Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with William Ivey, 1983 May 24-31

Funding for the digital preservation of this interview was provided by a grant from the Save America's Treasures Program of the National Park Service.

Contact Information
Reference Department
Archives of American Art
Smithsonian Institution
Washington. D.C. 20560
www.aaa.si.edu/askus

Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with William Ivey on May 24 and 31, 1983. The interview took place in Seattle, WA, and was conducted by Barbara Johns for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Interview

DATE: MAY 24, 1983
[Tape 1]

BARBARA JOHNS: Mr. Ivey, shall we start with your early life? We've discussed it a little bit. You were born in Seattle in 1919. How much do you want to say about your family? How long were they here? What sense of connection do you have?

WILLIAM IVEY: I'm a member of, I guess now, a fifth generation in Seattle.

BARBARA JOHNS: That's remarkable.

WILLIAM IVEY: My grandfather was here-- my great-grandfather was here.

BARBARA JOHNS: How did they come, from what part of the world?

WILLIAM IVEY: Maine. My maternal grandmother came from-- I guess she was born in Virginia and lived in Indiana after the Civil War and came out here.

BARBARA JOHNS: In what kind of business or trade was your family involved? What brought them here, do you have any idea?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah, I know. My great-grandfather came out before my grandfather, which is kind of surprising. He was a doctor. And in Maine his wife died; he felt rootless. He was about 50, you know, something like that. And he went to Michigan, for some reason. Remarried in Michigan, started another family and then came out here. He didn't start practicing medicine again; he went into the brokerage business or something like that, mortgage brokers. There's a company here in Seattle that I guess he started; the name's changed.

BARBARA JOHNS: Oh really.

WILLIAM IVEY: And then my grandfather, who was in medical school in Chicago, decided to come out here, too.

BARBARA JOHNS: And this was in the nineteenth century?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah.

BARBARA JOHNS: What years, do you know?

WILLIAM IVEY: I don't know. Early, long before the Seattle fire, I know that, whenever that was.

BARBARA JOHNS: And your family has stayed in medicine or brokerage, those kind of businesses?

WILLIAM IVEY: No. My grandfather got involved in. I think when he first came out here-- he was a very young man-- he went to work as a timber cruiser in the woods, got a little money. And then went into real estate, buying land and building buildings.

BARBARA JOHNS: In Seattle proper?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah.

BARBARA JOHNS: Was he involved in the Pioneer Square area or residential areas?

WILLIAM IVEY: I don't know. Capitol Hill, actually. He bought a lot of land on Capitol Hill and built houses or something like that, when it was still in the suburbs.

BARBARA JOHNS: Right. Those great big ones that are three stories?

WILLIAM IVEY: And some up on Queen Anne, mostly. I think actually what he first did-- I'm beginning to

remember the stories-- He had some money, but not a lot, and he went to the bank, probably to Dexter Horton, and borrowed money. Bought a team of horses and a wagon, and began to haul sand and gravel and things like that up to Queen Anne hill when they were starting to build houses. And apparently prospered at that, because then he started buying land and building houses, too. He bought more teams and more land. I think he went broke once or twice in the process.

BARBARA JOHNS: That seems, from what I know of my family, to have been common, those eras of boom and bust.

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. Boom and bust. And I think during the gold rush, things got good again. But he lived to be 104!

BARBARA JOHNS: He did! Did other members of your family have such longevity?

WILLIAM IVEY: No. He did; his father lived to be 90 or so. My grandmother did. The maternal side of my family, that is my maternal grandmother's side, did not live long. My own father died when he was very young, very early. And I don't know too much about him. I don't know anything about the longevity of his side of the family.

BARBARA JOHNS: This is your mother's or your father's family that you're describing?

WILLIAM IVEY: My mother's family.

BARBARA JOHNS: This is your mother's family. And, your father's family?

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, they're from the east. He was from South Carolina, and I don't. I've had calls occasionally from people in South Carolina that are curious and _____ pretty well. But I don't know much about them. I've only met an aunt. But none of them are here. I remember an aunt, that-- I don't know-- I suppose was coming out on a trip; I don't remember.

BARBARA JOHNS: Let's stop.

[Break in taping]

BARBARA JOHNS: Let's go back. You were talking about your father and your grandfather.

WILLIAM IVEY: Ok. Well, he died when I was very young so I barely remember him, and my grandfather really took the role of my father. But he was 60 when I was born! So I didn't... We always got along well, but I didn't pay much attention to, you know, his background or anything until I was considerably older and then he was a very old man. He became interesting to me by the time I was in college.

BARBARA JOHNS: He was alive at that time, still?

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh, he was alive until, good Lord, I guess he was born in 1860, and he was 104 when he died, so he died in 1964.

BARBARA JOHNS: A remarkable life.

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah.

BARBARA JOHNS: You mentioned one sister; what brothers and sisters do you have?

WILLIAM IVEY: One sister; that's all, one sister.

BARBARA JOHNS: You were younger, older?

WILLIAM IVEY: One year younger. She lives in California.

BARBARA JOHNS: Did you and she share? Were you comrades growing up or not?

WILLIAM IVEY: Not really.

BARBARA JOHNS: And how long has she been in California?

WILLIAM IVEY: I don't remember. It's been 20 odd years, or...

BARBARA JOHNS: You and your sister and mother, then, lived in a household with your grandfather?

WILLIAM IVEY: And my grandmother and an aunt, for some time an aunt, who was much younger than my

mother-- kind of like a much older sister, quite an age differential.

BARBARA JOHNS: This was on Capitol Hill? Where was your family home?

WILLIAM IVEY: On 16th and Galer. Just across from the museum [Seattle Art Museum--Ed.]

BARBARA JOHNS: Right, right. That was your grandfather's home as well as yours? I know that you have a very strong love of music. Was that in the household, or what were the ideas in the household, the influences that.

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh, it's hard to know about that, you know.

BARBARA JOHNS: Do you remember?

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh. There was always music. My grandmother's family had-- I don't know that much about them, so, bits and pieces, but she was the, I suppose, better educated, or more culturally educated, maybe that's what I should say, of my grandmother and grandfather. There were a lot of books, some pictures, some music. There was always... She played the piano. And there were records; but that early, records were something else at that time. I don't know whether they were. I can still remember windup phonographs. She had great-- she was blind.

BARBARA JOHNS: She was?

WILLIAM IVEY: She'd tell us stories, make-up stories, I'm sure. She read Braille, and she read a lot. My grandfather would read to her-- and this is kind of funny, because his idea of a good book would have been Zane Grey, but to her, she would select a book which might be something as kind of trivial as Sir Walter Scott or it might be Flaubert, it might be anything that happened to hit her mind, because the books were all there, really quite a large library of books.

BARBARA JOHNS: In Braille?

WILLIAM IVEY: No. No.

BARBARA JOHNS: These were ones your grandfather read.

WILLIAM IVEY: No, no. These weren't in Braille; she had her Braille books, but they were hard to get.

BARBARA JOHNS: I should think so.

WILLIAM IVEY: So he would read to her every night. And I listened.

BARBARA JOHNS: Storytelling is wonderful, like.

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. Because he was actually, he was telling her, he was reading them, but I think it was being told to me.

BARBARA JOHNS: This was a nightly occurrence?

WILLIAM IVEY: Pretty much, pretty much-- not that I listened every night, you know. On a summer night I certainly wasn't around listening to the reading. I was out playing. But I did listen and was fascinated.

BARBARA JOHNS: Had she been blind for many years, or was this?

WILLIAM IVEY: She went blind after her second child was born, so she was an adult; sometime after-- I guess it was just cataracts. I still don't really know. But at that time operations were real chancey and I think she was kind of a-- I think she was the first food freak, a natural cure sort of person, you know, that I ever came across, and kind of a-- I loved her very much; I realize now she was kind of nutty.

BARBARA JOHNS: (chuckles) Was she interested in theories? I know Roebbling, who worked on the Brooklyn Bridge, had his own theories of water therapy, and that was, of course was earlier, but I wonder if she was attached to a group or?

WILLIAM IVEY: She probably did. I don't know if she had her own, but I'm sure, because I've heard adults talking about it, you know. Anything that was nonestablished, she would have been apt to like.

BARBARA JOHNS: Was that an attitude that was pervasive in your household?

WILLIAM IVEY: No, no. She was the only one. Absolutely the...

BARBARA JOHNS: Not your grandfather, then?

WILLIAM IVEY: No. She was the first, the only vegetarian I thought ever existed. We weren't, but she was. See, now, he ate anything he ever wanted, he took no care of himself and lived forever, and she died when I was, I think, about the time when I was getting out of grade school. I might have been in high school. I can't really remember.

BARBARA JOHNS: And you continued living with your grandfather in that household?

WILLIAM IVEY: Uh huh.

BARBARA JOHNS: Any other ideas or, did you have a sense of direction, something that was expected of you?

WILLIAM IVEY: No, I was very _____.

BARBARA JOHNS: I asked that, thinking of later when you began law, and wondered if that was something you were interested in yourself, or if there was a direction your family expected you to go.

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh, it [law--Ed.] was interesting, and there were collateral members of the family that were in it. It was a thing I kind of did. The idea of that, I'd been familiar with all my life; and one obviously didn't make a living at art.

BARBARA JOHNS: You say one "obviously didn't"-- was that somewhat of a moral question at the time as well as practical?

WILLIAM IVEY: No. An economic question. In those days nobody did make a living at art. Even after World War II, I never thought of making a living at painting.

BARBARA JOHNS: Did you think, then, about being an artist before you entered law school? Was that on your mind as something?

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh, well, I was always painting and drawing.

BARBARA JOHNS: You were, as a child?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. I just knew that you had to have a way of making a living; it was a very practical thing. Turns out that although the law was interesting in theory, in practice it is terribly boring.

BARBARA JOHNS: From the dates you attended the University of Washington for four years. Did you?

WILLIAM IVEY: I think, no, I went in the army in my last year, so I never finished.

BARBARA JOHNS: And you went through law that far?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yes. See the fourth year of college at the university is the first year of law school. But I'd taken some courses earlier than that, you know, _____.

BARBARA JOHNS: Art course; or law courses?

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh, no, I mean I'd taken courses that would relate to law school. I didn't take any art at the university. I went to Cornish while I was going to the university, took classes there.

BARBARA JOHNS: Can we talk more about Cornish at the time? Who was?

WILLIAM IVEY: I don't think it had a hell of a lot of influence, really. No. There was a fellow named Walter Reese there who was certainly not stimulating, very _____ craft, that's about all.

BARBARA JOHNS: What kind of craft?

WILLIAM IVEY: Drawing. That's what I was taking. As I recall you'd draw a figure and you'd work on the drawing all week, and the next week you'd _____.

BARBARA JOHNS: Did you work in casts, or life drawing?

WILLIAM IVEY: No, from a model. But you'd work on that same charcoal drawing all week, and then you'd do another one the next week.

BARBARA JOHNS: Is draftsmanship important to you now?

WILLIAM IVEY: I'd have to think about it, but I probably, I have some skills.

BARBARA JOHNS: It's...

WILLIAM IVEY: It's easy, I'll say that. Kind of correct drawing is easy.

BARBARA JOHNS: I saw some of your figures in Bob Sarkis's notebook, figure work that I had never seen of yours.

WILLIAM IVEY: I'll be darned.

BARBARA JOHNS: Do you do that occasionally, or for fun?

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh, I do some doodling, and you know, whatever comes off, comes off, and your hand does it; your head's someplace else.

BARBARA JOHNS: I'd like to come back to that at some point, unless you'd like to talk about it now, your interest in figurative work, or...

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah.

BARBARA JOHNS: Much is made of Seattle at the end of the thirties and beginning of forties, at the time you were in law school and beginning Cornish, about Tobey and Graves and their influence...

WILLIAM IVEY: I had never heard...

BARBARA JOHNS: ...just before, so you had never heard anything?

WILLIAM IVEY: As far as I know, nothing.

BARBARA JOHNS: There was no one around Cornish; they weren't around Cornish or you weren't aware of their presence.

WILLIAM IVEY: Not anymore. By the time... See, I was only going there taking a drawing class, and I was spending my time at the university [district]. So I really wasn't part of the life of Cornish. And by that time, Tobey was no longer there. There had been a-- the place was pretty well riven by jealousies between the music department, the dance department, and the art department. I think it was, I didn't know then, but looking at it now, it had long since passed its peak-- the time when Tobey was there, when John Cage was there, when Merce Cunningham was there. But all those people had left. Steven Ballogh was the head of the music department; he was a very ambitious man to make it a music school. I think Reese was probably able to hold his own, but he just wasn't much of a stimulus. I mean politically he could hold his own, but he wasn't a very stimulating person.

BARBARA JOHNS: He was the head of Cornish at the time?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah, he was the head of the art part; now I don't know, maybe he was the head of Cornish. I just don't know. See, I knew so little about...

BARBARA JOHNS: So you would come evenings or during the day to take just one, you said you were taking drawing.

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah, I was taking a drawing class, and painting on my own.

BARBARA JOHNS: Did you learn about mixing paints, about how to work with paint there, or...

WILLIAM IVEY: No, I learned that on my own. I mean you could learn that _____.

BARBARA JOHNS: Were you working in oil paints?

WILLIAM IVEY: Some; watercolor mostly, but some oil.

BARBARA JOHNS: Did you have a place to work at home, then, some solitude?

WILLIAM IVEY: I had a room.

BARBARA JOHNS: Did you enjoy solitude as a child, or as a young person? Was that ever important, or something you considered?

WILLIAM IVEY: No, I'm very sociable, and I spent a certain amount of time alone, but not much. My friends are very important to me.

BARBARA JOHNS: Just a question, wondering if...

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, it's the same way now. People think of me as a recluse, or something like that. I'm not reclusive; I'm very sociable. It's just that just at the time I was born, I have friends who have nothing to do with art. I enjoy them. I've know them all my life. I don't hang around with artists, art, and that sort of thing. I have a certain amount of friends who are painters.

BARBARA JOHNS: My question had as much to do with your teaching yourself about paint media, and that that is...

WILLIAM IVEY: You know, everybody does that really. If you start young, color's very simple-- you know mixing color is the simplest thing in the world. There's just nothing to it; you can learn it in a few days; that is, learn the principles in a few days and then you practice them. So if you started young, you're bound to know that by the time you get to art school. They may have a lot to teach you about procedures, studio practice, being systematic, or information about primitives and things like that, which you might not have picked up, unless you were interested and would read about it.

BARBARA JOHNS: You mentioned studio procedures; how much do you think art school can teach about composition, formal structure?

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, they can teach that sort of thing to you.

BARBARA JOHNS: Are there things that you see art schools are successful at doing, others that they are not?

WILLIAM IVEY: It's been so long since I was in one that I don't really know what they do any more. I suspect they're much better at that kind of thing than they were some few years ago. I think they were very good earlier, and I think for a period-- this is a guess-- for a period of time, you know, the procedure business was looked on as something that got in the way of art activity. Then I think there was a time when they didn't, but looking at the skill of kids who come out of art school, I would suspect that they're awfully well taught on how to do it, in that way.

BARBARA JOHNS: Do you now, looking around the community, or from your own experience, have any sense about art schools such as Cornish or studying art in the university?

WILLIAM IVEY: I have some ideas that aren't based on much except prejudice.

BARBARA JOHNS: Yeah. What are those?

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, I think that art schools are, for a painter-- I think it'd be great to go to a university and not study art for a while, and get at least the basics of a liberal education. Learn something about literature, something about history, and so forth. Because it's apparently not given in high school, adequately. Then go to a real professional art school. Now, which one, I don't know, because I'm so far out of it. Where all you do is art. And there's nobody there who is simply a history major, a home economics major or something like who can only take an art class that is watered down in quality-- that takes the attention of the teacher, that sort of thing. Now my friends at the university disagree with that, but that's my idea.

BARBARA JOHNS: You might be interested: Dore Ashton was in town recently and was asked a similar kind of question.

WILLIAM IVEY: What did she say?

BARBARA JOHNS: Her response was the same as yours. She prefers to teach at Cooper Union. You mentioned earlier you didn't want to talk about the war years. Let's at this point skip to your going to another school, the California School of Fine Arts. Would you like to talk about your decision to go there, or whether it was just something, having come out of the war service, you were determined to...

WILLIAM IVEY: I did go back to school; just before the war I really decided that I was going go to art school. Then I got in the war, and...

BARBARA JOHNS: Art school other than Cornish, or...?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yes. But I didn't know where, and I... No decision apart from that had been made. The war came along and that obviously made a delay. Going to San Francisco was really quite capricious; it could have been any number of places. I had a million brochures and catalogues. I had been in New York, had just come from there, and didn't want to go back; otherwise I might have gone to the League. I thought about the Art Institute of Chicago, but I hate Chicago. I really don't like it. I don't know, but Chicago, I guess because the wind blows all the time or something, but anyway I just don't like Chicago, and I do like San Francisco; so I thought, I'll go to San Francisco. I didn't know any more about what was in the California School of Fine Arts than I did any other school _____. And I just lucked out, because...

BARBARA JOHNS: You were there at a time of some major changes...

WILLIAM IVEY: That's right. And they had some fine people and a director who was a great director, you know. He got the best people he could get around him.

BARBARA JOHNS: How long had he been in his position?

WILLIAM IVEY: About the same amount of time I had; about the time I came, I think. (chuckles) Not long. After the war.

BARBARA JOHNS: That's what I understood, and he came without a great deal of experience, as I understand?

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh yes. He was a young man, I don't...

BARBARA JOHNS: We should state whom we're talking about.

WILLIAM IVEY: Douglas MacAgy. And I don't think Douglas was really any older than I was, although he wore a mustache and tried to look older. He may have been a year or two older, but I think he was still in his twenties. And he got strong people, gave them their heads to teach properly, and was strong enough to keep them from destroying the institution, which really was quite a remarkable thing to do.

BARBARA JOHNS: It is.

WILLIAM IVEY: They were all guys who didn't necessarily like each other-- or, I shouldn't say that, because it wasn't that personal-- who had aesthetic differences which were so great but they didn't know each other.

BARBARA JOHNS: Was MacAgy from the east coast, or from the west coast?

WILLIAM IVEY: He was from Canada. Now where I don't know; east I think-- Toronto? The thought of Toronto sticks in my mind, but I don't know.

BARBARA JOHNS: And he brought Still from the east coast?

WILLIAM IVEY: He got Clyff... Well, first, before Still there was a sculptor named Robert Howard, who was quite good, quite an exciting sort of guy. Then David Park, who was a painter. Hassel Smith, who was a painter. A very young guy named Elmer Bischoff, who had just gotten out of the army also. And then Clyff Still, Mark Rothko, and Ad Reinhardt, and there were other people, too. But those were the strongest ones. And it was a very exciting place.

