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Oral history interview with Tage Frid, 1980 June 24-1982 February 22

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Tage Frid on 1980 June 24 - 1982 February 22. The interview was conducted by Robert Brown for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

The reader should bear in mind that he or she is reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose. This is a rough transcription that may include typographical errors.

Interview

ROBERT BROWN: This is an interview June 24th, 1980 with Tage Frid in Foster, Rhode Island and Robert Brown the interviewer.

TAGE FRID: You pronounce my name like Tay.

MR. BROWN: And it isn't that, huh?

MR. FRID: No.

MR. BROWN: You pronounce it T-a-y, Tay.

MR. FRID: Tay.

MR. BROWN: Tay Frid not Tay. Well, you were born in Denmark in 1915.

MR. FRID: Fifteen, yeah.

MR. BROWN: And although you began your work career at quite a young age, what led you to that? Was your family interested in the crafts? Were they craftsmen themselves?

MR. FRID: My father was a silversmith.

MR. BROWN: Oh, he was.

MR. FRID: Yeah, but you see, I was thirteen and a half when I finished school like in Denmark. You know, you to through the second grade, you switch in your fourth and then you are going to higher learning, whatever you want to. So you go there for seven years, but then of course, you spend many more hours in school than they do here. There are very few vacations, I think four weeks out of the year.

MR. BROWN: So it was a very --

MR. FRID: Concentrated.

MR. BROWN: --much more advanced than it would be here.

MR. FRID: Oh yeah, sure, sure, yeah.

MR. BROWN: And your father was a silversmith.

MR. FRID: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: And did he – had he apprenticed himself at one time and gone through the traditional --

MR. FRID: Oh yeah, sure, sure, but during that time, then he actually lived with a master. It's a funny thing, when you are going to see the – my father was told by Phillip's grandfather and then my father taught Prip's father, so you know, the thing go way back between Prip and --

MR. BROWN: This was all in Copenhagen?

MR. FRID: In Copenhagen, yeah.

MR. BROWN: And was your family a family of --

MR. FRID: Pardon me?

MR. BROWN: Was your family a family of craftsmen, artisans?

MR. FRID: My grandfather was a blacksmith on the one side, and on my father's side, no, but in a way, I was thirteen and a half and I got out of school and I was not what you would call an outstanding student in school because the only thing thinking I was interested in.

MR. BROWN: What were you interested in by the time you were 13?

MR. FRID: Almost July 1st, like the woodshop, that was my main thing – drawing and things like that.

MR. BROWN: But you weren't interested in literature or in languages?

MR. FRID: Especially languages, I've always been very lousy with language, but math and so on came very easy for me, but in a way --

MR. BROWN: Mathematics?

MR. FRID: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: They were pretty strict about schools too, weren't they?

MR. FRID: Oh yeah, yeah, sure, we got slapped and spanked and everything.

MR. BROWN: Did your father, were you around him when he was working very much as a little boy?

MR. FRID: As a little boy, yeah, we work at home, uh-huh, so I was sure I never wanted to be a silversmith.

MR. BROWN: Why?

MR. FRID: I didn't like it, you know. It takes too long a time, you sit there and fire your life away.

MR. BROWN: Yes, yes.

MR. FRID: And maybe after he spanked me, then I could smell the metal. [Laughter] If he spanked me, then I could smell the metal, so I would be waiting for like the smell of metal.

MR. BROWN: You have also mentioned that unlike wood, you felt that metal was a cold substance in itself.

MR. FRID: Yeah, sure.

MR. BROWN: Not something that particularly appealed to you.

MR. FRID: No, not at all.

MR. BROWN: Do you think that goes back to childhood?

MR. FRID: I don't know, I don't know, it just – maybe because I had to sit and shine that darn thing all the time, you know, with our silverware, and that become my job when I was a kid, sit there and shine all that. I wasn't looking forward to that.

MR. BROWN: But you did – you had at least in school learned that you liked to work with wood.

MR. FRID: Oh yes, absolutely, that was my favorite, my best subject.

MR. BROWN: When you think back way back when you were a little boy at school, before the apprenticeship, what do you think there was about wood that may have attracted you.

MR. FRID: I don't know. Even before I took wood in school, I was always working with wood at home, I always worked with it as far back as I can remember building something.

MR. BROWN: And you learned something of tools, even as a little boy.

MR. FRID: Before, yeah, and I could sometimes use my father's tools if I didn't spoil it.

MR. BROWN: Were you quite careful?

MR. FRID: I thought I was, but he didn't.

MR. BROWN: Then when it came time to leave school at age thirteen and a half, did you father think that you

should then learn a trade?

MR. FRID: No, my two sisters, they say I shouldn't have a job, you know, I would get dirty and so on and so on.

MR. BROWN: What did they think you should do?

MR. FRID: I should be a businessman or something, so I got started as an apprentice oh, when I was thirteen and a half or something, and after two months, I got fired. I was not interested in stacking tools and put prices on things and so on.

MR. BROWN: I see, in a store.

MR. FRID: Yeah, in a store, no. So I get fired.

MR. BROWN: It was --

MR. FRID: All the time I get fired, by the way.

MR. BROWN: Did your sisters – were they older than you?

MR. FRID: Oh yeah, I'm the youngest and the best looking.

MR. BROWN: Well, what happened? Did your sisters think you should go into something a little more prestigious or they didn't think that --

MR. FRID: No, they – my parents had a friend and he had a woodshop so they talked to him, and my mother asked would you like to be a woodworker, and I was thirteen and a half, I wanted to go out and play in the street, and I said yeah, sure, so I just become an apprentice. It was by accident, and then that was five years.

MR. BROWN: Was that Gronlund Jensen?

MR. FRID: Gronlund Jensen, yeah, yeah.

MR. BROWN: Was he quite a well-known woodworker?

MR. FRID: No, he was not the top well-known for classical and so on, but I feel I got a very well-rounded education, better than if you go through a very famous shop, for you more or less only learn one thing to make, some very beautiful furniture or whatever it is, but here, I mean, I did oh store fixtures, you know, nice furniture and mass production, and I got a very well-rounded education instead of you know, those high class shops, you always – I don't know if that's a word – they get a little too distinguished.

MR. BROWN: But there were those two types of places in Denmark.

MR. FRID: Yeah, yeah, sure, sure.

MR. BROWN: There were still a lot of handmade objects in wood.

MR. FRID: Oh yes, sure.

MR. BROWN: There was still a lot of demand for that.

MR. FRID: Oh yeah. You see, the thing was you were confined with a machine and hands, that it may be ridiculous to stay and cut all the wood by hand when you can cut it on a saw.

MR. BROWN: Sure, sure.

MR. FRID: But the first three months as an apprentice, I come in and then there was a pile, it seemed like 50 feet long, maybe it was ten or twelve feet, and it was all mahogany and it was stacked up and it was all rough so I had to cut it by hand, square it, join it together, plane it, surface plane it, cut it in size, put the molding on it, everything by hand. I did that for three or four months, and oh, I hated every minute of it.

MR. BROWN: Yes. Did the master look over you all the time and check your work for its quality?

MR. FRID: Oh yes, he checked me, uh-huh. Then again you get slapped, you get hit. So I mean, you started there – let's see, I started there, I had to be there at 6:30 so I got up at 5:00 o'clock or so in the morning, put on the heat, you know, it's done with wood, and so the glue was ready and the stove was ready when journeymen come in. Then we worked until 4:00 o'clock and then I had to clean up. Then I had to go to technical school from 7 to 9 and then from – I had to get back home from 10 to 5:00 o'clock the next day, I could do whatever I

wanted.

MR. BROWN: Which is sleep I suppose?

MR. FRID: I was so tired I could stand up and sleep. I was tired. That was six days a week.

MR. BROWN: And what about technical school, what were you learning there?

MR. FRID: Oh, drawing, working drawings and so on. You do that for five years. When I was finished, I had a very good idea about you know, the material, its limitation and drawings and so on, but I really didn't know too much about design. It wasn't really taught.

MR. BROWN: Oh, your technical drawing was just copying things.

MR. FRID: Copying, yeah.

MR. BROWN: Trying to make things graphic.

MR. FRID: Yeah, uh-huh. You give me a drawing and then I had to blow it up and draw in all the joints and what-have-you.

MR. BROWN: But in Jensen's shop you learned then how to apply that. Would you make drawings for him ever or he made those?

MR. FRID: No, he would give me the drawings.

MR. BROWN: They would give you drawings.

MR. FRID: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: You would have to blow them up or reduce them.

MR. FRID: No, no, they gave me the drawing and then I took it from there and I would start making it from that specific drawing so it was always somebody else's design. I mean, I had to read the drawing to make it.

MR. BROWN: That was one of the benefits of studying drawing yourself.

MR. FRID: Oh yeah.

MR. BROWN: You learned how to interpret --

MR. FRID: Read it.

MR. BROWN: -- or read the drawings certainly.

MR. FRID: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

MR. BROWN: And then you were gradually learning the properties of wood, right? And --

MR. FRID: I learned that, you know.

MR. BROWN: You started out and this was a very humble task of squaring rough cut mahogany.

MR. FRID: Yeah, uh-huh, uh-huh.

MR. BROWN: And what would be the next thing you might –

MR. FRID: You see, the thing was when I was finished, I could certainly handle a saw and a plane.

MR. BROWN: After the first there months.

MR. FRID: And a plane, I could sharpen both, and different molding planes and things like that. Then I started making different joints by hand, and then I started making furniture that was going to be sold. The first one I made, that was a chest of drawers with a curved front and they had one of those, what do you call it? Legs?

MR. BROWN: Cabriole?

MR. FRID: Cabriole legs, and they were put on with dowels and so on and the Master told me I'm going to kill you if you drill through. You know, the legs? I guess I'm nervous, I drilled through every one.

MR. BROWN: You mean drilled it up into the case.

MR. FRID: No, I drilled right through the legs because they go down, and because of the shape, I drilled right through the sides there, and that piece was finished. When you walk a little fast, the thing is kind of swaying back and forth. [Laughter] That was my first piece, you know.

MR. BROWN: And you were punished for that?

MR. FRID: Oh yes, I mean you got slapped at least once a day. Oh no, the journeymen, if you didn't do whatever it was, then wang bang.

MR. BROWN: Oh, the journeymen were your immediate bosses.

MR. FRID: Oh yeah, yeah.

MR. BROWN: So when you say this was your first piece, you would do a little bit of it and show it to them, or they were watching you the whole time?

MR. FRID: No, they keep an eye on me and so on.

MR. BROWN: How long would you have been there before you were able to make your first entire piece?

MR. FRID: Oh, I think after that, then --

MR. BROWN: Several years you would have been there before you made this chest of drawers? Had you been there --

MR. FRID: Yeah, I had maybe been there for a better part of a year or something like that, besides cutting the wood and all that, you spend a lot of time sweeping and delivering and helping the journeymen and getting beer for them. You get quite an education there.

MR. BROWN: Do you?

[Laughter]

MR. BROWN: But I mean, you expected this disciplinarian attempt, I mean this approach, the way they slapped you and so forth. This you were used to.

MR. FRID: No. Yeah, yeah, but then I learned pretty fast because I had been there for three or four weeks and I seen them making dovetails, so I was going to try, so then they give me a bench and a set of tools and nobody would bother me and so I start making a nice box for my mother. Then the boss called me and he wanted me to go to the hardware store and buy some hardware, and I thought it was kind of stupid, couldn't he see I was busy?

So I told him gee, I'm sorry, I don't have time, I'm making a nice box for my mother, and I got called in and it got straightened out who was the boss and who was the apprentice. So I was straightened out pretty early.

MR. BROWN: You weren't supposed to do anything for yourself on his time, were you?

MR. FRID: No, no. I thought it was stupid. I mean, I was very busy. [Laughter]

MR. BROWN: Let's say you were making, or the first time trying to make dovetails, would he give you many instructions?

MR. FRID: Oh yes, he will show me.

MR. BROWN: He gave you instructions.

MR. FRID: Yeah, he will show me how to do it and explain it and so on. And then I was – the head journeyman, whatever you want, he will explain it too. From the beginning you do everything by hand.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. FRID: Everything.

MR. BROWN: Would they sort of – after they explained it, would they then sort of test you by leaving you alone to see whether you could do it?

MR. FRID: Oh yeah, yeah. Uh-huh.

MR. BROWN: Because they were busy too, weren't they? Doing other things?

MR. FRID: Oh yeah, sure, sure.

MR. BROWN: More complicated things.

MR. FRID: Sure, sure.

MR. BROWN: And then they would come afterward and you would have to show them your work.

MR. FRID: Yes, they might come past me and look and if I did something wrong, or they might pick it up and test it and so on, but all of them – there may have been 15, 16 journeymen and all of them more or less give you a little hint here and there, so you were doing something wrong.

MR. BROWN: Were they very kindly?

MR. FRID: Some of them.

MR. BROWN: Some were.

MR. FRID: Some weren't.

MR. BROWN: You said after only three-quarters of a year, you were doing that chest of drawers.

MR. FRID: Yes.

MR. BROWN: That was pretty rapid mastery of various things, wasn't it?

MR. FRID: Oh yeah.

MR. BROWN: To be able to do that?

MR. FRID: Yeah, you have to --

MR. BROWN: Was this ordinary for an apprentice?

MR. FRID: No, but you see, at the same time, you are there six days a week.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. FRID: From 6:30 to about 5:00. You spend nine hours there, so even if not always that you do it, as much as you pick up with your eyes, you know, being in the atmosphere and help a little here and a little there, and finally it's time to do something.

MR. BROWN: That piece you did, had that been commissioned or was that something --

MR. FRID: It was commissioned, but I don't know if he – I don't know if the people got it.

MR. BROWN: You think they had to maybe re-make it?

MR. FRID: I can't remember that, but I just remember those, something, and then it was French polished too.

MR. BROWN: And that was the whole – something more to learn, huh?

MR. FRID: Oh yeah, yeah, I mean, that is a very difficult thing to do.

MR. BROWN: Was there a specialist in the shop who did that?

MR. FRID: The Master, he did that.

MR. BROWN: He did that.

MR. FRID: He showed me that, step-by-step.

MR. BROWN: During these months, as you look back, do you think you were probably enjoying it really?

MR. FRID: No, I hated every minute of it. Oh, I was going to get on the ship, I was going to take off.

MR. BROWN: Oh, you were going to escape, huh?

MR. FRID: Yes, and I got a job, but then I was not 18 and I had to get my parents tickets there, so that took care of that. I went down to the railroad station and jumped in a car. I had it up to here. I was getting spanked all the time.

The after a while – you see, I was the youngest. Then you become [inaudible], then you get much more interesting work and then starting to enjoy it and like it. But I didn't like it in the beginning.

MR. BROWN: Would you give an example of what might be more interesting work that you can – what would have been more interesting to a young boy?

MR. FRID: I don't know. I mean, I was interested in girls.

MR. BROWN: I mean in the woodworking shop.

MR. FRID: I was only thirteen and a half and I mean, you are still a kid, right?

MR. BROWN: Yeah, but I mean, you had been there a while they gave you more interesting work.

MR. FRID: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: What kind of work would that have been? What kind of tasks or things would you have been making that you would have found more interesting to make? That's what I mean.

MR. FRID: What happened, you see, was for example, then after a while I went in and talked to the Master.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. FRID: I said okay, I have an idea of how to make things by hand if I could work on the machines. But then I worked there, and then I want to be in the finishing department, and I did keep moving along. There is more interesting than just stay there and put something together. So --

MR. BROWN: Did it take quite a while to learn the machines?

MR. FRID: No because when you have the knowledge of how to do it by hand, then it is more or less the same except the inner joints, if you can cut the half of a line, that seem to fit. You understand? If you can split the line in half and have the soft curve on the way side, I think it's going to fit. It's just setting it up and wanting it, and this is set up, right?

MR. BROWN: Mm-hmm.

MR. FRID: But then like I said, I got moved to all those different places and was working outside the shop and insulation. I got a very good background.

MR. BROWN: But beginning with the handwork, you understood what needed to be done, and so the machines were simply helpers, is that right? They just simply expedited, as it were.

MR. FRID: Uh-huh, but I mean something like dovetails, I mean you have to do them by hand, right? But like I say, it is a combination between the hand and the machine, what they lost, what the machine ate.

MR. BROWN: The what?

MR. FRID: They lost the old craft so they took one hundred percent advantage of the machines.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. FRID: With solved the payment, be paid with the loss completed the craft, so they couldn't make it like [inaudible], and the machines, and the machines would do so much and then the hand would come in and they combined it, and it was handmade, you can say that, right?

MR. BROWN: Now, why did that happen in Denmark?

MR. FRID: You see, Denmark is a very small country, right? And they didn't export a lot of furniture and so on, so there was more or less just for Scandinavia left with that, very small market, so the United States, it was a much bigger country.

MR. BROWN: But couldn't the totally machine-made furniture be sold more cheaply?

MR. FRID: Oh yeah.

MR. BROWN: But that didn't --

MR. FRID: No, no, no, no, no, you see, the thing is, I mean, for example if you make total machine-made furniture, and then you might have to invest oh, very easy a million dollars to just make one piece in tooling and so on and so on.

MR. BROWN: Okay.

MR. FRID: But if you have a small production, then you combine that you have, for example, $30,000 or $40,000 worth of machines, then the combination between what the machine can do and the hand can do, it is cheaper in the long-run. If you had an investment, for example, let's take a half a million in machines, right?

MR. BROWN: Yeah.

MR. FRID: I mean, that, every hour there square foot. That's a lot of money there, right?

MR. BROWN: Yeah.

MR. FRID: You see what I'm saying was, why was, we had one combination machine. I had one up here and it was, is six by six feet, but it could do everything because they mass-produce it, you know, in a small scale.

MR. BROWN: Uh-huh.

MR. FRID: Plus there were big machine shops, well, for example, if I was going to make – let's say I was going to make 200 or 300 chairs like this one, then I could send out and get all the legs made, they are specialized in turning legs. Then there will be another place I can send out and they will specialize in carving the back, and so then after, they can put it together and so on.

So there was, everyday, there come a truck and picked up all pieces that had to be machined, with the joints, single frames, and so on. Then we get it back and then did the rest ourselves by hand.

MR. BROWN: Whereas in the United States where they invested in these expensive machines, they had to think about ways of short cuts, right?

MR. FRID: Oh yeah, sure, sure, because you do get the lump on one end, dry, and then machine it and then go through and then it come out on the other hand, like in a sample, right?

MR. BROWN: Yeah.

MR. FRID: But well, today, I mean, you are getting away from that. You see, there is something called dimension stock where you do the same thing. For example, I could buy all those parts again for example, for that chair, but then again, the waste goes in here, it is sold to somebody else so the only thing for them to do is cut everything up here and make everything here, and then I'll make the joints. But everything come – [inaudible], planed, sanded, and everything, and because there is no waste, any waste you would make, not a toothpick but not a lot of things, smaller things, so it is – the big factor is to move more and more away from that, to take it from the wet state to the end.

MR. BROWN: I see.

MR. FRID: Because most of them – the most they will do is kind of closing up, can't afford it.

MR. BROWN: And these big factories, what they can dispose of the waste someplace else, they have markets for everything, do they?

MR. FRID: Oh yeah. You see, the thing that is active whether they make the money or sell them the lumber, and because they use a hundred percent of it, it's more economical of course today with the shortage we have, so the machining is more or less halfway for free. They really are making money on the lumber, the biggest part of it, selling it.

So that's more or less going back to what they were doing in Denmark, you know, or in Europe.

MR. BROWN: You mean more of this piecework.

MR. FRID: Where you had the central machine shops, you know, you are centralized into such and such, you know. Some work must go out, but it was sent out and --

MR. BROWN: But back when you were there in Denmark then, you are saying that the American furniture wouldn't sell over there, they couldn't – it wouldn't have been cheaper.

MR. FRID: No, no, plus the quality wouldn't be to the standard of the people that would buy it.

MR. BROWN: Oh, are people quite demanding in their --

MR. FRID: Oh yeah because you see, most of them, there was always craft people like in Copenhagen, the biggest part of it was craft people, you know, those involved with like in my family, there was, my sister's husband was a glass engraver, my father was a silversmith, I was a woodworker, and my brother, well, he was an office worker, but those are three out of four.

MR. BROWN: So the number of craftsmen in the population in Copenhagen was very high.

MR. FRID: Yeah, yeah, and people were very fussy. I mean, they cared about --

MR. BROWN: The customers were very fussy.

MR. FRID: They really wanted the best because you see, at the same time, a customer would go direct to the craftsman and buy, so you see there is no dealers in-between, so for example, say I can compete with, even today, I can compete with like Herman Miller because when we make it, first of all, we have overhead of 301 percent and so the dealers in-between when they come to the store, and I can get it, or you know, the customers can get it. I can certainly compete with them anytime. I mean, just like the Herman Miller, that kind of quality, but you see, the advantage is, for example, a craftsman today, if you want that table and you want it this maybe six feet, you want it six and a half feet, look here, you want it a little shorter or whatever you want.

There might be a different of $30 or something, but you get it, you know, whatever size, it would be designed for you.

MR. BROWN: Yeah.

MR. FRID: I mean, I think --

MR. BROWN: Whereas if you buy it through a retail store, you don't have that control.

MR. FRID: No, no, that's it.

MR. BROWN: Yeah.

MR. FRID: There it is.

MR. BROWN: Yeah.

MR. FRID: And I think Denmark did – that's my feeling – you see, the apprenticeship is more or less is dying too in Denmark with maybe they hang on there for a year or something, then they become journeyman, and then the United States started importing a lot of furniture.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. FRID: And then the quality was going down.

MR. BROWN: To meet the demand.

MR. FRID: To meet the demand and --

MR. BROWN: Speed it up.

MR. FRID: -- and to the price to, price wise. For example, Hans Wegner, okay, people still today would pay $400 or $500 for a Wegner chair, and that's for a song, but then today they try and come in and compete with for example, $50 chairs and they don't belong there. They don't belong there at all because they don't have the facility, the shipping, the duty.

MR. BROWN: You mean that $50 chair is not – the quality is just not there.

MR. FRID: No, no. Not at all, not at all, no. Plus the wages over there is getting sky high. I mean, like I know for example, like a school teacher to start, the first year, they get $14,000 or $15,000, the first year. You know, a craftsman is you know, at least more.

MR. BROWN: And Master craftsman.

MR. FRID: Yes, a journeyman, okay?

MR. BROWN: A journeyman.

MR. FRID: Yes, so you can imagine what they are getting an hour, they get more than a craftsman here, or a journeyman here.

MR. BROWN: But they no longer have the years of – the thoroughness of training that you had.

MR. FRID: No, no, no.

MR. BROWN: Because the market pressures are so great.

MR. FRID: Yeah, uh-huh.

MR. BROWN: They are so in demand.

MR. FRID: Uh-huh.

MR. BROWN: You --

MR. FRID: Excuse me, there is still, there is still some shops, some shops, you know, the old craft shop where they have an apprentice and so on and so on.

MR. BROWN: Are they likely to continue? Are they still young people going --

MR. FRID: I don't know. Because you see, when I was an apprentice, you signed a contract for five years.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. FRID: And after three months, I was binding and [inaudible]. So if you – then you become a journeyman. Then you get locked in, in a room for three days. You come there three days in a row, you know, and you make all the working drawings for the journeyman's piece. He is just going around. You can't talk to anybody. Even if you go to the bathroom, you can only go one at a time. He is very strict and the drawings were kept there, and you come in there three days, and then you have to deliver the complete working drawings and the material list and the whole works.

Then that is --

MR. BROWN: This is your journeyman's --

MR. FRID: That is my journeyman's piece after five years. Then the drawing is graded.

MR. BROWN: By whom?

MR. FRID: By the guild.

MR. BROWN: Okay, there was still a guild structure.

MR. FRID: Oh yeah, yeah, sure. And then it goes from there, then you go to the shop, and then you get put someplace in the corner or some place, and then you work on a piece but you are putting all the pieces out right there because anytime somebody will walk in, and they want to see all the pieces, to be sure that nobody else is doing it for you.

Then when the piece is finished, then it goes to the town hall in Copenhagen, then it is accepted and then it's judged and each judge has a mirror on a stick and he tries so that he can look underneath the furniture and it has to be finished as well on the bottom. So they are very fussy and for example if they say there are three drawers on one side and three on the other side, and they are all the same size, they might check the bottom one from the right side, turn it upside down, put it in the hole on the left side, and it better fit.

So then you get graded on that and then you can get different prizes and so on and so on, and then if you flunk, then you go to court and then all the journeymen – I mean some of the journeymen is called in who you were apprenticed to find out if it was the journeyman's fault, the apprentice's fault, or the master's. If they find it is the apprentice's fault, then they say okay, you have to take one year, two years more, and then you pay for it, the apprentice pays for it. If they find it is the shop or the master's fault, then he has to pay the apprentice one or two years, a journeyman's salary when the apprentice is moved to another shop.

So there is a pretty good guarantee for that you will learn, you know, become a professional cabinetmaker or whatever it is.

MR. BROWN: What court was this? The criminal court or the court of the guild or what?

MR. FRID: No, no, this is a regular court. What do you call it?

MR. BROWN: Let me see, a civil court.

MR. FRID: A civil court.

MR. BROWN: A government --

MR. FRID: Yeah, sure, sure, sure.

MR. BROWN: Now the journeyman's piece, was the design like given to you or you were – by the master or the guild?

MR. FRID: No, they told me what -- the master told me what he wanted.

MR. BROWN: What would they tell you?

MR. FRID: It was a form mahogany desk, the crotch mahogany and cribbed doors and a lot of that.

MR. BROWN: So he tells you, he writes it – or it's written down and he tells you.

MR. FRID: I want, yes, something like that.

MR. BROWN: Okay.

MR. FRID: And then I go --

MR. BROWN: You're locked up and you make the drawings.

MR. FRID: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And then they judge the drawings.

MR. FRID: Uh-huh.

MR. BROWN: Right. Then when they – if they are approved, then you are given the drawings and you make the piece.

MR. FRID: Yeah, uh-huh. And you have so long a time to do it in. That piece was French polished and so on.

MR. BROWN: Then you are qualified to be a journeyman.

MR. FRID: Yes, then you belong to the automatic go to the union. Everything is unionized.

MR. BROWN: Is the union and the guild more or less the same thing?

MR. FRID: A guild is the masters, and the union is the laborers.

MR. BROWN: And are the masters for the most part employers? They are owners of their shops?

MR. FRID: Yeah, they are owners and then that's where the negotiation goes between the guild and the union, so it is the masters and the journeymen.

MR. BROWN: When did you become a journeyman?

MR. FRID: After five years.

MR. BROWN: In the early 1930's?

MR. FRID: Yes, I was thirteen and a half and it was '15, so it was '28, right?

MR. BROWN: You started.

MR. FRID: I started, so five years is --

MR. BROWN: '33.

MR. FRID: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: 1933.

MR. FRID: '33, '33, yeah.

MR. BROWN: And then as a journeyman, did you go to another master and work for him?

MR. FRID: Then I worked for the master for a very short time, but he doesn't – usually it doesn't work out very well because you --

MR. BROWN: Then what did you do then?

MR. FRID: Then I quit, and then I went to other shops. Then I would like to have different experiences. I worked in difference places, and then quit and then would go to another place. I worked in the shipyard, a place where they only made store fixtures.

MR. BROWN: Stove?

MR. FRID: Store.

MR. BROWN: Store fixtures.

MR. FRID: Fixtures, you know, as a complete different other trade, you know.

MR. BROWN: Why is it that the journeyman usually leaves their master? Is there jealousy then?

MR. FRID: No, no, I think it is hard for the master all of a sudden to respect him or her as a journeyman. So I mean it is hard to – it is just like parents, it is hard for them to understand that the kids are growing up, right?

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. FRID: So --

MR. BROWN: So as a journeyman then you deliberately took jobs at various places.

MR. FRID: Yeah, yeah.

MR. BROWN: Then you would quit.

MR. FRID: Sure, sure. Then I was foreman, for example, and the layout man for one outfit, and then I wasn't married and I had a sailboat and all of a sudden there is two people and they are making love to each other, I think I wonder why I am standing here, and I went in and I said I quit. He say, "You can't quit." I said, "Sure, give me my money and I'll quit." So I quit, I walked out, and I sailed the whole summer, didn't do anything. In the fall I didn't have any money, I come back and then I worked on a shipyard for a while.

Then actually in the shipyard, that is the most difficult work to do because what do you call the floor the deck is curved this way, but it is curved this way too. They walk up this way and this way, and the ceiling; it is real – very, very difficult to do.

MR. BROWN: These were timber ships?

MR. FRID: No, no, no, that's all the inside.

MR. BROWN: Oh, you're talking about the fittings.

MR. FRID: The fittings, yeah, for example, one of them I worked on, that was Hans Wegner, he was a designer.

MR. BROWN: He was a designer for what? A ship?

MR. FRID: For the whole ship, yeah, for the ship company there so I worked, you know, with him as the designer and just to give you an idea, for example, I adjusted the doors to the entrance of the first class bar and smoking. It took one man one year to make four doors.

MR. BROWN: Gosh.

MR. FRID: And then you come in, then there was maybe, 20 or 30, 40 feet of marquetry --

MR. BROWN: Marquetry?

MR. FRID: Yes, on the one side, at the old Bergen, it went between Bergen and New Castle, or something, England. And then the other side was in Newberg, I mean that's a town in Norway, and just to give you an idea, for example, or just to fit for example, it was teak around the windows, you know.

MR. BROWN: Teak?

MR. FRID: Yeah, teak window frames, [inaudible], because the ship is like that and like that, it --

MR. BROWN: Yeah, it's --

MR. FRID: All there are all the rivets.

MR. BROWN: So many curves. Yes?

MR. FRID: They have to fit, it would take me two or three days to just fit it after it was made. You would have to --

MR. BROWN: You would have to keep --

MR. FRID: You will have to be a woodworking man.

MR. BROWN: You would have to plane it and refine it.

MR. FRID: Yes, and mark it and fit it and – because you see, then like the panel, then the panel is coming, you know, in a curve.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. FRID: And in a curve up and down too.

MR. BROWN: In two directions.

MR. FRID: Yeah, plus it has to fit in the ceiling, that is curve and the deck or the floor is curved too.

MR. BROWN: Slightly curved.

MR. FRID: So then we will make frames to fit them.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. FRID: And then you send down to the main shop in Copenhagen, was the royal – where they made the royal furniture and so on, right? The furniture for the royalty.

MR. BROWN: You mean this was Wegner's shop?

MR. FRID: No, that was --

MR. BROWN: Another shop.

MR. FRID: -- another shop, but he was a designer. Then you make the frames there. Then I get them back and then boy, I hope they fit because you are all finished with the other thing.

MR. BROWN: So it was pretty tense work, wasn't it?

MR. FRID: Oh yeah, yeah. I mean --

MR. BROWN: Terrible.

MR. FRID: We got a little nervous once in a while.

MR. BROWN: Very challenging.

MR. FRID: It was, it was, because --

MR. BROWN: Was Wegner watching over this?

MR. FRID: Oh yes, he came about every day.

MR. BROWN: What was he like to work with?

MR. FRID: Very shy, very nice – a very nice person, very nice, very pleasant, but shy. He was never demanding or pushing or anything.

MR. BROWN: Now you were a journeyman then, right?

MR. FRID: Oh yeah, I was a journeyman.

MR. BROWN: I mean I guess that – as that, say the businessman, the engineer of the ship, he had no right to give you advice, right?

MR. FRID: Oh, no, no, no, no.

MR. BROWN: You were responsible only to Wegner.

MR. FRID: To Wegner, yeah.

MR. BROWN: Right.

MR. FRID: And then I was the foreman.

MR. BROWN: The foreman is what? A senior journeyman or something?

MR. FRID: No, he was overseeing you know, that everything was done and shaken and that we didn't goof off, and you know.

MR. BROWN: But as a journeyman, you could refuse to listen to say the ship's or the naval architect or something like that?

MR. FRID: Oh, no, no, he wouldn't have anything to say because the drawing was there.

MR. BROWN: It wouldn't have been fair. Right.

MR. FRID: It was totally right there, what Wegner wants.

MR. BROWN: Okay.

MR. FRID: But then there could be a detail, then they ask Wegner, not the other one.

MR. BROWN: Right, yeah.

MR. FRID: But then – or if Wegner wasn't there, then I asked the foreman, he would ask Wegner and then I get the answer through that way. And then boat was the last one I worked on before I came over here.

MR. BROWN: About when was that when you were working on the Bergen --

MR. FRID: That's in '40 – no, wait a second.

MR. BROWN: Oh, this is – you were a journey – you were a master by '34, weren't you?

MR. FRID: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: So it must have been before that.

MR. FRID: You see, I went to Iceland in between.

MR. BROWN: Oh. Well, but you were a master craftsman by '34, you said.

MR. FRID: Yes, I was '34, yeah.

MR. BROWN: So this was before '34, you were working on that, wasn't it? If you were still a journeyman?

MR. FRID: Yeah. But you see, I had been working in other shipyards and so on, and I said the last one, there was the thing that when I come back from Iceland, I come over here, I worked on the ships. That would be in '48, in '47 or '48.

MR. BROWN: Oh, I see, I see.

MR. FRID: I got them mixed up a little bit.

MR. BROWN: So you were a master craftsman.

MR. FRID: Oh yeah.

MR. BROWN: You were no longer a journeyman.

MR. FRID: No, no, I --

MR. BROWN: You weren't a master in your own shop.

MR. FRID: Oh yeah, sure.

MR. BROWN: No, that's two different things. When you talk about the guild with its masters --

MR. FRID: That's a master, he owns it.

MR. BROWN: Right, he owns it.

MR. FRID: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: But you could still be a master craftsman or a journeyman --

MR. FRID: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: Right? Okay.

MR. FRID: But you see, here you have --

MR. BROWN: The terms are confusing.

MR. FRID: Here you have a master's craftsman.

MR. BROWN: You see, here they use this word. What your rate is in the guild is a journeyman. You were a journeyman, right?

MR. FRID: Yeah, but that is the same as here, what you would call a master craftsman.

