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Oral history interview with Guy Anderson, 1983 February 1-8

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Transcript

Interview

Oral History Interview with Guy Anderson
Conducted by Martha Kingsbury
At La Conner, Washington
1983 February 1 & 8

GA: GUY ANDERSON
MK: MARTHA KINGSBURY

[Part 1]

GA: Now that it is spring and February and I suppose it's a good time to talk about great things. I know the sun's out, the caterpillars and things coming out soon; but talking about the art scene, I have been reading a very interesting thing that was sent to me, once again, by Wesley Wehrÿ-- the talk that Henry Geldzahler gave to Yale, I think almost a year ago, about what he felt about the state of the New York scene, and the scene of art, generally speaking in the world. He said some very cogent things all through it, things that I think probably will apply for quite a long time, particularly to those people and a lot of young people who are so interested in the arts. Do you want to see that?

MK: Sure.

[Break in tape]

MK: Go ahead. Do you want to...?

GA: Oh, is it going? Okay.

MK: Yeah. It's going.

GA: I was thinking about this, that, more things that Henry Geldzahler had to say, and one was the idea that there should be more attention, and particularly with young people and new people coming into the arts, more attention should be given to art history, rather than finding little methods of how to do things, and how to become famous over night, or how to be successful out in the world, rather than success within one's self. And I know, in knowing a number of painters and artists over the years, and having taught a little bit, that there's always the idea, well, isn't it a good idea to be successful out in the world? Well I suppose that that is one of the gratifications maybe, but I think it should be a secondary thing. That what you really want to do is to be hooked on the greatness of the whole art

field for ten thousand years, and also, you should get hooked periodically on not just what is being done today, in the last 20 or 25 years, but what, you know, started in the caves ten thousand years ago. And then, also, concerning that whole area, that you should want to be successful within yourself and to accomplish the things that you feel are of the greatest importance. And that has very little to do with what's going out in the world in what would be called the commercial success of the art field today. Because so many of the people who are most successful in the art field today are regular commercial artists. A lot of the people today, in New York, and not only New York, but Los Angeles, San Francisco, and every large city in the United States, such as Dallas, or Chicago, or wherever-- A lot of the most successful ones are the ones who have been trained in commercial art. I feel that a number of them, like Lichtenstein and Claes Oldenburg are really primarily commercial artists, and they have very big names and they're considered to be very important in the art world. But I think if you put them up againstÿ-- and also Andy Warhol-- against somebody like Jasper Johns or Rauschenberg, they really have no imagination whatsoever. All they are is just sort of cliches of things that have been done 50 or 75 years before. Like Lichtenstein, who is trying to get into kind of the Picasso field now; he got tired of the funny papers, the comic strips. So, when you look at his things, they are not for real, hardly at all. They are just very good posters.

MK: Do you have the feeling that this sort of problem was not a problem when you were a young artist? That choices like this were not available, and so it wasn't a problem for young [artists]?

GA: Well, it wasn't nearly as much of a problem. And I think simply because that we thought of the field of commercial art as being a little separate from the field that we thought was fine art, and we weren't very

concerned about it.

MK: It was a matter of there being a clear distinction, you think?

GA: But I think for many, many years now, that the commercial artists have felt terribly, you know, like in-laws and... (laughs) And they've been working very hard to be up really right along with Picasso, and they want to, not only their drawing, but also their painting, and their prints, and everything else. They have a feeling, I'm sure there's a whole group of 'em, that their [work is--Ed.] just as important as the things that Picasso and Braque did, and also some of the Americans in the thirties a little earlier.

MK: But when you were beginning to study art yourself, did you imagine that art was something to make a commercial success at; was it something to make a living at? Or was that a possible thing to think about in Seattle, in, oh, the late twenties and the thirties?

GA: Well, it seems to me that since [I was--Ed.] very young, it was a matter of trying to do a good painting, or trying to do a good piece of sculpture, and I think the other thing of success... I'm sure that we all had trouble, you know, making a living, particularly through the whole thing of the Great Depression-- but I think that we never thought of ourselves as just going out, like so many people do today. They sort of plan a career, and they're going to make that thing work if they have to use every influence and every person that's available.

MK: And you didn't think in those terms.

GA: Um hmm. And they do use every person available. But there weren't so many things... In the first place there wasn't all of the money concern at that time. Prices were not all that great, and if you got for a very good little painting 50 to 75 dollars, we thought that was really pretty good. And there were very few things sold. I think the people who had maybe the most settled condition at that time were the people who were teaching, people say at the University, like Walter Isaacs, Ambrose Patterson, and Raymond Hill, and a number of people like that. They felt, I think, a little more relaxed about what they were doing, and... [crunching noise interrupts--Ed.] Is everything all right?

MK: Yes. It seems fine. (laughs) We're recording out of doors, and the wind blows.

MK: This is the way they do it in the Northwest!

GA: During that period, of course I knew all those people, and I knew Margaret and Kenneth Callahan when she was working on the Town Crier, and Kenneth was just being prepared for his job at the museum [Seattle Art Museum--Ed.].

MK: Were you living in Edmonds, then, so you had easy access to everything in town?

GA: Um hmm. And I used to commute to and from. And I was studying portrait painting with Ziegler, and we were all going to life class together.

MK: Well, I was going to ask you about that. I wondered what you studied with him. Now, I know his landscape and his figure pieces, but I didn't know that you studied portraiture with him.

GA: Oh yes. We had regular class and I remember at that time there were a number of people that used to go to that class; even Kenneth used to turn up once in a while.

MK: I didn't know that.

GA: There were other people like Louise Gilbert and Estelle Claussen [Clausen?]. Of course, Estelle Claussen had been going to the university. And there were a number of other people, and some of the artists around town, like... I can see their faces and I can't think of their names. There was really quite a nice class. Then at night they had a thing going a little later, up at the old Henry stables, up on the hill, and that old Henry mansion was used as the Fine Arts Society for a while.

MK: Ah hah. The Horace Henry collection was shown there, and then he also had an area that he let artists use?

GA: Um hmm.

MK: I didn't know about that studio.

GA: In the stables it was my first introduction to working from the nude, and we had regular life classes. Then, of course, those later were carried on at the Seattle Art Museum in the downstairs.

MK: Now, this would have been in the early part of the twenties, before the Henry collection moved to the

university? Or was it later? When would it have been that you used the stables of the Henry...?

GA: Well, it must have been in the twenties.

MK: Ah hah. So this was before your Tiffany [scholarship--Ed.]

GA: Because the first time I ever showed in any place was in the fine arts thing downtown; it was in the Skinner Building, I think. That was the original one, and I sent a couple of portraits and, not things I had done in class, but things I'd done at home. One of my grandmother [Ledford], which is owned by my sister in Edmonds, and one of my mother. So, during those early days, I sent mostly things like that, because I hadn't been working very much out of doors. I did watercolors out of doors, and then later on, of course, we all went on sketching trips out of doors, a whole bunch of us, and it wasn't so much the teaching outdoors, it was just that we all got together and we went... We did watercolors down by Lake Union, and Mount Index, and painted mountains and this was just before I went to New York.

MK: That was Ziegler? Would Ziegler go on the outdoor...?

GA: Um hmm. That was Ziegler.

MK: Did he get a number of portrait commissions, and did his students hope to get portrait commissions?

GA: Yes, and he did a number of murals, two or three of them. I don't think much about the Bellevue High School...

MK: Pardon me.

GA: I don't think the one for Bellevue High School was very interesting, but he did a couple for a steamship company, with fishermen and things like that, and they were a beautiful big panels for their main office downtown.

MK: Oh.

GA: I don't know what's happened to them.

MK: So that there was an interest in murals here for purposes long predating WPA [Works Progress Administration],

GA: Oh yes.

MK: And Post offices, and so forth.

GA: And then later on, of course, when the post office things came along, why Kenneth did several, which I think are among his very good things. There's a recent book that was sent to me called Wall to Wall America [K.A. Marling, University of Minnesota--Ed.], and it is that whole mural period.

MK: I haven't seen that.

GA: It's quite recent, and it covers all of those early mural days; there were a few done out here. Kenneth did several, and then Ambrose Patterson did one for the Mount Vernon post office, concerning, you know, milk cans, and cows and things. And somebody did one for way up, I think it was in Ferndale. I think it was Ferndale.

MK: You've done a number of murals in the last 15 years or so. Did you do any when you were very young?

GA: No, but I entered one of the competitions-- it was quite a big one-- and I did get some kind of a hundred dollar prize or something [for--Ed.] it. But it wasn't used.

MK: Oh, I see.

GA: It was just one person and a lot of people were in this [competition--Ed.]. And there was a thing at the Seattle Art Museum-- I don't remember who the jury was or anything, I'm sure a very competent jury. But I remember it [mural design--Ed.] was quite involved, with a lot of figures and lot of things concerning farming and mill work and irrigation systems, and things like that...

MK: So concerned with the whole economic substructure of the area, something like that?

GA: Well, I was working with [peat farmers] and a lot of drawings, a lot of _____s and things like that. We were all very interested in the whole Mexican scene, and I think that probably was more of a generative thing for us, at least. I think also for Kenneth Callahan. I think he was probably inspired more by the Mexican scene than

anything else. And already, of course, there were a lot people working in the middle West, far East, and they were all doing a lot of things like that, especially middle West-- Thomas Hart Benton and all those people.

MK: How many people, or which people from this region went to Mexico? Did any of them? You didn't, did you?

GA: No, I didn't go to Mexico until very recently, until six or seven years ago. [In the thirties--Ed.], I was in the northern part of Mexico, and down around the southern part of the States and the Rio Grande; a friend and I lived down there; that was in the Depression. When the people were coming in from the mid-West when there was that terrible drought and all the soil was blowing away. I remember at that time that Ed and I, it was Ed Engel, and he had gotten out of Annapolis, and there was no commission, and so we decided that we would try to go to Mexico City. Neither one of us had any money, but I had known him earlier up here in Everett. And so we started off on railroads and hitchhiking. We got to El Paso, and there was very little money, and of course we didn't have a VISA, so we met up with a few people there that was interested in the arts, and the [library] and teachers. We used to go across the line, over into Juarez, and we went on a number of automobile trips down into Mexico without Visas or anything. We just went across, you know, in a...

MK: You lived there for a while, and made many crossings?

GA: Well, we lived there. We were living in El Paso, in a little old hotel, which was a very cheap little whorehouse is really what it was. But it was only something like 50cents a night, and we lived on avocados and goat cheese for days, and didn't get sick.

MK: I guess that that's a well-balanced diet.

GA: Yeah. We didn't get sick at all. It's just amazing. I'd do that today and I'd be sick in two days.

MK: Well, you...

GA: But also, we did meet some people and we were asked out to dinner occasionally, and...

MK: But you never got far enough to see any of the mural works.

GA: (laughs) No, we didn't. We didn't get any where near Mexico City. And then we got-- we had friends back in Los Angeles, and so we thought, well, this is not working very well. I do remember when the cloud of, a kind of brown smog came down, and that was the soil blowing away.

MK: Oh, you can remember...?

GA: Yes. It was like a very heavy smog in Los Angeles and or in Mexico City today, which is quite smoggy, only kind of red-brown, and we wondered what it was. It would almost obscure the sun on certain days. And I remember that quite distinctly; we wondered what it was. But anyway, then we got on a freight train, and we hitchhiked. We were hitchhiking back to Los Angeles, and when we got to a place called Alhambra right outside of Los Angeles, I said to Ed, "I think we ought to hop off here," because I had read or heard that they were picking up vagrants from all over. All those people from the middle West were trying to get jobs and they had to leave the middle West. There was nothing, and all their soil had blown away, and there was no work, no money, and the trains were absolutely loaded with all of these families, and they'd have their little belongings with them, you know, and all their kids, and dogs and everything. So they were discouraging them from coming into Los Angeles because they didn't know what to do with them.

MK: Nobody could feed them and there was no place...

GA: Because it was warm and they all thought, well, they could pick fruit, or they could do something. We happened to be on one of those trains where they were picking up people, so we came into Alhambra and we hopped off the train, and right there, there was a police car who picked us up. So we had one of those-- I've forgotten what they're called-- a night court thing with four Negros, a quartet, that had been on the train, and we were all sentenced together, a blanket sentence.

MK: This was the whole group, whoever was in the room?

GA: Well, no, there were six of us, so they were taking us in groups, so they said, "You're evading railroad fare, and you're charged with evasion of railroad fare." And so they say, "Are you guilty or not guilty?" So, of course, you say "Guilty," not knowing what that means, really, and not having any money, hardly even money for phone calls, and so they just give you, automatically, 30days!

MK: That's a bit! (laughs)

GA: (laughs) So...

MK: So then you're fed and sheltered for 30 days, I guess.

GA: And it wouldn't have been so bad, but the conditions were very bad.

MK: So you and Ed were in for 30 days, then?

GA: Well, we were in for 20 and then we got paroled.

MK: I see.

GA: The first night was at the big house, at Lincoln Head's Trail, I think it's called, and so the place was just full of a lot of very, un-, well, very unhealthy looking people.

MK: A little rough.

GA: A lot of rough ones, and so we kind of stayed with this little Negro group. And I said, "Well, now, what do we do tomorrow?" And they said, "Well, we've been through this quite a bit." Tomorrow morning, now, they'll ask you if you want to work. Be sure and say you want to work, because otherwise you're just going to sit here, and it's going to be pretty bad." So they lined us up, and they said to me, "Can you cook?" And I said, "Yes, a little bit." I couldn't cook at all at that time. (laughs) I learned later.

MK: (laughs) Did you learn?

GA: No, but I was very lucky. There was a little jail out in Venice. It was mostly a place where the policemen practiced their range shooting and target practice, and they also made bullets in the basement. It was mostly for alcoholics who'd get picked up maybe for a few days or something, so I was sent out there. My friend, Ed Engel, had to stay in Los Angeles, where he had friends and [was--Ed.] under pressure, you know. He was a commissioned man from Annapolis, and they put him on a garbage truck. (laughs) And he said he was always having to get behind a telephone pole because he'd recognize somebody. (laughter) We knew quite a few people in Los Angeles and Hollywood-- they were quite important people, some of 'em movie directors and lawyers with oil company and everything, where we had stayed at their houses, and...

MK: Was Ed Engel from up here, but he knew a lot of people there?

GA: Yes, mostly through one connection in Everett, [Seton] Miller, who was a very important scenario writer, and his mother was a member of the state legislature, and so they visited down there quite a bit. And then I knew another couple who were connected with the movie industry. And so this is where we had been entertained very royally, and had been shown the makings of the whole movie business, and had been on yachting trips (laughs), all of this, you know, being young men freshly out of school...

MK: You saw the extremes, then?

GA: I had already been to New York, at the Tiffany Foundation. So I got sent out to Venice, and it was very nice, because-- I thought they would send me right back when they find out I can't even boil an egg-- when I arrived, I didn't have to cook because they had picked up an alcoholic who owned one of the finest restaurants in Los Angeles. He was in there for beating up on one of his customers, and his wife was smuggling in wonderful stuff in the back door, turkeys and all that.

MK: Oh! He cooked!

GA: So, I lived a life of luxury for 20 days, and all I had to do was to help make bullets in the basement and count the scoreboard for the policmen who practiced this, like an artist.

MK: Yes. Just like a little resort!

GA: All that was dandy and I was getting for the first time a lot of food. We were awfully run down from just avocados and goat cheese. I didn't see Ed again until later. Of course, he was being paroled, too, because we hadn't done anything; we were not criminals or anything. But they fingerprinted us and all that sort of thing.

MK: Oh?

GA: Oh yes. Being very young and all, I thought it was kind of interesting, which it really was. I shall never forget the parole room, though. It had a very long table, with, like, three or four people on either side, and then the king of the domain at the end of the table, and it was like a very fashionable board room for a very big corporation.

MK: High class, right?

GA: And so they stand you up, and they say, "So on, and so on, and evasion of railroad fare. We are paroling you now, after 20 days, and we would like you to report in every month until the..." for something like... I've forgotten, but it was several months, and...

MK: Were you supposed to stay in the neighborhood? You weren't supposed to leave the area?

GA: And I said, "Well, I don't consider myself criminal and I have a passage to take me back to Seattle. I have money, and I will be going back on the _____ Alexander," and I had been in touch with my family. And I said, "I don't intend to report back."

MK: Yes. (laughs) And they said, "Good riddance."

GA: (laughs) They didn't, they just kind of smirked and they let me go.

MK: Oh, I see. Did you go back to Seattle then?

GA: Yeah.

MK: Did you have any brothers or sisters? You mentioned a sister.

GA: I have two sisters who are still living.

MK: Did you grow up in a big family in Edmonds?

GA: No, I just have two older sisters. They're both living.

MK: How did you become interested in art? Let me go back to the comments you made at the beginning about the importance of having a sense of the great history of art. Where did you get your sense of it and when did you first get interested in art?

GA: Well, I think that it started very early. As a matter of fact, I wrote a little thing for this recent catalogue from Osaka. They asked me to write something about how I got into it, and they asked me to write a little bit more than commentary. So I just sat down one day and rattled away. My first introduction was through a second-grade teacher by the name of Mabel Thorpe Jones. She was a marvelous person, and she was a friend of my mother's who lived down the street from us. When my mother would go down to visit her, for tea or something, I would go along, and she had traveled a lot, and she would bring out these wonderful Japanese prints. Of course neither one of us had ever seen anything like this before, a wonderful collection. And so that was very impressive. She was a very good person, that way, encouraging people, and also she taught me in the second grade.

MK: Was she your second-grade teacher?

GA: Oh, yes.

MK: Okay.

GA: For music and art. Yeah. We always had it separate. She taught that. We had quite a little music in the family. The only art that was any good in our house was a large framed-- and it may have been original, but it probably wasn't-- a pen drawing or an etching of Millet's Angelus that hung in the dining room. It was always there, and it was the one thing that was very impressive to me, and I didn't even know who Millet was.

MK: Sure.

GA: I think it was something that my grandmother brought with her, with a lot of furniture and stuff, from Quebec! I can't imagine where else it came from. But anyway, I was very impressed with this. I had an aunt who did waterfalls and trees and mountains, but they weren't really very good, and I think I even at that time didn't think they were very awfully good. (laughs)

MK: She lived in the Seattle area?

GA: She was very nice. She wrote books, and poems, and she painted, and that was my father's sister. My father was quite musical and he played clarinet; he used to kind of take care of the little band at Edmonds that performed at little functions and things like that. And he was just a kind of natural musician. My sister studied violin for fun, and so we had music in the family.

But the painting, the next exposure, and particularly to Oriental art, was when I talked my father into letting me have piano lessons by a very fine teacher, who was an Oberlin graduate and had been the wife of a missionary in Japan. And her name was AnnaV. Basset [Bassett?--Ed.]. Her husband was no longer living, and she had several

grown children. She [had--Ed.] set up her studio in Edmonds in an old hotel down near the water called the Olympic. She was a marvelous pianist, and it was agreed that I would study with her. So I studied with her for about five or six years. Her studio was full of the most marvelous stuff that she had brought back from Japan.

MK: I see.

GA: And a lot of it were real treasures that were given to them as missionaries, and also, we once again got _____ prints and wonderful things with] bronze vases and inlaid _____ . She lived in that manner.

MK: Did she live in the studio?

GA: Um hmm. She had quite a big studio, a number of rooms, and she always had it decorated in very simple, almost Japanese taste, with screens and all!

MK: Oh! Not the kind of Victorian clutter of souvenirs.

GA: (chuckles)

MK: Really? This was with Barbara James?

GA: No, this was in conjunction with Nancy Keith, and she was doing a lot of recordings and things for Timberline's documentary of the Northwest.

MK: The Northwest Visionaries?

GA: All of us primitives, you know.

MK: (laughs) Not primitives-- visionaries. So you [did that] for several years?