BARBARA JOHNS: Was Park from the east coast? I know he was.

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, originally, but he had been living in California.

BARBARA JOHNS: I always connected him with having grown up there many years.

WILLIAM IVEY: He's from Boston, the Hartford region, Hartford, actually, although he had visited once when he went to school. And I think that... They were kind of excited and exciting. The thing that was interesting was that they were all struggling with their own work. This was their primary focus. And they shared it with us. They didn't do an awful lot of teaching, and obviously we came second. Except they shared their concerns. They were in the business of just working things out themselves. It was pretty stimulating.

BARBARA JOHNS: A sense of problem solving, then, was an integral part of your learning?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah.

BARBARA JOHNS: Not your problems, but an artist's painting as a problem to be solved?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. Well, the big question really is, was then, "What do you paint?" Which is essentially the question, the only question, that's important. How to do it comes out of "What do you paint?"

BARBARA JOHNS: What concerns were being discussed then? I know what was happening in the Surrealist themes and abstraction in New York. How much of that was relevant to your experience?

WILLIAM IVEY: How much of that happened in New York, you mean? Then, at that time?

BARBARA JOHNS: That's pretty much of a history that's been recorded.

WILLIAM IVEY: I think the concerns were the same. Yes.

BARBARA JOHNS: You say, "What do you paint?" Can you describe that?

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, it's a great, it's very difficult because it comes down in a sense to-- let me back off. There was a proposal, in the forties. I think it was Still's idea originally but it was he and Rothko and Motherwell and I think Barney Newman, and maybe Gottlieb, I don't know. Proposed a school, which would be rather like a master's program would be in some art school, where serious and mature students would come and work and share their experiences, fight their problems out. The title of it was to be "Subjects of the Arts," "or Subjects of the Artist." Well, that's what I meant by what to paint, what is it you're trying to get down? I'm not talking about a realist or an abstractionist, or am I this or that. But "What is my form?"

BARBARA JOHNS: As an individual.?

WILLIAM IVEY: As an individual. To express that which I have to express, whatever that may mean. That's what I'm getting at. So the idea was that you thought out through the tradition, through your own experience, that which you painted, and that became your form, became your painting. We didn't talk a lot, mostly worked, but there was talk. But it's awfully hard to... In the first place I couldn't, it came out of conversation, and out of excitement, and I can't remember all the things that were said, you know. Paraphrases would be _____. Among the students was Frank Lobdell, Dick Diebenkorn, and a fellow named John Hultberg, who was an exciting guy, and John Grillo and myself, and a small group who saw each other all the time, 'cause we were very serious.

BARBARA JOHNS: What kind of work did you do when you came to the California School of Fine Arts? How did it evolve?

WILLIAM IVEY: You know, realist, kind of ash-can school, sort of thing.

BARBARA JOHNS: And most of you painted that way?

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, no. All differently. Frank Lobdell had studied at the Minneapolis Art Institute under-- God, I can't-- one of the finer American modernists, what the hell was his name? Cameron Booth. And no, he was obviously by then, well into Picasso, and into this sort of thing. Understood it well. John Hultberg had been a poet; he had never painted before. Diebenkorn, I'm not really sure; he seemed to be pretty familiar with the so-called modernist idiom.

BARBARA JOHNS: Yeah. Were you familiar with that?

WILLIAM IVEY: No, no, not at all. That was all new to me. Another close friend had really been in art history, so he was terribly familiar with everything that happened, really. He knew more than any of us about what had happened and got into painting. He didn't have the skills but he had great knowledge and this was kind of exciting, to talk about things.

BARBARA JOHNS: You mentioned that you were encouraged to explore the tradition; I gather you mean that of western painting.

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, Still, for example, in elementary classes, would have big reproductions of Cezanne or whoever, and analyze them. These are only triggers to get you going, to teach you some of the materials of-- I don't mean physical materials, but the stuff out of which art is made, the color, form, whatever-- to try and help you to find that to which you most strongly related; and figure that's where you're going to go from, be it Miro' or Cezanne or Michaelangelo.

[Tape 2]

WILLIAM IVEY: There was a teacher there named Clay Spone, who-- this is kind of surprising, because almost everybody I know that was at the school at that time, will mention his name as being perhaps the most exciting teacher they had. Yet he was kind of a failed painter. He had so many ideas that he spent more time thinking about things than he did actually painting. And most of his paintings don't amount to much, but his... He had ideas! They would just flow out of him. And he kept you confused all the time, because he'd have a different idea everyday. But that was probably good, because some of them stuck. The sense of art as an adventure, a mental adventure, was something he gave as much as anybody. And he was more open. Still was kind of magisterial. Rothko was kind of Buddha-like. But Clay was like a child, bubbling with ideas all the time. His skin was thinner than tissue paper. There was no defense. If you would oppose his idea, he was just deflated all day. Then he'd come back with another one. Kind of a wonderful guy. He became a drunk and I guess died in New York some years later. He didn't have any defenses against the world. He was always falling in love, unrequited, and you felt part of the time like you should protect him and other times, my God, he's _____, incredible.

BARBARA JOHNS: So there were, in these classes, many conversations among you students and teachers?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah, you [didn't--Ed.] learn anything directly in his classes, but indirectly you were stimulated to do things.

BARBARA JOHNS: Sounds as if this experience in school in San Francisco was a continual one of provoking the students.

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah.

BARBARA JOHNS: Both the problem solving, painting, and these ideas...

WILLIAM IVEY: And the fact that all these various teachers had absolutely diametrically opposed ideas, and were all propagating their ideas!

BARBARA JOHNS: Such as?

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, David Park would-- finally of course got back into realism again-- and was totally opposed to Still.

BARBARA JOHNS: Was he at that time?

WILLIAM IVEY: He was doing abstraction and then he began to shift. But his attitude toward art was entirely different. Not on just any particular painting-- I think he admired Clyff Still's painting-- but the whole paraphernalia of seriousness, the Messianic thing, which Still had, David thought ridiculous. He would ridicule him, openly! The artist as monk, the artist as a priest, this sort of thing. They made no bones about it-- there was no politeness. They hated each other, in a sense. Somebody like Hassel Smith, who was very outgoing, kind of a, I guess, passive _____ Communist. Opposed to all institutions-- probably an anarchist really, you know. [I'd, he'd] been a friend of David's, and then eventually came under the Still aura, and then back to the [department].

BARBARA JOHNS: And these were faculty members who were permanent or there year round?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah.

BARBARA JOHNS: Rothko and Reinhardt were summer faculty?

WILLIAM IVEY: Rothko and Reinhardt were summer, although Rothko was there two summers. So that made the elite.

BARBARA JOHNS: How much of this Messianic attitude, the classic abstract expressionist attitude as it was experienced in New York, came with Still? How much pervaded California?

WILLIAM IVEY: Still was never really an easterner, and he never really was a New York painter, although later on he did go there and stayed a while. His attitude was really quite different from people like Kline or DeKooning. They were much less rigorous than he and much less-- I've forgot what you call it...

BARBARA JOHNS: Moral?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. Well, in a sense. Only morality that had to do with painting.

BARBARA JOHNS: I was thinking in that context.

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. Kind of like a Baptist preacher, although I never really heard one, but I have an image of. He didn't converse real well; mostly they were monologues like I'm doing now, on and on and on and on. Once in a while he'd relax and open up to converse for a brief period of time, so there was an actual interchange. But mostly what passed for conversation was a monologue with seed lines tossed in by other people.

BARBARA JOHNS: What was his attitude, this morality or ethical stance about painting or what painting ought to be?

WILLIAM IVEY: I don't think he had... I think he had a strong feeling about freedom, I think this is what it was. The absolute integrity at doing your work, your best work, the product of your mind and hand and spirit, and... I don't disagree; it's just the way he put it was so kind of pompous.

BARBARA JOHNS: So it wasn't the manner, then, in which he communicated these ideas that made it effective? Was it an effective idea to you students?

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, yes, it was an effective idea; it was to me and it was to others, because it appealed to a kind of individualistic idealism. You do what you have to do; you don't make any concessions to pragmatism, to the

business of making a living. You do nothing that you don't believe in, you know-- and, yeah, that was appealing. I guess I still believe it. I don't want to put it in those terms, in the terms he did, with a kind of bring down the wrath of Jehovah on anybody who falls from grace. That's not my problem; that's theirs. And I'm not going to try to change other people. I think probably-- although he would deny it-- I think he probably did want [us] to change to his rigorous artistic morality. I think he was just a guy and he was quite unaware of a lot of his own motives.

BARBARA JOHNS: In these conversations that he would hold, did his attitude help you...?

WILLIAM IVEY: Conversations? (laughs)

BARBARA JOHNS: Well, monologues.

[Taping interrupted]

BARBARA JOHNS: Did they help to give you confidence that you could, in fact, make a living by painting or...

WILLIAM IVEY: No.

BARBARA JOHNS: ...Or that at least it was a pursuit no matter what.

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh no. None of us ever expected to make a living. He didn't; he wasn't making a living from painting. He was making a fair living from teaching. He was selling no paintings at all. And finally, shortly after, he withdrew from galleries entirely, because Betty Parsons-- this is pretty funny-- titled a painting of his _____. It was a painting which she called The Grail.

BARBARA JOHNS: He first showed with her in '47, as I remember.

WILLIAM IVEY: Around in there. But, when she titled a painting, he withdrew from galleries, and he wasn't in a gallery from then on.

BARBARA JOHNS: He was one of the early ones to leave paintings untitled, was he not? Does this relate to some sense of morality about the work or its integrity?

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, it's just that a title is irrelevant. And if something is irrelevant, then you don't do it. Titles are irrelevant to that kind of work. They don't describe any object.

BARBARA JOHNS: In his discussions of painting solely for one's needs, one's inner needs, without consideration for pragmatism, practicality, how much defiance was there in his attitude?

WILLIAM IVEY: A lot.

BARBARA JOHNS: You don't seem to have carried that away. I'm wondering what connections were made, what you discarded, or if that's a question of time...?

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, I'm as defiant as he was; I simply defied him-- to his face! He once said something to somebody in a kind of caustic way, and I remember telling him, "If you ever talk like that to me, I'll break your face." He thought that was wonderful. (slams table)

BARBARA JOHNS: (laughs)

WILLIAM IVEY: I was very young; I was 26, and I'd just come out of the war. I was pretty hostile. And I was not going to get involved in arguments with people. And if I didn't like something, I'd hit 'em.

BARBARA JOHNS: Literally?

WILLIAM IVEY: Literally. Yeah. I was not going to get engaged in the other guy's game; I was very good at handling myself, and certainly not very good to argue with, and it seemed silly to me to play the other guy's game.

BARBARA JOHNS: Even though you were in the midst of all these arguments among faculty members, did that extend to the students as well?

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh, I would argue, but when it got to a point of, beyond discussion, but when it would sometimes happen...

BARBARA JOHNS: But you said there was hatred among this faculty?

WILLIAM IVEY: ...it got to the point of insult; that's when I wouldn't take that. I didn't like arguing, but when you get into words, that kind of thing, I was not about to take it. As it turned out later on, Still said that he was scared to death of us, in a way. You see, the age difference wasn't that great, and here all of us had come back from the war; most of us had been in combat. And we had been through things he couldn't even imagine. We felt superior in most ways to the faculty.

BARBARA JOHNS: You and Diebenkorn and...?

WILLIAM IVEY: Lobdell, and... Most of the guys.

BARBARA JOHNS: Most of you were an older class, then?

WILLIAM IVEY: Most of the GIs. Yeah. And we knew we had been through a terrible experience that we could not share with these people, that they knew nothing about. So in that sense we felt superior to him; in other ways we didn't. So it was a funny kind of relationship.

BARBARA JOHNS: Are those war years part of what gave you your own sense of self and independence, that you didn't take insults?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. I never have.

BARBARA JOHNS: Were there other ideas? What was Rothko's teaching? What kind of experience was that for you or for other students?

WILLIAM IVEY: He almost didn't teach in the ordinary way. He'd look at your work individually, and talk with you, I suppose trying to find what you saw were your strengths-- really essentially what I've done in teaching, you know. And rather than being critical, try and find your strengths and help you to recognize them.

BARBARA JOHNS: Did he try to convey any of his sense of appropriate subject matter, or ...?

WILLIAM IVEY: No. Not at all. The only thing I can really remember... He was very good to me, and apparently, what I was doing at the time, he thought-- We used to have critiques, which of course I had never run across, rather early, where you'd all put up a work and we'd talk about each other's work. And that was a lot of his teaching. What I was doing at the time, he seemed to like, not that he thought the work was _____; it wasn't. But he thought _____ fashion. And it seemed to me that's what he looked for; I remember him saying, in general, "I don't know what your influences _____ , so I can only go from what I see." Then what he looked for was the attempt, at least, to make art a unique and transcendental experience.

BARBARA JOHNS: He was looking for that in his students?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. Well, he was looking for students who seemed to be after that. I don't think he expected to find it in students' work. He probably expected to find the desire for it. You don't expect to find much in students' work except desire.

BARBARA JOHNS: What was your work like at that time?

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, I had only recently started. Prior to that, you know, it had been realist work in art-- moved off into a kind of nature-based abstraction. I suppose the person who was influencing me most at the time was C.S. Price, the Oregon painter.

BARBARA JOHNS: Yes. Did you know him personally?

WILLIAM IVEY: No, I didn't. I'd seen paintings of his and there was some sense of a kind of spirit that I felt he seemed to be able to find form for.

BARBARA JOHNS: This would have been his work of the mid and late forties, the current work?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. The later work. Yeah. Relatively. He died in the fifties.

BARBARA JOHNS: Price's work is small easel scale. Was your work still [small] at the time?

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, it was still pretty small. I'd begun to expand, and Rothko talked me into doing a big paintings which was the first big one I had done, and it was, well, big, maybe 6 feet.

BARBARA JOHNS: Uh huh. Clyfford Still at the time, though, had already expanded his scale, had he not?

WILLIAM IVEY: Not very big, no. No, not really. You look at the catalogue numbers on those things, they're 72

inches by 36.

BARBARA JOHNS: Oh, I was thinking more 8 by 10 [feet--Ed.]. Not that scale yet.

WILLIAM IVEY: And there were a lot of small ones.

BARBARA JOHNS: How was your first attempt? You say Rothko induced you to attempt a big canvas. Was the experience different or...?

WILLIAM IVEY: I liked it, you know, I'm doing it.

BARBARA JOHNS: You must have.

WILLIAM IVEY: It was the kind of expansion _____ the rhythm was of the arm, rather than the hand. Yes. It wasn't a very good painting.

BARBARA JOHNS: You said they were nature-based abstractions.

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. They were rather specific drawings, you know.

BARBARA JOHNS: Did you draw on the site, or are they studio drawings or a combination?

WILLIAM IVEY: No, no. Outside drawings; they were little notes really or maybe some fairly complete drawings.

BARBARA JOHNS: Were they, as your work often seems to be now, the water, lights, and sky; do you have any recollection?

WILLIAM IVEY: No. Well, I guess I don't really know. That particular one wasn't much _____, kind of hills. But one time I was painting-- Oh, I was doing a watercolor, can't remember if I was doing a watercolor or a small oil, a kind of a study-- and I'd gone out to Lincoln Park in San Francisco and I was looking across at the Marin County hills, and I was making a painting, you know, kind of a semi-abstract thing, and I kept removing more, and more, and more, and what I realized was that really all I was interested in was a line of that-- there was a little bit of a surf. Across Marin County these white lines were going across like this, and the blue a slight _____, slight distance away, in the color of the hillside. I really wasn't interested in all the outside-- all the other stuff I'd put in. I kept erasing it, wiping it off. And I ended up with a very dark painting; it looked like a very bad Milton Avery; but that was kind of a first insight into maybe something...

BARBARA JOHNS: So this reductive process, then, was something you found very responsive yourself.

WILLIAM IVEY: Yes.

BARBARA JOHNS: Did Rothko or Still or anyone teach very active brushwork?

WILLIAM IVEY: They didn't teach anything like that, at all. Not a bit! Well, I think that would have been something they would not have been able to teach. David Park would teach a little.

BARBARA JOHNS: His work has always been quite brushy, has it not?

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh yeah. Elmer Bischoff calls it goopy.

BARBARA JOHNS: Goopy! And you said Bischoff was a very young member of the faculty?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. He was quite young. Not that much older than I.

[Break in taping]

BARBARA JOHNS: We were talking about Park and Bischoff. These people are known for the development of the Bay Area school. Did you have a sense of anything about this at the time?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. I never knew Elmer very well. He was never a teacher of mine. He was doing kind of a small surrealist, abstraction sort of thing that, I realize now, probably had something to do with early Rothkos. But David and I were pretty good friends and maintained the friendship for a long time. David at that time was painting big abstract paintings, abstract expressionist paintings. They were terrible too. He wasn't really at home with it and didn't do it very long. The first paintings I saw of his were really a kind of, well, they're a little close to Picasso in imagery. That kind of funny mixture of Picassoid drawing and American Indian symbolism-- symbolism shapes-- and some other kind of shapes. And in earth colors, kind of ingratiating earth colors, almost, really. Venetian reds or Indian reds and kind of ochres with a little bit of white in them, kind of...

BARBARA JOHNS: Taken fairly directly from the California landscape?

WILLIAM IVEY: I don't know where he got it; I guess it must have... It had-- you know, you thought of Mexican earths and these silhouetted images. I can remember one. There was at the bottom-- they were small-- at the bottom there was a hand. Just a symbolic hand, two or three fingers up like this. I remember some woman saying to him, "Were you thinking of the hand of God?" David, who had a marvelous sense of humor, said, "I was thinking of thumbing my nose." (laughs)

BARBARA JOHNS: Uh huh. (laughs)

WILLIAM IVEY: Neither one of which was true. I mean, he never took anything pompously. Wonderful, wonderful man. I really liked him a lot.

BARBARA JOHNS: Very much the opposite of Still, like you described?

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh yes. And David, you could argue and visit and...

BARBARA JOHNS: Was he one of the ones whose class was a problem-solving one, working on his own work?

WILLIAM IVEY: You just worked on your own work. Dave'd come around and he'd argue with you a little bit. "Why are you doing that? Why don't you do something else?" and "You really want to do that?" That sort of thing. But he didn't tell you what to do. I can remember once trying to pin he and Clay Spone down, together, looking for a little more discipline, a little more security, and neither one of them would give them to me. They didn't think they should.