MR. BROWN: A master craftsman, exactly.

MR. FRID: Right?

MR. BROWN: Yeah, okay.

MR. FRID: That's the reason for the word was used, a master craftsman because I mean, they could more or less put me to anything I could handle.

MR. BROWN: Sure, sure.

MR. FRID: After all.

MR. BROWN: Okay.

MR. FRID: After the five years.

MR. BROWN: Five years, and then you passed your journeyman's – you got – your journeyman's piece was approved.

MR. FRID: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: Then you become a journeyman.

MR. FRID: No, then I get a certificate.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. FRID: I pass now and get graded and everything. Now I am what you would call a master craftsman.

MR. BROWN: Oh, I see, okay.

MR. FRID: I use the word journeyman instead of master craftsman, but it is – because you see, then I think now – but I'm not sure, but I think now if you have your own shop as what we call masters during that time, right? Master, master, I think now that he has to pass another exam to be able to take an apprentice, take in apprentice.

MR. BROWN: Uh-huh, uh-huh, or is --

MR. FRID: The guy tells me that it didn't exist when I was there.

MR. BROWN: Do you suppose – does that mean that the requirements are stiffer, or not? Perhaps not?

MR. FRID: No, I think now the bottom is falling out so I don't know if it even exists any longer, but I remember shortly after --

MR. BROWN: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

MR. FRID: -- that I finished.

MR. BROWN: You went to the Copenhagen Technical School. That was while you were still an apprentice?

MR. FRID: Yes, uh-huh, uh-huh.

MR. BROWN: Then you went to this Vedins or Vedins School?

MR. FRID: Yes, there was a college.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. FRID: You see, I was 20 --

MR. BROWN: Well, you graduated in 1940 I guess.

MR. FRID: I was – 15, I was 25.

MR. BROWN: Uh-huh. What did you go to that for?

MR. FRID: I know if I want to come any – go any further, I've got to get some kind of papers or some different background, so I went back to school and then there you can take, for example, four years education in two years, you know, concentrated, and then you get the same as a college degree.

MR. BROWN: What, what--

MR. FRID: But you go there to school and then the real stuff feeds you with --

MR. BROWN: Force-feeds you, yes.

MR. FRID: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Yeah, yeah.

MR. FRID: When I came in, I got two sacks like that, I got four years of books I had to go through, but I could do it in two years if I want to. So I went to --

MR. BROWN: What sort of things --

MR. BROWN: Then you go to the university and then you get cross fire, nothing to do with the school, you draw two or three different subjects for example say geography, right? Then you get one in Europe and one of them in Denmark, and then there is four or five people that cross-examine you, and then you either pass or you fail.

MR. BROWN: I see.

MR. FRID: It is like playing bingo, I mean you either make it or you don't make it.

MR. BROWN: I see.

MR. FRID: In one day. Then you have English, German, math, algebra, Danish, geography, biology, you know, whatever, but like a regular college.

MR. BROWN: But you mainly study on your own and then go in for the exam.

MR. FRID: No, no, I went to school every day.

MR. BROWN: Okay, lectures.

MR. FRID: Yes.

MR. BROWN: These were lectures.

MR. FRID: Yes. No, then the – you asked me a question, like a regular college.

MR. BROWN: So you weren't able to work during those years then.

MR. FRID: I have to.

MR. BROWN: You worked part-time.

MR. FRID: Yeah. No, no, I have to – I work eight hours a day, and then I went to school and then I had to study at night, and then – it was during the war.

MR. BROWN: This went into the 1940's then.

MR. FRID: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: I see.

MR. FRID: So then when they blow the siren, I have to go to the hospital and be in there because you see, I worked, during that time, I worked in the hospital for ten years, and there you go down Steif North [phonetic], and you would take roofs, building, finishing toilet seats and make French inlaid desks for the president. I think that's what I have done the most in all my life because it was never the same. Then we make artificial legs, help the doctors with someone that has a problem back, we help to make the wood pieces, and during the war, they run out of Plaster of Paris, and we had to make out of wooden cardboard for broken arms.

Like I said, most expensive furniture because the Government paid for it, so I worked there for ten years.

MR. BROWN: Until about when did you work at the hospital?

MR. FRID: You see, I come from – I have to go backwards. You see, I came in '48. Could you shut it off?

[Interruption to audio.]

MR. FRID: Like I say, I went back to school and we were 35 that started and three that graduated. I mean it was –

MR. BROWN: Very tough.

MR. FRID: It was tough, I can tell you. I was sick a long time after.

MR. BROWN: You were sick.

MR. FRID: Yes, it was right up to it, and then somebody would say something and they are going to the boss and you say do such and such. Then I walk out the door and I couldn't remember it because you know, you have been pressed so hard. Three or four months later, then I was back.

MR. BROWN: So you finished this Vedins School in 1940 and then you --

MR. FRID: Went to school for interior architecture and interior design.

MR. BROWN: Was that part of the university too?

MR. FRID: You see that was something like RISD, you go in and take interior – it was more than architecture, interior design.

MR. BROWN: Speaking of design, were you beginning to design during these years for yourself, or you were, as

a designer, say under other people?

MR. FRID: No, you see, then I get interested in design. Then I start designing myself and start making my own furniture and so on.

MR. BROWN: To that point, you had not been interested in design, or you just hadn't had the chance?

MR. FRID: I didn't have the chance and the time, but then working at different jobs and working with or for Hans Wegner there, I mean I got a complete different outlook on design and so on and that kind, in a different shop, it opened my eyes that there was a difference.

MR. BROWN: You were working for Hans Wegner. Was that in the '30s?

MR. FRID: That was in '48.

MR. BROWN: I see. It was just before you came to America.

MR. FRID: Yeah, yeah. But that really gave me a completely different outlook on furniture.

MR. BROWN: What? Working with him?

MR. FRID: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: Because you saw a different kind of design?

MR. FRID: Yes, it was a complete new thing. I mean, he is one of the best known designer -- furniture designer in the world, right?

MR. BROWN: Yes, yes. Before that you were more familiar with traditional design or?

MR. FRID: No, while I was an apprentice, there were all kinds, you know, because we did make lots of colonial furniture, you know, heavy, melon balls and so on, but in-between, like I say, then we did make modern furniture, store fixtures and --

MR. BROWN: Yes, yes.

MR. FRID: -- well, I got a very good education, but then I did work in different shops and I was not interested in working in reproduction, so I always find a good shop where you made modern furniture or whatever you want, good furniture, and that's what, you know, I've started learning about design.

MR. BROWN: So that was, just by a little step from making it for someone else to beginning to design yourself?

MR. FRID: Yes, then I started designing for myself, make my own furniture, and so on.

MR. BROWN: Thinking back, what do you suppose to you was good design then? What do you think appealed to you when you started designing?

MR. FRID: Oh see, that was the big influence of the Bauhaus, and all of a sudden they took all the [inaudible] you put on, right?

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. FRID: And you saw that nice, clean piece of furniture that functioned just as well because you were used to seeing all that jazz and jingle put on furniture.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. FRID: So then – you see, at the same time in school like for architecture and so on, then we have some form teaching too, and form-related. For example, we have, just think how many things you touch in the daytime, what is very important in design. How many doors do you open? Spoons? Forks? Knives? All those things are design because you touch it and they will irritate you. If it wasn't well-designed, it would irritate you, right?

MR. BROWN: Irritate you, yeah, yeah.

MR. FRID: So we have a lot of feelings. Of course, then once we were blindfolded, and each one could bring in something, and we didn't know what it was. One girl brought in some cold oatmeal, boiled oatmeal and you put your finger down in that -- [laughter] -- I mean, you get it out in a hurry.

MR. BROWN: What was the object of that exercise?

MR. FRID: To show how many things you touch, how many things you live with, and how important it is that – I mean, a door handle, you have that square stock through and then you go open it, how many doors do you open in a day? And it doesn't bother you because it's well-designed and that is part of the design feeling, right?

MR. BROWN: Uh-huh.

MR. FRID: I mean, for example, in a chair, I mean, you sit like that, right? I think a chair should be finished as well in the bottom and inside as on the outside. An armchair you sit, without realizing it, you sit there --

MR. BROWN: You are touching --

MR. FRID: -- you are touching it, so it is important that it is pleasant to feel, right? That was part of the teaching.

MR. BROWN: The teaching was quite good then, was it?

MR. FRID: Oh yeah, yeah, sure, sure.

MR. BROWN: And were you designing or making furniture on your own then too?

MR. FRID: No, you see, there was more or less, you say interior design, but it was more or less interior architecture. It was interior design, then you picked the wallpaper, the color, the so-and-so and [inaudible] you design the flow through the building.

MR. BROWN: The flow through the building.

MR. FRID: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: You mean the --

MR. FRID: For example, like in an airport, where you come in, and then it – it should be very easy to go in, get your seat, get rid of your luggage and the lighting should be right, the scale in the right place, and then get them into the plane. What is the engineer architect's job? You know, to get the right height and design the furniture and then come in, you know, the ceiling, the floor, and so on and so on.

MR. BROWN: Uh-huh.

MR. FRID: One [inaudible] designer just couldn't pick the curtain, the colors, and the whole building is built before they come in. We learn to – the flow through the building. It was called School for Interior Design. That's what it was called.

MR. BROWN: And in fact, much of what you were learning was, it involved the use of wood? Not necessarily?

MR. FRID: No, no, no, no, we used lighting.

MR. BROWN: You had to learn about color as well, and lighting.

MR. FRID: Yeah, and lighting. And fabric and you know, all that should go in with it, you know.

MR. BROWN: What about during war-time though because Denmark was occupied. I mean, what sort of work could you do or what you were designing for?

MR. FRID: That was when I worked with the government, right?

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. FRID: And then I went to school but I could still get in the chair and work for myself, furniture for my own --

MR. BROWN: You could.

MR. FRID: -- place and oh make it and give it away, and for my parents and so on. I didn't sell any.

MR. BROWN: So the war didn't really affect your education that much.

MR. FRID: No, no, no, not at all, I'll say.

MR. BROWN: Once the occupation was in place, the German occupation, was the life fairly tranquil?

MR. FRID: You mean during the occupation?

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. FRID: I guess you just learned to live with it. I mean, especially at the end, for example, the Austrian and the German be fighting in the street of Copenhagen, and then shoot, you just hear that shooting, and then you get nervous, it's just a different teacher.

So one day I was – they were shooting and I was on my way to school and then it got a little heavy, so I jumped into a niche or something, you know, there was a big door and it was set in, very quiet and alone and my bicycle was laying outside, and I went out and grabbed it and got on another street. The next day when I come past, that whole door is like a Swiss cheese. I was lucky there.

MR. BROWN: You just escaped.

MR. FRID: Yes. I mean the same with my wife. Even if you think about it, I mean it used her.

[Interruption to audio.]

MR. BROWN: This is a second interview with Tage Frid in Foster, Rhode Island. This is October 29th, 1980. Perhaps we could begin this morning talking about the two years, 1946 to '48 which you spent as an interior designer in Iceland. What led you to go to Iceland in 1946?

MR. FRID: During that time, I wasn't married, I was single and I went out with a girl and she told me they needed woodworkers in Iceland so I was working for the government and I was – let's see, I was 30, 31, something like that, and I have a job for the rest of my life, and that's driving me nuts because I'm thinking about going through that same door, you know, every day.

MR. BROWN: And what kind of thing – were you doing fairly uninteresting things?

MR. FRID: Oh, no, no, no, very interesting, and I think it was the place where I learned most. I worked in a hospital.

MR. BROWN: You had talked about that.

MR. FRID: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: Yeah.

MR. FRID: So – but I couldn't imagine staying there the rest of my life, so the next day I bought a ticket to Iceland. I mean, I don't waste any time. I make up my mind and I do it, so then I get one year's leave of absence from the hospital and then four weeks later or something, two weeks later I was in Iceland. Before that, they have a farewell party for me and then that's where I met my wife, eight days before I left.

MR. BROWN: At the farewell party given by the hospital?

MR. FRID: Yeah, yeah. No, no, by friends.

MR. BROWN: Yeah. Was she a craftsman too?

MR. FRID: Anyway – no, she was a nurse, but in a different hospital. I never met her until eight days before I left. She went crazy about me, you know. [Laughter]

MR. FRID: Anyway, so I left for Iceland and it took three or four days, five days, maybe, I can't remember, to get up there by ship, and I didn't have a job. I didn't have anything, but I brought my tools, my work bench and so when I came up there, then they said, "Where do you want your tools and your luggage and workbench?" And I was standing on the pier and I say, "Oh, put it right here."

So I was standing there with the bench, the tool cabinet and five minutes later and man come across and say, "You are a woodworker?" I say yes. Okay, so I had a job and a place to stay.

MR. BROWN: Really?

MR. FRID: The first day. I read about that's the way that they needed them badly so I was there. After three months, I was foreman for the outfit.

MR. BROWN: What was the outfit?

MR. FRID: It was a construction firm – build houses, of course, but it was usually a duplex of four, there are four apartments, and it is most for doctors, so it is a pretty good-sized apartment. Then in the beginning, the – for example, they were giving me a stick and say go over there, and I couldn't speak Icelandic, and go and put that on the – nail it up over there or something, or board, and the first one I learned was the *skil fig ekki* That means I don't understand you. They put me on all the dirty jobs, you know, with the mud and so one day the boss came there, and then I told him, you know, that I was a cabinetmaker. Then they have all those special window stores and so on, that have to be made, so he say okay. I said show me the drawings.

He said, "Can you read drawings? " I said, "Of course, I can." I got the drawings and then started making all of those things. Then I designed all the kitchens and took care of that.

MR. BROWN: Very soon you were given things that were up to your level of --

MR. FRID: Oh yeah, yeah, sure, sure. Then I become the foreman for the building, for all the interior. So I was there for –

[Interruption to audio.]

MR. BROWN: Side 2. What kind of kitchens and other things were you putting in there? Were these what you would call a contemporary design or were they Icelandic patron's or more traditional or what?

MR. FRID: No, no, that was – it was a modern design, whatever we want to call it, you know. It was very simple, clean, straight-forward because – you see, the Icelandic really didn't have any – very few furniture. Everything they have is imported, even the wood they use has to be imported because the trees, you know, the forces like that.

MR. BROWN: It's tundra really.

MR. FRID: Uh-huh. So you see, we used to live in – what do you say? In the hills, in a dirt house.

MR. BROWN: A house of sod I guess you would call it.

MR. FRID: Yeah. And of course, after the war, the United States and England – Iceland was that country that the United States and England owe the most money so – because they got all the fish, and so on – all the fish you could get, you know, the United States would take it, and England and so on.

MR. BROWN: Yeah.

MR. FRID: So they owed them a tremendous amount of money so all of a sudden, the whole thing was a big boom with the building and people for example, live in an Army barrack and then have a Cadillac standing on the outside. People were swimming. I mean, the money was, it was fantastic. For example, a kid or a child or a boy, 14, 15 years old, could go out and in three or four weeks, make $3 or $4,000. Then he come back and then he just throw it around, you know, right and left. And he got you know, mixmasters and what-have-you, and he said we were ready for it, yeah. It was a big step from being --

MR. BROWN: They reported --

MR. FRID: -- what do you call, sheltered or whatever you want to call them.

MR. BROWN: Sort of isolated from the outside.

MR. FRID: Yeah, yeah, and then all of a sudden they get all those things.

MR. BROWN: How did you like them as a people? Were they very different from the Danes?

MR. FRID: Oh, I'll say so. I mean, for example just to give you an idea, you bought liquor in a liquor store and they were run by the state and they close at 5:00 o'clock. After 5:00 o'clock, you bought it from the taxi driver on the black market and they had it in the trunk, you know, in the back. And of course, it's illegal, and then when they were out, then you went to the police station and you bought it there on the black market.

So at the same time, if you were drunk, that was an excuse. For example, when I was working there, then I got a bad cold and I was home for two or three days and they deducted from my salary which makes sense. Then there was one day I real good, plastered, and I had a hangover, so I was staying home. So I told the boss, and I'm sure you heard about it, that I had a hangover and so on, and he said that's okay. So the next week I got my salary and I got a full salary, but you know, I wasn't here Monday or Tuesday, or whatever it was. I was home.

He said, "Weren't you drunk the day before?" I said yes. Oh, then you should get paid. I mean, that was excuse enough. One day we were driving and a car plowed right into him and a fellow come out stinking drunk. I was behind my boss and I said okay, I was witness. I was witness that he was – yes. He said, "Oh no, no, no, I mean, that could happen to all of us." So they settled it right there. They with their drinks, they went complete bananas, complete bananas. I mean, that was part of it.

MR. BROWN: So it was much more like a frontier society than Denmark?

MR. FRID: Yeah, yeah. But then at the same time, they had no sense of humor, but after living there for a couple of years – I mean, I kind of like it but it rained a lot. The weather was not that good, but --

MR. BROWN: They had no sense of humor. How? What form would that take? I mean, they would take everything very seriously?

MR. FRID: Yes, everything was very, very serious you know, with – I guess being isolated for so many years, and so on, okay, they didn't have any sense of humor. Of course, they belonged to Demark for 500 years or something like that. Denmark was occupied April 9th and April 10th, they declared independence, so – and they didn't love the Danes either. They called us beans because, beans yes, because once they were starving, you know, the fishing and so on had been bad, so the Danes sent up three boats with beans. So after that you know --

MR. BROWN: They called you beans.

MR. FRID: If you were a Dane, they called you a bean.

MR. BROWN: But you – could you have stayed on there? Was there plenty of work as you said?

MR. FRID: Oh yes, and I thinking about starting my own business but then they passed a law that no foreigner could start their own business. You see, there's a lot of people from Denmark come up there, made a lot of money, and then they sent home – it was right after the war – good material from England and silk and stockings and everything like that, so they passed that law, and then I couldn't start my own business.

In the meantime, I stayed with all the money there and so I bought radio, telephones, what do you call it? Movies and everything I could get my hands on and send it back and then in the meantime, Emma was pregnant and we had papers in for Greenland, Canada, and South Africa, because we wanted to go someplace else.

MR. BROWN: You didn't want to go back to Denmark.

MR. FRID: No, no. So --

MR. BROWN: You wanted to travel or you just wanted to get away from --

MR. FRID: No, I just want to go someplace else. You see, for example, in Denmark during that time, if I start as a woodworker, then I have to have permission to even buy the lumber for whatever I want to do, as long as it was imported and they more or less controlled what I want to send out from the country. They were very tight, plus I was 32 or 33 years old, I want to see more of the world and try some other thing.

MR. BROWN: Did you go back to Denmark then from Iceland, and make your plans? Or you had already made up your mind.

MR. FRID: You see, then – so we sent – Emma went home. Because we had the papers in for so many different places, we didn't want to have our papers spread all over, so we wanted the child to be born in Denmark, so Emma went home and then went to stay with her parents, and our son was born in Denmark. In the meantime, we get – I never met my in-laws, so after Peter was born, I came there the next day, and it was the first time I met them.

MR. BROWN: Were your in-laws interested in what you were doing? In your crafts? Were they also – had then --

MR. FRID: No, no, they were farmers.

MR. BROWN: I see.

MR. FRID: They have farms and so on. But it was a strange feeling to meet your in-laws the first time and you have a son.

MR. BROWN: But now your own father had been --

MR. FRID: He was a silversmith.

MR. BROWN: Silversmith. What did he think of your plan to travel, to move somewhere else?

MR. FRID: Well, it was fine with him. He always wanted to do it. He was supposed to go to the United States when he was young. Then he met my other and then he didn't go and his brother went instead, himself. No, no, he was all for it.

MR. BROWN: But how long were you in Denmark then before you came over here?

MR. FRID: Not long at all.

MR. BROWN: Did you stay with friends?

MR. FRID: No, no, you see, then I was – when our son was born, I was in there, then I heard about the job here, in the United States, they were looking for a woodworker for a School for American Craftsmen.

MR. BROWN: How had you heard about that?

MR. FRID: Through Prip, John Prip. You see, my father was an apprentice to Prip's grandfather, and then Prip's father was an apprentice to my father so somewhere, somehow we always get thrown together without even trying.

MR. BROWN: You were very close families, at least --

MR. FRID: Not real close families, just by accident we always get put together somewhere, somehow. So he had heard about it, he told me and I applied for the job. In the meantime, I went back to Iceland so then I can't remember how we went. I think I get interviewed before I went to Iceland for the second time.

MR. BROWN: Did somebody come over to interview you?

MR. FRID: Yes. And I was the last one he talked to, and he said I'm going to recommend you and Prip, so I got a letter shortly after that, you know, that I was hired, and then he paid for my trip over here. Then if I didn't like it after six months, or they didn't like me, they would send me back after six months and pay for that. It was American Craft Council that brought me over.

MR. BROWN: Did you know anything about them?

MR. FRID: No.

MR. BROWN: Before that?

MR. FRID: Nothing. I know nothing about the United States.

MR. BROWN: But did the American Crafts Council sound like a good thing to you after you --

MR. FRID: Yeah, I mean, they asked for pictures of my work, a picture of myself, and like usually, I never have any pictures – I still don't have any pictures of my own work, but – so I sent a picture of myself and got hired on that, I guess. So okay, I came over here.

MR. BROWN: Is that the time you came over on a banana boat?

MR. FRID: Yes, that's the time.

MR. BROWN: Or something else?

MR. FRID: It was actually Stockholm that was the first voyage. I had a great time there.

MR. BROWN: So it wasn't a banana boat.

MR. FRID: No, no, I just said banana boat. It was a – we had a lot of fun there, Prip and I. Our wives were still at home.

MR. BROWN: That was 1948.

MR. FRID: Yes.

MR. BROWN: You came over. Did you go directly to the Crafts Council school?

MR. FRID: Yes. No, we were staying with Mrs. Webb, Vanderbilt Webb for a week or two. We lived with her. You see, in the meantime, to get over here, during that time, there was a six years waiting list for the quota to get into the United States, so through the American Scandinavian Foundation, they say go through them and we will check you out from this side.

So we come over here in two or three months, after two or three months. Okay, then we landed there, and then I thought I could speak English, I still can, but so Prip, he was born here so he did all the talking, so Mrs. Vanderbilt Webb asked if I couldn't you know, talk for myself. So I was going to be real smart and whenever she asked me something, I will give her the whole, as much as I know anyway.

So we were in a restaurant and I remember it was a French restaurant, there were two orchestras and a real expensive one.

MR. BROWN: She was taking you?

MR. FRID: She was taking us there, and there was another lady and Prip and I, and then we talk about our wives with – so she asked Prip, "What are you going to do about your wife?" He said, "I want her over as soon as possible." So she turned to me and said, "What about you, Mr. Frid? Do you want to do the same?" I just started to say yes, but I was set for saying something real great, and then I had to say yes. I got completely paralyzed.

So Jack said to me in Danish, just said yes, that's all she asked. And I was so shocked I can't even say it, so it got a little embarrassing.

MR. BROWN: What was she like?

MR. FRID: Oh, a very nice lady, very nice. I really liked her. She did a lot for us.

MR. BROWN: Did she seem to know what she was doing in hiring you? Did you discuss what your – your work with her?

MR. FRID: Yes, I don't know she know about wood and so on because I came to – they had a store, an America house, and all the work from the school was coming in for display, a show. So I helped to uncrate it and set it up, and I was kind of nervous of course. Holy Christmas, man, when I saw the work that came in, it was like this pocket knife and a real Mickey Mouse thing, and I think okay, there is certainly a job for me there.

So anyway, then I came to the school where it was located in Alfred University.

MR. BROWN: Yes, in Alfred, New York.

MR. FRID: Alfred, New York.

MR. BROWN: And when was that? The summertime that you arrived?

MR. FRID: I came in May. My birthday is May 30th and that was on the ship so --

MR. BROWN: Did you have to start teaching right away, or what did you do?

MR. FRID: Oh yeah.

MR. BROWN: Was there another teacher there already?

MR. FRID: Yeah, there was one, Mr. Ernest Brace. He was a writer, by the way.

MR. BROWN: Ernest Breeze, yeah.

MR. FRID: Brace.

MR. BROWN: Brace, yeah.

MR. FRID: B-r-a-c-e. He was a writer by the way. He was a self-learned man. I mean, he started as a harpist and so on, so when I came there, then they asked me, "What do you do for lacquer?" They had a lot of problems to do with the finish. I say I scrape it and that was unheard of you know, in the United States.

MR. BROWN: Scrape the lacquer.

MR. FRID: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: They don't.

MR. FRID: You put the lacquer on and then you scrape it, you know, and get it smooth and it is much faster and much better finish, so the only thing he said, "Oh, like you know. Here is another one." Because before I came, the week before, they had a specialist coming with finishing, to teach finishing, and the student was in there for three days and he was demonstrating and taking notes and the whole thing became a big mess. So finally a boy said to him, "You don't know anything about finishing." And he said, "No, but I needed a job."

So when I said that thing about scraping, he said uh-huh, so --

MR. BROWN: And was Brace your superior?

MR. FRID: Oh yeah, yeah. So then we have you know, design classes and every time he went around, I mean, there was real Mickey Mouse put together.

MR. BROWN: Were you involved with the design classes?

MR. FRID: Oh yeah, so we go around and I said, "You can't do it, you can't do it, you can't do it," because everything was against the rules of the material you were working with and put together in a funny way.

MR. BROWN: Or you were saying you can't do this.

MR. FRID: I say yeah, you cannot.

MR. BROWN: Yeah.

MR. FRID: Do it, because such and such is wrong and finally they get tired of listening to me, so nobody will talk to me, so I think okay, I had another four months. This was about after two months and I had another four months, so I can make some furniture and sell them in American House. So I asked Brace, "Why don't you give me a bench and a set of tools, because you are going to send me home anyway after four months?" He said, "Oh yeah, you're right. Oh, okay."

So I started working at 9:00 o'clock which was the start of the design class, and I said, "Okay, there is no reason for me going in there because nobody wants to listen to me say, 'No, you're right.'"

MR. BROWN: You weren't getting along with Brace by that time very well.

MR. FRID: We were getting along, but he didn't understand when I said you can't do it, because technical was wrong, and design was lousy I think. So the student had me take down a mahogany plank at 9:00 o'clock and then I re-sawed it and glued it together, but the top, made the base, and then he come back at 12:00 o'clock and I had the base together and sanded and had the job and was handing the job after let's see, about three hours.

A student come in and say, "Gee, is that the piece of wood we took down you know, when or this morning?" I said oh yes. You see, usually a project like that would take two or three weeks, and I did it in three hours. I still have the table by the way. So then that spread all over the school because then everybody come running to see that table that was made in --

MR. BROWN: In three hours.

MR. FRID: In three hours. And it was quite shall we say modern for that time, you know, very simple and the darn thing, if I had known it, I would have tried to put the finish on too. I wasn't even trying to impress him, but after that, then I never had a dull moment because then when I made the table, then I lacquered it on purpose and they knew all that, and then when I scraped it, and I finished maybe in a half hour, then that really made an impression because they used to stand there and sand. A lot of them were old – what do you say, vets?

MR. BROWN: Veterans.

MR. FRID: Veterans, yes. So some of them were about my age, and some of them were even older, so they said gee, they used to come in with their wives and sand and sand for a whole day just to get the finish, and then it still looked like straight off the shower, very uneven. So I made a very big impression and since then, I never had a dull moment. Then I felt sorry because then everybody started listening and talking to me and wouldn't talk to Brace because one day I come in and someone was doing marquetry, and then marquetry is veneer and you can't veneer with a coin, then it will split. I told the girl you have to put a veneer in such and such a way and Brace fought her to do it his way.

When I come in and say who in the world told you to do a thing like that, and she started crying and I say Brace forced me to do it. So finally I went over to Brace and I said, "Okay, you don't know anything about woodwork at

all." So finally he admitted, no, he didn't know anything, especially about veneering.

So then I took over and the design changed, you know, considerably.

MR. BROWN: The design?

MR. FRID: It changed in the school.

MR. BROWN: You mean you designed more – the woodworking --

MR. FRID: There was a more, a Scandinavian influence then, that becomes simpler and more updated, shall we say that.

MR. BROWN: Did Brace graciously step aside and let you take chart?

MR. FRID: Not graciously, but he was a great man anyway, you know. He certainly was a great help to me and so on, but once in a while, I can understand, he get jealous and so on --

MR. BROWN: Yeah, yeah.

MR. FRID: But once, he forced many times a student to do something, and then that is when we had that talk that I say you don't know anything about woodwork and veneering and so on and he said no, but I was jealous. I mean, he was a great man and we worked very well together, you know, after that time.

MR. BROWN: What ways did he help you? You just said he helped you?

MR. FRID: Oh, you know, with the language, the especially the language and things like that, and then we had a run-in once in a while. First, we were going to move to Rochester. Then he ordered some machines. I didn't want them. And then the machines could come in. Finally I got so mad and I said what in the world, I mean, I'm going to get stuck with them and I don't want them. So he completely removed himself. Then he got arthritis, and actually it was a very sad thing. He got cancer in the nose. I took all his classes for two years and he was – he sent me his check, his paycheck. I mean, I did the whole thing, both jobs, his and mine, but of course, I was on his kick-back.

MR. BROWN: Back to him.

MR. FRID: Oh yeah, and then he bought a lawn mower for me and so on, but we had a very nice relationship in the end.

MR. BROWN: Were you able – you made that one table, were you able to make a lot of other things? Did you have enough opportunity while you were at Alfred?

MR. FRID: Oh yes, yes. Then I started making furniture and send them to America House.

MR. BROWN: In New York, yes.

MR. FRID: In New York, and he was selling but they had very bad bookkeeping. I made a lot of silver boxes, boxes with silver inlay, and he sold them, but if I sent down 30 boxes, I was lucky if I got paid for 10 or 15.

MR. BROWN: Right.

MR. FRID: Then I made a very – I think a very beautiful desk and I sent it down and it was a combination desk and vanity table. You could open the center and there was space for all the goody goodies.

MR. BROWN: For the cosmetics.

MR. FRID: And I couldn't understand it didn't sell. Then one day I came down there and they were up – there were no displays, and he used for a packing table down in the basement. So of course, I took it back and then I sold it shortly after, you know.

MR. BROWN: You couldn't do much to change them down there at America House.

MR. FRID: No, because there was just like the one in Boston. I mean Mrs. Vanderbilt Webb was the money behind it. I mean, it never paid for itself, it was always in the red, so there was no – Mrs. Calloway, she was Frank Lloyd Wright's daughter --

MR. BROWN: Mrs. Carraway [phonetic].

MR. FRID: Yes. She was running America House and she was to ride to the school for a while, by the way, and then – but she didn't have much feeling for the craft people and so on.

MR. BROWN: You mean in what way? You mean she was high-handed with them?

MR. FRID: Yes, for example, she would come from America House up to the school. Then she would look at piece of furniture or a piece of something, for example, a first year student or a second year student had done, and she didn't like it, she just threw it like that, and say I don't like it. I got so fried off one day and told her, I mean, she didn't need to handle the student's work like that. Okay, maybe it is not the best thing in the world, but from the day that student come in, and up to that point was a great, great step forward and at the same time, I told her I think she had bad taste anyway, so we kind of hit it out, you know.

MR. BROWN: You didn't hit it off at all.

MR. FRID: No, too well, but I say if you throw work like that again, I won't even allow you in the shop, and from now I will pick it and then you know, send it down. And I guess maybe that was one of the reasons why my table never come up on the floor, and so on and so on.

MR. BROWN: Did she seem to have quite a lot of influence on Mrs. Webb?

MR. FRID: Oh yes, she was running the show and it was Frank Lloyd Wright's daughter, and she was just like her father, you know, very strong. So I told the student about, for example, the permanent in Copenhagen. You heard about that?

MR. BROWN: Yeah.

MR. FRID: The permanent.

MR. BROWN: What did you tell him?

MR. FRID: That what is more or less craft people, you know, who put on the show, and so we told her, Mrs. Carraway, what I had told them about how the craftsman existed by himself without help from for example, like a place like America House. So she wrote a long letter to each student that wanting was what they did in Denmark and what we did in the United States, so other than that, I think.

I didn't approve it, so Prip, Jack Prip, Ernie Pearson, Franz Wildenheim, and myself, we got together and we started Shelf 1 just to prove that it could be done in the United States where a group of craft people get together.

MR. BROWN: So that was when? About 1950? Something like that?

MR. FRID: Yeah, yeah. It was a couple of years later because actually she got me so irritated that I was going to prove one way or the other that it could be done, what eventually was a great success.

MR. BROWN: Despite this strain with Mrs. Carraway, Mrs. Webb, they kept you on at the school as a teacher.

MR. FRID: Oh yeah.

MR. BROWN: You were talking about your job there was never in jeopardy.

MR. FRID: Oh, no. No, no, no, no, because after I made that coffee table, then it took a complete swing, and then Mrs. Webb come up and she would look at the students' work and design and so on and so on, and she said she thought it was a great, great improvement in the design, the workmanship, the craftsmanship, and a strange thing happened. I was – it was very nice indeed, so I say yes, I think that too, and actually I think it's fucking nice, and she looked at me and shook her head and said yes, I think so too.

I heard the students say it is, such and such, nice, so later on we got a laugh out of it, but for me, you know, the word didn't mean what it meant as well as indeed this doesn't mean anything, right?

MR. BROWN: Yeah.

MR. FRID: I mean, emphasizing and so on. So we get a great laugh out of there later on when we talk again and said I know, you didn't know what you were saying. I said if you are alone then [inaudible], and see her face and then I will look up what it meant.

[Laughter]

MR. FRID: But you see, the student has a tendency to teach you all those words because it was fun and it was a word that you heard quite often.

MR. BROWN: Oh yes, those are workshop, workplace words.

MR. FRID: Yeah, yeah, so --

MR. BROWN: But Mrs. Webb was pretty understanding and broad-minded?

MR. FRID: Oh yeah, yeah, sure, sure, sure, and --

MR. BROWN: And she wasn't locked into any certain kind of design or another, she was – her taste was pretty broad?

MR. FRID: Yes, uh-huh.

MR. BROWN: Some of the time, huh?