GA: (laughs) In fact I had been doing some movies, too, at the time, and then she was doing some sound and stuff, and needed _____ of a long time.

MK: And you lost good sounds, and that might have been useful to her then.

GA: And so all we could do was just try to do it over, but it never worked quite the same, you know, it never does. Your mind runs off; my mind runs off, anyway. Well, we were talking about the influence of when I was growing up.

MK: Well, did you begin drawing very early?

GA: Yes.

MK: Or did you think about music, mostly?

GA: Yes, yes, and I think through the interest of those teachers I had. They whipped up little still lifes for us; we didn't do just Santa Claus and things like that. But they put little still lifes up for us that we drew, like fruit and flowers. And so, you started thinking about that really early. But of course they encourage your imaginative side, too. You were always doing your other things, you know. A little later, I was very interested in doing sea pieces of all kinds.

MK: This was when you a boy?

GA: Not just sailboats, but... I remember I had been through one of those traveling exhibits of large reproductions that we used to have, that was about the only contact I had with that sort of thing, and it seems to me that that was in the sixth grade. One of these exhibits came through, down in the Opera House, and we all went to see these masterpieces of reproductions.

MK: These were photographic reproductions, and not painted copies?

GA: No, no. They weren't all painted, no, I think they were lithographs. But they were very impressive, and I remember there was one of some horses-- I don't know whether it was, it seems to me it was a Rubens. There were some very wild seas that I loved, and probably some of those were Turners. But at that time, in the sixth grade you don't know. But I remember being impressed by those 'cause I can still see them.

MK: Did you have any access to reproductions through books?

GA: There weren't too many until later. We did have a whole set of ancient history books at home, and they were full of all kinds of little illustrations. I think that was my first introduction to the richness of history. And then

we had a whole set of poems, and that was the entirety of our library. We did have a little local library in Edmonds, which was pretty good; it was a Carnegie library, and there was a children's room, and as you grow up, later on in high school and that sort of thing, why, you could always-- there were lots of books to read. But otherwise, there were no real paintings you saw. And if you went into Seattle, there were no museums, you know.

MK: When do you think you first saw any of the works in the Horace Henry collection? Were any of those impressive?

GA: I remember those very clearly, yes. I was going out there; that was the Henry Gallery; it was one of the few places we could go. And I had them all memorized; I knew exactly where the Boudin was and I knew exactly where the Blakelock was, and... (laughs)

MK: I think that's nice for a city to have a facility.

GA: ...and the [Blue Girl?] I never thought very much of and I still don't think very much of it. But it was that they were quite well done. And then there was one other collection when I was finally going to painting class in Seattle. And that belonged to the Fryes.

MK: Oh, it was publicly available, then?

GA: Well, no, but Eustace Ziegler was a very close friend of the Frye's.

MK: Oh, I see.

GA: And, she became, almost, curator of the museum for many years. So it was all kind of tied up there together, dating way back.

MK: So Ziegler could take his students to see the things at the Frye's, then?

GA: Uh huh. (assent)

MK: And did they have those paintings at the Lenbach's then?

GA: Well, they had a very big house, and all the Lenbachs were there, and also some very fancy things. I knew at the time, and Ziegler used to say to Frye, I remember in a conversation, "You ought to do a little better on your collecting; these are not very good and these are not very good." But there were certain things that he impressed us to look at, and there were the portraits of Lenbach, and also I think they have a Boudin too, don't they?

MK: I believe so, yes.

GA: Um hmm. And there were several things like that, and you know those wonderful realistic paintings of cows and horses, you know...

MK: Yes. All those German things and...

GA: ...things of the German school, and certain of French school, mostly German school. But when you see those today, they're really very competent. They're not very great art...

MK: But technically sound.

GA: ...but technically sound and awfully difficult to do. I can think of hardly anybody who can do those things today.

MK: Did Eustace Ziegler use those as examples for his students? Did he teach any of those techniques?

GA: No, no. No, as a matter of fact, he had a very big collection of mounted reproductions, and we spent more time looking at those in between sessions.

MK: And those were the big masters, and...

GA: Well, and lots of impressionists, and...

MK: Oh, really?

GA: Oh, yes, oh, very, and also encouraging us to, and also the old masters.

MK: In black and white reproductions?

GA: He had been collecting color reproductions for years. He was a Yale man.

MK: Color reproductions.

GA: He was very early school, and then later became a minister, you know, up in Cordova, where he met Mrs. Ziegler and the two girls were born. Then he gave up the whole thing of ministry for painting, and came to Seattle. But his great love, actually, was painting, and-- see it must have been his second major at Yale, because he was working then, and he had anecdotes about certain teachers. (laughs) Like he'd be working along in life class at Yale, and there was a terrifying teacher who'd come come along-- some kind of big name, [who--Ed.] was primarily a sculptor-- and he came along to Ziegler's thing he was doing one day, and he said, "Oh, you oughtn't to have done that; this looks very doughy." And Ziegler had a very quick wit, and he said, "So do the figures you did on the town hall."

MK: (laughs) Sculpted figures. Couldn't be much worse.

GA: Looking doughy. I'm sure they did.

MK: Yes.

GA: Then, of course, we had the public library in Seattle, and somebody had taken out almost all the color reproductions in all the best books.

MK: You mean they cut them out of the books?

GA: Absolutely. And they turned up on somebody later, and I said, "These are the books, these are the reproductions from all the library books." And he said, "Yes, but I didn't take them out; somebody sold them to me."

MK: Oh. Could be true.

GA: I won't mention that name.

MK: Oh, you know, huh?

GA: (laughs) Well, I was there.

MK: Was it an artist who wanted them?

GA: Well, I never knew the name of the person who cut them out, but the person who had collected them, yes, I knew very well. I'm glad they fell into the hands of somebody who knew what they were, you know. But it's such a terrible thing to do, in a public place when so few people had good books, and so many people used them.

MK: There were so few resources.

GA: We couldn't afford books in those days. My very first book I ever saved my nickles for, and this was, I think, about when I first started taking classes in Seattle, or maybe before. It seems to me it was really before. I been exposed in high school to a certain amount. We had [a--Ed.] pretty good general teacher, who really worked us, and we did portraits, and she took us out of doors to do landscapes and things like that; we stood out on the lawn and drew things, and drew each other, and it was all very good stuff. I had always liked the drawings of Michaelangelo, so my first book, which I still have in my library in there (laughs)-- and I think it cost $3.75, but it still is a very nice book; it was the drawings of Michaelangelo; that was the first artbook I ever bought.

MK: Were you very young then?

GA: I suppose I was seventeen.

MK: You were just getting going.

GA: And nobody had-- you know, there weren't very many places-- I remember I bought it at some little art company in Seattle, I think called Seattle Art Company; they carried a few books.

MK: Let's see, if you were seventeen...

GA: Then Seattle Art Company now is something quite different, and it's up near the bus depot. It used to be down on Third Avenue. That's where we bought our artists supplies and stuff, you know. And they also had color reproductions, even prints, and we started buying those very early. And I don't know whether I still have some of

them or not, but I didn't save my nickels for those because they were beautifully reproduced and the only thing you could buy to have a nice reproduction, except in very expensive books. You could get a very nice print of an old master for about 50cents. So I had quite a big collection of those. And then, later on, we started looking for magazines and used books and everything. Later on Morris Graves and I used to go to all of the old used bookshops and everything and look for certain publications like-- let's see it's a London publication-- I think it was called International Studio.

MK: Oh, yes. There was an American edition of that and then there was the big English edition.

GA: Yes. And we'd look for the English editions. Then there was another one, too, that was a great deal like that, and we would get a hold of those and cut out all the best stuff.

MK: You cut them up, huh?

GA: Well, you know, you can only collect so many magazines. Upstairs I have so many magazines I have to unload them.

MK: Well, just too bulky. They'll sink your house, after a while.

GA: You'd have to have a library. (laughs)

MK: Was it between high school and going on the Tiffany grant that you did most of your study with Ziegler? And then you went to New York on the Tiffany?

GA: Yes, I'd already been studying with Ziegler for about a year or so. And then I went to New York on the Tiffany grant.

MK: How did you get the Tiffany grant? I don't really understand much about them; was it competitive?

GA: Well, every year they selected or tried to select, two people from each state that would meet and study further at the foundation. The only, earlier one was somebody at the university, some teacher that had been there. Maybe it was Ambrose Patterson, but also Ernest Norling, who at that time was a commercial artist, a very good one, and who wrote children's books, and he used to join up on the classes at Ziegler's 'cause he had a studio in the same building. And he and somebody at the university decided that it was time that it was time that I applied for one of those. So I sent my stuff in, and he told me what to do, and-- I can't remember now, who, I think you had to have a couple of letters, he probably gave me one, and I had to get two or three others, just like you do with the Guggenheim-- and you have to do certain things in the way of drawing, and then certain things of your more imaginative things and I remember which one I did.

MK: What did you do?

GA: Well, I did a figurative thing, with a lot of figures in it, and it was sort of like a, I don't know, it had figures in it, some way.

MK: An outdoors scene?

GA: Um hmm.

MK: Like an idyllic, ideal scene of some sort?

GA: Not particularly idyllic.

MK: A genre scene? contemporary people?

GA: I think it was from looking at those old masters things, by Rubens, and all of that, but I didn't copy anything, I just made it up. I also sent watercolors of nude studies; I remember one of the-- I shouldn't talk about that; it was not good enough. And I did a number of careful drawings out of doors of things of nature like trees, and leaves, and the life studies, two of those, and then this more inventive thing. So I was the only one from Washington that went that year. And so we worked, and it was a very good experience.

MK: Now you lived out on Long Island, not in Manhattan at all?

GA: Um hmm, Oyster Bay. Oyster Bay, called _____ Harbor at the great Tiffany estate-- part of that's burned down. The thing that is important, though, is that I stopped off in Chicago, and I hadn't seen great galleries, and...

MK: No. That's what I wondered. This was a big opportunity.

GA: ...this was long before the Seattle Art Museum. So we stopped in Chicago and saw the great [Chicago--Ed.] Art Institute. For the first time I saw Monets, and Seurats-- and I'd seen Monet reproductions, you know-- and Gauguins, and I remember that now was in the National Gallery. It's no longer there. And also certain Fleming portraits which I had run across. Also the Grand Jatte of Seurat, which did not belong to the National Collection, and is still there. And a lot of that for the first time, so I spent two days there. And then, in New York, for the first time, I went to the great Metropolitan, and I saw the Rembrandts that I was familiar with, and a lot of the other things, including the big Horse Fair of, of...

MK: Rosa Bonheur.

GA: Of Rosa Bonheur. And it looked pretty good then, and I still think it [does--Ed.]; you know they brought it up out of the basement.

MK: That's right. It looks good!

GA: Well, of course it's good! It's a remarkable painting! It doesn't have all the power and the richness of a Rubens, but then who does except Rubens?

MK: Right.

GA: So there were a lot of little masters, too, that I adored, and [Memlings] and Van Eyck's and...

MK: Well, could you get into New York regularly, to see them, or...?

GA: Well, we worked pretty much every day, and we did go in occasionally. And then when I left, in the fall sometime; I went in the spring. I think it was a six-months thing, something like that. But the idea was to bring people that had a certain amount of schooling already, to bring them together from all over the United States, and they'd live together and exchange ideas, and especially to get the city artists out of doors, so they could work out of doors in a beautiful landscape...

MK: So that was part of the idea, huh?

GA: Um hmm. So every day, we worked out of doors; almost all the good weather we'd work outdoors, by ourselves, for eight hours, returning for lunch, of course.

MK: That's a lot! Um hmm.

GA: And then, it was a wonderful set up. There was the men's dormitory, and the girl's dormitory, women's dormitory, and that was divided by a very long bowling alley, and also a very big, lovely living room that had a gold leaf grand piano in there, a very fine...

MK: Gold leaf? Gold surfaces?

GA: Right.

MK: And you were a musician, and prepared to enjoy it.

GA: And we had a beautiful dining room; it was all screened away from bugs and things. A lot of the students, and also myself, weren't used to that kind of being waited on, and we had a wonderful cook, and we had wonderful waiters and all that sort of thing, and we didn't even have to clean our own rooms.

MK: Were there any interesting paintings hung about the place?

GA: It had been going on for a number of years, and they had kept a lot of the more important people over the years. There was a big studio that we worked in on rainy days, and there was a place where we showed our work every week, and an octagonal gallery with a stone floor, absolutely beautiful gallery. And Louis Comfort Tiffany, we had... Also various people would come out from New York on the weekends, and give us some criticism, and, oh boy, that was a rough one.

MK: Oh, I see; that's how the teaching worked? There were no regular teachers in residence?

GA: Oh no. We had all been in school and everything, but they would come out and give us the old one, two, three on what we were doing.

MK: And they really laid it on?

GA: Oh, did they really lay it on, yes!

MK: Do you remember any that particularly impressed you, or changed the way you do things?

GA: Well, there were two, and they were very good people, and one was-- gee, I can't remember his name. They also had been on the committees, you see, for accepting us, because that's sort of like a Guggenheim. There were a lot of people who wanted to go to that foundation.

MK: Right, I can imagine.

GA: And most of these people were New York painters and a lot of them had hardly been out of the city, you know. We had a teacher from Dallas, and there was a girl, a woman from the Middle West, by the name of Etta Fick, who had done murals and was doing some very wonderful screens that I saw later. And the one that I really thought was talented was George Cavallon, and he was the one that has turned out to be the best of the whole bunch.

MK: What's his name?

GA: George, Giorgio Cavallon.

MK: Cavallon.

GA: Um hmm. He's still living, he's about 80 now, and the last I heard, in one of the maggies and I saw his stuff, he turned out to be a complete abstractionist and working very high in white and was having something at the Whitney Museum. That was several years ago. I said, "Well, there's my Giorgio. This is the man."

MK: So he was one of the Tiffany fellows with you?

GA: Yes, and he had been born in Italy, and still had quite an accent and was working as a carpenter in New York, and going to the Art Students League. He liked the things I was doing, too; we had a kind of a little mutual thing going. I was working pretty heavy in pastel. The rest of the students were working on very detailed things kind of academic, like Byron Thomas. But there were three jewelers there that were very special. One became the director of [Town Pottery Works], and another one by the name of Dorothy Schramm went back to teach in college in Pittsburg, and...

MK: Did you keep up your contacts with a number of people?

GA: Um hmm. For a few years I did; I did have some photographs of all and I don't know what happened to those. (I think we have some birds up there, a lot of birds coming in now on the migration.) But, I visited Giorgio Cavallon's studio in New York. It was in one of those oh, cold-water flat things, you know, you go up several stairs, and there's a long succession of rooms, and there's one at the end.

MK: At the end of the hall?

GA: Well, at the end of several rooms, you know, like this. And he was doing the most marvelous painting of nudes, rich, rich, things. Well, I'm sure he just went on doing lovely paintings, and I don't think he ever was cut out for anything like that. I would see him occasionally. Byron Thomas became quite a well-known person; I saw him in various things in Life magazine every once in a while, but I never liked his painting very much; I thought it was terribly thin, and awfully academic, you know, what you call well done. But I thought Etta Fick was very talented; and a person whose name I can't remember from Dallas did very careful and very beautiful still lives, that were almost in the Flemish manner.

MK: Really?

GA: And very elegantly done.

MK: In oils, then?

GA: Um hmm. I think his name's Roundtree; maybe I've gotten [him--Ed.] mixed up with somebody else. So all of that was very good, but the main thing was to go to the museums, the great Metropolitan, and the Art Institute in Chicago, and then I came back, I remember, in the fall, across Canada by train.

MK: And you never went to Japan, or to China, did you? Were you ever curious to?

GA: No. No, I didn't go to Japan until October, this last October.

MK: Oh, for the Osaka show.?

GA: Yeah, for the Osaka show.

MK: Sure. I forgot that. But when you were young, you didn't go in the Merchant Marine, or to make a trip, or to see the great Japanese temples, or...

GA: No. No. No, I didn't. No I didn't get... Actually, I had been to Alaska; I went there one summer with Ziegler and some people up there, and we met there in mountains and stayed six weeks or a month trip. Then I had been up through Canada quite a lot with Morris Graves, and a lady friend, sort of a psychologist studying various kinds of people and cultures, a self-appraised psychiatrist, but I don't think she was a very _____. (laughs)

MK: I see.

GA: Anyway, we went up into northern Canada, and all through that area and stayed until quite late in the fall, and up on the Peace River three or four days by sternwheeler, and that was great trip and all that, and then down through a number of the other states, and things like that. No, I actually didn't get off the continent of North America until I went to Europe.

MK: Then you were more eager to go to Europe than to go to Asia, obviously; that's where you went.

GA: As a matter of fact I had never wanted to go to Tokyo, and I still don't, so I would be just as happy to go to Osaka and Kyoto.

MK: You did go to see Kyoto?

GA: We landed outside of Tokyo, but we only flew over it, and it's like I never wanted to go to the Hawaiian Islands; I don't know why, I just don't want to go. (laughs) I have some kind of a, an image about them that I just don't like.

MK: Is it the case that even though you saw Japanese prints very early, and your piano teacher had all these things from Japan, that by the time you became serious about making your own art, you thought of great art as mostly the Western tradition, as European art, and that's what you were interested in then, or...?

GA: Well, you see, but at the Metropolitan, you see, they had the most wonderful collection also of Oriental art, but...

MK: They do at Chicago, too.

GA: And they do at Chicago. And I knew about that a little bit. But then, of course, when the Seattle Art Museum came along, that collection is so much better there than... You can rattle around in Japan a long time before you get to all the right museums, at the right time. And then, the things you want to see are not there; they're in the great big safes, the size of a wall. We got into a little museum called the Fujita, on the way to the Osaka Castle; I had read something about this, and we had known a little something about it, and I knew it had some great scrolls that were Chinese. When we got there, of course, none of them spoke English, and they had only a small, beautiful (it was a small museum), a beautiful show, of mostly ceramics, and one or two beautiful kakemono. And so, then they had several books, and so I tried to say to the director, "Well, where are these, in the book." And so he showed us this enormous safe on the wall, and he said, "There are 3,000 great items in there that rarely come out."

MK: I see. Of course, they're all very fragile to light exposure, so for very practical reasons.

GA: Oh, yes. Well, of course.

MK: So it really wasn't something that they were doing...

GA: They had a guard that sat around in each little gallery, but I'm sure that they have their problems with theft, probably from people outside of Japan. (laughs)

[Break in taping]

MK: You had started mentioning the Seattle Art Museum and the Asian art there. Could you talk a little more about working in the museum in the thirties, and what you did and what art involved you? You worked off and on there for a number of years, didn't you?

GA: Well, yes. Both Dr. Fuller and Kenneth Callahan were very good about getting painters; almost all the of extra jobs went to painters and people like that. They weren't specially trained for museum work, but the work we did didn't require that kind of training anyway. And even Kenneth didn't have all of that kind of training for a complete curator. Morris [Graves--Ed.] and I used to work sporadically and periodically.

MK: So it was kind of off-and-on work when you needed it, and always left you plenty of time to do your own

painting, then?

GA: Well, that was the idea in the first place.

MK: That's what I thought.

GA: But, then, as with most of those things, you get more and more involved, and then they expect you to be more full time. Pretty soon, I wasn't getting any painting or anything done, so finally just one day I didn't go. (laughs)

MK: Oh really? I didn't know that.

GA: I was getting kind of late, as I was inclined to do anyway. I was getting tired of the whole thing, but I still was living in Seattle, and I didn't have any alternatives to earn a living, and I certainly wasn't selling enough. So, until you're pretty well established or else have some nice little stipend that comes every month from some inheritance or something, you've got to either teach or you've got to have a part-time job.

MK: Sure.

GA: Fuller was very nice about it, and I think I still have the letter saying that, "You left so unceremoniously," so and so, and so and so. But it was a very nice letter, but it was just that. Like the teaching, I can only teach so long and then I have to give it up.

