from Cleveland. And I think indirectly Fred Miller invited me to teach a summer course in metalsmithing at Cleveland, so this would. . . . I'm losing my continuity of dates, but somewhere along there, I went to Cleveland on the way back from Colorado. Ah, on the way back from Rhode Island. [corrected to Rhode Island] And I taught at Cleveland one summer. Then I got to know a lot of the craftsmen a little better, including Kenneth Bates, who was an enamelist of some stature. And the following summer. . . . And I meet Schmeckebier then for the first time.

RB: Who was the dean of the art school.

AP: Dean of the art school. And Otto Ege and the whole crowd. I had a wonderful time.

RB: These people you were pretty sympatico with?

AP: Completely, completely.

RB: Yeah.

AP: And I exchanged. . . . I made silver for everybody, and jewelry, and they gave me paintings and sculpture, and most of the stuff in my house [is—Trans.] Cleveland stuff.

RB: Hmm.

AP: The following summer Vance Kirkland was at the University of Denver, and he was a graphic

designer/advertising man. And then he's a friend of Schmeckebier, and I suspect, although I don't remember, that he recommended me to Vance to teach metalsmithing there one summer. I went out to Colorado, and I took a lot of enamels, and I had a class there and I had them all build a kiln from scratch, which was really rather interesting. We just bought fire brick, stacked it up. . . . We got Sears and Roebuck heating element coils, and clipped it to the inside of this firebrick box, tied a cord on the end of it, plugged it in, and we enameled all summer. And then we had a big enamel show and sold enamels and did all kinds of things. And also did some more metalsmithing. Then I was invited back to Cleveland, I think a second time. So I got another year. And I got to know Schmeckebier a little better. And so coincidental with my interest in leaving, he had left Cleveland to come here in '53, '54.

RB: Had he impressed you in Cleveland as a. . . .

AP: I liked his dynamism. He was a strong man. He's open, you know, talked a lot and so forth.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And he had a real affection for the crafts as a going thing. He didn't make distinctions. He was himself a self-styled sculptor and practiced his art. He was a very nice. . . . A good man. A very difficult man to work for, and his idea was that the best way to make artists work is to keep them hungry. Don't give them a place to sit down or a place to hang their hat. Keep them insecure. And it was a sincere feeling on this part that they work harder. He didn't intend to be a monster, but that's his conviction. Germanic combination of himself and Saw, the Russian, you know, that. . . .

RB: So he wasn't about to be interested in craftsmen who would go on to become entrepreneurs?

AP: Who knows, you know. But he wrote to me. . . . He came here, and there was an industrial design department here that Tony Heythum, that Monty Sharman had started in the mid-thirties. Montague Sharman was an English fabric designer who came here in the twenties and had a couple courses in design. He's an extension of William Morriss' arts and crafts tradition, and he was a textile designer. He's still alive and living in town. So he started to teach design. And in the thirties—mid thirties more or less—he began to teach industrial design, because it was a hot subject. About the time I began at Carnegie Tech. And then in the mid forties, when Norman Rice came here from Cleveland—from University of Chicago; no, Chicago Art Institute—to be dean, Norman Rice brought in Tony Heythum, Anthony [Antonin—Ed.] Heythum, who was a Czech architect—display designer, primarily—to head up the department of design. And Tony Heythum brought in a whole new idea of how to teach design from a humanistic point of view, and he got a special degree, a five-year. . . . [beeper sounds]
[Interruption in taping]

RB: So by humanistic design, what did this mean in the case of. . . ?

AP: Well, it meant human factors, fitting things to people, studying how they live, how they behave. Also adding, taking it out of the arts and crafts tradition, moving it closer, not just to industry, but to the sciences. Teaching math and physics, not just art and sculpture. So with the five-year program, he could increase the component of the humanities as well as the component of the sciences, and not just teach it as an art course.
Well, I didn't know any of this. I had read about it, but I really knew very little about it. But also in Schmeckebier's first year here, he got into a big argument. . . . Tony Heythum, incidentally, by 1951 or '2, had, was taking groups of students to Europe in the summer, touring the design shows and the rest of it, and he knew a lot of people. He had correspondence with everybody.

RB: So his students were in the mainstream. . . .

AP: Max Bill. . . .

RB: . . . and they were. . . .

AP: Yeah, and he was in the mainstream, even though he was not an industrial designer, absolutely not. He was posing as one, but I don't know that he ever designed a product that was manufactured. He came to design Czechoslovakia's exhibit at the San Francisco [World's] Fair, was stranded here by the war, and then stayed on. He and his wife were in business sort of together. And Art Crapsey, who was formerly director of industrial design at Kodak up here, had gone to Europe with them. Anyhow he died, I believe of leukemia, the summer of '52 or '53, while he was in Europe. And for one year the department, let's say was run by the faculty he had built up. Well, Tony himself I would say was an intellectual, and understood the European tradition of doing things quite well. And, but the people he had built around him were more or less specialists. One was a sculptor who had worked for Raymond Loewy. Another man was an industrial arts shop man. See what I mean?

RB: Um hmm.

AP: Somebody else was an engineer. He had added to his faculty people who would fill in the things he did not know.

TAPE-RECORDED INTERVIEW WITH ARTHUR PULOS
IN SYRACUSE, NEW YORK
DECEMBER 5, 1982
INTERVIEWER: ROBERT F. BROWN

AP: ARTHUR PULOS

RB: ROBERT BROWN

Tape 7, side A

RB: Washington, yeah. Okay, well, this, [teen, continuing] our interview, it's December 5, 1982. . . .

AP: Um hmm.

RB: . . . with Arthur Pulos, and today I wanted to talk about your business, Pulos Design Associates, which was started in 1958, and weave in with that your involvement in various American and international design organizations.
Why do you think, from looking back now almost twenty-five years, you moved from the career of a craftsman/artist/teacher to that of a teacher and to some, in industrial, where, perhaps problem-solving and practical things predominate, as opposed to aesthetic. I may be wrong there, and you can correct me in this session. But why do you think you made that move, apart from what you've already described: reasons of wanting to have your own business and things like that, and not being able to do it in the university. Why do you suppose you moved from being a silversmith, primarily, and a teacher?

AP: Yeah.

RB: Something you were really beginning to do in Illinois before you came to Syracuse, I know.

AP: I think at the seminar in Washington [D.C.]—I pointed out—that these two streams of the craft. . . . When I got into the crafts, I never thought of it as being something that you did on a kind of a very private basis and that you did it this way. I always thought of it as being sort of central to people's way of life, that it was important in one's daily life, and then I found it. . . . Some of this I'm sort of making up after the fact because I don't think I thought of it at the time.

RB: No, I realize. Much of this may not have been conscious, but. . . .

AP: Yeah. But I felt uneasy about it, and partially because I. . . . I guess I didn't like a number of the people that I was getting to know in the crafts—not as persons, but as what their goals were and where they came from mentally and where I thought they were going.

RB: What was it you suppose you didn't like?

AP: Well, some of it was very precious, and very cozy, and sort of like, "Keep my hands busy, I'll stay out of mischief," you know. They had the arts-and-craftsy tradition. At that time I didn't know about the great arts and crafts movement in this country or in Europe, but these people were trying to keep old men and women out of mischief, you know, and keep college kids busy. And there was a strong connection with occupational therapy, where people were doing arts and crafts, not for the sake of the arts and crafts, but for some completely really irrelevant reason—important though it was to rehabilitate people mentally or physically.

RB: Yeah.

AP: Had nothing to do with the craft.

RB: And you felt. . . . [This was a. . . .]

AP: I felt disenchanted. I felt cheated. Because I wanted it to be something.

RB: Yeah.

AP: And also I was finding out that the commissions that I was getting were. . . . I would say they were good commissions, but they weren't very satisfying. You know, they weren't. . . . Well, though I did things for churches and private jewelry and gold and diamonds and a lot of stuff, it still wasn't exciting to me. And I'd begun to, even from my college days, I had been aware of the industrial designers. And I had also become aware

of the fact that a couple of industrial designers that I knew, including one of my college teachers, had himself gone from silversmithing into industrial design. And it seemed to be a natural extension. In fact, since then I've found that a number of people have done this—started in the crafts and then gone into industrial design. And, lately, I guess, I've come to the realization that a lot of these areas that I thought of at the time as being craft areas were really industries. You know, Paul Revere was not a craftsman; he was an industrialist, you know.

RB: Yeah.

AP: And I mentioned yesterday, Stickley, Tiffany, all these people, these were businessmen trying to earn a living and producing something that was sold in a competitive market, and making their way in society the way it was, away from a sort of eclectic kind of world of the wealthy and so forth. And I was disenchanted. I also, even though I was very active at one time in the arts and crafts—the American Craftsman's Society, you know—I didn't like the patronizing attitude, however well-meaning, of a few of the people that were providing funds for the American Craftsman's Council, and the people that we had, one had to play up to, because they tolerated you in a sense because you were a craftsman.

RB: Well, they were, thought of you as sort of workmen of another sort?

AP: Poor, a humble person that they would sort of provide. . . . If you gave them a good meal, he'd work for you, you know, this kind of a thing. I don't know. I felt it wasn't my world. And. . . .

RB: You felt that there was, having been this tradition in the past, at least, of the businessman/craftsman you could be the same. You could work out the. . . .

AP: Well, when I had a shop at, when I was at the University of Illinois, remember I said Arlene Fisch was working for me, and I was beginning to manufacture in small numbers. . . .

RB: Already.

AP: . . . I had also, I think the biggest realization, now that I think back on it, was the fact that I could manufacture jewelry or silver or enamels up to a point by hand. You could make one piece certainly, one unique piece. You saw a lot of drawings yesterday.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: I've got acres of these kinds of exploratory drawings. I could make one piece, maybe I could make a half a dozen, maybe I could make a dozen pieces, you know. Those long spoons that I won the first prize for at Wichita, I ended up making six or seven sets by hand, and then I began to realize, "If I'm going to make any more, I better buy some tools. I'm not going to sit here the rest of my life pounding out spoons one at a time," you know, "because somebody would like some handmade spoons." So the same way in jewelry. I learned that the next stage is to go into production. And when I was on a Ford grant in the east there, I visited East Taunton, all these jewelry back-alley shops. In fact I went to some of the shows and realized what a grubby business it was, and how it was a dog-eat-dog . . . at that level. And it was putting together quick costume jewelry with findings, you know, fighting to market them, and whatever you don't sell you ship to South America. You sell it at carnivals and. . . . I had a very, very bad taste about that entire industry.

RB: That would be the production side of, say, silversmithing.

AP: Yeah, that was the extension.

RB: Yeah.

AP: The natural extension of what I loved was something that I found despicable.

RB: But on the other hand, you were finding with very few tools and meager equipment you couldn't really do very much. So you were in a quandary.

AP: I could continue making it.

RB: But you would be spending a lot of time. . . .

AP: Yeah.

RB: . . . and you wouldn't keep up with what you liked to. . . . I mean, you liked to, maybe into new forms, as well.

AP: Well, and also I felt that, I suppose, that it's. . . . I felt more challenged. You know, I could handle the art and the design side, you know.

RB: Yeah.

AP: And at a certain point there, I guess I was as much in the front edge of what was going on in jewelry and silver as anybody.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: Well, it's like suddenly finding out, "Well, you're there, and it's not really very satisfying." And I think I did a lot of very nice silver pioneering. I think I had some flatware that was as good as anybody's internationally and is still good, you know. But there's no place to go with it. See, I make a piece for one person here, and a piece for there, and my biggest thing was exchanging it with artists, primarily.

RB: If you'd gone into production you'd saw the sleaziness of that, and how they cut corners.

AP: I wouldn't have made it in production, because if you look around today and say, "Well, where did Alan Adler go? And where did Porter Blanchard go? And how about the Stones?" [Arthur and Elizabeth B. Stone, Gardner, MA—Ed.] Look at the people who try to make a living with their own design in silver, and they're gone.

RB: Yeah.

AP: You know, and go look at what's in the stores. If you go to buy silver, go to the best silver shop. Where is the modern design? It just is gone.

RB: Um hmm, um hmm.

AP: There's simply. . . . It's a dead art. . . .

RB: Um hmm.

AP: . . . as far as being a live art. I mean, it's dead in the sense that you can go and buy a Revere bowl in a million stores, but try to find a modern bowl.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: So there's no outlet for the designer-craftsman. So my feeling. . . .

RB: So you were moving toward other design problem-solving _____?

AP: Yeah, I found more challenges. . . . Well, I think part of it. . . . I was, I had some friends who were in the business, and then at the University of Illinois I began to teach some classes for the industrial designers—workshops in form and materials and so forth—and that interested my all the more. Then I tied in with a couple of engineers on campus who were doing air registers for Borg-Warner, and I designed the configuration for them. And that was sheet metal, so it was right down my alley. And so I worked with the engineers, and I enjoyed that, trying to solve with them the problems of distribution of the heat, but also making it fit the house and fit the environment.

RB: And these were things that you also saw that the technical people, like the engineers and then the business people as well, neither of them had the competence to work out the design solution. They knew the _____. . . .

AP: In the aesthetic sense.

RB: In the aesthetic sense.

AP: Right.

RB: And so you saw there could be a role for you.

AP: Well, or the other way around. They seemed to need me, you know, when they could have ignored me. They wanted me to work with them, and I thought, "Gee, that's pretty nice. Somebody wants me."

RB: And so when this led you eventually to setting up your design firm here. . . .

AP: Well, what I did there, I started it there, and then I worked with these creative builders that I got on some other tape [recorded interview—Trans.], and when I came here I don't think that I came deliberately to set up a practice. I don't know, I think having an office. . . .

RB: Well, you mentioned on a previous tape that you hoped you would be researching and doing things in the university.

AP: Yes. In the university I wanted very much to do that, and I just couldn't sell it somehow. And so I guess the kickoff for me here was when I was showing some silver in the annual faculty show, and a man came to see me and wanted to know if I would help them with some design. And his name was Burrows. He was chief engineer for the Porter Cable Company in town here, who made machine tools. I mean, electric drills and saws and so forth. And of course I'd never designed anything like that in my life, but he said he liked the way I approached form. He flattered me, and I thought, "Gee, that's terrific," so I went over to the factory here in town, and I was hired. . . . Oh, I made an enormous amount of money. I think fifty dollars for an afternoon, you know, and he'd drag out an engineer or a product, we'd talk about it, and I'd tell him what I liked and what I didn't like, just like about the form. And it turned out that they had a Syracuse graduate working there at the time, industrial designer—before my time—named Gordon Bentley. But he had transformed himself into a quasi-engineer, you know. And then the real surprise was when I found out that there outside consultant designer, until I was called in, had been my old college professor at Carnegie Tech, Peter Müller-Munk, and he had been doing their work from Pittsburgh. And at that time there was no other independent design office in the Syracuse area at all—several companies had designers—and the area was being farmed by designers all around, from Detroit and Chicago and New York. Loewy's people were coming up here doing Carrier. Peter Müller-Munk was coming up from Pittsburgh and doing Porter Cable. And I guess I thought it was pretty neat [that] I was being asked to do some work locally.

RB: And could you see also that neither of those people were doing very well, say, by what Porter Cable needed?

AP: I wouldn't say that particularly. No, they were doing their job. But I think. . . . They were not on a retainer; it was just a straight, "We'll call you when we need something."

RB: And this man apparently wanted somebody who could be more regularly. . . .

AP: Yeah, and I think also, if I recall, he had not been there very long and he was setting up his own connections.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And maybe he liked the idea that this was a college professor, you know, that he was using, and maybe [he'd] had some internal strength, as a matter of fact, and so I worked there only as a consultant. I'd go over there every other week on a Friday afternoon or something, and spend some time with him. And that happened, I guess I started that about '56, maybe '57, something like that. And then pretty soon that led to, "Would you make a model of it for us? Let's see what it looks like in clay." I got in more deeply with it. And then I was approached by another company in town, Camillus Cutlery. They're on the west side of town, in Camillus—surprisingly enough. [being satirical]

RB: Hmm.

AP: And they make penknives, you know. And this company wanted to make some kitchen tools—spatulas and spoons—and broaden out their line because their penknife business was going to hell. They had made a lot of money during the war making. . . . What do they call them? Machetes, heavy machetes.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: As a matter of fact, for me it was a unique tie-in, because when I came back from service I brought back with me a trunkful of bits and pieces of stuff I'd picked up overseas that I was fascinated by, including a beautiful Camillus machete. And of course Camillus is a Roman name, so I thought, "It's probably Roman, maybe it's English." And I didn't give it any other thought. I still have it downstairs. A lovely shape. Very cruel-looking thing, you know, but I was fascinated by it. When I found out they had been making them here, all during the war, for the forces. So I went over there and I made up, designed a whole line of these spoons and forks and so forth and did some very clever work. And I made the models—I still have photographs of them—out of aluminum and wooden handles. And they liked the line, they were going to produce it, and then when they figured out what it would cost them to get into that new market, they backed away and decided they were going to stay with their penknives. And I've always been amused by the fact that the one thing about the penknife business at that point in time is they knew how much they were going to lose each year. [chuckles] You know, it was, they were a known entity, and had a known market, and they were, they chickened out.

RB: Yeah. Huh.

AP: And they haven't gone any further since. They're still a little company that makes Boy Scout knives.

RB: Yeah, hanging on though. That was at least more predictable for them, wasn't it?

AP: Yeah. Yeah, that's right. And a lot of companies do that.

RB: So did you learn any lessons on how to present things, and how to. . . .

AP: Yeah.

RB: . . . at that point. . . .

AP: Yeah, it was good.

RB: . . . from that experience of being turned down?

AP: Well, I was. . . . My idea wasn't produced, but I wasn't turned down.

RB: Right.

AP: I mean, they liked it.

RB: Yeah.

AP: They just wouldn't go that far. Now maybe they saw it and thought it was horrible, you know. But remember I told you about Ararat, this other international group that I formed some years later. Well, this was the line that I gave the Italian, the Mexican member of our group, Villason, that he was going to market in Mexico.

RB: Ah.