BARBARA JOHNS: So you're out there alone, trying to find a way.

WILLIAM IVEY: You're out there alone. That's right. Art gives you an environment; it gives you some teachers to butt your ideas against, if you want. They essentially furnish an environment, some companionship, and you learn how to do it yourself. And I guess I believe that pretty much.

BARBARA JOHNS: The surrealist ideas you mentioned, Park's playing with a bit.

WILLIAM IVEY: No, Bischoff. Not Park.

BARBARA JOHNS: Oh, I misunderstood you.

WILLIAM IVEY: Bischoff. Well, it's a funny kind of... You know the early Rothkos?

BARBARA JOHNS: Yes I do.

WILLIAM IVEY: You know how linear they were in the drawing?

BARBARA JOHNS: Yes.

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, Bischoff had some of that quality, these funny little forms that seemed to be in motion, and so forth. They were in oil so they were right away _____ _____. Very thin oil, and kind of light, you know. It might even relate a little bit to Masson, or something like that.

BARBARA JOHNS: That was a question I had tried to reach earlier. Wondering if some of these ideas, the surrealist ideas, were present at the California School of Fine Arts, and if there was...

WILLIAM IVEY: _____ [bit].

BARBARA JOHNS: I gathered that. You said basically your work was provoked from many different directions; but the emphasis was to find your own form, rather than a particular attitude toward what painting ought to be.

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. I think surrealism had a very profound influence in-- That is, the surrealist method that is used in literature might very well have-- there might very well be a parallel; but not the surrealist painters, who tended to be, at that time seemed to be illustrating dreams and using a very conventional, almost...in Dali's case, almost a renaissance technique. The kind of thing that, well, Miro' was probably influenced by the surrealists, Cezanne, and, it allowed him to freely dispose things any way he wanted. I think that that aspect of surrealism which allows you to simply...

BARBARA JOHNS: The automatic aspect, then?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. Do what you felt like doing. It gave you license.

BARBARA JOHNS: Ah hah.

WILLIAM IVEY: But that's about as far as it went.

BARBARA JOHNS: But that was one, of its most important dimensions, I think.

WILLIAM IVEY: Um hmm. And I think it had a big influence.

BARBARA JOHNS: Most painters are influenced by...

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. I think it probably influenced Picasso that way, too. He had a brief flirtation with it. It gives you a kind of freedom, as long as you don't join up.

BARBARA JOHNS: With the doctrine, with the dogma.

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah.

BARBARA JOHNS: Uh huh. Let's go back to the sense of tradition or looking at painters from the past. You mentioned that Braque is one of your favorites. Is that something that you learned about in San Francisco?

WILLIAM IVEY: Nobody taught it to me. There was kind of a good Braque in San Francisco at the time. It was kind of an interest. From a personal sense, it was an interesting experience; I don't know whether it would be interesting to anybody else. But they used to have the San Francisco Annual, and it would occupy the main galleries. There was a little gallery on the end, which they didn't turn over; some of their permanent collection was there. And here was this kind of magisterial Braque; it was one of the still lifes-- a rather large one, not one of the best, but a good one.

BARBARA JOHNS: The thirties, or late twenties, or...

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh, it was before the war; I don't know.

BARBARA JOHNS: Not one of the very early ones?

WILLIAM IVEY: No. It wasn't one of the analytical cubist things, but it was probably one of the tables with things on it, you know. I was looking at this show, and I could see back there this very lean, simple, elegant painting, that I might not have paid much attention to had I not seen it in context with all these things. And somehow, it seemed like a great deal of hyperbole here [in the annual--Ed.], and this guy just said it. It meant something to me.

BARBARA JOHNS: He had eliminated all but the essential.

WILLIAM IVEY: I don't know; it was kind of a kind of personal discipline, and a kind of straight talk rather than... The ornamentations, if they were there, all added to the point. They weren't distracting. And the mastery, I think _____ ten years.

BARBARA JOHNS: And did this late work, in the show you [recently--Ed.] saw organized by the Phillips, strike you the same way?

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh yeah, most of the stuff. Oh, you know, he has his awkwardnesses and the things that annoy me, but he was a great painter. And he didn't stand still.

BARBARA JOHNS: You see him always pushing problems, then.

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, I have a little problem with the word "problems."

BARBARA JOHNS: All right. I thought it was one, actually, that you had used.

WILLIAM IVEY: I probably did, but when I hear it said back, I realize that it's...

BARBARA JOHNS: It's not appropriate.

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, because it implies technical problems, or compositional problems, for their own sake, for the game. And I don't mean it in that sense.

BARBARA JOHNS: I'm thinking more about what the painting's about. I've read of your saying, "The difficulty with painting, the difficulty of juxtaposing two colors, the..." My question, if by challenging...

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, the point of the painting is expression.

BARBARA JOHNS: ...and the point at which someone is challenged and tries to resolve that.

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah, well, that, you know. The point of the painting is expression. The problem comes in finding the means. But the important thing is expression. And so there are problems, but they're problems of finding the means for the expression. It's not a game play; it's not solving problems, crossword puzzles.

BARBARA JOHNS: I was trying to get at some expression, a certain edge at which you're pushing; difficulties. And it seems to me that you deal with the...

WILLIAM IVEY: The feeling. The expression of feeling, of intuition, and a sense of life, that's important. This is a difficult thing to do, and all sorts of problems a propos of that come about in the process of painting, and they have to be solved toward that end. Does that make any sense?

BARBARA JOHNS: Yes it does; yes. I mean... [loud siren goes by] Great tape! (laughs) City life. This... I lost my train of thought.

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, we were talking about Braque.

BARBARA JOHNS: Well, right. I'm interested in the way that you continually push issues, push the edge. What word shall I use to describe this? An expression for each painting, or... That's too vague.

WILLIAM IVEY: I always have the feeling, and I read something in Matisse once that said essentially the same thing. The painting exists in my head, and it's up to me to find it, to get it out. Almost as objectively as if I were painting a _____ as truthfully as I could. I know that may only be an illusion, but that's the feeling I have. So that it's a matter of trying to see it, clearly, maybe with my eyes closed.

BARBARA JOHNS: But your work is not psychological, even though it's deeply emotional, it doesn't...

WILLIAM IVEY: It isn't. It's basically-- I'm sure that whatever I have to do is influenced by the world around me a lot. The things I see, you know. My metaphor has to do with qualities, and I find the same quality out there as I...

[Tape 3]

BARBARA JOHNS: You've mentioned Braque. I've read that Bonnard is of interest to you. Are there other painters, other...

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. [whispered]

BARBARA JOHNS: ...painterly ideas that have intrigued you over the years?

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, I like painting; I mean, these are guys whose painting I like. I like some Stills wonderfully, some of them are really beautiful to this day. I still love to see some C. S. Price paintings. Some Matisses I think are marvelous, just marvelous. I'm not as personally interested in Picasso, although I've seen great Picassos, just that my personality doesn't merge with his, and these-- my god, there are just so many things. I love painting.

BARBARA JOHNS: Do you continue to go out and do sketches, like the sketch trips you talked about early in California, sketching on the site?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah, I make drawings.

BARBARA JOHNS: A continual renewal? Or new visual ideas?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. I probably do less drawing, though I go out a lot and look. I periodically do. But I just let things come in, and then try and put it on canvas, whatever _____.

BARBARA JOHNS: You mentioned lights and the environment around you; when you returned to Seattle-- 1948?

WILLIAM IVEY: Around in there someplace.

BARBARA JOHNS: Do you remember readjusting to the qualities of light or this environment?

WILLIAM IVEY: No. I'd gotten awfully tired of blue skies.

BARBARA JOHNS: Uh hah. (chuckles) What was your decision to leave California School of Arts?

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, I just really wanted some time to work on the ideas. I felt, I'd eaten an awful lot, and I had not digested it; I needed time. And that really wasn't the place for me to do it; there was too much _____, too much togetherness. I needed to get away and sort things out for myself. I think everybody does. And I needed to

make a living, and I knew it'd be much easier for me here because I knew so many people. So getting a job wouldn't be a problem. And I would have to do that.

BARBARA JOHNS: And did you come back here and work?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah.

BARBARA JOHNS: What kind of work?

WILLIAM IVEY: I did social work for 11, 12, 13 years. I painted at night and worked al day.

BARBARA JOHNS: For the county or the city?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. Uh huh.

BARBARA JOHNS: The city. Do you want to talk about that?

WILLIAM IVEY: No. It'd be irrelevant.

BARBARA JOHNS: For 11 or 12 years.

WILLIAM IVEY: Um hmm.

BARBARA JOHNS: After that point, did you paint full time?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yes.

BARBARA JOHNS: You said before that you never expected to earn a living as an artist. Then during those years of social work it became...

WILLIAM IVEY: I started to sell enough stuff, and I got a grant, and so forth-- one I didn't apply for, I didn't know how it was. It looked like-- I thought I might have to go back to work; I had some money, and I figured, well, hold on till that's gone, and then go back to work again. I didn't.

BARBARA JOHNS: I haven't seen work of yours from the early fifties, or seen it published; is the work around? Did you save much of that, or...

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh, I destroyed a lot of it.

BARBARA JOHNS: ...is it something that's behind you?

WILLIAM IVEY: Just a few friends have some. I have some.

BARBARA JOHNS: How much did you paint at nighttime?

WILLIAM IVEY: About six hours a day.

BARBARA JOHNS: That many. You're a strong person. Do you want to talk more about returning to Seattle? Did you have a sense of coming here to make a home?

WILLIAM IVEY: I never particularly had, you know, it was just a sort of doing it. I didn't know what the future was. Turned out, I stayed here. I still don't know if I'm here forever. That may very well be. But I don't have a sense of future. I don't really. And I don't look ahead, at all, beyond the next fishing trip. I don't look ahead at all beyond the next fishing trip.

BARBARA JOHNS: Did you have a chance to meet Price?

WILLIAM IVEY: I could have, but I didn't. I didn't. Somehow I thought... I almost did; I was going to Portland for some reason, and I was going to stop and see him at home. Really, honestly, what interest could he possibly have in talking to me? What do I do, run up and say, "I'm William Ivey; I'm a painter from Seattle." And then what? Poor man. No. I didn't do it. I regret it.

BARBARA JOHNS: People must have come up to you that way, don't they?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah.

BARBARA JOHNS: You came back to Seattle shortly after the war; did it feel like a war town?

WILLIAM IVEY: No.

BARBARA JOHNS: That experience was long enough behind that you didn't feel that resettlement kind of thing. And your sense of returning to this environment was just that it was something very familiar.

WILLIAM IVEY: It seemed pragmatically justified. I had a lot of friends here. I like it here.

BARBARA JOHNS: And your studio was near Elliott Bay at the time?

WILLIAM IVEY: No, my studio was home then, for a long time. No, I had a million different studios since, but when I first came back it was-- good lord-- when I first came back, I painted in the aparment, and then I had a garage I painted in. My wife was pregnant, and turpentine is an abortive, so I couldn't paint in the apartment. So I rented a garage, not far away, an unheated garage, and it turned out to be the coldest winter we'd had, and the snow was drifting under the door. And the paint was congealing. I had a little heater, one of those little electric things. God it was cold. And all the paintings I did were ice blue. (laughs) Really terrible.

BARBARA JOHNS: (laughs)

WILLIAM IVEY: Looked like the inside of an iceberg or something.

BARBARA JOHNS: Umm, it's understandable in that time.

WILLIAM IVEY: They were awful.

BARBARA JOHNS: Have you always had light incorporated into your work?

WILLIAM IVEY: As a matter of fact, I don't really even think about light; I think about color. People make reference to that; I don't think of it as light. Simply because-- well, I just don't; I can recognize a kind of luminosity sometimes and so forth, but I don't really think about it as light. Whatever comes in just comes. In order to get the color right, I suppose, to get a sense _____. No. At one time I worked far more, the areas are far more discreet, far less worked. I almost said more opaque, and that isn't true; it's true of paint now, but it was one color, I mean in...

BARBARA JOHNS: I think of the canvas as very rich, dense color, broken in just a few places perhaps. You mentioned your wife. Would you like to talk about your marriage?

WILLIAM IVEY: No. That's personal.

BARBARA JOHNS: Okay. Let's talk more about early years of an artist. Did you return to old friends? Some of them were artists, I assume.

WILLIAM IVEY: No. None of my old friends were artists around here. I knew nobody that was painting when I came back. The first person I met was Richard Gilkey. I saw a painting-- the first Bellevue Annual happened after I got back. I'd painted maybe-- I don't know what year it was, but maybe a couple of years went by before meeting Gilkey. And I saw a painting I liked, and so I looked him up. And at the same time, I met Leo Kenney, because nobody knew exactly where Richard lived, but they knew where Leo lived, and so I went and found Leo, and he took me over to Richard, so I met Leo and Richard the same day. We remained friends ever since.

BARBARA JOHNS: And you're good friends with Guy Anderson, I understand.

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. Well, yeah, I have great respect for him. I don't know him as well as I know Richard, but I know him well, and we visit occasionally and so forth, but not intimately. It's more purely a painter's relationship. Richard and I were kind of eehn [gestures--Ed.]. And Ward Corley and Jack Stangle, we kind of palled around together.

BARBARA JOHNS: Were there others making a living painting at the time?

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh, Gilkey nearly always, sort of made a living from paintings, but he was the only one.

BARBARA JOHNS: Well, a great deal was made of the so-called Northwest School. Did that idea dominate the circles at the time? Was there any sense of the idea?

WILLIAM IVEY: Not my tradition. I never could... If there was one, I was never included in it, so I'm not...

BARBARA JOHNS: I was thinking of it more under the domination of Tobey and Graves and some of those people are often included within that. Does it seem like a false idea?

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh God, I don't know.

BARBARA JOHNS: I don't want to make much of it.

WILLIAM IVEY: I just don't think it's very interesting.

BARBARA JOHNS: All right. But as far as circles, you were just friends, and that's how it moved.

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, we painted all very differently, but one thing-- and this was kind of good in a way-- there were so few painters you couldn't line up on aesthetic lines, or all do the same kind of thing. You'd be all alone; there weren't two people doing the same thing.

BARBARA JOHNS: Okay, that's more the question I was trying to reach.

You mentioned living near the Seattle Art Museum as a child, and visiting the San Francisco Museum, there. Did you frequent the museum?

WILLIAM IVEY: In Seattle?

BARBARA JOHNS: In Seattle.

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah, I played in it, sure. I can still remember an Indian piece of sculpture with a thousand arms, or a hundred arms, or five hundred arms, or something like that. I've forgotten the count, but I used to count them; It was just, it was part of my playground. Some things I loved; some things I didn't pay much attention to, don't remember very clearly.

BARBARA JOHNS: And what were the programs at the art museum when you returned, say in the fifties? Dr. Fuller played some role in helping to support, buying works of many of the artists, particularly Gilkey and Kenney. Did you perceive his participation as particularly active, particularly supportive, at that time?

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, I didn't ever ask him for anything, so...

BARBARA JOHNS: I wasn't meaning personally, I was meaning among friends.

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, you know, Dr. Fuller was... I have great liking for him, and kind of respect. He did what he saw as his duty, I think, for the city _____ _____. I could wish that he had done things differently, but nobody else was doing anything. We used to criticize him constantly in a way, but it was like criticizing members of the family... "You didn't need more European art; you need more Western art," and this sort of thing. But that was still recognizing that he was doing something. I'm sure in his case it was noblesse oblige. He didn't know that much about painting, probably didn't really care about painting, or sculpture, that much. He cared about the idea of it, but I don't think he coveted, loved the actual object very much. He'd inherited the job and he did it in kind of a noble way.

BARBARA JOHNS: Um hmm. Were any of your friends showing at the museum? There were annuals at the museum; did you exhibit at those?

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, we used to enter them; once in a while we'd get in; more often than not we'd get rejected. I think...

BARBARA JOHNS: Were those exhibitions respected in the community here?

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, yeah. It was a big thing in town. I kind of wish they had them still, not for me, but because a younger painter now has to have, to get any kind of showing, has to go through a one-man show, really, or sometimes a two- or three-man show. Too much pressure. They can't sustain it. It [the annual--Ed.] really made a kind of wonderful thing for a person to enter a work, or two or three, _____ want to get in, and their exposure was much slower. There wasn't the focus on them. The focus of a whole show is really more than most young painters can handle; it really is. The shows weren't often very interesting, and _____ in a sense. They were interesting to us, but I'm sure they weren't great shows. They were kind of carnivals, but I think that they served a function.

BARBARA JOHNS: There were quite a few purchase prizes from those exhibitions.

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah, but nobody ever really hoped to get one, and they didn't amount to that much anyway. It wasn't money as much as it was the cache', I suppose.

BARBARA JOHNS: Yeah. I wasn't thinking money, I was just thinking of-- your word is as good as any.

WILLIAM IVEY: And they got to see themselves, a painting. A young painter could see himself one painting against Tobey, or whatever. It was really not a bad idea. There were some years when, later on, I probably wouldn't have thought as much of it as I do now.

BARBARA JOHNS: There were many fewer artists in the community, so it was...

WILLIAM IVEY: There were many fewer artists.

BARBARA JOHNS: ...within practical limits.

WILLIAM IVEY: Yes, it's true. That's right. Although they used to do it in San Francisco, and San Francisco had as many artists as we have now. So I, it's still doable, if you have the space.

BARBARA JOHNS: Were there any other institutions or art occasions like the Northwest Annual that were particularly important?

WILLIAM IVEY: You know, the Henry Gallery used to have an invitational show which is really kind of good. But it depends wholly on who's doing the inviting. They were broad enough that they would invite enough different kinds of people, but there's always the problem of a clique trying to take over and limit the show.

BARBARA JOHNS: Were these invitational within the region, or were they national invitationals?

WILLIAM IVEY: Just Seattle, I think. It was just a Seattle, local Northwest invitational. I don't think it went to eastern Washington. Sometimes in quality it was the most exciting show because it wasn't juried. It was an invitational show. And so the painter would put in things that he thought were the best, which always-- often were.

BARBARA JOHNS: The juries were composed of painters?

WILLIAM IVEY: Um hmm. And sometimes there'd be some outrageous things. [unintelligible sentence] So just as a show, it was more exciting than the annual, but it wasn't as big; it was about a hundred painters. The annual had _____, or maybe it was like a [thousand?]. Things would occasionally get in that never would have gotten in an annual. I remember one year Jack Stangle put up a big, seven-foot self-portrait of a nude. It was terribly funny; it was awful, an awful painting, but it was terribly funny and it would have never gotten in an annual. And there was something kind of grand about it, at the same time; it was a grand failure. It was narcissistic and-- God, I don't know, it was-- I can still remember the dumb thing.