MK: Did the work there involve you with any of the collections in a way that was stimulating?

GA: Oh yes. It was the only interesting job I ever had in my life! Simply because there was always something new going on. We always anticipated the new shows, and opening the boxes was always a very interesting experience, and the work itself was not that hard. You are under pressure, because shows always in all museums just barely get up by the deadline, and it's like any other thing-- like the theater, you know, you just barely get your lines learned, and somebody pushes you out on the stage and there you are.

MK: Was there lots of traveling material?

GA: We had perfectly wonderful shows, occasionally. I remember there was a Van Gogh show came, and I had to be responsible for the unpacking of it, so I could see exactly what went on and what Vincent had been doing, and what kind of canvas he used, and how he put his tacks in, and everything. And then you had to be responsible for that. And those kind of shows that were circulating until they could be returned to their real owners in Europe, like post-World War; and in some cases the mixed shows were because museums, like the Metropolitan Museum, were very happy to have shows circulating because they didn't have much storage room.

MK: I wish they'd do that more now.

GA: And I think they still have that problem.

MK: Yeah.

GA: But the idea of doing that museum work and working with people like Dorothy Malone-- [she--Ed.] was a perfectly wonderful person, and I still see her occasionally. She's about the only one connected with the museum that I see anymore, she and Margaret Evans, who turned up at the Osaka show just last week with Dorothy Malone. We reminisced a little bit about old times, but there's so much ground to cover... But the experience of working in a museum, and the in-between times, if you had a little time you could always go in the stacks and look at the great collection of prints, or you could look in the various files, like the Mustard Seed Garden prints, Japanese and Chinese prints, and things that don't get out too often. Or you could go back and look at your favorite icon or something like that. So, all of that was interesting.

MK: Is that where you best got to know Kenneth Callahan? Or did you already know him quite well before?

GA: Well, I had known Margaret and Kenneth before, during the school days with Ziegler, and when they hadn't been married I don't think too long at that time, and were living in a very modest little apartment down in south end of Seattle somewhere. And I think that they felt that they were really almost at home in Montmarte.

MK: Did they live in that kind of atmosphere? People in and out and lots of activity?

GA: Well, they had, Kenneth always had up his drawings and his paintings, and the place was very simple, and they lived very simply. And then later on they bought a place over on-- I've forgotten the name-- over on the east side of Madison somewhere.

MK: So did they picture themselves very much artists, and very much part of an active scene, in your allusion to Montmarte?

GA: Well, of course in those days, no one had any money, even if you had a job. But everybody that I knew was working strictly for the love of art, and they didn't have in mind any great shows going on, and they weren't, as far as I knew, interested in being any big names. There was no thought of doing anything except the thing you wanted to do, the very best you could do it. And if you were influenced by the impressionist school, or you were influenced by this or that, why that's what took place. You showed a few times a year, and the big thing was the Northwest Annual every year. You always hoped to save your best paintings, and hoped that you would get in the show, because it was a very big show and had very good juries, and that was the only thing that happened for years in the Northwest.

MK: When you were working in the museum and Kenneth Callahan was there, was he working on that big mural of his, of the loggers?

GA: He had finished, and he was working in various parts. He had a kind of a room at the end of the storage space.

MK: I see.

GA: And then he also had some down in the basement. I remember when some of those were first completed; he had done them in tempera, and he was wondering if he would varnish them. And so we looked at them, and we thought for their preservation and all-- they were on this kind of like very heavy cardboard building board, which is not the most wonderful stuff in the whole world. Anyway, it was what was available and what he could use, so I remember us deciding that it would be very much better to varnish them because the colors would come out more, and they were richer that way, [and--Ed.] they wouldn't be scratched so much. Those are the ones I think that are still there in the collection, the logging murals.

MK: But was the thing as immense as I have heard? Did it go on for panels, and panels, and panels?

GA: Oh yes.

MK: Hundred and some feet, I can't remember.

GA: Well, they used to be hung in the garden court; it was the only place that could accomodate them, and they went clear along the far end.

MK: Oh, he did they put them around the whole court, then?

GA: Oh, they were occasionally hung upstairs in the garden court of the Seattle Art Museum.

MK: Well, I wonder if they have any photographs. I've never seen a photograph, you know an installation shot that would show all that.

GA: There should be, there should be. They're very good murals.

MK: I've been through all kinds of files at the museum, and I've never found them.

GA: I think they're influenced by his Mexican trip that he had; everybody was very aggressive in the whole Mexican school, and I think that he brought off something that has a certain amount of flavor, maybe of Rivera, a few of those people, and maybe more Orozco. But they come off to be his own, and I think they're very original, and I think they are some of the best things he ever did.

MK: I'm very interested to hear that.

GA: And then he did also a mural for the Anacortes post office which, recently, when they were redoing the post office over there a few years ago, Doug Burton and I saved. They were going to cover it up, or do away with it, or something. Doug came home, and he said he was wretched, and at that time, fortunately he was president of the Chamber of Commerce. He said, "What about that mural?" and I said, "It's a very good one, and don't you let them do away with it." There were people that weren't quite so enthusiastic about it. They did save it; you can't see the top part of it; some of it goes up under something, but anyway it's all intact. I helped him install that many years ago, and also the one in Centralia, which is mostly people working in fields. It's very good. And we went down there, and got it all in _____. Everything had to be done according to requirements, and it was a very heavy canvas, and you had to use a certain kind of [glue], and then the two of us did it; it was hard work. It was a very interesting experience, you know.

MK: Did people from this area go down to San Francisco and look at the mural things down there, or did they just read about how to put up murals, or...?

GA: Well, there are specifications that come with them.

MK: The WPA things and the Treasury Department...

GA: And oh yes. The wall has to be prepared in a certain way.

MK: You had to lay it all out.

GA: And you have to use certain material. Well, I had to do that when I did the one for here in Mount Vernon, which is on a curve; it's required that you use a certain kind of heavy linen, and also that it is mounted on plywood panels which can be removed.

MK: Oh, they're much more sensible now than they were 40years ago.

GA: Oh, they're much more sensible! And they know the hazards of people who...

MK: The historical controversies.

GA: ... run public places. (laughs) And how the taste changes with the years, you know.

MK: Right, a little less naive than we used to be.

GA: The one that I did for Roland Terry, I think, got me that commission for the California Bank. The specifications are just so, and you use a certain kind of heavy linen, and that has to be glued to a panel; I did it right upstairs here. Then you take it, and all the things are on the wall, and they give you very careful measurements, to the eighth of an inch, and you have to get those things on the back of [the panel--Ed.] just right. So far, it has worked out, and you just, you get a big truck, and you take the thing there and hang it on the wall, and it's there, if you put the screws in the right place.

MK: And boom. Like an erector set.

GA: If you do it exactly as they tell you, it works out. The same thing with the Washington Mutual Savings Bank, which is three panels, and it's 42feet long, and... What is one-third of 42 in feet?

MK: About 14.

GA: 14. Yeah, that's it. 14. So I did them separately upstairs here; that's when that room was completely empty up there, pretty much.

MK: It's hard to imagine now.

GA: It is hard to imagine, because I have moved an awful lot of stuff from my old studio there; but when I did the murals, there was nothing much up there, just walls.

MK: Well, I wondered how you could manage.

GA: So we got all that moved, and it all went right on its hooks, and that's where it is.

MK: That's gratifying.

GA: They picked it up in the afternoon, and we took out the sections out this window. I got a couple local boys, and I said, "I'll pay you well, and we have to lower that down a certain way." They brought this big truck, and then it had to be delivered after the bank closed, and by eight o'clock it was all in place exactly as it is. (laughs)

MK: Great.

GA: It was all done late one afternoon. I did have help turning the panels over; they're kind of big. Glen Brummett helped me. We got all of these screws and everything in exactly the right place, and he was very good about that. He also prepared the wall and put the screws in down there; that was quite a job because it was some kind of a concrete wall under it.

MK: Lots of work.

GA: Um hmm. It's hard work.

MK: How did you come to leave working in Seattle and go to the Spokane Arts Center? You were there for a couple years.

GA: Well, I was at the Spokane Arts Center mostly before I worked at the Seattle Art Museum, I think. Or was I? Yes, I was at Spokane Arts Center two years, 1939 and '40. That's where I met Hilda and Carl Morris, and Clyfford Still, and Ken Downer, and all of those nice people, interesting people.

MK: Who hired you to go there? Did [Robert Bruce] Inverarity hire you?

GA: Um hmm.

MK: So you didn't know the Morrises before you went there?

GA: I didn't know them at all. I didn't know any of them, except that I had known the watercolorist from Seattle; originally only two people were there from this region.

MK: Was it Ray Hill?

GA: No, no. No, a woman watercolorist; she lives down in California, has for many, many years. She's a realist watercolor painter, but very good. Oh! Vanessa Helder, I have her name.

MK: Oh, oh. I think of her as a printmaker, because I've never seen her watercolors. Yes. The work I've seen by her I like.

GA: Yes, oh yes, yes. She always works very realistically, and very well. Yes, she was doing mostly watercolors and teaching that medium.

MK: So she was connected with the art center? And Morris was in charge of it, of course.

GA: Um hmm.

MK: And was Clyfford Still associated with it?

GA: Clyfford Still was teaching down at Pullman, but he was very friendly with the Downers and also Hilda and Carl Morris. He used to come to Spokane to get away from his whole school business; he would come up and spend a couple days there quite often on the weekends. He usually stayed with the Downers, who had quite a big house at that time, two-story house; I had the apartment upstairs.

MK: Oh, you were in, you were renting from them, you were in the same building?

GA: Um hmm. From the Downers. Before that I rented from a very nice family called the Rashkovs, and that's where Hilda first had a little room, too, and I had a small apartment upstairs, up on Tenth. Hilda was very friendly then with Carl, and Carl had a little house, down in that area on the hillside; then she finally moved in with Carl, and I took a larger space above the Downers.

MK: So did you get to know Clyfford Still and the Morrises quite well? You must have.

GA: Um hmm. Oh very.

MK: Did you keep in contact with Clyfford Still?

GA: No, no. After I came back to Seattle, I used to see the Morrises; they lived in Seattle for a while, and then when I'd go to Portland I'd see them when I was on the way to San Francisco, or going to Portland for some show or something. I haven't seen them much now for years; when they come up, they had their own set of friends so I rarely see them. Ken Downer finally went back to New York. He used to turn up occasionally, when he was visiting out in this part of the country, when I had a little cabin out on a farm out here, near the pea patch. He turned up one time, and he had been living in some area of the Mediterranean.

MK: Yes.

GA: He was in cahoots with somebody who owned a boat, and they did tours, or something.

MK: I see, yes.

GA: He loved it. He was a great traveler, and he was very gregarious; he was the son of a doctor from Woodstock, where he grew up. That's when Woodstock, was a real...

MK: The big artist's place.

GA: Um hmm. It was a real art colony for years and years. I guess it still is! He was a very nice fellow. He became director after Carl left. And I had pretty much the management of the school part of it.

MK: What age people were you teaching? Were you teaching adults? Or children? Or everybody?

GA: Well, we were teaching all shapes and sizes, but mostly young adults, up to very old people-- anybody who had an urge to paint and wanted to sign up, and carry on in regular courses. Why, that's who came.

MK: Was that the first teaching you had done?

GA: No. I had done a little private teaching before.

MK: I see. So you didn't have to develop a new philosophy.

GA: I was not trained as a teacher and I didn't know really all that much about it. I'm wondering if I had some experience at the Seattle Art Museum before I went there. I can't remember! Hmm.

MK: Did you and Clyfford Still ever have conversations about teaching, since he was teaching, too?

GA: No, but we used to go down there occasionally, and there were two or three other teachers I got to know down there. One was from the Art Institute of Chicago, Laisner, who died just two or three years ago and had been teaching there forever. And then there was the head of the school, by the name of Worth Griffin. He used to come up and there was another person, too, that was teaching there later who came along, who was in Seattle, a very fine teacher, very fine painter, and we used to all get together. Laisner, in his earlier work, was, I thought, a very excellent painter. I don't know what happened to his later work. Worth Griffin did things more of an academic order, it seems to me. Clyfford Still at that time was not painting abstractly at all. The only people who were either working abstractly, or teaching abstractly, were Hilda Morris and myself.

MK: Oh, Hilda was? I thought Carl was.

GA: Um hmm. Hilda was working on a more or less triangular idea. And Clyfford Still was doing big, very heavy pastel landscapes, and still lifes, and that kind of painting.

MK: Yes. A few years before you met him, he finished a Master's Degree at Pullman. And he wrote a thesis, that I guess is required of all the studio people. He wrote his thesis on Cezanne.

GA: Um hmm.

MK: And I wondered if Cezanne was someone who was still very important to Still when you knew him.

GA: Yes, that would be the closest person I know that he would paint like. But he painted a much heavier impasto. And at that time Carl was not painting abstractly at all; he was painting figurative things. Earlier he had had a fellowship for traveling and studying El Greco, and most of his things were still in El Greco manner somewhat.

MK: Oh, I see. I didn't know that. A fellowship for studying El Greco?

GA: Um hmm, from the Art Institute of Chicago, I think.

MK: And he'd gone to Spain?

GA: Yes. He had traveled, and that was his big thing.

MK: And was he very enthusiastic about El Greco?

GA: Oh, of course.

MK: Turned you on to El Greco and turned everybody else on, was that...?

GA: Well, we were all turned on to El Greco, anyway. This was before everybody was so turned on to Picasso, you know, though we knew about Picasso. Hilda and I taught-- because we had so many students whose painting was not at all strong, and they...

MK: People still do!

GA: Um hmm. ...they would do very decorative things, and their landscapes were very weak. So we worked hard on strengthening their inner sense of painting. I used to-- and this was before it was done as far as I know-- I would go to junkyards and drag home a lot of old pieces of automobiles and things that you couldn't identify,

fenders and all kinds of things.

MK: Yeah?

GA: And I'd set these things up as part of my class. I had people like Jan Thompson; and Carolyn Kizer; and Jan Thompson's mother, Susan Meyer, who was a marvelous person, and also a very good painter; and then a couple of other people who turned out to be really very good painters. I'm trying to think of one or two of them at the moment. I can see them. Let's see, one had a German name. I taught life class, and I had all these people in my life class. And then I had a very good person out from New York, by the name of Joseph Solman, who later became an abstract painter. At that time he was doing very rich landscapes and interiors, and things very much like Braque; he was, I think, the most schooled and [probably] the most intellectual of the group-- very well schooled in New York, very quiet, and very knowledgeable. He taught composition and that sort of thing. So, with my bunch, I would set up this bunch of old pieces of automobile stuff on the model stand, and I'd say, "Well, now you can do anything you want with them, and you can move them around, but in your mind. But don't let them look like anything. Don't put them together so they look like cows or airplanes or something like that. You must keep the design absolutely abstract."

MK: You made them stay with the form because there wasn't anything else.

GA: That's right. So they produced absolutely some of the most perfectly marvelous paintings. They could change the color as much as they wanted, they didn't have to do anything realistic, and they did remarkable things, and it was very good for them. So that was the first abstract teaching, I think, in that manner. And then Hilda was teaching in the basement; she was teaching and showing them, doing certain things in abstraction, and also she taught portraits in modeling. She has one of her best things that she did there down in the Portland Museum now, Singing Woman.

MK: I don't know that.

GA: She was doing these two things, you know. But one of them was a very abstract triangular thing, and I see that she still uses a triangular idea in her sculpture.

MK: That's true, isn't it?

GA: Um hmm.

MK: Was she doing any sculpture at that time?

GA: Was she what?

MK: Was she doing any sculpture, then?

GA: Oh, she would work right along with the other people in the basement. She had the whole concrete big basement, and once in a while I would take over. I didn't know anything about sculpture, but if she had to go to Seattle or someplace, well I would take over and just let them go on with what they were doing. (laughs)

MK: I see. These arrangements that you set up for your painting students, were they in your mind ever connected in any way with sculptural possibilities?

GA: Well, I was already doing collages, in rusty iron.

MK: You were?

GA: I did a couple of them over there.

MK: I knew you did, but I don't know the dates of those things.

GA: Well, I never kept them, because they were so heavy, and I don't know what happened to them. Well, I had done some of the...

MK: You have some collages upstairs? Two little things.

GA: Oh, little ones. I did a lot of the little ones later, and my best ones were at the gallery.

MK: Have you done that sort of thing off and on all through many decades, occasionally collages?

GA: Well, I started way back then, and probably before I went to Spokane. But I got so taken with this-- of course we were all aware of what Picasso and Braque had done, and also Schwitters, and people like that. But very few

of the people that we were teaching over there knew anything about it. Mostly just try to strengthen their inner painting, and it would be one of the most, still one of the essential reasons, I think, for doing it.

MK: But a kind of collage aesthetic was something that interested those of you who knew the European artists?

GA: I was already doing those things. None of those people that we were aware of in New York, like Stankewicz, who came through Spokane one time, and he wasn't doing those things, like... He went to New York and he became a very big name.

MK: Yes. Yes indeed, he did!

GA: Yes, he did. And he put together all kinds of automobile parts and everything, and I always liked him very much. I'm not saying that he grabbed ahold of that idea; he was probably already doing those things.

MK: Yes.

GA: [passing car obscures much of this paragraph] But there were a number of people out there I used to see, and people would come out from Washington. I've forgotten the man's name that directed the whole project. He would come out occasionally, and he would send us very good shows, and very, very fine paintings. I don't know where he got them, but...

MK: I'm trying to think. Would that have been Cahill? Holger Cahill?

GA: That's right, um hmm. Holger Cahill.

MK: I didn't know that he went round to all of those places.

GA: Um hmm. He came over a couple of times, and that school was rated by, not only him, but other people, the second best school of its kind in the United States. The other one was in New York City.

MK: That's wonderful. I didn't know that. I know that...

GA: Well, it was very productive. It was so good that when finally the whole thing ended, they had to keep it going. I think it still exists!

MK: Everyone who talks about it, talks about it with great respect and fondness, but I haven't heard that particular assessment of it.

[Part 4]

[GA and MK are in restaurant; frequent background noise--Ed.]

GA: I think that, I don't know what I was reading at that time, I suppose William [Gehrings, Billingsly] and other things like that. But mostly I was just decided on my own that it was just absolutely kind of wicked to be eating all these things, you know?

MK: So for about a year, you were a vegetarian?

GA: Yes.

MK: Did you make yourself sick, like people I've known who go on brown rice diets and pretty soon they're weak and can't think?

GA: (laughs) My family worried about me, and they thought maybe I was losing weight. I didn't lose weight or anything, everything was fine. Except it was very inconvenient for other people. It was not inconvenient for me, so much, because we always had lots of vegetables at home and we had a garden and also _____. I had just decided that that was a thing I had to do, so I did it. But as I got to going around to other people's places, it was a little bit inconvenient for them. So I decided just out of respect for other people that -- I think I was going as a guest somewhere -- that one must learn to eat whatever there is. Behave pretty much, otherwise don't go. (laughs)

MK: It's a choice you have to make, of respect for other people, or some kind of...

GA: So I just decided that maybe I was being too selfish, but it was probably that I wasn't quite strong enough to do it. Because I think that as far as the health thing is concerned, I've known a number of vegetarians, and they didn't have any problems at all. We have several vegetarians up here, and they're the healthiest looking people I've ever seen; Paul Miller, an architect, hasn't eaten meat for years!

MK: People work it out right. They get everything they need.

GA: And if you eat enough cheese and, or meat substitutes you might be all right. But for me it wasn't a matter of health at all, it was a matter of morals.

MK: Yes. A kind of sympathy and conviction.

GA: Yeah. So I say to friends of mine who are vegetarians up here, I say, "Well, now, is this a matter of health, or is it a matter of morals?" Because I do distinguish.