AP: In this context, I'm more like a European designer, as I know them now, who are developing something all the time. They work on projects on their own back burner. They develop projects, you know, and then they go to find a place to make them, whereas a lot of the American industrials are trained not to do anything unless they get some upfront money and do the designing, and you let the client work on it.

RB: Oh, I see.

AP: Do you see what I mean? We design sort of after the fact—the American designers.

RB: Yeah.

AP: The client has a need, a market, and he comes and finds a designer. The designer gets paid and gets off.

RB: Yeah, yeah, first.

AP: The Europeans, an awful lot of them, they work on their own things, find their own clients, get their name attached to it, build their reputation, so in a weird way it's the craftsman philosophy. . . .

RB: Yeah.

AP: . . . transposed into industry.

RB: Whereas one result is here the designer is anonymous, generally speaking.

AP: Yes.

RB: With rare exceptions.

AP: And they're constructed anonymously.

RB: Yeah.

AP: In other words. . . .

RB: In other words, Raymond Loewy's designs are the exception, say, for Studebaker and something else, when his name was attached. But that's an exception.

AP: Well, there's another very interesting angle in that, related to the founding of the American Society of Industrial Designers, the old S-I-D, as they called us, Society of Industrial Designers. The giants, as we like to call them, the pioneers, the names that put that together, wrote into their own, into the rules of the organization that one should not promote himself. Well, and then they would, they had a blackball system that would take in other designers. The fact is that they had already promoted themselves. You know, they were already names. . . .

RB: Yeah.

AP: And if I wanted to join them, I had to promise not to make myself a name.

RB: So how could you make yourself anything?

AP: Well, then they had it made. And it's one of the curses, I think, of the American industrial design profession that we teach it in school and everybody thinks that unless you have a client you don't design. You don't do any speculative work, you don't take any chances, you know. and my last two or three years here at Syracuse I realized how wrong that was, and I've been encouraging all the students to be entrepreneurs. You know, to go out and push for their own ideas. "Don't wait for a client. If you can't get a job, start an industry." You know, "because you have imagination, and so forth." So. . . .

RB: Gradually you got other people coming to you, and by '58 you formed. . . .

AP: Yeah, well, the. . . . When it turned out, when the Porter Cable thing developed and it . . . and I split up with the people I was going to work with on campus, I realized I had to do it on my own outside, and then I got a small retainer from Porter Cable to do work steadily, so that meant, "Well, at least every month there's some money coming in." And I used that to rent the spot in DeWitt there, a little back room, and I hired my first employee, Dick Chapman. He was just out of school, very talented man. And we started to work. And actually I had one room, and I had a card table for a desk, and one of these yacht chairs—you know, these folding chairs?

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And I had a couple of sawhorses and a couple of doors for drawing tables. I'd scrounged a wooden coat hanger, coat rack somewhere; we had that. I bought myself a little filing cabinet, that was part a filing cabinet, so we started our little business there, and we kept our records. There was just the two of us. And then Porter Cable decided to go into the tractor business, a riding tractor. So all of a sudden we had this big job to do, and I hired a couple students to work with us one summer while we were there. And then at that time I wasn't going to incorporate, but. . . .

RB: You mentioned on an earlier tape that it was to your advantage, you found, because of the tax.

AP: Yeah, well, the notion was that designers did not incorporate, because if you incorporated, then that meant that you were no longer a professional. See, did I cover that story before?

RB: You did. You talked about that.

AP: Yeah, it's a very important thing.

RB: Yeah.

AP: In fact they've just canceled that, as I understand it, the unincorporated business tax. It used to be that if you were selling goods, you had to be incorporated. Well, designers had won a case in 1940 that [Walter Dorwin] Teague had acted as a guinea pig for, which excluded them from requiring incorporation. Which implied then that they were professionals. And the fear among many of the designers was that if any designers incorporated, that would be prima facie evidence that they were not professionals. So the idea was you should not incorporate. Well, I decided that was a lot of malarkey, so I went ahead and incorporated. And I think I had to have two thousand dollars, and two thousand shares at a buck apiece, or something like that. It was no big deal. So I set up the business as an independent thing, and I became an employee of the business. And then in very short order, I got some other clients. I think the word went around inside the business community that there was a guy locally that was doing design, and there was no other design office in the area to speak of. General Electric had a staff; there were some designers at Crouse Hinds, and some of these other companies.

RB: Would General Electric have called upon you at this point? Or they had their own.

AP: No. No, they had their own. In fact, they had a very strong group over there. This was General Electric radio, television, hi-fi. . . . George Beck was heading the department. They must have had—I'm going to guess—fifteen or twenty designers cranking out a lot of stuff. They had a chapter of IDI, the Industrial Designers Institute, there.

RB: Which meant what?

AP: That was. . . .

RB: That they were big enough to. . . .

AP: No, it meant that George himself was involved, and they had built up a little local community. And as a matter of fact I should also mention that they helped me a lot when I first came. They had. . . . They were on the outs, or had nothing at all to do with the previous group—the Tony Heythum, Dick Koontz group. They had nothing to do with them.

RB: You mean the people who had been at the university?

AP: University. They considered. . . . Each hated the other, in a sense. And I just called George Beck and Dick Montmeat, and Bob Robb, that were over there and said, "I needed some help. Would you come over." And they came over, and they gave some lectures to the students, and got us back into the local swing that way. I think it was a good move. I needed them, too. I needed the reassurance that I was okay, and I needed to prove to the students on campus that this wasn't just an idle replacement of a faculty. So they helped; they helped me a lot. But I didn't work for them. I didn't do any design work for them. And later on, when I had some chances to work for them, I wouldn't—in the sense that usually what they wanted was a satellite service. In other words, they had too much work to get out that weekend, would I please help them, you know. And I guess I was either too stupid or too proud. I just wouldn't provide a satellite service. I did do some work on special projects for them later on.
But I picked up some other clients. We picked up Dietz. So we had Porter Cable. We were doing riding lawnmowers and tractors and power tools. And then I had the R.E. Dietz Company, and they make. . . . We did hazard warning lights for them. We did a very nice light that has a battery in it, and you hang it on the telephone pole at night, and it flashes, you know, to protect people.

RB: Well, these were things you didn't do speculatively. They would typically. . . .

AP: None of this, none of this.

RB: They would approach you. . . .

AP: That's right.

RB: They would say, "Here's what we want to do, but we don't know how to design it."

AP: I did nothing speculative, nothing.

RB: But in general they were rather naive about how to package it. Their concern was selling against competitors.

AP: Well, also this was a booming period, the postwar era, when companies could sell damn near anything, and everybody was rushing, you know. Also design, I suspect at that point in time, design was hot stuff. It was good to have designers, you know. Cars had fins. . . .

RB: Yeah.

AP: And everything was rolling.

RB: Right.

AP: So every company felt—this is my opinion—that unless the thing had been blessed with design. . . .

RB: And had a very distinctive look, right?

AP: Yeah, and it was. . . .

RB: Like a car with its fins?

AP: Right, and many of them were also taking prewar products, or military products, transposing them for consumer sales, see. . . .

RB: Um hmm.

AP: . . . and they needed the look—the boom, the aesthetic postwar boom that people ridicule so much. The orgy, as I call it, was on. And, you know, you'd go from the fins on an automobile to warning lights and barricades, and we did a remote control—what was it?—light for Dietz, for example. We had a little electrical pot inside the car, and you could move it left or right, or up or down, and then the spotlight would move outside the car, you know, when people put spotlights on their car. They don't do that so much anymore, come to think of it, but there was a time. . . .

RB: Yeah.

AP: . . . when a lot of cars had spotlights on them. And we did a spotlight for them that was streamlined, and it fit the current idiom, the aesthetic idiom of the things. I have all the drawings in my file at PDA. You know, so we did that for them. And we worked quite amicably with them. But most of that was. . . . They were job contracts. You know what I mean?

RB: [shakes head no?]

AP: Well, they would. . . . We didn't have a retainer with them. They would just simply call us up and say, "Would you come over and look at this project?" And we'd go over and they'd say, "We need some ideas in a couple of weeks."

RB: But you found that was better than negotiating a retainer.

AP: No, it just. . . . I would rather have a retainer. Retainers are nice, because you agree on what an overall figure will be for the year. . . .

RB: Right.

AP: . . . and you build against that. . . .

RB: Yes.

AP: . . . and you have a minimum guarantee and they have a maximum guarantee, you know.

RB: Yeah.

AP: And retainers are good, but most. . . . Out of the fifty-some jobs that I've had, you find that most of them are job contracts. Like there's one that ran for a year. Here's one for two years.

RB: That's a _____ _____.

AP: This becomes a retainer. A retainer you have a guarantee for a year.

RB: Yeah.

AP: Which means that you can put on a half a person. . . .

RB: Right.

AP: . . . or you can allocate a certain number of hours.

RB: At that point these Syracuse-area industries weren't willing to go that far.

AP: No, I had a small retainer from Porter Cable; that was all, see. The others were job contracts.

RB: Were you getting involved by then with the societies—industrial design?

AP: Well, let's see how that happened.

RB: That early, in the late fifties?

AP: Yeah, the. . . . Schmeckebier and I went to a meeting in Washington, and it must have been. . . . Let me guess it was '57, '58.

RB: And what. . . .

AP: A national meeting of the. . . . What did they call themselves at that time? SID, I think. Society [of Industrial Designers—Trans.]

RB: What did you go down for? Why did he go with you?

AP: Well, he was interested in industrial design. Also he had been the other side of the fight that blew up that department before I came at the university.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: So I felt he wanted to make his own presence and his own—what shall I say?—good interest known.

RB: Known to the professional societies?

AP: To the professionals. So he let me go down. Or I said I wanted to go, and then he said, well, he'd like to go with me, and the university paid our travel down. And that was where, I think as I told you, I went naively into the meeting of the board and spoke up—I had all kinds of opinions in those days; I guess I still do—and spoke up, and the upshot of that was that then I was invited to become an ex-officio member of the board at SID. And then I think they changed their name to the ASID—American Society of [Industrial Designers—Trans.].

RB: Why. . . . Was it extraordinary for a teacher fairly new in the field to be brought on their board?

AP: It was. . . . Yeah. First of all, they had no educators at all.

RB: Yeah.

AP: And they were very much against educators. Had been. Because it was strictly an organization of practicing professionals, and no educator, to my knowledge, was practicing.

RB: Hmm.

AP: And I found that very funny, because I was interested in a combination of practice and—just like when I did crafts—I did the crafts and taught them. I didn't. . . .

RB: What was the effect, do you suppose? Or what had it been, by virtue of the fact that the educators had not had practice in the past? They had. . . .

AP: I don't know. I guess. . . . I think the thing was that. . . .

RB: They had much less effect on American design, didn't they?

AP: Uh, yes, sure.

RB: Simply through their students.

AP: Well, first of all, there weren't many schools. Maybe there were a dozen schools at that, as it started off, you know, or less.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: Secondly, the presumption was that if you were any kind of a designer you were in practice.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: A third. . . . A lot of the teachers of industrial design were not in themselves industrial designers, as I was, like me. That is to say, you went from the crafts to the shop to the materials and processes, and then you started to teach a little bit, and then you taught a little more, and you grew into the profession from the academic side. So most of the educators of my generation were not practicing designers. I could go down a list of ten or twelve of them and directly or indirectly they were or weren't, or had been a bit of it here and a bit of it there. But not committed industrial designers. My own teacher in college, Alexander Kostellow, who started the department at Pratt and built it up to such great things, was really a painter and did occasionally a little designing on the side, but never an industrial designer.

RB: What was the weakness of that?

AP: Well, the weakness was—I suppose it's sort of self-evident—that they, like a surgeon teaching surgery who's never committed . . . murder, you know. [laughs, knowing "murder" is the wrong word]

RB: Who never. . . .

AP: Who never cut a body.

RB: . . . cut a body.

AP: But they knew all about it, because they watched it from the outside.

RB: Yeah.

AP: And it was okay, because we tried to bring a certain kind of noncommercial ethic to it. You know, you did form for the sake of form. You did. . . . You solved a problem for the sake of how a human being feels about. We

didn’t pretend to know anything about marketing, or pushing lines, or worrying about client’s problems. You know, we worry. . . .

RB: That was your shortcoming, too, though.

AP: Yes, yes. Both an advantage and a shortcoming.

RB: But you now here in Syracuse were learning this other aspect of. . . .

AP: That’s right.

RB: . . . the economics and marketing and so forth.

AP: Right on the firing line, right on the firing line. And working. . . .

RB: And you blended that in with your outsider design aesthetic.

AP: Um hmm. And I enjoyed it, quite frankly. I liked the challenge. I liked the. . . . You know, the problem is the problem. I found that more exciting than the solution. Because the solution was like I know how to play the tune. I can do it, you know. And I liked fitting what I could do into the problems that the engineer had, and the marketing people. And I respected them very much; I still do. It wasn’t a case of “they were all a bunch of jerks and I knew all the answers.” I thought they were terrific, you know, and I learned an awful lot from them—from both the marketing side and the engineering side.

RB: Well, your fellow designers in practice, they too respected the people in the economic and the marketing side.

AP: Pretty much, pretty much.

RB: Pretty much.

AP: They tended, I think at that point in time, I would guess that they tended to become more closely allied to the business side of the business. In other words, developing a line that’ll hit the market at a particular time, that’ll fit in competitively, that has the latest color on it, that’ll sell. . . .

RB: Rather than with the engineering, technical. . . .

AP: The technical engineering or the human factors.

RB: Which might be a breakthrough then for the human. . . .

AP: Yeah. Because most of them had come out of the aesthetic side.

RB: Yeah.

AP: If they had had an education at all, it was in illustration, or sculpture, or that kind of business.

RB: So it’s analogous to commercial art: bending to. . . .

AP: Yeah, yeah.

RB: . . . what the client needs for a line. . . .

AP: In fact many of them came from the commercial art.

RB: . . . as opposed to working with fundamental research, that aspect of industry.

AP: Right.

RB: Did you. . . . You felt good about this, this moving into this way. How was the resentment. . . .

AP: I was excited by the challenge.

RB: Was there resentment, on the other hand, on the part of your colleagues, present and from the past, in. . . .

AP: Education?

RB: Well, in the arts side, the artist craftsman?

AP: Oh, yes, yes. I think here. . . .

RB: That you were selling out.

AP: Absolutely. Here I had. . . . It was a very strong fear. In fact I think they resented the fact that you made money on the outside. . . .

RB: Yeah.

AP: . . . and that you could make money. . . .

RB: Yeah.

AP: . . . and that you were busy.

RB: And that you couldn't. . . . What about the artists apart from the ones that weren't right here? Wouldn't they have thought that you were selling out your aesthetic simply to be a handmaiden?

AP: Well, I think it's fair to say that that's a kind of conventional attitude.

RB: Yeah.

AP: You know, that the artist would resent.

RB: Yeah.

AP: Just like the cello player, you know, resents the guy who does jingles for radio, you know.

RB: Right.

AP: But that, you know, it's not as true as people say it is. I had good friends in the art world, you know, and I think we liked each other's people. I've always partied with them. My house is full of their work, and so forth. And I like that whole community. And we would rag each other all the time, you know, as to why the hell you're doing this instead of that. And there was always a little venom in the ragging, you know, but no out and out severe criticism. We were just different people. Some ways you could almost say that, "If I could have painted, I would have painted," if I thought I was a painter, you know. And you could almost say that these people, if they thought that they could do industrial design, they would have done it. In fact, some of the painters here—it was very funny—because in their spare time they would draw up sketches for decorations for plates and then peddle their freelance sketches to Syracuse China. Go over with a whole bunch of ideas, and Syracuse China would buy them, just straight freelance. They'd buy the drawing for fifty bucks or a hundred bucks or whatever, and they, maybe they would show these drawings to some hotel chain or some place that might be interested in that design, see, and so they were freelancing.

RB: Yeah.

AP: Some of the good painters were free. . . .

RB: Well, among your erstwhile craft of silversmithing, there were only a minority, though, that. . . . Many of them got teaching jobs, and then they could continue with their practice and exhibit. They did not. . . .

AP: Yeah. Well, that. . . .

RB: . . . have to go into production, but those. . . . For example, the two that I'm thinking of right now, John Prip and Ron Pearson, on the other hand, went into working with industry.

AP: Well, but that's very interesting, though, because the ones that were around that table, by and large, in Washington. . . .

RB: This is the Washington conference in September.

AP: Yeah, were teachers, basically. They never had earned a living as a designer. And Prip and Pearson became commercial designers sort of after the fact, you know. I think I told you that they had come down to see me, after I was here teaching industrial design, as to how to set up a business, and how do you charge, and what kind of contract work do you do, and so forth. And we talked at one time of the possibility of my teaching a group of them from the School for Craftsmen how to do it. And of course I was learning it myself. I didn't, I hadn't been taught it in school. I was picking it up on the line, and also by talking to some of my elder colleagues in industrial design. I could talk quite frankly, and I'd say, "Well, how do you charge? And how do you

break up your accounts? And what is a retainer, and who is an associate?" I was very brash in asking questions, and they were very generous in answering me. So I built up my knowledge quite quickly.

RB: But nevertheless Pearson and Prip are examples of who did go. . . .

AP: Yes.

RB: . . . break away into the business.

AP: Yeah, but in and out of it.

RB: By the mid fifties, they were beginning.

AP: But in and out of it, if you'll notice, you know.

RB: Hmm. Mister Prip then went back primarily into teaching.

AP: To teaching. And Ronnie Pearson runs what, a. . . .

RB: A workshop, but production, too.

AP: Um hmm. I don't know what. . . .

RB: Limited scale.

AP: Um hmm. But it was very uncommon, you know. I mean, they were unique people. You wouldn't find the same thing of the other smiths around the country and so forth, you know.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: But Fred Miller had a connection with Potter-Mellon. So he really had a nice connection with a kind of, the Tiffany of Cleveland, let's say.

RB: Right, um hmm.

AP: So he had good contract work. And, no,a lot of them did it, but I did it in the straight industrial design way. It wasn't my silver that was being manufactured. It was, anything a client brought to me I worked on.

RB: Yeah. And you were the anonymous contributor of the design.

AP: More or less, yeah, yeah.

RB: Were there any other in this early period that you want to emphasize? Any client relationships?