BARBARA JOHNS: Who else was active in the community at the time? Someone like Stangle that you knew.

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, Jake Elshin was painting; I didn't know him very well, but he was painting. Paul Horiuchi was painting. There were two or three older Japanese painters who were quite good painters, painting in cityscapes and those things, but really pretty good, Mr.-- I can't think of his name. And there was John Matsudaira, who was painting pretty well in those days, and _____ there was a woman named... She'd been a student of Tobey's and had really gone off kind of on her own, but I can't think of her name. She died, not old when she died. And Jim FitzGerald, Margaret Tomkins. Carl and Hilda Morris used to show in the annuals pretty much, and they showed up here, too; Carl had one-man shows at the museum. Ken Callahan. Morris [Graves--Ed.] was still showing a lot. Bill Cumming.

BARBARA JOHNS: When you founded the Artist's Gallery, with FitzGerald, Tomkins, was [Louis--Ed.] Bunce a member, and [Alden--Ed.] Mason?

WILLIAM IVEY: Alden Mason, Manuel Izquierdo started off to be, but...

BARBARA JOHNS: Why did you start that? Was there not a place to show, or what was your...?

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh, well. Truth?!

BARBARA JOHNS: Sure.

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, (laughs) one time, Jim and Margaret and I were at their studio and we were drinking. And got criticizing... Zoe had the only gallery in town, Zoe Dusanne was the only gallery. Maybe Otto [Seligman--Ed.]. I'm not sure whether Otto was around; he must have been.

BARBARA JOHNS: I think he began about 1955.

WILLIAM IVEY: So there were... Okay. Two galleries. And they both, people paid to have shows and there was all this stuff.

BARBARA JOHNS: Was that standard practice in other cities as well?

WILLIAM IVEY: I don't know for sure. And so I said-- I think I'd had too many-- "We ought to start a gallery of our own and show 'em how it really should be done. If we ran for a year, we could drop it, and somebody'd pick it up." And I should never say, no one should ever say anything like that to Margaret, because she was an activist. I could say it, and drop it, and never think about it again. But God! She picked it up and ran with it! First thing we knew we were in a gallery.

BARBARA JOHNS: And so she she really put it together?

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, she just didn't quit! Yeah, you know. Instead of just playing around with it, she believed in being active, by God, and she started looking at spaces. First thing we were drawing up plans, a specific plan.

BARBARA JOHNS: This was on Olive Way, I understand?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah.

BARBARA JOHNS: It was behind the theater?

WILLIAM IVEY: No, no. Do you know where the, I think it's a kind of design center there now? It's just below Broad... One block, north of Broadway? Somehow I... There's a building that used to be owned by Marge Seigel and her husband and had an interior decorator up above, and there was this parking lot, and an area down below with windows out, and we were in there.

BARBARA JOHNS: What was the program of the gallery? Did you have a program? You obviously didn't have to pay to exhibit.

WILLIAM IVEY: We planned to have good shows...

BARBARA JOHNS: Of your own work or others' work?

WILLIAM IVEY: Others', too. And show how a gallery should be run.

BARBARA JOHNS: And what actually happened to that program?

WILLIAM IVEY: It worked fine. What we did was we each donated six small works, and we sold sponsorships for $50 apiece. And the sponsors could take a work of their choice; that's the way we got our money to start with. And it really worked. See, there were six of us then, six of us, so we had $3,600. And...

BARBARA JOHNS: You sold out?

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh, yeah. We had no problem doing that. And particularly with Margaret going around putting the arm on everybody. Anyway, we could _____ our $3,600 bucks. I don't remember what we paid. We hired a girl who worked there; originally, we were going to do it all, but we ended up having a woman. We'd work on the weekends, because we didn't want to run a gallery. And we ran for a year. We sold very little; we sold a few things. I think Marge Siegel and-- I can't remember her husband's name; they were wonderful landlords-- I think on a couple of occasions they took paintings for rent. And we'd said we'd run for a year, and we did. And we closed up at the end of the year. There was some argument about that, but I didn't want to continue.

BARBARA JOHNS: Oh, so that was a specific goal or yours, to begin with.

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. Mine.

BARBARA JOHNS: Well, you mentioned it, but I thought it was a figurative expression.

WILLIAM IVEY: No, no. No. Because I really wasn't that... I didn't want to spend my life being in a gallery.

BARBARA JOHNS: Did anyone pick up the idea?

WILLIAM IVEY: Galleries started opening all over the place right after that. That's when the big surge of galleries came, right after we closed up.

BARBARA JOHNS: And artists no longer had to pay to exhibit?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yes.

BARBARA JOHNS: When artists had to pay to exhibit in galleries, was it very political? Even if one were willing to pay?

WILLIAM IVEY: I don't know. I have no idea.

BARBARA JOHNS: Did you show in any galleries in Seattle?

WILLIAM IVEY: No. No. And simply wasn't even interested. I never have liked to show. And...

BARBARA JOHNS: Gordon Woodside opened his gallery shortly, a year or two after.

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. You have done your homework. You know the history better than, dates better than I do.

BARBARA JOHNS: Well, I've got to have some landmarks to keep us going.

WILLIAM IVEY: David Hall-Coleman had opened a gallery, and...

BARBARA JOHNS: That one I don't know.

WILLIAM IVEY: I think he started off in McBreen's decorating store for many _____.

BARBARA JOHNS: On Capitol Hill as well?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. And then Don Scott opened a gallery. Gene Zema opened a gallery.

BARBARA JOHNS: A couple of these were on Capitol Hill. Was that more or less the center of the art community then?

WILLIAM IVEY: That seemed to be... Everything was on Capitol Hill, except for Otto [Seligman--Ed.]. Otto was out in the [University--Ed.] district. Yeah. Everything started up on Capitol Hill. I don't know whether there was any necessary connection; I really don't. It may have only been the times, but I think that.

BARBARA JOHNS: And you decided to show with Gordon Woodside, soon after he opened?

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh, I don't know. He came down to the studio; he kept coming down. And I said no. And then finally said yes.

BARBARA JOHNS: Just to have it done with?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah, I'd never really-- you know, the business of having a gallery and shows is not a very big interest to me. I do it now, about two or three years. I don't enjoy it.

BARBARA JOHNS: As galleries were beginning, how did they select artists, or how did they...

WILLIAM IVEY: I have no idea!

BARBARA JOHNS: ...induce artists like you to participate?

WILLIAM IVEY: I don't know. They just came down to the studio, and seemed interested, and... See at that time, I still was figuring, "I've got a little time, and a little money," and I was painting, and I'd go back to work. I was perfectly content to do that.

BARBARA JOHNS: Right.

WILLIAM IVEY: So that's why I wasn't very interested in showing. This whole business of the Artist's Gallery was something I said in a moment of capriciousness and got caught with.

BARBARA JOHNS: Well, you mentioned you worked on weekends during the gallery-- I'd like to go back there just for a minute. Were all of you fairly active in the gallery or did Margaret continue to carry it?

WILLIAM IVEY: No, we all did it. No, no. We all worked, did all the scutt work-- hang shows, and wax the floors, and...

BARBARA JOHNS: And with Bunce and with Izquierdo participants, was there a greater sense of community with Portland when the towns were smaller and there were fewer artists?

WILLIAM IVEY: I think Louie and Jim kind of knew each other for a long time. And liked each other. I knew Louis only slightly, not very much.

BARBARA JOHNS: But would they travel up to work on weekends and participate in the gallery, or...?

WILLIAM IVEY: No, they didn't. Margaret, Jim, Alden and I did all of that. It was impossible for them to make the drive, you know.

BARBARA JOHNS: Just the four of you carried on. Well, it seems like a large task.

WILLIAM IVEY: We did that. No; they'd come up for openings. Manuel didn't; he kind of dropped out totally, you know, never showed. We had some good shows, too. Had...

BARBARA JOHNS: What kind?

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, we had, of course, our own; then Frank Okada, Willard Parker, Bill Mair, and another fella-- I can't think of his name-- had his first show there. It was a fairly good-sized gallery. Then Lee Kelly had his first show there. Let's see; what else? Then we had a show, a mixed show of people that _____, Gilkey, oh, a whole bunch of people.

BARBARA JOHNS: How did you decide? Was there any difficulty in deciding among the four of you what to do?

WILLIAM IVEY: Jim and I had a big fight one time.

BARBARA JOHNS: Ah hah. Do you want to talk more about that process?

WILLIAM IVEY: No. (laughs)

BARBARA JOHNS: I don't mean that fight, I mean the process of deciding.

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh, I can't remember that well. I just remember that usually, "Well, dammit, if you won't include him, I'm out."

BARBARA JOHNS: Oh. Straightforward.

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. "I'll take my marbles and go home."

BARBARA JOHNS: Yeah. You remained friends with Margaret and Jim after that? Were you on Capitol Hill still at the time?

WILLIAM IVEY: No. Queen Anne.

BARBARA JOHNS: You did some teaching during the fifties, is that right? Did you do some private teaching or...?

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh, I used to teach. One night a week, I had a class in my studio, in order to pay the rent.

BARBARA JOHNS: Um hmm. Many students, or one or two?

WILLIAM IVEY: No, no. About six.

BARBARA JOHNS: In a session?

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, yes. I only had one class, one session.

BARBARA JOHNS: I see, just once you tried it. Who were your students?

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, let's see. Merle Martinson, who shows now and then. A fellow named Jerry Pruitt [now in Texas--Ed.], guy named Roy Schmaltz, who's down at St. Mary's, Santa Clara-- I don't remember-- the art department; he's there now. A woman named Joyce Siemon, who's gone back home to England. Oh, goodness, there were quite a number.

BARBARA JOHNS: Do you enjoy teaching? [WILLIAM IVEY shook his head in the negative--BARBARA JOHNS] No, I wondered; you haven't done it but that once.

WILLIAM IVEY: I enjoy it for a brief period, but you always have to teach longer than you enjoy it. I enjoy the first class.

BARBARA JOHNS: A great deal of giving out of yourself, draining?

WILLIAM IVEY: I'd try to-- if I explained it the way Rothko does it-- and I find that very congenial for me, because I don't want to teach somebody by saying, "Paint like I do," or this or that-- to try and find whatever I can see as their strengths and help them to develop that. It was part of a funny kind of passivity; you have to enter into their world. And this makes it very difficult, to find yourself again. It's allright if you do it once a week, but I have

done it at the Art Institute, say in the summer, three days a week, or something like that, and I found it was very hard to work.

[Tape 4]

BARBARA JOHNS: I'd like to pick up some details of our last interview. You told us a lot about the family history in early Seattle; would you tell us some of those family names, particularly on your mother's side.

WILLIAM IVEY: My mother's maiden name was Waterhouse, and her mother's maiden name was Gilliland, and my great grandmother's maiden name would have been Campbell. And that's all. On my maternal grandfather's side, it was Waterhouse, of course, and then, I think Compton, and then I'm lost. I don't know.

BARBARA JOHNS: All right, thanks. That would help someone who wanted to trace these stories someday. Another question I'd like to ask is about your wife. I know that you don't want to talk about the marriage and personal partnership, but would you like to just tell us her name, perhaps, and that kind of thing?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. Her name was Helen Taylor.

BARBARA JOHNS: Would you tell us if she was from Seattle; was she an art student?

WILLIAM IVEY: She was from California. She was an art student once, many, many years ago. We had one child, a daughter.

BARBARA JOHNS: Thank you.It's interesting to hear what you have to say about other people who may have been active earlier that we don't hear so much about now.

WILLIAM IVEY: Jacob Elshin.

BARBARA JOHNS: You mentioned him, right. He was Russian and studied in Russia.

WILLIAM IVEY: I don't know when he came. I have no idea; it seems to me I'd heard of him about as long as I can remember. He was here...

BARBARA JOHNS: How much did he bring of, say, a European sense of art?

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh, I think Jake's... Probably his tradition was that of Cezanne. And he could do a pretty good Cezanne-ish painting. (chuckles) He did that mural out in the University post office. I think it's a portrait of Cezanne there, isn't it? I think there is. I think that was what he really lived; he did other things later. He kept up, but I think his heart was there.

BARBARA JOHNS: He did a lot of religious work, also.

WILLIAM IVEY: He did some icon-like stuff. But that was much later. I don't know anything about his Russian background. I don't know how old he was when he came; and I think he belonged to the Russian Orthodox Church, though, at least for a while, or had some relationship with it. And maybe the icon thing grew out of that. But he was not young when he did those; he was, I would guess in his sixties, before he started doing the icons. At least I'd never seen them before. He was kind of a pro, you know. He was well schooled.

There was a story once; I don't know whether it's even true. But he'd been rejected for a lot of annuals for doing what he did, whatever that was at the time, he was painting. And so one year he did a big kind of Cezanne-esque landscape and sent it in with another name, won a prize, or something like that. I don't know if it's a true story. I know the painting was there, I know it was under another name. But all the collateral stuff, I'm not sure about. And it was not a bad painting.

BARBARA JOHNS: It was an annual at the art museum?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yes.

BARBARA JOHNS: If it was a prize, then it would be...

WILLIAM IVEY: Might have been. They weren't all purchased, but I remember the painting, and I remember that there was Jacobs in the name, the attribution was a different man.

BARBARA JOHNS: Do you remember about when that was?

WILLIAM IVEY: Hmm. My guess would be early fifties, around in there sometime. It might have been in the... Yeah, I'm sure it was in the fifties.

BARBARA JOHNS: Um hmm. You mentioned that he was a real pro.

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, I think he was well schooled and he turned his hand to a lot of things. I think he could do most anything people wanted, on a commission or something like that, stylistically. You know, if one said, "Mr. Elshin, I would like an impressionist landscape of certain dimensions," he'd paint one. Or it could be an abstraction or cubist or whatever, and I think he was perfectly capable, technically, of doing it, and I think he was willing to. But that's what I meant by professional.

BARBARA JOHNS: Um hmm. It seems to me when the Camffermans, say, came earlier to Seattle, or the Pattersons, that they brought with them also European training and a sense of the tradition and professionalism of an artist.

WILLIAM IVEY: I never knew the Camffermans at all. I remember the paintings, sort of; I didn't know Patterson. I knew Isaacs a little bit.

BARBARA JOHNS: How much of that sense of professionalism of an artist was in the community at that time?

WILLIAM IVEY: I think he [Elshin--Ed.] was much more professional, more accomplished, more skillful and more competent than the Camffermans were. You know, their work had a kind of home-grown quality, I always thought, compared to his. He could turn out a very professional job that would look respectable anyplace, not just here.

BARBARA JOHNS: Were there were other people who carried this sense of professionalism?

WILLIAM IVEY: I don't think there were that many, no.

BARBARA JOHNS: What about Isaacs?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah, I think Isaacs, but it's hard to tell with Isaacs, because he was much less... If Isaacs painted what he felt, and what he believed in painting. I don't think he was the kind of a journeyman artist in the sense that he would paint you this or paint you that or paint you something else, that Jake was. That's my impresssion. Isaacs was far more, oh, dedicated to his own peculiar vision, and that's all he was interested in. I mean that's all he was interested in doing. Am I making that clear?

BARBARA JOHNS: I think so, right. You mentioned earlier, when we were talking about the forties or earlier, there weren't great collections of art to be seen in Seattle. And when you returned to Seattle in '48, there were some artists around but there wasn't a great community. I'm trying to find out: Where are the resources? Where do you go for visual images, for a sense of [art history] or a sense of professionalism?

WILLIAM IVEY: I think probably my generation, more than others that preceeded us, had been-- again, with the exception of Isaacs, who'd studied in France, and Patterson, who came from elsewhere and had been in France, and probably Jake, I don't know what all his background is-- That most of them hadn't ever really been any place to study and look at paintings and... By the time my generation came along, it was rather easy to go from here to New York, or from here to San Francisco. It was just get the money, get on a plane, and go.

BARBARA JOHNS: And you're talking about easy to travel, not easy to see_____.

WILLIAM IVEY: Easy to travel to look at art! And I think an awful lot of people who were probably quite talented never had a chance to set standards for themselves which came from looking at great art. It was easy, again, if you had the money. Most of us got to Europe. During the war, I was in Europe and saw an awful lot of things. And it, of course, was marvelous. And there's a sense of the kind of quality for which you strive that is set by looking at a Rembrandt or Goya or Vermeer or Picasso or Piero [della Francesca--Ed.] or whoever! And I think, before the war, my own standards would have been much more provincial, but having had a chance to see an awful lot of things, it was just mindboggling.

BARBARA JOHNS: What things in particular? Where were you?

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, I was in Italy. I was in Africa and I saw some Moorish stuff, which was pretty impressive. But then I was in Italy and I was in France. And, you know, I'd seen reproductions of the Michaelangelo ceiling, but to really see it! And to see Giotto, who was only a name to me. And to see even some of the Neapolitan-- I spent a lot of time around Naples-- some of the Neapolitan baroque things, and the school of Carravaggio. And some Carravaggio, although most of that stuff was locked away. But the school of Carravaggio, where there was a high degree of skill; they simply weren't as creative as he was. There were some pretty impressive things, that I had not seen! Not in that number. I'd seen some very good Asian stuff, all my life.

BARBARA JOHNS: At the Seattle Art Museum?

WILLIAM IVEY: At the Seattle Art Museum. There weren't a lot of awfully good paintings, but there were some. They were really very good, and then...

BARBARA JOHNS: What period, or what...?

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh goodness; I'm not good enough about periods to know.

BARBARA JOHNS: Well, I mean what kind of reference are you making?

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, they got those big, I think Southern Sung, maybe Northern Sung, dynasty scrolls.

BARBARA JOHNS: So you're talking about Asian paintings?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. Asian painting. And, oh, a few small Chinese paintings. Not much Japanese painting at that time, mostly Chinese. And those were impressive to me, and I suspect that they were the first real paintings, real good paintings that I had ever seen. It doesn't take that many to give you an idea that there are some possibilities in art that one hadn't realized.

And then to see these things in Europe. And, oh goodness, I can't remember all of the stuff, because I've been back since, and get confused about what I saw when. But, I think that was not an opportunity for people living, say, out in the Northwest or in southern California at that time. Both cultures tended to be pretty provincial. San Francisco a bit less so, simply because they had better museums. L.A. didn't have any good museum until much later. San Francisco did have the Legion of Honor and it did have the DeYoung, which had, you could see a good Greco, you could see good examples of a lot of things. I think that's important.

BARBARA JOHNS: You mentioned Piero della Francesca. Were you in a small towns in Italy?