MK: What do they usually say?

GA: (laughs) In some in cases they really hadn't thought about it very much.

MK: They haven't?

GA: I think that mostly they say it is a matter of morals, but in some cases, it is a matter of health.

MK: Yes it is. In the last ten years, a lot of people have followed it from that point of view.

GA: Um hmm.

MK: A lot of people do it for morals in terms of world population and resources, rather than a morality that has to do with the unity of animal and human life. Those are the different kinds of moral principles some people choose among, let's say.

GA: Yes.

MK: This is chanaging the subject, but when you were talking last week about your trip to Mexico and Southern California, and being put in jail, and so forth, who were you with then?

GA: Well, it actually started off up here. I was with Morris Graves, and a friend of ours, who had an art major at the university by the name of Estelle Claussen. And I had met her...

MK: Estelle Claussen?

GA: Estelle Claussen. She lived with her aunt up in Everett. Her aunt, Mabel Ingersol Miller, had been a state legislator, and she liked Estelle very much. Aunt Mabel had a big house and all that sort of thing, and her sons were pretty well gone. One of her sons turned out to be a very important scenario writer, by the name of Seton Miller; he already was married and in California. The other son was still going to the university. Estelle was born on a farm over near Goldendale and as she was ready to go to college, [she--Ed.] came and lived with Mabel up in Everett. She was going to the university and she was a regular lit and art major, and a very smart, very intelligent person. She also joined up with the extra classes of Ziegler's downtown.

MK: Ahah. I was just going to ask where you met her, because you weren't there. So it was in Ziegler's classes you got to know her?

GA: Yes. She wanted to do more work with portraits, because she wanted to be a portrait painter; she turned out to be really quite a good one. But during the Depression, no one was doing anything about portraits or anything else. We got to know her quite well, Morris and I, and she said she would like very much to go along with us on this trip. They encouraged her because of her health, and all, because she had been working too hard in studies.

MK: So a trip would be good.

GA: She was a good-natured person, and was very literary. So the three of us set off in this old truck, a kind of an old Victory Wagon thing we bought. And it was a time when there was a shortage of gasoline, and mostly rationing of tires and everything, and besides no money.

MK: Yes. A whole combination of factors.

GA: We had pooled our money, what there was, and Dr. Fuller at the museum had given a hundred dollars toward the trip, something like that.

MK: Oh, I see.

GA: Yeah. We started off on the big fling and we had a wonderful time. (laughs) It was late spring, so we took our time and one of our first stops was down in Puyallup; we tried to stop places where we knew people, hoping to get invited to dinner. There was a wonderful person down there-- I can't even remember her name. But she

was a _____ woman, and raised all kinds of bulbs and things like that, and she had a had a very elegant house, and we got to know her somewhat. And so she was quite pleased by the whole thing. She was into theater and had a house with a pool, and kind of a Greek theater out of doors.

MK: How nice!

GA: I don't quite get her name now, but she's a perfectly marvelous person.

MK: You must have spent more than one night there, then.

GA: (laughs) So when she found out that we were camped over in the little park, she invited us over and turned her place over and had a little show for us. Of course we didn't sell anything. But I remember that at that time, why we were all painting animals and farm things, and hoping that they were a bit like Van Gogh or Gauguin or somebody like that.

MK: So you all took your art supplies with you?

GA: Oh yes.

MK: Purpose of the trip was to be a sketching trip, and a study trip, and a...?

GA: This was a sketching trip, and a study, eventually to get to Los Angeles, and then across the border to Mexico. But especially to get down through that country, and see that country, and to stop where it was pretty, and try to earn our living as we went.

MK: So Morris left and came back to Seattle before you did. Is that right? And you and Estelle stayed in the L.A. area alone?

GA: We were entertained by Estelle's cousin, who was the scenario writer, and also Morris had connections with somebody that he had known earlier on some trip to Japan, who later turned out to be an artist and a teacher in a college in San Francisco. Let me see if I can remember his name now, Milton Ecke and his family. Milton was working with studios in Hollywood, and they lived over on, I think Sunset Boulevard. [**GA:** 1/4/84: Ecke designed sets and furniture in L.A. in 1930s; later changed first name.] So between the Seton Millers, who lived very elegantly and the Milton Eckes, we were taken care of for a while. And this is where I joined up with my friend who was from Everett, who was a close friend and neighbor of Seton Miller, and also of Estelle Claussen.

MK: Your close friend that you joined up with, what was his name?

GA: Oh, his name was Ed Engel.

MK: Okay. So he's the one you got thrown in jail with. Now it's caught up.

GA: Yes. And he, and he had just finished at Annapolis. Later on he became a commander. They snatched him up. But he never really liked the military very much at all. It was an opportunity to go through college, and it was manipulated by his mother and Mrs. Harry John Miller [Mabel Ingersol Miller], who was a state legislator and neighbor. Ed Engel was a very intelligent and very studious young man, so he completed his four years, and he came through very well. What he really wanted to be was a city planner; he didn't want to be in the military at all.

MK: That was a new concept then?

GA: Right. He later became city planner for the city of Los Angeles. This was after we had been in jail and as we got out, he said, "I'm going to one day get picked up for vagrancy in Los Angeles and I'm going to sue the city and I'm going to win." And later on what he did was marry an heiress and become a city planner for the city of Los Angeles. (laughs) Later on he was the manager for a city in New Mexico -- Albuquerque -- for 13 years, and then when I last saw him, he was in administration at New Mexico State University at Las Cruces.

MK: He got around!

GA: He had remarried some charming young woman, a good student I'm not sure, but anyway he said, "I do want you to meet my new wife." He had abandoned his heiress, who he always referred to as having bundles, but they had two sons that were grown and they were very nice boys. It seemed to be rather typical, not only of university professors, but of other professional people, as they grow older, you know, to run into graduate students, and fall in love and vice versa.

MK: Figured he could do [lost phrase]...

GA: [and a good thing, too.]

MK: Oh, I know them all the time, [lost phrase].

GA: I know they're there; the world seems to be full of them. (laughs) And at this party the other night at Barbara and Clayton's [James] there was a young man there who was the son of a former University of Washington person, and who became a meteorologist, by the name of Ed Danielson. He also was a good painter and a very good friend of Paul Mills. He went to the University of Washington and got a... Paul Mills later became the director of the Oakland Museum and drifted up, and I think he now is director of Santa Barbara. But they were very good friends, and at that time I was still studying and so I knew them. We also knew this boy's mother who is no longer living, and she became professional ballet dancer, and then had -- she was born right out here as a matter of fact, a Wagner, Jean Wagner, and she married Ed Danielson. But she had to give up ballet because she got that, what's it called, fever something? Rheumatic fever.

MK: Oh, that's a serious thing.

GA: Yes. So she was already a professional ballet person, so she came back out here to live, and then she married Ed. Her son, who's 29 years old, turned up at this party the other night. So he wanted to know, of course, about how I knew his mother, and so I told him everything I knew, you know, with reservations. He was very interested. He didn't know that his father was a very good friend and a very good painter, his father was quite a good painter, but his father teaches meteorology at some university, I think, either Montana or Idaho, and has been that for a long time. But, speaking of professors who get younger wives all the time -- we were talking about tha. Ed is on his third wife and she has children by a former marriage, and so then Dins [a son--Ed.] and he lived with his father for a while, but now the younger son, Paul, is off in San Francisco, but I was saying that his father had always been a very good abstract painter.

MK: And he knew nothing of it?

GA: He didn't. He didn't know anything about it. He said, "Now, when we were that year on Crete, he went and lived on Crete when the boys were young.

MK: Where? On Crete?

GA: In the Greek Islands, Crete. And he said he remembered that his father was sketching all the time and drawing, and that Paul had some of the drawings. And I said, "Well, I remember when your father worked in pure abstraction and watercolor, and they were very beautiful and, well, I think that kind of abstraction probably relates to maybe meteorology, you know."

MK: His son said that, or you said that?

GA: No, I said that.

MK: I see.

GA: So Dins, his son, took a great interest in this idea, and he said, "I'm going to ask my father about those." He said "I've never seen a one of them." I said, "I noticed your mother had a very beautiful one; I don't know what happened to it."

MK: When did you know his father to be painting? In the forties, in the thirties-- well before his son was born?

GA: Let me see, it was about the time-- he and Paul were finished at the University, and this was when he met Jean, who was also at the university, and had gone back to the university after she had had to give up ballet. That's where she met Ed, then they had lived together for a while and then they were married. I told him [Paul?] also why they finally did get married, because of the parents.

MK: But you don't know when that was?

GA: It was a very formal marriage, and so Ed said to Jeannie, "Well, you know, when we go on our honeymoon, we can say as we get into bed, 'Well, here we are again, honey.'" (laughs)

MK: Yes. In those words?

GA: I'm not sure I should be telling the son this, but it's all right. He's heard it.

MK: Well, I think nowadays.

GA: Oh yes. Twenty-nine years.

MK: Well, was that before the war that they were married?

GA: Well, let me see... In the university, they were not married at that time. When Life Magazine came out with a thing on a group of us, called "Mystic Painters of the Northwest," why... You don't remember that year?

MK: That was '52 or '3, I think.

GA: Okay. It was right around then.

MK: I see. It was after the war and about the time...

GA: Yeah. So, shortly after that Ed and Jean were married and Paul Mills went away. Shortly after that Ed, too, worked at the Oakland Museum.

MK: How many abstract painters were there in Seattle in the early fifties? Say 1950, 1952?

GA: I think that a lot of people had experimented, and we had all experimented maybe a little bit, but...

MK: I see.

GA: ...you see, that way, I had already been teaching-- Hilda Morris and I, in '39.

MK: I remember. Yeah. Then really before the war.

GA: So maybe it was a little earlier than '52, but something reminded me of that, when that came out. [The Life Magazine article] Because I was over in the [university] district, and somebody waved that magazine at me, and...

MK: Oh really? That was the first you saw it?

GA: And I think it was Paul Mills and Ed... I didn't even know anything about it, they said...

So, anyway, we did have a very good trip down the coast. We stopped at a lot of places. We would buy furniture and antiques (this was Morris Graves and Estelle Claussen and myself) and resell them, and we managed to get by. Once in a while we'd get a little job picking strawberries or something, but that didn't last very long, and you worked so hard and you made so little money.

MK: Were you trying to pick up antiques and take them on into the next big city, and...?

GA: We did, we did. And if we'd find an abandoned house, we'd try to get in the basement or the attic, and we even found a spool bed one time, a very good one.

MK: You put it in the truck.

GA: One place we almost got caught. One time we did get caught. (laughs)

MK: You said you were you looking for a place to sleep?

GA: Somewhere in the middle of Oregon, I don't remember the town. We spent some time in Oregon; it was a nice long summer, beautiful country, and we painted.

MK: Now by that time how well did you know Morris? You'd known him for a long time by then?

GA: Well, I had know Morris since he was 19 years old and I was 23. And I had already been to New York on the Tiffany Foundation thing, had come back, and was living in a little studio...

MK: Oh, you met him after you came back?

GA: Oh, yes. I was living with my parents in Edmonds. I had a little studio up on a hill, in a little house up there that was kind of a cabin thing, built actually for my aunt Dorothy [Bruckart--Ed.], who had been a personnel supervisor for Bell Telephone years, and was of the age, and was not well at all. My family had a place down, well, it was all one property, kind of up in the trees and then down on the flat, and there was a garage and a workshop. My father was always building boats and all kinds of things. He was into building small houses and that sort of thing, and later on moved onto our garage. But in those days why, of course, it was in the pre-Depression, and after coming home from New York, I first encountered Morris when I was building a chair, that funny settee that's in the garden which I call Recamier. Of a piece of cedar, I had built that, which I call Recamier Rustique. It was from looking at those wonderful Roman things in the museums in the east then. And I thought, "Well, those Greek and Roman settees, I wonder if I can build one." So my father had all these tools

home and stuff, so I got a piece of cedar and built it, just like that. And I was also building another chair which I have upstairs in the studio, an armchair. And I had just finished this and...

MK: Was it the armchair that I probably noticed, that was sitting out in the center, fairly near the door?

GA: Yes, uh huh. And that dates to [that time]. And so I just thought, "Well, I think I'm going to build a chair, now." I think I had already built the little Roman settee. So I worked away on that, and I started with just one piece of wood, a very beautiful piece of wood my father gave me, and I sawed and sawed, and it was all hand done, and mortised and tenoned and all that stuff.

MK: Oh, it is? I _____ at all.

GA: Oh yes. I learned how to do that in high school, and mostly from being around my father. He could build beautiful tables and things like that. He built a table one time, I'd like to have it, an octagonal table that a nephew of mine has inherited, and it has, in the top it has something like 320 pieces, in a pineapple design. He worked regularly in our basement , built that. I was very young when he did that, and I remember I used to watch him, and I didn't know quite how this was going to come out, the design, you know, and it came out to be this beautiful table. So he had that, you know, he was very _____. But anyway, I had finished this chair, and Morris came along, and so he was very, he was into all that sort of thing, and I didn't know who he was at all. But he talked like a painter and he knew a great deal about design. He was more into furniture than he was into painting. He knew [chairs], and I knew a little bit about that sort of thing, you know. But he would talk about periods of architecture, and Duncan Phyfe and a number _____ _____.

MK: Where had he been picking this up? Were these things out of high school, public high school?

GA: Well, it was in public high school and going to museums and things like that, and that was... He and his brothers were building a little studio out in north Edmonds on his family's place. His family lived in north Edmonds and had gotten away from Seattle. His father was a manager of Evergreen Cemetery, I think owned part of them, and we always thought it was very odd and used to kid Morris about this because of the name of Graves. (laughs)

MK: Yes, yes! (laughs)

GA: They weren't too happy about papa's business, you know. It was very lucrative, anyway.

MK: I didn't realize that's what his father did. Well, it's lucrative and it involves elements of design, and design appeal to the general public, and all kinds of things, that a lot of businesses don't, often in a kind of funny skewed way, I suppose.

GA: So, at that time Morris wasn't painting in oil and that sort of thing. I was already stretching my own canvases, and was painting in oil and doing portraits of my family.

MK: Had you exhibited? You probably had.

GA: What?

MK: You had exhibited by this point?

GA: Yes. Once or twice in the Seattle Fine Arts Society, a juried show. It wasn't wangled in at all. One of the first ones I showed in-- Tobey had something in it, Walter Isaacs, and Ambrose Patterson, and I think I still have the little folder, a very few people, 20 people or something like that.

MK: How many of those people did you know by this time? You were very young, and...

GA: I didn't know most of the people.

MK: Did you know Tobey, or Patterson, or...?

GA: I didn't know Tobey at that time at all.

MK: Did you know any of the university people? Did you know Isaacs, or Patterson?

GA: Oh, I knew their painting, and then later on I met them, but I just commuted from Edmonds, and that sort of thing, and went to my classes, and whenever I could go to the Henry Gallery, or something. I spent a lot of time in Seattle Public Library looking at books.

MK: And you met people that you could through Ziegler, and through his class, but that was your main access to

people at that time?

GA: Uh huh. And I had known, of course, people in the east. But then I came back out here, and of course I didn't know the university group at all. I knew them later.

MK: Did you meet Tobey after he came back from England? Was that when you met Tobey?

GA: Well, it must have been, because I think that he was living at the Marne Hotel and I think he was connected with the Cornish School.

MK: That's right, yes.

GA: And I remember going up there and meeting him for the first time, that strange elevator, marvelous elevator that no longer exists, a kind of like a birdcage, very very old fashioned.

MK: Oh, one of the old-fashioned elevators.

GA: But other than that I don't particularly remember. I didn't know that he was an important painter anyway. I didn't know that until later when I knew Margaret and Kenneth Callahan.

MK: Yeah. I see.

GA: Because she had "The Town Crier" and was into _____ art, she kept track of all those things, and they were very nice, and probably helped Tobey socially as much as anybody, at least who knew him very well. And then in, what was it, 1933, Kenneth became curator of, an assistant to, Dr. Fuller at the museum. He hadn't really been schooled that much at all, for that kind of duties, but he was very apt at it, and mostly he was interested in painting. They lived very simply in a little walk-up apartment somewhere in the south end of Seattle.

MK: The Callahans?

GA: The Callahans, yes. Kenneth was already into quite a lot of drawing, and some of them were used in the Town Crier almost like cartoons, commentary, you know.

MK: I didn't realize that!

GA: Um hmm.

MK: I wonder if I've seen them and not realized they were his. I don't remember them when I look back.

GA: Uh huh. And...

MK: Well, anyway, by this time you'd known Morris a long time, and very well.

GA: Well, not too long. Let's see.

MK: Do you remember for sure what year you had the Tiffany scholarship, because one publication says '26,...

GA: No.

MK: ...and other publications say '29. Is '29 right?

GA: Well, either '29, '30, or '31.

MK: Okay. But not '26.

GA: Because I've lost the photographs and everything on that. I had their little book. For a while they would put out things very much like the Guggenheim; you remember the little booklet you got every year, was like I did with the Guggenheim.

MK: Alums. Yes.

GA: Every year, you knew, it would get bigger and bigger. It's like Who's Who in America in Art. And then one got in Who's Who, and now Who's Who in the World, is the new one. And so I just don't bother to build those things up anymore (laughs), even though it's all right. But to begin with, why, it's kind of interesting. The Tiffany Foundation thing I don't think they carried that on too far, but still there is a Tiffany Foundation thing; they give grants, now, like Guggenheim [does] because they don't have a school anymore.

MK: For people to do what they want, but not for a residence.

GA: That is a very juried affair, and it's very much like a small Guggenheim. And so there are three or four of those things that... For instance Michael Shafford had one, and he also had a Prix de Rome for two years.

MK: That's right, Prix de Rome; he had a Prix de Rome and something else.

GA: I think he had the Tiffany again, didn't he?

MK: I don't know; I'm not sure.

GA: I think so. Because they're still current, as far as I know. Somebody must have been very careful with all of those funds, because Tiffany spent the entire fortune; there was nothing left when he died.

MK: Yeah, I guess I have heard that.

GA: Oh yes, I have the book on it; I have the history of it.

MK: I've never seen his house.

GA: Well, you see the house is pretty much destroyed now. Part of it is burned down, and I think _____ . And there were two or three little museums on the estate, one given over to Oriental art, and very good as I remember. Oh, yes. And the other was a little museum...

[Part 5]

[There appear to be a few missing sentences between the two tapes--Ed.]

GA: You see, when he discovered Munch, Edvard Munch, and then all of a sudden, you know, they take on a new thing, which is much closer to [D.H. Lawrence's] than those other little watercolors of the English.

MK: Well, I haven't looked at all that. Anyway, I didn't mean to distract you from Morris Graves. When you met him, did he criticize your chair? Did he say, "I could help you build a better chair?"

GA: Well, it must have been, then, let me see-- it had to be not much later than maybe two or three years. We were already sending to the Northwest Annual, that was a big thing in Seattle. When he got to painting for a year or so, he painted the swan called Moor Swan, a big black swan. And I knew as soon as I looked at it, it was a very good painting, and he sent that in and of course he got first prize. That was the year that Duncan Phillips came out and was the sole juror.

MK: I didn't realize that. Okay, that's... So Duncan Phillips saw that early work right away, right then?

GA: He came out, and he juried the show that year.

MK: Does his loyalty to Graves date right from then?

GA: Yes, it does. Right. And he said, he was very enthus... He didn't know Morris from any of us out here, but they made this public announcement that he was available, and would come out for the show, and so he was very professional about it. As soon as he saw this bird thing, which he insisted on having for the first award, he said, "Well, this fellow is very talented." And then he made a sexual remark which I will not repeat, about the difference between, you know, the kinds of art.

MK: Yes. He could tell? He thought he could tell.