AP: Yeah, I had a couple other clients. I had several clients right in a cluster there. I mentioned Dietz. Vega Industries here in town.

RB: What is that?

AP: Manufacturing porcelain-enameled freestanding fireplaces. They had done a [Citation, citation] fireplace with another designer-architect before I came in that hung on a wall, and then they hired me to do a freestanding fireplace. And I did a conical fireplace that was really quite successful. Enameled, they were enameling them in Tennessee or somewhere. And I ran across one up in the mountains in Colorado years later. It was Vega Industries. And I also did. . . . What else did I do for them? I did two or three things for them. I worked for them for about three years. Oh, we did design a cabinet system which was terrific. The idea they had—it was never put into production. . . . That's one of the things about industrial design—the kind that I have done at least—very often you're hired to help a client research and develop a new line, which they then may or may not go into, you know. But they don't have the people in the staff to do it. So the people at Vega had the idea that, "Wouldn't it be nice if you could buy a knock-down kitchen cabinet, or a bar, or what have you, at lumber yards, and get the metal parts, and then the lumber yard would look at the bill of materials, and they would cut the wood that you need, or the paneling, to fit, and then you'd take it home and put it together. So we designed a systems of extrusions—Dick Chapman and I—that was very, very clever—terrific, I must say. And we built some sample units, and they bought some molds, some extrusion dies. . . .

RB: You mean this was plastic or. . . .

AP: No, the extrusions were aluminum, and these were like something that would hold the sheets of wood together in the corner. And then we had some gussets and door hardware. We did the whole system. Built a

whole bunch of them. And their idea was then they would package the metal in a box, and you would. . . .

RB: Right, the lumber yard would cut the lumber for the. . . .

AP: And they guy would take it home. This was also a big do-it-yourself era. Everybody was putting attics on their house, or building garages, you know. These were all war veterans. It all fit beautifully.

RB: Yeah.

AP: Well, Vega, again, decided that they weren't going to go into that business. They stayed with their fireplaces, and they were making septic tanks, and in a big housing boom, boy, septic tanks in suburbia were big business. Well, they eventually folded that whole business, moved it out of town. A piece of Vega is still left here, but it does primarily septic tanks.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: So we worked for them, and then we also worked for Welch Allyn, which is a diagnostic medical company. And their [probably meant our—Trans.] first job for them. . . . I think it was, they were probably the first walk-in client I had, to make a. . . . It's a story that I enjoy telling the students, where this man called me up and wanted to know if he could see me one day, and I didn't know Welch Allyn from anything. He came in, put this little gadget on my desk, and asked me if I thought I could make it look better. And I said, "Yeah, I think so." And he said, "Well, how much would you charge?" And I very quickly figured out what I was worth, how long it would be, and I very brashly said, I think, as I remember, "Five hundred dollars." And he says, "You got a phone?" And I said, "Yeah." He took the phone. . . . This was at school. And I hadn't tried to bring any stuff into school. So I heard him call somebody and he says something like, "Hello, Jack." He said, "How does five hundred dollars sound to you?" And there's this long pause, and there's some humming [sic] and hawing, "Yes, and so forth." I kept thinking, "Oh, God, I bet I blew that. I should have charged twenty dollars," or something. And finally he hung up the phone and he says, "Okay, let's do it." So what he wanted. . . . They had these hand pieces—otoscopes and ophthalmoscopes—but they had one with a rechargeable battery in it, and the recharger had been designed by one of their engineers, so it had the mechanism in the cover, but it didn't look very good. So that was my first sort of walk-in job, you know.

RB: Hmm, another [joy].

AP: And we did it. They produced it for many, many years.

RB: Did the, was your price out of line, did you later learn, or. . . .

AP: I think it was, my price was low.

RB: Low.

AP: Probably. I put in two or three times that amount.

RB: But in those years you weren't exactly, you couldn't exactly figure what. . . .

AP: Well, also, I was hungry. I wasn't. . . .

RB: This was still very early in your. . . .

AP: I would have done it for nothing. You know, I really, I think in retrospect if he'd just paid me minimum wage, I would have done it. I was delighted that somebody. . . . Flattered that somebody asked me. So we did the job and it led to some more. It led to developing these small diagnostic sets that won some prizes and were in the museum and. . . . They were very proud. In fact, the one job he came to me and he said. . . . This was Bill Moore, who's just retired. He and I have been good friends for a long, long time. And he said, "What we want to do this time," he said, "is win a prize," he said, you know, real proud. "Well, okay, we'll win a prize." So I did this set, in a pocket, like a pocket pen set. But they did a beautiful job of fiber optics, delimiting the light. There's lots of detail there I could tell you about. And I turned it into a couple competitions. There were a lot of competitions around then; there are virtually none now.

RB: What were these competitions in?

AP: Oh, they were national. . . .

RB: Industrial design?

AP: . . . industrial design competitions. Product competitions run by one society or another company. And lo [sic]

enough. . . . We didn't win a prize, but then I got a letter one day from the Museum of Modern Art, saying they'd selected the stuff for their permanent collection.

RB: Huh.

AP: God, I walked on air. I. . . . That's mine. [meaning the timer that just went off—Trans.]

RB: No, I need to. . . .

Tape 7, side B

RB: So the. . . .

AP: So the Museum of Modern Art selected it. I didn't even know they'd. . . . Oh, I know. We had an annual design review. . . . The Industrial Design magazine used to have a December issue where people would send their stuff in, and they'd make the whole issue up of the best in design of the year.

RB: Who selected that? The magazine?

AP: Well, the magazine itself, which we didn't think much of, but anytime I was selected I thought very highly of them, you know.

RB: About when was this at the Museum of Modern Art?

AP: '59, maybe.

RB: Were they quite actively. . . .

AP: They were interested in industrial design.

RB: . . . buying [and] taking a collection.

AP: Well, they were building a collection at that time. . . .

RB: Building a collection at that time.

AP: . . . of good design. And they had a section. Some of it's exhibited as masterpieces, some of it's part of their study collection, you know.

RB: Right.

AP: And they change them once in a while.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: So I was in the study collection, I guess.

RB: Well, then that was pretty early in your firm?

AP: Yeah.

RB: And you were able to, you would then mention this to potential clients.

AP: Yeah, I think in the resume here it probably mentions it.

RB: Yeah.

AP: Plus the fact. . . . I've forgotten also that this annual design review of Industrial Design magazine. . . . Just about when I got into business, industrial designers did not have a magazine. But the magazine called Interiors, which was owned by Charles Whitney and Company, had started to add an industrial design section. So they would write the word "industrial design" on the cover in very small [print—Trans.]. Well, about, let me guess, '57, '58, they launched the magazine called Industrial Design, split it off, and launched this annual design review.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: Well, for three or four years running there, it says something in my resume—one of them at least—I won prizes. . . . No, in the printed resume. Did I give. . . .

RB: Um hmm, yeah.

AP: I won prizes of that stuff. I mean, not won prizes but my stuff was selected, photographs were in there, you know, and I got an awful lot of sort of up-front publicity for Porter Cable work. And they'd have this big photograph and so forth. And of course that gets around, and I think that helped at that point in time.

RB: Well, fairly soon, then, you were getting clients beyond your Syracuse base?

AP: Well, for quite a while though they were still Syracuse- based. So there were two or three others that we did for them. We worked for. . . . Oh, I had an extension. One of these silver things was the Frazier Company. When I was in this competition, one of the twelve finalists of the competition run by International Sterling. . . .

RB: This was when, about that same time?

AP: '59. '58, '59. An importer shop in New York approached me, Frazier. And he was buying stuff in Germany and Italy and so forth, and bring[ing] it in this country. He was also hiring designers to design things for him. And I had a contract for him to design the line of stainless steel flatware. Which I did, and I made all the prototypes in silver. And he tried to interest an American company into manufacturing them to be sold through Frazier's and apparently couldn't, and he took it abroad, and WMF [_____—Ed.] was going to manufacture it, and then. . . .

RB: What's that?

AP: It's a Würtemburg or something or other.

RB: Oh, German.

AP: German company. Very respected flatware company in Germany. And they decided not to. Now maybe they thought the market wasn't good, or they thought the design wasn't good, or the fact that they had a parallel pattern. I don't know why. And it's too bad. I was a very nice. . . . Remember the drawing I showed you last night, the mechanical?

RB: Yeah.

AP: That was one of the elements in that line.

RB: Hmm.

AP: And they decided not to manufacture it.

RB: But did you enter this in the competition you mentioned earlier?

AP: Well, I had entered another design, that I called human factors, Human Factors]. I had become aware of human engineering, and I designed a flatware line that was all based on how a fork and knife and spoon should work in the hand, and I violated all the rules of how, what these things look like, and created some rather strange looking products. I still have the originals. And that won me a place in the competition. But the forms themselves did not lend themselves to traditional stamping methods and so forth.

RB: Yeah. The competition was what? Showing what was possible in silver, and they even included. . . .

AP: Well, International Silver Company ran the competition. They ended up, as a matter of fact, the first prize. . . . They had one prize and about eleven or twelve follow-ups. First prize went to Tapio Wirkkela, who's a very elegant Finn. And he deserved it; no doubt about it. Then Ronnie Pearson was one of the finalists, I was one of the finalists, Lee Dusell—the young man I mentioned. A designer with Yamasaki was another one. And there were some people from Israel, England, you know, so forth. Then International Silver Company took one of the designs and manufactured it and marketed it, and that was Ronnie Pearson's design. But it didn't make it. You know, the American public simply was not going to buy something, you know.

RB: But this was yet another way of your getting better known.

AP: Right.

RB: Although that was not an industrial design.

AP: No. But it was a way I would have liked to be known—known for my own design from scratch, you know, and so forth.

RB: Yeah. And with this new, what you called "human engineering."

AP: Yeah.

RB: Was that a term used at that time?

AP: It was a very popular term.

RB: Yeah.

AP: It wasn't academically respectable. All our students had to take a course, but they took a course called Experimental Psych, and the human factors people, so-called, were all Ph.D.s in psychology that worked in the aerospace industries, particularly the military, in how to handle a tank, and how to fly an airplane, and things of that sort, where they still basically work. There are very few of them in consumer goods, where they should be.

RB: But they were the predominant people [then]. But I mean. . . .

AP: Well, it was becoming the in thing.

RB: Your entry then in that competition was different from anyone else's because of its consideration [of human factors—Trans.].

AP: Oh, yes. Yeah, it was completely out. . . .

RB: And that was related to the kind of problem solving you were doing in your industrial design.

AP: That's right. It was industrial design experience transferred to the silversmithing industry, creating forms that were too strange for that industry, but yet unique enough to attract attention. You know what I mean?

RB: Yeah.

AP: And if it had been picked up, we might have done a lot of different things, you know.

RB: But that was your one, one of your last forays into the aesthetic. . . .

AP: I think so.

RB: . . . purely aesthetic realm.

AP: Yeah, right. And then I. . . .

RB: Decorative art realm.

AP: And I. . . . If it had gone, I'm sure if the line had been produced, I would have done more, you know. And curiously enough, after many years I met Tapio Wirkkela, saw his show in Finland a year ago, and [it] turned out that he knew all about me, which I had never realized, because he remembered the stuff I had done in that same competition, and talked about it at great length with me about the thing. So I was very flattered that he even knew anything about it. And we've become very good friends, as a matter of fact.
And also there was another aspect to that also, the flatware thing. . . . [pauses to think] Oh, I know. Another man, Don Wallance, that I met recently, that you should really get to know. I'm going to give you his address. And Tom Lamb. He's had a contract with Lauffer all, over all these years, that I would have given my eye teeth to have. Because they let him do things with stainless that I would have loved to do. But no other American company would touch. Do you know this company named Lauffer?

RB: No.

AP: L-a-u-f-f-e-r. You'll see them in good shops, and it's basically stainless steel flatware.

RB: But this, for you, did not pan out.

AP: That's right. I didn't get the second job, and so. . . .

RB: Yeah.

AP: By that time I was also busy with other products, you know, with the. . . .

RB: Are there any that in the, that came along now in the sixties that you would want to highlight?

AP: Well, we did Syracuse China. We started to work for Syracuse China here in 1960.

RB: And did they have a series of lines, or rather. . . .

AP: Yeah, they were hired. . . .

RB: Utilitarian or. . . .

AP: Well, they had two divisions. One was a hotel-ware line. The other was their so-called fine china. And this is one of these cases where the designer is often asked to come in as a pallbearer as much as anything.

RB: [chuckles]

AP: In a way. Because they had gotten a report. . . . Their designs had become very dull—Victorian imitations—in the fine china area.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: During the war they had been producing ceramic land mines, you know, that you couldn't find with a metal detector, and after the war they found out that they were producing stuff that wasn't coming off well, and their sales were dropping. They hired some consultants to tell them what's wrong, and what they said to them was that, "Your designs are dated, and you're falling back, and you've got to do something about it." So they hired us to do some design for them. They didn't want us to do hollowware—you know, tableware—but they wanted a gift line. Well, we designed a gift line for them—and a good one; I still have samples of it. And they called in their district salesmen for a big presentation. Everybody thought it was terrific. They invented a new process for achieving this configuration that we had in mind, a way of force-casting—slip-casting and then spin-casting they called it. You know what cast, how they cast pottery? They pour liquid clay into a plaster mold, and then pour it out, and then some of the clay sticks to the wall.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And then it shrinks away from the mold and you take the piece out, you know. Well, to make the pattern we had, they had to spin the cast to make it. And the line was very good, and we took it. . . . We designed the exhibit for it, named it, picked the colors, went down to the big Atlantic City Ceramic and Glass Show. It was written up, there was a hell of a lot of attention to it, and it came back and said Syracuse China had been revitalized, let's go. So they produced it like mad and distributed it all over the country, and then found out it wouldn't sell. And in retrospect they realized the reason it wasn't selling is because maybe the line was fresh, but their point-of-sale marketing distribution people themselves had aged on the vine and they weren't about to push something they didn't understand. The district salesmen were for it, but the salesman on the spot wasn't selling it.

RB: The retail outlet.

AP: Yeah, and the thing just froze up at that point, and Syracuse China panicked and dropped the line.

RB: Well, was this line. . . . What was. . . . How would you characterize it? Was it fairly simple?

AP: I'll show you.
[Interruption in taping]

AP: . . . to get this effect in slip-casting, they had to. . . .

RB: Must be spun into the mold.

AP: . . . spin the mold, yeah.

RB: Well, what do you suppose was there. . . . Looked too modern to the person out in the small town?

AP: Yeah, I don't think of it as being terribly modern, you know. But at the point of sale, where they had the big sign up that said "Syracuse China," this was not the Syracuse China that that salesman was used to selling.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: So they called it "The Gallery," or something. They worked very hard at that.

RB: They did, and the logo on the bottom here is traditional looking, giving sort of an old-fashioned flavor.

AP: Yeah, that's right.

RB: But then you. . . . The form itself is very. . . . This cup, you can hold very well.

AP: Yeah.

RB: It's a vertical indentations, which are widened just at the point where you want to have your finger and your thumb.

AP: Yeah, yeah. There was a lot of design in it.

RB: It's functional, but it's. . . . They're selling at a level. . . . They were out there, they were selling the retail level, which was very unsophisticated probably. And they wanted. . . .

AP: Well, the retail. . . . You know, this would sell in a good gift store.

RB: Yeah.

AP: It would not sell in a small-town jewelry store

RB: No.

AP: . . . that had a line of conventional pottery.

RB: But that was their main outlet probably.

AP: Yes. It turned out. . . .

RB: Wasn't that right?

AP: Well, it turned out that the stores that were selling Syracuse China by and large were not selling it because it was modern. They were selling it because it was old. If you went down to any of the local china shops. . . .

RB: It was old, or because it was traditional?

AP: Traditional.

RB: Yeah.

AP: If you go to any of the shops today, you still won't find this. Go to Day Brothers or Sibley's here in town, you know, you won't find modern china. If you do at all, there'll be a token piece, you know.

RB: Yeah.

AP: That industry in this country is a dead industry.

RB: Um hmm, yeah. There are imported ones, though, that are sold widely.

AP: Some. Not very widely. You take Rosenthal, or take any of. . . . Royal Copenhagen, or what have you. . . .

RB: Yeah.

AP: . . . you'll find it in a few shops. If you go here. . . . Syracuse is a fair-size city. Go into the best shops in Syracuse, you may find a few pieces of Rosenthal. Try to order it, and they'll say, "Well, we'll have to order it for you, but it won't take any longer than six months." So they keep it as a token display, but they don't really market it.

RB: Well, this wouldn't be for a mass. . . . Would this Syracuse line have been for a mass audience? The sort of thing sold at something like a Sears, or a. . . .

AP: No, no, no, no.

RB: No.

AP: This is good department stores and good jewelry stores that have gift lines.

RB: And they're just a group that are very conservative. Yep. Generally speaking.

AP: Well, you don't go looking, as it turns out—this is all in retrospect—you don't go looking for Lennox, which is probably the best porcelain in the country. . . . You'd never go to Lennox for modern design.

RB: Sure.

AP: They don't make it, they're not interested in it, and if they produced a piece of modern stuff, it would be suspect, you know. A few companies at this time. . . . The Japanese were taking over the fine china industry in this country, and at that point in time ninety-six percent of the sales of fine china in this country were imported.

RB: Yeah.

AP: So the American fine-china industry was collapsing. Also even the Museum of Modern Art made a deal with Castleton China and had a competition, and hired Eva Zeisel as a result of that to design a line for them, which was very, very elegant stuff, and that line collapsed, and the Museum of Modern Art got out, and Castleton eventually sold out to the Japanese.

RB: Hmm.

AP: So we were on that edge.

RB: This was another foray into primarily the aesthetic—I mean, in this work what's for Syracuse China—for you.

AP: Um hmm, yeah.

RB: I was going to ask now, at the, at a lower price level, a Japanese or an Italian import are sold widely at cheap stores throughout the country.

AP: Could be.

RB: And a mass group. It's not one, it doesn't want to spend much money, and therefore the china doesn't. . . . You use it just for everyday use. [This group—Trans.] does have things that have modern lines to them.