MR. FRID: No, no, it was.

MR. BROWN: Her taste was.

MR. FRID: Yeah, I don't want to say anything about her taste.

MR. BROWN: Yeah.

MR. FRID: Okay? She was a great lady, very helpful and she came to our house and she was a very rich lady and high society, right? But she loved to come to our house because it was always a good meal and she could sit down and relax and the kids loved her, and she was always sitting with them on her lap and telling them stories about her house and so on and so on.

MR. BROWN: The school was headed by a dean?

MR. FRID: Harold Brennan.

MR. BROWN: Harold Brennan.

MR. FRID: Before that, Mrs. Carraway was director of the school, and him and I, we got hired at the same time. He was the new director and I was a new teacher in wood and Prip was in the silver shop.

MR. BROWN: And Mrs. Carraway went down to America House.

MR. FRID: To America House and took over America House.

MR. BROWN: And how was Brennan as a dean?

MR. FRID: He was --

MR. BROWN: He had a background in design, I think, hadn't he?

MR. FRID: Kind of, yes. I think so, yes. Yeah, he did. I think he brought the school, he really did a lot for the school.

MR. BROWN: In what way?

MR. FRID: Oh, he traveled a lot and made a lot of talks and at first, he talked to every teacher three days a week, we only had to teach three days a week, so we had more time for doing our own work. Then he -- actually he kind of put the school on the map through his lectures and so on, and I always traveled with him and I guess because I did all the driving or something like that. He liked my driving plus introduce the Danish design and so on and so on.

MR. BROWN: Because at that moment, Danish design had quite a lot of vogue, didn't it?

MR. FRID: Oh yeah, yeah, sure, sure.

MR. BROWN: Who would he be speaking to?

MR. FRID: All kinds from Rochester, Chicago, Buffalo, for example, Rochester like the Chatterbox Club.

MR. BROWN: The Chatterbox Club.

MR. FRID: Yeah, that is a ladies club, but you know, very wealthy ladies and so on. They might be 50, 60, 70 people, but then there was lunch first and then he give a talk.

MR. BROWN: What was he trying to do, raise money or --

MR. FRID: Sell the idea of the school because the school was going to move to Rochester.

MR. BROWN: Oh, it was.

MR. FRID: So they were trying to get backing from the influence of the people. That would be like a big show in Chicago. Then we would go there with a booth from the school, and have a booth and sell the school plus display all the work and so on. I designed the booth and so on.

MR. BROWN: What was that --

MR. FRID: Go ahead.

MR. BROWN: What was that, a fair or something in Chicago?

MR. FRID: Yeah, that was everything --

MR. BROWN: A trade convention or something like that?

MR. FRID: Something like that, and it was in the Palmer House and I was maybe a thousand booths or something like that, so we fit in there very well and sold the idea about the school.

MR. BROWN: What would Brennan talk about mainly?

MR. FRID: We had the booth and then he will – and I will be there and he will be there. For example, we talk to people and told the story about the school and give them the idea, but the whole thing was about the school.

MR. BROWN: What was it about the school that was attractive to people then?

MR. FRID: Oh, there was no degree.

MR. BROWN: No degree.

MR. FRID: Number one.

MR. BROWN: Yeah. And that was attractive to people?

MR. FRID: Oh yes, because in the first place, there was no crafts school, let's put it that way. There was this one and then what do you call the one in Michigan?

MR. BROWN: Cranbrook?

MR. FRID: Cranbrook, but that was only for master's degrees, right? So that was the only crafts school that was in the United States, plus there is no degrees would attract a lot of people that want to be shall we say furniture maker, cabinetmaker, silversmith, potters and so on, and usually is not interested in the program that they teach in high school because during that time, it was geared for high school and if you are not interested in what they are teaching, you don't become very good at it.

So then usually you put down your vocational school and the positive school and then when you were eight, nine, ten years old, you get a stamp right in your forehead of vocational and you get out, there wasn't a chance for you to go anyplace. With the school here was much more interested in the craft side of the [inaudible] design of course, too, so it was the only school so all of a sudden it got a lot of students.

MR. BROWN: They had something they could go on and do after they graduated.

MR. FRID: Yeah, sure, sure, because – uh-huh, uh-huh. And because there is no – I think you have to finish high school. That was the only --

MR. BROWN: Requirement.

MR. FRID: -- requirement, and so for a while, shall we say, any warm body who walked in was accepted.

MR. BROWN: Oh so you didn't screen them out and test them?

MR. FRID: Kind of, kind of, you know, but then the school got a name, and then they were screened.

MR. BROWN: You liked that, didn't you?

MR. FRID: Oh yeah, sure.

MR. BROWN: You liked to be able to screen.

MR. FRID: Sure, sure.

MR. BROWN: Because back in Denmark, you had been screened as an apprentice.

MR. FRID: Oh yeah, sure, sure, so you were screened before.

MR. BROWN: What did you know or think about Cranbrook? They were giving a master's degree in the crafts.

MR. FRID: Yes.

MR. BROWN: What did you think of the work that they were teaching?

MR. FRID: I went through – you see, that's that period when what's his name? The Finn, no, Sheppard [phonetic], he was there, you know, Nielson [phonetic] and Kaufmann and there was a designer --

MR. BROWN: Saarinen was there.

MR. FRID: Saarinen and so on. And Eames, and of course, he put in a great name for the school and of course, it happened that Kaufman was director or the Museum of Modern Art and they were all four pals, so that gave them a chance to show what was very good, what was very good.

MR. BROWN: The quality of the work was very good.

MR. FRID: Yeah, yeah, absolutely, absolutely. But then you see, what they did in Cranbrook, they just made models, they didn't really make any furniture and it was just the design part of it, and I visited them, and I think there were 50 different coffee tables, and I think maybe ten of them could stand up. I mean, it was – the design was so important that they forgot that they thing had to stand up.

MR. BROWN: You think that maybe had an influence on subsequent design, what they did there, you know, just making models and some were nearly impossible to translate into wood?

MR. FRID: I don't think so because you never heard of anybody coming from Cranbrook during that time that went into furniture. They would come out and teach furniture anyplace because it was kind of – I mean, why design furniture that can't stand up? I mean furniture is something, people buy furniture, they are very practical. They might buy a pot because they like the glaze or there might be a hole in it. They might buy silver because, you know --

MR. BROWN: The way it looks.

MR. FRID: Yes, but when they buy furniture, people are very, very practical too, and it has to be so you can use it.

MR. BROWN: Why did the school for American Craftsman leave Alfred?

MR. FRID: I think there was kind of a jealousy between the ceramic department, you know, with the engineering.

MR. BROWN: At Alfred University?

MR. FRID: Yeah, and then they were teaching more or less the same, and the crafts school was doing it, and many times made better parts, plus they were looking for – Mrs. Webb was reporting the school so with Rochester Institute of Technology was really a technical school, but they would take for example, three, four, five school – I think there was nine school that were actively put into Rochester Institute of Technology and made it more or less an arts school out of it.

MR. BROWN: Uh-huh.

MR. FRID: And we were one of them, one of the schools that came in.

MR. BROWN: That came into Rochester.

MR. FRID: Yes, in 1950 or something like that. So President Ellington, he was the coordinator of that whole program. At the same time, then he took over the responsibility, financial responsibility. I think Mrs. Webb paid him a half a million or something towards the new school or whatever it was. I think, I'm not sure.

MR. BROWN: Yeah, uh-huh.

MR. FRID: I'm not sure, I'm not sure, but they took over the financial burden and that released her.

MR. BROWN: So you moved up to Rochester in 1950.

MR. FRID: Yeah, '50, yeah.

MR. BROWN: Did you – were there differences from being in Alfred? You were in a much bigger place for one thing?

MR. FRID: Oh, I think it was a great move because I made some boxes out of silver and Alfred was kind of an isolated place and one of the art teachers wife's come in and she looked and oh, isn't that beautiful, adorable and he made it with his own little hands, I mean to give you an idea, you know, that there wasn't like Briar Rose --

MR. BROWN: Like what?

MR. FRID: Briar Rose, like Sleeping Beauty.

MR. BROWN: Yeah, yeah.

MR. FRID: He wasn't exposed to anything because of that little net group there, and then you get out from Alfred and you know, baby, it's cold outside, you know, when you get out and try to get on your own. In the meantime Mrs. Webb had put up school or shop in Shelburne, a student who graduated, and then they would go up there and then work.

MR. BROWN: In Shelburne, Vermont.

MR. FRID: Yes, and do their own work. Brennan knows much more about that than I do, you know, but I guess he didn't last too long. The school is still there, not as a school.

MR. BROWN: But some of your students would go there after they had been with you.

MR. FRID: None of mine did.

MR. BROWN: None of yours did.

MR. FRID: You see, before I came, a lot of student did, but I felt that teach much more realistic, not crafty-wrafty, but tried to teach them so they would be able to survive, anyway, when they got out of the school.

MR. BROWN: they went to Vermont, they just prolonged --

MR. FRID: Just fiddled around, made a few bowls and a chair in that three months, and so on, while I tried to teach them to do it so anyway, you could sell it and still make a living.

MR. BROWN: When you got to Rochester, you had a more sophisticated worldly place. I mean, you were --

MR. FRID: Oh yeah. I mean, there is the school of music, good museums, easy to get you know, the material you need, just wonder around the stores and look at the furniture, instead of Alfred, I think there was none, then Hornell, that was not the naval of the world either.

MR. BROWN: Hornell is a nearby town?

MR. FRID: It's a railroad town.

MR. BROWN: What kind of facilities did you have in Rochester?

MR. FRID: We just moved everything up there plus added some new machines and that's where Brace and I got a little [inaudible] because he had ordered machines I didn't want.

MR. BROWN: Brace did that.

MR. FRID: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: What was your – the work space like?

MR. FRID: Oh, it was a good work space. It was bigger, and there was more – you see, we had the lumber downstairs and then we had a machine room and a hand room. Before we had the whole thing in one area and it's very difficult to even talk with all of the machines running.

MR. BROWN: So you could keep the machines separate in Rochester.

MR. FRID: Yes, yes, plus we got a lot of new machines going back to Alfred, when I came to Alfred. Then they showed me the school, and then finally they took me to a place and I said gee, I would really like to see the wood shop, and they said that is it. I mean there is an old machine, I think Columbus father brought over, you know, a thickness planner and a few tools here and there. I thought it was a model shop. So that gives you an idea of how it was in Alfred.

MR. BROWN: It was fairly makeshift there compared with Rochester.

MR. FRID: Oh yeah, but you see, then at the same time, at Alfred, they have just work tables so they were hanging on with the one arm and working with the other hand, and I think the Lord gave us two hands to work with.

MR. BROWN: They didn't even have proper benching?

MR. FRID: No, no, so I designed a workbench, and then we made them all and so that was the first move --

MR. BROWN: Yeah, yeah.

MR. FRID: -- towards furniture-making craftsmanship, you know.

MR. BROWN: And the students would do this with you.

MR. FRID: Oh yeah, yeah. As a matter of fact, we still do it every two years, make – so when a student comes to wherever I teach, a graduate student after two years, you walk out of there with a workbench you made. You can make 15 in two or three days, you know. Okay, that was a side step.

MR. BROWN: By this time, your students, were they still the veterans, or were you getting the younger students by then?

MR. FRID: I was getting some younger ones, yes.

MR. BROWN: How would you compare them with the veterans? The veterans were as old as you. Were they more serious, the veterans, or a little more mature in some ways?

MR. FRID: Some of them, and some of them was can I say little shoemakers?

MR. BROWN: Oh.

MR. FRID: They were not very open-minded, and – but it was no student, no school, so then we come to Alfred, or no, to Rochester --

MR. BROWN: Rochester.

MR. FRID: -- and that's when we travel even more and get more and more people and we go to high schools and give talks and have shows, for example, we have in Boston, in Harvard, you know, show all the work.

MR. BROWN: At Harvard, at the university?

MR. FRID: At the university in the architectural department, and then we did things like that, and things started picking up and the school got a better and better name, so there is a lot of people applying so we have a choice, so the quality of course improved.

So then I come to – because there was no children born – very few during the war so there was no students, and then the quality went down and I was having to flunk a student, and Brennan would put him back in. He changed the grade, and I went in and I blow my stack and say he couldn't do that. Then he signed his name, but he said okay, no student, no school, and I said I don't care, then I will quit.

MR. BROWN: This was the late '50s, early '60s.

MR. FRID: Yeah, yeah.

MR. BROWN: In the early '50s you had your pick of a lot of good --

MR. FRID: Oh yeah, sure, sure, sure, because then a dean is not allowed to do a thing like that, because I throw a student out, I mean flunk him and then he come back the next fall. So I keep flunking him and finally he – anyway --

MR. BROWN: Yeah.

MR. FRID: Then came that period where, after all the soldiers come back, then there was a mass production of children, right? That's when all schools really flowered and built.

MR. BROWN: In the 1960s.

MR. FRID: Yes, real – yeah, went overboard, so then of course we could be very choosy and got much better students, much, much better students, but then they started with the degree program.

MR. BROWN: Where? At the school?

MR. FRID: Yeah, in Rochester.

MR. BROWN: About when was that?

MR. FRID: I can't remember.

MR. BROWN: Was this in the 1950s?

MR. FRID: No, it was around that same period, you know.

MR. BROWN: Just before you left?

MR. FRID: No, no, it was in – I cannot remember it.

MR. BROWN: Were you still at the school?

MR. FRID: Oh yes, yes. So I was --

MR. BROWN: And did that create difficulties?

MR. FRID: I was an associate professor. Oh yeah because now all of a sudden you had to teach certain things like the people in Albany told you to teach, right? The student had to take public speaking, English, you know – it doesn't hurt, not at all, and it becomes a four year program.

MR. BROWN: It was a two year program up to that point?

MR. FRID: Yes, but a student could still go for two years, and then graduate, and you get a certificate, and you can continue. Then after that, then you pick up – we start teaching Master's, give a master's degree, and the two first students – it was tried out in the woodshop – so the two first student that ever got a master's degree from Rochester Institute of Technology was two of mine. They only put in two for trying the program and work it out and see how it works, and then of course, we expanded.

MR. BROWN: How long over the four years would they have to go for the Master's? One year? Two years?

MR. FRID: No, no, no, two years.

MR. BROWN: Two years.

MR. FRID: Two years.

MR. BROWN: On top of the other.

MR. FRID: Yes, but it was usually people from the outside.

MR. BROWN: Oh, I see.

MR. FRID: I don't believe that students should be four years and then hang on for another six too, and make it

six. I think after four years if you ain't got the idea about a teacher in the school, forget it. I think you go someplace else and try another school.

MR. BROWN: In your opinion, how did the Master's program work out?

MR. FRID: Well, I think it work out great. It was much more interesting for me.

MR. BROWN: Because these were quite advanced students.

MR. FRID: Yes. I say it was much more interesting for me because I didn't have to teach them A, B, C. That's what drives you nuts, you know, teaching. But it is not too bad in IT because you get a group in and then they stay with you for four years. So you really have a chance to teach them, you know.

MR. BROWN: But nonetheless, even four years is less than you went through in your apprenticeship, isn't it?

MR. FRID: Yes, I went five, five years, five years.

MR. BROWN: But did you feel that you could accelerate or how would it compare with the traditional apprenticeship of five years?

MR. FRID: I think you learn in more in four years here about design and so on and after five years, I know very little about design. It was later when I went to the School for Interior Architecture and so on, I got interested and that was shortly before I came over here.

MR. BROWN: Yeah, yeah, but say a student in Denmark who didn't go on to design school would never be trained in that at all.

MR. FRID: No, no, not at all, not at all.

MR. BROWN: Of course, you were much younger when you were an apprentice than these people were.

MR. FRID: Oh yeah, sure, sure, I was eighteen and a half when I started and then I went back to school, then got like a college degree and then school for --

MR. BROWN: But you started out as an apprentice.

MR. FRID: Oh yeah, yeah.

MR. BROWN: At what age were you when you started out?

MR. FRID: Yea, thirteen and a half.

MR. BROWN: Yes, much younger.

MR. FRID: Oh yes, sure.

MR. BROWN: Older students you could – in America, you could push them to go faster.

MR. FRID: Yes, 17, 18 years old and you see, at the same time, I had to learn to do everything by hand and so on. Well, because the machine wasn't that – it didn't have that big influence yet.

MR. BROWN: When you were an apprentice.

MR. FRID: No, most of it was done by hand, but today I still think you should do something by hand but you shouldn't spend three years or two years doing it by hand because who rip a plank by hand when you can go over to a table saw, I mean it is ridiculous, right? I mean, I will show them how but you don't have to be perfect because if you can handle a saw and cut half of the line, then you can make any joint, and so I teach them by hand first, but then you go to the machine and you use the same principle.

So I think it's a waste of time to stay there and sand and cut everything by hand – I mean, it is stupid to plane it by hand when you can do it fast on the jointer and the [inaudible] planner. For example, the five years, the first year I didn't learn much. The second year, I learned a little, but then the third, fourth and fifth years, those were your real, real start doing it.

But of course, anything I did has to be sold, has to be perfect or else I had to make it over and over and over.

MR. BROWN: So you did learn the discipline from the beginning.

MR. FRID: Oh yeah, yeah, sure, sure, I had a very good idea about the material, how to put it together and how he will react and so on and so on. What I tried to give most of the students, or no, what I tried to give to all of the students, and I feel I was one of the few that do that, there is a reason for wherever you go, of most of the places where you go, you will find some of my former students or some – taught by some of my former students, but of course, that's very easy because I was the first one to start teaching furniture and furniture design.

MR. BROWN: But no one else really was doing that.

MR. FRID: There wasn't anybody really. School for American Craftsman was the only one. So I guess I didn't have to be very good.

MR. BROWN: But in the '50s, did you enjoy teaching in Rochester, those early years?

MR. FRID: Oh yeah, yeah.

MR. BROWN: When you had very good students, you must have.

MR. FRID: Absolutely, absolutely, and then some were younger and a lot were more or less my age so it was a very close relationship. We had a lot of fun. So in the meantime when I came to Rochester, I was still on a special visa. You see, I got the --

MR. BROWN: You were only here temporarily.

MR. FRID: Yeah, for one year, but then I get extension and extension every three months, but before I get the okay, then my time was run out so I keep renewing it and renewing it, and then finally I say, "Okay, I've had it, I'm going to go back to Denmark and then maybe apply," and so on. And so in the meantime, Emma was pregnant with our second one, yeah. So finally the doctor wrote a letter that she couldn't be moved, it was that close. Then we got a letter from the immigration that we had to be out such and such date. If not, they were going to put us on a boat or an airplane and send us, so we had been living there with our overcoat on for about three years, or two years.

So a lawyer got a hold of it and he said okay, he did it – he was an Italian lawyer and he loved to do things that nobody else could do. He did it for free too, so he gets Senator Lehman and Congressman Keating to pick – our paper was removed. Jack Prip's and my paper was removed from the file in Washington and then we go back and forth. Then he try – anyway, so we went to Canada in the morning and was sworn in and come back because there was a clause to enter into the United States. If you have been cheating for two years, you didn't have to go through the quota, you can come right in, and if it was proved that we were needed in this country. So it was proved – it didn't say what we had to teach, but we had both been teaching in the United States for two years so we went up there and then come back at 2 o'clock on a permanent visa.

If that hadn't worked, then Keating and what was the other one? Okay, the two senators, one in the House and one in the Senate.

MR. BROWN: One in the Senate.

MR. FRID: They were going to introduce a bill for Prip and I to get in, so we had two chances, but the first one worked.

MR. BROWN: So you had this hanging over your head in your first years here.

MR. FRID: Oh yeah, the first two years, yeah, yeah, yeah, that was something, you know.

MR. BROWN: You started to mention earlier the foundation by you and your friends of a Shop One in Rochester.

MR. FRID: Oh yeah, yeah.

MR. BROWN: And you said one impulse to do that was to show up Mrs. Carraway, show her that craftsman, a craftsman-run business --

MR. FRID: It could exist, yeah.

MR. BROWN: And what other reasons did you have?

MR. FRID: Oh you see, I had my own shop then. I started my own shop.

MR. BROWN: In Rochester.

MR. FRID: In Rochester.

MR. BROWN: What do you mean, where you sold?

MR. FRID: Yeah, I have seven, eight people. At first, very few people, you know, but then we are up to about seven or eight people, you know, the whole year around, and I had a partner, Donovan. He was my first student when I came here, and we had become very good friends.

MR. BROWN: What was his first name?

MR. FRID: Bob Donovan.

MR. BROWN: Bob Donovan. He had been a student and he became your partner in this?

MR. FRID: Yes, and our best friend in all the time we have been here. He just died, by the way. Anyway, so we started the shop and let's see, I think we had 300 together and then we borrowed some money from his mother and we should have had our head examined. I mean, we didn't know anything about what we were doing, so we got a machine and we rented a place and after a year – in the meantime, I was still teaching, so we still had to pay our bill, the rent and for the wood and so on and so on, so I get paid from school, Emma would be there to pick up my paycheck and put it down in the business account so we could pay all the things, and then we hope something come in so we get something to eat.

But after a year, we didn't make any money so we --

MR. BROWN: What were you selling? Furniture or were you doing design for people?

MR. FRID: Yeah, design for people and making furniture and try to sell them, mass produce them. We tried everything.

MR. BROWN: But it wasn't working after a year.

MR. FRID: No, so then we decide okay, if it is not working, that means our price is too low because there seems to be a lot of customers, so we raise our prices a hundred percent. I think something that cost 100, we say okay, it has to cost 200. And the funny thing was after that, we never had a dull moment because people liked, when it's expensive, then they like to brag about it and so on.

So then we were up there, we had seven or eight people working for us and then started Shop One. In the meantime, Pearson and Prip, all about Pearson and Prip and they had a shop together.

MR. BROWN: They did?

MR. FRID: Yes, they had a silver shop and then Frans, he was the potter. During that time, we were pretty well-known, all three of us, you know, all over the United States, so we decide

[Interruption to audio.]

MR. BROWN: Second tape, interview with Tage Frid in Foster, Rhode Island, Robert Brown the interviewer, November 12, 1980.

MR. FRID: Anyway, you asked --

MR. BROWN: You were talking about Shop One, just beginning to discuss that, which -- and you'd mentioned that Ron Pearson, Frans Wildenhain, and --

MR. FRID: Jack Prip.

MR. BROWN: -- Jack Prip were the partners. And this was what? A cooperative exhibition space, plus sales room?

MR. FRID: Yes. We had a -- each one had their own shop.

MR. BROWN: In the shop?

MR. FRID: No, no, no, no. I had mine -- I had my at Donovan and Frid.

MR. BROWN: Yeah.

MR. FRID: And then Jack was teaching and I was teaching and Frans was teaching, but we still have our own

studio shop. I was in with Donovan and Frid, and we were three, four, five people that were working. So you asked me before when did I -- when do I stop? When did I stop?

MR. BROWN: Yeah, the Donovan and Frid partnership.

MR. FRID: So far I remember in the '60s around there, because I had a full time job teaching and co-owner of Shop One, plus a shop where we were -- there was eight or nine people all -- yeah, so I got an ulcer. [Laughter] So the doctor told me I had to give up something. So I gave up Donovan and Frid, because I always thought when I started the shop that I would stay down in the corner and do furniture and have somebody copying and make it. The result was that before you know -- you know I was a janitor, the worrier, the designer, the layout main, and the whole thing. So I didn't enjoy it.

MR. BROWN: What did Frid -- rather Donovan, what was his job?

MR. FRID: Oh, he worked there, too, but --

MR. BROWN: He was a woodworker?

MR. FRID: Yes. Yes. He was one former students, my first student, yeah. But he was taking a turn I didn't like where he would become more business than what I was after. So I sold that, and I sold that to two students. There was Donovan, and then two former students bought in my share and, by the way, one of them is now the president of Hartwood House [phonetic]. And they have a business of about five, six millions a year. And the other one is Jack Steven [phonetic]. He's -- separating, no. After a while they couldn't --

MR. BROWN: They separated.

MR. FRID: Yeah. They couldn't get together, because they were both very go, go, go people, right? So Jack, he went out and started his own shop, and then start building tracks and condominiums, and last I saw him, their average business may be twelve, thirteen millions a year.
MR. BROWN: And the other fellow's the head of Hartwood --

MR. FRID: Hartwood House.

MR. BROWN: Hartwood House. What's his name?

MR. FRID: Jim Bailey [phonetic].

MR. BROWN: So this --

MR. FRID: I have -- that's one thing that has one, two, three -- there's five of my former students working there as designers and so on.

MR. BROWN: Yeah. You really see them everywhere now I'm sure.

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. Sure.

MR. BROWN: But you elected to stick with teaching at the School for American Craftsmen and devote yourself -- your own production then would be shown at Shop One, right?

MR. FRID: Yes.

MR. BROWN: How did Shop One -- you started in '51. How did it do in Rochester?

MR. FRID: In the beginning it did fine in one way. But we didn't have any money, either one of us, so we had to pay $35 a month each for the heat thing and so on. And then Ronny, he had his silver shop in the shop. So he was -- took care of the customers during the daytime, and then we took turns at night to go in and -- for example, we were open Thursday night or something and sit there and then whoever come in.

MR. BROWN: Were there -- did customers come? Were there quite --

MR. FRID: Yeah. The customers come.

MR. BROWN: -- a few people with interest in the shop, pretty --

MR. FRID: In the beginning, but not that many. I would go there, maybe talk to two or three people. But I might sell one or two pieces which meant something during that time financially anyway.

MR. BROWN: Was the Rochester community very interested in contemporary design?

MR. FRID: No. It was -- that period, like, Finn Juhl has first -- just introduced a new line for Baker's, for them with the floating seat and floating chairs and tops and so on. And people wasn't ready for it yet. So if there was made a piece of furniture in between, you understand that?

MR. BROWN: In between what they did know and what Finn Juhl had just designed.

MR. FRID: Sure. So it didn't sell. We had -- I had quite a bit of trouble selling what I was doing. But then after three of four years and so on, then I had no problem at all, then everybody wants to buy my stuff.

MR. BROWN: Why do you think that was?

MR. FRID: We didn't have -- like I say, people wasn't storming into the shop. So we brought in different exhibitions of other artists. Then we would invite, for example, in the beginning, we just took out the phone book; okay, who has the most money? Doctors, right? So we invited all the doctors to the opening. Then with the opening, we had wine and liquor and our wives had made the Danish goody goodies there, and then with [inaudible], right? So then we get a mailing list of the doctors, right? Then after a while, the next one we just took all the architects and invited them. We didn't know any of them. Then the word just started spreading, and I think I mentioned that the last time. No?

Anyway, after two years or something the shop we had was too small. So we had to move to a bigger area, and then after three years or something -- I think that's three or four sales people there, especially during the holidays, we had people come from some -- flying into Providence, take a taxi, come down by, and then go right back again.

MR. BROWN: You mean to Rochester?

MR. FRID: Yes.

MR. BROWN: People were making special trips by then?

MR. FRID: No. They would be, for example, on the trip from here to there, and because we had got pretty good advertising in different magazines and so on, you just take a taxi. We were not that far away from the airport. We even sold to the Swedish royal, to -- during that time, everything was imported from Scandinavia, but we sold to Swedish royalty. [Laughter]

MR. BROWN: But this didn't interfere very much with your work. I mean, you didn't have to be there much.

MR. FRID: No, no, no. Because then we hired a manager, and then another girl and then another girl, and then like Emma helped there, too.

MR. BROWN: Mrs. Frid came in.

MR. FRID: Yeah. And we had -- for example, Christmas, then we would have the doctors' wives and so on to come in -- friends to come in. We always served sherry and different kind of wines, little hors d'oeuvres. We would meet there, for example, in the morning, take off their coat and spend a couple hours and go around and serve wines, and then doing their whole Christmas shopping for the husband's secretary and all the business acquaintances. And the girl just went around and took notes and we handled it from there. So we had quite a business going with that.

Then I got the idea one day that when people -- maybe [inaudible] in the wedding who was going to get married. Then we invited them to a party and give them some good things to eat and drink. And then they walked around and said they would like that, that, that, and so on. So on invitation, I would stay -- you stay to there that -- what do you call -- the bride and groom has the, what do you call, shopping list or what do you call that -- in Shop One. So it was very easy. People just come up, and we just had to wrap it, and then send it. So that was a good business. So I mean, after a while, it was --

MR. BROWN: It was very prosperous.

MR. FRID: Yeah, it was. But then we spent a lot of money for -- see, we made our money in the shop -- I made my money in the shop, and each one made our money in the shop. Then we made money in studio -- what do you say -- the outlet or whatever -- Shop One, because we are owner, of course. But we never took anything out, hardly never took anything out. We would invite some real good either craft people, painters, or a thing like that and have a show. We had usually about six shows a year.

MR. BROWN: And that consumed quite a lot of your profit?

MR. FRID: Yeah. Even for example for the show and for the liquor and whatever come in there. But of course,

then at the same time, we sold a lot of our own stuff, too. So it was actually just put back into advertising for us. And it was -- after a while, people get mad if they don't get invited to the opening. And you would stand shoulder to shoulder on an opening night. You couldn't even get in there.

MR. BROWN: You made your own money aside from your teaching salary then? You made your own money with commissions on the outside.

MR. FRID: Yeah, yeah. Sure. I mean, it's at least the same as I got in -- I mean, the first year with Donovan and Frid, when we were finished, we hadn't made anything. So we decide why have a shop if we don't make any money. When you first start, it's hard to sell. So we just doubled the prices. I think I told that.

MR. BROWN: You told us that, yeah.

MR. FRID: Okay. Yeah.

MR. BROWN: [inaudible] sit up and take notes. Well, at this time and you were also involved with this -- in this jury. Why don't we talk about that a minute. You were involved with a national crafts exhibition in 1953. Was this about the first -- your first involvement in an important national crafts exhibition?

MR. FRID: It was the first one. Designer --

MR. BROWN: Designer Craftsmen U.S.A. 1953, and it was sponsored by the American Craftsmen's Council?

MR. FRID: Mm-hmm.

MR. BROWN: Perhaps you could describe a bit your involvement there and why do you think you were chosen to be -- you were a technical juror for woodworking. Why do you think you were chosen to be involved?

MR. FRID: Like I said before, I mean, the School for American Craftsmen was the first craft school, so they didn't have much choice.

MR. BROWN: No, but the principal place where people could get --

MR. FRID: Yeah, yes. I mean, I think that was the only one.

MR. BROWN: Crafts education at that time, yeah.

MR. FRID: Yes. So they didn't have much choice -- [laughter] -- in one way, right. So -- and of course, my background, technical background, I guess I was the logical one to be there. But the whole show was that each state has their own show. So everything that come into the Brooklyn Museum has been just once. So all the pieces from the 48 states got into Brooklyn Museum, and then we had to put a show together that would travel for two years in all 48 states, and that was -- my job was then to look at the technical, and of course we talked about the design and so on. But I had the final word in the technique, and some of the other people had the final word in design, but we worked very well together, some of us.

MR. BROWN: Some of you. [Laughter] Well, I'm sure there's -- most of the people on design were either designers or museum people, weren't they, without your background.

MR. FRID: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: What did you think of the quality of the woodworking items that were sent into Brooklyn?

MR. FRID: I think that during that time, because most people were self taught, that the quality was --

MR. BROWN: Pretty --

MR. FRID: -- not to the standard of what I would call real craft. Can I use the word "crafty-wrafty"? I mean, do you understand what I mean?

MR. BROWN: Yeah, yeah.

MR. FRID: A lot of it put together wrong, because they didn't know the wood moves, and things like that.

MR. BROWN: You've often been quoted as saying that you design around construction, and many of these pieces simply weren't constructed right.

MR. FRID: No. They would design it and then hope they can put it together and then hope it will stand together -- stay together.

MR. BROWN: Were they -- many of them attempting to be sort of *au courant*, to be up to date in terms of current fashions?

MR. FRID: See the most of them has like a small place where they raised their own vegetables and have a few chickens and so on and so on and then try to make a living. But it's actually pretty hard to make a living during that time, because people wasn't educated yet towards what the craftsman was trying to do.

MR. BROWN: But were these craftsmen mainly sending you the things that looked kind of like they had been looking at illustrations of Scandinavian furniture, or were they out -- many of them were rather old-fashioned in design?

MR. FRID: Yeah. I think there was a transition from the old-fashioned towards more should we say modern furniture. I mean, that was my feeling. Then, of course, there are some way out in the left field, but there was a lot of carving and you would see like George Nakashima and saw his -- one of -- he was just started, too.

MR. BROWN: He was just starting. Well, he must have stood out from --

MR. FRID: And Esherick.

MR. BROWN: Well, they must have stood out in contrast to most of the things you judged. Is that right?

MR. FRID: Well, I mean, George Nakashima and Esherick, he didn't have any -- you may think that it would eventually fall apart when he started it with -- we have a --

MR. BROWN: You mean his furniture -- they didn't seem very sturdy at that time?

MR. FRID: No. See the piece he has here, that's the one that used the hammer.

MR. BROWN: The hammer?

MR. FRID: Yeah. He went to an auction and bought 3,000 hammer handles.

MR. BROWN: Oh, I see.

MR. FRID: So what do I do with it? He started making the three-legged stool and chairs. But I think it was very clever and very good design. Of course, it was Nakashima's --

MR. BROWN: But you're saying their furniture wasn't that well made at that time?

MR. FRID: Those pieces were, but a lot of thing that Esherick made, because he was not a furniture man or craftsman, he was a sculptor, a lot of it put together that eventually would fall apart.

MR. BROWN: Did you get to know Wharton Esherick?

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. Yeah, sure. He was in Asilomar. We were on the same panel.

MR. BROWN: That's a bit later. We'll talk about that in moment, that conference of the American Craftsmen's --

MR. FRID: See, during that time, there was a lot of turning, carving, and other kind of --

MR. BROWN: Bowls and platters.

MR. FRID: Copies and so on and so on. There was actually not that many furniture in.

MR. BROWN: Well, what was your overall impression then? That furniture making had a long ways to go?

MR. FRID: Oh, yes. Absolutely.