GA: Well, it's an old remark about piss and vinegar, and he said, "Well, that's not this. It's sex." He says, "It's in this bird." And I won't say the other word.

MK: Okay.

GA: (laughs) But everyone knows the old saying. And, so they relayed that information to Morris, and _____ _____. And then from there out, he followed Morris's work, and now, Morris, you see now, I think it's next week that they open his show at the Phillips. Now Duncan Phillips is no longer living.

MK: And the Phillips gallery is doing another show!

GA: Oh, yes. It's still going. And then I think the second Phillips is no longer living. And I think the present director's name is deLooper. But he has an interest in the Northwest and he has an interest, _____ in my work and not just because I knew Morris or anything like that, but he used to say that he likes what I do. I've never met him or anything. I did get to know Raymond Kass, whose done all of the digging for Graves out here for the last year or so for this show coming up, because he's doing a book.

MK: Who's doing the book? Who's writing it? Is it Kass's book?

GA: Well, now, Raymond Kass has partly to do with it, and how much of the rest of it is done-- I presume deLooper has a lot to do with it. How much the Phillips, before he died-- I don't think this Phillips was Duncan; it might be, if it was Duncan, he must be very old, because he was much older than we were. When he came out here, he was a very mature person, Duncan Phillips.

MK: Is this Graves show they're doing now a complete retrospective? So they were looking for very early things?

GA: Um hmm. They're doing a lot of things. Raymond Kass I know was doing a lot of the preliminary work on the biography, because he called me... He teaches at the University of West Virginia; it's one of the local universities. And he's quite a good painter himself, Kass is. He was born and raised in Brooklyn, another Brooklyn person who became quite a good teacher and art student, and all that sort of thing, and a good painter. And so he got the job of doing this whole thing, and they came out here two different summers that I know of. And then when he was rounding up the whole final thing, a few months ago, he used to call me from the east and we talked a whole hour! (laughs)

MK: To check details.

GA: I said, "I'm glad you're paying for this." And he said, "Well, I'm not paying for it; the Institute is paying for it."

MK: I'm sure Phillips collection could afford it.

GA: He said, "There are a lot of things I simply have to know about because I'm concluding the written material." So I presume he's the primary writer.

MK: I'll look forward to seeing it.

GA: He was a very aggressive and a very interesting person. And everybody, for a while, just kind of froze, because he was so aggressive. He [dug] right in and there was no stopping him. Wesley Wehr got very cross at him, because he wanted to get into all Wesley's...

MK: Who got cross at him? Wesley? Wes did?

GA: Well, he just insisted on seeing all of the records, and he wanted Wesley to give him all of the stuff he'd written and...well, Wesley's been working on it for 20 years. Why should he let somebody come in from the outside and just take over everything, take over all the gravy, when he was the one who really knows. Wesley writes very well for Tobey, and he wrote very well about Imogen Cunningham, and he is the person who's been doing it for a long time.

MK: Scrupulous, and...

GA: And he's very as _____, he's very jealous about everything, you know. There are certain areas that he wasn't going to let Kass just railroad in and take over, and I think he was quite right.

MK: And he held out?

GA: Well, I guess so; I don't know. (laughs) I know that Kass got 'round in every other place, and for a while... I didn't know, you see, we didn't really know quite what he was into to begin with, and I thought that maybe he was-- oh, he got wind of the whole business that Tobey, Graves, Callahan, and all this-- and was doing a book, and that's what Wes kind of thought, you know.

MK: On the whole thing, rather than just one person.

GA: Yeah. And one didn't know, until a little later when he assured everyone that he was just doing this for the retrospective and the book was being done on Morris for the Phillips. Because the Phillips did do one on Morris Graves's drawings, you know.

MK: I know that.

GA: They didn't select too well for that, because I have the book. They should have worked a little harder. I think that they selected on kind of-- which is a typical thing today-- the finished, beautiful drawing, rather than the more intense and the more penetrating work. They didn't select very well; because I knew Morris's, and knew all of them, because I knew him when he was first painting and everything, when he was first doing the white writing things other than _____ such pure art and was working alone, up on The Rock up here, when Dorothy Miller first brought his things to the Museum of Modern Art. I knew all of those paintings. When I was still working in Edmonds part time and had a studio there, when Morris would have a new batch of bird drawings and

everything, he'd come by and I was the first human being that saw them, you know.

MK: You'd be the first eye and the first feedback.

GA: Um hmm. And I remember [painting name] and that was after Dorothy Miller. And then, when he got off on the white writing and so many of those things...

[Break in tape]

MK: But did the family resist the artistic inclinations, or...?

GA: Well, when they found out he was very talented, of course, why there would be-- I don't think they would be able to stop Morris anyway, because he was too much into it.

MK: I see.

GA: And besides, nobody else, in the Depression days, had any money, they didn't have any jobs, they didn't have anything. Everybody was still going to school or surviving the best they way they could.

MK: So that made the difference a little less obvious and made it an easier thing to do?

GA: Russell was the next oldest to us. He was still going to the university most of the time when I knew him, and then Phillip was older than Russell. And then it goes up [to--Ed.] Robert and there are two more; I don't quite remember the names now.

MK: How many of those brothers were involved in building the bunkhouse that you and Morris were involved in?

GA: Well, mostly just Russell was building the studio with Morris. It's a very nice little building, very nice, like French provincial; they were very aware of what they were doing. The family [home--Ed.] was kind of a big log house up on the hill which was homely, you know. It worked and everything, and it wasn't very pretty (laughs), and...

[Break in tape]

[Subject of the following is Robert Gardner, the ethnographer who made a film about Mark Tobey in Seattle in the early fifties (Mark Tobey Artist, 1951)--Ed.]

GA: So I said to him, I said, "Are you related to Mrs. Gardner of the Boston Museum?" And he said, "Yes, I'm a nephew." (laughs)

MK: I didn't know that! I see!

GA: He just came up [through] that whole thing. But he was a very pleasant person, and he went up, I remember he went up and into the islands, the Queen Charlottes, and did a lot of photography up there. Now whether that was in connection with the Tobey thing that he did, I can't quite remember.

MK: I don't think it was.

GA: I don't think it was; I think it was a separate thing.

MK: He was interested in ethnography and the Indian culture as a study in itself, and I don't know whether he talked about things like that with people like you and Tobey, or whether those were separate interests from that he had in contemporary art. Did you and the other artists you knew go up and go to Indian performances and know Indian artists? Some people have told me that the Indians still did things.

GA: Well, yes. I used to come up here with Erna Gunther, and...

MK: Oh, you knew her?

GA: Yes. And Betty Willis and Morris, and also a dancer by the name of Eleanor King, who came out and lived here a number of years, who's been with the [Humphrey-Wiedman] group in New York and was a dance composer as well as performer. She lived out here several years; I knew her very, very well. So we used to come up with Erna Gunther... And the Indians over here had a long house, all of cedar, and every year the Indians would come from all over, Tulalip and up farther north, and also up the river, and the various Northwest Indians would sometimes come down from the islands, sometimes down from Vancouver. And they would all congregate and have the regular festival on January 21st, 22nd, 23rd. I think that was it; it was a midwinter festival. And the longhouse was built like a typical longhouse, and all, with several layers alongside. And the families would come,

and they'd all have a big thing, and lots of cooking and lots of dancing, and they would build three big bonfires; there were holes in the roof, but it was terribly smoky.

MK: And did they let you people in?

GA: Well, yes, through Erna Gunther, we, I happened to be there the first time it was ever photographed by a newspaper. But before that it was a very private affair; they didn't encourage people to come, but we did go, and you had to get used to the smoke and _____.

Now, he's [a cat--MK.] hurt now. He's been fighting. Well look at that! He's going in to sit in that covered box in there. Oh poor _____. I boil up chicken and things for them all the time; they're really very well fed.

MK: They look healthy, except if they fight...

GA: I wonder if there's some other kind of a thing that affects their locomotion. He was perfectly all right yesterday. They looked very healthy. They're the two boys from different batches that we kept on, and then the mother, Sufi and... Hmm. I wonder if they would... Some people say raccoons carry certain kinds of things.

MK: Yes, raccoons can, I think, carry rabies.

GA: Is it rabies?

MK: Well, if the squirrels can carry rabies, like any wild animal can, can't they?

GA: Well, they come and you see them late at night. There's a bunch of them, they come and clean up everything, and eat out of the same dishes.

MK: And eat all the cat food that's left over, washing them in the cat's water. I would keep my eye on it.

GA: So this thing then of...

MK: Was there Indian dancing then, or...?

GA: Oh yes. They had dancing and they would go into trance, and they used a kind of a thing with four holes in it they put the fingers in, to go into the trance; there was a shaman, and they also used a sort of a staff. And so they would go into this trance and they would make very strange noises like, "Oh, oh," [a high pitched sound spoken in falsetto voice--Ed.], and then they would get up and dance. And apparently they were really into this thing, and they would dance around the bonfires and in the smoke. That's the only way with these three fires, with the holes in the ceiling of this longhouse. So we would, of course, always stand on the edges and away from them, but I got a chance to see them up quite close, some of the men, and they were in, whatever it was, a self-induced, some kind of hypnosis.

MK: Was the trance, the self-induced trance, something that large numbers of them entered into, or were they just a couple?

GA: No, no. Only certain dances, and then I think that concerning these, the dances were always the same; they weren't very inventive. They just kind of jumped from one foot to the other and jumped on the _____, but always made this sound when they were jumping. So Eleanor King studied them, and she actually made... But there were several from the more northern Indians who had more inventive dances. And one was a little woman who had a Klahowya dance. And it wasn't like the other ones at all; it wasn't in trance at all. They danced, and they danced rather inventive dances. But the ones in trance seemed to do the same thing; they weren't dancing as a thing of dance; It was a thing of therapy, I think. It was kind of like the wailing wall. And so sometimes they'd have trouble getting them out of the trance; they'd really have to work at them quite a while.

MK: Oh, I see.

GA: And they would...

MK: Was it a great drain, the whole experience? Or was it a very remote thing from their own experiences?

GA: Well, they were just _____, after they danced, they would keep on, just going, "Ohn, ohn" like they were, almost like they were wailing in pain. And they would have them hang on to a stick and then encourage them to come back.

MK: Who would encourage them? The shamans?

GA: Well, the older shamans, the older men, you know.

MK: Where was this longhouse? Was it over almost in La Conner?

GA: Well, it burned down finally, like so many things do. It was north up where the present longhouse is over here, which was built by Henry Klein, a very nice building [actually not a longhouse; a recreation hall--GA--1/4/84]. There are two buildings over there that are built recently with federal funds in the last seven or eight, ten years, and...

MK: This was over in the Swinomish Reservation?

GA: Swinomish. And then they built other buildings, too; those were all very new. But when they had the longhouse, there were none of those other buildings; they had only very small houses, and they lived all scattered through the woods in very, very rustic little cabins and improvised, living sometimes with only dirt floors. They were quite impoverished during those days. It was all... There was one period when, earlier, when they had a fish trap, they were supposed to be the most self-sufficient Indian tribe in the whole United States.

MK: Oh really.

GA: They had clam beds, they had lots of fishing, they had oyster beds, and they had a fish trap. And they also had enough timber that they could sell a certain amount of timber, and they had a sawmill.

MK: They had _____ so to speak.

GA: But then they finally ran out of timber, and the fish traps weren't kept up, and the... So then they fell back into... And there weren't any government funds then, you see.

MK: From bad to worse.

GA: So then they fell back into being very impoverished, just like all the rest of us during the Depression.

MK: Were you familiar with their ceremonies before the Depression, back in your youth?

GA: No, not before the Depression; I didn't get to know them until I moved up here and lived in that old cabin out on the Johnson farm.

MK: Which was when?

GA: Which was, let's see, when I finally gave up teaching altogether; it was in the fifties.

MK: Did you know Erna Gunther before the war, or did you become friends with her after the war?

GA: Well, I knew her off and on through other people who were interested in dance and all that sort of thing, when she was teaching at the university. I used to go to her little Indian museum in the old forestry building, years ago. That was one of the few places I really used to go and study quite a bit.

MK: That was a predecessor of the Burke collection [University of Washington ethnographic and natural history museum--Ed.].

GA: Um hmm. That was a predecessor before the Burke. And they, she had a wonderful collection; an awful lot of it was stolen, you know.

MK: Oh, no. I didn't know that.

GA: Oh, yes.

MK: From the institution, or from her personally?

GA: Well, they didn't have money to have a guard or anything. I used to wonder how all these things sat around. Well, a lot of [different, little] rattles and things just disappeared.

MK: _____ _____

GA: They couldn't make it public, you see, because then it would be a game. It's like all kinds of theft in public places; you don't talk about it.

MK: Sure.

GA: So, but what was left-- why that's how that I got to know her a little bit, through people at the Henry Gallery, and Betty Willis, who was a curator at the Henry Gallery for a while and was a very good friend of Erna's, and

through other people. But I did know her a little bit through some other connection; I don't remember what it was. I used to go to parties occasionally where she would be, and she knew that we had an interest in that sort of thing, so she was very nice about it. She was made, finally, a member of the tribe over here; I'm sure she was a member of many tribes.

MK: I'll bet. Yeah. Knowing her publications.

GA: Yes. Later on, there were younger anthropologists that were studying who were usually students of hers-- I think one was called Joyce White-- who came up and lived up here for a while; and there were several others who came from other places. The last I heard of Joyce [she--Ed.] was on some kind of trip up the Amazon. I hope she got back! (laughs) That was a long time ago!

MK: (laughs) You lose touch with people?

GA: She was terribly funny. She wandered around all over the neighborhood, very curious about knowing the Indian. But there were some more serious anthropologists, I think, who came later and tried to get into the history of the people, and they would interview the older Indians and all. I got to know some of the older Indians over here, and some of the families, just at the tavern; this is where you meet them.

MK: I see. Do you know Bill Holm, who teaches Northwest Indian art now?

GA: Well, I've never known him personally, but I know his books, and I have seen his dancing; he's done a lot of very good things.

MK: When you and other people you knew were reading the Joseph Campbell books, did the Indian art or Indian performances have any interest in relation to Joseph Campbell's accounts of myths of the world, and...?

GA: Well, I think that... This particular tribe over here, this group of Indians, is a part of the whole larger group of Salish; and then also the Skagit; and then this particular smaller group is Swinomish. They very always a very friendly tribe of people, who were presumed on by the other Indians. They used to come because they had everything here. They were not aggressive people; they were not warring people at all; and because they didn't, they had everything.

MK: They weren't competitive.

GA: No!

MK: It was all here, and they were close to everything.

GA: It was all here! And they had the lovely forest, and this was all very big cedar forest for protection in the winter, and I suppose that in the early days when it was warm, they didn't have to bother about clothing, and the winters were mild enough when you have a big forest to get under. And you have plenty of clams and you can fish. There's no reason to go to war. So what happened to them was that the more aggressive tribes from farther north, and also from eastern Washington, would come over the pass over here, from the other end of Lake Chelan, and this is where they took their slaves!

MK: Oh.

GA: So, let Uni in. [another cat--Ed.] [Anderson's voice from a distance:] Your cousin's out there, your feline cousin.

[Break in tape]

MK: Go back to talking about Morris Graves and yourself, and what happened when you were making the chair and he walked up. [brief silence follows--Ed.] Well, did you know Dudley Carter, while we are on that subject [cedar forests and Indian culture--MK]?

GA: Yes. I did know him a bit, and I always admired him very, very much. He did that very nice cedar figure that was near the Henry Gallery for a long time. Is it still there?

MK: You mean near the Volunteer Park museum?

GA: No. Near the Henry Gallery.

MK: No, I don't know it.

GA: Let me see. I don't know what happened to that. It was down just to the lower part. I think when they put

that overpass that they might have taken it away. It was just a single standing figure of a female, a nude Indian, and I always thought it was one of the best things around here.

MK: Well, I wonder where it went. I don't...

GA: I have no idea, but I think someone should inquire. I know a lot of people just didn't think it was very good modern art. But they think that of James Washington, too, you know; he doesn't go in with all of the new fads and everything, but they both are very very good people and very good sculptors, probably [two--Ed.] of our best.

MK: Oh I know. I think Dudley Carter is very conservative to a lot of people, but he seems to me to have very sound, strong, simple kinds of form, and very _____...

GA: Um hmm. Always has been. And just went on doing what he wanted to do. I know that when he did some carving-- I believe it was the San Francisco, where he went down to do a rather large piece for that particular big World's Fair they had down there. They had a number of people, among them Mexicans, and I don't think that was in Seattle; no, that was in San Francisco. And it was said, that Rivera said, about Dudley Carter, that he was one of the few Americans he thought was a real sculptor.

MK: Interesting.

GA: Um hmm.

MK: Well, when did Dudley Carter leave, or die, or...?

GA: Well, he's still living.

MK: Oh. Where?

GA: I read something about him the other day.

MK: He's not in this area, then, is he?

GA: I think he is; I think he lives over not too far away. And he was doing a piece for some big, new store. And I was just as amazed as could be.

MK: I should keep my mouth shut then. I had no idea!

GA: You see, he always had a problem of hearing (he must have had an accident or something very early), so it was very difficult to communicate with him. But I knew him when he had a place, of like, over at Bellevue. He had a very big shed over there, and he just did commissions here and there. Any place there was a new store, or something like that, he was right there with his act. And they said, in this article I only read two or three weeks ago-- you might ask the newspapers. Who would know about it? It was one of those people who write things for newspapers; I don't know whether Hackett, or...

MK: Sue Ann Kendall.

GA: Yeah, Kendall or one of those people. And so they went into this thing, and I was quite pleased. It was in one of those things in the newspaper.

MK: But as a result of his hearing problem or his own personal inclinations, he was not around and active and sociable as much some of the other people you knew, then?

GA: Well, no. He just has seemed to always be very, very much working away at something, and maybe, because of his deafness, he wasn't very social. But of course, he must be quite old now, because he's older than I am. And they were amazed that he would still get up and chop out his figures. He's working on one, I think, in Portland, right now!

MK: And still working in wood.

GA: He's still working in great big hunks of stuff!

MK: So he has worked on _____ from the east and then...

GA: I know there's one or two. There's one we passed over in Bellevue just the other day, and I said that's got to be a Dudley Carter, a great big huge thing. He would go out in the woods and he would just start chopping on a

big cedar tree. There was one that we ran into, way over near, hmm, by some lake over east of Lake Washington, some little lake, I've forgotten the name of it. We found out what that was; he had gotten ahold of a big tree and then he was going to do the entire thing and then fell the tree, and...

MK: Sort of work it on the site, then cut the tree down.

GA: Yes, he was working on site. And we wondered at the time, if he was just doing this, and he was going to leave it right in the forest. That was a long time ago, but I remember us running onto it in _____ studio.

MK: That takes care of a lot of studio problems!

GA: It's very exciting; it's very beautiful. It was a very big tree.

MK: Supports and things.

GA: But he was doing it on a springboard, or a scaffold around it, and it had to be his thing, though he wasn't working on it, but we guessed it was his.

MK: Another thing that I've been curious to ask you about is whether music plays any role in your relationships with other artists or in your own work. Obviously you are, and your family also was interested in music, and I know that some of the people you know, like Mark Tobey, were interested in music. Was that a strong interest and bond between some of you?

GA: Well, my father played clarinet when he was quite young, and he also directed a little band in Edmonds; we used to go down...

[Part 6]

GA: At home we always had a piano, and violins, and my father would play a certain amount of violin, but mostly, just kind of chording, like he chorded at the piano and we'd all sing, and do all that sort of thing. My sister, who's very talented, studied a number of years with a very good man who played in the Seattle Symphony, by the name of Hale Dewey. And so she had a good training as a violinist and played really quite well. She could have gone on and been rather professional, but she decided she would marry and didn't continue it, but...

MK: But you still play, apparently; do you?

GA: Well, I studied piano for five or six years.