WILLIAM IVEY: I think I saw two paintings in Rome, and that's not where he worked, but in Rome. Two Pieros. Not real big.

BARBARA JOHNS: There are not many of them.

WILLIAM IVEY: I know. And that's it; it's such precision, elegance, cool fashion.

BARBARA JOHNS: I got lost in Europe! We were talking about developing a sense of vision and professionalism, looking for other examples of it, in specific.

WILLIAM IVEY: I wouldn't use the term professional, only because I think it's an irrelevant term. I use it with regard to Jacob Elshin, simply because I think he thought of himself that way.

BARBARA JOHNS: You said Leo Kenney and Richard Gilkey were the first artists you met when you returned here, and Gilkey was selling some work at the time. How had he gotten established?

WILLIAM IVEY: I don't know. I know that Richard always managed; somehow he didn't ever work at a job like some of us did. He always managed to survive. So, there were a few people, I guess-- a little later I know it's true-- but a few people who liked what he was doing and would buy something, and he lived pretty marginally. But he did manage to survive and buy his materials.

BARBARA JOHNS: What kind of work was he doing when you first saw him?

WILLIAM IVEY: The first painting I ever saw was a painting that was probably pretty strongly influenced by Guy Anderson's work at that time. And there's a painting in the museum that Guy did called Sharp Sea, and I think that what Richard was doing then probably-- he was quite young-- was influenced by that. And then, goodness, no, I can't remember the chronology of Gilkey.

BARBARA JOHNS: Well, I wondered what about it appealed to you.

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh, simply that it was just done with a kind of authority, and it was convincing in some way. It seemed head and shoulders in quality above everything else I was looking at. He sort of knew what he wanted to do-- and did it, which was kind of rare. And there was something-- it wasn't just a rehash, either, even though it was influenced by Guy; it wasn't an Anderson. And the imagery was one I found interesting and it was new to me.

BARBARA JOHNS: Your and his work, and Kenney's as well, seems very different. Did you-- you apparently became good friends-- did you discuss these concerns?

WILLIAM IVEY: We talked about them, but none of our work seemed to take from each other much. We talked

about these things all the time. Richard's a wonderful person to talk painting with. He's got a fine eye for all sorts of things that he's not much concerned with.

BARBARA JOHNS: Do you want to elaborate?

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, I don't know that I could, exactly. Well, for example, he's obviously uninterested in color, at the moment anyway, and for several years. And yet he's very perceptive in talking about color in front of a specific painting, or about a particular person's work. And why he doesn't use it is an issue you'd have to take up with him; I don't know. But he has a real appreciation for it; I can remember he was excited by some Velazquez he'd seen. I later saw some of the same paintings. And he managed to communicate verbally, a very clear image of these paintings. He saw them as really _____. I learned a lot from him. Not about how to paint, but about the process and about art and looking. He was very generous.

BARBARA JOHNS: So he was more than friend or companion, he was someone you learned from, or did you learn from one another?

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, sure, you'd have to ask him whatever he learned from me, I don't know. (chuckles)

BARBARA JOHNS: Okay. I don't want to push it. And Kenney shared in these conversations, or was that a separate friendship?

WILLIAM IVEY: No, Leo wasn't here very long. I'd met Leo, and I didn't meet him again, really for years. He went to California and he was living in the Bay area for a long, long time. Goodness, it must have been, I guess, late sixties, maybe, when he came back. So I just met him at that time, and probably saw him a couple of times. We were never... Gilkey and I got to be fairly good friends, and Leo and I were acquaintances, we liked each other.

BARBARA JOHNS: Another thread, we were talking about opportunity to travel from here. Some did travel a lot; Tobey went back and forth to New York and also to Europe. What did that bring to the community, or to your work? Were you aware...?

WILLIAM IVEY: I don't know, because I never knew Tobey that well; certainly during that time I didn't. I got to know him a bit later on. Oh, I may talked to him a dozen times, and only once or twice over a long extended period of time, like all evening.

BARBARA JOHNS: I was going to ask if you meant over social occasions or had an opportunity to really explore some ideas.

WILLIAM IVEY: He was always good to me, and he talked well of what I was doing, he seemed to be interested, but I never cultivated him or anything like that. When I'd run into him, he was always very friendly. Then he was a close friend of Carl and Hilda Morris, who were friends of mine, and I guess two occasions, ran into him there. But the last time, one of the last times he came back from Switzerland, and that was a long evening and it was very pleasant and we did a lot of talking. But, you know, that wasn't that many years ago. I admired his work a lot; I think probably I, I probably got something from him, you know. It's a little hard to pin down, nothing that's definite, but the sense of the-- probably more than anybody else, simply because I saw his work more-- the sense of the whole painting being painted. What he could do...

BARBARA JOHNS: Meaning?

WILLIAM IVEY: The whole painting being given a kind of equal attention. It isn't necessary; you can make great paintings without doing this, but I did respond to the fact that these things were so all of a piece and there were no dead spots. It was years before I realized that it's a quality that I liked about things; the magic was maintained throughout the whole painting. (chuckles)

BARBARA JOHNS: And that's an idea that a lot of people in New York were exploring as well; do you have any sense of that as an idea that was current?

WILLIAM IVEY: I just think of that because I saw the Tobeys more often and probably that's where... It was not a concern, say, of the people that I knew best. It wasn't a concern of Still, for example, at all. He would put down that kind of concern, "You want to get that image down, and get it down." Reduced any preciousness or whatever, what he would consider preciousness, and would have been more the whole concept to start with rather than fiddling around with things, you know. There's relatively little color modulation or color change, you know, that sort of thing. Tobey could take a painting that was almost monochromatic, and yet give variations, that kind of pinky grey, bring it out here, and swell out, and so forth, and in a way that Morandi can, you know, that kind of thing, that's what I meant.

BARBARA JOHNS: Is there anyone else that you talked to or got to know well? You mentioned the Morrises.

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, that was much later. Bob Colescott and I became quite good friends, and still are, although he lives in California and I don't see him very often.

BARBARA JOHNS: This was when he lived in Portland?

WILLIAM IVEY: He lived in Seattle. This would have been in the early fifties, I suppose, no late, excuse me. It would have been in the fifties, mid fifties. He taught school here, in the public school system for some years. And I met him-- he called me one time. He'd come up from Oakland, for something, and he was putting together a show from New York, or some place, I don't remember where, and would I be interested, and I said sure, so he was doing it all. And I don't even recall who all was in it, and I don't remember anything about what kind of reception it got, or whatever. And I think it was probably someplace like the YMHA [Young Men's Hebrew Association, New York--Ed.] And anyway I met him there, and we got to be quite friendly and he moved, about that time, to within a half a mile or so. So we saw each other a lot then. We were both working days and painting nights, and he'd come in, around midnight some times, you know, and sit in the studio and talk for a couple of hours or I'd do the same. So I saw him a lot and then he moved to Portland and still we went down to Portland fairly frequently, and they came up. So there was a lot of that. Then he went to Europe for quite a while and was in California _____ and _____. It just kind of petered out, tapered off. We're still friendly and see each other once in a while. He was here last fall, I think it was.

BARBARA JOHNS: Right.

WILLIAM IVEY: But simply proximity is...

BARBARA JOHNS: You mentioned knowing him in connection with the Morrises.

WILLIAM IVEY: Yes, well, when he moved to Portland-- they live in Portland-- he got to know the Morrises and I met them through him.

BARBARA JOHNS: But you've retained fairly active friendship with the Morrises.

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. We get along real well. Well, it's not simply artistic friendship. Carl and I both are avid fly fishermen, and so we go fishing together a lot. And I like his work and I admire Hilda's a great deal and like her. I like them both, you know. It's just one of those happy things. It's... We rarely talk art. Once in a great while, you know, a little aside, mostly... I look at his work and he looks at mine. Then there'd be some, maybe some intense business, not about Art with a capital A, but about painting, or one's response to it. Same with Hilda's sculpture. But we're just friends.

BARBARA JOHNS: Was there much sense of connection between Portland and Seattle? Were they part of the Artists Gallery?

WILLIAM IVEY: No. Louie was, Louie Bunce was. And Manuel Izquierdo was supposed to be, but he wasn't able to keep it up for some reason. I don't know, you know, Portland and Seattle. I was a Seattle painter, I knew people in Portland and got to know quite a number of them pretty well. I can only talk about my own experience, you know. I've showed there a little bit, but in the past.

BARBARA JOHNS: Well, perhaps there'll be other people that you want to weave into the story as we go along. You talked a bit last time about your teaching experiences. You taught in your studio from, somewhere I read about '58 to '65. Is that right?

WILLIAM IVEY: I don't think it was that long.

BARBARA JOHNS: I was surprised because the other day it sounded as if you had just perhaps one class.

WILLIAM IVEY: Yes. My guess would be that it was from '58 or '9, someplace in there, '59 or '60, I would guess for about two or three years. No more than that; maybe only two.

BARBARA JOHNS: And you taught at San Francisco Art Institute?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. Two summers.

BARBARA JOHNS: Two summers.

WILLIAM IVEY: When the World's Fair was here, whatever year that was.

BARBARA JOHNS: '62. That's the most formal teaching you've done, I gather. You were at Reed College for a year.

WILLIAM IVEY: I was at Reed; and as kind of a favor to Bill Mair twice out at Highline [Community College--Ed.], later on, I taught one class for one day a week. Didn't really enjoy, I didn't want to do it. But he's a guy I know; he asked me if I'd do it, and I did.

BARBARA JOHNS: You taught painting.

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. It was not a very good experience.

BARBARA JOHNS: What was your experience at the San Francisco Art Institute?

WILLIAM IVEY: Pretty good, really. It was a so-called advanced painting class, I guess it's called. Advanced painting class. It was a little larger than I really wanted, both times, particularly the second time. But they were good people, and they were interested...

BARBARA JOHNS: These were graduate students?

WILLIAM IVEY: I can't recall if they were graduate students or if they were just seniors or something like that. I really don't know. They were people that already knew, at least for the moment, what they wanted to do, and then I could simply help, be helpful as I could. And among them there were, my guess would be, five or six that were really quite good, and fun to work with. One of them was Ron Davis who's a southern California artist now. He's from southern California. He was one of the students. He obviously was-- a lot of energy and skill. But the kind of thing he was doing, I had a feeling it was what he thought he should do, rather than what he should be doing. They were big and kind of ambitious, but his heart wasn't there; it was someplace else. I suppose coming from someplace else, it was a little easier for me to think that than for somebody who was there, because it was a variation on the kind of school idiom that you find in any school. And I suggested...

[Tape 5]

BARBARA JOHNS: You were talking about Ron Davis?

WILLIAM IVEY: Ron Davis, yeah. Well, anyway, he really didn't like to come to class. He'd work on real big things. He was serious enough; I knew he was working, so I'd let him work in his studio, and I thought, "Well, I'll come down, and look at what you're doing." And after I had talked about, perhaps clarifying the color and things like that, and not thinking quite as much about what was a permissible thing at the school-- after all I was coming from the outside, so he didn't have to do that to be permissible to me. And I got the address of his studio. He came by, oh, two or three weeks, I suppose, he was back in the class, and he wanted me to come. And he lived down on the Fillmore. Actually, at one time, I had lived up on top of the Fillmore, so I took _____. It had changed quite a bit since I had lived there.

BARBARA JOHNS: That was sixties, too; things were active?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah, things were getting pretty active. And he and three or four other people lived in this building, and you couldn't get into it directly. You went up these stairs, down a hallway, out a window, over a roof, and then you could get into this studio, you know. (laughs)

BARBARA JOHNS: (laughs)

WILLIAM IVEY: And he had all these big, big things; they must have been ten, twelve feet long and whatever canvas width he could get high. And totally different from what he had been doing-- a bright color and a kind of, you know, some of the shapes were similar, but color totally changed, quite heavily painted. Because at that time he was painting, not staining; but these were not as heavy as the things he'd been doing before. And I was very impressed.

BARBARA JOHNS: After how much time had lapsed between...?

WILLIAM IVEY: Three weeks, or something like that.

BARBARA JOHNS: I thought you said three weeks and I was wondering if I had missed something...

WILLIAM IVEY: It was that area, anyway, that neighborhood. And there must have been three or four of these big things. God, such energy; I felt terribly old. But, you know, the summer session only lasts six weeks, or eight weeks, or something like that, so I didn't see him again, until I ran across these-- it was Ron Davis who was painting, you see. And I asked around, "Is this the same guy?" Turned out it was. It was quite a different thing. And nothing he seems really quite at home with, but it does relate to the kind of thing he was starting at that time, a relationship, and certainly, well, one can see that start to happen, and it changed a hell of a lot since then. It was kind of interesting.

BARBARA JOHNS: Who else was among your students?

WILLIAM IVEY: I don't know their names. In a way, I got to know him more because he was kind of an irritating guy. I kind of liked him; but he was irritating. (chuckles)

BARBARA JOHNS: Just difficult, or...?

WILLIAM IVEY: I don't remember, you know, it's been a long time. I remember what he looked like, and I remember that some way he-- I suppose because he had such obvious gifts, and yet he, at that time, up until then anyway, had just been kind of doing it off the top of his head, I guess, painting out of the side of his mouth sort of.

BARBARA JOHNS: And the scale of the work you described was very large in his studio.

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, the things I'd seen in school...

BARBARA JOHNS: Were these new things the beginning of his very large scale, or had he worked in that scale before?
WILLIAM IVEY: I think he'd been working pretty good size stuff before. I didn't see that much; I'd seen a couple and they were at the school, and they weren't big. And kind of uncomfortable; you know, he looked kind of uncomfortable in that particular idiom that he was using.

BARBARA JOHNS: A little different issue: thinking of working in that scale, it becomes a much more expensive matter to paint such large scale. Was that an issue for any of your students then?

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, I don't know their problems that way. I didn't require anything, I mean not in terms of scale. These were things he was doing.

BARBARA JOHNS: Right. I was thinking of something that was becoming popular.

WILLIAM IVEY: I'm sure it would be always an issue. I don't know how much money anybody had, or where it was coming from. There were some people who were working on a pretty good-size scale. In a classroom, though, you tend to not work that big. You might be working six feet, but not ten feet, you know; it would have been pretty awkward. I remember there were some that were working pretty generous size canvases and others working on small ones. I have no idea what economics were involved.

BARBARA JOHNS: You taught at Reed College in '67.

WILLIAM IVEY: I didn't really teach. I...

BARBARA JOHNS: Artist in residence.

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah, I was artist in residence, and I didn't have to do any teaching. I did have contact with four fifth-year seniors who had spent the previous fourth year, which would have been their senior year, at the Studio School in New York, and had come back to finish and get their degrees. I didn't teach them at all; you know, I'd look at their work, and we'd talk at times, but there was no teaching involved. And I was given a studio, and just painted.

BARBARA JOHNS: That was your role? It was a grant...

WILLIAM IVEY: That was my role.

BARBARA JOHNS: That was funded by...?

WILLIAM IVEY: Rockefeller.

BARBARA JOHNS: Rockefeller grant. Did you have any other role at the college, or did you provide them with any paintings?

WILLIAM IVEY: I left a couple paintings there, just because they were too awkward to bring back.

BARBARA JOHNS: The purpose of the grant, then, is just to allow you to work in, and was the grant tied to residency at Reed?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. Well, Reed had gotten the grant, and they asked me to come down and do it. I didn't get the grant; Reed got the grant. And I was the one who was selected; why I don't know. I don't know what that process was. It was an uncomfortable time to be teaching at any college; it was during, let's see, the Vietnam

War was on, and there was all sorts of unrest on the campuses, anyway. Reed students didn't have-- if you were at Berkeley or someplace else, you had something immediate [object--Ed.] to vent your hostility on, which would be an administration that would look tyrannic or whatever. But at Reed, the administration was so loose and everything was so easy-- except that it's an academic boiling pot; it's hard to stay in. But they couldn't vent any anger at the administration or faculty; everybody felt the same way they did. And that was kind of frustrating for those kids; maybe worse than at Berkeley, where they could get out and shout. So everybody had a kind of disgruntled look all the time, and that was just a hell of a place to be. Looked disgruntled without knowing what to do about it.

BARBARA JOHNS: Was it disruptive to you?

WILLIAM IVEY: I found it unpleasant. I've been back since, and the whole atmosphere has changed. I thought, my God, these are the most silent-- nobody laughs, nobody smiles. The art students were different, I must say, they were a little more out of the world. And these four that I knew, anyway, were kind of sweet kids; I really liked them. And I still maintain contact with one of them, who is now David Reed, who brought that... Were you at the museum when that constructivist exhibit came, a couple years ago?

BARBARA JOHNS: No. I moved here just at that time.

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh, well, anyway, David worked for McCrory [Corporation--Ed.]-- he was a New York painter, and showed someplace here in Seattle-- but he had this little job, supervising, packing, and unpacking these works. I've maintained some connection with him over the years.

BARBARA JOHNS: And have you ever had any teaching contact with Cornish or with the University of Washington?

WILLIAM IVEY: I was asked once at the university, but I didn't go; I didn't want to do it.

BARBARA JOHNS: Have you retained or do you have any ties with particular faculty members?

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, yeah, Bob Jones, and-- let's see, Bob Jones, and Dick Dahn, and somebody else used studios in the old Collins Building; and Frank Okada and I were there. And so I'd see Bob occasionally. Dick isn't painting anymore; he's teaching just industrial design or something. I, once in a while, would see him, but I see Bob every now and again. They were the only two that I really know; I've met others.

BARBARA JOHNS: Did you retain contact with Alden Mason?

WILLIAM IVEY: No.

BARBARA JOHNS: You shared studio space with Frank Okada?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah, oh goodness, again I don't remember the years, but Frank Okada and I had a floor-- we didn't share a studio-- but we had a floor in the Collins Building at Second and James. Down in Pioneer Square, before they started redoing Pioneer Square. And then, later on Merle Martinson came in there, in that building, and Paul Havis, and Bill Mair, Willard Parker, oh, we were there for several years, and there were others in and out.

BARBARA JOHNS: Bill Mair, you've mentioned him a few times. Does he still keep a studio, and he's still at Highline, I understand.

WILLIAM IVEY: He's still at Highline. I guess he has a studio wherever he lives; I haven't seen him since Highline.

BARBARA JOHNS: Are these other people active-- Willard Parker?

WILLIAM IVEY: No, I don't think so; not really. Kind of a sad _____ _____. Let's see. Merle Martinson is; he's still painting, he shows at Francine's [Seders-- Ed.] Who else was there?

BARBARA JOHNS: Did you maintain contact with Okada?

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh, yeah. A lot. He was here the other day. He teaches at Eugene, but his family is up here, and so he's back and forth a bunch.