MR. BROWN: What was the effect of this show? Do you know? It traveled for two years.

MR. FRID: Yeah. In '48 --

MR. BROWN: Do you recall what happened? Did it alert people to the shortcomings --

MR. FRID: It did.

MR. BROWN: -- of furniture making, or --

MR. FRID: See, I think like Mrs. Webb said once -- Mrs. Vanderbilt Webb said one -- all those shows and so on,

you can't say that that thing did a lot of good and that thing, but when you put them all together, then you will educate people, of course. One show wouldn't do the whole thing, but you get in enough of them, and people bump into that type of furniture, that person's name, whatever it is.

MR. BROWN: Were there -- I know in connection with this show you were quite annoyed that so much emphasis was placed on design, and some of the people overlooked the quality of workmanship. They were -- in subsequent exhibitions, do you think -- was there more emphasis placed on good workmanship or on more and more innovative design? Was there sort of a struggle between the two camps or were there two camps at that time --

MR. FRID: Yeah, and --

MR. BROWN: -- the people who favored innovative design versus those that said, "Look, the base of it has to be good workmanship"?

MR. FRID: I think it still even exists, because like I mentioned to you before, especially during that time, because the craft people need the museum to show the pieces, many time there's museum people was judging the craftsman's items. But my feeling was that it didn't understand what, for example, the craftsman in 1953 was trying to do. I mean, they had learned the history about furniture and being told what was good and what was bad.

MR. BROWN: You mean, the museum people --

MR. FRID: Yeah. The museum people, so --

MR. BROWN: But beyond that, they were ignorant you felt.

MR. FRID: I feel so. Yeah. And today there is many times when you see shows -- and for example, I just saw a show in Museum of Contemporary Craft. I mean, a lot of the pieces there you'll say, "Gee, I've never seen anything like that before," but I don't understand that because the -- after two, three, four years, you fall apart. So I mean, it's not easy. Plus they many times pick pieces, because they have never seen them before, and a lot of it is terribly made. That is -- I can't remember the name of the show, but a year ago -- no half a year ago. So I mean, it still exists. Many of the people that pick the shows don't know what they're picking except, gee, I've never seen that before, right?

MR. BROWN: Well, do you think there is a place for that kind of design, maybe in a -- when you're working out prototypes, that they shouldn't be shown as an exhibition, say, of furniture? They're really in the realm of models or --

MR. FRID: Yeah. I think if you call it -- it's called the Museum of Contemporary Craft. And I think contemporary craft, right? And craft is -- I mean, it is put well together, right? Not -- that it's different isn't enough.

MR. BROWN: It might be more accurate to call it Museum of Contemporary Design, huh? Or prototypes or --

MR. FRID: Yes, but then a lot of them, even the design was lousy. I mean, one table was, for example, with a hand holding it, and the hand was even lousy carved.

MR. BROWN: Well, you were -- this was long before this year. But in some of your various commissions and work you did during the '50s and about that time, you designed some furniture for conference room at the Museum of Contemporary Crafts.

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. You're sitting in one of the chairs now.

MR. BROWN: Right here. Okay. And what was that -- was that via Mrs. Webb?

MR. FRID: Yeah. That was Mrs. Webb. For example, here, that's the table, the conference table. See, those pictures you receive now is about 25, 30 years ago. I made it.

MR. BROWN: These? What did you aim for in this table? This is a trestle table, isn't it?

MR. FRID: See, that is a conference table, and I think -- because it might be 10 feet long or something. It's still in there. See, then I made another one, exactly the same base, but then the top flipped over and slide out. So that would be standing in the middle of the room with the chairs around, and the other half or the other table is up against the wall and is used as a buffet. Then when they have a lot of people, then you could fold the other one out, and there was two tables that was made out of one long conference table. You understand that?

MR. BROWN: Mm-hmm. Now, could we look at that just a minute? The design here, is this based at all on

traditional forms? The trestle support is a traditional large table support, isn't it?

MR. FRID: Yeah. But it's much more open and much lighter.

MR. BROWN: Oh, yes.

MR. FRID: It is -- of course you can see that, like, the legs is shaped and kind of sculpted out. So I mean, usually before and a trestle table is with a piece coming down and a piece -- like the table here.

MR. BROWN: Just a post and rail arrangement. Yeah.

MR. FRID: But like this one is much more open and I think a little more elegant. But of course that's me, right?

MR. BROWN: Well, you were aiming toward elegance of design?

MR. FRID: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: And what do you mean by elegance? Maybe you could pin that down.

MR. FRID: I mean, in -- you get a table like that, for example, right?

MR. BROWN: Yeah.

MR. FRID: And then you have, for example, 12 chairs around it, right?

MR. BROWN: Yeah.

MR. FRID: If you have that heavy trestle table here, I mean, it would be something amiss. I mean, you come in and see all those things. But this one I feel is much lighter, much more elegant. I mean, it's not a big, heavy base, and, yeah, I'll call it elegant.

MR. BROWN: So elegance to you is clean lines among other things?

MR. FRID: Yeah. Not heavy, bulky and -- I mean, like, see that piece over there for example?

MR. BROWN: Yeah. This is a cabinet we're looking at here.

MR. FRID: Yeah. But I mean, that is much more heavy and bulky. But because the hatch with the beams and things like that, I feel I had to work like that.

MR. BROWN: I see. Something --

MR. FRID: See, I feel like that table in here would be out of place.

MR. BROWN: Yes. Whereas here with the heavy old wood construction, the heavier furniture is more in order, more appropriate.

MR. FRID: Yeah, yeah. Because all the beams [inaudible] and so on. I mean, a modern -- let's say Danish modern or whatever you want to call it, you sit in there like a sultan, right? I mean, you could see it wouldn't fit in here at all.

MR. BROWN: Now, we're talking about your designs at that time. You've always stressed respecting the wood, the fact that it moves. You've mentioned a number of times people must remember that, the grain, the natural beauty of wood. When you design, you attempt to bring out those?

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. Sure.

MR. BROWN: The beauty of wood. What about -- how far do you carry your design in terms of maybe making the wood perform in rather complicated ways? Do you try to avoid complexity?

MR. FRID: I mean, let's put it this way. I think the most difficult thing is when you learn -- when you design is -- especially the furniture -- is proportion. You have to watch you don't make a base and then put a top or other cabinet on top. That's two things that doesn't belong together, that the relation for that table, the thickness of the tabletop, if that had been a thin one, I mean, it didn't belong there, right?

MR. BROWN: No.

MR. FRID: So the relation to -- I mean, how thick should the leg be and the width and how much should it taper

and shape it and so on is something -- you can't really teach it. You follow me?

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. FRID: I mean, design, you can't teach. You can bring it out or help bring it out, right? But wait, I forgot your question.

MR. BROWN: Well, now, the -- no, I meant you that you avoid complexity in the treatment of the wood. You try to do fairly simple things with it. Is that right?

MR. FRID: Yes. So it looks like it naturally goes together that way, right?

MR. BROWN: Yes. Now, the width or the thickness of those supports is about equal to the thickness of that tabletop, isn't it?

MR. FRID: This way, yes.

MR. BROWN: Yeah. It's more or less the same.

MR. FRID: But it is considerably wider here.

MR. BROWN: Considerably wider if you look to the side. Also --

MR. FRID: But see then again here, you need the meat of the wood here, because of the joint.

MR. BROWN: Certainly, yeah. Where the leg joins the splat or the --

MR. FRID: Yeah. Well, you don't need it on the top and the bottom.

MR. BROWN: -- rail. No, you don't.

MR. FRID: So if you have it heavy the whole way, I mean, the table would weigh a ton.

MR. BROWN: And also that -- the shape of those legs -- it's sort of like a boomerang shape -- is very strong, isn't it?

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah.

MR. BROWN: It splays out at the bottom and then up toward the top.

MR. FRID: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: And that very contour of the boomerang, I call it, is echoed then at the ends of the tabletop, isn't it?

MR. FRID: Yeah. Plus it is -- the two sides is slightly curved, too, because, see, they eat there sometimes, too. And if you have a straight table, and it's ten, twelve feet long or whatever it is, and you can't see the people down the end if it is straight. And then somebody say something, and you lean in and get the gravy in your ears just to see what is going on. But just a slight curve, for example, three inches or something is enough, then everybody can see each other. Plus it doesn't look square, cold.

MR. BROWN: When, you were thinking -- you were practically alone in thinking out all these subtle -- practical considerations at that time would you say?

MR. FRID: I think so.

MR. BROWN: Most people weren't thinking in those terms?

MR. FRID: No. Not during that time. I don't think so. Everything was very heavy and bulky -- I mean, the furniture and what have you, because it was, like, for example, here we go -- someplace. I don't know. Anyway, with -- see, like this one, for example, you look at the cabinet there, right?

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. FRID: It has [inaudible] and so on -- here both sides open up. But see, that has a tendency to look like a fat person with a thin leg. Can you see it?

MR. BROWN: Yeah. This is your liquor cabinet design.

MR. FRID: Yes. When it's open. When it's closed, it goes very nice together. But the minute you open it, especially if it's empty -- with everything in there, it's not that bad, but as you can see, it looks -- the top looks heavy compared to the base.

MR. BROWN: Did you realize that at that time?

MR. FRID: No. And it took me years before I realized it. And actually a realized it when I saw the catalogue. And then in a photograph, if you bring out all the worst part of the piece -- the pieces selling you see is not that bad, but -- especially when it's closed is fine.

MR. BROWN: Perhaps we could talk -- next in, I guess, the later '50s, you designed for, like, for mass production; that is for Howard Johnsons, for a motel near Rochester, and for a Treadway Inn as well. Could you explain why you went -- you did this design for mass production?

MR. FRID: See I had -- I sold my share in Donovan and Frid as I told before. But I have a shop at home then. But financially it's much better because you can deduct a lot of things when you have it at home. So I sold Donovan and Frid, but then at the same time, they needed some designs. For example, the Howard Johnsons was interested in getting some different furniture. And I also had the idea that -- I even did that before I came in Denmark. I started hanging furniture on the walls. Then there's no legs. So it's much easier to clean, for example, in a hotel room. If you can hang the furniture, it's very easy to -- for the maid to come in and just run right over the vacuum cleaner and the legs are not kicked and so on. So I designed everything so everything that could hang was hanging. And they bought the idea, and then they sold it through Hartwood House. They made the furniture, but in the meantime, they had joined up with a quite money-strong outfit, sold furniture on lease. So they was -- oops here we go.

Get out. Get.

They had that a motel -- you go in a motel, and then you could lease the furniture for five or ten years, and then you own them. So that was one way of selling it, right? So they did a lot of mass production there.

MR. BROWN: But you were simply paid for the design?

MR. FRID: Yes. I just made it. I made the prototype and sold the whole thing. I was up.

MR. BROWN: What did that furniture -- that hanging furniture look like? Was it --

MR. FRID: It was made out of walnut. I mean, of course, a formica chalk probably wouldn't make sense, right? And then -- so there was a place for the suitcase, there was a side -- what do you call -- a chest of drawers and a desk in each room. Then -- that's good money in that, because you make it, you get rid of, and no headache instead of --

MR. BROWN: Did you enjoy designing it?

MR. FRID: Yes. But see, the minute you design a thing like that, then the sales people come in. Then they start become the designer and change it, and you have to fight for your right there to -- but of course you're going to sell it, too, right? But then like the headboard was sitting on the wall. The bed could roll away.

MR. BROWN: The bed -- yes.

MR. FRID: And so on and so on.

MR. BROWN: But I guess -- did the salesmen say they wanted more conservative design?

MR. FRID: No, no. They would say -- it was quite -- way ahead what they were used to, but then after a while -- they respect you when they see they can sell it. Then you get more free hands.

MR. BROWN: And they found that they could sell.

MR. FRID: They could sell it, and there was a big demand for it. So then it doesn't bother you so much anymore -- any longer. But then I did a real good one. That was in the Treadway Inn in Batavia.

MR. BROWN: Batavia, New York, yeah.

MR. FRID: I made -- during that time, they always have, for example, the television and so on. In the beginning when we first came over, there was a shower and the radio in the motels, right?

MR. BROWN: Yeah.

MR. FRID: Now, all of the sudden they advertise the television. Did I mention that?

MR. BROWN: No.

MR. FRID: No? So I made the shelf like an L. Do you understand that?

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. FRID: And it was on the wall, and the television used to hang on the wall, so you could lay in bed and you could see it, and you could sit on the sitting area and see it. I laid the whole thing out, and then when I came in -- before they were going to open the hotel, I saw that all the rooms were switched around. So you had the L, right?

MR. BROWN: Yeah.

MR. FRID: An L-shaped shelf.

MR. BROWN: To hold the television.

MR. FRID: To hold it, yeah. So you could see it from one side. But then they put them all over the opposite. So when you were in bed, that was the only place you couldn't see it.

MR. BROWN: You couldn't see it?

MR. FRID: You could not see it. No. And nobody ever said a word about, and I didn't have the nerve to.

MR. BROWN: Oh, you didn't -- were you quite upset about that, or --

MR. FRID: Of course. Of course. But then the whole thing was going to open, and take that down and the walls, and boy, that would be a big, big [inaudible].

MR. BROWN: Well, did you sometimes think of continuing with these mass production prototype designs?

MR. FRID: No.

MR. BROWN: No. This was about the -- you also at that time did design some kitchen designs, I think, in Ladies Home Journal.

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah.

MR. BROWN: Did they sponsor you? Or did they sponsor a competition? Or how did that work?

MR. FRID: Ladies Home Journal, they were trying to find what they thought the six best kitchens designed in the United States. So the -- what do you call -- the editor of the magazine is flying back from North Carolina and sitting next to a lady on that plan that was from Rochester, and I didn't know the lady, and she had never -- we had never met each other. They just sit and talking, and so she told -- the editor told what she was doing, and they had just taken the last one. They had the six best kitchens made in the United States. So the lady said -- from Rochester said, "Have you ever heard about Mr. Frid -- Frid's kitchen?" No, she hadn't. I got a phone call the next day, and they sent somebody up with a camera and took pictures and went back to New York, developed it, and then called me the next day and said -- they took one out and put in your stuff.

MR. BROWN: So that was in an issue in 1960. Now, this was pictures of one of your commissions in Rochester. This was the for the house -- a kitchen for a Mrs. Hawks.

MR. FRID: Mrs. Hawks. She was the daughter of the president of Kodak.

MR. BROWN: And can you explain -- we're looking at a picture of this kitchen. Can you point out some of its leading features and what planning went into this?

MR. FRID: Okay. That kitchen here with -- matter of fact, I designed the whole house, all the furniture and everything there. But everything was designed, and the building wasn't built yet. So when they start building the building, we already start building the furniture and the kitchen. But we have it in sticks. You understand that? Of course, then the kitchen will go from here to there, we have a stick, they say, okay, it goes from here to there, that long. Let's say it was --

MR. BROWN: Oh, you mean you got sort of a little framework built --

MR. FRID: Yeah. See now, for example, that's 15 feet long. You do the contract. That stick that is 15 feet long,

then we would mark for the drain, the outlet, the whole works. So he knows that. He just put the sticks in there, and he has to build between those two sticks, right, or that stick? So we would just come and slip it right in. So the advantage with doing it this way was usually the house is built. Then I come in, and then, for example, the lady wants, for example -- the kitchen, the dishwasher, the sink, the cabinet, and the off and so on, all of the sudden you find

you're a foot short. So she has to give up something. For here, because the house wasn't built, the whole thing was laid out, and we could say, okay, you could take two feet out at the corridor or we could lengthen the house a foot or whatever it was. So everything was designed. And then they broke the ground, we started making the furniture.

MR. BROWN: So in other words, she'd agreed to this furniture, these installations so that the design of the house had to conform to --

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. The architect and me and them, they work together.

MR. BROWN: Now, these are recessed. There are no handles, these drawers? Can you explain some of the elements of this around the sink and the stovetop and --

MR. FRID: Well, see, in the first place, everything is teak wood.

MR. BROWN: Teak wood.

MR. FRID: Teak wood, yeah. And she was very -- usually, they said she was a difficult lady to work with, but I didn't find that. Later I did some furniture for her father, the president of Kodak, and he said, "If you can make furniture for my daughter and get along with her, you can make furniture for me, too."

Anyway, I don't like handles. Whenever -- I try to avoid handles, especially like in a kitchen. I mean, they catch you and your clothes and so on. There is -- just about there is no cabinets so far I know except up above. Everything is drawers here. That is on the ball bearings [inaudible], because you have a kitchen, for example, that is 24 inches deep, then you want a pot or pan that is in the back, you have to take everything out and the floor, get the piece, and put it back in again. So for example, here, you can pull it out, and those walls and all the pots and pans were sitting there. So you can get in from the side. Do you understand that?

MR. BROWN: I see.

MR. FRID: And of course -- you say there's no handles, but of course there's handles.

MR. BROWN: Sure, recessed.

MR. FRID: But these are recessed, so --

MR. BROWN: Grooves between each drawer, yeah.

MR. FRID: And then, for example, underneath here, there is a hole for when you sweep. Just sweep, and you go right down the garbage can.

MR. BROWN: Oh, really?

MR. FRID: Yeah. And then there was a hold here, so when you --

MR. BROWN: Behind the back of the counter, I see a little trough that --

MR. FRID: Trough, so that could go down the chute. The splashboard, that's all tambour doors here.

MR. BROWN: Tambour?

MR. FRID: Doors.

MR. BROWN: How would that be affected by moisture?

MR. FRID: It wouldn't because it's teak wood, and it was oiled.

MR. BROWN: Oh.

MR. FRID: So instead of having the splashboard, you had -- the splashboard is four inches deep. What there was, the most depth in the cabinet, too. There's four inches plus 24, that gives us 28 inches, right?

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. FRID: Well, here all spices, paper towels, everything is there, but it's closed off. So when you need it, you just open and take out whatever you needed.

MR. BROWN: Yeah. These are sliding?

MR. FRID: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: Then here at the end of the kitchen, we see a -- under which are some -- it looks like the dishwasher, so --

MR. FRID: Yeah, dishwasher and --

MR. BROWN: Like a little counter or something.

MR. FRID: -- the washer and everything is there.

MR. BROWN: The surface above. What about this rolling table here?

MR. FRID: See, they like to -- they want a tea cart, but the same time, can you see that sofa, whatever you want to call it? So sometime the maid would stay overnight. So that that thing was made on a track. It could slide out, and then the back fall down. So it would become a bed.
MR. BROWN: I see.

MR. FRID: But they liked to eat in the kitchen in the morning before they went to -- he went to work anyway. So I said, "Do you want the tea cart?"

MR. BROWN: A little tea cart?

MR. FRID: Yeah. But at the same time, you can't have a tea cart that sits straight in. You're going to fight that with your legs, right?

MR. BROWN: You're going to fight the legs, yeah.

MR. FRID: So when it's opened, as you can see here, you see the -- each leaf is at an angle. So after you sit in an angle, that gives you space.

MR. BROWN: It had an angle to the legs.

MR. FRID: Yes. So they give you space for the legs. And at the same time, they make a pretty good size table for --

MR. BROWN: Table service, yeah.

MR. FRID: As you can see here, there's plenty of space.

MR. BROWN: Yes. And yet the slanting leaves that extend out, also because they slant, allow room to reach down to the shelf.

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. Sure. So I got a lot of letters people wanting to make them. But usually I make one, then I'm not that interested.

MR. BROWN: So these were commissions that in themselves paid well, I suppose.

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. Sure.

MR. BROWN: Now, you also, I think, exhibited several times or had things photographed for a traveling show that I guess it was a Smith College contemporary house interiors exhibitions. Was this a Rochester Smith College club? Or was this a national thing?

MR. FRID: That is Smith College in -- what's it -- Amherst?

MR. BROWN: In North Hampton, Massachusetts? They had a national -- an exhibition of interiors?

MR. FRID: No. They have the alumni open up usually what they thought was the ten best-designed interior.

MR. BROWN: Across the country?

MR. FRID: In Rochester. Oh, in Rochester and vicinity. So each year, we had quite a few, and one year we had, I think, five or six houses, and our shop was open, too. So in the meantime, then we have no profit with the shop. People just come and say, okay -- one person own a big department store. He just come in and say, "I'm going to rent your shop for half a year. You're going to do my house." So I said, of course, you can't rent the shop, because I have a lot of other customers. So we were doing very well with -- when another person come in and they redesign -- design the house for -- I think we worked it three years off and on. Most on. And it is that kitchen here. But I kind of like that kitchen. It is cherry, and then all the kitchen counter is slate. You see it's very -- yeah, everything is cherry, and out here is the breakfast or dining area. You can -- if there -- they have a dining room, too, of course. But I think --

MR. BROWN: Everything is very open, very functional, and also very clean lines. Again, rather simple, isn't it?

MR. FRID: Sure. Like that counter here, you can come in from both sides, not only from one side.

MR. BROWN: From the dining side or from the preparation side.

MR. FRID: Yeah. Then here in the end, here is all the washer, dryer, and everything is in here.

MR. BROWN: Encased in a cherry --

MR. FRID: Encased so you can't see it there. The doors was teak wood planes, and this was a -- no, so you could sit down, and then you could open the lid, and inside here was a copper-lined tray so you could put galoshes and things like that in there. And you see the holes here. It's not --

MR. BROWN: The holes at the end of this bench.

MR. FRID: That is for the umbrella. So you come, you could stick them in.

MR. BROWN: Why these random shapes, these openings? Are they not random?

MR. FRID: That become design. We've adjusted the holes, right? But the -- but I think you see -- I mean it's very clear with dovetails and very simple.

MR. BROWN: Well, the flooring in this entry here is slate. The walls --

MR. FRID: No, no. That was stone.

MR. BROWN: Just another kind of stone.

MR. FRID: But the other one is the wallpaper.

MR. BROWN: This is the wallpaper. Did you choose this, or was this --

MR. FRID: Not in this case, no.

MR. BROWN: This is sort of a simple floral pattern.

MR. FRID: And that is the sideboard in the living room.

MR. BROWN: In the living room, and this is in the same house. About when was this designed? In the '50s?

MR. FRID: Yeah. '55 or something like that. But no, that is 25 years ago, right?

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. FRID: I mean, there was a -- you didn't see furniture like that during that time.

MR. BROWN: Now, were these ideas occurring to you or were you aware -- when you had been in Denmark, had you seen -- were people beginning to work out --

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah.

MR. BROWN: -- these immense, very efficient built-ins. And these were fairly common --

MR. FRID: And they hang on the wall, too, by the way. There's no legs as you can see.

MR. BROWN: But these were very --

MR. FRID: And there's no handles either.

MR. BROWN: These were very common when you were a young man in Denmark? People were beginning to design --

MR. FRID: Something like that, very simple after the influence of the Bauhaus and so on. But then when I came here, I feel that design-wise the United States was 25, 30 years behind in '48 and so on. Then in come Eames and all those people and Kaufmann and so on and so on and so on. But I think that's one of the better kitchens.

MR. BROWN: Now, this is a very large built-in. It's L-shaped, so you go into a corner. And it runs the risk of being -- looking very bulky, but you've got -- it looks like tambour or these vertical strips here, which make it seem much lighter. Are these sliding doors or --

MR. FRID: Yeah. It's sliding doors, because at the same time, you had to go around the corner. But see then it's broken up in both ends.

MR. BROWN: At either end then you would have a --

MR. FRID: And because it's taken with a wide-angle lens -- a wide-angle lens --

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. FRID: -- then of course it looks much longer than it is.

MR. BROWN: Than it really is.

MR. FRID: It's not that bulky.

MR. BROWN: The camera's wide-angle lens.

MR. FRID: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: Yeah. And we're looking at a wall in the bedroom of the Hawks house, and you were saying there are many shelves and what other --

MR. FRID: Yeah. That's a hall. He's a lawyer, and anyway, they didn't want the end tables, so on. As you can see, it is a door, but then it is opened up at night, and it becomes the table. But up about here -- during that time, that's when intercom and radios and they start building all those things in.

MR. BROWN: Up above the -- where the headboard would be.

MR. FRID: Yes. So right up about here even when the -- if you ring the door on the outside, you could lay in bed and talk to them and so on. So it was built in there.

MR. BROWN: This is a very -- two-story high up here --

MR. FRID: Yeah. Like a balcony.

MR. BROWN: This is in another house.

MR. FRID: And you can see the dining area is in here, right?

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. FRID: And they built in the bar and that whole thing. All the liquor and so is in the doors. You can open it. But the funny part of this one is that when I saw that picture, I asked: Who designed it? And I did that maybe 20-some years ago, even the stairs, the whole work. I designed the whole thing. And I didn't even remember it.

MR. BROWN: Why do you think that's so? Because you've changed so radically since then?

MR. FRID: No, no. I mean, when I saw it, it looked familiar. I said, "Who designed that?" And then my partner said, "You did." I mean, I did. But of course, I've done maybe a hundred -- designed a hundred and some houses or more, and that one completely slipped my mind. But it's very simple, right?

MR. BROWN: Is that very typical of your work then would you say?

MR. FRID: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Or was this unusual in theory?

MR. FRID: No. I think it's a very -- again, you see all the shelves and so up here.

MR. BROWN: The built-ins up above in the wall.

MR. FRID: Yeah, hanging on the wall. See, the minute -- for example, you always try to avoid, especially in the kitchen or anything, to go all the way up to the ceiling. In the first place, you can't reach, right?

MR. BROWN: Right.

MR. FRID: And the minute you go all the way up to the ceiling, you squeeze the home in. It gets smaller, because you cut that line off. Plus when you don't go up to the ceiling, you get a beautiful place to display some of your pots and pans and so on and so on. So I never go up to -- I always try to avoid, let's put it that way, going to the ceiling. See, you can see here -- I mean, you can see the whole ceiling here. Eventually, you chop that thing off, right?

MR. BROWN: Sure.

MR. FRID: And the stairs was cantilevers.

MR. BROWN: Cantilevered stairs must give it a real lightness, and the banisters are simply boarding, aren't they, which is light.

MR. FRID: Yeah. I think it was like an L-shape, something like that so far I can see. I don't remember it.

MR. BROWN: All of this work, of course, would be for wealthy clientele, wouldn't it?

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. Sure.

MR. BROWN: Did you -- was your -- did you aim eventually towards trying to influence design generally or what the mass of people could buy?

MR. FRID: See, the thing was when -- I didn't have any problem getting customers, so people would come in. I had a complete free hand. I could do, more or less, whatever I want. But then I would give them a price. I never go down one dollar, but I never tried to overcharge either, but oh, yeah. I had to make a living.

MR. BROWN: Fair. Sure.

MR. FRID: And if -- I worked for a lot of Jews, by the way, what is a very nice clientele work for, because when they build a house for a hundred thousand, it's going to cost a hundred thousand. For a non-Jew, the start of a house a hundred thousand and wind up with 150,000 and have a problem paying. I had one experience with that. But with those people, they know what they want, and you get the reputation, too. I mean, you can't get a dollar off. I mean, I wouldn't go down one dollar. With -- because I used to say, okay, you want the Cadillac, and you have -- that's what I make. If you don't want to pay for it and so on, you better buy a Chevy. You understand what I mean?

MR. BROWN: Yeah. Sure.

MR. FRID: And after a while, nobody ever -- oh, they know what it would cost anyway, but -- and like, I would come back like to the Hawks house. Here you can choose the curtains. Then you move in all the furniture, and I didn't like it, I would rearrange the whole thing. And I went back 10, 15 years later, and it was still staying in the same place.

MR. BROWN: You apparently have an ability to convince people, and once they gave you the job, they gave you free reign.

MR. FRID: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: What I tried to ask earlier was --

MR. FRID: Excuse me. I'll just say this. Once that gentleman that wanted to rent the store, you know the department store?

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. FRID: See, I made a drawing, and I showed it to them, and so on, but many times people can't read the drawings. So we made the kitchen, and I hate those things where you shoot food through into the dining room.

And I told her -- I mean, you have the feeling, hey, three hamburgers.

MR. BROWN: I see. Sure.

MR. FRID: So -- and at the same time, you kind of caught the person. So when the thing is open, you see somebody walk without the head and feet, right?

MR. BROWN: That's right. Yeah.

MR. FRID: So I told her, "I don't think you should do it." But she said, "Oh, I want it." And then when I came in with it and we installed it so on, we were going to do the whole house. So she said she didn't like it, and she got completely hysterical. And I told everybody, "Okay. Finish off right now. Install that." I said, "Okay. So that's it, Peggy. So we're not going to work here any longer." I just walked out and installed what we had done. That night her husband -- and wife, and she come to apologize and so on, because she didn't understand the drawings. And I worked from then on no problems. Whatever I said was okay. That is the only time I really bumped into somebody.

Okay. You were asking.

MR. BROWN: Yeah. What I tried to ask earlier was: Did you -- during this period, you had ample clientele among the well-to-do people. I was wondering, did you also -- you did these motel designs, but were you at all interested at that time maybe in having large manufacturers pick up some of your innovations?

MR. FRID: No, no, no.

MR. BROWN: Because the bulk of design in this country, what most people were buying was rather shoddy compared to what you were doing.

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. Sure. But I get a kick of --

MR. BROWN: But that didn't bother you, the fact that if you go to Sears Roebuck, you get pretty shoddy-looking --

MR. FRID: You get Sears and Roebuck, right?

MR. BROWN: Yeah.

MR. FRID: No. And then people always want to -- what do you call -- protect the design. What do you call it?

MR. BROWN: Copyright?

MR. FRID: Copyright. I think it's ridiculous. I mean, they say if -- from you start making chairs, and people start copyrighting the chairs, right? So then we couldn't make a chair, right? Or a table or whatever it was. In one way, I would feel proud when somebody steals my design.

MR. BROWN: You feel proud and pleased when that happens.

MR. FRID: Yeah. Because usually in the meantime, I work on that, and he's moving to the next thing, right?

MR. BROWN: Yeah.

MR. FRID: So it doesn't bother me if people -- as you can see in the magazine, I freely give all my drawings for whatever I do.

MR. BROWN: Yes. For Fine Woodworking magazine.

MR. FRID: Yes. I mean, they can -- and a lot of people make it.

MR. BROWN: You don't have that need. You want people to enjoy and be able to work with your design.

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. Sure. See, I mean, if they like the piece -- see, a lot of people -- for example, in craft and things like that, I mean, they're taught by somebody, right?

MR. BROWN: Yeah.

MR. FRID: So they'll learn that -- to an old craftsman and so on, and then they think it belongs to them. Whatever I know, somebody taught me about it, and I'm certainly going down to the next generation.

MR. BROWN: You find some of your contemporaries, though, do copyright or are thinking of it?

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. Yes.

MR. BROWN: They feel the designs are unique, and --

MR. FRID: Yes. But I mean, I just have a letter now for somebody -- there was a photograph of some tool chest -- tool cabinet in Fine Woodwork, and one of them, he redesigned one of them, and then I got a letter he want to copyright it, but he wouldn't do it without my permission. So I told him it's fine with me. You can do whatever you want, but how do you copyright anyway? For example, say a tool chest, okay. I can change three shelves in there, right? I mean, if I want to copyright that chair, I had to have that leg from half inch and up to three inches for every 16th of an inch. So I mean, it's just about impossible. And I don't think it should be anyway. Nobody should be able to copyright a piece of furniture.

MR. BROWN: That's interesting. So on the one hand, much of your clientele has been companies and wealthy people. But on the other hand, people see your designs illustrated or something, they're welcome to try them out themselves.

MR. FRID: Sure. Sure. No, I mean, it's -- I mean, if they have -- I'd rather see them copy one of my design if it is good than try to make something that is not that good, right? Do you follow me?

MR. BROWN: You mean if --

MR. FRID: With that three-legged stool out there I have, right? I don't know how many people have made it. Quite a few, right? But that's fine. I think it's a nice, little clean design. So I'm happy with --

MR. BROWN: And you feel that it's an indirect way of your teaching and educating people.

MR. FRID: Sure.

MR. BROWN: What about your direct teaching, your teaching at the School for American Craftsmen? You were there until 1962. Maybe we should -- could discuss that a bit more. You were there from '48 to '62.

MR. BROWN: Well, we did some then, but did your teaching, your approach to teaching change over those years or --

MR. FRID: Of course, because --

MR. BROWN: You mentioned the early students were older, and then you got these younger students.

MR. FRID: Yeah. But see at the same time, most teachers have the tendency to teach what they like or their design. And of course, I wasn't any different either until I read in a newspaper after a show -- that we see the Scandinavian influence. Then I -- sometimes you read something or something happens right to you, and since then, I never, never tried to put my finger in the pie with the students' design. I stay in for their design. Do you understand what I mean?

MR. BROWN: Yes. I see.

MR. FRID: And help them with the design, but I don't try to force any -- what I particularly like. If you go to BU, for example, then you can see there in a show, the student show, there's a look -- a lot of small Alphonse Mattia and a lot of small Jere Osgood. The teachers will influence the students with their design, which I think is wrong.

MR. BROWN: So how do you avoid that? You teach them sound construction, and --

MR. FRID: Yeah. And then when they come with the idea and so on --

MR. BROWN: Yes. Then you discuss.

MR. FRID: I guide them. For example, with dimension, with some of the lines, and so on, but not that it should be what I like or what I do. You can't help it that the students see what you're doing. For example, I -- that chair in there from Boston Museum, the student and so on is nice and clean, so before you know, there's four or five pretty close to it. But in the beginning, yes. In Alfred and beginning in Rochester, I had a the tendency to do it my way or have them do it my way, but it's wrong.

MR. BROWN: But as a result, some of your students began to diverge more and more from you, some of them? I mean, you begin to see a greater variety of work?

MR. FRID: Oh, yes. If you go and see -- if you ever see a show from the school, RISD, it's very seldom you see two pieces as in -- alike, because I try to get them to interact and do many different things with -- instead of -- for example, the minute you give an assignment where most school does, then, for example, if you had 25 students and give an assignment for dining chairs, you're going to get 25 dining chairs. And there's not going to be the big variation, because everybody is about in the same period and --

[Interruption to audio.]