MK: Oh, you still have one here.

GA: Um hmm. Yeah, I still play a little bit, at night, just for fun. But mostly I knew that I'd never be a real performer, though I gave my recital and that sort of thing when I was still in high school. I had a very good teacher who was a graduate of Oberlin, and she had been the wife of a missionary in Japan, and settled down after her husband died somewhere. I don't think that he was done away with by the Japanese at all; I think they finally came back. But she had grown children, and, but she was a very good teacher, and so I got into that. But it was purely of love of music; I never thought of myself as being a professional. I think what it has done is that I learned to listen to music! Like these are new records I've been playing of Haydn's-- they were just brought down by the Reed Merrills-- they're perfectly marvelous, and a pianist I've never heard of by the name of Gilbert Kalish, and he's a marvelous interpreter of Haydn! When you run down his little biography, on the back of one of these records, it happens that he's [a] New Yorker, who finished at the university and went on to other places to study, and has played in a number of places, and he's played with all kinds of groups, and quartets, and everything. But he's a marvelous pianist. So my friend brings us these records, and all yesterday and today and this morning, I have been playing. There are six sides, and there are one or two... There's a lot of them; there's so many Haydns, you know.

MK: (laughs) Yes. Prolific.

GA: So many, many wonderful Haydns. I don't know; there's 41 on one of those. And I noticed while I was listening, yesterday, that I thought that I had gotten on the wrong record, and I thought I was playing a Beethoven sonata, because I was working upstairs, so I rushed down, and no; it was still Haydn. But there's a Haydn sonata that I'm sure inspired Beethoven's "[Sonata--Ed.] quasi una Fantasia," which is the "Moonlight Sonata," which was what I played in my first recital. So I know it very well. And any time I hear a part of it, and also there's another one, too, the number one... I've forgotten it what it's called. What's the name of that [piece], a certain Viennese, something "_____ Zwei Sonaten." But anyway, I used to play that one, too. They were too _____ to play, so I know them very well. In both these Haydn's, Beethoven, I'm sure he didn't copy them, but was inspired with the same kind of feeling that's in those sonatas. So without Haydn, we would not

have Beethoven. I'm very sure about that. This makes music just like looking at painting, and you never tire of looking at Rembrandts. At least the people that I know, in the arts, never tire of looking at Michelangelo, and Rembrandt, and El Greco, and countless others, Piero della Francesca, and Montegna, and people like that, as well as the later Frenchmen. We never get tired of Ed Manet, and Monet, and Picasso, and it can go on ad infinitum. And so when people like Henry Geldzahler say that, concerning young people today, they do not go deeply enough into history, I think he's right. Instead of just trying to be successful: "Here I am, a talented young painter, and in a few years I should be really up town there in New York." That is not the real reason for painting, or sculpting, or anything else. I was just reading about James Washington and his show at Foster/White. I was just reading this morning, that he's devoted to what he's doing, and it means a great deal to his life. And I don't think he ever thinks of himself as-- specially in the early years. I've known him for many, many years; I've known him when he was studying with Tobey, and he painted quite nicely, and he was a friend of Walter Isaacs; I remember some of his little paintings, and they're paintings out of painting for love. And I'm sure that most of his sculpture, though he probably has made a living at it over the years-- I think that was not the reason he does it. I think it's an essential part of his expression. He's a religious man. I know he loves the Mexicans' art. I'm sure that they're a number of other people that worked in stone that he would love, all of those people who've worked in stone, whether it was statuary of one kind, another, even people who did great graveyard carving. A lot of them did all kinds of religious things, whether they were thinking about the Renaissance or whether they were thinking about early American stone cutters or the wonderful people who worked all those years on the cathedrals of Europe. I'm sure he would love the cathedral at Autun, which is Romanesque.

When you think of all those great gothic things, not only Rouen but Chartres, and Laon and... There were these wonderful people who worked in stone as well as wood. So much of the wood, of course, disappears; it just does not hold up real well, even in the interior, especially in the Orient. They had lots of worms [and] the wood just... Little pieces I have around are left over from little churches that have fallen down and they're almost eaten up; [that is one over here].

MK: The _____ have eaten all _____.

GA: But even so, just the fragments I happened to like; it doesn't bother me that they have an arm or so missing. Sometimes I think they're better sculpture. And sometimes [when--Ed.] the legs of the horses'll fall off or something, I think they're better, you know. (laughs)

MK: Sometimes all the legs are gone. A big mass of _____ body.

GA: Yeah. And Henry Moore bears that out. He likes the unfinished sculpture of Michaelangelo better than the polished ones.

MK: Right.

GA: Yeah. Like the great Pieta, you know, in the Vatican, which I've seen.

MK: From Rodin on, we've had a great taste for...

GA: Yes, uh huh. So that's one of the good things about the Seattle Art Museum collection is that Fuller got ahold of some of those, especially in East Indian art, because he had people that admired what he did, and they made it possible. People like [Kleijkamp?, Colliche?] and Kevorkian of New York, and Heeramaneck, and C. T. Loo. They always admired Fuller very much for his genuine interest in Oriental art. So when there wasn't much money, they would make it possible for him to buy things when they wouldn't sell to other museums. That's why the Seattle Art Museum has some very good torsos. I remember when I worked there one time, or we opened one of those big boxes that came, it was one of those stone-- I think it was a Yakshi-- or one of wonderful stone figures.

MK: A new one he'd just acquired?

GA: Yes, uh huh. It was one of those. I saw the bill on it, and they had sold it to Fuller for $350! Today it's worth a fortune, and it was worth a fortune then. Those people wouldn't trade with people just to make money; if it was a good piece of art, you really had to have credentials, and the right person had to have it. That's why we have these things; this is why they should be looked after.

MK: That's why they should be out someplace where we can see them whenever we want.

GA: Um hmm. It used to be that they were quite permanently installed, but now, there isn't enough room, you see.

MK: That's right!

GA: And they have to move things about. And it's like the Metropolitan Museum; there are things in the Metropolitan Museum that haven't been out for years and years and years, you know.

MK: At least something is out.

GA: You can only build so many wings and then you take in all of Central Park! (laughs)

MK: _____ a big controversy there.

GA: That would be kind of nice. Of course, people then would have to have a map to get around the museum; it would be like the Louvre! I know on several occasions I got way off in a wing of the Louvre and I didn't know where I was at all; it took hours to get back. But there are so many things to see on the way that you don't mind being in that kind of a labyrinth.

MK: Back to music for a minute, did Tobey have quite different attitudes toward music than you did?

GA: Well, the first time I heard Tobey play was-- he had a piano at his studio over on Brooklyn, a little upright piano, quite a nice upright piano-- and that was one of the early times when I met Wesley Wehr, who was studying piano and was a friend of Tobey's. One afternoon, Tobey said he had been composing some little pieces, and so we each played a little composition of our own, or something. Tobey played a little one called "The Hay Cart" or something like that, and then Wesley played something, and I played something. I don't know whether it was something I composed or not, but some little Grieg or something. So we all performed for one another. (laughs) You know? That was the first time that I heard Tobey play one of his own compositions. Wesley I didn't even know at that time that he played. He published, and I have several of his songs. He was a very good composer; Wesley won the West Coast prize for piano composition one year.

MK: A long time ago?

GA: Um hmm, a long time ago.

MK: I didn't know that aspect of him, either.

GA: I don't know how long; well, it must have been 30 years ago. Wesley is 50, and he must either just have finished the university or he was still going, when I first met him. But Wesley is one of those forever scholarly people; he will always be going, I suppose, to something at the university.

MK: Um hmm. Right.

GA: [There] could be a new Joseph Campbell or somebody come. Joseph Campbell did come the other day, on Saturday. And Dennis, who teaches at the university, wrote me a little note and said, "I know you love Joseph Campbell, and he's giving three lectures on Saturday at (I think) in the Roethke Hall."

MK: Did you go down?

GA: No. I didn't go down because I didn't have any transportation. I said to Deryl [Walls--Ed.]-- we had already been down on Wednesday to the Bellevue Museum, then came back-- and I said, "Well, you know, we just haven't time, too many trips. I think maybe I'll get more out of just reading Joseph Campbell." He was doing some special area, and I felt it was really more for students.

MK: How early in your life did you first read him? I mean, you have mentioned several times that he's someone you re-read?

GA: Well, I suppose that I had been reading... I know that when we went to Europe, the only book I took with me was The Hero with a Thousand Faces.

MK: You'd known it for a long time by then?

GA: I'd already been reading it for quite a long time. And also Heinrich Zimmer, and how... I think the first one to introduce me, not to Joseph Campbell, but to Heinrich Zimmer, was Dorothy Schumacher, the old friend of Morris's [who] used to help Morris with a great deal, a number of things, and also she helped him with his Guggenheim; they were very close friends. Dorothy has a degree in philosophy from the university, and she's one of those well-read people that has never used it professionally, I would say. But she would always say, "Well, now, have you read so and so?" And it was like Reed Merrill now, with me, you know, and also my friend Dennis Strong, who teaches at the university. He sent me the Noel Coward diaries for my birthday. Well, probably I would never get around to reading the Noel Coward diaries unless somebody sent me these things. But because these people are familiar with books, and that's their life, and with the case of Dennis, he many times reviews books. His major at Yale was lit; it wasn't history, until later. And in the case of Reed Merrill, that's what he does,

you know. He writes, and he's familiar with all those areas. I would never know who Micea Eliade was, unless it was Reed Merrill that sent me, let's see, the wonderful little book called, The Sacred and [the] Profane, which is marvelous. And I wouldn't have known that Eliade was a teacher of later religions at the University of Chicago, unless it was through somebody like Reed Merrill.

MK: Now he's at Bellingham?

GA: He's at Bellingham, um hmm. And has done a definitive study, of course, of Alfred Koestler; he's an authority on Kafka, and also Kierkegaard. His great love is Dostoevsky. At the moment now he has a three-year grant to work just on his own work. Isn't that marvelous?

MK: Yes. How long have you known him?

GA: Well, we were just saying-- they came down for Barbara and Clayton's little party the other night. They had bought something of Clayton's and they had bought a number of things of mine. They have a small collection. They started by buying prints, and then they got a little more ambitious and they own a Miro' print, and then they started buying other things. And so we decided that I had known them for 12 years, but it doesn't seem that long; I just can't quite believe that 12 years have sped by that fast.

MK: When do you suppose it was, or how long ago do you suppose it was that Dorothy Schumacher introduced you to readings by Zimmer and Campbell?

GA: Well, I think that must have been around about 1890! (laughs)

MK: Well.

GA: That was a long time ago.

MK: Was it before the war, or...?

GA: She's more of a music major than she is a philosophy major, but all those things interlace with [time]. She was in the music department at Sherman-Clay for years, in records, so she was a great authority on music, and she was always saying, "Have you heard so and so?" And we'd say, "Of course not; how would we know so and so." So she produced these wonderful records of some marvelous singer or something. So we would always pass the record around and we'd hear it. And then she would dig up some book that no one had ever heard of. She was the one, I think, that introduced all of us to various books like the Bhagadvad-Gita, that Morris had a great run on for a long time. I had read a certain amount of Buddhist literature and things, but mostly through other people, you know, the people who wrote about them. [I had--Ed.] read William James and people like that very early, and also Emerson, and Thoreau was my first. We were into that sort of thing, you know.

MK: You read them very early? Emerson and Thoreau?

GA: I was reading those quite early, before I ever knew Dorothy Schumacher or Morris.

MK: Well, when did you read Buddhist literature itself? In the Depression, or...?

GA: Well, I didn't really read the literature itself; it was mostly people who had studied it. Boston was the center for Transcendentalism.

MK: Yes. Transcendentalists.

GA: And the great George Ticknor Library [one of the founders of Boston Public Library 1848; collection housed there now--Ed.]. I had read about that very early; he was the only one who had that kind of literature. Emerson and Thoreau, and Hawthorne, all those people, borrowed things from the George Ticknor Library. I think I have that name right, don't I?

MK: I don't know.

GA: It's Ticknor. You look that up because he was the only one who had a great collection of East-West books. And he would loan them, just as we do today, you just leave your name or something, and agree to return the book at a certain time, with no charge and that sort of thing. I'm quite sure I have the name right. He was the important man in Boston in those days.

MK: And that's what you read in your teens, and your twenties, and...?

GA: Well, I was reading Thoreau, and Emerson, and I loved Emerson essays, and then I got into William James because we had a library in Edmonds, a very good little Carnegie library. I don't know who put me on this sort of

thing; it was probably something when I was in senior in high school.

MK: When you met Morris Graves and you and he were both young, did he share any of those reading interests?

GA: Well, he had already been to Japan so he had an interest in that. What he had read and that sort of thing, I don't know at that time. But I think that we also knew other people. Another person who was always laying heavy literature on us (laughs) was George Mantor, who was a very literary person. And we always called him "first-there George," because he was the first one of us to get a complete Mahler cycle of records. We would go to the Callahans' and listen every Thursday, and if you talked, you didn't get back again. George said "Now, unless you listen, you're not invited next Thursday." (laughs)

MK: Were these musical evenings or talking evenings?

GA: Those were musical evenings. He was the first one to send all over Europe and get a complete volume of Mahler. So we had a symphony each Thursday until we completed them.

MK: Oh, I see, through the Mahler group.

GA: We had to go to someplace where they had a good record player.

MK: Right.

GA: George had a very good one, but he finally got such big speakers on it, it shook the house down. But anyway, he was the one that also collected things like East Indian miniatures, and he was one of the early people who knew Tobey when he first came to town. Tobey painted-- the first portrait that I'm sure he did in Seattle was a portrait of George Mantor, and nobody knows what happened to it; it was a beautiful portrait. I don't think that George had any heirs. Maybe there was a distant cousin that turned up and took everything. Because George, as far as I know, was the only son. His father, earlier, was the fire chief of Seattle. George traveled around quite early. He was one of those, you know, he was more serious than a dilletante. He was a very fine photographer. He knew a great deal about books, and he used to work also at Harry Hartmann's bookstore, and later on he worked for another book company. He was into psychology very early, and would go back and do work at the university and one thing and another. His very dear friend, and a friend of all of ours, was a woman by the name of Denise Farwell, who was a very close friend of Dorothy Schumacher. After Denise was married to a man who was connected with steamships, Hollis Farwell, and they didn't have any children, and she was very interested in preschool work, she knew that she would have to go back and do a lot of work at the university, which she did. But in the meantime, when we first knew her, she was into all kinds of study, not only psychology, but into Far Eastern, Buddhist philosophy and all that sort of thing. So a lot of that came, I think, from people like Denise Farwell. And just who else I don't know. You get around a little group, and then you pass books around, and you belong to the "great books club," and you get ahold of these things like Peloponnesian Wars and things. Who would read that, unless you belonged to a club? Well, it's wonderful history and all that, but somebody said, "You know, I can't read that book anymore."

MK: I taught it in school as well as read it.

GA: (laughs) Did you?

MK: Yes.

GA: Yeah. And she said, [that] this was part of the "great books" thing, implemented at the University of Chicago, I think.

MK: That's right.

GA: And so we all went to those things; we were going to try to read the books. It was Mary Bard Jensen [author of *The Doctor Wears Three Faces*; sister of Betty MacDonald--Ed.], a very good friend of Margaret Callahan's, and Mary was being very scholarly about the whole thing, and she finally called Margaret one day and said, "Margaret, you know, I've been reading Peloponnesian Wars now for a number of days, and I can't go on with it. I read two whole chapters, and I thought they were talking about a beautiful woman and it turned out to be a seaport." She said, "I can't read books like that!" (laughter)

MK: Yeah, I remember most clearly that I was teaching from the Peloponnesian Wars, and I think we were in the worst part of the plague, or the Sicilian invasion, or something, the day Kennedy was assassinated.

GA: Oh dear.

MK: And suddenly the book seemed very different; all of these savage atrocities and panorama of history seemed very different.

GA: Uh huh.

MK: I went to class after lunch and it was on the west coast, so the news came very late, and I said to the students, "Well, shall we have class or not?" And they all thought, and they looked at their Thucydides and they said, "We'll go ahead." So we went ahead in class.

GA: Uh huh. Was that Thucydides of Peloponnesian Wars? Yes.

MK: Um hmm.

GA: Well, we used to try awfully hard. I remember reading Aristotle.

MK: But for an evening social gathering, Thucydides is not....

GA: (laughs) I read Plato rather early, and I think that had a great deal to do with a lot of things that I have thought about, and never got around to really getting into. Which I still do; my reading will always be peripheral. I'm a little like Mary Jensen when she read two chapters and she thought she was reading about a beautiful woman; if I can't understand, I'm not going to read it any longer, you know. (laughs)

MK: Yeah.

GA: And I've gotten into a few things like that, and I've just had to give them up.

MK: Life's too short.

GA: No. If it's that laborious, I can't do it.

MK: You mentioned, or you used the term about James Washington, that he was a religious, that he is still a religious man.

GA: Um hmm.

MK: Would you use that same description of any other...?

GA: James Washington.

MK: Would you use that same description of any of the other people, any of the other artists?

GA: Well, I think that the only person who painted religious paintings that I know, American, was Tobey! I think his Bahai things-- and he never intended to sell those, or make them public-- those were a very personal thing with him. I knew him very well when he did his Bahai paintings, and I knew what he was doing. And we became very good friends, because he knew I knew.

MK: You're talking about the clearly Bahai paintings, the figurative ones?

GA: Um hmm. Right. The elevation ones, with a lot of, very few people, and then they go up through saints, and so forth, and then they get up into heavenly places, and that was a...

MK: Were there many of those? I've only seen a very, very few. Did he do many things like that?

GA: Oh, yes. He did a lot of things. And then, also, the various little ones, of groups-- they dated very early, two or three of those-- where there are saints around. And those were all really for real. And when Rothko came to visit him at his studio in Seattle-- I didn't meet, I met Rothko at San Francisco just for a moment. Tobey told me much later-- When Rothko came to visit in his studio in Seattle, Tobey had up a lot of these little religious paintings all over, because I remember the time, and the whole studio was full of these wonderful things that hadn't been shown. So Rothko looked around all that, and he said, "Tobey, you're not trying to do a religious painting, are you?" [Tobey] said he'd already done them; he wasn't trying to do them!

MK: "Trying." Yes.

GA: They were done!

[Part 7]

GA: I think that James Washington is devoted in that way, and I've known him for many, many years; his whole interest is getting into that realm of what he feels is of [great interest to living]. And in almost all phases of all art, through the centuries, I suppose for ten thousand years, the best artists come out of that kind of devotion. Or would we say dedication, you know. One gets into the later areas and it becomes more of the art, even say

with the Japanese; when you get to certain kinds of prints and things, they're not particularly religious, and they're not like the great screens or the great scroll paintings; they have become, then, more of the proletariat kind of painting. And the ones that you've seen up in [the big hall], that particular group of the prints-- I can't think of the name of them right now-- they're right here. I've had them long before the museum ever existed. Something honga, I think.

MK: Well, in the incident you were just relating of Rothko going to Tobey's studio, was that early when Rothko was still in Portland, or was Rothko in New York then?

GA: I think Rothko was in New York and just coming through. And then, when I went down to San Francisco with Tobey, on that panel, just to go along-- I used to help him and give him interrogations, so he could face up to people like Frank Lloyd Wright.

MK: I remember that one, yes. You rehearsed him, huh?

GA: Yes. And from very early in the morning. Frank Lloyd Wright said, "You're holding your own pretty well, Tobey." (laughs)

MK: (laughs) And did you congratulate yourself?

GA: He'd only been working on it since six in the morning. (laughs)

MK: Do you think when Tobey no longer painted or showed those clearly Bahai paintings, and when he went to apparently abstract paintings, in the late forties and fifties, do you think there was a religious impulse behind them, in the same way?