AP: Yeah, and of course what they did there, too, was that the Japanese would pick up a German porcelain idea that was selling well, or whatever, they would mass-produce it. . . .

RB: Yeah, right.

AP: . . . and come in, and they would sell it through sort of discount-house gift stores. . . .

RB: Yeah, a. . . .

AP: . . . like Azuma in New York, you know,

RB: Well, that's. . . .

AP: . . . or Takashimaya, or they'd sell it in. . . .

RB: Yeah. Great quantity goes cheap.

AP: Great quantities, low price, and, as I say, in the process destroying the American ceramic industry.

RB: Yeah.

AP: And so there's virtually nothing left like that.

RB: And among the people with extra, with more affluent Americans, by and large the taste was conservative, and where they would buy modern design, it would be Rosenthal or _____.

AP: Yeah, I would say [it] like this. The affluent, the very affluent Americans, ninety-five percent was conservative as hell.

RB: Yeah.

AP: They wanted a Staffordshire or Wedgwood?

RB: Right.

AP: That few percent that might be interested in modern wouldn't touch an American product—then, a hundred years ago, or today. They'll go abroad and buy, just like I will go abroad and buy Orrefors, or Rosenthal. . . .

RB: Yeah.

AP: We have. We have a whole cupboard full of Arabia, you know. We buy, Americans buy their elegant products

from abroad. Those who are interested in the modern—or even the traditional. And that's why. . . . That's why I left the field, why I'm disenchanted with this continuing interest. Why I myself am part of the problem—because we too, we buy Danish furniture and Swedish lamps and all the rest of it, and help keep a market for that, for native stuff from ever developing.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: You know, and it's a very serious disease, I think, that the Americans have. And I'm caught up in it, I think just like everybody else. So I lament the fact that I don't get contract work in that area, and yet I contribute to the problem.

RB: Yeah. So the American industry that, is content with just very humdrum things? Or it's been _____?

AP: The idea is that if it's, if it has a cultural base or it's aesthetic, it has to come from someplace else. And don't we do that? We talk about English tweeds. . . .

RB: Sure.

AP: . . . and something or other, Danish silver, go on and on and on. And your shops, your eclectic shops in Boston or wherever, tend to have more foreign things in them. And being foreign makes it good, and very often it is good, because they've honed their talent and supported it, see.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And when you get people like Hans Christensen who come here, or whatever it is. Lots of the foreign talent has found that it can make a fairly good living in this country, but primarily by educating Americans. Not by coming to America and designing, the good designers, foreign designers stay abroad. They don't come to the United States to design for American industry. Do you know what I mean?

RB: Um hmm.

AP: Wildenhain and that whole coterie of fine European designers in ceramics don't design for American potteries.

RB: No. Well, when they were here then they began doing one of a kind things.

AP: Well, you see, that's the second, that's the second stream, the second stream of the craftsmen, designer-craftsmen, who became artists.

RB: Yeah, over here.

AP: Yeah. They can make their mark as artists. You bought a Wildenhain.

RB: That's right. Right. He left his production days behind him essentially in Europe.

AP: That's right. They all did.

RB: Yeah.

AP: So did the furniture people. The only person that I think held on, as I mentioned yesterday, was Jens Risom, who came here as a designer from Denmark and eventually started his own business and became very successful at it, and eventually sold it out, and now is doing consulting.

RB: Hm hmm.

AP: But there were very, very few of that type.

RB: But he probably was bought as a Scandinavian designer—by Americans.

AP: Yeah, yeah. In fact, he had stuff made abroad. Some Americans designed stuff to be made abroad and sold back to the Americans. I knew people. . . . Well, Russel Wright, for example, designed Swedish modern furniture. He designed a line of furniture here, that was similar to this. It was very successful, it was, you know, [when] it was introduced, similar to these chairs, by Conant Ball, but very shortly the line faded out and it disappeared. But he went on designing Swedish modern furniture, and it was made in Sweden, sold back to the Americans, which was interesting.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: That's why when that flatware from Fraziers was going abroad I was delighted with the idea that it would probably, if they manufactured it, come back here and be sold as a German flatware.

RB: Hmm.

AP: Well, that was another interesting experience. We designed, also, a line of china for Syracuse China. We went through all the prototypes and made the models and all the rest of it, and they decided not to produce a line of modern china. Within two years, the plant was closed, they tore it all down. There's just a field there now where they existed, and that was the original Syracuse China factory. It was a lovely, lovely place.

RB: Now it's all essentially gone.

AP: Gone, gone. But the hotelware still exists. You know, they've got a good solid market, partially because the deal that the ceramic industry made with the Japanese was that the Japanese could have the fine-china market, if they would stay away or. . . . They had a quota on how much hotelware they could produce. So the American companies held on to the hotelware.

RB: Are there any other highlights in the sixties that you want. . . ?

AP: Well, let's see. . . .

RB: Any specially important projects for your. . . ?

AP: Pass & Seymour Hardware. . . . We did ceramic light fixtures for a company called Pass & Seymour. We worked Crouse Hinds doing barricades and traffic signals. And then I started to participate in the international thing. In 1961, I was now a member of the board of ICSID, of the American Society, and I was invited to be a member of a delegation that was going to Venice, to the. . . . It was really the third meeting of ICSID—International Council of Societies of Industrial Design, and so B.J. and I went to Scandinavia, and then went to Venice, where I participated in that meeting as a delegate.

RB: And what? Did you give a presentation, or you simply. . . .

AP: No, each country had. . . . The way that works. . . . It still works the same way. There are about sixty-some societies representing forty countries, and each country has six votes, and if there's only one design organization in a country, that's six. If you have two, each organization has three, and then two. . . . Well, the American society sent six delegates. And I went only as a delegate. But while I was there I met a whole bunch of Europeans very quickly, and became very close friends with a number of them—again very quickly. I was the first American educator that they had met. And they were educators. One was Misha Black, probably England's most outstanding designer and educator in the post-war era. He designed a festival for Britain. He had a very successful office in London and was also director. . . . professor of industrial design at the Royal College of Art. [corrected from director to professor—Trans.] So he and I became very close friends quite quickly—partially because each was the first to meet the other, you know what I mean? I was the first American design educator that he'd gotten to know, and he was the first English. . . .

RB: You stress that because the other Americans were practitioners, not educators.

AP: Yeah, that's right. I was the only educator in the group.

RB: Were many of the foreigners educators? You say some were.

AP: Yeah. Well, in. . . .

RB: Depended if. . . .

AP: Some were educators. One was also Paul Reilly who is now Lord Paul Reilly, who was head of the British Design Council. They have a big government agency in London.

RB: Yeah.

AP: So I got to know Paul Reilly, and I got to know Misha, I got to know a French designer, Roget Talon, German people. I got to know the people from Ulm school. And at this meeting I really, for the first time, got a good look at the international scene, and I liked it.

RB: What was the scene, in summary?

AP: Well. . . .

RB: It sounds like a good deal of it was governmentally sponsored.

AP: Other countries, almost without exception, have a federally funded design center of some kind, which is usually connected to trade and industry or export. It's a business organization—for money. It's not an altruistic cultural thing. We had nothing like that. And they had a good practice of exchanging exhibits. And it's kind of funny. The German organization would send stuff to England, let's say, and England would send stuff to France to put on exhibits in one another's countries, so they would stimulate trade, and then also steal a little business from one another, but it helped to create a competition at the same time as it created a kind of an international homogeneity where all learned from each other. Well, the Americans were completely outside that. Nobody in America, unless they happened to be there, saw any of that stuff. Certainly our government wasn't interested or involved. We were selling only to ourselves, particularly in the area of the decorative and domestic arts: furniture, fabrics, china, silver, glass, lamps. You know, that whole world of furnishings.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: We just weren't interested in that. And so they had a good thing going, and that gave me a chance also to visit some of the places. I visited the Kunstfahtskolen and the place in Denmark, and the place in. . . . Kunstfahtskolen was in Sweden. And also in Paris, and also in Italy, and so I became quite interested in these activities. As a result of that, Misha Black was a president of ICSID at the time, which put him pretty high up.

RB: What do you mean by that? When he's "high up," he was the top of that organization.

AP: Yeah, he's the top of that organization, and probably at that point in time the best-known.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: One of the reasons I was invited, however, was that the president just before him, who was president. . . . Misha Black was elected president at the meeting in Venice. The president just before him was Peter Müller-Munk from Pittsburgh, who was my teacher. One of the reasons I was put on the delegates was because of my acquaintance with Peter, and he had asked me to go, and I was delighted to go, so I guess I had his support from behind the scenes, and he had been an educator himself, who left the field of education and entered practice full time in Pittsburgh. So that was my connection, so I already had an in, you see. So. . . .

RB: Now your interest that grew out of this Venice meeting and your visits around Europe was simply that of curiosity, of seeing what was going on many different places?

AP: Yeah, broadening my own horizons.

RB: Yeah.

AP: The upshot of that was that Misha got some funding to set up a working group, as they called it, on international industrial design education, so that two years after the Venice meeting this group of international educators was invited to meet in Belgium. We went to Bruges. That was my first activity.

RB: Was there any, was there a reason to go there, or was it just. . . .

AP: Yeah. What we were working on was trying to develop a set of international minimums for industrial design education. So this group met in Bruges, and I could go through all the names of the people that were there, but there were about twelve of us, each from a different country, each selected with the approval of its national council or government. And we spent. . . . There was a guy from India and Japan and Mexico and South America and Germany and France and Italy, and we met and we had two languages, French and English, with the translation, and we talked whether standards were important, whether we should have them, whatever, and out of that came a report which. . . . In effect it said internationally there should be a set of minimums. It doesn't sound very important now, but it was a very—in that limited world—it was a very important report. Also that same year there was another ICSID congress. They used to have a congress every two years.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: This society, this council of councils, meets every two years in an assembly, and the assembly really is a business meeting, where you're voting your new officers and you have reports. But parallel to that, the host country always puts on a congress which is like a big fair for design, with speakers and exhibits, so forth.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: Well, that particular year the congress was in Vienna. Now at that congress, I was on the program, and I gave a talk of sorts.

RB: On what?

AP: On design—I guess design education. I can't remember anymore. It's in my [box].

RB: What seemed at that time, at least in the early sixties, to be the reason for that organization? People were curious about what was going [on—Trans.] elsewhere?

AP: I think, I think. . . .

RB: Or was there genuine concern that standards weren't very good, or. . . .

AP: No, I think this was in. . . . It all seems so silly now, but this was the euphoria of the post-war that we were really becoming one world. And. . . . I mean, as a result of that, I and of course my counterparts in other countries became a part of an international network, a community of designers and design educators, and I am known all around the world—as they are known all around the world—and we're very much of a league of designers. We exchange information, we have meetings, we come and go, and we help each other. And I suspect it also happened in chicken farming, and in shoe making, and medicine. . . .

RB: Has the effect. . . . Have you seen a qualitative betterment as a result of your actions?

AP: I think so. I think also it's become a general elevation of what a standard ought to be—a general consciousness of that—and then with that the humanization of a lot of this that didn't exist before. This society itself went from a kind of an elitist organization. . . . Misha Black and Peter Müller-Munk and Count Sigvard Bernadotte of Sweden, and the other group that made ICSID happen originally were all very elitist, very international-minded, very tight little group of about a dozen. Well, that opened up when people like me went into it, and it became much more democratic and much broader and perhaps sank a little bit in cultural level, but still established a level which was above the general level. See, so we sort of exist at this level. [gesturing]

RB: Now, what were the standards you've been mentioning, in the report on standards? What. . . .

AP: Ah, I'll come to that, because it came about at another meeting. At the Vienna meeting, incidentally, though, the most popular subject was to lambaste the Americans, and no matter, whatever speaker got up, somewhere in their conversation they said evil things about the materialism of the Americans, and how they were trampling all over the world, and doing this and doing that, and I finally had it, so I asked for the floor, and I just raised hell. And I said they wouldn't even, none of them would be there at all if it weren't for the Americans, and if they enjoyed beating the Americans down, it was all well and good, but please don't forget that their very freedom is something we created. You know, a real good American red-white-and-blue speech. And there was a stunned silence in this big hall in Vienna afterwards, and I was very embarrassed at the way I had sounded off, and Misha Black went over and took the microphone, looked at the audience for a long time, and he looked at me for a long time, and then he says, "I love Arthur Pulos."

RB: [chuckles]

AP: And then he went on to say [he loved AP—Trans.] because I [had] brought them up short, and because I spoke up. And a couple months later, the English design magazine came out with a major editorial, and across the top it says, "I Love Arthur Pulos." And the editor goes on to talk about the fact that I had at least called their. . . . What do we say, called their number or, you know. . . .

RB: Called their bluff or. . . .

AP: Called their bluff. Called them to account for it.

RB: Yeah, um hmm.

AP: And then it was also picked up in some other press, so in a way that one incident did a lot for me in establishing my American position—and the position, I might say, of a lot of Americans, who are sort cowered when somebody said, "Americans are no god-damned good"—the fact that in this world at least somebody spoke up for them.

RB: This was. . . . What lay back, behind that was the size of American, America's exports at that time?

AP: Yeah, not their exports but their arrogance. I mean, we still had troops all over the world, we were still pushing people around. Everybody in America had a car and a new home while their people starving in other countries, you know.

RB: Yeah.

AP: The European cities were just starting to rebuild themselves, were rebuilding them, whereas we were riding high and sending airliners all around the world. We owned the bomb and. . . .

RB: Right.

AP: . . . and when you start to think of all the things we had going for us, the rest of the world was an unholy mess at that time.

RB: But you did point out that though they might be envious, they should also remember that. . . .

AP: You know, just don't forget it, that's all.

RB: But in this group by then also there were people in the Soviet bloc weren't there?

AP: Not yet. Not. . . .

RB: [They] were just beginning; they hadn't come in yet.

AP: They hadn't. . . . They had no. . . . That's right, they weren't in yet.

RB: And what was this, in the mid sixties, the Vienna. . . .

AP: This was, Vienna was '63.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: In the meantime, Porter Cable had been bought out by Rockwell Industries in Pittsburgh, so I shifted with the management and I worked for Rockwell now on a very good retainer that lasted for some years, and designed a very important line of consumer portable tools, directed at the consumer. The first all-plastic line of consumers [meaning consumer tools—Trans.] made in this country, and it grew out of trips I made to Europe, where I saw Europeans working on polyester housings for tools, and double insulation, which then wasn't a fact in this country at all. And I came back and I talked the president of Porter Cable, or Rockwell, power tool division into doing a line of plastic tools. We built the first green line, and then that year they won all the, complete recognition in this annual design review, and they had the cover and main illustrations of this line.

RB: The green line? What do you mean? Is that. . . .

AP: Well, it's a great story.

RB: Is that a trade name?

AP: No, it's like this: Portable tools—use an ordinary electric drill as an example. . . . They're also saws and sanders and punches and so forth. They were normally made out of cast aluminum shells and then ground down and finished, and if they were painted at all, to save money, they were painted to look like aluminum. Well, the company decided to make their products out of plastic. Well, what color is plastic? And there's no such thing as aluminum-colored plastic. So the big issue was what color would be acceptable to the public? There had been a few forays into the field—a tool here and a tool there, non-double insulated—but they were generally a very bad gray color. Well, when we were asked to work on the line, I came to certain points of view with respect to what a line of consumer tools should be like, but first of all it was not going to be aluminum, so it did not have to look aluminum. Second, however, it should be safe, and it should have some appeal to the average person who might buy it. Drills at that time were selling for fifty dollars to a hundred and fifty. This line was going was going to sell for under twenty dollars. And it was to be designed so that you couldn't repair it. It was to be double-insulated. So I had to talk the company into using a color. So we had a big thing in my office as to what color should it be, when there'd been no color before. So we finally picked the most conservative color we could pick, which was a green. And if you know anything about the color wheel, you know that you go from black at the bottom to white at the top, and then around that in a circle is the spectrum of colors, and as you go away from the center they get more brilliant, and the brilliant yellows are up high, way out here [gesturing], and the brilliant blues are down low and they're way out here.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: We picked a green, and we picked the most neutral green that we could pick. Today it looks almost gray. It was right next to the black and white value scale.

RB: Hmm.

AP: And I developed a pitch to go with it. This is part of the deal. [chuckles] I went into a big management

meeting to sell it with samples of the tools, and it's the first time anybody'd seen a colored tool, and I said, "Green. Green for go. Green for safety." You know, "This is not a fun tool, this is for work, so it's got to be conservative." So I sold this management group on the idea that this was a safe tool. Well, they built their whole campaign around it, and they had pictures of people dropping the drill from an airplane, they had a, would come in flying low to the ground, you know, and then plugging it in. They had pictures of a man standing in a bathtub full of water doing a hole in the wall. They did everything to prove that it was safe, and it was green, and green was good and safe and growing and go. So the green line, as it became known, really made Rockwell. Gave them a hell of an entry into that field. Unfortunately, once the ice was broken, everybody moved in fast, and for a year or two everybody was producing a brighter and brighter green, and then Black & Decker went off into orange, and somebody else into blue, and color came into all of these tools, and the tool became something that a woman bought for her husband for a birthday present.

RB: And they're very attractive looking.

AP: They were attractive. So everybody's got them now, you know, and then it fed over into the garden tools.

RB: You say "unfortunate" because you were with the company that was soon in a very dire competitive situation.

AP: Yeah, well, Rockwell had no staying power. They just had that one line, and what's more their reputation was one of stationary and more heavy-duty tools, and they couldn't beat Porter Cable, uh, couldn't beat Black & Decker, because Black & Decker has a marketing strategy that you can't beat. [In previous sentence, AP was correcting from Porter Cable to Black & Decker—Trans.] They've got good penetration, good market share, and they, every dollar they make they put a certain percentage of it right back into improving their production line, so they can make the next one cheaper. Well, once they get that one going, you know, they just knock everybody out. And of course eventually Rockwell got out of that line completely, but for a while there it did a lot of good for them.

RB: But this was an example of something you'd picked up abroad?

AP: The approach to double insulation and the plastic body. . . .

RB: The further use, extension of the use of plastic from what was common here.

AP: Right. And the introduction of color, the introduction of form directed at the marketing level, you know.