MR. BROWN: Side two, November 12, 1980. So you then try to avoid, by setting the dining chair problem, you try to avoid the sameness, the fact that they're all doing the same thing. What do you do instead?

MR. FRID: Oh, I have each one make a different piece. For example, in a school, I feel you learn as much with your eyes as what you particularly are doing. So for example, let's say you're doing veneering, you're painting, you're painting wood or whatever it is, it's something you really can't do alone. So you had to work two or three people. So all of the sudden -- for example, one is bending wood. Okay. Three or four people has to go and help him. We learn to bend, because even hands on the foot work and the warp work you still depending this main part. After you made the jig and so on. So they learn that. Plus all the other see, right? Somebody might be bending plywood, veneering, some might make a chair, some a cabinet. So I want to see 25 different pieces being made in the same class, because I feel they learn much more that way. So I used to give assignment, but then I went away from that, too.

MR. BROWN: So they think out what they'd like to make? They discuss that with you?

MR. FRID: Yeah. Sure. Because each one is more difficult to teach that way, because the student never sees you until they have a problem, and then of course you have to -- you had just been talking about chairs, and then you're talking about veneering, and then the next one is bending or turning or carving, whatever it is. So I mean, you're all over the map. And sometimes walk from the one to the other, and then remember, for example, 25 different drawings can -- especially at my age now. [Laughter]

MR. BROWN: But you started this when you were still at Rochester? You started this -- you changed your approach. You saw that -- yeah.

MR. FRID: Yes. Because there --

MR. BROWN: After you read that you were -- they saw Scandinavian design, you realized that you were influencing the students too much, and so then you stood back, so to speak.

MR. FRID: Yeah. So with -- okay.

MR. BROWN: And you were -- did you have a -- when you were -- your years at Rochester, Brennan was the head of the school throughout the Harold Brenan that whole time, and you had pretty much his support in most of these things? Were they --

MR. FRID: In the beginning, yes. We got along very well. We traveled a lot together.

MR. BROWN: But in the end it changed a bit?

MR. FRID: Yeah, over a little stupid thing with -- you want me to talk about it?

MR. BROWN: Yeah.

MR. FRID: Okay. Brennan, he was -- when he came to the school, he did a lot of good for the school. He really kind of put it on the map.

MR. BROWN: Yeah. You talked about how he went around with you sometimes.

MR. FRID: Yes, with -- and so on.

MR. BROWN: Publicizing it.

MR. FRID: Yes, and so on. But then we moved to Rochester, and then he get less and less responsibility. Then they were building the new school, and he was the advisor with the design and so on, and finally the architect from New York threw him out of the committee. And since then -- then he starts changing. He wasn't involved in that many things any longer. And then he just got a tape recorder. It was just coming out. So he get very -- my feeling was he get very narrow-minded. For example, he would come in Sunday, and then when there was a match, for example, on the floor or on the bench, he would go around and talk them out and then get called in, there was matches such and so on. Of course, there's matches in the woodshop, because you're burning shellac

and, I mean, you use matches, right?

MR. BROWN: Well, what was he trying to do? Just take charge? He was losing control?

MR. FRID: I don't know. I mean, he would sit in his office.

MR. BROWN: But he became very picky?

MR. FRID: Yes. He closed all the side doors. So we had to go through the main door, and his office was right next. So he was sitting there and watching, oh, he went out, and then, see, when you compare --

MR. BROWN: Somebody came back, yeah.

MR. FRID: -- and then he had a -- we want me to make a thing with the names on. Well, for example, when I was in -- I pushed it, I was in. When I was out, I had to push it out. So first I wouldn't make it, and I wouldn't push my name either. I say, "You see when I come in anyway. So you can push it." So we got a little -- so then I told you about that thing with the cabinet where we ploughed into each other, right?

MR. BROWN: That was what? At the very end?

MR. FRID: Then I kind of -- I'd been there for a long time. I was the teacher that had been there the longest. So I feel you teach in one place, and then during that time, there's no sabbatical leave and so on, you kind of empty yourself out, and it becomes a job. So I decided I was going to find something else, and I wanted to move to the East Coast.

MR. BROWN: Why was that?

MR. FRID: I come from Denmark. I'm used to the ocean, and I like the East Coast better than Rochester, okay? So anyway, there was the fire in Chicago, what, a hundred kids or something was -- got trapped in the fire. That's been around the '60s or around that. See, I quit in '62. So it was around there, '61 or something. So then of course, the fire department went all over the school and everything had to be fireproof and so on and so on. So we had the finishing room, and there was wooden cabinets in there we had made. It wasn't right; it should be steel. But during that time, they wouldn't give us the money, so we made them ourselves, right? Now, the fire code says it has to be steel. So during that time, there was all those army surpluses. So instead of buying a new cabinet, I told Brennan, okay, I will look and find some -- you can get it for a school for 10, 15, 20 dollars, you can get a whole cabinet, right? From the army surplus.

MR. BROWN: In other words, they were deciding you better move to steel cabinets. The fire code --

MR. FRID: They said you have -- we have three months or four months to do it. So okay, we could save maybe five, six, seven, eight hundred dollars, right, by buying the --

MR. BROWN: Sure at the oft-needed government surplus, yeah.

MR. FRID: Yeah. So I found them, and I put in the requisition, and then he comes back with a note: Is that necessary? And it takes me a long time to get mad, but boy. He had hidden himself between all those tapes, so finally that was the last straw. So I went in and smacked it right in front. I said, "Here's one of your stupid letters again." Then he jumped up and said, "You call me stupid?" I said, "Now, you mention it, yes. I think you are." So then I told him about the -- maybe I shouldn't --

MR. BROWN: Fire code, yeah.

MR. FRID: Yeah. Fire code, and he agreed that's what we're going to do. So he said he didn't remember it. So I said, "You have a very convenient memory." So he said, "You call me a liar?" I said, "Yes. Now, that you say that, I think you are." So then I got a letter that I didn't get a raise until I had learned to act as a professor. So that night I wrote another letter and said I wouldn't even consider working there until he had learned to act as a dean. So the whole thing was that I left the door open and hoped that he would hear me say he was stupid, and so that would really hurt his feelings. So I quit. I didn't have a job.

MR. BROWN: You didn't have a job. This was the --

MR. FRID: Oh, no.

MR. BROWN: '62 you quit?

MR. FRID: Yeah. That would be '61, right? And I was finished in '62 with that year. Yeah, '62, okay? I didn't have a job, and I got that letter on the same night I wrote the other one and sent a copy to the president of IT

and -- but then later on through -- then through his secretary and the president's secretary, he offered me a job with more money. I said, "Oh, no. If he wants it, he can come and tell me." At this -- I made up my mind. I mean, I just moved a year earlier than I wanted. So I wrote to Rhode Island School of Design, to Philadelphia School of Museum -- Museum School during that time, and the one in New York that was -- anyway, I wrote to them. See, during that time, there wasn't very many jobs open for in my field. And I got all three. So the Museum School in Philadelphia offered me more money, but then I looked at the endowment in the Museum School, and I mean, they were -- they had none. They were always running on a string. And then I looked at Rhode Island School of Design, plus it's very difficult to move in with four horses in Philadelphia.

MR. BROWN: To do what?

MR. FRID: Move in with four horses. See, we have four horses, and yeah, move the kids and so on. You had to find something with -- so you don't -- so okay, I took the shop job here, and we bought the farm, and had a little happy forever after. I don't think a teacher should be teaching -- it should be, for example, as a teacher you should understand you're going to teach there for seven, eight years. I think then you've more or less given everything you own. Then I have to be moved to someplace else. Not for a year, for -- but moved out and go someplace else, because a lot of those teachers that has become teachers --

MR. BROWN: Teachers' teachers.

MR. FRID: Yes. I mean, they go to sleep -- fall asleep with the --

MR. BROWN: One last look at the School for American Craftsmen. Did you feel -- did you see quite a few improvements in it from when you first went in Alfred? I mean, did -- it became larger?

MR. FRID: I think it grew a lot. In Alfred, it was two years and a diploma.

MR. BROWN: When did it become four years?

MR. FRID: Then we moved to Rochester '52, '53 or something like that. Then they started all the titles and all the things.

MR. BROWN: Did that make a difference when you got --

MR. FRID: Yeah. I -- yeah, it did. You get a different clientele, different students. A lot of them were just after a piece of paper, where the other one was serious and want to be craft people and so on.

MR. BROWN: Tell me, at Rochester, did you flunk out some students? Were there quite a few that really weren't too --

MR. FRID: Well, yeah. But then there was another thing where you plough into each other, Brennan and I, because I would flunk them, and it was during that time there were -- those no babies born during the -- or very few during the war.

MR. BROWN: Right. So you had a shortage of --

MR. FRID: So there was a shortage, yeah. So every warm body comes. So I would flunk somebody, and then he put them back in. And I told him he didn't have any right to do that. But he said, no student, no school. So okay, he's not going to go until I taught them. So I say, if it is to change, you change -- you put your name on it. I want nothing to do with it. So that was one of our first run-ins with it. I don't think any dean has that right to – [interruption to audio].

I said in one way I'm very thankful to Brennan that we did plough into each other, because of course it changed my whole life with -- of course, when I came to the School of Design, they were going to close all the shops.

MR. BROWN: At the School of Design?

MR. FRID: School of Design. Then when I wrote a letter --

MR. BROWN: This was after you came?

MR. FRID: No, no. I get into a fight with Brennan. I wrote the three letters to --

MR. BROWN: Oh, I see.

MR. FRID: What was the one in New York? I can't remember. Anyway, with --

MR. BROWN: They were going to close the shop.

MR. FRID: They were going to close the shop. Then I wrote a letter that I would be available. And then I got a letter right away back that they were interested, been looking for a man like me for four years. So it was in like the metal shop there was nobody, and they were just making goody-goodies.

MR. BROWN: It was a very low ebb then in crafts?

MR. FRID: Yeah. But they had big shops. So --

MR. BROWN: Well, what was the -- who did you deal with on this? The president?

MR. FRID: There was Fraser, and -- no. I deal with --

MR. BROWN: John Frazier was the president. Yes.

MR. FRID: Yeah. But Strout, he was the dean.

MR. BROWN: Strout?

MR. FRID: Strout. You know like the -- Dean Strout. And I know what they were paying. They weren't paying that much. So I was there for five, ten minutes and so on. By the way, I met Jack up in his house.

MR. BROWN: Jack?

MR. FRID: Prip.

MR. BROWN: Prip, yeah. I guess he was teaching there then?

MR. FRID: No. He was teaching in Boston or something. So we were sitting up till 4 o'clock in the morning and straighten out the world. So I had to have a meeting there at 9 o'clock when I had a hangover like, man. So Strout, he was talking, and then after five minutes and so on, I say, "Okay. I know what you're paying here, your salary. And if you have anything like that in mind for me, I mean, it would be ridiculous you take me through the school, you sit here and tell me everything, and I'm not going to work for that kind of money." So he could as well quite right then, right?

MR. BROWN: So he what?

MR. FRID: He could as well just quit.

MR. BROWN: Yeah. Quit talking.

MR. FRID: I mean there was no reason. So he said, "Oh, no. We'll find something." So when I came, I got paid as much as the head of the architectural department. Anyway, so --

MR. BROWN: Why do you suppose they were willing to -- instead of closing the shops, bring you in, and instead of paying you -- not offering you an advance, giving you a handsome -- or fairly good salary? Why do you suppose they were willing to do that? Was there some member -- somebody here at the school who was particularly interested in your coming?

MR. FRID: The school was still trying to move all -- it was a kind of technical school before.

MR. BROWN: Yeah. In the beginning, yeah.

MR. FRID: So they were trying to move more and more toward design school. And so they felt -- I mean, Strout felt very strongly that shop was a very important part of that program.

MR. BROWN: So you feel Strout was the one who pushed to have you brought in on your terms.

MR. FRID: Mm-hmm. So then I came in, and then they offered me the job as head of the department. I said, "Okay." When -- I was 47. When I'm 47, if I want to be head of any department, I would have been a head a long time ago. I want to teach. So I say, "Okay. I will take it for one year."

MR. BROWN: As head of the department?

MR. FRID: Yeah. And that means there was silver, machine shop, and the woodshop.

MR. BROWN: These were all under you?

MR. FRID: Yeah. That was under me. So then my first job was to fire the people in the machine shop and the silver shop.

MR. BROWN: Really?

MR. FRID: I mean, the teacher in the woodshop couldn't get it going, right? The teacher in the machine shop couldn't get it going. The teacher in the silver shop couldn't get it going, right?

MR. BROWN: You mean, couldn't get it going -- couldn't get students or --

MR. FRID: Yeah. Couldn't get any students interested. When I came there, I had 12 students Tuesday afternoon and 13 Thursday afternoon. So I had 25 students. By the way, we were two teachers, right? So I knew if I didn't get any students, there wouldn't be any jobs, right? So I was even out in the parking lot talking to the kids, why don't you come in and see, and I helped them. I was even -- even if I had to make it myself, I was going to do it. So then I got Jack Prip in there in the silver shop and Honeybell [phonetic] in the machine shop.

MR. BROWN: Honeywell?

MR. FRID: Honeybell.

MR. BROWN: Honeybell.

MR. FRID: And he start then [inaudible]. But then the student was coming in and out, and so in the meantime, Frazier was finished. He was not president then. Then Bush-Brown come in. The first thing he did, he fired 26 teachers. That was his first number.

MR. BROWN: Really? In what -- how come?

MR. FRID: All. I mean, I was there five days a week. I was only supposed to be there three. But I want to have a job, and I want to get that thing going. So the teachers say, "What do you live here?" I say, "No, I teach here." You come, for example, in the architectural department, give an assignment, then you meet next week. Then without even looking, they say, "Why don't you go home, think about it again, and then do it over," and then walk out.

MR. BROWN: So the teachers were hardly around.

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. It was real --

MR. BROWN: So Albert Bush-Brown just fired them.

MR. FRID: He fired them, yeah. Of course, in the meantime, then I wouldn't move down unless I had at least a two-year contract. And I thought everybody here had at least -- I thought I was a beginner -- a two-year's contract at least if you offer me. So I got a two-year contract, and then I find out I was the only one.

MR. BROWN: Oh, really? Everyone else --

MR. FRID: In the whole school was one year.

MR. BROWN: Just from year to year employment.

MR. FRID: Yes. But then when the contract come out, they were nervous, and I'd say, "What are you nervous about? I mean, I'm the new one." But of course, I had two years. I don't have to worry yet. Two years, and geez, there was a big commotion anyway, and I found out I was the only one that had it. Anyway, he fired 26. I would have fired 50 if it was me.

MR. BROWN: Really? They did --

MR. FRID: I mean, it was real bad, real bad. I think it was bad.

MR. BROWN: You thought it was -- the way he did was --

MR. FRID: No, no. I think the teacher was bad. I mean, they was real lousy.

MR. BROWN: But they did keep teachers in some of the design departments that had been there a long time?

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. Sure.

MR. BROWN: Some of the painting teachers and all they were [inaudible], weren't they?

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. Sure, sure. But see, those -- in one way, Frazier still runs that painting department from his grave, if you understand what I mean. All the teachers is some of his former students and so on. Anyway, after one year, then I went up to Bush-Brown and said, "That is stupid. Because I'll come in and a student will use a circle saw. I'll just show him how to use it." I said, "That's ridiculous, I think everybody should take woodshop." Said, "Gee, that's a pretty good idea." So two days -- that was two days before -- what's that -- convocation or what is it, commencement or whatever? The beginning. What do you call it by the way?

MR. BROWN: Oh, I don't know. Convocation, I guess.

MR. FRID: Yeah, convocation.

MR. BROWN: The beginning of the academic year.

MR. FRID: So that day he just said that from now on all freshmen have to take woodshop, and I didn't have any tools. And the freshmen didn't know about it. I didn't know about it. But he saw that I understood that now they were going to have it. So we had to go to Boston and get tools, and from then on, then all freshmen took woodshop, but that was not my idea that -- anyway, I got a lot of warm bodies in there.

MR. BROWN: Certainly you did. So you had -- you were a major department --

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. And then after that -- after that growth, then the students become interested. Then -- now, I'm going to have a waiting list of 50, 60 people on that list. And the same the sliver shop, then the machine shop. There is a department now that is the strongest in the school.

MR. BROWN: In the school. So you came in. You worked out -- it happened that it worked out very much to your advantage that quickly.

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. Sure, sure.

MR. BROWN: What was the role of machine shop? Could you explain?

MR. FRID: What?

MR. BROWN: What was the role of the machine job instruction?

MR. FRID: Oh, it was more left -- the building, for example, that I'm in, that was the textile building. Half of it was silver jewelry and the other half was textile. So then the machine shop was involved with the jewelry. See Providence was the center of all jewelry.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. FRID: And then all the mills around. So the factories paid, more or less, for the whole school there. And there was a certain amount of money that could be used every year. So the wood shop was in a little hall.

MR. BROWN: Was the machine shop used to make tools or to --

MR. FRID: It wasn't used. Let's put it that. I mean --

MR. BROWN: Eventually, it wasn't.

MR. FRID: It was supposed to be part of the silver department so they could make their own dyes and things like that and so on. There was an old lady, though, teaching jewelry. I mean, as good it was in Sears and Roebuck and Five and Dime in my book. And the machine man, he had no students. So I said, "Okay. You can come fix my machines." And he said he wouldn't, so, okay, you're fired. So I got rid of him in a hurry. But go ahead. You were going to --

MR. BROWN: Well, but since then, you've been able to -- these departments have built up.

MR. FRID: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: The machine shop actually does serve the silver shop and other shops?

MR. FRID: No. The machine shop now is under industrial design, and I am, too.

MR. BROWN: Do these students learn how to be pattern makers and the like in industry?

MR. FRID: No, no. But see as an industrial designer, for example, if you want to make a bicycle, okay, you have to have to make all the gears, you have to make the whole thing. And then what they do -- or they make a machine or tape recorder or something --

MR. BROWN: They have a machine shop in which they can make it.

MR. FRID: Yes. And then -- but see then, that is elective. That's not a major. See, furniture is a major. They can major in furniture, but they got it in industrial design majoring in furniture. You understand? But then there's a master's program in furniture, and I'm in charge of that. That's all I'm teaching now by the way.

MR. BROWN: Now, why was furniture making put under industrial design?

MR. FRID: That is because it's related to industrial design.

MR. BROWN: Rather than under fine arts or something.

MR. FRID: Yes.

MR. BROWN: In other words, this is sort of a reflection of that controversy in the '50s between the craftsman as artist and the craftsman as applied designer.

MR. FRID: Sure. Like in RIT, it's under fine art. And like weaving is under fine art, and now silver is under fine art, so put --

MR. BROWN: It's still not settled, is it?

MR. FRID: No, no. By all -- see we belong in architecture because industrial design in architecture, too.

MR. BROWN: But I mean, the question is still not settled. Some of the crafts are in fine arts, and some are under industrial --

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. No. I was trying for a long time to get the weaving, ceramic -- ceramic is in fine art -- silver, machine shop, and wood in as one department as -- and call it craft, right? I was going to say fine art, but -- [laughter] -- I mean, why not? Face the music; that's what it is, right? So it was -- somewhere and somehow you always get railroaded because -- see, they were going to close ID.

MR. BROWN: ID?

MR. FRID: Industrial design, because it didn't have any students. And then -- so he was smart. He moved in on the architecture so it gets absorbed in that whole big department.

MR. BROWN: Who was he?

MR. FRID: That is Marc Harrison. So all of the sudden I was in architecture, too, with -- I didn't even know about it, but it was fine with me, because they don't bother me. I'm in my own little world. I have my own budget. See, before we had -- I was in with the budget on architecture and so on. Then he complained, because square footage and let's say we have 50 students. For example, I got 50 students, he would take the square footage and divide it up. In English class, they might have 50 students, but only one tenth of the space, right? So they're figuring out first square footage, and then our budget was much, much too big. We spent too much money, and I know we didn't.

So I went through it, and then industrial design was -- they brought a change. So they had bought cameras and films on our budget. So I went up to the treasure and said, "Okay. I don't want to be in their budget. So I have my own budget now, and completely -- I get completely removed. So I actually never -- I live in my own little world. Nobody ever bothers me. So what is -- but in the meantime, in the program, like in industrial design, I have a lot of industrial design students. So if I pulled out of there, then the department becomes small again. So they're more willing to give me free hands.

MR. BROWN: And the industrial design people are.

MR. FRID: Yes. But now that department is gone.

MR. BROWN: Now.

MR. FRID: Now, yes, too. So --

MR. BROWN: Now, the -- are most of your students going to go into production, into --

MR. FRID: No. Let's put it this way, some of them --

MR. BROWN: Because it's called industrial design.

MR. FRID: Yeah. No, no. But see --

MR. BROWN: You're --

MR. FRID: They can be in industrial design, but they can major in furniture. So some go out and put up their own shop. Some go to industry and design, because there's a great demand for them, because they can not only draw it, but they can make it and make the prototype. And some go as, you would say freelance designer and design and sell the thing. And some go teaching. But I'd say 85, 90 percent of the students that graduate from my classes stay in the field.

MR. BROWN: You said -- I remember last year you commented that your graduates have no trouble getting jobs.

MR. FRID: Oh, no.

MR. BROWN: Is a lot of that because so many go into production? I mean, designing prototypes and the like?

MR. FRID: Yeah, like -- a lot of them, yes, is in the industry designing and making it, like Knoll has -- Knoll Associates has for -- I had two students there for -- 30 years ago designing and now there's another one. One is working with -- or designing for Vernet [phonetic]. That is a big outfit there. And like, Vernet buys -- for example, bought the design of his furniture.

MR. BROWN: He buys what?

MR. FRID: Some of the design and some of the chairs of the thing that's made in school is bought up by bigger furniture manufacturers to be mass produced. But then of course you automatically go in and work with them.

MR. BROWN: Are some of your -- have some of your students gone into the large-scale furniture manufacturing companies in North Carolina or Michigan?

MR. FRID: No, no, no.

MR. BROWN: None of that.

MR. FRID: They don't belong --

MR. BROWN: They don't --

MR. FRID: They don't belong there.

MR. BROWN: They don't want them? They don't --

MR. FRID: And the students don't want them. I mean, I think that is more like it, because it's reproduction, and it is a design school, which are different.

[Interruption to audio.]

MR. BROWN: Continuing interviews with Tage Frid in Foster, Rhode Island. Robert Brown, the interviewer. It's March 5th, 1981.

In the 1950s, you were somewhat involved with exhibitions. We've talked about the Brooklyn Museum exhibition of '53. You were also involved with the American Craftsman's Council to a point to the extent that you went to its conference, Asilomar Conference in 1957. Can you describe your recollections of that conference and what it was trying to accomplish?

MR. FRID: It was the first conference of the ACC. So I was invited as one of the -- what do you call it -- on the panel. And there was Esherick and Sam Maloof and Walker Weed and John May and Lawrence Peabody. They were on the same panel. I really didn't know what I was supposed to do. And then many times I said the wrong thing.

MR. BROWN: What -- they hadn't given any clear idea of what they wanted to accomplish at the conference?

MR. FRID: No. I just went there, and when it was my turn, I just talked, right? Said my philosophy, and I think it is in there some place, I'm sure.

MR. BROWN: Did you get much out of it? I mean, what was the -- what's seemed to have --

MR. FRID: Me?

MR. BROWN: What seemed to have been accomplished by the --

MR. FRID: Well, I got a trip in Southern California. That's what I got out of it.

MR. BROWN: But that was about it? You didn't --

MR. FRID: No. I think it was -- like, for example, Wharton Esherick, they would ask him a question, and then he would just say, "Why don't people leave me alone?" So I say, "Why in the hell do you take the money to come out there, and then you don't want to answer the questions. So that was one thing I remember." But I think it was most amateurs that was there. I asked, for example, what people was doing and so on, and somebody hold up a cane -- they had been -- the go out in the woods and find a nice piece of wood take the bark off and make a cane. That gives

you an idea.

MR. BROWN: It was about that level, a lot of them.

MR. FRID: A lot of them. I mean, the whole craft movement was quite new, too. I mean, you hadn't -- that School for American Craftsmen hasn't been for that long time, right? And that was one of the only schools that was teaching craft.

MR. BROWN: So you -- what did you know about the American Craftman's Council at that point? I know you'd been a bit upset about some of the standards that were -- of things that were exhibited and shown by them.

MR. FRID: Oh, that -- see, they started thinking it would develop slowly, all right? And because I have to be a member of it because I was in School for American Craftsmen, so we have to belong if we wanted or not. That was Brennan's idea anyway.

MR. BROWN: It was Brennan, the dean's idea?

MR. FRID: Yeah. The dean's idea that we have to.

MR. BROWN: What did he feel it would accomplish to be a member?

MR. FRID: I don't know. See, I was not that involved. I know Prip and Pearson and all those people, because the whole thing was run by a bundle of amateurs I think, too. There was -- by Paul Smith and I can't remember the girl's name. There was three, four people there from Buffalo, and we were very involved in the whole movement, and by Paul Smith -- I had him as a student of, what, three weeks or something like that, but his background was windows -- decorator and so on.

MR. BROWN: Yes. A decorator.

MR. FRID: Yeah. So all the craft shows and so on was always -- for example, weaving, there was never really good fabric, because that's very difficult to do. But it was always three-dimensional weaving, what is more or less sculpture. The furniture was always something way on the left field. There was -- it's not very well made. I mean, a lot of it was not very well made. And it seems that the idea was more important than the craftsmanship and the usefulness of the furniture, because when people buy furniture, they're very -- I mean, they want a table they can eat from and a chair they can sit in. So it's not like a piece of pottery or weaving or whatever it is you just buy even if it's not very functional.

MR. BROWN: So your opinion of the things that the American Craftsman's Council were showing was that they were for show more than for use.

MR. FRID: Yes. And I asked once Mrs. Webb -- I saw it was called Museum for Contemporary Craft, but I mean, they had the bread shows and -- I mean, complete --

MR. BROWN: What kind of show?

MR. FRID: It was a bread show.

MR. BROWN: Bread?

MR. FRID: Yeah. Once it was on. And there was very little craft involved. And I told her, too, I could see better

furniture, for example, in the Museum of Modern Art. They have a better collection and much better -- it's furniture with --

MR. BROWN: Than they could see there. In the '50s before you came here to Rhode Island when you were still out in New York State, you exhibited steadily, I guess. And an example on the Finger Lakes annual exhibitions that -- the memorial art gallery in Rochester, you showed from 1951 to '61. What was your -- what were those shows like? Were they a mixture of crafts and painting and sculpture?

MR. FRID: No. I think it was considerably better shows than --

MR. BROWN: Most other places?

MR. FRID: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Partly because the school was there, and the school was the chief craft --

MR. FRID: Sure. But at the same time, they usually got some good people to judge the show.

MR. BROWN: Oh, they did? You mean -- what do you mean by good people?

MR. FRID: Oh, for example, what's his name? Shepashie [phonetic] from Cranbrook? For example, he was a member once, one of them that's on -- people that was in the field and know what they were looking for and what they were talking about. As I wrote here in that letter --

MR. BROWN: The letter to Mrs. Webb in '54 or so.

MR. FRID: Yeah. Whatever -- I think I put in pretty well my feeling about people that just shows.

MR. BROWN: And Finger Lake shows, they had people who knew what they were looking at.

MR. FRID: Yes. Usually.

MR. BROWN: Who exhibited there or I mean what -- from where? Were they from all over the country or --

MR. FRID: No, no, no. It's only the Finger Lakes region. I mean, that would be the whole idea of the Finger Lakes, that show.

MR. BROWN: And was there quite a rich group in woodworking, for example?

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. Sure. Oh, yeah. There was quite a few, and it's still going on.

MR. BROWN: Were they mainly people that you had -- that had -- you had taught, or were there a lot of other mature --

MR. FRID: There was a lot of other people, too.

MR. BROWN: Were some of them pretty well known that -- can you remember the names of any?

MR. FRID: No. Me and names, they --

MR. BROWN: Now, was the work in general conservative or very well crafted or --

MR. FRID: I think it was very well crafted and very experimental, too, with -- but still furniture if you understand that. You have seen Straney's [phonetic] work. You're familiar with Straney?

MR. BROWN: Mm-hmm.

MR. FRID: They have no function at all, and not a lot of furniture -- the influence of Straney. For example, many times now, they make -- you make a chair, and if you sit very careful, you can sit in it, but don't -- and you're going to sit in one position, for example.

MR. BROWN: But was his work in those shows?

MR. FRID: Oh, no, no, no.

MR. BROWN: But as in contrast [inaudible].

MR. FRID: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: For your own part, would you make extraordinary pieces to show in these exhibitions because -- or more or less simply show the things that you were getting commissions for, because you were having -- you were steadily doing -- executing commissions in that area?

MR. FRID: Oh, yes. I had a --

MR. BROWN: Was that the sort of thing that you exhibited?

MR. FRID: Yes. Usually with -- I didn't make anything specific for the show, but whatever I had, and I guess I got several prizes there, too.

MR. BROWN: Were you yourself being quite experimental in the 1950s?

MR. FRID: I think so.

MR. BROWN: In what -- could you describe a bit that -- what forms that experimentalism took?

MR. FRID: See, when I came here, I mean, it was -- there was very few contemporary furniture made. So of course being brought up in Denmark, I had a different outlook and a different feeling toward furniture. And of course, it was very clean, simple furniture during that time. Then I moved more into more sculptured furniture in for reason, not real sculptures, right? But for example, like, the chair there with the arm and so on, just the arm in the back I had to make 12 ones to get one to fit and go into the -- so the relation between the arm, the legs, the apron, and so on, it has to go together.

MR. BROWN: They have to look well together, you mean? Or --

MR. FRID: Yeah. And don't fight -- the forms and shapes should define each other.

MR. BROWN: Yeah. So each one is somewhat rounded and --

MR. FRID: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: So when -- you still insisted on a function --

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. Absolutely. Like I said before you and plus I said that several times, I'm sure, you design around the construction instead of construct around the design. I mean, that's what a lot of people do today, right? You design the piece, hope you can it together and so on, and then hope they can use it.

MR. BROWN: So you were working -- were you making very much use -- doing a lot of sketching? You weren't working out ideas just on paper.

MR. FRID: No. I do very little drawing now. I just get the idea and then I go right at it. I don't need it now.

MR. BROWN: Well, now these other places you exhibited -- the Museum of Contemporary Crafts in 1957 -- is that -- was that a particularly important exhibition for you in New York?

MR. FRID: I cannot remember.

MR. BROWN: Or in the University of Illinois, you were at their show that same year.

MR. FRID: See, those are most invitational shows.

MR. BROWN: Yes. And you would send a few pieces?

MR. FRID: Yes. You get invited and then you send, and then, for example, in the Albright Gallery --

MR. BROWN: Knox.

MR. FRID: Knox.

MR. BROWN: In Buffalo.

MR. FRID: Yes. That there I had a one-man show. You get invited, and then you get an area there, have --

MR. BROWN: Do you recall -- was there much response to the show? Did people get in touch with you or --

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah.

MR. BROWN: For example, the Albright Knox show in 1962, was that good for your career? Do you remember?

MR. FRID: It was -- see, because right after I moved to Rhode Island, so I've come into a complete new environment, a complete -- very few people -- they know about me in Buffalo in Rochester than here of course. I have to start building of a name here, too.

MR. BROWN: But the time you left the New York -- western New York state, you were perhaps the best known furniture designer there. Is that right?

MR. FRID: I think so. I was pretty well known all over, although I did then because, like, in -- when I went to Asilomar, I was in Albuquerque, and then I went into a store and just looking at things and picking them up, and the owner comes over and asked who I was. The thing I picked up, it was interesting. And I told who it was. He said, "Hey, I always wanted to meet you." And that was in the '50s.

MR. BROWN: '57 or so.

MR. FRID: Whenever it was, yeah.

MR. BROWN: So your reputation was pretty well national among people interested.

MR. FRID: It would start [inaudible], yes.

MR. BROWN: Well, you --

MR. FRID: But I think Shop One has a big influence on that, too, because we were the only one at that time. We got a lot of --

MR. BROWN: And Shop One had become very well known or it was written about a lot?

MR. FRID: Oh, yes. So we got a lot of publicity from newspapers and magazines and so on.

MR. BROWN: So when you -- you came back here in '62 to be interviewed. You had decided -- I know we talked about why you were ready to leave Rochester. And what was it -- how did go when you came here to be interviewed? You were --

MR. FRID: Oh, it went fine.

MR. BROWN: Who did you talk with?

MR. FRID: First I talked to Dean Strout, and then --

MR. BROWN: Dean Strout?

MR. FRID: Dean Strout, yes. And then I know what they were paying. I told you why I was a little sluggish, right?

MR. BROWN: Why?

MR. FRID: Jack Prip and I have straightened out the world onto 4 o'clock in the morning, because I had --

MR. BROWN: Oh, I see. Just before your interview?

MR. FRID: Yes. I have kind of hangover. So I was sitting there, and after two or three minutes, I say, "I know what you -- what the salary scale is here. So if you have anything in mind like that, then don't waste your -- I don't want to waste your time, and I don't want to waste my time either."

MR. BROWN: You told that to the dean?

MR. FRID: Yeah. After two or three minutes.

MR. BROWN: Yeah.

MR. FRID: I mean, there's no reason.

MR. BROWN: You could have just stayed in New York state, because your commissions and all would have made a --

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. Sure. But at the same time, to spend a whole day get interviewed, and then when you

finally get an offer, then I know I'm not going to take it. So we get that straightened out right away. And then he took me for a tour and so on, and then the president was John Frazier, and so --

MR. BROWN: Did he have --

MR. FRID: I had to be introduced to him. So I came into his office. When I came in, he was sitting at his desk, and then he turned around and was sitting, looking out the window for three or four minutes or something like that. Then he turned around and just said a few words, got up, shook my hand, and then turned around and looked out the window again.

MR. BROWN: So you'd never had any conversation to speak of with him at all, huh?

MR. FRID: No, no. None at all.

MR. BROWN: What did they -- at least to the dean or other people, were there -- what did they want to have at Rhode Island School of Design?