GA: Well, I think his best pure abstraction is also related to his religious paintings. I just think he went off into a highly subjective language. Because his abstract paintings are very unlike most other people's abstract paintings, and particularly of that period. Even when you think of Jackson Pollock, who did that all-over thing, and I think Jackson Pollock was pretty close in there, also, that he felt the deep aesthetic thing and the universal thing pretty strongly. But Tobey, I don't think all of his abstract paintings in the high place of white writing are of religious connotation, but I think some of them are. And at least they were so deeply aesthetic that they would go over into what would have to be called some realm like the religious realm. I mean when you get to a certain place in aesthetics and everything, the crossover is so delicate that you can't tell which is which; at least I can't. And so when he paints an abstraction like The Edge of August, he's talking about a very profound, high aesthetic form of change of conditions in, like the light in August. Well, when you're talking about the light...

[Taping may have been interrupted here]

GA: ...the aesthetics go right hand in hand with what I would call a religious experience. It wouldn't be necessarily from the history of religion, chronologically speaking, or not necessarily completely to the humanist one, but it would certainly relate to the Taoist concept of religiosity, so it seems to me.

I'm a little groggy.

MK: Want to take a break?

GA: I think I'll drink a little coffee.

[Break in taping]

GA: You must wrap those back up in their dark cloth, because, you know, they're very fragile. And so we were quite [good] about it.

MK: Who took them? Your uncle?

GA: My uncle by marriage.

MK: Your mother's sister's husband.

GA: Yes. He died rather young. They had one son, Leo, who later became a buyer for Frederick and Nelson's. They lived in Seattle almost their entire life. But I never knew this uncle; all this was taking place when I either was so small, or else maybe, I don't know. I must have been very, very young.

MK: Oh. So you kids would look at the glass plates, but you didn't see him in operation, actually?

GA: I think my sisters who are a little older than I am might have remembered McClellan, who took all of these

photographs. But anyway, we were the repository for all of the glass plates; my sister still has them in possession. And there were all kinds of picnics and everything, all kinds of boating parties in Seattle. And there was a Seattle yacht club that my uncle belonged to, called the, umm-- gee, there was even a song that went with it, if I could remember the song. So he would take photographs of all these boating parties, on Lake Washington, and on the Sound; it's when they wore big puffed sleeves and all, you know, and they're really historical.

MK: All before World War I.

GA: Um hmm. And beautiful photographs, they were. Later they got quite faded, but my sister went to several people, and they didn't know whether they could do very much about them. But I said, "Well, let's just find somebody like this person, and have them printed, anyway." You know, they're negatives. So we had a wonderful time, going through all these negatives, which was something _____. They were all about this size.

MK: Did she talk to any of the historical societies or museums about whether they might want some of them?

GA: Well, she's kept them, and she keeps them dark and all that sort of thing, and she's trying to find the right person who would make prints of them. And once I said, "Well, I think they're really important to Seattle history, in that my uncle was a member of the early yachting club and that early little crowd, you see.

MK: So these are social documents much more than some of photographs...

GA: Well, I remember now; it's called the EBYC, the Elliott Bay Yachting Club. (laughs)

MK: Sounds good. They all wore white uniforms and caps and so forth.

GA: Robert McConnell. There was a little song that my aunt, then, you see... I don't know what he died of; he must have died of appendicitis or something like that, very suddenly, because he was really quite young.

MK: Right.

GA: And so my aunt had married many years later, and she married a man by the name of Bruckart. But she had always been a businesswoman, anyway. Both she and my aunt Adeline, their husbands both died when they were very young. But my uncle George contracted some kind of awful malaria in the Philippine Islands, during that Philippine-American War, so he died rather young. The little song went something like [sings]:

Sailing o'er the deep blue sea,

Ta da, ti da, ti da, da, da.

Hmm, ti di, ti di...

MK: (laughs)

GA: The only way I can think of the words, you see, is getting the little song. [Goes on humming several more phrases.] Anyway, it has the whole business of the little Elliott Bay Yachting Club in it, the same old little gag, you know, sailing over the blue waters, everybody was happy as a bunch of canaries. (laughs) Probably twice as drunk.

MK: Yes.

GA: (laughs)

MK: Well, maybe we should talk about your own work, which we've been skirting, before the afternoon gets too late. One thing that crossed my mind when you were again talking about other people, is to ask you whether you've ever done any sculpture yourself-- that is, carved or modeled. I know you've done constructions and collages, but I don't know that you've done any carving or modeling. I am right that you did not?

GA: Well, my first introduction to actually carving was when we used to carve in soap. Somewhere along like in junior high school, in grade school, or something. I was always very attracted to the Greek sculptures because we had all of these old history books and everything; I was always very attracted to Greek sculpture when I was very, very young. I don't know how it came about. I don't know whether that was through some school experience. I know we had various things in school. We had models of Minerva in plaster. **MK:** Oh, in plaster?

GA: And we had the great-- the one on the prow of the ship that's in the Louvre, and several of those, you know, and Saint George and the Dragon, and we had those standing around in high school, and also in grade school. They were really very nice.

MK: Were you interested in these?

GA: Um hmm. And then we had plaques on the wall; one was a plaque of a whole bunch of, it must have been the Parthenon! There were people who made these plaster casts in New York City; they [the people--Ed.] were called caproni. And this was where schools bought things. And then we also had, of course, the things around the schoolroom, you know, "George Washington Crossing the Delaware."

MK: Yes. Did these things...?

GA: And everybody had the Gilbert Stuart, you know.

MK: But did the three-dimensional works make you want to carve, or did you ever very much?

GA: Well, when we got to carving in soap, I was very interested. And I sent one off to one of those national things, those soap carvings which all schools, I suppose, did, and all students. And I got in a show in New York City, with a little figure about this big, like a little Greek figure. I didn't copy it, though, from any Greek thing. I just made it up, and I carved this, and I can still see it. I don't know what happened to it. It was a Greek figure like this, and a hand up like this with a little glass of wine, and just [perfectly tiny] like this.

MK: Clearly not copied! None of them have little glasses of wine in the museums. (laughs)

GA: Nobody thought anything about it. We had this around for quite a long time, and finally, I think the soap kind of got dark yellow, and I think it contracted and got smaller and smaller, so it looked finally like a little ivory carving. But I kept it quite a long time; I was kind of sort of proud of it. I suppose I was 12 years old or something; I don't know what my age was.

MK: Did you ever carve in wood, or sandstone, or...?

GA: I did quite a lot of little modeling in clay, and Plastacene; all of that is very figurative. And then I didn't do anything much until... I did do some things in wood; I don't know what happened to them. And then I got off... Oh, I remember now! I got off on a kick of doing cement things.

MK: You did?

GA: With armatures and stuff like this, out of cement, in dark-colored cement.

MK: Free-standing?

GA: Yeah, uh huh. They were almost always figurative in some way, and sometimes I tried to make them look like people I knew.

MK: Did you exhibit any of them?

GA: No.

MK: Was this a long time ago?

GA: Well, it was at Edmonds, and it must have been in the thirties, sometime.

MK: I see.

GA: Early thirties.

MK: But they were not intended to exhibit; they were for caricatures, or for portraits, or...?

GA: No, I was just trying to make a figurative piece of sculpture.

MK: How big were they?

GA: Something like that.

MK: Fifteen inches, eighteen inches.

GA: I remember one time, I was working in _____ cement and I got carried away with it. I didn't have gloves on, and all of a sudden my hands were shriveling up and I couldn't remember-- I was alone, and fortunately I'd had chemistry.

MK: You couldn't remember whether it was acid, or base, or what you should do about it?

GA: Yes, and I thought, my heavens! My hands are really shriveling up! I washed and washed and washed and it didn't-- [and] I remembered vinegar! So I soaked them in vinegar for a while, and it counteracted the alkaline. But if I hadn't remembered that little thing in chemistry, I don't know what happens. I don't suppose your hands completely fall off, but I don't think it would be very good for them.

MK: You could really damage the skin.

GA: So after that I wore gloves. [I] also learned that that was very strong lime in that particular stuff, which I didn't really realize.

MK: Huh. Cement is so everywhere around us that you don't think of it as having strong chemical properties, but it does.

GA: Yes, it's pretty strong stuff. The lime is alive.

MK: Yes. Did you ever later in your career employ sculpting in any form as preliminary to your painted figures? Some people I think would say that there's a strong sculptural sense to some aspects of your painting.

GA: Well, I've done quite a few little things in clay and in Plastacene. The only things I saved were three little figures over there that I had cast in bronze, and the head up near the horse. Just a few years ago I got to working in clay, and then there was this man up in Bellingham who cast things, so I just took a chance and had them cast [like] that head over there. I think I had six; they're in bronze. Now they're scattered around the garden. And I did it kind of as a subjective portrait of Edward Kamuda. As a matter of fact Darryl and Edward and I were working out in the garden, and we got a lot of good clay, and we thought, oh, wouldn't this be fun. So we did this for a number of days.

MK: Clay from your own garden, you mean?

GA: Right here, right here in this garden. And we got really big tables from home. We had a dandy time. Deryl had already studied a certain amount of sculpture and learned the whole process of bronzing, casting, and everything, when he was up in the university. But Edward didn't know anything about it; having been born and raised in New York City didn't help a bit (laughs), and he wasn't very interested anyway. We had this great bunch of clay, and so finally I did this; I got tired of doing the little torsos. I had done a number of torsos when I was teaching one summer in Ruth Penington's school; I did them in clay and they were baked. The McKinnells [Nan & James; potters--Ed.] were there, and they said, "You like to model in clay. Why don't you model some little clay things, and we'll put them right in with pots and we'll bake them." So I did a number of little torsos, and one I think is owned by Annie Hauberg.

MK: Oh really.

GA: I did a number of those. I left them at the gallery, and people bought them, so I don't have them anymore. Then I did these little ones. There are three over there on that stone thing. The little white one, here on the piano, looks sort of like a Rodin. Then the bronze head that's under the horse, and the original clay head is over there with the horse also.

[Taping appears to have been stopped]

page break

GA: He [Jim Willis?--Ed.] and his wife live over here. He [came] out from somewhere, I think, in the Middle West earlier, but they've lived here for quite a while. His wife is connected with midwifery and has been schooled in it. And this man has lived in New York City, and he has a son who's a violinist, who now is in New York City, and makes his living-- he goes on playing in groups and things like that, but is still not really professional. I think he's 21, and he makes a living driving cabs. He's lived in New York now four or five years.

Jim is a poet, and quite a good one, very knowledgeable. He always sends me transcripts of his poetry. I meet him on the street, and we have quite long talks about mostly the state of the world, and we're glad [Cosmos] 1402 [a Russian satellite--Ed.] came down all right in the Indian Ocean, you know. He's into all kinds of do-gooder things, both he and his wife.

We got off on this, wondering why so many people have turned to the arts today. We just decided that, like the flower children, they looked around and it looked like a pretty wicked world. And they're not happy about it, and they're going to do anything they can-- if nothing else, to express what they feel about it. I think this is a lot of it. If you can't do anything to change it, at least you can make that one contribution. And if it's a quiet thing like painting or music, it's not disturbing anybody, and you have at least an outlet. I said I think most people should keep a little diary or something like that. It used to be fashionable to do this.

MK: Right, yes.

GA: Um hmm. A lot of the most interesting things, the best history we have are many times out of diaries. I got to thinking about that more when I was reading Coward's diaries; there are a lot of things that he tells in here, a lot of things I've learned about the English people, that you don't read in the average history book, because I've read some of them.

MK: Yes, they don't deal with the same aspects of life at all.

GA: Lytton Strachey and people like Tom. So we had to conclude, while we were talking on the sidewalk, that it probably is a very good thing. The only thing I said that was maybe harmful about it was if they have the wrong idea of what is worthwhile in their life. If they're doing it purely from the commercial point of view, and saying, "If I really strike it good in New York, I'll make a million dollars, you know, like Jackson Pollock." There are a lot of those people and they have been controlling the scene in New York. A lot of commercial artists and lot of amibitious people, not only who work in the arts, but people who run galleries and people now in the museums, are not as dedicated as they might be. They're not really so interested in the arts at all. They're interested in either being somebody, being famous and being rich, or just making a living, or maybe have a power complex. I think that there are a lot of people in that area who today would have to be called businessmen. And I think they are all through the galleries, that's through the biggest galleries. An awful lot of the people like Lichtenstein, Claes Oldenburg, Segal-- I think you'd have to call those people commercial artists. I think that their first dedication is not-- it may have been earlier, it may have been for the love of art, but I think it's turned into something else.

MK: And yet you...

GA: Henry Moore says, when he's interrogated about the American scene, of not only people, but of artists, "Well, the American people are very generous, good kindly people, but they're awfully gullible." And he says, concerning most of the art scene, that he doesn't think really they're real sculptors; they would have to called "stunts." I think this is quite true. But I think if he went a little deeper, he would find out there are a lot of very ambitious people who are business people. When you find people even in serious galleries, and important people that run the art world in New York City, who think that Mondrian is a better artist than Picasso, then we're really up against it. I think that must be the biggest laugh of the century. And then other people like minimalists-- I won't say the name-- [who] said, "I have a very difficult language." Well, it's not a difficult language, at all. It's just one big sheet of colored paper, you know (chuckles), or maybe a variety of things. I think the minimalists are really interior designers, because there's not any content in those things. When they say they are a difficult language, it's a real put-on and a real cover-up; it's a real tongue-in-cheek. I think it's high time that we gullible American people catch onto the very fact that they have nothing else to say. They cannot extend on to the high periods of painting. They don't-- it's pretty hard to extend out a Picasso, or Manet, or Monet, or a hundred other people; and in the sculpture world, it's pretty hard to extend onto a person like Marino Marini], or Gaston Lachaise, or Rodin, or our very own Henry Moore. You have to be an extraordinary person to do better than that. So to take just a very specialized little area and turn it into something, which would be called fragmented art and belongs to a fragmented society, then, of course, you have to be a real operator. You have to be a real strong person to get the most cultivated people in museums and things to believe it's good. And there's been a whole wave of that. A lot of it was through the Pop Art; it began before that, but I think Pop Art made it possible to do almost anything today. If you are clever enough, you can wrap up a museum, you can wrap up an island, you can do all of these things, and people swallow it and think it's some kind of a marvelous thing. What it is, is a stunt!

MK: But you and your poet friend, Jim, were also deciding that, in spite of all this, I gather, there are also a lot of people who have turned to art for other reasons, for reasons of desperateness, and expressiveness, and personal needs or commitment, and a voice or something.

GA: Oh, absolutely! Just because those people happen to be in the saddle temporarily-- and there's one wave right after another, you know. It isn't just the Pop Art, and it isn't just [this] art, because it started way back 75 years ago; there's nothing new about Dada. Duchamp putting together pieces of hatracks, and one thing and another. And even Picasso experimenting and using handlebars for horns and turning them into little animals. But those were really just kind of experimental stunting. In knowing Picasso's real sculpture, like the figure with the lamb around its neck-- which is inspired, I'm sure, by the very early Greek one, which is up the Acropolis because I've seen it, and which is one of the great things of all time-- he did it with his own figures, and he did it with his own calves, or lambs, or whatever it was, and [with] other pieces of sculpture he's done. He considers those things that he put together as mockups, as being [not?] terribly serious, anyway. It's an exercise, as we all like to do collages, and put together stuff, and do all kinds of abstract things. It all depends on how they [perceive] what the intent is. But to use a device because it's a popular thing, and it seems to be a thing which is at least fashionable, why this is where that I think a lot of young people get kind of off the beam. Like I said to a young painter friend of mine who doesn't draw, "Well, one day maybe you'll want to draw, and then what are

you going to do?" And I said "Almost all the great ones, I know, started drawing rather early."

MK: Yes.

GA: And they weren't thinking of going to be a great person at all. They just [loved to draw]. They loved drawings, they loved great master...

[Part 8]

GA: So I said to this person, "Now can you think of a really splendid painter that, somewhere along the way, hasn't done a certain amount of drawing? I'm not talking about academic drawing; I'm not talking about those people that can draw so realistically that you can almost hear them or smell them." He said, "What about Motherwell?" And I said, "Are you sure that Motherwell can't draw?" (chuckles) And he said, "Well, I've never seen any of his drawings." I said, "Well, I happen to like Motherwell very, very much. He's a case that maybe if you really look into his background, he can probably draw." I don't know, though, I haven't seen any of his drawings. But, anyway, whatever he does...

MK: I'm sure his early art included drawing, from what I know of his background.

GA: Is that right? Well, I don't know very much about him.

MK: I'm sure he drew as well as painted.

GA: Well, I had to kind of defend Motherwell, because he was one on the jury that gave me a Guggenheim. (laughs)

MK: Oh, he was. I didn't know that.

GA: Yes. It was Henry Geldzahler, Motherwell, Stella, Judd, and Cohn, and it had to be unanimous. This is why I think that I said to somebody, "I can't send to that jury; it's formidable." Reed Merrill was one of those that said, "Oh, you go ahead and send [it] anyway." It's a form. And also Dennis Fromm. They didn't know one another. I said, "They sent me so many forms. Well, I guess I'll do it." So I sat down and in three days I had it all finished and sent it off. But without their pushing me, I wouldn't have done it, because I looked at the jury, and I said, "This is a formidable jury, and they won't like anything I do." Well, it wasn't true, you know! (laughs)

MK: Yes. It seemed at the time that way.

GA: So there you are. So to this particular young painter, I had to sort of defend (but I wouldn't do that anyway)-- but I just happened to like Motherwell's paintings.

MK: But Motherwell never came to Seattle and lived on the West Coast?

GA: No. I didn't know him. I didn't know any of those people on the jury. I met Henry Geldzahler, later, in New York, just on the street with somebody, when he was still at the Metropolitan Museum. And he didn't even know [me], I didn't say, "Thank you for helping, giving me a Guggenheim," or anything like that.

MK: He probably couldn't remember.

GA: So many millions of people, he wouldn't even remember, you know, _____.

MK: You were talking just a few minutes ago about contemporary issues of decoration in art, as against other values. Was that ever an issue among the artists you knew in the thirties and the forties, the question of decorative values against higher art values?

GA: Um hmm. I think we used to talk about it quite a bit. And we always felt, up here in the Northwest, that a lot of the California painters, who painted so brilliantly and so beautifully in color, were essentially not very much in depth in their ideas. We always thought of them as [a] very colorful, decorative school, thinking of the school as a whole. We always thought we were much more serious. (laughs) But we didn't, course we always knew people like Diebenkorn; people like that were very splendid artists. I think that the one artist that really was in great depth in California in those years was Rico Lebrun.

MK: Oh.

GA: And I'm not the only one that thinks that. I was talking with Henry Seldis one day, who finally did a show, and did quite an in-depth study of Rico Lebrun; one of the parts of it came up here to the Pavilion [of the Seattle Art Museum--Ed.] a number of years ago. I was saying how much that I really admired Rico Lebrun, and he said, "Well, so do I. He is the little master of the contemporary arts." Especially in California, I suppose.

MK: Was color one of the things that you discussed frequently in relation to the issue of decorativeness?

GA: Well, I think that it goes much deeper, really, than color. But there are people who tend toward more decorative painting. And there's nothing wrong with it; we all like decorative, beautiful decorative art of some kind or other. Particularly I think in the Orient, it's many times difficult to distinguish, sometimes in the more serious screens of an early period-- I'm speaking of Edo period, Momoyama, and periods like that, when they were doing great screens _____ and that there are decorative bird and flower panels and long screens that are really profoundly aesthetic. But they do not... Then you have to think, though, of the other kind that deal more with religious ideas and also with the humanist ideas, and things like that. Not only the great humanist series with all the horses and the historical things and biological things, which are perfectly wonderful, I think, but the ones that relate many times more to the idea of mandalas. Mandalas in the Japanese point of view don't always have to be round. They're lots of mandalas that are not round at all, and they're deeply religious. But they're called mandalas.