RB: Yeah.

AP: Populizing [means popularizing?—Trans.] tools at the same time as they were made safe, so today double insulation I think is mandatory in all toolwork.

RB: But plastic had not really been used in product's consumer products, at least here.

AP: No. Not to speak of.

RB: Yeah.

AP: Not as the main body element. As a matter of fact, when they made the first one, the engineers were so worried. . . . The body was ABS, and they were so worried about it, that they made an internal structure of cast aluminum, a stator bracket, to carry the motor, so that the plastic was just a shell. Moreover, we didn't want anybody to open the tool because they might break the interlocks that protected them, so I designed clamps to hold the tool halves together, that if you took a clamp off to get into the tool you couldn't put it back together again. People were furious, and consumers just gave them hell for it, but consumers didn't have enough brains to realize that the company was trying to protect people. Because before that it was customary to open a tool and try to patch it and put it together. It also had a hell of an impact on the commercial contractors' world because up until that time contractors bought the best drills they could, they watched them like a hawk, they signed them in and signed them out to their men. At the end of the season they took them in, had them cleaned, they put in new brushes, oiled them, put them away for the winter, dragged them out the next summer. So they paid a lot of money for that.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: With the advent of these portable tools of this kind, the contractors would buy the drills and then give them to their workers, and not even bother taking them back. They'd paid. . . . It cost them less to buy the tool than it did to repair it and service it. "Oh," they say, "well, that's terrible. That's planned obsolescence." But not really. Because the way of making it made it cheaper, you know, one-fifth the cost, one-fourth the cost, of what you would have paid for otherwise, and it was literally cheaper to throw it away and get a new one. So it introduced

a whole new attitude toward power tools.

RB: Hmm.

AP: Well, that was a very important design step. So that also helped us as far as our own developing reputation, the green line. I want to. . . . I'm taking too long here. We worked some other companies: Die Molding over here, we did. . . . Oh, they were working with General Foods in doing plastic trays and plastic lids for containers, and so forth. We did some work for them. We did a dental cleaner for them called Sonac, which cleaned dentures, that they sold to Cooper Labs. And it was a funny product, because up until that time if, unless you scrubbed your dentures yourself, the only thing you could do was buy a little jar. . . .

RB: Yeah.

AP: . . . that you put them in with a liquid, and some dentists had invented one that had a little motor that shook the liquid that helped to clean, but you put both false teeth on top of one another, and that made people nervous, and we recognized this, so when we were hired by Die Molding, Die Molding wanted to go into some proprietary products. We came up with the brilliant idea of putting the teeth side by side. [laughs]

RB: Oh. [laughs]

AP: And we made this little container, and I put a blue cover on it so you could see the vibration but you couldn't see the teeth clattering, you know.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And I designed a mark [i.e., a logo??—Trans.] that also created this wave pattern for them, so we did the whole bit, and it was a very successful tool. I think they sold three or four million dollars on the consignment selling that you see around Christmas. You'll see it right now if you go to the stores looking for something for your wife, you might buy her a box of electric curlers, or God knows what. Most of those things are designed and manufactured for Christmas sales. They're put into all the supermarkets, or all the drugstores, on consignment, meaning that whatever doesn't sell they'll take back.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: Well, the stores love to have the stuff, and they do that with toys or whatever, and so they just fill the goddamn place with virtually no investment. Whatever doesn't sell—and let's say this Sonac sold for fifteen dollars. The agreement is whatever doesn't sell they take back. Then they put it back out onto the market, but this time it goes into the discount houses. It goes into [Rayleon's] and this back-alley discount. . . .

Tape 8, side A

RB: Well, we're continuing to talk about certain of these products that were breakthroughs for one reason or another. Maybe they're. . . .

AP: I guess Sonac was the one I was mentioning.

RB: You'd just been mentioning a dental. . . .

AP: Sonac, yeah, and what it did, and how it was redistributed at the discount houses. . . .

RB: Yeah.

AP: . . . for two-thirds of its original selling price, and then they could also sell a product like that at a third level. They could sell it for five bucks, because it only cost three bucks to make it in the first place, see, so that's consistent. Well, let's see. . . .

RB: Well, in this respect, did you pick up, would you get royalties or some fees as the, throughout the deal?

AP: [On] Syracuse China stuff, there was a royalty agreement. . . .

RB: Uh huh.

AP: . . . where I would get a certain percent.

RB: But in general you don't.

AP: Product work. . . . It used to be the designers, the generation just ahead of me that worked a lot in the decorative arts world. . . . In the decorative arts world royalties were common: china, glass, fabrics, furniture,

and so forth. In the hard product world, if we can call it that, the industrial design world, royalties are very uncommon. You're usually paid like an engineer is paid. You're put on the staff, you get paid well, and you get paid up front. The product may or may not be manufactured; your income doesn't depend on the product, see.

RB: But it does mean you've got to have one thing lined up after the other. . . .

AP: Or you have to have a reputation that keeps bringing the clients in. If you don't get them, you fade away.

RB: But by the mid sixties, you had such a good reputation.

AP: I was doing all right. I had enough clients going, and I'm mentioning main ones, but we have a whole host here on this list of mine.

RB: Yeah.

AP: The smaller clients would come in for one month or two months and do a design, and they'd be gone. And also when, any time that we had a slow moment, we'd pull some idea of mine off the back burner, and work on it with the idea of someday doing more with it. You know, and I'd like to be doing more of that. I should have done more of that all along. I didn't work, more like the Europeans, on concepts of my own.

RB: And yet. . . . Do the Europeans have some sort of safety net, however, that allows them to do that? They can work more steadily on speculation or. . . .

AP: No. First of all they work on a much tighter organizational basis. In other words, an awful lot of European design offices are one-man bands.

RB: So they don't have the overhead.

AP: One man. No overhead, nobody else's children to worry about, no insurance, nothing. They just go from one job to another and they're always hustling. It makes them sharper, you know more alert, and they live off their intellect and their talent. Americans in the industrial design world. . . . Well, first of all, the Americans who try to live that way in this country have a tough time, except for a handful of topnotch graphic designers—like Paul Rand and people who are hired because of their particular unique expression, and used only for that, you know. They live off, out of their hat, as it were. The craftsmen, the people in furniture. . . . There are some people who freelance furniture design, ceramic, glass, decorative art, but they're not on a very high level in this country. They're not like the Scandinavians or the Italians, you know. In fact, I was with a Scandinavian family not so long ago, and the young man had just graduated from Kunstfahtskolen, and I asked him who he was going to work for, and he was shocked. He said, "I'm not going to work for anybody. I'm going to work for myself. I've got a lamp design, I've got this, I've got that, I'm going to develop it. . . ."

RB: And then it will be carried under his name or. . . .

AP: ". . . and sell it." Yeah, and if he makes it, he'll make it; if not, he'll quit, and do something else.

RB: Of course American industry is a little leery for the most part of the freelance, the one-person. . . .

AP: Well, the American, the design world that I'm interested in, is not interested in the freelancers. There is, however, a whole segment of American industry that does a lot with freelancers: greeting cards, jacket covers for albums, you know what I mean? knickknacks, gifts, Christmas ornaments, all of the—the superficial, it's called, in popular arts.

RB: But there's what you call "hard," what did you say? Hard. . . .

AP: Yeah, products.

RB: Products, products.

AP: Products: lamps, fans, tape recorders. . . .

RB: They want to see evidence of a small company, rather than a freelance.

AP: Yeah.

RB: They want to work with person.

AP: Usually, and usually they have a problem. In other words, the company that's making, let's say, this machine has a going business, they have a product plan, they know what market they're into, they know what

they need next year, and they're trying to fit that spot.

RB: So they come to a group which solves that problem.

AP: That works on the problem, takes on an assignment.

RB: As opposed to the freelance who peddles his or her idea.

AP: Whatever he comes up with, whatever he comes up with.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: See, and that's a much different. . . .

RB: And in this country that only works in ephemeral areas.

AP: Right.

RB: The level of knickknacks.

AP: Right, and a lot of it. . . . That's right, ephemeral and knickknack are the right expressions.

RB: But how does it, in Europe, how can these can these freelancers peddle. . . .

AP: Well, remember, they also have, they also have what we have. They have the ephemeral and the knickknack. They've got their junk shops and their Christmas cards and their freelancers.

RB: But who picks up the top people's thing, the hard product people?

AP: You know who buys them? Americans. I mean, tours, tourists in Europe.

RB: It's luxury goods.

AP: I'll give you one example. It was told to me at Anko Shop in Stockholm. I visited there once, and the manager was showing me around, and he was pointing out the fact that the greatest percentage of income of that department store is in their glass shop. And their glass shop is primarily [Orefors]. And by far the greatest percentage of sales are made to American tourists.

RB: Hmm.

AP: So Americans who would not buy handmade glass in this country. . . .

RB: Yeah, it's the point you made earlier.

AP: Yeah. And it's a very important. . . . It's a. . . . I don't know [if—Trans.] it's a disease or not, but it's a very important fact.

RB: So in fact these people that are your friends abroad are often freelancers who are selling for Americans.

AP: Absolutely. And take. . . .

RB: So what about the base? The base of industrial design in all those countries is really not that unlike here. I mean, the French, say the French steel manufacturer, or someone. . . .

AP: Yes, it's not. . . . But there's another aspect of that, and that is that the concept of. . . . Until a common market was established, every country was a fortress as far as products were concerned. It kept its products inside, and at one time, as an example—I learned this when I was working for Rockwell—there were fifty-some manufacturers of stationary drills—big machine drills—in France. Fifty-some manufacturers. Their production, each company's production, in a year, was on the nature of like a hundred units. They were sort of built by hand, ground and put together. But the market was closed. Nobody else could sell drill presses in France, so each company was a small company, maybe fifty workers or whatever it is, and they made their tools.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: When Rockwell got in there, they bought out a French company and a Portuguese company, and an Italian company. We redesigned their products to be sold in this country. Also, when the Common Market came into Europe, and all of a sudden a German and a French and an English company could go to France, they could no longer survive on very prices and limited production, so they started to change over into mass production. When

they change over into mass production, they're going to have all the problems we have had, and then some.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: So suddenly you find this famous old French company dissolves. [I. E. Gaye], a turn-of-the-century German electrical company has just collapsed. They're collapsing right and left, as these people shake themselves out, and the number of manufacturers is reduced at the same time as the volume that each produces increases. If you could look twenty years ahead or less, you'll find that it'll shake out into three or four automobile manufacturers, and. . . . You know.

RB: What effect was this. . . . Why were they interested, the Europeans, though, before the Common Market in this international industrial design group? They wanted to get good ideas from each other?

AP: Well, I think it also had a camaraderie and a cultural overtone. It was part of the globalization of design: getting to know your colleagues, you know.

RB: Yeah. But what was the relation of those designers to these . . . a small, say, drill press company in France?

AP: Well, I'm thinking of Roget Talon that I know so well, and he worked for some of them. You know, he'd do a design for them. But they weren't very—at that point in time, they weren't terribly interested. . . .

RB: In design.

AP: . . . in design.

RB: No.

AP: In fact, his big work was done for a Belgian company, who designed. . . . He's from France designing for the Belgians, who decided that they were going to go international with the product, so they hired a French designer. So they began to cross the line. English designers went to Italy, Italians went to Belgium.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: The designers themselves began to cross national lines to work for other companies. And even today an English designer that can't get a job in England will, because there's no market for English-made refrigerators, will go to Italy, be hired to work as a designer for an Italian company that is selling refrigerators to England that wiped out the English refrigeration business, you know.

RB: Um hmm. Well, even today—I mean, since the Common Market.

AP: Since the Common. . . .

RB: Before that they were each national. . . .

AP: Right.

RB: . . . _____ in the group were protected, and yet. . . . So in a way the industrial designers were sort of forerunners by crossing these borders?

AP: Right. And also in [that same context] becoming a catalyst. Because they could bring the knowledge—as I brought knowledge of different things from Europe here, you know. . . .

RB: Yeah.

AP: . . . I also took knowledge of the way we did things to Europe, because I lectured in Europe, and showed how we were doing things. And education was, American education in design was very important. They didn't have much over there. The only. . . . They had the Royal College of Art, they had the school at Ulm, which was developed after the war, largely with American funds, as a kind of a reprise of the original Bauhaus, at Ulm, Germany. The buildings were designed by Max Bill, and Tomas Maldonado, when I knew him, when I knew them, was the director of the school. It was subsequently closed by the rather jealous German academic establishment, and so it's gone now.

RB: It had been a state-subsidized. . . .

AP: At that point in time. Heavily subsidized by American money.

RB: Hmm.

AP: In memory of some martyrs that Hitler had wiped out, the reason for it.

RB: Oh.

AP: But actually it was a political thing to put an international school in the middle of Germany.

RB: You mean to internationalize Germany, to help. . . .

AP: Yeah, I suppose.

RB: Hmm.

AP: There was a lot of that. We had exhibits abroad, they used education. . . . The second meeting of this design organization was at Ulm, this group that I mentioned earlier that met at Bruges.

RB: What, were these. . . . I see. I had the impression when you first talked about the Europeans that they were rather conservative, or there wasn't, there weren't great leaps of creativity, because they were so tied in with their industry. They were often on the staffs of industry, as opposed to. . . .

AP: Yeah, I think you have to, I have to slice it a different way.

RB: It wasn't quite clear. . . .

AP: The heavy industry companies and the automotive industries—the cranes, machinery, that entire world—was essentially engineer controlled.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: There was very little interest in consumer goods, and most of it was reconstruction after the war. And they didn't use industrial designers. The industrial designers, by and large, were in the decorative arts, the furnishings arts—the furniture, the fabrics, the lamps, the silver, the glass, on and on—and that was the world of decorative arts. Most of these designers that I talk about were. . . . They had no design schools. Most of them came out of the world of architecture, and as they teach architecture there, then, and still do, architecture is taught as a profession for all of the arts, including the building arts and the furniture and so forth. So they tended to work in the broad field of furnishings and decorative arts. The industries, including the automotive industries, just did their own thing. There were no industrial designers involved in the VW [Volkswagen—Trans.], for example—or the Fiat, or any of those cars.

RB: Hmm.

AP: There were some body artists in the world of very exclusive automobiles, like the Aston- Martin. . . .

RB: Sure, or a Bugatti, and so forth.

AP: Bugattis, you know. But even there there was a strong engineering connection. The idea of using industrial designers in hard goods, as I call them—appliances and so forth—was really a kind of a Johnny-come-lately. One of the most significant ones was the Braun Company in Germany. . . .

RB: Um hmm.

AP: . . . that decided to hire a man from Ulm, the school, Hans Gugelot, to design their products. And curiously enough for the design world, Braun products are considered to be the epitome of logic and intelligence—a kind of classicism in form, based on human factors, sensibility, durability, and so forth. It's simply not true to the fact, because Gugelot himself was a sculptor. He approached it entirely as a sculptural, superficial problem. He wanted forms that were consistent. A way of handling details. He looked for a line that was consistent, but because his taste was a very dry, Germanic taste, we interpret it all as a very intellectual. . . .

RB: Functional. . . .

AP: . . . functional shape. And the products are not functional, basically. They have, they've tried to import them into this country. They bombed out in market after market. A few people buy them—like me, we buy because we like that kind of eclecticism—or selecticism, I guess you'd call it. And they haven't had any impact worth a damn on the American consumer goods market, you know.

RB: Hmm.

AP: The biggest influence we've had is Cuisinart, which was, also has another whole story connected with it.

RB: Is that French design?

AP: No. That's the cur. . . . Well, a smart group of marketeers from Connecticut found this product abroad called the Roto-Coup, and they thought they could sell it in this country, and they were smart because they sensed this sort of growing gourmet interest in American homes, a kind of a self-consciousness against plastic food. I have it too, you know, I have my little hand grinder and people. . . .

RB: Yeah.

AP: And so they invented. . . . They took the product, changed the name from Roto-Coup to Cuisinart, never told anybody that it was a synthetic product in this country, so most of us that saw the name Cuisinart, we assumed it was a very special product used by French chefs, and it was very elegant. After all, it was called Cuisinart.

RB: And yet it. . . .

AP: And they imported it.

RB: Now why, what do you mean "synthetic" product?

AP: Well, the name was synthetic.

RB: Uh huh.

AP: The idea that it was a French gourmet product was synthetic.

RB: But it was not true.

AP: It was just a gadget. Not true.

RB: Yeah.

AP: But it did its job. It was a good product. So they imported them, and then they decided to start to make their own, so this American group went to Japan and bought the tools, and they built the Cuisinart over there, and they got into a lawsuit with Roto-Coup, and the French tried to get into this country. There was a big advertisement, the last year or so, promoting Roto-Coup, the real French original, and it's bombed. You hardly see it anywhere. In the meantime, Cuisinart has hired American designers to design other products in their line, that are now sold in these exclusive designers shops, you know. [chuckles]

RB: Yeah, well, what does this say about the role of the industrial designer in other countries as opposed to here? In fact, here they work more intimately with industry? More consistently in terms of function and aesthetics?

AP: Yeah, I think we. . . . There's a lot more of us. You know, I think I counted once over a hundred designers within a fifty-mile radius of Syracuse.

RB: Yeah.

AP: That's more than most countries have all together. I mean, designers in industry are a fact.

RB: In most other countries, industrial production is an engineer problem, simply a practical problem-solving solution.

AP: Tend to be, with a little superficial styling on the edge, you know.

RB: Yeah.

AP: And only as they get into Common Market problems, and try to broaden their markets, and marketing becomes important, do they then begin to use industrial designers. They already have the engineers. I gave a talk at the Pompidou [centre for fine arts?—Trans.] in Paris when it opened to a group of French designers, and I accused them of not knowing anything about marketing, and there was a damn near revolution. There was some articles in the papers about Americans think French don't know anything about marketing, but it's of fact they don't. They don't know how to market their own cars. They're just beginning to.

RB: They don't how. . . . What do they not know? I mean, that. . . .

AP: How to market their own products.

RB: Yeah, but what don't they know about marketing?

AP: Well, we would call it being market-wise, to sense where your market lies for a particular product, in terms of price. . . .