MR. FRID: Oh, see, there was a silver, machine shop, and woodshop, and it was real Mickey Mouse, real --

MR. BROWN: Oh, it was?

MR. FRID: -- low standard. So when I applied to the school, then I got a letter back and said they had been looking for a person like me for four years. So the first year, I was in charge of all the shops. And my first job was, of course, the unpleasant one to fire the people that was there. So then I got Jack Prip to come in there, and Honeybell, that's the one in the machine shop. But when I came to the school, there was -- I think I had 12 students Tuesday afternoon and 13 Thursday afternoon or something like that. So I mean, I didn't have any students, I didn't have a job either, right? So I was always out in the parking lot, asked the students to come and see the woodshop. So then everybody that wanted to come into the woodshop, I mean, they were welcome. I would stay there with open arms and helping them and so on just to get the thing going.

But then after a while, people would come in, and then I'd have to show people how to run, for example, a table saw ten times in a day. So I went up to the new president Bush-Brown and told him that I didn't think I was hired to just show people how to run a table saw and explained the whole thing. So he thought it was maybe a good idea, and then on convocation when the school opened, then he announced now all freshmen had to take woodwork. And he didn't -- I didn't know anything about it, and freshmen foundation didn't know anything about it, so I had to hurry up to Boston, get some tools, and then we started, and then after that, then no problem. We had a lot of students, and now we have a waiting list one or two years. Some of them had to wait to the fifth year to get in.

MR. BROWN: What had led you to come to the School of Design if when you got there, there were so few students and had been -- you knew you were going to have to fire some people? What led you to take the job?

MR. FRID: See, they were looking for someone to --

MR. BROWN: Build it up?

MR. FRID: -- build it up. It was a question, closing the shop. They were going to close all the shops. There was -- and then when I applied, then they were going to give it a chance. So okay, I like the challenge. The funny thing, I was hired in Philadelphia Museum School at the same time.

MR. BROWN: You were?

MR. FRID: I had two jobs, and they wanted to do exactly the same thing, but then -- the money was better in the Museum School, but I look at the endowment of both schools, and then I picked RISD.

MR. BROWN: It seemed that RISD would keep going?

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. Plus at the same time, I have four horses, and it's very hard to have four horses in Philadelphia.

MR. BROWN: Oh, that's right, yeah.

MR. FRID: And the two kids, I didn't want to move and they didn't have the horse with them.

MR. BROWN: And divide them all up, yeah.

MR. FRID: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: So that's basically the reason you came here then -- the endowment plus --

MR. FRID: There was four horses.

MR. BROWN: Has to live in the country or something like that here in Rhode Island.

MR. FRID: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: Well, you were -- of course, as a faculty member, you had exhibits at the Rhode Island School of Design Museum right from the beginning in '63 and all. As I asked you a moment with respect to Rochester and Buffalo, what was the response after -- with your first exhibition here in Providence? What was the -- did you get some feedback from the public?

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. Even the -- all the board of trustees said she didn't even know we had a woodshop, and that was in the faculty show and so on, and I had to meet them all and he congratulated me and so on, and then it went up, up, up since.

MR. BROWN: So it was very -- they were very pleased from the beginning.

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. Sure. And then when people saw the show and so on, then of course, you get some customers and -- see, when I first came, then Bush-Brown, he fired 26 teachers. He did, and that was a big -- but anyway, I didn't get fired, because I had a two-year contract, and later on I find out I was the only one in the whole school that had a two-year contract.

MR. BROWN: Oh, really?

MR. FRID: Yeah. Everybody was from one year to --

MR. BROWN: Year to year.

MR. FRID: Yes. And I said I was not going to come for one year. And so I got a two-year contract.

MR. BROWN: Did Bush-Brown come to appreciate your being there?

MR. FRID: Oh, yes. He was --

MR. BROWN: Did you work well with him?

MR. FRID: Oh, yes. He was a great help to me, and he really pushed the school, and he's interested in furniture and wood himself. So as a matter of fact, he buy the magazine and my book, and whenever he's in Providence he comes say hello to me. So he's a --

MR. BROWN: So was he a good -- in your opinion, a good administrator?

MR. FRID: I think he was the best.

MR. BROWN: Why? What made him so good do you think?

MR. FRID: During that time, he was the president, and the dean was the dean, the teachers was a teacher, and the student was a student. It was very distinguished, and you walk around, and if, for example, the teacher wasn't in the classroom, he would ask, "Where were you?" Because when I came there, there was -- for example, teachers would come in and then give an assignment. Then you would meet, and the next class he would say, "Okay. You made it? Yes, no. Take it back and think about it and redo it." He didn't even look at it, and then take off. So I was there in the beginning five days a week just to get the thing rolling and so on. But the shop was -- there was in a very small space, and I couldn't work there. So we'd get a much better place then. And I got all the help I needed, except the shop wasn't moved. So finally I took all the students, and I moved the shop myself to get rolling.

MR. BROWN: So it was necessary to do a lot yourself.

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. Sure.

MR. BROWN: I bet it impressed Bush-Brown then.

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah.

MR. BROWN: Because there had been so much rather desultory teaching, had there?

MR. FRID: Yeah. I mean, he fired 26. I would have fired 52 if I was the president. But he was a president and always -- he would invite faculty to home for dinner and so on. It was a much better relationship. He was still the boss. There was no doubt. And everybody had respected him, but night to day, the administration and the faculty is like mice and cat. They'd always -- like the president, I'm sure she doesn't even know where the woodshop is.

MR. BROWN: She's very removed from most -- from things.

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. Sure. She even said she don't like people who -- why would I take a job like that where you have to invite people in.

MR. BROWN: So under Bush-Brown, those were good times then, were they?

MR. FRID: Absolutely.

MR. BROWN: And what about the students? How would you compare the students you found here with those you'd known at the School for American Craftsmen?

MR. FRID: Oh, see the School for American Craftsmen was a completely different thing. Where a student comes in, I had him for four years. And so they become furniture designer and spent four years, and craft people, too. And craft was emphasized a lot. Then I came here, and then it was a design school

MR. BROWN: What did that mean, in fact, with the perspective of students?

MR. FRID: For example, in Rochester, a graduate student would go out and put up their own shop, and he was more or less prepared to for that kind of work. Some did go out and teach, but that was usually graduate students. Here it is a design school, and there is a big emphasis on the design. And in the beginning, I just felt that even if they couldn't do it, as long as you know how to put the thing together right, so for two years, I was still head of the woodshop, but there were some other teachers down there, and I was teaching up in interior architect furniture design. But then the woodshop went way down, so I wouldn't teach up there, but I say all this because it was up on the fourth floor.

MR. BROWN: You mean, the woodshop was being neglected then --

MR. FRID: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: -- because you were supposed to teach design as well.

MR. FRID: Yes. So then I went back to the woodshop with -- see, what happened before, for example, you design it upstairs, and then you come down to the woodshop. Then we had to redesign it. So then I talked to the head of the department, and he said, "Okay. Why don't you teach design?" So I did it for two years, and then -- but then the woodshop, like you say, was neglected, and so I went back in the woodshop. But now at the same time, I was teaching design and woodshop now. I teach both. There wasn't somebody teaching the design, and then they would come down and make it. So I had my own little world there for a long time.

MR. BROWN: So you were teaching design right in the shop?

MR. FRID: Yes. And the skill, too.

MR. BROWN: Yeah.

MR. FRID: And then it -- the furnishing -- it had never been a major. Never.

MR. BROWN: Never been a major? Yeah.

MR. FRID: Student belong to industrial design majoring in furniture. So I would pick fights with them, the [inaudible] letters to each other.

MR. BROWN: To who?

MR. FRID: To the architectural department, because I was removed from design over to architecture. So anyway --

MR. BROWN: You made -- eventually you created a major in what? Furniture design?

MR. FRID: No. It still doesn't exist. It is still industrial design, but they major in furniture. But they got it in ID. But the graduate program, the MFA, that is in furniture. That's a major in furniture, and that is a program. And

that, of course, is the one I'm most interested in.

MR. BROWN: But when you first came here, you were under architecture. Is that correct?

MR. FRID: First, when I -- when I came here first, I was under design. But then some politic and so on, I don't have to go into, I got moved to architecture. I didn't even know about it. So --

MR. BROWN: So basically what you were trying to do was to have the design occur in the workshop --

MR. FRID: Yes.

MR. BROWN: -- so that there would be no gap between designing and execution.

MR. FRID: Mm-hmm. No, no.

MR. BROWN: Because that's the way you had taught at Rochester, isn't it? And the way you'd been trained, that the designing took place --

MR. FRID: In the shop.

MR. BROWN: When you came to the School of Design, you'd found that they'd been separated, is that right? They would make designs, sort of theoretical.

MR. FRID: Then they wouldn't even know how to put it together, and they come down and try to make it. So I insisted that -- I mean, in the first place, how can you design anything if you don't know how to -- if you don't know your material and if you don't know how to put it together, right? So then I start teaching with the material and should we say the crafting of it. And then they could start designing. But see, I only get them -- the freshmen for one year, and then half of the second year, they have to take sophomores, so I only have them for two and a half years. But what I feel was a great advantage, too, because they have a pretty good background in design before I got them.

MR. BROWN: How would that help them would you say? The design background?

MR. FRID: Oh, that they have a good sense for forms, shapes, and structure, and so on, because they were in architecture, right? So they have a pretty good background for furniture and so on. Because architecture today is a funny thing. I mean after Sweets catalog come out, then there's really no architect any longer. I mean, they buy the things like Tinker Toys, and then pre-stressed concrete, put it together, and the funny thing is, I have, for example, students, and they wouldn't know how to get from the first floor to the second. I mean, they wouldn't know how to make a staircase. As an architect, I think that's pretty bad.

MR. BROWN: Oh, yeah. But now, you also -- from out of that basic design program, would you get people who would -- were very interested in painting or sculpture as well, and then they'd go into - -

MR. FRID: Very little. In the beginning, I would take anything, anything.

MR. BROWN: But by and large, they've been people who've been in the architecture --

MR. FRID: Now, it's architecture and -- because the -- I belong there and I had to take them first, and I guess they have a waiting list for a year, too.

MR. BROWN: But the people who were interested in painting and sculpture didn't -- weren't very much interested in coming into --

MR. FRID: Oh, they were -- oh, yeah interested, but --

MR. BROWN: Did you see any difference among -- between those two groups, the fine arts people and the architecture?

MR. FRID: See, I was taking a few, for example, let's say one student, for example, come from photography, and then he just wants to take an elective like carpenter shop, so he could learn to fix his own house. But he result, he was a graduate student. After three months, he switched over to furniture design, and he was an excellent student. He didn't have any background whatsoever in wood, and --

MR. BROWN: This was at the -- how long is the graduate -- how many years is the graduate --

MR. FRID: Two, two years.

MR. BROWN: Two years?

MR. FRID: Yeah. And I'm head of that full time, and I'm still teaching there.

MR. BROWN: And in two years, how much do you feel you can accomplish with, say, somebody like this fellow who had been in photography? Can he -- how far along can he get in two years?

MR. FRID: He got that far that he went out, and he put up his own shop, and [inaudible] since.

MR. BROWN: No, but you stressed earlier the -- for example, at Rochester there had been some problem when they started bringing in other courses. You had a four-year program there.

MR. FRID: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And you at that time thought it should take four years for the student. Here we have them starting from scratch, and they're gone in two years.

MR. FRID: Oh, yes. But see, they have a background some way, somehow. They have some kind of background behind them, right? And that was an unusual situation that was with a photography --

[Interruption to audio.]

MR. BROWN: Third tape. This is March 5th, 1981, interview with Tage Frid, Robert Brown. To continue talking about the curriculum and your instruction at the Rhode Island School of Design. So you had -- those who went in in the architecture department at the middle of their sophomore year you had for two and a half years. If they went onto graduate work, it was two more years. And I want to get back once more to -- in the '50s when you were at Rochester, you felt that four years were necessary. Now, though, a student could take as little as two years or two and half years if he was an undergraduate. How did that compare? You say they had a background. You mean, in design or --

MR. FRID: Yeah, but I mean, with the -- let's say, for example, in Rochester that in the beginning, any warm body would come in, and it was -- a lot of people come from the -- should we say vocational schools and just one of the woodwork and many times, mom and dad didn't know what to put, and they'd say oh, there's a place where they could learn to be a woodworker. So there was a type of the overall of the students. I mean, there's nothing wrong that a person is interested just to be a woodworker. That doesn't mean he's stupid or not intelligent and so on, but --

MR. BROWN: But they thought of it more as a trade school.

MR. FRID: Yes. But then, of course, design was heavily taught there, too. Where to get into Rhode Island School of Design, for example, when I came there, there was -- I think there was about 1,200 applications or something like that, and they would take one out of every four of five students. I mean, there were plenty of applications, and then plus you have to send in a portfolio. They have to take -- come in and draw -- freehand drawings before they can even get accepted. And then they have one year of freshman foundation where they learn form, shapes, design, and then they would go to the department for at least a half a year. For example, the architects go to the architectural department. Then still it's a kind of an extension of the sophomore year.

But just for example, they get some toothpicks, for example, and then an egg, and they say, "Okay, design something that egg is going to be dropped from the second floor and don't smash." So I mean, they already have now learned construction and strengths and so on of the material. Then when I get them, then I start them from scratch again, but much faster. If I was going to go back to what I was teaching in Rochester, I think I could teach it in half the time now. We spent too much time on the RPM on the bandsaw and the teeth and so on and so on. I think if you can fire it, then you go on it, that is the main thing, because in all my life, I couldn't even repair a machine. I never find it necessary. I can make more money as a woodworker than trying to repair machines. So I get somebody from the outside to pay for it, and I'm in business the next day.

MR. BROWN: So you, in fact, found that you could accelerate the teaching.

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. Sure. Sure.

MR. BROWN: Were the students at the Rhode Island School of Design -- have you had any tension among those that were interested more in construction and those that wanted to design, sort of, works of art in furniture?

MR. FRID: See, we have -- I would say I have both. That is, for example, when an interior architect student comes in and take one day a course, I feel if he or she can just work out, how to put the thing together and put it together the right way and know the material, will be able to write out a spec for a job and so on. I think that is all they need. Then they still make a piece or so on just to get the feeling. Then there's people that come in -- I have some from sculpture. I mean, sculpture and furniture is pretty well related. They usually are pretty good students there. Then I have the ones who more or less major in -- they major in furniture. And of course, you

stay there for at least two and a half years, and then sometimes they slip in one more year. And then they have spent actually five years, and now I have them for three and a half years.

MR. BROWN: You have -- though, are there some that want to -- are more interested in design -- designing something that's more -- that's sculptural and are not very interested in the functional side of things? Have you had --

MR. FRID: I had those, but usually I guide them a different way. No. I mean, we make sculpture. So there's made sculpture in the woodshop. But then I call that sculpture. I don't call that furniture. If they have them you can sit on, that's fine. But don't call it a chair. So the teacher that's there now is Seth Stem [inaudible].

MR. BROWN: A teacher --

MR. FRID: Yeah. Seth Stem.

MR. BROWN: Stem?

MR. FRID: Stem, yeah. He's very sculpture-minded. And I can see very influenced by Straney, by the way, with -- and I can see a different attitude in the woodshop. But see I'm still there one day a week. So it's a mixture between -- eventually, I would guess, it would be a mixture between him and I. What I saw is a good idea is they're continuing, for example, when my job was open, and interviewed those different people. The easiest thing would be to take one of my former graduate students or somebody of my former student, and then they go on it just like I did. But I think I've been doing for so many years -- for 30 years, right? And have influenced -- I think I influenced the furniture schools and so on, and I thought it was about time to find some new influence as long as it's still kept in the same level.

MR. BROWN: You mean, quality of making?

MR. FRID: Yeah. They still put it right together, and it doesn't -- it's not going to fall apart after three years or five years and so on. And of course, he was a landscape architect and only had two years as a woodworker. But he has a good feeling for form, shapes.

MR. BROWN: This is Seth Stem.

MR. FRID: Yeah, Stem.

MR. BROWN: The other teacher, yeah. So a student now at the School of Design can get a fairly broad spectrum of design in woodworking.

MR. FRID: Mm-hmm.

MR. BROWN: Is there a -- do you feel that there's still a tension between those that want to be artists, craftsmen, and those that are more interested in the craft for its own sake?

MR. FRID: No. I don't think so.

MR. BROWN: There isn't a tension anymore? There was at one time, wasn't there?

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. Everybody wanted to be an artist/craftsman, right? But a lot of them should just be -- I don't mean the word "just". But a lot of them should be craftspeople, right? In one way, the United States, they need a lot of craft people, because all of them that's in business and so on, all of them is designer craft people, craft -- whatever they want to call themselves. But we have to find just a good help. There's a big, big open market there.

MR. BROWN: For --

MR. FRID: For just craft people. And they did put up those vocational schools, but who is teaching it?

MR. BROWN: Who is? What's the -- you mean, these regional vocational schools all across the country.

MR. FRID: Yes. Who is teaching it? Former industrial art teachers. So it's just an extension of the vocation of the -- vocational training in high school. What the idea was, when that whole idea opened up, there was -- it should be craftsman or a person that have been in the field at least for five years. So I know I was in a school committee during that time.

MR. BROWN: In this town?

MR. FRID: In this town, yeah. I was there for seven years. So they weren't too wonderful when there was a former industrial artist -- teacher. Of course, he got all his pals in there. So instead of having a craftsman, for example, a woodworker that had been working at least five years in and teaching, he has somebody -- what is it -- a jack-of-all trades teaching woodwork, because industrial art teacher, you get everything, right? So I don't feel it turned out like it should.

MR. BROWN: For example, are many of your former students in these regional vocational schools?

MR. FRID: Oh, no, no. No, they wouldn't even take the job.

MR. BROWN: Oh, they wouldn't? Well, maybe that's part of the problem. They don't want the jobs.

MR. FRID: No, not that the way is wrong. They still are taking, for example, a kid wants to make a coffee table or something, and then you say, "Okay. Go and draw number five, and then there's Popular Mechanics and Popular Science, and then pick one there."

MR. BROWN: But there's too much opposition to taking on, say, your former student? They wanted to bring on these jack-of-all-trades? Is that what you -- they didn't want your students as teachers in these vocational --

MR. FRID: Oh, I think they do, but I don't want -- there's a few of them now that's doing it, but I have to say that's not the most outstanding student I had. But that was a good living for them. So --

MR. BROWN: The more outstanding students you have, they want to go out on their own with their own workshop?

MR. FRID: No. A lot of them go into industry. Some of them, for example, as designers with firms like Knoll and places like that, not furniture like made down south, reproduction. I don't know. Some is designing for -- for instance Pearson's boats, the head designer there is one of my former students. For all the interior, they go back to wood, on the boats again.

MR. BROWN: On the boats?

MR. FRID: Yes. All the interior now is wood, is not fiberglass, except the hull. And a lot of them go out and teach, of course, and a lot of them put up their own shop. So -- and I would say at least 85 to 90 percent of the students that graduate from my class, they're in the profession with -- and make a living from what they were taught.

MR. BROWN: There's lots of outlets for them?

MR. FRID: Oh, yes. I mean, industry is looking for them, and -- see, it's much better, for example, for like the industry that first a person know how to put it together, right? Second, they can draw it. But best of all, they can make it three-dimensional, the prototype. So after they can see it instead of they have a designer and a shop for somebody, make it for the designer with -- because as you design, I mean, you can do it on a piece of paper, but then to take, for example, like I said, that back there, I mean, he has to keep --

MR. BROWN: This curving chair back.

MR. FRID: Yeah. He has to keep trying it and reshaving it and feeling it, and it sits in all kinds of positions until you get it, and then that's the advantage when you can make it. And then the salespeople or whatever it is can come in, try it, and look at it, and -- because they have the product. It's finished, ready to go into production.

MR. BROWN: What do you hear from your students about the power of the salespeople? because we know that in a -- for example, in silver, the sales people will come back, and they usually say, no, most of these contemporary designs won't sell. But what's the story with furniture production?

MR. FRID: Well, if you go in, for example, then like I said, you wouldn't go any place where they make reproduction.

MR. BROWN: No.

MR. FRID: You would go in where they make contemporary furniture. And then, of course, the salespeople always come in and put the finger in the pie here and there and so on. And you just have to be strong enough and stick to your guns and say that is the way it's going to be.

MR. BROWN: Okay. And many of your students have been able to do that and gotten their ideas across and made them stick?

MR. FRID: Sure, sure.

MR. BROWN: And the stuff sells.

MR. FRID: Mm-hmm. No. Like, for example, the -- I was designing there for an outfit there for Howard Johnson. Then the salespeople come in. Then he tried to change it here and there, but I just stood stubborn and wouldn't do it, and it worked.

MR. BROWN: That's while you were still in New York State in the work.

MR. FRID: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And your students today find the same thing?

MR. FRID: Yeah. They try to fight for it. I mean, it's still the president of whoever it is -- I mean, he's still the boss in the end.

MR. BROWN: He's got the last word.

MR. FRID: And you have to say, okay. But --

MR. BROWN: Thirty-some years you've been here now, have you seen some changes? Have you seen that a lot of American corporations and furniture manufacturers, with the exception of the reproduction people, have -- are more excepting of modern design?

MR. FRID: Oh, yes. Yeah. I mean, you see a lot of new factories and so on. When I came, see, there was only Herman Miller and Knolls. That was the only two places you could buy any furniture.

MR. BROWN: Contemporary furniture.

MR. FRID: Yes. And of course, there was -- what was his name -- Charles Eames and so on.

MR. BROWN: Yeah.

MR. FRID: With --

MR. BROWN: But very few?

MR. FRID: Yeah. Anyway, with -- like my former shop, now we made only contemporary furniture, and I think we had about a hundred people or more.

MR. BROWN: Your former shop?

MR. FRID: The shop I started.

MR. BROWN: In New York State?

MR. FRID: In New York State. It's still in Rochester. I started it, and then -- but I had Shop One, too.

MR. BROWN: Right, as an outlet.

MR. FRID: Shop One, too. Shop One.

MR. BROWN: You mean, the former shop -- the Donovan and Frid firm, which continues under --

MR. FRID: That continues, and then --

MR. BROWN: What's that called now? Is that --

MR. FRID: Hartwood House

MR. BROWN: Hartwood?

MR. FRID: Hartwood House, yes. And one of my former students is the president, and there is -- three of my former students is designers there. So I mean, they have -- of course, get along pretty well. There's many shops coming up with the -- what you make, for example, you custom make furniture. Well, 12, 14, 15 people and so on and only contemporary furniture.

MR. BROWN: But there are more and more of --

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. Sure.

MR. BROWN: Because most of that furniture is quite expensive, isn't it?

MR. FRID: No. With -- I don't think it's any more expensive than if you buy, for example, Baker furniture. But you see, like Hartwood House, they do most office furniture and moveable walls and things like that and so on. But there's a great market for that. That usually is the best thing to come into, for example, like doing a bank or doing an office, because it's not their money.

MR. BROWN: That's right.

MR. FRID: [inaudible] paying for it, and they're not as stingy as if you buy it for yourself, right?

MR. BROWN: In all of this, has there been -- we still see a great deal of Scandinavian work brought into this country. Is that all that's -- has that been an important factor, do you think, in furniture since you've come to the United States? I mean, is it very competitive with American contemporary design?

MR. FRID: I think when I came here, I mean, the United States, design was maybe 30 years behind. But then the Danish furniture come in and Finnish and Norwegian and so on, Scandinavian furniture; let's call it that. Of course, Denmark was the strongest in furniture during that period. And so everybody, of course, wanted to buy, and that was -- during that time, there was -- they still had the old craft people. So they could combine the machine and the craft -- the handwork and sell it reasonable. Plus the salary was not that high compares to the salary in the United States. And the dollar was worth more, too. So they could -- it was very reasonable, the prices and so on. But then of course with the change of the dollar and losing -- I don't know if the -- I'm sure they have some apprenticeship programs going over there, but it's getting less and less. Well, actually, the only thing a small country like Denmark could do was to keep the old craft and sell it, for example, to the United States. They could never compete with the United States. I mean, they have much better equipment and better machines and so on, so the pieces that's come out of Denmark today, I wouldn't even buy it.

MR. BROWN: You mean, the quality --

MR. FRID: It's very -- the quality is -- I think it's terrible.

MR. BROWN: You mean, they're using the machine more? They don't have the training they once had?

MR. FRID: Yes.

MR. BROWN: The apprenticeship program evidently is --

MR. FRID: Is more or less --

MR. BROWN: -- pretty well gone.

MR. FRID: Mm-hmm. It looks nice, but I don't know how long they're going to stand up. I mean, I just went on -- look for Scandinavian furniture company, and we turned it upside-down, and oh, that is bad. It is bad now.

MR. BROWN: What about the design? Is it -- does it keep --

MR. FRID: Well, see, it is still the same. I mean, I don't think much has happened in the last 30 years in Scandinavian design. I think very little. But you see Scandinavian furniture, you can see it right away, right? I mean, you spot one right away, because nothing has -- very little happened. There is a few designers, and they've gone more over towards like the Bauhaus, very --

MR. BROWN: Oh, yeah. Much more cubicle and rectilinear. Yeah.

MR. FRID: But once, the Danish Government sent over a lot of people to -- it was shortly after the war in '51, '52, or something, and that was from the Danish Government, come and they visit, for example, RIT School for American Craftsmen. So then because they were Danes, then the president had a party for them, and even I was invited there for dinner and so on, and I had a chance talk about it and to talk to them. And during that time there wasn't any -- very few furniture imported. So I told them there was a completely open market here, and then after that they started importing furniture, and it really sold very well and then spoiled it with the bad quality.

MR. BROWN: Perhaps now is a point where we can talk about some of your own design commissions from the time you've been here in Rhode Island on. You began designing furniture for the design department itself at the Rhode Island School of Design, 1963. Could you describe was that was like and --

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. They needed some drawing tables for the graphic department, designed and made, and they had to be -- they could be locked up. And there had to be a bulletin board and because it was crowded instead of having doors and drawers, I made tambour doors.

MR. BROWN: What kind of doors?

MR. FRID: Tambour.

MR. BROWN: Tambours, right, that could slide back and forth. So --

MR. FRID: Yeah. I mean, that was something new they hadn't seen here.

MR. BROWN: Really? So you did a lot of space-saving design.

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. Sure.

MR. BROWN: But then you did here in '64 some furniture for a men's dormitory at the school.

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. I did that over three, four -- three or four years in a row. Finally, I furnished all the dormitories.

MR. BROWN: Really?

MR. FRID: With drawing tables and beds. The bed was that they could be stacked on top of each other --

MR. BROWN: Like bunk beds.

MR. FRID: So the bunk bed, but then you could take them down, too, and they could be used as --

MR. BROWN: Separate beds?

MR. FRID: Yes. The one was turned upside down, and then it became a bunk bed and the other way it was --

MR. BROWN: Did you have to design with an economy in mind? I mean, you had to use --

MR. FRID: Oh, yes.

MR. BROWN: You couldn't do like you could for certain private commissions, use a rather expensive wood or --

MR. FRID: No, no. You tried to be reasonable and so on. But -- so you can still compete with what they can buy, because I designed it, and it was made here in the shop -- in my shop. And there were no dealers and people in between. So I had the whole neighborhood working around there, because it was very simple design, and it was most -- more finishing. I did the joinery and then had somebody to glue it together and finish it. So --

MR. BROWN: Did you -- was most of this -- consist of joinery or very much gluing or anything of that sort?

MR. FRID: Well, it's very simple joinery, and then -- it was very simple to make. And everything is made so it can be screwed together. When I say "screwed," I designed some kind of [inaudible] system. So everything is easy to take apart and ship and install, and that thing -- those things have been there what, now, for instance, what '63?

MR. BROWN: So they've been there maybe 16, 17 years anyway.

MR. FRID: Yeah. And they're still standing up. That hasn't -- any of them hasn't broken down yet, but --

MR. BROWN: They were heavy, very sturdy things.

MR. FRID: Sure.

MR. BROWN: Did you enjoy that, or was that simply a practical task?

MR. FRID: That was I need the money.

MR. BROWN: You needed the money. Now, designing really more for a lucrative market or rather a market would be these pieces of desk accessories which you designed to be mass-produced. And they were sold as such places as Georg Jensen and to the government in about 1966 or so. Why don't we look at some of these? What is there -- were there any new things you were doing?

MR. FRID: Yeah. See, I'd been experimenting for a long time to combine wood and metal, and so I took, for example, like you can see it has walnut and then aluminum -- walnut, aluminum, walnut, aluminum. I used a glue that's called Titebond.

MR. BROWN: Typond?

MR. FRID: Titebond.

MR. BROWN: Titebond.

MR. FRID: Yeah. T-i-t-e-b-o-n-d, Titebond, and it worked find, except after about a year and so on, then everything falls apart. And thank heaven it wasn't in production yet. So then I started using contact cement. You see, contact cement will give up to an eighth of an inch without it going, because the metal doesn't move, but the wood moves. So I had to have something that was flexible. And I've done a lot of church work, too. Oh, I made one cross that was about 10-feet tall, and then there's wire coming out to all places in the church. And there's a skylight up above, so when you come in, you see all that metal glittering in the cross and all the wire give kind of holy feeling with the thing. And that's been there now for, I think, about 12 years. And that big cross is right over the head of the minister, and he's still alive. So I guess it's still holding.

MR. BROWN: But the problems of doing some of this -- this was lamination of wood and metal?

MR. FRID: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Was more difficult, was it?

MR. FRID: Yes. But that cross was wood and metal, too. Anyway, with -- so I make a whole line with -- from bookends to letters to paperweights and --

MR. BROWN: Clock faces, the whole thing.

MR. FRID: Yeah. So the whole works. And then --

MR. BROWN: Had anyone else been doing much of this?

MR. FRID: No, no.

MR. BROWN: There was no technology for you to look on.

MR. FRID: No, no. I hadn't seen it before. So then -- let's see. Here, for example. Even we made the ash tray that was banged out in metal and then inserted into wood, the calendars and so on. So -- but then at the same time, I had another line, and that was just dots, as you can see.

MR. BROWN: Little dots, metal inserts.

MR. FRID: Yes. But it's very effective, because in walnut, it's warm, then that cold thing, and pencil well and different kind of calendars and so on.

MR. BROWN: Well, these pieces are very crisp, very -- quite plain except for the alternation of metal and wood. Were these kind of cubicle designs typical of your work in the '60s in general?

MR. FRID: Yeah. But --

MR. BROWN: There weren't very many curves in your work at this point?

MR. FRID: No, not for that specific line.

MR. BROWN: Oh, for this specific line.

MR. FRID: No, but see, for example, this one.

MR. BROWN: This is what? A letter opener?

MR. FRID: Yes. And it's -- some people would call it a very classical thing, but we sold a lot of those.

MR. BROWN: It looks like a spear point almost.

MR. FRID: Yeah, yes. And then because of the metal is coming out, this works very well as a letter opener.

MR. BROWN: Is this just a little -- the blade is metal, and is it simply an inch strip of --

MR. FRID: It's just laminated together.

MR. BROWN: Laminated. It's a sheet of aluminum.

MR. FRID: Yeah, between two pieces.

MR. BROWN: Laminated between --

MR. FRID: Between two pieces of walnut and then shaped.

MR. BROWN: Walnut.

MR. FRID: And then it becomes a letter opener, right?

MR. BROWN: So the contact cement you found was stable? I mean, or cold tolerate the extension and shrinkage in the walnut.

MR. FRID: Yeah. Sure. Sure. With -- like I said, I've done a lot of church work with these big

pieces, twelve-foot crosses and things like that, and --

MR. BROWN: Well, now, in this commercial commission -- or was it a commission? Or was this speculation? You did it and then --

MR. FRID: No. See, actually, I started a business. And then at a sales organization, selling it and so on and so on, but then I didn't want to make those things for the rest of my life, stay out there, so we had three people working for us. But then we couldn't really keep up with it. So then we farmed it out, and then it was -- I thought it was simple, but for them it was difficult. It was designed, I think, very simple, but they couldn't do it.

MR. BROWN: But the fabrication or --

MR. FRID: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And you thought it could be mass produced, that kind of thing.

MR. FRID: Yes.

MR. BROWN: To what extent in these -- this work that you did with this business were you getting -- relying on what the customer -- potential customers might want with the -- like Jensen, would he get back to you and say, "I want more of this," or, "I'd like something --"

MR. FRID: No. [inaudible] and then Jensen, but then I called in there [inaudible]. I had one of those gift shows in New York.

MR. BROWN: A gift -- you exhibited at a gift show.

MR. FRID: Yeah. A gift show with all the wholesalers and the buyers come. And then I was called down to Georg Jensen to design, and then they say, for example, like they wanted a box and a little tray for a table, an ash tray and so on, and then they furnished the whole building in Washington. I can't remember the name of the building, but all the desk accessories there.

MR. BROWN: Was the -- was Jensen easy to deal with? Are they a very --

MR. FRID: They were easy to deal with. The --

MR. BROWN: They liked your design and they accepted it as it was?

MR. FRID: Sure. Oh, yeah. No, no. I didn't have to change anything. They just asked me for --

MR. BROWN: And the same with the orders for that government building. Were they -- they had seen your work and --

MR. FRID: They just saw it and bought it. It was that simple. In the meantime, too, we were making these. You can see, like, a bread board, right?

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. FRID: But -- and it was a very simple thing. Instead of usually just putting together like a butcher block, right --

MR. BROWN: These are blocks of wood, different colors, and forming patterns.

MR. FRID: Yeah. And then I put veneer in between. So you get a very attractive, very interesting thing. So it just -- like --

MR. BROWN: It provides a dark edge to each block of wood.

MR. FRID: And now for example with the walnut, you make a light edge.

MR. BROWN: A light edge between the walnut blocks.