BARBARA JOHNS: Have you and he discussed work a lot, in your studios.

WILLIAM IVEY: We don't discuss our own work. There'd be talks about, you know, what he saw someplace-- we ran into each other in San Francisco recently. I was at the Braque show, and felt a tug on my arm, and there was Okada. He doesn't drive so somebody, some graduate student drove him to San Francisco, I guess. And we

talked about that show, and the Stills and the Lobdells, which were showing at the same time. You know, you can't talk all the time.

BARBARA JOHNS: What kind of standing did some of these people have in the community? Can you make any assessment of that?

WILLIAM IVEY: Who?

BARBARA JOHNS: I'm thinking of Mair and Parker, or some of the names that are no longer prominent.

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, they were young painters then, you know, Okada's much younger than I am. They're not young painters now, but they were then, and gifted. I don't know anything about the standing they have now in the community.

BARBARA JOHNS: I was thinking at that time.

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh, I think they were promising young painters.

BARBARA JOHNS: Were there many artists in Pioneer Square during that time?
WILLIAM IVEY: No. We were the only ones that I know of, for a long time.

BARBARA JOHNS: [Jack--Ed.] Stangle was there, wasn't he?

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh, yes. Earlier. Stangle had been down there. Stangle was gone by that time. Stangle was there in the forties and into the fifties. Gilkey had been there a bit. Gilkey and Corley had a studio about where the Greenwood Galleries are now, at least on the second floor of that bank, it was a bank building. There was another painter whom I didn't know named Andrew or Andre Martin, who was there for a while, a French guy. So there were a few, but they'd gone, by the time we were in the Collins Building, and I don't think there really was anybody down there in the sixties. All those buildings were closed off, and they probably didn't open a building because they had to pay taxes on each floor if they opened at all. So if they had one painter in a big building, in the whole floor, they had to pay taxes as if that whole floor were occupied. The Collins Building wasn't that big; the floor space wasn't that big, they made awfully big studios; but it wasn't a real problem, and so opening up a fourth floor for Frank and I probably meant they wouldn't make any money, but they'd break even, there'd be somebody there. The buildings were always in danger of vandalism.

BARBARA JOHNS: I imagine it was pretty rough down there at that time; or was it dead?

WILLIAM IVEY: No, it wasn't rough at all. No, there were a lot of drunks around; they don't bother you. The safest people in the world are winos; they have no interest in anything except a bottle of wine. And so I would guess that it's probably rougher now.

BARBARA JOHNS: How long did you rent that studio space?

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, I can't remember; it was several years. Then, Frank went to Europe, he got a Guggenheim and went to Europe, and I went to Reed for two years. And, prior to that-- Frank and I would pass on anybody who wanted to get in the building; and that way we could pretty much make sure they were fairly serious guys who weren't going to disrupt anything, because you're only semi-legal in a place like this. They were living there; you're not supposed to live there, and if you started making a lot of disruption, the city inspectors, and etcetera and etcetera. Well, I was away and Frank was gone, a bunch of youngsters came in, who were having a ball, but they were hanging effigies out the window and all sorts of things, so the fire department got in, and the building inspector got in, and they could smell the pot for two blocks away, you know. They were really drawing attention to themselves. And sure, they closed the building up; they told the guy that owned it that he'd have to do this, that, and everything, and it would have cost a thousand dollars, or something like that. So I moved over to the Smith Tower Annex, and then there was a series of places after that.

BARBARA JOHNS: You talked about the Rockefeller Fellowship in connection with your residency at Reed. Going back to 1960 and '62, you received first the Ford Foundation purchase award. Can you describe how that worked?

WILLIAM IVEY: I haven't a clue. Oh, wait a minute. I was asked to submit something; I got a letter, asking me to submit something. I submitted two paintings, or three paintings, or whatever it was. And received a purchase award. Beyond that, who did it, I don't know. I later heard that Dick Diebenkorn was on the jury, but I don't know that for sure.

BARBARA JOHNS: Was that a surprise at the time?

WILLIAM IVEY: That I got it, you mean? Sure.

BARBARA JOHNS: The way you described your life in Seattle in the fifties, this would be _____.

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah, it was great, you know; I could use the money. And I had no expectation of getting anywhere with it.

BARBARA JOHNS: Where are those paintings today?

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, the painting that they purchased is in Portland. The others, only one do I remember, the other-- I know there were three; I'm sure there were three-- is owned by John Erling and Barbara Erling.

BARBARA JOHNS: It was the purchase that I was thinking about.

WILLIAM IVEY: That's in Portland.

BARBARA JOHNS: About 1960, is it true that you destroyed a great deal of your earlier work?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah, someplace along the line. Yeah. I don't remember the year, but... There was a dump down at Interbay, and I just took it down and burned them.

BARBARA JOHNS: Just having felt that you'd gotten beyond something?

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh, I don't know; I think I just wanted to get rid of a lot of baggage. Not the physical painting so much as just kind of a symbol. I think it was dumb.

BARBARA JOHNS: Oh, you do?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. Sure, these things grow in your mind. Some of those paintings-- I'm sure that most of them probably were not that good. But I remember some of them and think of them as being a hell of a lot better than they probably really were, and if I could face them physically I'd realize they weren't that good, you know. But I did it.

BARBARA JOHNS: You might find they were stronger than you remember also.

WILLIAM IVEY: It's also a possibility, but I prefer it the other way, (chuckles), that I didn't destroy anything worthwhile.

BARBARA JOHNS: Ah hah. This was sometime in the fifties. Do you have any idea when it was?

WILLIAM IVEY: No. _____. Late fifties, I suppose.

BARBARA JOHNS: Sounds like there were a lot of changes at that point.

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah, but it was impulse. If I hadn't done it that day, I probably wouldn't have done it. It was total caprice.

BARBARA JOHNS: It sounds as if there were a lot of changes in the fifties, beginning of the sixties. Do you have a sense of recognition, or greater recognition at that time?

WILLIAM IVEY: Recognition?

BARBARA JOHNS: Right. Or what am I saying? A time of coming together at least?

WILLIAM IVEY: No, I don't really have that feeling, it was _____. I don't really see anything dramatic happening.

BARBARA JOHNS: It feels more some kind of cumulative process. Then the National Foundation for Arts and Humanities grant _____.

WILLIAM IVEY: I got a National Foundation grant, and that was great. I could use the money. It was just about a time when I was running out of money, and I thought, well, I'm going to have to go back to work, and I got this.

BARBARA JOHNS: It was a grant without stipulation?

WILLIAM IVEY: I didn't apply for it. I don't know how I got it. I haven't a clue.

BARBARA JOHNS: It sounds as if someone in the community was supporting, at least liking your work and...

WILLIAM IVEY: I haven't a clue. And I just don't know. And it was wonderful! It...

BARBARA JOHNS: How much was it?

WILLIAM IVEY: I've forgotten now, and I'm sure it'd sound kind of paltry nowadays, because of inflation. $5,000? $8,000?

BARBARA JOHNS: A substantial grant!

WILLIAM IVEY: You know, something like that. And I think it kept me going for a couple, must have kept me going for a couple of years, and by that time _____ . So it was wonderful! That was the most dramatic thing, I suppose.

BARBARA JOHNS: And then you were included in the Whitney annual.

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. I don't remember what year.

BARBARA JOHNS: In '63. How were those selected; did you apply?

WILLIAM IVEY: No, it was an invitational!

BARBARA JOHNS: Were you in other national exhibitions outside Seattle?

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh, I had a [one]-man show, or something like that, but you mean these invitational kind of things, or competitive?

BARBARA JOHNS: Anything you want. I know that...

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, there was a show in Paris someplace, at Arnaud Gallerie, but I don't know what year that was either.

BARBARA JOHNS: That was '66. Okay, listen, we could go through it. There's a 1963, the Whitney Annual. And '64 was the solo exhibition at Seattle Art Museum. And two years later the solo show at Gallerie Arnaud in Paris, and I wondered if there were other group shows. I know it was a time when there were still a lot of national group shows.

WILLIAM IVEY: I don't think so. I really have never entered any national group shows. If I'd been invited, I would sometimes go. But I really don't like group shows. I was kind of flattered by the Whitney and so I did it. But I'm really not interested in group show, where you show one painting. Now I probably wouldn't do it.

BARBARA JOHNS: Have you exhibited in San Francisco?

WILLIAM IVEY: Not in a long time. I have, but it's been a long time. You know Gordon Woodside had a gallery in San Francisco at one time, and I showed some paintings; I don't think I had a show, but I showed some paintings there. Then, when I was a student I showed there.

BARBARA JOHNS: Right. I just wondered if it was a connection you've kept at all?

WILLIAM IVEY: No. You know, I work on things a long time, and I don't have enough paintings to have a show here every two or three years and then show all around.

BARBARA JOHNS: Where do you show in Portland?

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, there was a gallery at one time, which is defunct, and I had a show there. I showed at Marylhurst College, which was outside of Portland. And of course I'd shown at Seattle and the Portland Art Museum, that was kind of semi-retrospective _____ . I will show with Okada and Martinson and Charles Stokes, I believe, at the Blackfish Gallery, and I've never been there. This summer.

BARBARA JOHNS: Let's talk about this one-man show at Seattle Art Museum, it was 1964.

WILLIAM IVEY: Before that there was a show. Richard Gilkey, Ward Corley, Jack Stangle, and I at the museum.

BARBARA JOHNS: Oh, was there?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. We each had a half a room.

BARBARA JOHNS: Who chose those exhibitions at the time? Was that Fuller's decision?

WILLIAM IVEY: Dr. Fuller. This is kind of funny, because we were sitting around one time, and I think it was Richard's idea. "We oughta show together someplace. And we'll go ask Dr. Fuller." And nobody would go. Richard

was willing to go, and Ward and Jack weren't willing to go, so I went along. I said, "Okay, I'll go with you." We went to Dr. Fuller, who, well he's the shyest guy in the world; he's the only person I know who's introduced himself to me a hundred times as if I wouldn't remember him. Kinda funny. But we went to see him, and he was kind of pushing his chair back against the wall, and he said, "Yes." Just like that! [We should] go, and he'd let us know, and he did. [sentence spoken very quietly]

BARBARA JOHNS: [gestures that tape will not pick up his voice]

WILLIAM IVEY: (laughs) Well, I know, but that's the way he spoke.

BARBARA JOHNS: (laughs) Oh, okay.

WILLIAM IVEY: It's very quiet. And so we had a show there, and I hated what I did so much that I wanted to take them off the wall; I didn't want to _____. Terrible. I was in the same room with Ward Corley. And Ward's paintings [were] really quite beautiful; they really were.

BARBARA JOHNS: I know the windows and flowers. Were they work of that sort?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. That was about that time. And then I thought, "Oh, my God, these gross things; I want to take them away." And I didn't have quite the courage to take them off the walls and haul them out of the museum. I felt really badly about it.

BARBARA JOHNS: That must have been one of your first experiences with exhibiting publicly? It was more public than the Artists Gallery.

WILLIAM IVEY: No, it was before the Artists Gallery. I don't know whether it was the first... Oh, I'd shown some at an annual, I guess,

BARBARA JOHNS: Pardon me?

WILLIAM IVEY: I had had individual paintings at an annual, or something like that, but I don't know. And I had shown in California. Yeah, I showed in Berkeley. I never saw the show _____

BARBARA JOHNS: The one in Berkeley?

WILLIAM IVEY: Fred Martin had a gallery someplace in Berkeley, and I don't know, I never was there. Shipped the paintings, that was...

BARBARA JOHNS: Do you still find it a somewhat wrenching experience to exhibit work?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah, I don't... Well, it's not wrenching anymore. No. I don't find it wrenching. I just don't like openings.

BARBARA JOHNS: Oh, that's a different matter. But you don't feel particularly vulnerable?

WILLIAM IVEY: No, I don't feel horrible, but it's a terrible drag in the... It's disruptive, that's the only thing. You empty your studio, or pretty close to it. You have to have everything framed and ready, and so forth, so all the logistics, just like working that damn thing [points to tape recorder--BARBARA JOHNS]. You know, it's not fun. And it takes you away from painting.

BARBARA JOHNS: Do you feel that exhibiting is, oh, a useful or even necessary kind of testing? Or do you have a sense of putting yourself out that is useful?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. I think one gets a little closer to having an objective view of what one has done. And I consider that to be important. The danger in this business is, oh, a kind of hallucination; you think because you feel a certain way, and so forth, you're assuming that the work manifests this spirit, and so forth. It doesn't; that's a fallacy. It may or it may not; there's no guarantee. And you get something out in another environment, it can be, and there have been times when it has been, pretty discouraging. All your flaws. But I think that's good. Then there's another kind of collateral thing. I suppose I feel some obligation to make public what I do. It's pretty private; I work here privately. I can't really justify that feeling, but I do have it. And, although I don't find it [exhibiting--Ed.] particularly pleasant, I do it. And a show like the museum show, that last show, that could be a little rending, in that you see long years of work, then you see that your weaknesses really show up. And I thought it very good. I spent a lot of time looking, when there was no one around.

BARBARA JOHNS: This is the show in '75?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. And I saw a lot of weaknesses that I wanted to try and cope with. When you first go in and

see it, it looks great and _____, but when you really start looking, hard, then you become aware of things that you've done that you don't like and want to change. Some you can't change; they're so much a part of you, there's no way out. But there are others that you probably can at least minimize. Relying on dramatic devices. Not being aware when you're working on an individual painting, but you see an accumulation of these things; it's okay, you know, like _____ _____. It gets in the way; it's not really what you need.

BARBARA JOHNS: I guess that your friends saw that show several times as well. Do you talk about these kinds of concerns?

WILLIAM IVEY: Not unless I bring them up, and, oh, I may have said these things I'm saying to you. I probably did. Nobody came back with it very much as I recall.

BARBARA JOHNS: You've made some shifts then since that show, ones you're particularly aware of?

WILLIAM IVEY: No.

BARBARA JOHNS: I'm sure your work has shifted; I'm just saying are there particular things that you solved?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah, I know. Well, I think that sometimes the work becomes too dramatic, more dramatic than I want it to be. I've tried to not fall into that; a certain amount of it's going to be there, I know, because I do that. I try to rely less and less on certain little devices and dramatic things...

BARBARA JOHNS: Such as?

WILLIAM IVEY: A movement that is just too strong.

BARBARA JOHNS: So the gesture, then, is something _____.

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, it isn't a gesture if you make it with one stroke, but it's just a kind of structural thing, which can be overdone. I hesitate to say it, because it's probably still there. (chuckles)

[Tape 6]

BARBARA JOHNS: You had two one-person exhibitions at the Seattle Art Museum, 1964, 1975. The first one, how did that come about? You described your group exhibition...

WILLIAM IVEY: I don't know exactly. I imagine that it was worked out between Gordon Woodside Gallery and Dr. Fuller, but I had no part.

BARBARA JOHNS: I do remember reading in, actually it was Northwest Traditions, that catalogue that came out in the museum show, about a long working relationship between Gordon Woodside and Dr.Fuller. And I know about that same time your two paintings came to into the museum collection. What was the response to that show?

WILLIAM IVEY: I don't remember.

BARBARA JOHNS: I was curious. Virginia Wright, in her essay for the catalogue for the 1975 show, refers to the one in '64, and she describes you as a somewhat of a, not a misunderstood artist, but certainly an artist who hadn't received what she considered due recognition. She describes that show as being too early, or the wrong timing, that people in Seattle were not receptive to abstraction, your kind of work. Do you have any sense of that?

WILLIAM IVEY: I don't know; it never bothered me much. It may very well be true. I never paid much attention to responses, except from other artists. So no. So it's not an issue; it's not something I'd be apt to notice.

BARBARA JOHNS: You didn't feel misunderstood at the time? (chuckles)

WILLIAM IVEY: I never think about it, being understood or not understood. I do the work; people don't have to understand it. They're under no obligation to even look at it. Nobody asked me to be a painter; that was my idea. They don't owe me anything.

BARBARA JOHNS: That exhibition was fairly current work around 1964?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah, it was within, I suppose, three or four years. There might have been an occasional earlier piece.

BARBARA JOHNS: I was curious about that statement, because it seemed to me as if there were quite a few

people working in abstraction of various styles.

WILLIAM IVEY: I think so; I don't really know.

BARBARA JOHNS: Tobey's work was abstract, Anderson, Brazeau, _____ _____.

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. I don't think at that time very many people in Seattle would have cared one way or the other. They just wouldn't have been interested.

BARBARA JOHNS: About art, period.

WILLIAM IVEY: About art, period. And if they thought they were interested in art, they would really have meant that they were interested in the Impressionists, or a much more realistic mode. Andrew Wyeth would have been very popular, then, or now. I think that's true of most people, anyway. So big deal.

BARBARA JOHNS: How about the exhibition in '75? There was a catalogue and it's called a retrospective.

WILLIAM IVEY: I have no idea, you know, what anyone thought except friends.

BARBARA JOHNS: If it was intended to be a retrospective, did you have any contribution to that as far as selecting work?

WILLIAM IVEY: That was all Virginia's. And I gave her slides that I had-- and there's an awful lot I don't have slides of-- and as many sources of who owned them as I knew. Fortunately, some people had quite a number of paintings. I think this is true. It makes the things rather easy to locate, because there are a number of people that have a number of paintings. So even though I didn't know who had what, I think she found things that I didn't know about. True, people owned the paintings, and I did know about it. But I don't have any idea what any kind of general response was at all. I would think minimal. Most people aren't that interested in art.

BARBARA JOHNS: What role did Willis Woods have?

WILLIAM IVEY: None to me. I don't think he's even there then, was he?

BARBARA JOHNS: I think he wrote the introduction to that catalogue.

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh, did he?

BARBARA JOHNS: Unless my memory...

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, let's look. I've got a catalogue right here somewhere.

[Break in taping]

WILLIAM IVEY: I just don't, I don't think Willis Woods had anything particular to do with it; he must have just arrived about that time. Virginia was working on the show for a long time-- months.

BARBARA JOHNS: So it was her personal interest that... She apparently had the idea and put it together.

WILLIAM IVEY: It was her idea. And we've got a nice working relationship; we only talked a couple times, two or three times. I gave her a bunch of slides and names, and she came to the studio once, and came to my house once to look at things. And both of us had agreed that if at any time in this process we decided we didn't want to do it, we'd bag it. Either one of us. And so there was really no strain. I didn't have to do anything.

BARBARA JOHNS: Nice arrangement.

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah.

BARBARA JOHNS: She's been a supporter of yours for a number of years, or had been?

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, we know each other slightly, but only slightly. She and Bagley bought a painting a long time ago, God, it must have been in the fifties.