RB: They didn't do surveys, for example

AP: Yeah. Not even. . . . You don't even have to do a survey to develop an instinct. You have to have a smell of the market. You know what I mean?

RB: Um hmm.

AP: See. And people develop that. I think we have it. I think I have it. I have a feeling for what's going to go next year. Now, I could be wrong, but I did develop an instinct for it.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: Or you seem to, your antennae are more tuned to what's around you.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: You know what I mean? And your sort of feel. . . . I know that about the time I get tired of a certain color, my instinct tells me that if I'm tired of it, it means that everybody is getting tired of it. My colleagues are getting tired of it. I don't want to paint this product that color. You know what I mean? I'm tired of flat black. If I'm tired of flat black, chances are the product, others are tired of it, and the next generation's going to move away.

RB: French. . . .

AP: Now what direction's it going to move in, see? Well. . . .

RB: So it's instinct?

AP: If your antennae turned inward—you know, you're only thinking about yourself—then you never assume that that's a popular feeling.

RB: [With] respect to the French, their antennae were turned inward.

AP: Yeah.

RB: Not just the French, but most, many of the European designers.

AP: Right. They did it the way they wanted, and they didn't. . . . They considered themselves an elitist group outside the public. . . . Ah, what do you call it? Public sentimentality, or mentality.

RB: So did people as a result not buy most of their products? Within their own country they would, huh?

AP: Oh. . . .

RB: Like in France would the French buy—apart from, I'm not talking about luxury lines—but consumer products designed by these Frenchmen who were ignorant of marketing, would they buy them?

AP: Uhhhh. . . . Well, I have a lot of answers for that one. First of all, they would buy it because the French have been almost rabidly patriotic the past few years.

RB: Right.

AP: You know, and they, if it's even. . . .

RB: Certainly since the early sixties.

AP: Well, DeGaulle-ism is still rampant.

RB: DeGaulle, that's what I mean, yeah.

AP: If they, they average Frenchman, if he smells that it's foreign, he would be embarrassed to buy it. He'd be stigmatized by his people. He has hurt them quite seriously in many areas, you know. With it goes a certain pride: "We've always been number one, we know what's good, we don't give a damn whether you buy it or not," you know, and as a result the products are always just a little bit out of tune with what people want. I had a couple French students this past year, graduate students, and one of them has written to me recently. He's fed up with France. He wants to emigrate since there's no opportunity there, nobody wants to do anything,

everybody's. . . .

RB: Even the manufacturer will put millions into a product, and say, "It's French. You should buy it." And the French may.

AP: Yeah. And I think you smell that now even, see.

RB: Yeah.

AP: And the funny. . . . A funny thing happened to them in connection with Le Car, you know.

RB: Yeah.

AP: They produced this funny little car, which was an extension of the Deux Chevaux, intended to sell for virtually nothing, and to do virtually nothing. But as an advertising gimmick an American talked them into putting the word "Le Car"—which is anathema to French; the word "car" is not a French word—into putting it on as a gag. Well, it took off, and the car sells like mad in this country, providing it comes with a sign on it.

RB: Right, otherwise. . . .

AP: . . . that says "Le Car." And we take a whimsical toy-like attitude towards it.

RB: Sure.

AP: But those who own them love them. The French wouldn't think of that. You know what I mean?

RB: Um hmm.

AP: It's just not their mentality to think of it.

RB: You think of a little. . . .

AP: They're having more trouble. . . .

RB: They do a little. . . . Now, in Quebec it's sold as the "Le Cinc something."

AP: Oh, is it?

RB: But it also, it's, they're somewhat Americanized. It had to have something on it.

AP: Yeah.

RB: Otherwise it looks like a. . . . It's stubbier than a Chevette.

AP: Yeah.

RB: A very minimal thing.

AP: Yeah, and when we also the supergraphics as a kind of a gag, you know.

RB: Sure. But this international association then, in certain quarters has had little effect.

AP: Yeah. But the situation isn't. . . .

RB: [You think] it's because of the dire economic situation of the West now.

AP: Well, it isn't, it also, the problem isn't so simple, you know, that it would have an [effect]. . . . We have an effect on one another—a very profound effect. I just came from a meeting that's full of it. But you're dealing with dozens of nations, with hundreds of pride [sic], and vested interest, various companies and attitudes lost in this morass of what's going to happen to the world, and what's going to happen to marketing, and who's going to sell what to whom, and the fights over protectionism. I mean, it's a very, very complicated mess. So it's very dangerous to generalize.

RB: [Yeah.]

AP: You know, because it doesn't work. All the generalizations, as somebody said, are untrue, including this one. Did you ever hear that one? [laughs] So I find it difficult. I know all, for every generalization I make, I know a dozen contradictions, you know.

RB: So what is your hope always been for ICSID?

AP: Well, I want to finish this education thing, because the third meeting of that organization—we met in Ulm—the third meeting of that organization was held here in Syracuse in ‘67, and at that particular meeting. . . . We wrote a definition for ICSID, international definition at Ulm. At the meeting here in Syracuse, we established the international minimums for design education: how long you should be in school, what courses one should take, and all the rest of it. And the ICSID published these minimums, which were picked up all over the world, including but, with the Americans, and the American design organization reshaped its own established minimums for design education in this country, which are now pretty much standardized from school to school. We all meet the minimum—in one way or another. But they’re strictly minimums.

RB: Now these are. . . . What are those minimums.

AP: Well, the minimums, the basic rule that we came up with is that design should be a higher-level program, rather than a lower level. It doesn’t belong in secondary schools or trade schools. It belongs as, on a professional level. That’s one.

RB: You feel that really young people, it’s premature.

AP: No, we felt that you should treat it as a cultural study as well as a trade. At the lower level, you tend to treat it as a trade: how to carve wood, how to sand, how to file, how to produce somebody else’s ideas.

RB: Right, right.

AP: We feel you should also introduce courses in psychology, and aesthetics, and culture, so that the designer operates more as a professional.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: Then we, the curriculum: we worked it out so we agreed that fifty percent of the curriculum, the time spent in school, in an institution of higher learning, should be in what we called formation. Courses that teach you about form: styling, if you will. But also form in a more classical sense of the character of the whole. Not aesthetics, but just a drill is a drill; what should a drill look like, basically. What does it mean to people, you know? And then, with that, what should the form, what should the form of a drill designed for the average man be compared to the one designed for a linesman [sic]? Or a drill for a doctor in an operating room? How do they differ? So fifty percent of courses should be in form. Then twenty-five percent of the courses should be in information. We have formation and information. Just to acquired information: methods of manufacture, methods of putting things together, materials, economics, marketing. You know, all of this basic information. And then third was communication. How do you communicate your ideas? How do you make a model? How do you make a mechanical drawing? How do you make an illustration? How do you present something orally? What sort of media do you use? What media do you use to recording ideas? So we established this proportion: fifty, twenty-five, and twenty-five. Then pretty much within that, any country, any school, can build it’s courses against that minimum. And that’s the pattern that now we tend to be following. Well, that’s about. . . .

RB: Are these ideals for most, in most countries, because they weren’t. . . .

AP: Not entirely ideals. Because some countries. . . . You take, where the Indian, design in India might work, he needs all of this education, but what he needs mostly is to be able to go into a rural industry and help them make a change in methodology. So they might be more com. . . . He might need more politics, not more mechanics.

RB: Or his communication part has to be. . . .

AP: Different

RB: . . . different.

AP: But remember, there’s still minimums. In other words, if you take a four- or five-year curriculum, you might only spend two years or three years in acquiring these minimums. Now above that, you can have another entire year on technology if you want, or another entire year in marketing, in economics, or politics, see.

RB: But has it had the result worldwide of, in most countries, they’re working toward these three parts?

AP: Yeah. We published them. ICSID published them. They’ve been distributed. You can buy the minutes of the Syracuse meeting. We’re known around the world as the place where these minimums were established. People will argue against them. There’s no law that says that they must have them, you know. But it gave everybody a reference point, see, which we did not have before. As a result, if some kid is studying in Finland or South

America or wherever he is, we know that he's somewhere near this. When my graduate students come here from Korea, or from Malaysia, or wherever, they usually have had something approximating that core program.

RB: Now this program approximated also the program you had been developing at Syracuse University.

AP: Oh, yeah, absolutely, absolutely. And. . . .

RB: Was it [then]. . . .

AP: I don't want to take all the credit from them because before me, Heythum, who was a Czech, had created the first structure, and he may have gotten it directly out of the Bauhaus. I don't know where he got it. Or out of classical Czechoslovakian education.

RB: In fact, was it similar to the program they resurrected in Ulm—or they had in Ulm?

AP: Well, the man from Ulm, Tomas Maldonado, was an important part of this committee. I would say that Tomas Maldonado from Ulm, and Misha Black from England, and I from the United States were the dominant three. We had the best organized schools, and the most international attitude.

RB: Yeah.

AP: The French still had the decorative arts very strongly, the Italians were, had no industrial design schools, you know, and the Japanese were just formulating their schools. So, in a way, I think it's fair. . . . [referring to something he's looking at:] What happened to this? Oh.
[Interruption in taping]

AP: It's fair to say that we set the minimums, the standards, for education. And it doesn't mean that they're sacred. It just means that at least we have a place from which we can grow. But, curiously enough, coming into existence has created a barricade against change. Now, it's difficult to reconvene a group to reexamine them [the standards—Trans.] to see what changes should be made in the light of a changing world.

RB: Yeah.

AP: What we've been doing primarily is helping developing countries acquire the strength to set up their programs. And I have gone. . . . As a result of that, I've gone to a number of the developing countries, either at their invitation or because of UNESCO or because of our own USIA [United States Information Agency—Ed.], to lecture on design or design education. I was invited. . . . The same year that this meeting was held here in Syracuse, it preceded Expo '67. I was on the planning committee on industrial design for Expo '67—again with these educators—and we put on a show of world design education. I think we selected some twenty schools around the world, and the Canadian government built a building for them, and we all had major exhibitions, so we got a lot of currency out of that. I was also invited to go to Moscow for the USIA—information agency—was having an exhibit on industrial design in the socialist countries, the first one to be held there. And the show was in Leningrad and Moscow—and Kiev, I believe was the third city. And I was invited to go to Leningrad as a expert whatever they called it, and I gave lectures there to industrial groups and so [forth] in connection with the show. And then I went to Moscow. I invited myself, as it were, to Moscow, and that's when I met Yuri [Soloviev].

RB: Oh, what did you. . . ?

AP: Well, the Americans were still uptight, and they still are uptight about all of this. In fact, when I went to Leningrad, I knew from whatever source I had that there was this old school of design in Leningrad, called the Mukhina. And I'd never been there, knew nothing about it. All I knew that it was, that there was a school there, been there for almost a hundred years, and as a matter of fact, in my research for my book, I found that the Stroganov School, which is another one in Moscow, had had an exhibit of decorative arts at the Philadelphia Centennial. . . .

RB: In 1876?

AP: Yeah.

RB: Yeah, Stroganov was a great industrialist. . . .

AP: That's right.

RB: . . . one of the pioneering first big ones in Russia.

AP: That's right. And their school still exists in Moscow. Well, Mukhina was also a part of it.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And as was the Cincinnati . . . University of Cincinnati. And it's in the books [probably meant "book"—Trans.]. And Walter Smith, the man you mentioned earlier, discusses these two schools.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: Anyhow, I knew about Mochina, and I asked the American director of the exhibit, and I said, "I'd like to go visit this school." He says, "It's not possible." And he says, "We have no relations that would make it possible. It would be very embarrassing." "Well, I really would like to. Can I just go?" He said, "I'd rather you didn't." So I talked to another man who was there, so one morning we just called a cab, and told the cab driver to take us to Mochina, and he did. [chuckles] And we walked in the door. I think the first Americans that had been in there since God knows when. And everybody got startled when we spoke American and said we wanted to see the administrator director, and they took us up stairs, and it turned out he spoke a few words of English, and he brought a woman in. [probably meaning a translator—Trans.] We had a great time. He gave us some brandy and coffee and we talked. He invited us back the next day to give a lecture. So I went back to the. . . .

RB: Because he knew, he knew about your exhibit?

AP: He knew the exhibit was there, but [in a way] they weren't allowed to come. So the next, that afternoon, the director of the American exhibit came up to me, he said, [speaking in a conspiratorial tone:] "I've got great news for you," he said, "after a lot of behind-the-scenes maneuvering, we've been able to arrange for you to go over to the school. Do you think you could arrange to go over and lecture tomorrow?" And I said, "I think I could make it." So the next morning I went over with the state department interpreter, you know, and the state department interpreter sat in the front row, and the Russian interpreter sat in the front row, and I gave a talk about industrial design education in the United States with slides of my school and so forth, and the Russian would then speak in Russian, interpreting what I was saying, but every once in a while, apparently the interpretation was not a clean interpretation, so the American would get involved, and pretty soon the two of them would be arguing about what I meant.

RB: [snickers, then laughs]

AP: So as a result of that, I then sort of invited myself to visit the Russian institute of industrial design, the Nee-Et-Tay, they call it, all Union, all Soviet Union research institute of industrial design. And that's when I met Soloviev, who was. . . .

RB: Who is he? Director of it?

AP: He's the director of the institute, and he's related indirectly to Kosygin. His cousin is married to Kosygin, or his aunt or something, so he sits very high. He's on a third level, or maybe the fourth level, of the national government, and his office controls all industrial design in the Soviet Union. He's got a staff of about twelve hundred people in Moscow, plus ninety-some design offices around the country—bureaus. One for tractors, one for radios. . . .

RB: Huh.

AP: And everything that is manufactured in that country. . . .

RB: Passes through there.

AP: . . . he's responsible for. And he can stop a factory from manufacturing. However, he lives on the consumer side of the budget, and when the five-year plan allows the consumer percentage to go up, he's living high. When it goes down, he's living low. At the moment, he's living low, you know, which is too bad.

RB: You mean his own personal. . . .

AP: Yeah, his institute is not so important, you know.

RB: Well, this marked the entry then, more or less marked the entry of the Soviets into your international. . . .

AP: That's right. Yeah, I think. . . . I don't know whether I [blowed] in. . . . I didn't start it, actually.

RB: Yeah.

AP: It was started by Paul Reilly of England, who was, one of the first things that happened over there, was invited to go to Moscow. . . . I guess the Allied power did a lot of this, trying to woo their enemy back into the free world, as it were, including Germany. . . . They sent German teams here. . . .

RB: Yeah.

AP: . . . we sent people to Germany, including Japan. I had a lot of Japanese students. We sent people to Japan. Including Moscow. So Paul Reilly—Sir Paul Reilly at that time—went to Moscow. He was shown around by this young graphic designer as to what was being done, and that was Yuri Soloviev, and Paul Reilly recommended to the Russians that this young man was very, very wise, and very intelligent, and that helped Yuri get the recognition he needed.

RB: Hmm.

AP: And then, in the process, Paul Reilly said they should have Raymond Loewy go over there. So they invited Raymond Loewy over to give some talks and show his work. And then subsequently the design institute was established, see. And Yuri was made the director. So there's a connection there between all of these [people].

RB: How effective is that in the Soviet Union? I mean, it has great authority. . . .

AP: Well, it's all effective.

RB: But I mean how effective is it in terms of producing well-designed products?

AP: Umm. . . . I think if you talk to the average American designer, they would tell you they're terrible, ridiculous. If you ask me, I think they're pretty goddamn good.

RB: Functionally.

AP: In every respect.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: For example, Yuri showed me what they were doing, as one example. They were not allowed to produce vacuum cleaners for domestic, for consumer goods.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: The company's need for vacuum cleaners for hotels and offices was being met under contract by importing vacuum cleaners from Poland, or one of the other satellite countries. But in order to make certain that the Russians, that the Russian institute kept up, they would buy the top vacuum cleaners in a number of countries, they would dismantle them, put them all, the parts on a board, and analyze them from every conceivable respect—in function, from appearance and the rest of it—and they would file a case study of vacuum cleaners. Or of this product, or that product. And when I was there, they were just completing a study of truck cabs, and they had built full-scale truck cabs as models—something we would never do, you know—to develop the best configuration for a truck cab—for safety and comfort and what they need for their government, as their part of the government. So they take on these massive projects, and do the basic research, go into it with teams of physicists and psychologists and engineers. . . .

RB: On those grounds, it's unequaled, isn't it?

AP: Hmm?

RB: In terms of research and comparative study it unequaled in the world.

AP: Absolutely unequaled.

RB: But why did you say earlier, why would you. . . . The average, you said, the average American designer. . . .

AP: We like to knock them down because they don't follow our cliches. As a case in point, I visited a plant that makes eye-testing equipment—electrical, you know, equipment. And their graphics by our standards are abominable. You know, we have this sort of notion that if the instrument is a delicate instrument, the lettering has to be delicate. And what's more, it has to be spaced out. So very often, you can't read it. You know, the more the instrument is, the smaller the lettering has to be, see.

RB: "The more," you mean the smaller it is, or the. . . .

AP: Like this, see. [showing something]

RB: Uh huh.

AP: This is an instrument; therefore the lettering has to be small. The Russian attitude is: the human eye is the

human eye. And a fifty-year-old man or a sixty-year-old man that's going to use an instrument has to be able to see it and use it effectively. So it doesn't matter, but that lettering has to be big enough so he can see it without squinting. So you may have a button, but the word that says "stop" is bigger than the button and everything else. And it looks big and clunky and, by our ethic, ugly.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: But in terms of human engineering and the logic that you need, perfect. You would never mistake it. You and I, I'm sure. . . . I don't know whether you do, but I often find myself squinting to see which button I should push, or where the, what it says, you know. They take a very Russian attitude, you know. They say the aesthetics comes afterwards. They also take the point of view that. . . . And they're foolish in some areas. A case in point: They make a, they design a radio. The configuration of a radio is designed at the institute, and the radio, let's say they decide. . . . Soloviev thinks it's funny that we have several hundred models of a radio on the market at any one time. He said, "How many do you really need?" Well, when you get brutal about it, you boil it down to maybe two, maybe one. But we work on a free-market with price points and a line, and trading people up from the cheapest to the most expensive by adding jewelry to it. That's considered good business. You know, we're all familiar with the idea. You buy a car, you have to pay for what's on it, whether you like it or not, you know. Well, they say, "No, we're responsible to the people. We should make, let's say, a radio that sells for thirty rubles, we think, that's aimed at this segment of the public. Their salary will permit them to have a thirty-ruble radio.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: You know, for another segment of the public, we could have an hundred-ruble radio, but these thirty-rubles. . . . So they design the thirty-ruble radio, they produce the basic engineering drawings, and they decide what factories around the USSR are going to make it. So they, it's programmed into those factories. So now here's one at Kiev, and here's one at Harkov, and here's one at Leningrad made from the same radio. And they say, "Since it's the same radio, all designed to the same standards, and since it's under good intelligent control, it doesn't matter where it's made. You ought to be able to take the Harkov radio and move it to Leningrad and sell it, so it becomes a commodity that has no origin."