MR. FRID: See, they were made in long strips like that. And then -- so we sold them like that, too, just like that. And then they were chopped up. Some of them -- these were then glued back together this way. So it was all ingrained, right? And we have -- some we would just inlay the cross, like [inaudible]. There was a lot of other things, but those are the pictures I have here now. But I'm still working with the wood and metal. I like it, especially when you start sculpturing. Because the minute you sculpt out, for example, a cross, now you hit all those aluminum in different angles. Like, for example, I made a baptismal font. And in the old time, when the Romans or after the Christians and so on, they would draw either a dove or a fish in the sand. That means, you're a Christian. So I choose to take the fish, where I have like the tail like a veil or something. And then I have all those lamination in there. Then as I carve it, then it becomes just like fish scales. And it's very attractive.

MR. BROWN: Then the metal was inserted?

MR. FRID: Yeah. The metal -- it was laminated together just like the other one.

MR. BROWN: So you're carving the metal as well as the wood.

MR. FRID: Yeah. See, the aluminum, you can handle it just like wood. You can run it through the thickness planer and joiner and circular saw and so on. You get soft aluminum. So --

MR. BROWN: Once it's firmly laminated, you can -- you treat it as though it's just a block of wood.

MR. FRID: Yes. Like a new material, like a different kind of wood, whatever it is. You handle it the same way. Then a funny thing happened with the fellow that donated it. He wanted a dove, and I want the fish tail. So I made the fishtail, and then I made a little insert so when he was in the church, I cut out a dove in aluminum, very light and so on, that is stuck down in the baptismal font when he's around.

MR. BROWN: Oh, to be put inside?

MR. FRID: No. It sticks up -- it sits up over the cover.

MR. BROWN: Over the cover, yeah.

MR. FRID: Yes. Over the baptismal font. So we were both satisfied.

MR. BROWN: But you discontinued doing these things for mass production and you farmed it out eventually?

MR. FRID: Yeah. But then finally the quality was bad, so I just quit. I sold the business.
MR. BROWN: You really haven't gotten into that kind of thing since then, like for a mass -- or a thing for mass production?

MR. FRID: Actually, that is not my cup of tea, but I thought that was an easy way to make money, right?

MR. BROWN: You prefer --

MR. FRID: I enjoy designing it, but I didn't enjoy making all of them.

MR. BROWN: So you prefer the smaller scale commission, do you? I mean, where you're not doing repeated mass production.

MR. FRID: Yeah. No, no. I'm not interested in that.

MR. BROWN: But you were -- some of the other commissions or places where you've been a consultant -- '69 consultant at Mystic Seaport Museum in Mystic, Connecticut. What was your task there?

MR. FRID: That was Benjamin -- the Frank -- Franklin Benjamin is a schooner or a ship anyway. And it had been down in Toyland [phonetic] in -- near New York. There was an amusement park down there. Then finally, the ship was in bad condition. They had to go out and dump it, swamp it, or whatever you want to call it. But they took out the captain's cabin and his bedroom and that whole area, because during that time, they would be gone, for example, for six months or a year. So the captain's cabin was very elaborate. But as I looked into it, it was real -- all the tricks in the book was used with -- by the way, I've written an article about it if you want to read it.

MR. BROWN: Sure. So you studied this. This was by the end of the -- it had been brought to Mystic by then.

MR. FRID: So somebody bought it and brought it to donate it to Mystic. The idea, they're going to reproduce it. Then I was called in as a consultant, and then first I have to put all those pieces together and see where they belong, what was missing and so on and so on. And then I give an estimate, how much it would cost to so on and so on, but then to find somebody to make it, we couldn't find any. So then he asked if I would do it. So it was done in my shop, and I did the most tricky work, but I also had somebody to do the rest of it. And -- but it took us six years. A job like that is good, because you just send them a bill every month with -- you can't say it costs so and so much. So of course, if you're honest then --

MR. BROWN: They were willing to -- what was so particularly tricky about it? Now, I know when you were a young -- right after the war you had worked under Hans Wegner fitting in shipping in wood -- ships.

MR. FRID: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: Was that the experience you drew up on? Were you --

MR. FRID: No, see, the thing is, everything was fitted, but it was such a bad condition that, for example, the steering wheel was completely apart, and there was at least a hundred parts in that piece. And we had to take the whole thing apart, put it back together again, and then the funny thing is, then you put it up on the lathe to clean the spokes. The steering was maybe eight feet or something -- eight feet tall. All of the sudden, there was three of them that was different. You couldn't see. But then when you really start looking at it, there was a little design. And one was a little higher than the other ones, and the other two were a little flat than the design, but when you see the wheel, you wouldn't even notice it.

Then of course, that's when you can feel at night -- they could feel when the tiller was in the center. So the feeling as well, they couldn't see it, right? And nobody had noticed it before, but it was just because I had [inaudible] it. But as I went into it, like I said I think before, every trick in the book was used. They used very expensive veneer and gold leaves and a lot of -- every trick you could think of. But then it was -- like the molding was just nailed on, and everything was veneered on fir [phonetic], just fir. And it was made very inexpensive, but very -- when you come it, it's very --

MR. BROWN: The effect is --

MR. FRID: Effective, because you see all those gold leaves and all that expensive veneer and some -- until you really start looking at it. Then -- but it was in such bad shape, that I would have to take something from the back to repair it up in the front, and --

MR. BROWN: Did you -- so is this about the only time you've done -- I guess we could call this restoration work.

MR. FRID: Yeah. I did it when I came over, because I had to make some money to get my wife over, but it's something I stay away from anytime I can.

MR. BROWN: But this was a fairly good -- at least a good business arrangement for you.

MR. FRID: It was very good.

MR. BROWN: Well, we talked about the big cross you did in Rochester.

MR. FRID: Oh, there's one there, yeah.

MR. BROWN: But her in 1970, the display unit for Hallmark cards in New York at its headquarters. What was there particularly notable about that?

MR. FRID: It was -- it's hanging from the ceiling, but if you -- it's in 5th Avenue, and there's a store below on street level and then I think a balcony or something. So anyway, that thing is designed so that it's on an electric underwire to come out, and then there's a model so it can be raised in any level you want to. So when you come in in the store, you go over like a bridge. And there's two big holes so you can look down. But those two big saucers or disks or something, they fit right in there.

MR. BROWN: That's what they display units were? They were big disks?

MR. FRID: Yes.

MR. BROWN: And they could be --

MR. FRID: And they was made of aluminum and wood and so on. My best friend -- he's dead now -- Bob Donovan, he designed it. And I made it, but that was -- I've got to tell you [inaudible] and then get it balanced, too, because they were, I think, about eight feet in diameter. And there's one on each side. And then sometime they can have it down below, and sometimes the up level and sometimes up above.

MR. BROWN: And this was made of laminated wood and aluminum?

MR. FRID: Yes. No, no. It was wood, and then the aluminum was bent around and oxidized and so on. They're still there. They're still in New York. Oh, and then consultant for International Mint [phonetic]. That was the chess game. Remember that? There was a big -- everybody was playing chess, and I wasn't -- that was for -- what year was it?

MR. BROWN: Well, 1972.

MR. FRID: It was '72 for a national -- there was a big thing about chess. I can't remember what it was.

MR. BROWN: About chess at that time?

MR. FRID: Yes. So anyway, they were going to make them out of silver, the chess pieces. And then I was designing the chess table.

MR. BROWN: The board or --

MR. FRID: The board and the table and so on and so on. And then -- see I do a thing like that, then I get paid, and then I just go out there. But there's good money in that. I had to do some traveling there to find the right wood and the places that could make it. But that's [inaudible] for them and then --

MR. BROWN: What kind of a design did you create for them?

MR. FRID: Oh, it was a very simple table with a --

MR. BROWN: A circular table?

MR. FRID: No, no. It was square and then there was drawers for the chess pieces. And they were going to make chess pieces out of silver and some out of gold. That was before gold went --

MR. BROWN: Sure. Well, then fairly recently, you were commissioned to do some seating units for the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, 1979.

MR. FRID: Yeah. Well, before that, I did -- I was a consultant for a high-rise in Providence. I don't think we talked about that.

MR. BROWN: No. Maybe you want to talk a bit about that.

MR. FRID: Yeah. Because I come before that. That was -- it was a bank, a hospital trust, and they have 28 floors, I think. So I just got a call from the president, and they want to take something from the old bank and put it in the new bank. So then I suggested that they took the old -- the director's room what was brown English oak. I mean, you couldn't even buy it. It was really beautiful, and they were just going to tear it out. So I suggested that, and then everybody said that it couldn't be done. And I said, yes, it could be done. And then --

MR. BROWN: You mean, they thought you couldn't remove it from the older building.

MR. FRID: Yeah. They said it just couldn't be done. See, I had to work with the architect in New York and the interior architect in Boston, and they both didn't love me, because all of the sudden, there's a third party putting a finger in the pie. So I didn't get any help from them at all. Matter of fact, they did everything they could to goof me up.

MR. BROWN: Their own designs, they didn't want to --

MR. FRID: No, no. Because see they had vinyl all over the building. Everything is vinyl. They even wanted to put vinyl in there, too, and I said no. So finally, we had a meeting, and I don't know how many meetings I had, but there I got just paid -- that was how I come in. They would just pay me, and then when you design in a

bathroom or bed, drive, so I just give them an estimated bill every month and no problem. Anyway, with --

MR. BROWN: You finally prevailed? You finally convinced the bankers that --

MR. FRID: Yeah. That's what I'm going to tell now that finally that the people from New York and Boston and so on, and then the person that was in charge of the building there, we have a meeting with the president and the chairman of the board, and they said that that thing -- we have some good news and some bad news. So the president said, "I want to hear the bad news first." He said, "That room, it can't be done." But he looked at me and said, "Tage, can it be done?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Okay." He took the drawings, and then he put a big X on the 28th floor and said, "Tage Frid, that belongs to you." So all of the sudden I was the designer of the whole thing. So then again, we have problems to get somebody to do it, and so a lot of it, it was really tricky to do. It was tricky. I mean, I have to admit it.

MR. BROWN: You mean, to remove it from the old building and --

MR. FRID: Yeah. There was no problem there; to fit it in.

MR. BROWN: To fit it in.

MR. FRID: Because I made maybe 20 drawings and so on. And like, for example, that's a good thing when you work for a place like that, money is no object. So like the one into the building, there is all the artificial, but it's still the same paneling and everything. You can't see it, but then all of the sudden, you push a button, and then two well gears, one moves the wall back, and then it envelop into the wall. So I made a much simpler one. Then -- but they had to be done by hand.

So the president said, okay, I want something I just push a button and whole thing happens. If we can fly to the moon, don't tell me you can't do it. So I said, "Well, that's going to be expensive." He said, "What do you care? Don't we pay you?" So back again in the drawings. I don't know how many drawings I made. A lot. But anyway, so finally the cutting to the size and so on was done in my shop. I had two people working, but I had to do the cutting, because it was just enough panels, and if I goofed up, could violate the whole job. I was gone. Plus they had those big silver sconce or -- you know the thing with the light on?

MR. BROWN: Oh, sconces.

MR. FRID: Sconces, yes.

MR. BROWN: Yes.

MR. FRID: But they had to be moved. So there were big holes in -- so I had to repair that so you couldn't see it. So anyway, it was going to work out fine, and because a union job -- I get some union job to install it. They wound up doing all the work in the building. And even like the table, it was 36 feet. It's a long table -- big table.

MR. BROWN: You designed a new table for them?

MR. FRID: No, no, no. That was still the old one. So we had to get that out of the building and in up on the 28th floor before they closed the windows. So they had to take a crane up to the old building and get the table out through the window and then drive it over and then take the steelworker's crane and get it up and load it up on the 28th floor. Now, because they were using the steelworker's crane, then everybody sit down on the job. They couldn't work, because the crane didn't work. So it cost them I don't know how many thousands, thousands to move that one table.

MR. BROWN: You mean, they had to specially get the --

MR. FRID: Yeah. Just to get permission to use the crane. Then all those people are sitting down for two hours. I mean, that cost a lot, right?

MR. BROWN: You mean, they refused to --

MR. FRID: Yes. Because they couldn't use the crane, the union of course, right? So I was there for how many years? Two years?

MR. BROWN: It was two years, '73 and '74, something like that.

MR. FRID: Yes, okay. And then --

MR. BROWN: But you -- were you pleased with the result?

MR. FRID: Oh, yes. And then everybody said it couldn't be done. Then there was a big opening, and then of course, I was invited, too, and then we were downstairs for cocktails and so on, and then everybody has to go up and seen the new director's room. And everybody was taking credit for it that it was their idea and they helped on it and so on and so on.

MR. BROWN: You mean, all the bankers work or --

MR. FRID: All the people I'd been fighting with.

MR. BROWN: Oh, the designer and the architect and all those --

MR. FRID: Yeah, because even the -- I took some of the old panels and make in that speaker [inaudible] and so on. And that's where all the controls are for the whole thing. Then one fellow, he's standing there and say yes, and then I decided I would take such and such and such and such, I think what in the hell, they were installed backwards. I said, no, that was not the way it was done. It was done such and such. So he said, "How do you know?" I said, "I'm the one that did it." Oh, and he was standing there in front of the whole group taking all the credit that he was the one that had done the whole thing. The only thing I was displeased with was that the -- I was in Mexico in between, and when I come back, they had put some footing on I didn't like to get the old lock in and made like an awful looking panel on the door, but it was too late.

MR. BROWN: A footing on the door they'd done?

MR. FRID: Yeah. But at the same time, even when I was designing it, then you would give me the drawings, and I had to get all those panels fitted in. And then finally the architect on the job, we become pretty good friends. So he looked at it and said, what the -- they had moved the door over 20 inches. On the drawing I had, the door was off 20 inches. So nothing would have fit, but thank heavens that was cut with that. But --

MR. BROWN: This would be -- this was a very exceptional job where money was no object and --

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. I just sent them the bill every month, and every time I say something, "Boy, that's expensive," he would always say, "Well, don't we pay you?" And he'd always kid me and say, "Okay, now you're going once more to Mexico."

MR. BROWN: But quite unlike that were most of your other commissions. They were -- the economics were a big factor. The seating --

MR. FRID: It all depends. Like I said, too, for example, I designed some offices and so on for doctors and lawyers and so on, and money is not that big an object --

MR. BROWN: There to them.

MR. FRID: Yeah, because they want something special, and they're willing to pay for it. And because if I make it myself, then I can do it as cheap as I -- the same price as they can buy the same thing, but just a standard desk. For example, I can make one I think will suit them better. And that's the reason for I get called in.

MR. BROWN: And you can do it because you can work quickly and --

MR. FRID: Yeah, and there's no dealers in between. A desk, for example, comes in, and it might cost 5,000, but then there's maybe 2,000 or 2,500 in profit to the store plus the salespeople in between. So maybe the desk has cost about 1,500 to make in the factory. Plus you run with overhead that's 300 percent. So you can see the -- why we can --

MR. BROWN: Yeah. A great deal of difference.

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah.

MR. BROWN: The project at the museum in Boston, 1979 or so, can you talk a little bit about that?

MR. FRID: Yes. Fairbanks, he --

MR. BROWN: Jonathan Fairbanks.

MR. FRID: Jonathan Fairbanks, he called me one day and said he wanted to buy some of my furniture. I said, "I don't have any." Everything I make, I sell it, right? So he said, "We want some of your furniture." So [inaudible] I get paid even before they know what I was going to get -- what I was going to give them. So anyway, I designed it, and -- but see, they were both -- some went to Castle -- what is his name, the Japanese --

MR. BROWN: Nakashima?

MR. FRID: Nakashima. And the girl in Boston that there was a carving. I'll give you her name.

VOICE: Judy McKie.

MR. FRID: Yeah. Judy McKie.

MR. BROWN: Judy McKie, yeah.

MR. FRID: And then -- but they already had the pieces, so and they had just bought them. So I had to make mine first and design them, too.

MR. BROWN: So he paid you on faith that you would --

MR. FRID: Yeah. I mean, I shouldn't have even -- because I think there was an endowment that paid for that. Yeah, there was.

MR. BROWN: Yes. It was through a grant that they did that.

MR. FRID: Yeah. So anyway, I was the only one that nobody was going to go. So I could design it so I fit it in with --

MR. BROWN: Did you go up there and look around and --

MR. FRID: Yeah. And then I talked to the curator and so on, and in the Egyptian and Greek -- yeah, Egyptian and Greek area. So I took the idea from the old Greek chair.

MR. BROWN: The klismos chair.

MR. FRID: Yes. Yeah. And then -- the chairs in that era seemed right. And then I made those, then I made -- they bought eight pieces, I think. I can't remember -- a bench, so and so many chairs, I can't remember, and three stools, the three-legged ones that you see I have here, and then I made something like the desk, but only with two drawers in it, and that is what they sell books and pamphlets and so on. And I still hadn't made the piece -- I forgot.

MR. BROWN: Oh, there was to be piece, a display board or something?

MR. FRID: Up above, and I have it, but I had to finish the book first.

MR. BROWN: Now, the -- you were inspired then at least in the chair by the Greek chair.

MR. FRID: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: What inspired you for the bench and for the other things you did?

MR. FRID: It was going to be in the same area. So it was actually the chair made, should we say bigger? And --

MR. BROWN: Now, there were -- it wasn't only functional considerations, but you wanted something that would look well with the art --

MR. FRID: That wouldn't stick out like a sore thumb. See Sam Maloof, he has some furniture in there, and it really didn't fit in in where it was sitting. And like Wendell Castle's, they have a difficult time placing it anything. You're in a museum where everything is -- you would be fighting where we'd put it. It's very easy with Nakashima's to -- he goes in oriental section on his furniture, right?

MR. BROWN: It would fit in well.

MR. FRID: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: And yours did because you were the only one that had a chance to go up there and look around and --

MR. FRID: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Is that kind of work interesting to you?

MR. FRID: Yes. It was.

MR. BROWN: Was it much of a challenge?

MR. FRID: I feel so. I mean, it was very hard to get something that didn't stick out and still was not the reproduction of anything. And they say anyway that was the furniture they were most pleased with, but of course, I was the only one that had a chance to do it that way.

MR. BROWN: Would you say basically in your furniture design, you don't want it to stick out a great deal?

MR. FRID: No. I think it should fit in in the environment and so on with the -- should we say when I design furniture for people, then I always think of them as sitting. For example, when the person is sitting in the chair -- I think I said that before, too, a heavy person looks ridiculous in a small one, and a little man looks ridiculous in a big chair and so on. And I think the furniture should be -- I mean, it should be there, but it shouldn't stick out. So you're the one that should be sticking out. And it should fit into the setting. Should we put it that way?

MR. BROWN: Mm-hmm. And you got your real experience on this, I suppose, around Rochester in the '50s when you were doing lots of kitchens and living rooms for people. Do you think that's where you -- is that where you really were able to first try all that out and work out the kinks?

MR. FRID: Sure. Mm-hmm.

MR. BROWN: But then you were in Denmark. Your training was to think out the use that something was to be put to, wasn't it, and the --

MR. FRID: No, I want to say -- see, as apprentice in Denmark, you learned very little about design, but you certainly know the material in and out. And then as -- so usually it takes five, ten years to shake off what you learned and the influence from where you are apprenticed. But then it's the same. I mean, people come out of the school, and it takes them a long time to shake off what the influence of the school until they find their own, should we say style.

MR. BROWN: Maybe here's the time to ask you: What do you think your style is?

MR. FRID: I don't know. Very simple.

MR. BROWN: Very simple.

MR. FRID: No. I think everything I do, I always design around the construction, but then I change, too. I mean, like, that is my pedestal period, as you can see here and there, and I get tired of the legs. Plus, the way our house is built, I mean, like, Danish furniture would look like -- it wouldn't fit in here.

MR. BROWN: Why wouldn't it do you think?

MR. FRID: Cold and -- no. I mean, with all that vault beams and --

MR. BROWN: Of the house, yeah.

MR. FRID: And the whole -- you have a heavy feeling in the whole house, and then have a little skimpy chair, a little cigar box standing on four legs, it wouldn't fit in there at all.

MR. BROWN: It would be too flimsy, wouldn't it?

MR. FRID: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: So you give a pedestal base, and that's a robust and that fits in with the heavy frame of the old house.

MR. FRID: Yeah. Plus I mean, you get tired. I mean, I don't think you've seen any furniture with pedestals, have you?

MR. BROWN: No.

MR. FRID: I mean, like this one, this one, this one. That was actually -- I made an altar before -- I think I talked about that before.

MR. BROWN: I'm not sure you did, no.

MR. FRID: But anyway, I made an altar like that with no drawers in it. And that was in -- is up here in Lincoln.

MR. BROWN: Lincoln, Rhode Island.

MR. FRID: Yeah. And then all of the sudden, everyone wanted a sideboard, where if I put a big box there like a sideboard usually is, it would shorten up the whole room. So [inaudible], so I made -- I changed it into and put in the drawers for the silverware, but you can still serve from it.

MR. BROWN: Yes. Now, it seems much lighter, because it's put into the wall, and it's on a light pedestal. It seems almost afloat out from the wall.

MR. FRID: Yes. That was -- I showed that in Boston. That was waiting for when Fairbank saw it, and he wanted some of my furniture. So --

MR. BROWN: So you design around construction and maybe the same construction. The designs do differ. You respond differently at different times of the construction.

MR. FRID: Sure.

MR. BROWN: Sometimes it's more curved. Sometimes it's heavier.

MR. FRID: I mean, like these stools. That's the little three anchors. This is typical. Of course, the institutional furniture, right?

MR. BROWN: Institutional for this armchair here.

MR. FRID: That is for -- I made -- I don't know -- 25, 30, 40, I don't know. That's for the Rhode Island School of Design for the faculty lounge. And they come in and there had to be something you could throw yourself into.

MR. BROWN: Sturdy. So these are --

MR. FRID: They have been there for many years now, and I designed all the faculty lounge there, and then it was the only upholstered of the chairs.

MR. BROWN: They're very nice. It's rather heavy construction, and yet it doesn't seem heavy.

MR. FRID: No.

MR. BROWN: Because it's only upholstered in the seat and the back perhaps.

MR. BROWN: But it's very nice to sit in. Then I made some that was a little higher of going with the table and --

[Interruption to audio.]

MR. BROWN: Continuing interviews with Tage Frid, Bob Brown the interview, Foster Rhode Island. This is February 22, 1982. This time I want to begin by discussing your various lectures and talks and conferences you've been involved with. We've talked about some of these already, I believe, and the last we talked about was the one in Asilomar in California in 1957. And the next one I'd like to ask that you've indicated was 1964 when you were a consultant at a conference in Kentucky, and it's sponsored by the United States Office of Education. And what was all that about? How did you get into it?

MR. FRID: Does it work?

MR. BROWN: Yeah.

MR. FRID: Okay. I think I was in as a consultant from the Department of Education from Washington to see what could be done in the elevators in craft, yes. So that was wood and so on. There was all kinds of people there, different people. And I think it was the first time, actually, where I was standing up on the -- what do you say -- podium? What do you call it? The speaker's thing.

MR. BROWN: Oh, I see, you mean a formal --

MR. FRID: Yeah. A formal talk.

MR. BROWN: The first time you've really given a formal speech.

MR. FRID: Yeah. And that was the governor of the state and the former governor of the state, and I started sweating and thinking, why in the hell did I say yes to that? So anyway, I get started, and it went very well.

MR. BROWN: And you'd never been involved with thinking about using the crafts to overcome poverty, had you? Because that was their interest, wasn't it? It was an antipoverty campaign.

MR. FRID: Yeah. So anyway, my speech went very well, and that night they had a Danish dinner, by the way.

MR. BROWN: A Danish dinner?

MR. FRID: In honor because they thought I was one of the best speeches they have. But the idea was to see what could be done in the Appalachians, and each one wrote like what I was writing here. Before I came, then they made -- have us talk. And -- but the end result was that the best thing would be to put up a school for the people in the Appalachians and so on. And I believe now -- yeah. I know they have one now, the school of -- I can't remember the name. You know which one I'm talking about?

MR. BROWN: No. Yeah, but I don't remember the exact name either. Do you -- did you think it was a good idea to have a school?

MR. FRID: I think so, but I don't think it was a good idea the school they have.

MR. BROWN: Why is that?

MR. FRID: They have a -- you know Tom Hawkins [phonetic] and that --

MR. BROWN: What was wrong with the school?

MR. FRID: Okay. I think they have the wrong teacher -- the wrong approach to the Appalachian people.

MR. BROWN: Really?

MR. FRID: They still -- well, to face it, I mean, you see how they live. I mean, they're way, way behind, right?

MR. BROWN: Yeah.

MR. FRID: And then they get two very extreme designers. There is -- if you know Tom Hawkins -- Harker [phonetic], no. But he makes some real way out in left field furniture.

MR. BROWN: And you felt that these people weren't right for - -

MR. FRID: I mean, it's so advanced, that you knew that he is advanced of the most woodworkers.

MR. BROWN: I mean, you in your talk, you advocated thorough training of the teachers. It sounds as though you were talking about something that could be adapted fairly basic -- basic techniques in woodworking and basic design.

MR. FRID: I think I said that, like, in high school, maybe the most important thing is to retrain the high school teachers first so they can give the people a better education, because a high school teacher is a jack of all trades and not real -- know of any of them. So anyway, they did put up the school, and then -- but it's in a level like way over the head of those people in the Appalachians. I mean --

MR. BROWN: Too sophisticated, is it?

MR. FRID: Yes.

MR. BROWN: What did you know about these people in Appalachia before you went there? Did you do a little research before you went down to the conference?

MR. FRID: No. I didn't, but the -- I was driving around, looking, talking to people, and I did a little research down there.

MR. BROWN: But you really -- your students at Rochester, your students in Providence, and your own training in Denmark, all of it was among pretty sophisticated people, wasn't it?

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah.

MR. BROWN: So this was something pretty new for you.

MR. FRID: Yes. But I can't remember, but I was called once. That was from Washington, too, that they were going to give me, I think, a million dollars. Then I could put up a furniture factory any place I want to and run it and so on. And I can't remember if that come first or after.

MR. BROWN: Well, one of the things in your talk you did talk about setting up a factory, a production factory. You said it would require a larger investment, but on the other hand, wouldn't require a great deal of training of

the workmen, would it?

MR. FRID: No.

MR. BROWN: In a production factory.

MR. FRID: Mm-hmm. But at the same time, of course, people learn. I mean, you can't help. The idea was not that one person stay with the bandsaw all his life. The idea was to move it around. See, that was my idea here, but where nobody were. But the end result was that we all agreed that the best thing would be to put up a school. So then they did put up the school, Appalachian Craft.

MR. BROWN: Yes. But you say it was over the heads of the people by and large.

MR. FRID: Yes. I mean, I like those people is not ready to accept that. It should be something -- you have to start them from scratch and then work them up and educate them. I mean, they have no real chance -- they have no background in design, really.

MR. BROWN: They what?

MR. FRID: No background --

MR. BROWN: Right, in design, no.

MR. FRID: -- in design. And then come in with something very out in left field.

MR. BROWN: But the people might have had some natural ability, and if you'd begun very simply, sure.

MR. FRID: Sure. I mean, they used to whittle and most of them is very good craft people, because they had to do everything themselves, right? So the background was excellent, but --

MR. BROWN: You also proposed in your talk at the 1964 conference that they might think of having stores in which crafts could be displayed.

MR. FRID: Yes.

MR. BROWN: Did they ever take up that idea?

MR. FRID: There is a southern guild where they have stores in different areas, and I don't know if that was before or after. I can't remember when. So they do have stores now.

MR. BROWN: But are those things that show locally made things that people will buy?

MR. FRID: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: Because they're not simply too sophisticated.

MR. FRID: No. They -- and I think it's self-supporting. I think so. See, usually most of those stores like America House or something like that, there's always some rich person behind it to support it. But I think -- I think they're on their own.

MR. BROWN: Do you see that such stores have a place, that they might be patronized even in a poor area like the Appalachians?

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. But there's a lot of good areas there, too. Tourists, come, right?

MR. BROWN: Tourists might come.

MR. FRID: Yeah. And that's where the --

MR. BROWN: That's where the money might come from.

MR. FRID: Yeah. I mean, they should make it and then send it to the stores, right? I mean, you go through Ashville and that whole area and the Blue Ridge Mountains, and there's plenty of areas there.

MR. BROWN: Well, you in fact, you taught out in Appalachia. You taught at Penland School of Arts and Crafts in North Carolina.

MR. FRID: Yes.

MR. BROWN: What was that like by comparison with your experience in Kentucky? What were the students like?

MR. FRID: Well, in the first place, I think Penland School is the one that had done most for craft in the United States. You don't have to put in a portfolio or anything. It just is first come, first served. And the students are from all over the United States and even from Europe and other places.

MR. BROWN: It's not rooted in Appalachia by any means.

MR. FRID: No, no, no.

MR. BROWN: I mean, it's a sophisticated place that happens to be in the Appalachians.

MR. FRID: Yes. And it started in the Appalachians as a -- I think as a weaving school. I think so, but you can find out about the history about that. But I think it's one of the best schools.

MR. BROWN: But teaching there was more or less like teaching at Rochester or in Providence, right? I mean, the same --

MR. FRID: Yeah. But see, they're completely with no background, some background.

MR. BROWN: Okay. So they come without background.

MR. FRID: And some was 18 years old, and some was maybe 80. So there was quite a variety. But they have some very good teachers. I mean, I'm not talking specifically about myself, but Sam Maloof, Wendell Castle, and just in the wood field and in all the fields. The only reason for the -- go on the school was we all donate our time. We never -- that's the only place where I don't get paid. As a matter of fact now, even donate money to it. I really believe in it.

MR. BROWN: What was it like, though, teaching such a mixed bag of students?

MR. FRID: I think it was great, because they were all so enthusiastic about it. And I must say that, for example, if I was on there for three weeks, some of the students, especially if you consider their background, made more in that three weeks than my student does in three months. Because the school is open 24 hours a day, and it's a great place.

MR. BROWN: People would come, they would be very enthusiastic, hardworking?

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. I mean, they have so many applications, for example, that even you had to stamp it the time they received the letter, because it's first come, first served. I think it's great. I've been down there several times as a visiting scholar. You just come in and then spend your time with the students and don't get paid and -- oh, they used to pay our travel, but they can't afford it any more. So now I pay for it.

MR. BROWN: The long-time head of that has been Bill Brown.

MR. FRID: Bill Brown, yeah.

MR. BROWN: What's he -- what's his influence been as far as you can see?

MR. FRID: He took that school from nothing and built it up to what it is now, him and his wife Jane was really the back pillar of that school. And they're doing a fantastic job.

MR. BROWN: Do many of the students, as far as you know, go on then with crafts careers?

MR. FRID: Oh, yes. They completely have their own shop, too, with quite a few and then come down and get a [inaudible]. And there's quite a few doctors, lawyers.

MR. BROWN: Part-time craftsmen.

MR. FRID: Yes. But some of them even become serious and make it a career. They're tired of --

MR. BROWN: Doing what they were doing?

MR. FRID: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: Well, maybe -- how would you compare -- how do you compare Penland with the other notable summer craft school of the East, Haystack Mountain School in Maine?

MR. FRID: Of course, it was Bill, he was assistant director in Haystack when he moved to --

MR. BROWN: Before he went to North Carolina.

MR. FRID: Yeah. I think they've done a fantastic job. It's a beautiful area. It's very difficult for me to really talk about it, because I've only been up there conferences and so on. I haven't taught there, but they have -- I'm planning on doing a -- not this year but next year, go there. Because the woodshop closed there for quite a while. I don't know if they couldn't get enough students or what it was.

MR. BROWN: But it's -- is it on first come, first served basis, or are they screened, those students.?

MR. FRID: I think it's first come, first served. I couldn't --

MR. BROWN: Yeah. Pretty much the same.

MR. FRID: Yeah. The same idea, but I think both schools is fantastic, yeah. I think it's -- the greatest thing about both schools is that sometime -- I mean, you have a job where you're kind of unhappy, and you really don't know if you want to be a woodworker or a ceramist or so on, that's an excellent place to go to, one of those two schools. And because you get concentrated attention and concentrated whatever you want to do, they give you chance to find out first if you have then thumbs.

MR. BROWN: If you have --

MR. FRID: Ten thumbs.

MR. BROWN: Ten thumbs, yeah. Okay.

MR. FRID: Or if that's what you really want. And a lot of people come there year after year and finally start up their own business, because it's -- what do you call it -- it's not the word "compact." What do you call it?

MR. BROWN: Compressed or --

MR. FRID: No. It's -- I just about had it, but --

MR. BROWN: You mean, it's a very concentrated --

MR. FRID: Concentrated, yeah. Very concentrated, because it's there 24 hours, and a lot of them is there about 20 hours. I don't know when they sleep.

MR. BROWN: They begin or they learn a great deal of the craft.

MR. FRID: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: What about the design side of things?

MR. FRID: Oh, yes. They talk about that, too. And then each -- excuse me. Each night there is each department have a slide show. So it's not only you get introduced, for example, if you come as a woodworker, but you get -- find out about ceramics, jewelry, weaving, and photography, and things like that. And so each teacher at least once have a show, and that's a show every night everybody usually goes to.

MR. BROWN: Do people mainly talk about what they were doing and why in front of --

MR. FRID: Yeah. And their own work and talk about the design, too, and why they made that specific like that, and sometimes it's a good design, bad design. That's what I like to do. I take some good design and some bad design.

MR. BROWN: And then you explain why something's good and --

MR. FRID: Yeah. And why something is bad. Most people like to just show pretty pictures. That piece is beautiful, that piece is beautiful, but the other people really don't know why a piece is bad, bad design, bad proportion; there's a lot of things involved there, right?

MR. BROWN: In your teaching in general, do you have the students draw quite a bit, draw sort of general ideas for designs as well as renderings from which they could make a piece?

MR. FRID: Yeah. No.

MR. BROWN: You have to make general studies or at least sort of sketch out.

MR. FRID: Mm-hmm. See, what they do is they come with a rough idea or maybe ten rough ideas, then we all go as a group, like now for example, each one -- usually I don't give assignment, but they ask me, too. So everybody's going to make a chair, and it's going to be so they can set up and make a minimum of six chairs. So then each one comes with ideas, talk about it like in a crit, and we all criticize it and so on and so on. Then they pick one or two, and then when they are down to -- eventually to one, then they have to make a working drawing.