BARBARA JOHNS: Before the Gordon Woodside era?

WILLIAM IVEY: Or wait a minute. It was about 1960, '61, someplace in there. They came to the studio, and I think Gordon brought them, so I hadn't been with his gallery very long. Brought them to the studio, and they bought a painting, I remember that. I didn't see them for a long time, and then, oh, you know, I had no idea they'd been a supporter. I think maybe they bought a painting, maybe a couple of paintings over a period of time. And Ginny

proposed this idea for the show. I like them both, but we're really not friends, they were acquaintances.

BARBARA JOHNS: Yeah. Are there other people who have collected your work over a number of years, who are friends?

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, one very close friend, Michael Murray, owns a lot of things. But we're childhood friends.

BARBARA JOHNS: Is he in Seattle or in California?

WILLIAM IVEY: He's now in California. He was here. Lives in Menlo Park.

BARBARA JOHNS: And that's been important regular support, or that's a friendship _____?

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh, yeah, well, it's friendship, and he apparently cares for the work, and we've been like brothers since we were little children, grade school.

BARBARA JOHNS: Is he involved in the arts?

WILLIAM IVEY: Just as a collector; he buys. He has a collection, not just mine, you know, he has others. I don't... You see, most of the things go through the gallery; I don't even know who owns paintings.

BARBARA JOHNS: Right. It was a question whether there had been a few people, perhaps, who had bought work consistently and whose support or whose friendship has been important.

WILLIAM IVEY: Really, I guess there's been support in terms of people buying paintings. And there are some who have quite a lot; I do know that. But I don't know them well, you know. So it's been important, but... (chuckles)

BARBARA JOHNS: Right.

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh, Dick Hedreen has been very helpful, you know, in a way. He's bought some things and I like him, and we're kind of friends, not close, but...

BARBARA JOHNS: Helpful in what way?

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh, he just, maybe interested in talking, and he has bought some things too, but it wasn't primarily the sales, it was kind of a nice guy to talk with. He was interested in the arts, he was interested in painting, he's got a lot of other things, and it was kind of nice to be able to go to his house and look at things if I want to. And I always can. That way. Dick and I hit it off simply because we kind of come from the same kind of background, we were raised in the same neighborhood, quite a few years apart, and speak the same language.

BARBARA JOHNS: Yeah, I understand. Virginia Wright, in this same catalogue, 1975, again is speculating on what she and others apparently perceive as lack of adequate recognition for you in early years, for earlier work, and raises what I thought was a interesting question. She wondered whether your not developing a single personal format, easily recognizable as your unique style, was perhaps a reason that people didn't quickly identify your work. Do you think that's true? It was an interesting comment because other people might say that you work within a very narrow range.

WILLIAM IVEY: I don't have any idea. I can always tell my work. (laughs)

BARBARA JOHNS: Well, that's why it was an interesting comment to me because, juxtaposed to other people's feelings that your work shows a great consistency, over a number of years...

WILLIAM IVEY: I think that probably it isn't as contradictory maybe as it sounds offhand, or as it looks. Because there is a kind of range within what I do that is constant. Many people work in series until a show will be all one, variations on a theme. My shows aren't that way. There might be something like this, and something like that [points around studio--BARBARA JOHNS]. These are the kind of things I deal with all the time. And so they do look somewhat different in one show. But these are the kind of things that have been going on; this range is constant over the years. I move, but... So a show could look disturbing in that sense. They aren't all variations on a window, or whatever. And they all might appear in the same show.

I really treat 'em like, I suppose, kind of like Cezanne would treat doing still lifes and landscapes; they're different paintings, they're different themes, different subjects. One would get tired of painting landscapes all day, and feel like painting still lifes, or figures, or whatever. So I don't really see it as being any more contradictory than I would feel a bunch of Cezannes on different subjects. But that is an attitude which is not that all common today, where the kind of serial thing is so common. And people get used to it; it makes a nice looking show, everything kind of fits, they're easy to hang.

BARBARA JOHNS: It also seems common today when commercialism is so dominant that younger artists really push to establish a particular image that is readily identifiable with their name; they become that style, and hopefully that way of working will lead to commercial success. But I don't see or hear anything in you that spawns-- certainly I should think you work opposite that way.

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah, that's right.

BARBARA JOHNS: To other people, the range of your shifts is narrower than other artists, who have made major shifts.

WILLIAM IVEY: Sure. There are really qualitative things on issue.

BARBARA JOHNS: You mentioned using the exhibition in '75 as a chance for you to look and be able to rethink some concerns. Are there other? How do you push yourself when you feel change necessary?

WILLIAM IVEY: I try to work resist it! No, I don't know, I'm not that puritanical. If I become uneasy about something, then I try to find a way to become easy again; that may mean change. But I don't have any feeling I've gotta change, I've gotta do this. I just want to paint. I'll do the best I can to be as true to my own vision as I can, but I don't feel any sense that it's necessary somehow, to justify my _____. I don't think you can will movement; I think it has to happen. And if it happens, it will manifest itself. If it's a willed kind of movement, it always looks so bloody arbitrary. And it's kind of fake because it's something you've manufactured, rather than coming out of your real change in perception. I hope the work grows, but I'm not looking for any dramatic about-faces in painting; it's not my nature. I just hope it gets better, gets truer.

BARBARA JOHNS: Before we started recording today, you talked about a time period when you had felt restless and had done a lot of drawing, taken many walks. I know that's something you do customarily, but you talked about going to automobile junkyards. Would you like to describe that period or others like it?

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh, there are times when one gets feeling dried up, when you start to see things outside of the studio. And you want to record, and start making maybe very literal kind of records of stuff you look at. The outside world gets very strong; it's much stronger than the world of the studio. At that time you begin to take it in. And my way of taking it in is to make a lot of drawings, maybe watercolor paintings and so forth. And on the occasion you were referring to, I had been driving, and I'd seen this automobile, wrecked automobile yard. It just hit me! Wow! And so I stopped, I don't know if I did it that day or the next day, but anyway I went there, with drawing pad and so forth. And started making drawings. And I did it for, you know, two hours, or something like that. Maybe on two or three occasions. And then later on, some of these shapes began to be changed somewhat and move around and reformed it, as you talked about a couple of oil drawings, one of the, no, two of the three drawings.

BARBARA JOHNS: The one in the art museum collection is one out of that?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yes.

BARBARA JOHNS: We were reviewing last week's interview when I first came here today, and you talked about what a painting's about. That that is the issue of painting, not mainly skill.

WILLIAM IVEY: What we were talking the other time was kind of an aside reference one of us made to learning the skills. And at the time, I think I had said that wasn't very difficult. And thinking about it later, I realized I could amplify it. It just isn't difficult to learn how to mix color, or how to put two things together, or how to draw lines, or make shapes. The difficulty is in seeing what you want to do with these skills. And the skill never manifests itself until you can see it in your mind's eye. You may see it bits and pieces until the whole thing is done, or maybe a few people can prevision it and simply do it. I think most of us have had the experience, maybe a few times, of conceiving of a work and doing it quite rapidly. And feeling good
about it, and remain feeling good about it. So that's really what I meant, that it's the vision one has that's the difficult thing; it is not the manual skills that people are always kind of awestruck by.

BARBARA JOHNS: And I gather that you mean this as a kind of two-way effort. First of all coming to terms with oneself as an artist-- we talked about that last time in the context of Clyfford Still, what is it that one does-- and also you're talking about each painting, canvas by canvas.

WILLIAM IVEY: Sure.

BARBARA JOHNS: And you talked about different ways, that sometimes you approach a canvas blankly, and different ways you might approach it at that point.

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh yeah. Well, at one time I may, as with earlier [paintings], start with a very specific natural

thing, you know, an event in nature, and make a drawing which at one stage is pretty literal. And just in a, almost like jazz, improvising around a theme, just let it happen, make the changes that are necessary to, that seem necessary to make it closer to the way you feel. It is a matter of feeling, _____ perception, rather than analytical thought. Another time I may simply, I may have a little structural sketch that I've doodled in a notebook or a piece of paper, and out of hundreds this one somehow comes to light and seems possible, so I'll start there. And another time I may simply have a canvas stretched-- this is usually the smaller ones-- or a piece of paper, and stare at it a while and pick up a brush and begin to, you know, I kind of see some shapes on it or some colors. Another time I might start to draw on it just as if it were a page in a notebook. And then wipe if off, draw in chalk, wipe it off. And take a brush and begin to draw around a bit. The process gets going and I don't know that it makes a hell of a lot of difference what starts it. The problem is to get started. Maybe it's only a matter of getting the canvas dirty.

BARBARA JOHNS: That reminds me of one of the paintings in the Munch show, which is one of the two paintings entitled Murder on the Avenue. (Not necessarily for the recording.) There are a series of trees, and it is almost as if the trees suggest a body, Munch starts working in hands. That's a wonderful show to see different ways of proceeding.

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, there's a story about Leonardo, the cracks on the wall, and doing a battle scene?

BARBARA JOHNS: Oh, right, right.

[Break in taping]

BARBARA JOHNS: You were bringing back the subject of the exhibition of yours.

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah, I had a _____ show at the Gallerie Arnaud in Paris, and they were pretty good sized paintings, you know, six feet and that sort of thing, not huge, but fair sized paintings. And the gallery had this little thing where people would write comments-- they were all in French of course. But I got the book, or I saw the book, and there was one marvelous comment, and this Frenchman had written, "Gigantic American automobiles, gigantic American paintings, phooey!"

BARBARA JOHNS: (laughs)

WILLIAM IVEY: I loved it!

BARBARA JOHNS: Great. How did that exhibition come about?

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, John Koenig was probably responsible for it. He showed at Gallerie Arnaud, he also showed at Gordon's [Woodside] and he liked the paintings, so he arranged it.

BARBARA JOHNS: Uh huh. Did you have other exhibitions in Europe, too?

WILLIAM IVEY: That was it.

BARBARA JOHNS: Did you have any other idea of response to it; Europeans were not painting in that scale then?

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, I'm sure many were, but they weren't showing at Arnaud, apparently, and the people who came to Arnaud they wanted things that would fit a small French apartment, not these big gooey things. (laughs)

BARBARA JOHNS: Koenig has returned to the city; have you picked up connections with him?

WILLIAM IVEY: No, we were never knew each other, we were just acquainted.

[Break in taping]

BARBARA JOHNS: We've been having an informal discussion about days of Dr.Fuller. You were talking about the kind of support that he lent artists in the community. You mentioned that very often artists would come to him, ask for help, for sustenance, and I think you said that he almost always would write them a check, for perhaps a hundred dollars.

WILLIAM IVEY: Right, right.

BARBARA JOHNS: At their time of need. Would you like to go on and talk about this way of supporting, his personality, perhaps.

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. Without in any way downgrading what he did, because he and his mother furnished the

museum, and they furnished the fine Asians collection, and they did support, to the some extent, Tobey and Graves and those people. But he didn't, but I think it was largely done on a personality basis; oh, he could relate to them as people. And Guy worked for him, and I think Morris worked there for a short period of time. Most of the support of contemporary painters was that kind of personal thing, and it wasn't lasting, in most cases; it was kind of somebody's down on his luck, and he'd give them alms. So there really wasn't the kind of support for contemporary painting that one might have wished for. But it wasn't happening many places. At a time when you have bought DeKooning for three or four hundred dollars, or Rothko for $75 or $100, or whatever. He could have had a museum full of those people, you know. And it didn't occur to anybody! Just didn't occur. Even the Tobey collection could be a heck of a lot better. It was just that he felt an obligation because Tobey was here and kind of well known, in a local sense, that he should support him, so he'd buy an occasional painting. And they have some good ones, but they could have marvelous ones. And then, after Tobey was showing much more in the East and his reputation was certainly more international, nothing more was gotten, and some of the finest paintings were done at this time. The support was always peripheral, really. And it's true of the Portland Museum. It's true, with the exception of a brief period of time, when they got some of those little Rouaults and so forth, it's true in San Francisco; it's that, even Grace Moreley could only pry a certain amount of money loose to buy things when they were quite inexpensive. Got a couple of beautiful Gorkys and, you know, the odd thing.

BARBARA JOHNS: When did you or people you knew, have a sense of importance of these kinds of works? Did you, when it was being done?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. I think most young painters who've been exposed to the kind of ferment of the forties, and maybe the early fifties, were believers. They knew that these Pollocks were marvelous experiences, that DeKooning was a superb painter and a man of great courage, too. And that it was up to him to get those Gorkys; even those that people got were variations of Picasso or out of Miro ', really were something else, you know. Because to us Picasso didn't look that way, and Miro ' didn't look that way or feel that way. These were already another expression, using some of that language.

BARBARA JOHNS: So people-- you're talking about, I suppose, early fifties-- were at that point looking back to Gorky's work in the thirties?

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh even in the forties, even in late forties. Sure. The people I knew, the young painters I knew, we all admired those people. Sometimes we'd fight about them. Some would admire one and not another-- Pollock at a time when, you know, nobody was showing Pollock except Betty Parsons. We were looking at those things, finding a lot there.

BARBARA JOHNS: In what form? Did you travel at that point?

WILLIAM IVEY: Mostly out of reproductions. I think most of us probably got to see-- the San Francisco Museum had that one She Wolf, or something like that-- so we'd seen one of the slightly earlier ones. But mostly in reproduction. I think maybe Still had a small one, because he and Pollock were friends, which we may have seen. That kind of
thing. And they were just very little money. They weren't selling anything at all, really, you know; the occasional person would buy one.

BARBARA JOHNS: Too bad for Seattle.

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, I can remember, you know, Kenneth [Callahan--Ed.] used to review for the Times [Seattle Times--Ed.]. Even he would put the stuff down. Everybody was putting it down; everybody who wrote about it put it down-- "drips and runs school," and all this sort of thing. It made it very difficult for people who might have been able to see them, to [get past--Ed.] the propaganda, the put-down. Most people don't have the kind of social confidence to accept that which all of the authorities are putting down.

BARBARA JOHNS: Or the experience to be able to look that freshly.

WILLIAM IVEY: Sometimes you find it in rather unusual people. If they don't feel pressured they can look quite freshly, and it's kind of marvelous. They don't know enough to have many prejudices pro or con; they're just kind of looking. And they may look at a painting pretty much the same way they'd look at that plant, you know, kind of unjudgmental thing. They allow it to get in.

I don't know this person at all, but some guy bought a painting from Gordon of mine, a long time ago, one I happened to like, and not a painting I think very many people would have bought. Gordon called me and he said, "There's a guy who keeps coming in and looking at that painting." And he'd been looking at that painting for months cause it was there in the stacks; he kept asking to see it. And Gordon didn't know anything really about him, but he finally bought the painting, obviously a person who _____. Turned out he was a mailman. Why he liked it, how he got into art, I don't know. You know, there's no particular background. So every now and then you find somebody who just looks; that's very exciting. So I remember saying to him, "God, let him have it for as

little as possible."

BARBARA JOHNS: And you've never made contact with him?

WILLIAM IVEY: No.

BARBARA JOHNS: Did Zoe Dusanne's gallery have much effect on the city? She was showing [advanced] work.

WILLIAM IVEY: I think it did; I think it did.

[Tape 7]

BARBARA JOHNS: You just mentioned that Zoe Dusanne did the first show of Sam Francis's work.

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. She [got] interested-- She had connections in Paris, I guess, and she had some in New York, and she had been apparently a friend of Peggy Guggenheim; I think that the Pollock at the museum came from Peggy via Zoe, or something like that.

BARBARA JOHNS: Right.

WILLIAM IVEY: Apparently during her marriage-- I don't know anything more about that-- but apparently through her husband or something like that she had known Klee, and she had known some of these people; and she had small ones, and they're very good paintings, of Pollock or Klee, or various other people. She had not a bad eye. But mainly she had a sense of, she was colorful; kind of a character, a style which was kind of fun. And she could show these things on her wall, and then not very many people were. She had some pretty good shows. And she was fun to argue with, talk. She was very approachable, kind of arrogant, but approachable at the same time.

I used to go there with Richard [Conway] Hickson, who I don't think is painting anymore, but he was a very good painter from this area. And I remember one time, it might have been when Sam was having his show [at Dusanne--Ed.]. I hadn't seen it. I'd met Sam in the Bay area a long time before that, but I'd lost track of him. And these were small paintings, I suspect that's what was being shown. But Hickson was schooled in the Pennsylvania Academy, and he was doing a kind of-- I think a very good painter-- kind of that Franklin Watkins kind of thing. And he got-- and he was southern-- and he got more and more nervous, just switching his tail, almost. Finally he started out the door, and he said, "Zoe! Why do you have to show this shit on your walls!" [spoken in Southern accent--BARBARA JOHNS] And he walked out. (laughs) I'm sitting there talking with her, and she looked at me, and she said, "Isn't he a character?" Oh, God, you know, I just wanted to leave! Well, I thought of her as a character.

BARBARA JOHNS: Uh huh. Hickson taught at the university?

WILLIAM IVEY: No, this is a different Hickson. This is Richard Conway Hickson, not William [Hixson--Ed.]. He had a studio in the Public Market above-- you know where that South American restaurant is in the Public Market?

BARBARA JOHNS: Yeah.

WILLIAM IVEY: That was his studio.

BARBARA JOHNS: Oh, wonderful.

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. And I knew him pretty well at one time, and I don't know what's happened to him. He got quite a bit of attention. He won a prize at the Metropolitan, when they had their first contemporary show; I think it was a, not invitational, but competitive exhibit. Do you recall reading about that?

BARBARA JOHNS: Well, I was wondering if that was one Margaret Tomkins was in, about '46, '47?

WILLIAM IVEY: Later than that, it would have been, oh, '49, '50, around in there someplace. Anyway, and it was reproduced in Life Magazine, I think, and so forth, and he got quite a bit of attention, and turned it off. Those people would come to him and say "Well, you wait." He was very rigorous in instances. I think he had a lot of problems, personal problems I think, and he had a hard time. I don't think he's painting now. But anyhow, he was a very good painter. There's a woman here, named Eleanor Hunningford, has a big portrait he did of her mother. It's a very elegant painting. It's not simply a portrait-- it's called Bess, which was her nickname-- it was primarily weeds; it was in Edmonds and she was wearing a paper hat. But quite abstract, really. Very, very beautiful painting, but there weren't that many. He didn't do that many; that might have been the best. He couldn't make up his mind. He had no confidence. That's what I meant by having the image somehow in mind. He kept changing his mind about that, about what painting was, what a painting was supposed to be, tortured himself, but never was able to look back on it.

BARBARA JOHNS: Something you said brought to mind...