RB: Um hmm.

AP: That's all well and good, and you think that's a no, "Why not?" see. But then you get the. . . . They forget that people are people. So some guy at the Harkov learns how to use a spray gun a little better than somebody else, and he gets a better finish on his radio. Or some guy who's soldering the works develops a gadget, and he puts it together a little better. So pretty soon people are noticing that this thirty-ruble radio may or may not work, so they complain, you know. But then they get disgusted and they don't buy it. They spend their money for vodka or shoes or something like that. So the company that makes the good radio has trouble selling its products, as well as the company that makes the bad radio, right?

RB: There's no mechanisms for recognizing. . . .

AP: So what they did, they changed the rule while I was there, so they had to put on the nameplate that this is Leningrad, and this is the Harkov, USSR radio manufact. . . .

RB: Uh huh.

AP: The minute you identify the source, human pride starts to come in. The products get more competitive. They get a little brighter. You know, you see the two together, people will turn it over and say, "The Harkov is better than the Leningrad." Well, the American marketing learned that a long, long time ago, see.

RB: Yeah.

AP: So the more they go into consumer goods, the more there's a choice, the more they have to enter our marketing world, bad though it is. Do you know what I mean?

RB: Bad? Ours is bad?

AP: Yeah, with superficialities, and excessive models, and all the rest of it, see.

RB: Yeah, yeah.

AP: But that goes with the territory. That goes with a free market. You know, you can't have a free market in that you and I compete and then tell us what we can do. See, so the evil goes with the good, you know. Well, anyhow. . . . I went. . . . Oh, Jesus. [realizing the time—Trans.] Uh, I think I could wrap this up very quick. . . .

Tape 8, side B

AP: I was invited to go to Tblisi by, for a Unesco meeting on art and technology in 1968, and it was in Georgia, where they brought in people from radio and television and architecture and the arts to discuss the impact of the relationship between art and technology. Bucky Fuller [R. Buckminster Fuller—Ed.] was there. . . .

RB: This was a. . . .

AP: . . . Henry Dreyfuss, George Nelson. . . .

RB: . . . the Soviet government?

AP: Yeah, the Soviet government made a bid to Unesco to fund that meeting. They funded the meeting; it was held at Tbilisi.

RB: What was the. . . . Was there a clear need for the meeting?

AP: Well, in a. . . .

RB: In your opinion?

AP: Yeah, I think so. In a changing world, the aesthetics and technology at some point has some bearing on one. Another question is, What is that bearing?

RB: Um hmm.

AP: See, so that was the meeting. I won't go into the details.

RB: And to you it's always important that there be international contacts. . . .

AP: Yeah.

RB: . . . even if concrete steps are taken.

AP: So we did that, then the next year there was an ICSID meeting in London, and at the meeting in London, Henry Dreyfuss and I nominated Yuri Soloviev to be president of ICSID, and he was foolish enough to accept. We found out afterwards that the system in his country was such that if he'd have run for presidency and lost, he would have also lost his job in the Soviet Union. So he had a lot of courage. And he was elected president. Then that same year, '69, I went to Rumania. This American exhibition that had been in Moscow was sent to Rumania. So I went to Rumania and I lectured in [Brassov], where the exhibition was held—up in the mountains—and also did some lecturing at the American embassy to, in Sofia, in Bucharest [correcting to Bucharest from Sofia—Trans.] to industrialists.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: Then. . . .

RB: Do you have any idea what effect. . . . Was there much feedback?

AP: I had a lot of correspondence with some of the Rumanians and particularly a number of people who approached me surreptitiously, either inventors or designers, people who either wanted to get out, or wanted an idea to get out, and I was. . . . I didn't know who was following me or who wasn't following. There are two kind of Americans abroad: Those who think there's a microphone under every pillow, and those who naively think there isn't anything anywhere. I'm in the second group. I figure that what I'm doing is very straightforward, and if they're listening to me, fine.

RB: [chuckles]

AP: You know, I'm not. . . . I'm really very American. I'm helping America. I'm spreading American ideas. I can't do otherwise. And when I get cornered and be called a dirty American, as I've been called, I say, "I hate to tell you this, but I don't have a drop of American blood in me. I'm completely Greek, and in fact I didn't speak English until I started public school, so I'm not an American—by birth or anything like that. . . ."

RB: And yet you. . . .

AP: "I'm an American by philosophy, by conviction."

RB: Yeah. Which is what an American is, huh?

AP: Yeah. So. . . . But I like, I like talking about that.
Then in ‘71 Unesco asked me to go to Pakistan to give some lectures. There was an Englishman and a German and me, were sent as an international team to Pakistan—just before the war that separated. . . .

RB: West and east?

AP: . . . Bangladesh. As a matter of fact, we lectured as a team in Karachi, then we were sent to Dacca, and we lectured with machine guns on the roof of the hall, and that same day that we were lecturing I was picked up and told to leave by the, by Unesco, and I left and was flown to Lahore. The other two stayed there to finish the lecture series, and the following week the war broke out, and Dacca was devastated. So I, we were there, and of course it’s pretty silly in light of what’s going on in the world to be talking about product development and people, you know.

RB: Yeah, it was. But they wanted that, or. . . .

AP: Well, this was part of. . . .

RB: The Pakistani government?

AP: Yes, but it’s tied in with Unesco’s interest in world peace. . . .

RB: Okay.

AP: And Unesco wanted to support the program because, forgetting the problems with Bangladesh, Pakistan needed to get its trade going and its work, and it had just established, as a matter of fact, a design institute. . . . The Swiss government had just established a design institute, which was a turnkey operation, completely, and we were being brought in as the first team of international experts to talk about design.
And then the following year, ‘72, I contrived an idea of a design, something I called Design in the Americas, and I talked the American [industrial design society, Industrial Design Society] into having a meeting in Mexico City, and we lined up some Mexicans. And I took. . . . I think an awful lot of Americans left the United States for the first time. [chuckles] And we had a wonderful time.

RB: You mean they were provincial?

AP: Yeah, terribly provincial. Well, they still are. They still are. I mean, most Americans, if they go abroad, they’ll, they want to go to the Riviera, or take the trip to Paris.

RB: Yeah.

AP: They don’t go to visit the designers and things.
In ‘73 I became president of ITSA [_____—Ed.].

RB: The Industrial Design, or. . . .

AP: And we went to ICSID. It was in Tokyo that year, and I was in charge of a program of some kind there, and had a seminar in Iran. . . .

RB: But all of this you found was more and more important to you?

AP: Oh, yeah.

RB: Both the American association and ICSID?

AP: Yeah. Well, I’m giving you that string of activity.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: All along, PDA [Pulos Design Associates—Ed.] was coming along. In ‘72 we picked up Piper as an account, and there’s a whole story there. We did everything: inside, outside, graphics, corporate identity. Did everything for that company. And we still have them as an account. But for us they were a very important account. And they’re good people. And let’s see, ‘74, president of ITSA. . . . Oh, I became, I was on the planning committee for the federal design assembly.

RB: What was that?

AP: The federal government started a program called Federal Design Assemblies, with a little funding, I suppose, suspect, from the National Endowment [for the Arts—Ed.]. And the idea was to upgrade the federal

government's image of itself—graphically, physically, architecturally, it's products. And out of that grew a very interesting project that I ran called, for the federal prison industries. Turned out that was a big business in this country, fifty million plus, and the government offices had to buy first from federal industries before they bought outside. And yet there was no design worth a damn being done, and whatever was being done was ripping off good companies on the outside who had nobody to complain to. They damn near put [Tens Rissom] out of business by copying an entire line. The upshot of that was I set up some seminars and eventually got the federal prison industries to appoint a design director, who now controls the design of all products that comes through the prisons. And that's our great folk art group. You know, that's our cottage industry in this country, where being labor intensive is important. [laughs] And so they produce. . . . Actually at Fort Leavenworth they produce beautiful things. These wonderful brushes that architects use—with pig bristles, for cleaning their desks, lovely pieces of wood—are made at Leavenworth.

RB: Well, the sell on the outside, huh?

AP: Yeah. They sell to the government, and then some to the outside. Also the best shoes in the world are made there, military shoes, and shoes, prosthetic shoes for cripples.

RB: Hmm.

AP: They have a place in there like you can't imagine, where doctors will send casts of some horribly misshapen foot, and these people will analyze where the pressures ought to be on the foot, and they'll produce a prosthetic device to help a cripple walk. I don't know why they don't publish this stuff more, because it's really terribly noble. And the people that are in the prison, the lifers that work on them, are very dedicated, you know. But all we hear is of the bad side.
And then I, in '75 I became. . . . Oh, in '74 I designed a plastic [tool bay] table for a company. Also, in '72 I picked up the Dictaphone Company, which we still as an account, and over the years we've done everything for Dictaphone.

RB: So they and Piper are both. . . .

AP: Major accounts.

RB: . . . companies that have allowed you to do a great breadth of things.

AP: We have a retainer; we do everything for them. Unfortunately, I think all contracts run out eventually, and I think in both cases the economy has been tough. Piper has been hit very strongly by the gasoline crisis. So has all general aviation. And Dictaphone's been bought out by Pitney-Bowes, so there's a chain of management going on there, and I dare say in another year, why, we may not be working for them. But all things change. Let's see. In '76, I was invited by the Russians to put on a special exhibition in Moscow of design education in the United States, and the federal government, USIA, funded the exhibition, sent us to Moscow. I selected a team of five design educators—myself and four others—and we and our wives went to Moscow, and for one week we put on a series of lectures and slides of design education in the United States. We had circulated all the schools, collected materials from them, and we put on a damn good show. And it's amusing to me, because as fast as something was shown—the slides—the Russians would borrow the slides, run them out and make copies, and bring them back.

RB: Hmm.

AP: And I think the best collection of American industrial design school work is in Moscow, because we had to give the slides back, and so forth.

RB: [chuckles]

AP: So then we put on. . . . To thank them, we put on a typical American cocktail party. That's another whole story, and I'm not going to give it to you now, but it was so funny, because we took everything with us, including the paper napkins and the lemons and the olives and the booze and so forth.

RB: You mean you brought it out from the United States?

AP: Yeah, we all, each of us took a different drink. Somebody took bloody marys and I took martinis, and then we demonstrated: How do you make the perfect martini, you know? This is an American drink. And the Russians don't know how to drink cocktails like we do, and so the classic for me is watching this woman pick up a plastic glass with Manhattan in it and come over to my table—B.J. and I had the martinis—and she picked up a martini and held the two and looked at them a while, and then she poured the martini into the Manhattan and drank it off in one shot! [laughter] I think we must have killed them.
Then the upshot of that was we were invited in '78 to do the same thing at the Bauhaus in Germany. The

Bauhaus was being reopened by the East Germans— this was in East Germany. So we took the same exhibition again to the Bauhaus. It [the exhibition—Trans.] was owned by the state department and was in Vienna. They sent it to the Bauhaus. And we went there for a week, and again we had the Bauhaus auditorium full of people from the east European countries, all the countries. They sent their top directors of their institutes and educators and so on. And we divided up the program so each of us had a different facet of it.

RB: On design education?

AP: Design education.

RB: But in the east bloc there is much more design education than there is in the west, right?

AP: Umm. . . .

RB: There are more schools. I mean, there are more. . . .

AP: Possibly, possibly. I'd never counted them, you know.

RB: But you never got. . . . Did you get much feedback at this time, or did you. . . .

AP: Yeah, pretty good feedback. We visited a couple of the schools. We had a good time. We went to ones in Berlin, the one at Halle.

RB: I don't know what there is to see in the reconstructed Bauhaus, but what was your, the. . . . ?

AP: Oh, they're putting it back in its

RB: . . . impression it made on you?

AP: They're putting it back in its original condition.

RB: What impression did it make on you? Because it's something you certainly had heard about.

AP: As a piece of architecture?

RB: A [student].

AP: An excellent facility for a private school of design. Still very dynamic buildings, you know. They've been. . . . [There goes the timer again—Trans.]
[Interruption in taping?]

AP: Yeah, I think they have, they had changed it, the Bauhaus, quite. . . . What shall I say? The school is no longer there, but it's using, they're using it as a sort of a conference center.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: They're very proud of the history of it and so forth. While I was there, I got a completely picture of what really happened at Bauhaus, that's almost diametrically the opposite of what the conventional wisdom of the Bauhaus is in this country. And they filled. . . .

RB: What, was. . . .

AP: Well, the idea was that. . . . There was a big fight between what were called the formalists and the functionalists. And the functionalists had tended to be Communists. The formalists tended to be non-Communists.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And in the battle of. . . . I'll sort of make this short and generalize, perhaps, dangerously. But in the battle for the leadership, when they moved from Weimar to Dessau, where the new buildings were built, the struggle got very, very strong, and eventually Gropius and his group quit and left the school and went to Berlin. Well, the people who took over, Johannes Meyer, the Swiss Communist, and his group, that was a functionalist group. They wanted to approach it seriously, with no sculpture and so forth. And yet in some, by some weird transformation, the German group that went to Berlin, and came to the United States eventually—[Marcel] Breuer, [Herbert] Bayer, Gropius and that whole group. . . .

RB: Right.

AP: . . . .came here with the image that these were the functionalists.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: But as far as the people that were left at the Bauhaus is concerned, they were the formalists. They were the superficial artisans. . . .

RB: The aesthetes.

AP: Yeah, and what kicked them out was not the Nazis, but the Communists—that the Bauhaus made life impossible for them. So the Communists took over, and made the school such a hotbed that eventually the Nazis closed them. . . .

RB: Right.

AP: . . . and 'Hannes Meyer and his group took off Berlin, for Moscow. [correcting from Berlin to Moscow—Trans.] And then they brought back in Mies van der Rohe, who was kind of a gentle, ineffectual person, who made it strictly a school for aesthetic architecture.

RB: Um hmm, um hmm.

AP: And he ran the school ineffectually for two or three years, and then it was closed permanently, and eventually he too came to the United States.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: Well, the conventional Western history doesn't say that at all. It never mentions Johannes Meyer. Well, I just brought back with me from Italy an article that Tomas Maldonado, who now lives in Milan, wrote for an Italian encyclopedia, who corroborates my own experience while I was there. Also they claimed that these people invented tubing furniture and all that. Well, they probably did, but if you go into the Bauhaus you see the plumbing that is in the Bauhaus is made up of tubing that's brought from the ceiling—very badly, I might say—down through the ceiling and then bends around to go around some of the cast concrete pillars, and I took a Mies van der Rohe chair, and put it right next to some of the plumbing, and you can hardly tell the difference. So it's pretty easy to see that it was in the mentality.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: You know what I mean? It did come out [nowhere]. This doesn't discredit it, but it gives that reference point.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: Also the railings of the dormitories, so forth, looked like ship railings, and I think it, in that era, the dominant form of modern product was an oceanliner.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And I have a feeling that whole, that call for round windows and shapes and railings and tubing was simply a transference of the airliner, of the oceanliner [correcting to oceanliner—Trans.] details into products. Just as later on the Americans took aircraft details and transferred them onto automobiles and trains, I think the Germans in the early twenties were taking oceanliner parts and making products out of them. It's the same thing. I'm going to give a talk at Columbia, as a matter of fact, this next April in a seminar, on this subject.

RB: Well, this conflict between formalist and functionalist, you've talked, it's really run through your whole discussion of your career. . . .

AP: My career.

RB: . . . in industrial design.

AP: That's an interesting observation. I think that's true.

RB: Yeah.

AP: Always wrestling one against the other. In the end I think they come together. I like [Lewis] Mumford, because Mumford constantly points this out. This part of Mumford I must say I like. He doesn't like the formalists, you know, but yet he himself is a formalist, in the way he uses words and ideas and all the rest of it. But he talks about balancing art and techniques, and bringing them together, giving dignity to the human person

and so forth. I think his observations are pretty astute, you know, actually. But he doesn't quite see that in the end they're really one. You don't really make the separation. I guess that's what I believe, that you just don't self-consciously make a separation, because both ends. . . . It's like deciding which end of the string is most important, you know. [laughs] There is no. . . . The string has no end. The string is the middle part, you know. There are no ends. Or if there were ends, they'd come together. So I have a feeling that that's, the argument is an empty argument, but it provides for a banner that each side can carry while they fight it out, you know.

RB: Is it a fight that still goes on, considerably?

AP: Yeah, I think so.

RB: Yeah.

AP: I think so. And anytime an American even accepts the idea that he believes in form, he's called a superficial stylist. The Italian, however, anytime he does, he's considered a wonderful inventor, you know. They can style and not be called stylists, see. If I style, I'm a sonofabitch. I don't dare style.

RB: You mean among industrial designers.

AP: In our world, in our world, yeah.

RB: I see. Well, is your world a pretty healthy world nowadays, do you think? Industrial design?

AP: The design world? No, I don't think so. I think we've come. . . . We're on a point of equilibrium. And part of it's because I think the post-war rush to fill markets is pretty well finished. Our markets are saturated. You know, all the developed countries, let's say, virtually are sat. . . . You know, anybody that wants a car practically can have one. Anybody can have inside toilets and electric lighting, water, medication, radio, even television set, you know. So the markets have become. . . . Instead of markets that being filled, they've become stabilized and mostly they're replacement markets, with a few old products going off the top and new ones coming in. But when television sets came in, there were no television sets. . . .

RB: No, no.

AP: . . . and so you had to fill that entire market.