And there is a lack -- I mean, you're going to do rendering or whatever you want to, and it usually looks better than the actual piece, because you can shade it and snazz it up a little. But there's very few people that can actually really draw a chair. For example, with -- okay. As an example, we have a -- in the school for Rhode Island School of Design, they -- in the architectural department, there's a lot of those students, they don't know how to get from the first floor to the second. What I mean is they couldn't even draw a stair because of the -- I think we talked about that Sweets catalogue before, didn't we?

MR. BROWN: You may have. But go ahead, please.

MR. FRID: No. Because everything now is Sweets catalogue, pre-stressed concrete and everything they buy from the catalogue. And it becomes like Tinker Toys.

MR. BROWN: So the emphasis is on renderings rather than on working drawings.

MR. FRID: Yeah. And they just take the different thing out of the Sweets catalogue, and -- because today there's really no -- I don't think there's any architect anymore, right? I mean -- what I mean is I couldn't afford to have an architect to design a house for me, and the architect couldn't afford to take me as a client with a result. Now, most of the designing houses and things like that is done by the carpenter. Often you notice many times you'll come in, then there's the stairway, and then you go to the bathroom, you have to go through the kitchen or living room or someplace.

MR. BROWN: Yeah. Not thought out.

MR. FRID: No. It's not thought out. So --

MR. BROWN: And when the architecture student is drawing, he usually just turns to the catalogue to put the --

MR. FRID: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: When he makes his working drawing.

MR. FRID: Yeah. And then he makes his working drawing from there with --

MR. BROWN: So you find also in woodworking that --

MR. FRID: You can't do it.

MR. BROWN: It's basic. You have to train them to make working drawings.

MR. FRID: Yeah. I mean, like it's impossible to make a chair without the full-scale drawing, because nothing is square, right? All drawings and everything is at an angle.

MR. BROWN: And in the case of chairs, you find it's best to do this superimposed drawing you've just shown me where you have the front view, the side view, and a view looking down.

MR. FRID: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: And by superimposing them, you can continually refer -- reference from one to the other to the third so that the angles and all are correct.

MR. FRID: Yes. Because in the first place, two -- I mean, if you do an individual drawing, you have to take them one measurement, for example, here from the front view and the height here, there, and so on and take it over and put it over there, and you could very easily make a mistake. So you might have had three perfect drawings, but they might not go together. But because these super-exposed or --

MR. BROWN: Superimposed.

MR. FRID: Imposed.

MR. BROWN: Drawings.

MR. FRID: Drawings.

MR. BROWN: Is this something you would have learned in Denmark as a --

MR. FRID: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: As a student there, you learned this?

MR. FRID: As an apprentice, yeah.

MR. BROWN: And this is something you instill in your students here now.

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. Sure. And it takes a little while to get it, but the same time, like I said before, if you make a mistake, it will still go together. It might not be -- I mean, a little mistake in a curve, you wouldn't even see it, right? But if you made a mistake in a curve here --

MR. BROWN: You mean, the curve were in the back.

MR. FRID: Yeah. And then carry it over -- or didn't carry it over to the other one, the thing would never go together. And if it's done in three different colors, then it is --

MR. BROWN: Three different colors, it's very apparent.

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. And then you can very easy.

MR. BROWN: Do you find that -- so after giving the students this very thorough training in working drawings, making working drawings, what does this do to their -- what people nowadays talk about their creative side? Do you think it affects it at all? Because I suppose they also -- at least when they begin, a lot of them are inclined to make rather imaginative, almost fantasy drawings, aren't they?

MR. FRID: Yes. In the beginning.

MR. BROWN: Do you balance the two? I mean, do you say sketch out your fantasy and then let's see if we can translate it into a --

MR. FRID: Yeah. But I mean, they -- it's just a little guidance to -- I'm sure I said that before. I always design around the construction instead of constructing around the design. And many times when -- in one way, that's what I like about the -- being a teacher. A student will come in, and then he will make a drawing, for example, and so he says, "Why can't I do it like that?" And because I'm so taught that you do such, such, and such like this [inaudible], all of the sudden those young kids come with something that's yeah, why not? Why can't you do it? So I'm learning every day, too, working with the students. That's the reason I like teaching. Sometimes technical things, they say, "Okay, why can't it be done such and such?" Yes, why not? So I mean, I'm still learning.

MR. BROWN: So they do expand what you thought could be done.

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. Sure, sure. But many times, they'll [inaudible] way out in left field, and then I try to guide them into -- but still staying for their design.

MR. BROWN: But this training and this basic learning the techniques and learning how to do a drawing that will show how something that can be put together, this sticks with them. So even though they've got a new rather imaginative idea, they're able to translate it into something that can be made.

MR. FRID: Sure. See, it's very difficult to look at a two-dimensional drawing and see it three-dimensional. That's something you have to learn, do what is very hard. Proportion is very difficult to learn. As a matter of fact, design you can't teach it. I don't feel you can teach design.

MR. BROWN: You can't.

MR. FRID: I don't think so. You can bring it out. I mean, I can't teach them English, but math and things like that, but --

MR. BROWN: You can't teach design, really.

MR. FRID: I don't feel you can.

MR. BROWN: You feel it's kind of intuitive, and when you see a design, you can sense whether it's good or bad.

MR. FRID: Yeah. I mean, you can bring it out of the person the same time --

MR. BROWN: But you can't show them how to do it.

MR. FRID: No. I mean, there's people who can't even hit a nail. You can't teach them.

MR. BROWN: But even something that comes out of the imagination, even something that complex you certainly can't teach.

MR. FRID: But at the same time with -- that was for a while everything was so abstract and -- but there are still teachers that teach like that. For example, you design the piece first, let's say for example, the chair first, right? And then they just put it together as they go along. Well, the result usually falls apart. And there's a few pretty well -- not really well known, but established people that do that kind of work. But the thing is you never see it mass produced, and you will see it in museums and so on, because museum people usually think, "Oh, that's great. I've never seen that before," but that doesn't mean you can sit in the chair, and it doesn't mean it will stand up forever. That's the reason for many times you see in art magazines and so on, you see all those funny, strange kind of furniture, but if you really look at them technically, they're going to fall apart.

MR. BROWN: Have you found that a problem particularly here in the United States over the years, museum people and art collectors tend to want something simply because it's new and different?

MR. FRID: Yes. I mean, I think I talked about it once when I was in that show in Brooklyn.

MR. BROWN: The Brooklyn Museum show.

MR. FRID: Yeah. Brooklyn. I talked about the day [inaudible].

MR. BROWN: Yeah. You did. About 1953.

MR. FRID: Yeah. I don't think museum people belong in there. I mean, they belong there, but they shouldn't have such a big influence, and I have a letter I can show you. I wrote to --

MR. BROWN: Yeah. Protesting that or pointing out that -- their shortcomings.

MR. FRID: Yeah. Pointing out. I didn't protest, but yeah.

MR. BROWN: The -- in contrast, your involvement with Fine Woodworking over the last six or eight years has been -- they came to you or you went to them or --

MR. FRID: No. They came to me.

MR. BROWN: And there you've been able to write about what you feel is important and be able to have some influence. That's been, therefore, probably a pretty happy collaboration, hadn't it?

MR. FRID: Oh, yes. But the funny thing I didn't want to have anything to do with them.
MR. BROWN: In the beginning?

MR. FRID: Paul, the publisher --

MR. BROWN: Paul --

MR. FRID: Paul Roman. He came here I don't know how many times and even staying overnight and dinner, breakfast and -- but I wouldn't do it. So he would say, "Why don't you do it?"

MR. BROWN: Because I'm not a writer. I can't even speak English. So -- and I have a hell of a time spelling, too.

MR. FRID: He would say, "Why don't you try it?" You know my wife? She talked me into it, and I tried, and it seems people like what I was doing and then in the beginning, I wrote in every magazine. But then I started writing the books. And then it's very hard to write books and articles, too, so you don't repeat yourself.

MR. BROWN: Did you know something of the magazine before you -- before Paul Roman got you involved?

MR. FRID: Him and I started it. I was the first one.

MR. BROWN: Oh, you helped to start it?

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. I was in there from the beginning.

MR. BROWN: But not to be a writer necessarily.

MR. FRID: No. I'm the only one that wanted to stick my name out for it, because of my wife.

MR. BROWN: You felt the need for such a magazine.

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. Absolutely.

MR. BROWN: There wasn't much like that.

MR. FRID: There wasn't anything.

MR. BROWN: What was there, just like Popular Mechanics on the one hand or these arts magazines on the other, these craft --

MR. FRID: Yeah. But see there was all those ceramics, silver, weaving magazines, but there was really no woodwork --

MR. BROWN: Nothing for woodworking.

MR. FRID: There wasn't anything. So -- but my feeling is, too, with a magazine like that, he maybe have a 10, 15 years period. How long you're going to write about dovetails? You understand that has a limitation. And then before you know, it's coming to pick on the design magazine. Like, I don't know if you're familiar with it, Mobilia. It started out like that, like a trade magazine.

MR. BROWN: For the craft.

MR. FRID: For the craft, for woodworkers, and so on. And eventually, it becomes a design magazine and was sold, by the way, all over the whole world. I mean, it has a certain lifespan, a thing like that.

MR. BROWN: How does writing suit you now? And what's the effect been of these books you've just -- your second volume of your book on fine woodworking has just come out. How has that affected you?

MR. FRID: Financially you mean?

MR. BROWN: Well, just generally I mean in terms -- your career and development of your own work and so forth.

MR. FRID: I mean, it was -- it's been fun. In one way, all of the sudden, I had to really sit down and think what I'm saying, what I'm writing, because there it is in black and white, and I've got not do any -- make any mistakes there. So -- and at the same time, I've found out that, as you say, some new joints I never thought of before, but all of the sudden I think, gee, there must be an easier and stronger way to do it with a result. There's quite a few in the first book, some new joints and --

MR. BROWN: The first book was on joining?

MR. FRID: On joining, yeah. And it sold -- I mean, for a textbook in -- I think it's been out for two years or something like that -- it sold at least over a hundred thousand. I mean, that's a lot of books for --

MR. BROWN: But in the course of writing it, you came up with some new techniques that you --

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. Sure. And then I brought up -- brought back a lot of old techniques that had completely been forgotten, and I don't know why.

MR. BROWN: But you brought them back because you wanted to show many alternative ways of doing things.

MR. FRID: Yeah. I mean, do it by hand, by machine, and the same thing. What I hate is -- I mean, I didn't invent the dovetails and all those joints, and I mean, I was taught. Is that right? Taught? Taught.

MR. BROWN: Yeah.

MR. FRID: I learned from somebody else. And so it didn't belong to me. I mean, I want to pass it on. But there's a lot of people that's taught by other people, and they think it belongs to them. They won't even give it away. I wouldn't wonder why they didn't [inaudible], but they wouldn't write it. That's my feeling what they are.

MR. BROWN: That's often been a problem in the crafts then.

MR. FRID: Well, it is, because --

MR. BROWN: Keep -- hide their secret.

MR. FRID: Yeah. But you learned it from somebody else. It's not theirs. I feel it's -- I mean, it's been passed on from Egyptians up to what we're doing today, right?

MR. BROWN: Well, your own training was to share. You were being -- an older person was sharing it with you [inaudible].

MR. FRID: Yeah. Sure. He taught me, yeah? And I feel it's my obligation to pass it on.

MR. BROWN: You're only -- in your training, the only insistence was on quality. That was the only -- and that's not a secret. That's just -- you've got a [inaudible] you've got to go through these steps.

MR. FRID: Yeah. I mean, the quality, the joinery, and so on and do it right.

MR. BROWN: Now, you had difficulty in writing. You had to set down your writing, but you also had to square it with the illustrations, and did that cause many problems for you or you just didn't --

MR. FRID: No. Not the -- you mean, the drawings and so on?

MR. BROWN: You need to figure out just where you had to -- what you had to illustrate, didn't you? Which steps.

MR. FRID: Okay. So the way I work, the book, you want to hear?

MR. BROWN: Mm-hmm.

MR. FRID: Okay. The first thing is I want to talk about something, right? Then what we would do, I would start making it. And then a photographer comes in, and then he takes it step by step.

MR. BROWN: Now, did you drill him first? Did you talk to him and say --

MR. FRID: No, no, no. As we go along -- see sometimes I have it in three stages so you don't have to come 20 times. So I have, for example, one thing going three or four different stages and so on.

MR. BROWN: And you told him this is what is most important?

MR. FRID: No. I just say shoot that, shoot that, shoot at these angles.

MR. BROWN: You did [inaudible].

MR. FRID: I mean, I direct him --

MR. BROWN: You were the director -- producer and director.

MR. FRID: Yeah. I tell him everything. He just shoot it. Then I get all the pictures, and then I start writing and then put in the pictures and then the drawings and so on.

MR. BROWN: The drawings -- why were they put in also, the drawings as well as photographs?

MR. FRID: Because like here, I mean, you have to show them the dimension and [inaudible]; you have to show what angle it is and how you chisel it out and --

MR. BROWN: The photograph wouldn't be enough.

MR. FRID: No, no. The combination of photograph and drawing.

MR. BROWN: Did you have to train the photographer to an extent by showing him just what was important?

MR. FRID: No, the first one in the first book, that was actually one of my former students.

MR. BROWN: So he knew.

MR. FRID: Roseanne Somerson, that's Alphonse's wife now, Alphonse Mattia's wife. She knew where the -- I had her as a student three or four years or something. And that was, in one way, a great help. You say, "Oh, no, no. You forgot such and such." But she took the pictures. I would tape it. Then she typed it and read it and then we sent it down.

MR. BROWN: Now, what about the draftsman that you used to make the drawings. Did you have instruct that

person?

MR. FRID: Yeah. I mean, the first one --

MR. BROWN: And I recall you had to go over it and revise some of the drawings that were meaningless.

MR. FRID: Yeah, I mean, the first one was impossible. He didn't even -- he would make one drawing, and I said there would be a tongue that had to fit into a groove. The tongue might be bigger than the groove. But I made the drawing, and he just had to scale it down or something and ink it.

MR. BROWN: And he was altering it in doing that.

MR. FRID: Yes. All of the sudden, then I made the drawings and then we called in the inker.

MR. BROWN: The inker did distortions.

MR. FRID: Yeah. And he really goofed it up. And then the second one we have a [inaudible], too. So now I'm more or less doing all the drawing.

MR. BROWN: So but in your first one, as it was published, there were still -- were there still any distortions in it that you --

MR. FRID: There was a --

MR. BROWN: There were a few that --

MR. FRID: There was a few. See, I would talk to him for example, "Then you show ingrain in a certain place." Then I said, "That's not ingrained." Then he just erased it. So it kind of came out weak as ingrain. And see, I didn't see it before it went out.

MR. BROWN: But now you have tighter control in the second volume.

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. Sure.

MR. BROWN: It's crucial then, isn't it?

MR. FRID: You get kind of nervous with --

MR. BROWN: So this publication has three very world-selling volumes. The third one is just coming out. It's been a -- you've gotten to be much more known, have you?

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. Sure. I mean, I think we could spend -- if I took all the lectures I was invited to, I'd travel very easy for half a year just lecturing, but kind of take the days [inaudible].

MR. BROWN: Do you enjoy lecturing now?

MR. FRID: Not any more. It was fun in the beginning, but see, I don't go any place without Emma, so we always travel together. We're not apart, but for some it's good and some is not so good. See, what is -- what I don't like is that, of course, all schools and universities and so on is in financial trouble today. So I do it because I believe in it, and then they pay for my trip, Emma's trip, and our expenses and so on, and then I only charge $100, $125 a day for a lecture. But then they take, for example, gate money, and then they might take in 3, 4, 5,000, and people think I get it. I -- maybe it cost them $800 or something like that.

MR. BROWN: And you've had some indirect criticism? It's come back to you?

MR. FRID: No, no. See, I didn't realize it, but then something happened lately. I was in Chicago with -- what it's called -- Excellent in Woodwork. And that was 500 people. And I didn't know that they charge $40 apiece. That's 20,000, and that's the people that run the show. They had -- it was in Hyatt Regency, and they had the whole show area and plus some of the ballrooms for the thing and so on. I can see it has to pay for itself, but I saw they made the money on the exhibition area. But now you're imagine [inaudible] I think we might be worth maybe $1,000. Then there was another fellow on the panel, too. He was -- and he didn't even pay anything, because he worked for the firm. So they pay out the thousand dollars. And then they have to rent the room and so on, but then take in 20,000, I don't like that. I don't.

MR. BROWN: You mainly talk about technical matters at these?

MR. FRID: Yeah. Well, see, usually, I'll go out for example, then I show slides, and then I'll talk about design -- good design, bad design, technical things and so on, then I'll do a demonstration. And then question and

answer. That is more or less. But then now it's getting, too, for example they want one in the morning and one in the afternoon, and I'm not getting any younger. I get a little tired.

MR. BROWN: Do you find these things are very satisfying? I mean, are the questions good that you get or --

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. Sure.

MR. BROWN: They are good questions?

MR. FRID: Oh, yes. And I guess because of the book and the [inaudible] wherever I go, it's a full house.

MR. BROWN: And you get some good people attending.

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. Yes.

MR. BROWN: Now, you said a little earlier you can't really teach very much of design. So what do you talk about to these people in terms of design? You just point to examples?

MR. FRID: Yeah. Example. I show something, for example -- oh, for example, I said the relation between the apron and the leg on the chair and the back and so on is wrong, and that form is fighting that form. For example, if the shape of -- let's say you have a table or something. Then the shape of the legs, the apron, and what is going on underneath fight each other, especially if it's sculptures and tables.

MR. BROWN: And people understand that?

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. When you print it out. But then there's something, too, that's called a positive and a negative area in a design. The positive is, for example, the chair, right? But the hole in there, that's the negative part, and they have to relate. And a lot of people never talk about it and people really appreciate that you point to those things. Then there would be something, I would say good relation and so on and so on and so on, proportion, what is very difficult to learn.

MR. BROWN: Do you sense that in general the quality of design is coming up in terms of woodworking that is available to the general population?

MR. FRID: I would say so, yes. We have a tendency to go back to the Bauhaus, simplifies it again that all that sculpture and abstraction of furniture has kind of vanished out. Wendell Castle, for example, right, might actually do woodwork for the first time as a matter of fact, he's doing woodwork.

MR. BROWN: Yeah. Getting away from the sculptural, what you once called plastic feeling. You yourself don't feel that kind of plasticity is in the nature of wood, right?

MR. FRID: No. I mean, like, the [inaudible] and so on what they were doing would kind of kill the material. I mean, it would be beautiful in plastic, but wood is so beautiful, right? I mean, you plane it, join it, sand it, and in one way, the more you do it, the worse it's going to be, I mean, in for reason, right?

MR. BROWN: You've, I know, several times done things -- production things.

MR. FRID: Yeah.

MR. BROWN: And what my question really was, the general taste. Say what a person can buy at Sears or at some furniture store, do you see that any of that's getting any better? Is it likely to get better?

MR. FRID: No. It's always --

MR. BROWN: Things that come out of Grand Rapids and North Carolina.

MR. FRID: Well, it all depends. If you take Herman Miller and Dunbar and those people --

MR. BROWN: They're the top of the work.

MR. FRID: Yeah. There is -- the quality is fine, but I would say Sears and Roebuck is still Sears and Roebuck.

MR. BROWN: You've not seen much change since you arrived in this country 30-some years ago?

MR. FRID: No. In the design, I think. But --

MR. BROWN: But not -- in terms of the general run of things --

MR. FRID: No.

MR. BROWN: -- Sears Roebuck has been pretty much the same?

MR. FRID: Yeah, I would say so.

MR. BROWN: Do you see any way that in the United States this will ever change?

MR. FRID: I don't know. It's the same in Europe. I mean, there is certain clientele, and that's the only kind of furniture they can afford. So there is a market for it, and there's nothing wrong with it. Because those people buy it, and then maybe -- like my own aunt, for example, in Minnesota. She couldn't understand, for example, let's say if I have to have 8, 10,000 for a dining room. She could buy three, and she bought three from Sears and Roebuck. But I mean, that's a different -- she would rather buy three sets and then get a new set every 15, 20 years, whatever it is.

MR. BROWN: But is there any way, though, that those sets from Sears and Roebuck that your aunt bought were probably imitations of colonial or renaissance or something like that, weren't they?

MR. FRID: No. But they still have fake modern furniture in there now.

MR. BROWN: Well, they do. But most people aren't buying quite that; they're still buying these sort of derivations from some historical style, aren't they?

MR. FRID: Certain type of people, yeah. I think that maybe their clientele is more likely to buy that type of furniture.

MR. BROWN: But the same was true back in Denmark, wasn't it?

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. Sure. But that doesn't mean that -- see, in one way, it's much more difficult to make a clean furniture when there's no carving to hide the joints, there's no -- you make a mistake, and it sticks out like a sore thumb. So where the others are cluttered up with a lot of jazz. So --

MR. BROWN: They can cover it up with applied decoration and the like.

MR. FRID: Mm-hmm. So they can use a lot of Swedish dolls.

MR. BROWN: Swedish dolls?

MR. FRID: That's nails.

MR. BROWN: Oh. [Laughter] That sounds like a nationalist remark.

MR. FRID: I can say it because my father was a Swedish descendant.

MR. BROWN: Oh, you really -- you were involved in a couple conferences lately. The one I'm thinking of is the one on apprenticeship that was held at the University of New York --

MR. FRID: Purchase, yeah.

MR. BROWN: -- in 1978.

MR. FRID: His book just come out.

MR. BROWN: What was that like for you? Was that -- I know we have the report here, and is that sort of thing worthwhile in your opinion, these conferences?

MR. FRID: Yeah. I think so. That specific one was at an apprenticeship in the United States wouldn't work, couldn't work, because say I get an apprentice here -- I can get a lot of them if I want to, right? But then I have to pay the lowest wages, which is what, $3? What is it?

MR. BROWN: 3.15 now I think.

MR. FRID: 3.14, okay, Blue Cross, workman's compensation, and all the things that go with it, and then let's say he was here for -- I mean, I have to keep stopping to show him or there's a her --

MR. BROWN: Costs you a lot of money plus you have to stop all the time, interrupt your work.
MR. FRID: Of course, like in Denmark, I had to sign a contract. I couldn't break it, and they couldn't break it either. So if --

MR. BROWN: But also you paid for the apprenticeship, didn't you in part?

MR. FRID: No. I got $1 a week, and then he paid for Blue Cross and -- $1 a week and all the spank I wanted. So -- but then today, I'm in -- they say you get a person, and then he is -- he becomes pretty good after a year or two. That's how you figure you're going to get it paid back, right? Then they usually take off and start for themselves. So if there was a contract, then they have to stay there, right?

MR. BROWN: And they could be a contributor to the workshop after a little while.

MR. FRID: Sure. But at the same time, I suggested in that conference that there should be somebody to overlook or not that everybody could have an apprentice. See, a lot of them would take an apprentice to get cheaper labor just to stay there in the same for four years and [inaudible] woodworker take off -- in the end of the mill or something like that. So there should be something I would suggest like an organization like American Craft Council or something should maybe tell certain shops that could that you had to pass -- your shop has to pass a certain standard before you're even allowed to have an apprentice.

MR. BROWN: Why did they have that -- such a conference as that on apprenticeship, was this -- were they worried about the level of design in this country or working conditions or what?

MR. FRID: No, I think it was just to --

MR. BROWN: Why do you --

MR. FRID: No, I think you start out like in Haystack that they put out something -- Apprenticeship or Slaves.

MR. BROWN: Apprenticeship slaves?

MR. FRID: Or slaves.

MR. BROWN: Or slaves.

MR. FRID: So I kind of got a little bit excited there about that thing, and told them you are not the slave; you are still the student. And it was just a different name for a student. So then --

MR. BROWN: You mean, these were students who accused the -- said they were being made slaves?

MR. FRID: No, no, no. The program was Apprenticeship or Slaves.

MR. BROWN: Oh, okay.

MR. FRID: And I didn't feel I was a slave. I think I was a student. I was an apprentice. It was just -- okay, I mean, how these schools start? How did art schools start, for example? A painter or woodworker, whatever it was, he knew something, and people come to him to learn. And usually they would live there, clean the shop for room and board and learn. Then after a while, he get a few more apprentice, then he has to hire a bookkeeper and an accountant and so on before. Then all of the sudden now, it is the bookkeeper, the accountant, and the people that is running the art school and the most schools is not the teachers. And people would come, for example, to I know that my students come because of me not because of the accountant and the bookkeeper. So when we apprentice, the system there, you come there, and you stay with him or her, and will learn what you come for.

MR. BROWN: But this reflected the fear of some people that an apprentice could become a slave?

MR. FRID: Yes. That's what they --

MR. BROWN: And be exploited?

MR. FRID: That's what they thought, but I don't feel -- I feel it was the wrong name. So then they had that --

MR. BROWN: And a certain group of people were interested, therefore, in just being in an art school or an environment where they weren't under the thumb of a master?

MR. FRID: Yes. Because -- say it again please?

MR. BROWN: Some people who thought that an apprentice was a slave felt that you should be in a more -- a freer atmosphere than that of a master and apprentice, freer where you would be more on your own.

MR. FRID: Yes. But I mean, at the same time, you can't even find anybody that can afford to take an apprentice. The Endowment of the Arts was giving money to people and it really didn't work out because they

had to spend so much time with them that it cost them money, and then when they learned, they took right off.

MR. BROWN: So you think the apprenticeship system perhaps is idealistic in this country at least?

MR. FRID: Yeah. I think it's the best way to learn.

MR. BROWN: You think it's the best, but would it work in this country?

MR. FRID: Not as long as you had to pay that kind of salary and --

MR. BROWN: So the alternative is --

MR. FRID: And there should be school, too. What do you call it? Like I had to go to school at night, technical school.

MR. BROWN: I'm still not quite clear. Now, the apprenticeship system is uneconomical in this country by and large. So therefore, the person should go to schools to which people like you come and teach part time. And then you come back and do your own work. Maybe you pay -- have an assistant or so.

MR. FRID: Yeah, because it's --

MR. BROWN: But in Denmark, you did both. You were both an apprentice, and you went to school. You could have both there. But here, it might not work out very well to be an apprentice.

MR. FRID: Not as long as you had to pay that expense, and as long as you don't have a contract that at least, I would say for five years, but I'm sure I could -- you've got to pay it off, too, in four years. First one or two -- like the first year you don't learn much. I was young, too. I was thirteen and a half. But anyway, you learn to [inaudible] the solders and the environment and so on. But realistic today, no. But I still think it's the best way to learn as long as they have to go to school and learn about design and the material and so on.

MR. BROWN: But the American --

MR. FRID: And drawing.

MR. BROWN: -- would consider his child exploited if --

MR. FRID: Yeah. But you would be amazed how many phone calls I get.

MR. BROWN: You do get a lot.

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. I mean --

MR. BROWN: But then those people won't stay with it after a while. They may want to go off on their own.

MR. FRID: Nobody can afford to take them. So I mean, I can get all the people who will work here for nothing, but then if an accident happens and people find they work for me, and then I go to jail because I didn't pay them even the minimum wages, right? So the system -- unless you get a system like in Europe where you sign a contract, and then it could work.

MR. BROWN: You lose money on the apprentice in the first few years, and then they begin to contribute.

MR. FRID: Yeah. Sure. But at the same time, it would be cheaper, too, for a person -- see, now you get individual training, right? Even if I had two, three apprentice here, they would get individual training, right? But at the same time, it's much cheaper than going to school, because you get -- let's say they got $50 a week or something. Then if I had to pay for the school, for example, I have to teach them whatever it was. But somewhere and so on, they have to learn drawing and so on, the related things. But then with -- instead of now, they go to a school four or five years. I mean, first four or five years, they could have learned more here than they could -- the expenses today is fantastic, right?

MR. BROWN: A great amount of money. Yeah.

MR. FRID: I think, for example, a lot of those conference, for example, in -- there's a lot of organizations popping up now in the United States where I think here they call it SAW, s-a-w, woodwork some association of woodwork or something like that. And they have, for example, two -- what do you call it --

MR. BROWN: Conference?

MR. FRID: Conference and so on. A lot of people come, all, for example, all of woodworkers. And then you have

main speeches and so on and then divide up in groups. And then they can rotate. For example, you're there for three days, four days, and they rotate, for example. I would have different groups coming in each day.

MR. BROWN: Oh, I see. Yeah.

MR. FRID: There's maybe five, six, seven, eight, ten different -- in groups.

MR. BROWN: They meet with several of you, and then they --

MR. FRID: So they could just walk around and go from one group to the other. But I think the most important thing is that all those woodworkers meet, and then they talk about money, the market, designs, and sometimes what will go on between the meetings is just as important as what is going on in the meeting. And they had [inaudible] -- they had a conference there.

MR. BROWN: Where was that?

MR. FRID: BYU.

MR. BROWN: Brigham Young.

MR. BROWN: Oh, Brigham Young in Utah, yes.

MR. FRID: Brigham Young in Utah. And --

MR. BROWN: Are these fairly useful then? At least in terms of woodworkers keeping in touch with each other?

MR. FRID: Yes. But see, then in Purchase, they had them two years in a row, and that's too close.

MR. BROWN: Too close together.

MR. FRID: Too close. I mean, there should be a bigger span -- two, three, four years between each one. I feel anyway.

MR. BROWN: Do you see much results from these things?

MR. FRID: Yeah. I think people go back with a lot of information and usually a lot of people, too, are trying to sell things. But then they have those discussions, and then they find out between themselves almost it's much easier to do it with this way and so on.

MR. BROWN: It's a fairly haphazard system, but it's better than nothing, isn't it?

MR. FRID: Yeah. I think it is pretty well organized and so on.

MR. BROWN: No, but I mean, in terms of trying to learn all the possible variations, to learn something, you say yourself, it's a fairly occasional and rather haphazard way simply so you can go to a conference.

MR. FRID: Yeah, well see --

MR. BROWN: As opposed to being among -- being able to talk regularly.

MR. FRID: Yeah, well, let's say for example, somebody's interested in Wendell Castle's philosophies, somebody's interested in mine. I mean, I have students who keep coming back to my class, right? And Wendell has students come back to -- same people, I mean, that's all coming back. Somebody interested, for example, in bending might join -- what's his name in Rochester -- Bill Kaiser's section. And someone's interested in finishing and --

MR. BROWN: Finishing?

MR. FRID: Yeah. Turning. I mean, that's -- like the turners have an organization that meets, I think, every year. But then usually you have different people coming in, too, each time. So -- but because of money, it's very difficult, for example, for people -- for the East Coast to get people from the West Coast because they can't afford it, the transportation and vice versa. But then there's a lot of big firms like Paxton, for example. For them, they can run a business, too, of course. But then they will invite me, for example, let's say to Tulsa.

MR. BROWN: To --

MR. FRID: Tulsa in -- Tulsa, that's west.

MR. BROWN: Oh, Tulsa in Oklahoma.

MR. FRID: Yeah. Tulsa, yeah. Pretty close.

MR. BROWN: So you were -- you went there, and --

MR. FRID: I went there, and then I was in the store, talked to people, signed books of course. And then I had to have a talk to 200, 300 people, slides, demonstrations, and so on. Then the next thing was Oklahoma City and the same thing again. And then Des Moines. And they paid for the whole thing for Emma and I and so on and so on.

MR. BROWN: So it's pretty useful then considering the great size of this country.

MR. FRID: Oh, no, because again, I may have been [inaudible] 200, 300 people in each section. So I reached, let's say, about 900 people that way.

MR. BROWN: Do a growing proportion of people go on then to study woodworking more? Are you finding that?

MR. FRID: Yeah. What --

MR. BROWN: A growing number of people?

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. Sure. But what I found, too, is the biggest group and thing like that is professionals, real doctors, lawyers.

MR. BROWN: But they're generally not going to go on as a career.

MR. FRID: No, no. But there is a lot of serious woodworkers, too. But I say even if there was 20,000 serious woodworkers in the United States, I don't think there's any more. But I'm sure there's space for many more.

MR. BROWN: Are you -- looking back, are you glad you came here to the United States?

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. Sure. Gee. I would be crying if I had to leave.

MR. BROWN: If you'd stayed in Europe, I mean, you --

MR. FRID: Well, see, I was hired by the government. As a matter of fact, I read in a newspaper I was the youngest one they ever hired permanent. It drove me nuts just thinking if I had to go through that same door in the same place for the rest of my life. I think I told you before it was in the hospital.

MR. BROWN: Oh, yes. I think you --

MR. FRID: I did and so on.

MR. BROWN: And that would have likely been what you would have -- where you might have ended up.

MR. FRID: Yeah, but then --

MR. BROWN: As a bureaucrat.

MR. FRID: Yeah. So then I just took a year's leave of absence, went to Iceland, and then I got married, and then we were going to go Greenland, to South Africa, and then that job came up here, so we came here.

MR. BROWN: There are far more options here than in Europe?

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. I think wherever you go, if you come in as a foreigner, see, like you were born here. You can't see the opportunities like, for example, I can see, right? And the same if you come to Denmark. They usually say you do better when you go to a different country. There's all those things. Your knowledge coming from here whatever you don't have there. So you usually you see foreigners usually make out pretty well. I mean, I can go to other places, but of course, I was lucky, too, that I just landed in the right place at the right time. I say that several times.

MR. BROWN: Yeah. That was a time of growth. They were ready for you, weren't they?

MR. FRID: Yeah. I mean, the School for American Craftsmen was the first one, right? There was really not other school.

MR. BROWN: It was a pretty remarkable place, wasn't it?

MR. FRID: Oh, yeah. Sure. I mean, with the -- in my second book, they will read about it. When I came to the woodshop, I asked if I could see the woodshop, and then they told me I was standing in it.

MR. BROWN: There wasn't much to it in other words.

MR. FRID: No.

MR. BROWN: You were to build it up there?

MR. FRID: I did, yeah. I would say I did.

MR. BROWN: And they were encouraging and --

MR. FRID: Yeah. So I've been very lucky and it was [inaudible] it's always been for the better. I mean --

[Interruption to audio.]

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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