WILLIAM IVEY: I forgot about that damn tape. I really didn't want to put all that on tape. Oh well.

BARBARA JOHNS: I don't feel it was slanderous or suggestive at all. Something you said brought to mind a question about Ward Corley that I want to talk about. What kind of painter was he? I know he died quite young.

WILLIAM IVEY: I liked his painting very well, very much indeed-- very sensitive, very good painting, good painting. First things I'd seen of his were very influenced by Tobey. Kind of interesting-- he and Richard Gilkey shared a studio at one time. I don't really know what Ward was doing at that time, unless it was one of these kind of temperas, kind of Tobey-esque. And Richard kept throwing a book of Bonnard, a folio of Bonnard paintings, on the table; and he'd throw 'em out. Finally, he opened it up and started looking and got very excited. So I suspect that was a genesis of the work. The first two or three paintings he'd done after that were very Bonnardian but after that the work was his own thing. You had a sense he bet his life on each painting. He would virtually scrape it off, he'd do it again, he'd destroy it and start over again, and he'd work on one thing at a time, all the way through. Take a long time. A funny kind of picking-away process, it was very _____, great integrity. And he didn't do that many paintings; he died very young.

BARBARA JOHNS: There are two of his paintings in the art museum collection. We talked a little bit about Seattle during this period and Fuller's collecting. Are there particular paintings like that, people who may or may not be well known, that if you were a curator or director, that...

WILLIAM IVEY: You bet.

BARBARA JOHNS: ...people or paintings that would be really important to document?

WILLIAM IVEY: You bet. That one and another one or two of Hickson's, I would have bought, not with the idea that I was sure they were of such great importance, but I knew they were good paintings. And important in their work, you know, in this case Hickson's work. Of course you can never foresee whether a person keeps going or not, but if they did, then these would probably be seminal works, in the life of the person. In Ward's case, yes, there were several, but he didn't work long, live long enough to really, I mean, he just died too soon. There's a woman named Eleanor Hunningford who owns that painting by Hickson. He doesn't really paint much now. Somehow never got much encouragement. Did some marvelous things. A friend of mine bought some; I think he bought two or three or four. He lives in California, and one evening when I was visiting, Frank Lobdell and his wife came over, and Frank immediately, "Who did those?" And he obviously-- I have some relationship with him, which is a friend, but he had none-- immediately recognized, "Gee, these are paintings." I don't think that most of the things from the [museum--Ed.] stacks, that you were referring to, anybody's going to say that about.

BARBARA JOHNS: Good guess.

WILLIAM IVEY: So, yeah, I mean if you're going to support people that are here, these are among the people that I would have supported. There were some Gilkey's that he'll never do again, ever.

BARBARA JOHNS: It would be interesting to know which, if they're particular works.

WILLIAM IVEY: I'm thinking of particular works in all these cases. There's one, an earlier painting of Richard's, called Picasso Chair, something like that. Great, big, funny kind of Picasso-oid chair, what would Picasso be like _____ chair; funny, distorted, big chair. I thought it was a splendid painting. Another one whose title I don't remember, quite a large painting, not huge, but quite a large painting, a kind of abstraction; there are forms in there which are referential, but unlike any work I'd seen of his before.

And I have an idea that sometimes, had there been a little bit of support for a particular thing that was worth following up, it would have been followed up. I think sometimes with artists, if no one is paying any attention, they lose their own confidence sort in it, you know. And there are things that could have been followed up, that is, more worked over a period in dealing with this particular kind of stuff, whatever it is. A little-- Artists aren't necessarily the most self-confident of people in their work, you know. And sometimes some pretty good fields have been dug up a little bit, and weren't really plowed, because everybody seems to ignore what they were plowing. And of course an awful lot of self-confidence, for some people particularly...

BARBARA JOHNS: You're talking about Gilkey having other directions, who seems to have selected the landscape as...

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah, yeah. And not that the landscapes wouldn't have happened, but I think some of these things, with a little encouragement, would have been explored. There've been some abstractions of grasses and so forth that are really very splendid, but nobody likes them. And he loses confidence; it isn't that he is painting

what people are going

to tell him, because people say they like them. It's just that he loses confidence in them. And when all the response is negative, he kind of wonders, "Well, who in the hell am I to think they're good; maybe I'm wrong."

BARBARA JOHNS: He's still doing some of those grass abstractions; are you carrying this up to the present day?

WILLIAM IVEY: He does a few. Yeah, I haven't seen too much lately, but, yeah. There've been other things-- that he's liked, and felt good about for a while, but because everybody puts him down, or shows no interest in them, he loses confidence. That's my assumption in his case; I may be wrong in his case.

BARBARA JOHNS: Are there other artists or paintings, thinking over the 30 years we've talked about, that again, had you choice as curator, director, or whatever, feel important?

WILLIAM IVEY: I'm a bad one to ask in a way, in that, well, I don't get around a lot. I mean there're just so many people painting that I'm not paying that much attention to. It would be forcing it.

BARBARA JOHNS: Right. I want to ask you a question about some of your work in the sixties.

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, I would have got some Colescotts. They never bought any around here, some of those earlier Colescotts. The imagery sometimes was, he always painted a bit roughly, maybe letting go a little too soon, in terms of just painting. But the kind of imagery that was very effective sometimes. And nobody got any works.

BARBARA JOHNS: [The museum] has one, I think it's late fifties. It's a great nude, a long horizontal painting.

WILLIAM IVEY: Hmm. Where did they get it? Who?

BARBARA JOHNS: I'd have to look it up. I'll tell you if you'd like to know.

WILLIAM IVEY: I'm curious. I think I know which one it is.

BARBARA JOHNS: Uh huh. The color and figuration is very different. And they have another painting of his that he did in Paris.

WILLIAM IVEY: He was a student of Leger, if you can believe it.

BARBARA JOHNS: Oh really?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. (chuckles)

BARBARA JOHNS: I love his historical references, references to Matisse, or some of the great ladies in paintings at the Fountain Gallery [exhibition in 1983--Ed.].

The museum is criticized for not being as active as it was, both in annuals that we talked about last time, or in this area of collecting
or in documenting activity; do you think that's an important role that the museum plays? Do you wish it would happen differently? You suggested that if one really wished to document art activity of a period or place, that you would really have to buy everything, across the board, and then sort it out in time.

WILLIAM IVEY: I don't mean you can't have any selectivity, but I think one doesn't dare be too selective, simply because sometimes the very best'll get by that way. I mean, I suppose it's kind of obvious there're certain things that are done by some little old lady in Kent, or something.

BARBARA JOHNS: Oh, I didn't mean that; I mean by the active artists.

WILLIAM IVEY: But, yeah, I think you'd probably have to be one of two things. You'd either have to be pretty broad, and I suspect that for a museum this would be the necessity. Or if you're a private collector, be narrow and extremely, exquisitely fastidious. And really know what you're doing. And you'd buy a few people that you really understand, and you throw your support to those things, and maybe you're right. You have the kind of eye of [Duncan--Ed.] Phillips, who had a very limited range, but within that range is absolutely impeccable. He understood a kind of painting, the sensuous sensibility of Bonnard, this kind of thing. I guess really what I'm saying...

BARBARA JOHNS: Few people have that kind of resources.

WILLIAM IVEY: ...it takes either a hell of a lot of money or a lot of taste.

BARBARA JOHNS: Do you wish that the museum...?

WILLIAM IVEY: I don't care what they do.

BARBARA JOHNS: You don't care.

WILLIAM IVEY: I do have a little feeling about the annual, again, not for myself; I did think it a function in this society, and it was helpful to artists, particularly young artists. I did say, I think you know, that a one-man show is sometimes a bit much for them to handle. And there isn't anything else.

BARBARA JOHNS: The art scene seems to have changed considerably in the past decade and half, perhaps, with the commercialism that has entered. You talked about the Metropolitan competitions, those national competitititions and invitational shows, annuals that used to happen more frequently. Several questions about that shift in the scene toward a much more commercially active art scene. Does it affect you, do you regret or do you applaud the changes? Do they allow greater visibility to more people?

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, I suppose that you can decry aspects of things, but you can't probably have only certain aspects. You know, you get the whole thing. I decry on the part of young artists or old artists commercialism in making money their motive. I don't decry their selling things; I don't even decry them getting good prices for things. But I would like to feel that they really don't particularly
care about money, that they really care about their work. So in that sense, I decry commercialism, and yet, you probably can't have it that way. You either have a marketplace or you don't have anything, you know. There'll be a few artists in all the media whose primary motive is in money. And there'll be a lot of others who'd vote against money. I have nothing but contempt for it, for that attitude.

BARBARA JOHNS: Some people make judgments that it seems to have pushed artists to find a recognizable style very early and perhaps not continue a maturation process.

WILLIAM IVEY: I guess I rationalize that by saying that the best artists won't be pushed.

BARBARA JOHNS: Won't...?

WILLIAM IVEY: That the best artists cannot be pushed by money.

BARBARA JOHNS: It comes through no matter what?

WILLIAM IVEY: That's right. So they'll take the money and run, as long as they don't have to do anything for it. But if it means denying a perception, I don't think they're capable of it. That's my feeling; I may be very wrong, but that's the way I work it out. I just don't think you can buy the _____; they'll take your money and thumb their noses, do what they have to do and run.

BARBARA JOHNS: It sort of requires not only being a good artist but a person of discipline, integrity, and clear vision, I guess.

WILLIAM IVEY: Yes, and shifty, and conniving, and evasive. (laughs)

BARBARA JOHNS: (laughs) I keep wanting to ask you a question, a rather specific question about your work in the sixties. There's been a lot of conservation problems with some of those canvases.

WILLIAM IVEY: (chuckles)

BARBARA JOHNS: Well, how were you working? What happened, what changed?

WILLIAM IVEY: God, you know, I'm just not very concerned, and I have no concern for anything except doing it; and conservation, if people want to conserve 'em, that's their problem.

BARBARA JOHNS: Well, I wondered if you were working a particular way...

WILLIAM IVEY: I'm not concerned.

BARBARA JOHNS: ...a way of working with a medium or construction.

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh, actually, it's a relatively small group of paintings, and it was a white I was using at the time. And I don't use it any more. Well, I shouldn't say I have no concern, but it's not my primary concern.

BARBARA JOHNS: I'm sure. Conservation's not a concern when you're making something, but _____.

WILLIAM IVEY: And you know, I'm not that systematic about my methodology simply because I can't be and work

the way I work. I'd have to be more product oriented, and I'm not. There was that problem and I don't use that particular paint anymore. But part of it, too, was handling, so it was a combination. They are fragile paintings, and when you add layer after layer after layer. I haven't had any, and there actually hasn't been that much, but there's been some. There hasn't been any for quite a long time, so apparently I'm being a little more careful.

BARBARA JOHNS: Mmm. Okay, I wondered about that. Couple more things, and I suppose it relates to questions of money and making a living. I know you have had a couple of public commissions lately.

WILLIAM IVEY: Just one.

BARBARA JOHNS: King County was an award.

WILLIAM IVEY: That's the only one I've ever got.

BARBARA JOHNS: How about Spokane City Hall?

WILLIAM IVEY: They just bought a painting. They bought it from the gallery; I didn't even know they'd bought it.

BARBARA JOHNS: Uh hah. I was really interested to read the comments about that; some officials of the city had a hard time with the painting.

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh yes. I got a call from a radio station in Spokane.

BARBARA JOHNS: I was astonished; it was 1982.

WILLIAM IVEY: I know, and that's what I told them, these are esthetic wars that have been fought and won years ago, or beat to the draw. And I thought it very boring; I told them so.

BARBARA JOHNS: They kept the painting?

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh yeah.

BARBARA JOHNS: I was amazed at the response. Would you like to talk about the King County Award?

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, you know, it was one of those kind of embarrassing things. I didn't want to do it. And yet I didn't want to say flat out no; I'd said no so often. I went with Mickey Gustin, one of the people on the art commission, who was going to show me the works they had, and, gee, I didn't like any of them very well. And I didn't like where they were put, all these things in hallways and corridors and desks, you know, it just doesn't interest me at all. And so I said, "No, I just don't want to..." I could have just given them some paintings; I didn't want to do that, just have paintings stuck around here. And I didn't want to be the dog in the manger and say no. I certainly knew
her; I didn't want to be rude. So I thought, well, I'll put so many restrictions on it that they won't give it to me. So I said, "Look, if you find the right wall, I'll do something special for it." We looked at a lot of walls and I after a while had rejected all the walls. Well, then they showed this wall in the presiding judge's court. It was a kind of wonderful wall. Did you go down there to see that?

BARBARA JOHNS: I haven't; I'm sorry.

WILLIAM IVEY: I'll show you the slide, because I just got some slides. But so I said I would, and I did a bunch of drawings and sketches, you know, a study, things like that. I thought it would take me a heck of a long time to do it, and it turned out it didn't take that long, because I had done so much preliminary work. And I figured you could probably see it. This [a slide--BARBARA JOHNS] probably shows it in the room a little. Does that show part of the floor and so forth?

BARBARA JOHNS: Yes.

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh, okay. Is it in the right way? No, let me turn. That's right, that's the way it goes.

BARBARA JOHNS: How long is it altogether?

WILLIAM IVEY: Twenty feet long, eight feet high.

BARBARA JOHNS: Is that the largest you've worked?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. That was much larger than anything I've done; I don't think I've ever done one more than half that big, ten feet long.

BARBARA JOHNS: You mentioned a triptych you'd done once. Do you often work in multiples?

WILLIAM IVEY: I have tried three. I failed at two of them. Not all at once-- I didn't sit down and try three times; I've tried a triptych three times. This is just a painting and it's only divided simply because I couldn't get them butted well enough so that the seams were impeccable, and it seemed, in that case, better to make a separation. I had tried three triptychs, and two of them were utter failures: I got one good painting, and then I just simply couldn't do it, and I resolved it decoratively, I couldn't resolve it in an important way.

BARBARA JOHNS: And you'd feel this was successful because it was conceived as one unit?

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah, one painting. Then the telephone company has one; I haven't seen it up. But it was conceived as a mural with a theme, handled abstractly, but I had a theme. The two side panels reinforce the center. Well, I felt it was fairly successful. The other two had problems.

BARBARA JOHNS: You talked earlier-- I think we were off the tape and we were talking informally-- about your work on a smaller scale. Would you talk
about that again? How much do you refer to it? I think we were talking about your working on several canvases at one time.

WILLIAM IVEY: Real little paintings I'm fine, but the medium sized paintings I have a hard time with; I just don't relate to them. I don't know why.

BARBARA JOHNS: And yet you continue to do them as a challenge to yourself?

WILLIAM IVEY: I try, just because I hate to admit defeat; but you don't see very many of them around.

BARBARA JOHNS: No, I don't, right. That one's larger.

WILLIAM IVEY: That is big enough, but this one, you know, this is a very awkward size for me.

BARBARA JOHNS: So you keep working at it just because it's a challenge.

WILLIAM IVEY: Yeah. And I have odds and ends of canvas and try it again.

BARBARA JOHNS: I think I read also, in perhaps, Matthew Kangas's interview with you, that if there's something that's difficult, say a color that's difficult to work with or in combination, that it's a challenge, you work at it.

WILLIAM IVEY: I really don't think of it quite that way, I suppose, but yes, it probably happens.

BARBARA JOHNS: It was a reference I think to use of green-- I keep looking at this painting-- but you'd found green, or at this point you were quoted as having said you found green difficult to work with, so you kept...

WILLIAM IVEY: I do. Very. Well, in fact, it is challenging; but it's also there. And it's hard to ignore. I don't think of it as, "I'll accept a challenge," that kind of thing. This is part of my environment; I want to deal with it. I guess I want to: I keep trying. The business of difficulty or _____ _____ _____, when a painting just happens out of impulse or need or, I think with most paintings, things are going along and they're kind of nice but it's a little bit bland, or whatever, and you have the feeling that somehow you have to strengthen this or make it more real. By "real" I meant convincing, somehow. And so you do something that breaks it out of that kind of harmonious, overly lyrical form that it's got. Really, just as Matthew finds of expressing it but which I find a bit _____ _____.

BARBARA JOHNS: You mentioned the landscape environment around you; do you sketch when you go fishing?

WILLIAM IVEY: No, not when I go fishing; I look a lot.

BARBARA JOHNS: How frequently do you go?

WILLIAM IVEY: In the summer? As often as possible. I've been up already this year in Oregon; Carl and I went together for two or three days. It's been

about a month; the season just opened this weekend here. So I'll go once a week, or twice.

BARBARA JOHNS: For a day or two at a time, or it varies I suppose?

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, when I say once a week, it'll probably be for a day or part of a day around here, but then a few trips to Idaho, and eastern Washington, Oregon.

BARBARA JOHNS: You talked earlier how important traveling had been to you, particularly Europe and going to New York, San Francisco. Do you continue to travel very much? Or have you?

WILLIAM IVEY: Well, I haven't been to Europe now for about 10 years. And I haven't been east for 4 or 5 years.

Been to San Francisco, been to California, a couple times a year. Probably go east again this fall. I have no plans to go to Europe; I would kind of like to, but it's awkward. I'd like to go to Japan.

BARBARA JOHNS: Have you been to the Far East?

WILLIAM IVEY: [shakes head no]

BARBARA JOHNS: Because you're certainly by the way you've described yourself not one to feel you need to keep in touch with what's happening in New York.

WILLIAM IVEY: Oh, no. There isn't that much happening. At any time, there isn't that much happening; there are a few things happening, but you'd have to... You can go to New York at any time and see nothing that's happening.

[Tape 8]

WILLIAM IVEY: The older you get probably the more involved you get in your own work; and your sense of time changes in that you know you don't have as much time, and a heck of a lot more to do than you every realized you had to do. So, with exceptions, much of what's happening is less important. There'll be a few things you want to see. Your own work takes precedence over most everything else. I might travel to see some particular things, maybe things I hadn't seen before occasionally, and somehow I was pretty sure I was going to have an experience, but I wouldn't go on "spec," you know, without knowing.

BARBARA JOHNS: I know Braque is a favorite. Did you go to San Francisco when that [exhibition--Ed.] occurred?

WILLIAM IVEY: I went to San Francisco to the Braque show twice. I went down to see the Lobdell show. Actually the Braque show was due to end, and they extended it, so I was able to see it again. Yeah. I liked him a lot; I would go there. I would probably go to see a Bonnard show. If somehow, all of the Vermeers were located in Chicago for a week, I'd be there, even if I had to stand in line, and I've never done that yet. But there aren't many more.

BARBARA JOHNS: Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW

Last updated... *September 24, 2002*