RB: Big vacuum at that time.

AP: Yeah, and so you could make almost anything.

RB: What do you see the role then of the industrial designer now?

AP: Well, I've lectured on this thing. I think he is shifting. First of all, he's settling in. Because you have a lot of healthy people doesn't mean you don't need doctors. You still have to have monitors of public health. Well, the designer, it seems to me, is shifting to a position of a monitor of the environment, public well-being, bringing a sense of respectability to the environment that we use, you see, eliminating the spurious, you know, making products more sensible if not nearly as glamorous, you know.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: That's what I call the humanist designer. It's a popular word anymore.

RB: So there in fact is a settled, established role now, for the industrial designer?

AP: Seems to be.

RB: As compared with twenty-some years ago when you were starting.

AP: Yeah, yeah. We're not fighting for recognition. You know, we're still not very well known to the average public.

RB: No.

AP: Or if we are. . . .

RB: But to the public, to those people who are producing for the public you are.

AP: The public we work for we are very well known. They know that [the] designers exist. They may or may not use us.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And we tend to work in cycles, because when the manufacturer is hungry for a product, or he's getting too much competition, he uses industrial designers, and they're going for new markets. When they get complacent, they tend to knock it off. When the company goes into a recession—or the country—then all the manufacturers, as you might expect, including private citizens really, you pull back your plans, you settle down for the tight spot, you know. You watch what you've got in the bank, what you've spent. And companies will slow down their research and development. But they can't do it forever, because technology keeps moving and there comes a time—I think we're just starting into it again—where you cannot make the company any smaller, you cannot reduce your inventory or your products any lower, without beginning to go out of business, so now you have to do something. So you finally start to say, "Well, let's start some research again." Designers tend to get. . . . When you start into a recession, you tend to get hit first. When you start out of recession, you tend to get your action started first. Because companies will say, "Well, we put that program away, let's go." So they'll take money out of the bank, show faith in themselves, desperation even, and launch a new project, see. We've got two or three projects that are just being launched, you know, in order. . . .

RB: Um hmm.

AP: So we think it's changing.

RB: So you're in a sense first fired, but also first hired?

AP: First hired. Yeah, I think that's true. Or at least that's my feeling. We're still slow at PDA. We're quite slow at the moment. But the action is there. I feel it in the companies we work for. We've had calls, tentative starts, you know, and so forth. And so that's changing.

RB: You must have sensed, as you were a president of ICSID in '80, '81, and that was, the recession was already with the Western world, and. . . .

AP: Yeah, and. . . .

RB: What was the tone of your year there? What did you attempt to accomplish as president?

AP: Well, we had a couple of things. The Russian had been president just before me. We had been trying to start, or encouraging the start, of regional organizations of design, and work with developing countries. I had been invited. . . . For three years running I went for Unesco to Bombay, to the Indian Institute of Technology, to help them develop a graduate program in industrial design. And what the government was doing with Unesco money was retreading architects and engineers to become industrial designers.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And that was a graduate program. Well, that program was just finishing, and they were going to start a bona fide program of industrial design. And so that indirectly connected to ICSID because that's where I met the Indians, and eventually I helped them form their own professional society and brought them into ICSID. Now I have two graduate students. There are two graduate students here from India.

RB: But this was sort of a prototype of what you hope will be a number of regional design groups?

AP: Yes, and right now we had a meeting and the. . . . The issue right now for ICSID is a problem, and I think the question that was asked by the Japanese member of our senate, we call it. . . . All the past presidents make up the senate. His question was, "Who needs ICSID?" I mean, we know we were needed in the past, but how do we justify our need now? And the fact is that the general. . . . It too has got a kind of equilibrium. Those countries who are going to have design organizations have them; design institutes, have them. There are standards for education. The recession is rather world-wide. There are the overdeveloped countries, you know.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: There's a separation with the underdeveloped countries. We seem to be moving into an international war-filled footing, horrible though it may sound, you know. So there's some things going on that are bigger than the problem of just making consumer goods. At the same time, we sense the rise of regionalism, sometimes more politically motivated really than product motivated. The Latin American, a number of Latin American countries have formed something called [ALADI], which is sort of anti developed countries, you know. There's some action in Africa on the same line. And I was, I'm invited to go to Egypt, for example, this coming April. Egypt is trying to do something. So the developing countries are feeling their oats, both generated by desperation and also by. . . . Not just desperation but also the will be a, to take their position on the trough, you know, to get recognition. And the young people in those countries are generally very impatient. And you say, "Well, you're from a developing

country.” That doesn’t mean that this person that you’re talking to is underdeveloped, because usually the person that you’re talking to is very, very brilliant.

RB: Yeah.

AP: And this young Indian, or this young African, or this young . . . whatever—Malaysian—sees themself not as an underdeveloped person but as a developed person demanding, in a sense, the things that we have. So I’m on the side that says that we shouldn’t demean these people. We should give them everything we can. We should help them. But we should not try to put them into our own political image.

RB: By that you mean what?

AP: Well, they don’t have to believe in materialism and. . . .

RB: Yeah.

AP: . . . social security, and a democratically elected president, and they couldn’t be a Communist country and still be decent people.

RB: But in terms of industrial design, it means, if they wish information it’s available.

AP: We give it to them.

RB: Wish consultation. . . . But as the Japanese said, perhaps an international organization, activist organization is no longer needed.

AP: But not in that context.

RB: You need perhaps a referral service, an international. . . .

AP: Yeah, and we also need, you also need something else. Many of these developed [means undeveloped—Ed.] countries—there are two aspects of it—many of them are being farmed by the developed countries. That is to say, the brains, let’s say, for making a VW [Volkswagen] are in Germany. The technology is in Germany. Germany can duplicate the tools and send them to Argentina or send them to some other country.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: The tools, the country’s law says. . . . This is a story that’s been told me. The laws of the country say they can import technology to help them get started, but the tools can only stay in the country a year, then they must leave. In the meantime, their own people are supposed to be educated to them. That’s what it says.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: But in point of fact, the economic and military establishment that controls a country gets the tools there, they can duplicate the products, and have an artificial industry. They can have an industry that can make the VW, but could not design the VW. Then they themselves, at the end of the year, they’ll ship scrap iron back to Germany, with agreement with the Germans, they’ll meet their laws, and then they will in turn rent the tools to Chile and ship the tools to Chile, and they’ll make VWs. So these, the methodology for making a product becomes diffused, but the brains for making the product and the high technology still stays with the originator.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: So you have that one thing going. And you have another thing going. So then, you get a young designer in Argentina, and he becomes a Communist because he sees this establishment controlling the fact that he couldn’t start an industry if he wanted. There’s no place for him in industry. The establishment controls both the tools of production and the process of production.

RB: Hmm.

AP: You go to India you see a different facet of it, and when that country got its freedom—whenever that was—1957, ‘47, I can’t remember—from England, England left, but the industrial capability of the country was frozen as of the time that they left, so they still make electric drills there that are designed in the ‘20s in Great Britain, with the same tools, and they repair the tools and make them, but there is no engineering capability to modernize it, and what’s there’s not even the will to modernize it, because they have a closed market. Nobody can sell drills in India.

RB: Yeah, protectionist.

AP: Protection. Therefore, it's a sellers' market, so they continue to use the old tools. I worked on a project with the Bombay school, institute of technology, on hospitals. We spent a couple days at a hospital there. And you'd think you were walking into Florence Nightingales' camp. The troughs that people use to eat out of or to pee into, the cots, their hardware, the equipment, you know, is made with technology that's been outdated for fifty years in this country. But we had a meeting. . . . I called a meeting of manufacturers, and doctors, and nurses, and designers, not to discuss this, but just to get their point of view. But it's pretty evident that they, they're all, they've got to all have a piece of the action in some way. And the manufacturers aren't about to change. So what India needs to do is to open its doors and let the competition come in, and it'll wake up their own industry. Or their own industry has to go Communist, which sounds awful, in order to really take over and feel that they are fighting for the nation instead of for themselves. You see what I mean?

RB: But right now they're doing darn well for themselves.

AP: Yeah, and they don't need it.

RB: They don't care to change.

AP: Yeah, absolutely.

RB: But you feel they should, because there are great improvements. . . .

AP: I think it's inevitable. I mean, you look at the misery in the hospital, and you say, "Well, do they really have to eat and pee out of the same pot because it suits the convenience?" you know. "Shouldn't you have a floor that can be made sanitary?" I went into an operating room, and you'd think you were in a veterinarians hospital, and they were hosing down the walls with a hose, and all the equipment, you know.

RB: Hmm.

AP: That's sanitation.

RB: Hmm.

AP: And the water is not potable.

RB: Hmm.

AP: You know. [laughs] So the real challenges. . . . You know, you say, "ICSID, who needs it?" We need ICSID, but we don't need it to help the developing countries get better. We need it in order to make contact with these other countries. And UNIDO wants us desperately. They call us all the time. But they too are locked into the politics of the country, so design almost has to become a political entity in order to make a change. It isn't aesthetics anymore; it isn't human factors. It's the politics of production, it's the politics of management, it's the politics of people. That's where design is. You see how that changes?

RB: Yeah, yeah. A really exciting time to get further into it living in this country, wasn't it?

AP: Yeah, yeah. Well, we have, to some degree we have the same problem.

RB: But your profession here doesn't have the clout to have that much political influence.

AP: And I'm afraid—I don't want to sound presumptuous—but I'm afraid an awful lot of my colleagues don't give a damn.

RB: Hmm.

AP: They've got their clients, they're complacent. . . .

RB: Their living.

AP: . . . they've settled down, you know, they know who they're going to work for, they're not involved in international politics, and many of them, they're not even involved in local politics. You know, they're not involved in the acid rain issue or science in the community, or what have you.

RB: Yeah. So you. . . . There is a lot of [refinement] of the environment and replacement in the developed world, and do you think therefore it's a time that for designers could be a time of great purpose?

AP: Yeah.

RB: Well, let's push, project that need to the. . . .

AP: Uh huh, yeah, and I. . . .

RB: . . . political and economic powers, right.

AP: And I'm sure I'm not the only one that feels this way.

RB: Yeah.

AP: It's just I've. . . . It's not a subject of even interest to our industrial design society right now. They just had a meeting, and they talked about generalities, and how to be businessmen, you know, and how to run an office. They don't talk about responsibility, they don't talk about ethic. . . .

RB: That's another side of a recession, isn't it? Some people just close into themselves. . . .

AP: Yeah, uh huh.

RB: . . . take care of themselves. . . .

AP: That's right.

RB: . . . take care of number one.

AP: It's a defensive kind of thing, and. . . .

RB: But you feel, even with our helter-skelter economics, [say in the past]. . . . Your practice was built up though, on the free market and sort of not speculation on your part, but you were working with companies which were just out there competing. Their product may or may not have been better than somebody else's.

AP: Yeah, and I believe in the free market. I mean I'm a complete believer. . . .

RB: Did you feel that the best will come to the top some way or another?

AP: Well, and I think you can't sit. . . . Nobody can sit down and say, "You can't make this. I don't want you to make it. I decided you're not going to make."

RB: Um hmm.

AP: My advice is make the goddamn thing. If you fall on your ass, that's your problem. You know, so I'm for free trade and free economy. I don't like, for example, what's happening to the automotive and the steel industry, you know. But on the other hand they've had it coming for a long time. The smugness there has been unbelievably oppressive, you know. And they just wouldn't listen. You know, they thought they had it made. And what's more, you had an interesting situation which is slowly beginning to emerge. The automotive industry, using it . . . generally speaking, was an aging industry. So was the steel industry, you know. The methodology was old. They had not been bombed out; they didn't have to rebuild anything, so they got all the mileage they could out of what they had. It was labor-intensive. And it was labor-intensive in part because the unions themselves demanded very high wages and protested robotization or anything. You know, they were. . . . Everybody was satisfied. They made high money per hour, and the tools were old but they were kept going, and the industry was aging. And at the same time management was creaming off high profits, paying enormous bonuses. I know that people at General Motors, at least in the design circles, worked more for their bonus than for their salary. That was many times the size of the salary each year. And they weren't about to shake the boat. So everybody was creaming it off the top, the industry was aging, the union was taking everything it could, and I'm positive that top management knew that they were falling behind. They could not have not known. But they felt, "Just let it go. I'll be home free. I've got five more years to retirement, I'm going to sell my stock, I'm going to do this, I'm going to do that. So they let it age until the thing is very rotten. And it starts to collapse. Best thing that could happen to the automotive industry in America. First of all, the unions start to pull back their horn. A lot of them go back to the south, go into other industries. The most skilled people of those unions move to work for the Japanese industries that are opening in this country, so the best talent finds good jobs in replacement industries, when they close a plant. The low-level talent, the masses of production line, go off, back to the farm, or go back to [Wokeeville], or wherever they came from.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And then the automotive industry start to close these outdated factories. They write them off. And they've closed. . . . I don't know how many factories have been closed, but a lot of them. So that automotive industry is shrinking back the fat side, and in its wake is coming up now a new industry, a new automotive industry. I can't believe that the managers of the automotive industry don't see this cycle, and haven't welcomed it, no matter what the surface says. They knew it was inevitable, but in order to get that, they have to destroy what they had,

in order to build a new one. That's the way I interpret it. And it's good. The steel industry—because my dad was in the steel industry, and I know the Pittsburgh area pretty well—it's deserved its licking they're getting for ages. God, they were running nineteenth-century factories, you know, and complaining because they couldn't get enough for their steel. It's true, I think, really. So this affects industrial designers, see.

RB: How do you see your. . . . What do you think you'll be doing the next few years?

AP: Myself?

RB: With respect to your, to design.

AP: Well, we have some clients that we work for, but I think I mentioned, I expect to back off from my office more.

RB: And you want to devote more of your time to study and writing, and observation?

AP: Yeah, I've got. . . . I think it's time to sort of take advantage of some of the things I've learned. And on the other hand, I really hate to give up designing. I just love the challenge and so forth. So. . . . But I want to turn the business over to the younger people, and I'd like to be kept on as a consultant, keep my [thinking]. . . .

RB: Do you think in writing and research, though, that problem-solving and shaping you can do something like what you. . . .

AP: Yeah, I think if you'll. . . . If and when, and I'm sure when is a more appropriate word, you read this book of mine, you'll realize that it's full of observations that have needed to be put down a long time, but you can't find them anywhere, because a lot of the people that think that way are not the writers, and many of the writers tend to be popular writers. That is to say, they write inside the establishment for the establishment press. So I guess my hope is that this book will create a change of thought in the design world. I've already had signs from people that think that it's opening up. It's got facts in it they never saw before. And so I'm hopeful it'll have an effect beyond just a rote reading of a book.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: And I think the second volume will have even a more effect because I hope that somehow that these observations that I've been making will be added to by my colleagues, and [it'll] help us refine what I'll call an American attitude about design, which will influence—it sounds very presumptuous I know—but which will influence industry and how people feel about products. So if I can do that, then I've done my thing.

RB: Do you see this as something you could have anticipated, being such a spokesman, forty, fifty years ago?

AP: Ohh, no, I don't think so.

RB: You did ever take things just day by day though. You always saw ahead, didn't you. . . .

AP: Well. . . .

RB: . . . in where there were opportunities, where there were vacuums. . . .

AP: Perhaps.

RB: . . . and offered tentative solutions.

AP: I think also I've. . . . Maybe this is true of a lot of people, but I've really lived several lives, and have sort of worn out my welcome in one and then moved to another one, worn out my welcome in another, and moved to a third. And I've transferred my career and my attitude from one stage to another. You know, I'm not like the man who's a stone sculptor all his life. As a process I may never have achieved much of anything at any one level, but at least each level. . . . It's like a stepladder, where one step is not up above another; they're just a different step. Do you know what I mean? I didn't go from being a silversmith to being a designer because that was a higher level. It was just a different place. Do you understand what I mean? But I could bring some of the experience of the first one to the second one. In other words, I'm not a better silversmith because I became an industrial designer. I'm just not a silversmith anymore; I'm an industrial designer. When I leave industrial designing and become a writer, I don't know that I'll be a better writer—a better industrial designer because I'm writing. [correcting from writer to industrial designer—Trans.]

RB: Yeah.

AP: I'm just going to be a writer. So it's just a shift in career emphasis using some of the experience of the past,

and going into an area that I find more challenging. You know, I. . . .

RB: Well, each time that's what you've done.

AP: Yeah.

RB: Gone into areas you've . . . more challenging.

AP: And it's the challenge that excites me, more than anything. [In other words], I think it's part of the adventure of life, for me at least. My mother used to say, you know, if you chase all the rabbits you're never going to catch any. And my response to her was a very snotty little response, and it said, "I don't want the catch the rabbits. I just want to chase, chase them." And I think that's part of the excitement of doing all this stuff.
The fact is that the designers have not been articulate. They haven't been writing. All the people I know are mute. I can't. . . . I love Bill Goldsmith, and I like this person. . . . I think they're fantastic people. I try to see what they've down. They're very vocal, they give great presentations to clients, but I don't get anything from them that's underneath it. And we have no dialogue, you know.

RB: Um hmm.

AP: Virtually no dialogue. No scholarship in this field, between the designers themselves. Really, it's an empty. . . . Architecture is much more mature. There's a fair amount of scholarship in architecture. Profundities, maybe and presumptions and all the rest of it, but at least it has the scholarship, if you know what I mean.

RB: Or perhaps it becomes too self-conscious is one result.

AP: Of the scholarship?

RB: Yeah.

AP: Maybe, and it's become a little bit hokey.

RB: I mean, right now, it's a very historical-looking thing.

AP: Yeah, right.

RB: Very self-consciously.

AP: Well, it's like this thing of the taste-makers that I've written about, the fact that there's a new profession called taste-making, and it has a philosophical side as well as a materialistic side, but any way a change can be made is you have to destroy the past. You have to tear down the house before you can build a new one. So have to ridicule. Philip Johnson and all these people have to ridicule the glass boxes until they just look so funny that everybody's embarrassed to do one. When you destroy the existing building, then you come in with a new one.

RB: Uh huh.

AP: When you come in with a new one, it has to be outlandish in the beginning.

END OF INTERVIEW

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