MK: What other configurations do they take? I'm not familiar with almond shapes.

GA: Well, it would deal with the life of Buddhism and Zen and religious characters, you know. All of the saints, of which there are many. And then all of the various phases of Kannon, who, of course, earlier was Kwan-yin in China, and before Kwan-yin in China, she was Avalokitesvara in India, who was a double saint.

MK: But when you were talking about mandalas not always being round, were you talking about other configurations?

GA: Well, yes. It's usually thought that a mandala is a universal round.

MK: Yeah.

GA: And it was developed so highly in certain kinds of Indian art and in all of the extensions out of the many sects of Buddhism, that most people got to thinking that it always had to be round. [They] get into a certain area which is not true.

MK: What can it be besides round?

GA: Oh, it can be just an ordinary, like a kakemono. This happens to be presumably Tibetan, but Sherman Lee said he thinks it's done in China and then sent to Tibet. He found it interesting because it has the original mount; it is a Buddhist being surrounded by saints. Well, it's not the typical mandala thing.

MK: But it's signifies that.

GA: Yes, it is a religious thing, you know. And it deals with a circular idea, but here it is a square [pane, painting]. There are more of them; there are other kinds of mandalas that I've run into in books in the last few years that are known as mandalas in the religious painting of Japan, and they're not round. And they don't have those things that are thought of as mandalas.

MK: When you and other painters like Morris Graves and Mark Tobey talked about these things earlier, and talked about whether painting was decorative or achieved something higher, was subject matter and symbolism something that you often discussed? Something that people thought was needed or was not needed? Or important?

GA: Well, I think that with the people that I knew, like Tobey and Callahan and Morris, and the people at the university-- I'm trying to think of several people out there, the Pattersons, and Walter Isaacs-- they were all interested in the history of art. And though we were interested especially in things that extended more in the recent European school, beginning like 1875 and up through what would be called the modern art school, not only French but also German Expressionism and all of those movements, it was the thing to be alerted to. But in spite of all of that, I think that especially with Tobey-- and we loved old paintings, you know-- and also with people like Barbara and Clayton James, who came out from Boston, are graduates of the Rhode Island School of Design, and were exposed to a lot of history of art; it hasn't changed. It's like James Washington with his sculptures. None of the fashionable schools of sculpture even touch him; he goes right on with what he's been doing for 30 or 40 years. He loves the early forms of art, and he finds that doing a single thing like a bird or an animal or a person or something like that is symbolic as long as it is in the way he does it. It's enough to please him. I don't think he has to be fashionable. I don't think just to be fashionable and go along with every little idea that somebody has, some fragment or something they get hold of that is popular, that... Those people simply have to get over it, you know, if they're going to really do anything. Some of those people, though, have had real grounding and schooling and all that sort of thing, but I think there's a kind of person who detects what is going to be popular; they can almost decide what is going to be fashionable and they get in there and they're really... It's like commercial artists for years have always been very aware, especially of the fashionable period which

preceded them. There was a whole wave of Mondrian when Mondrian was popular, you know, 30 or 40 years ago; even architecture and interiors were very, very influenced and all of the printed stuff, like everybody had drapes that looked like Mondrian. (laughs) And they made wallpaper that looked like Mondrian, and they made windows that looked like Mondrian, and everybody was submerged in Mondrian. Well, I just don't think that Mondrian was as great as Picasso. Anyway, it'd be pretty hard to be terribly fashionable about Picasso; he's too rich.

MK: You've mentioned Picasso several times, and I see from your studio that you obviously think about Picasso, so how early did you become aware of what Picasso was doing?

GA: Well, it was certainly in the early thirties.

MK: Was it?

GA: Uh huh. It's when books-- not that I had seen the originals-- but when books came out on Cezanne and then later on, you know, the influence of Cezanne on so many people; then it started to spread. Some of the other people went to Europe to study, like the Pattersons and various people like that. They went and they studied with people who were very aware of that whole school; they studied with people like Ozenfant. And Ozenfant came out here, you know, too, for a while.

MK: Right.

GA: And they would come on the Walker-Ames lecture tours. Archipenko was out here, and they were already into what would be called the modern movement. And there was another person, too -- Ozenfant. A number of people studied, people came to teach at the university. So it doesn't matter whether you get around very much or not; you run into people in books and things like that and publications that have these things in them.

MK: Can you remember who, besides Picasso, seemed particularly rich or valuable, to you?

GA: Oh, yes. My first introduction was to people like Monet, Gauguin, and Seurat, who I encountered for real at the Art Institute of Chicago and before that in publications. And then there were people of the German Expressionist school that one wasn't familiar with it; it was a real-- Beckmann and people like that. By the way, there's a very good Beckmann over in the new show at the Bellevue.

MK: Is there?

GA: It's a very good one; I think you won't find a better one. That's amazing. So there was that whole wave of being excited about all of the people, not only Cezanne, but all of the people who were influenced by Cezanne. And then the Surreal school came along and that was always a very interesting thing, not only Dali but Max Ernst. I encountered Max Ernst rather early because there were some big books published of his, and I thought they were kind of odd, but there were always so fascinating. You didn't particulary try to paint that way; but I think that was the beginning of the idea of cutting up things, putting together kind of paste-ups and collages, until you got around to people like Schwitters and then Picasso, who did wonderful things that were much easier to do than, say, Max Ernst. Max Ernst said about his own work, "If I painted all these things I've put together, I'd have to live about a hundred lifetimes." (laughs)

MK: (laughs) Yes.

GA: And that's true of people like Rauschenberg later. You know, there wouldn't be a Rauschenberg without Max Ernst, and Picasso and Duchamp, all those people. When he did those beautiful, big-- I think they were Titians-- and put them together with all kinds of stuffed birds and everything; some of those are very interesting. I think Rauschenberg is a very imaginative person. I hate to see him dissipating his more concentrated efforts too much in the theater. When he has a whole show of things, of just yard goods and things like that, nobody can convince me that's anything except a stunt and window decoration.

MK: I think he's moved back away from that, somehow.

GA: I hope he has, yes. And Jasper Johns has gone on into doing other things, too. I really prefer some of the earlier Jasper Johns to some of the more very abstract things that look a little more like Tobey, really than the early Jasper Johns. Yeah, the interlocking diagonal.

MK: Yeah, and the Mirror series.

GA: But they're real. He does them seriously, but that doesn't mean that they have great depth and idea, or are quite that original. But anyway, they are two of the best, there's no doubt about it, I think that came out of that whole school. Probably Jackson Pollock and Johns and Rauschenberg were, at least they were rich in ideas. They're willing to give over a lot of time and everything to the execution of them.

MK: Has your own work always been concentrated on oils? Has that always been your preferred medium? Or did you ever go through long periods of experimenting with _____?

GA: Oh I experimented quite a little. I used to do a lot of transparent watercolor, and then I did some things in tempera; but it didn't seem to be quite the right thing for me. And the caseins and things like that, I did some for a while, but they don't build up, and you have to use them very differently. I haven't been quite that interested in brilliant color, ever. Unless you build up and know how to use them-- and I admire people who do use them in a brilliant fashion-- they don't seem to appeal to me, because I like things that are more textured and things like that. I used to talk with Tobey about that, and I said that I thought that one of the most emotional things in painting was through the texture of painting.

MK: Oh, really?

GA: And so he considered this a little bit, and I said, "I think there's another thing, too, in this period, that has been overlooked, at least people don't talk about it. And that is that the accent is on the first, second, and fourth dimensions, but skipping the third." He said, "Oh, you can't believe that!" And I said, "I think I do."

MK: Can you elaborate?

GA: The third would be perspective. You have the retinal thing of two-dimensional surface, and then you have the plastic thing, and then you skip the [third] which is _____. Since Picasso there's a projection out; I don't know what that would be, but it should be somewhere in the Cubist realm. You have the allover, the retinal realm, and you have the Cubist or the plastic realm, and then you skip the depth realm and go into the realm of feeling, which would have to be the fourth dimension.

MK: I see what you mean.

GA: The fourth dimension, whether you're a Surrealist or whether it's a thing of feeling. And so he considered this a little bit, and then I said, also, this thing about the emotional content. But I noticed that he experimented with it anyway, and a lot of his richest things are no longer flat painting at all; they're very textural and very rich.

MK: That's right they are.

GA: Um hmm.

MK: As soon as you said that...

GA: However, some of his very finest things are not in that kind of texture at all, like The Arena of Civilization; it can only be done in tempera, and things like that. But he built it up in such a way that it becomes a vibrant thing; especially when you get up toward the top in the heavenly area, it vibrates almost like pointillism. So he was one of those people who, in his love of what he was doing and the act of painting, could go on and work on one little thing for months, you know.

MK: Tobey could?

GA: Oh, yes and he'd scrub it all down and work it up again, and you'd think, "Well, there goes that beautiful painting." And then when you saw it again, it was better. He had worked it; with tempera you can do that, you can wash it away. He's not the only one that did that. That can be done in oil, too, because Whistler used to do that. He'd work all day on a portrait of somebody and then he'd wash it all down with turpentine, wash it off. And then go back and build it up again, and that's when, I'm sure, that rich surface came about.

MK: Do you ever do things like that?

GA: Oh, sure. Uh huh. Also you can scrape it down if you're building up with a lot of oil paint and tarmac and everything, you just scrape it all down and build it up, and you can mix all kinds of paints. One marvelous thing that's happened in these later years is that you can mix mediums, you know.

MK: You can get _____.

GA: Henry Moore and Picasso and people like that made it possible that people can mix mediums and make it work.

MK: In these large paintings that you do on this layered paper, do you ever wipe down or wash off?

GA: Um hmm.

MK: Large portions?

GA: Or I might scrape it down, but not too often. I prefer that it goes clear through, but I do build up.

MK: I can see clearly that you build up, but I was not aware that you ever took off substantial quantities of...

GA: Um hmm; sometimes I wash it clear down. The only thing is sometimes with paper it isn't that sturdy. You have to be a little careful about it. I've almost washed some of them away, and then they get kind of wrinkly when they dry, and stuff like that. You can always get carried away so far, but that occurs on any medium you're working with, like transparent watercolor, or wash, or anything. You can scrub away on a beautiful piece of paper, and pretty soon what you have is a hole in the paper.

MK: Ruined! Yes. (laughs)

GA: Or it gets all funny and wrinkly when it dries.

MK: How could Tobey repeatedly work things over without damaging the support too much?

GA: Well, I remember that one little painting I was admiring, he said, "You know, I worked on that night and day for three days, hardly without sleeping."

MK: And did he mean...?

GA: I suppose he catnapped, and had little lunches and things like that, but I remember him saying that.

MK: But you think that working on it for three days and nights involved a lot of taking out and starting over? Not just...

GA: I don't know how that developed, but I just presumed, knowing how he did other things, he probably washed it out several times.

MK: I see.

GA: It was a thing of very delicate configurations and things; the only way to do that sort of thing, you have to work on them a long time. And you also have to be very knowledgeable about a lot of things. You have to be very knowledgeable about the human figure. You have to know all about... Where his figures were many times people he had known mixed up with people that were symbolic, like early figures of saints and things like that; he would interweave these.

MK: With people he knew?

GA: Um hmm. Usually he invented; I think he invented his saints, too. But they come about through the study of very early forms of all kinds of religious, early forms of art, and religious forms like Mantegna and the very early, say, Italian, as well as say forms that he might have encountered somewhere in early Chinese things, or maybe early Flemish religious paintings. They could come from a lot of places or maybe come out of the endless religious sculpture of churches and things like that. Nobody really quite knows. The memory is so strange and so delicate that you never know what it has picked up. But in most cases with him, I'm sure it was not copying something; it was a synthesis or it was his own idea.

MK: Yes.

GA: Um hmm. But I think that with all people somewhere along the way, children and everybody, there are times when you do copy things, and it's a very good discipline. It all depends on what you're copying.

MK: Do you think that the description that you just gave of Tobey drawing on a multiplicity of sources is also an accurate account of how you think your own figures and configurations come about? Do you think you draw on delicate memory of many things that you synthesize? Or do you often have a sense that you're working in a particular direction?

GA: Well, I think synthesize. If I hire models and people like that, I do that purposely so that I won't get too far afield in invention. I think we always have to go back. I've done an awful lot of drawings sitting in bus depots, like in Seattle, waiting for buses, and I have endless little books of drawings that have never been shown, just as Tobey did his things in the Market [Pike Place Market in Seattle--Ed.]. I did those even before I knew Tobey. People do that sort of thing; you draw from real people over at the tavern. When I used to come up here, I used to go over there and just sit, and while people were drinking beer or playing or pool or something, I made lots of drawings, and I have lots of them. You don't always get around to using those in paintings; but I think somewhere, connected with all of the things that you have known in a history of ten thousand years, if you're working symbolically, that that knowledge of the real things like drawing hands and feet, which I think is so important, that it doesn't matter... It always shows, too, if you have been knowledgeable about study. I can tell

from a great distance if a person has studied from the human form, or if they studied portraiture or anything. And you just know that; there's an authority somewhere there that you were not only in love with drawing, but you had studied great drawing, and that also you had worked in real people. It always shows.

MK: So even in the paintings you do now, you think of models and real people as the most immediate source for whatever you've drawn on?

GA: Well, this is purely imaginative up here, but the only way that figure looks at all authoritative is because I've drawn hundreds of people from the nude. It's the only way. And I don't think it's too good, I don't say it's a great drawing, or anything like that, but I think that there's something in there that indicates that I have worked from figure. I would know; other people [would know--Ed.].

MK: Ultimately, you think it's more fundamental to have worked like that in a way from a figure than to be familiar with the canon of great art, and the El Greco and Michelangelo, and Gauguin, and...

GA: I think that they're all important, they're very important. But I think in order to make it more authoritative and your own work, whether it's landscape or whether it's still life or figurative, and you're combining things, even symbolically, that if it looks authoritative, you must have worked in real people, or real landscape, or real still life. Or it just kind of some way or other shows that it doesn't have any authority. Particularly today, if they can get around all kinds of things with quickies, particularly since the Pop period, and also...

[Part 9]

GA: The great wave of abstraction I think has been very, very important, not only in American painting, but certainly in all Western painting, and maybe even in Eastern painting. I think [it] was understood in Eastern painting a long time before we caught on, the _____ school, of all kinds of brushing and that sort of thing, and the putting together of paintings. They knew that very, very early, and way back, I'm sure, before the Ming period. The wave of abstract painting was one of the most important things that has happened to American painting, because, at least as I think of it, it is the examination of the interior of performance and strengthen[ing] the whole idea of how painting is put together, as well as the more specialized aspects of it, which turned out to be things of a very esoteric nature. Say, Tobey's white writing is very esoteric. You can only go so far in that direction [of] the painting of white on white, you can only get white on white so far, and then you have to go into a light theory. And the same with black on black; you can only paint black on black so far, and that's the end of that. But there's all of that rich ground in between, which has been the bulk of painting for centuries, which is between white on white and black on black, if we're just talking about painting. And to me, the whole rich experience is in between those two poles. After the great wave of abstraction, and abstract expressionism particularly, then I think that the pendulum simply had to swing back to more realistic painting, or study, and try to do the things that we really see with our eyes. I think that it's pretty silly to think, if we do have good sight, that we're seeing abstractly all the time, visually, any more than a person who has good hearing doesn't hear all that sound of the traffic and everything.

MK: Right.

GA: Or the beautiful birds singing, in the opposite direction.

MK: Yes. We are too busy being pragmatic and selective.

GA: Um hmm. So it gets to that specialized realm, when you get into another area of symbolic painting-- there's nothing new about it; symbolic painting has been performed for centuries and centuries. That relates, of course, to the other things of Surrealism, and so many kinds of very poetic painting that have taken place, as well as a religious aspect, which is a little more difficult I think to detect, many times, really religious painting. [Then there's] the kind that seems to be, as we used to call it, the furniture of the church makes out to be all of the gestures of religious painting, but it really isn't religious. It isn't deeply spiritual. So there are all of these little aberrational forms of all kinds of specializations, and I think in some cases they're very important. But I think that still the mainstream of painting and sculpture has not changed quite all of that much. And there are new things, like the experiment with light and everything, but so much of that, it seems to me, is taken up and pretty well covered with that very powerful medium called the movie. Motion pictures, and films.

MK: Sure.

GA: Films are a very powerful medium. When you're dealing with real light, I don't think that one has to try to imitate that world any more than it is necessary to imitate the world of photography in painting, or realism--there are so many different kinds of realism. The whole interest would have to swing back, and probably to very many new forms of painting. And then we finally get down to the thing, one of the most important things, of the ingenuity of the person [himself--Ed.], the personality in the painting. Whether it happened to be abstract, or symbolic, or surreal, or realistic, it seems to me the performance today, somehow or other, has to be a

projection of the person [himself--Ed.]; there has to be a personality in the art. I think there always has been; but in certain areas it's very difficult to detect, particularly in early areas, like religious icons, where they didn't even sign paintings.

In studying, say, certain forms of icons-- and I happen to love all of those early icon forms of painting and the whole Byzantine school, which is so rich, so very, very rich (and we haven't talked about that); I do think that that is a very, very important school. You finally get so that you can recognize, even in those styles of painting, what I would call a real style in the Byzantine-- not just a mannerism or just a fashionable little something or other, but a real long development of style, like a certain way that they would do the face and the hands, and certain way they would do the [draperies]. You get so that you can almost spot a great Rubylob in the Byzantine school, or certain people that did certain things. I don't think one could do that very well in the Fayoum paintings, where they did the posthumous portraits and that, but you can spot the school if it's Fayoum portrait. This has to come from the love of painting. There's no other way to do it. You have to be attracted enough so that you get with it-- like the love of music: if one is really into music, you love Mozart and you know Mozart, and you know if it's a Chopin polonaise. And you get to know these things, and that comes through primarily through the love of doing it; and then later on, there's the intellectual thing that balances it, and you become richer in your experience and knowledgeable.

MK: Was there ever a period when you thought your painting would be abstract, totally and sort of permanently?

GA: Well, I had a period for a while that I worked quite abstractly, and I think I loved to do it, and I think I knew why I did do it.

MK: Why?

GA: Well, I think it was to free oneself, from mannerisms, and [to] have a chance of finding what your real self is. I discovered, and I think Tobey also discovered, while we were doing some little exercise-- a number of us one time, David Lowenthal [painter; one work inlcuded in the Henry Gallery collection--Ed.] and several others were just having a good time and painting whatever occurred to us, or drawing. And he said, "There's no doubt that your form's curvilinear; you're a curvilinear person." I hadn't even thought about it, but I knew that I liked to work in that form. When I was painting abstractions, they would go this way and that way. I've never worked like Tobey worked. Tobey is, I think, rectilinear, primarily. There have been periods when he was curvilinear, in [modal] time. But in the case of a lot of Tobey, I think it's a combination. Tobey could work for a long time on the rectilinear form. That would drive me absolutely crazy; I couldn't do it.

MK: When were you doing these exercises? In the forties? After you'd been at Spokane?

GA: Well, no, I think it was before I went to Spokane.

MK: Oh.

GA: Um hmm. Because David Lowenthal was around. We used to get together and go to have Japanese dinner or something, and just talk about painting. There were several other people that were around at that time. I don't think Morris was there. I don't remember Morris and I don't remember Callahan, though we talked about these things a lot with the Callahans and with Morris, and George Mantor, "first-there" George, and also Betty Willis, and Emma Stimson. There was a whole group that were all very friendly; it was a big group with the Pattersons and the Isaacs, and sometimes there would be a whole bunch of people. But those groups weren't quite as interesting, because the larger the group, then you don't talk about ideas and what you really believe so much; it isn't so much of a truth session. But in those little experimental things was, where I did a number of abstract paintings. I was working purely in abstraction. One went off on a tour; I think it was called "Wounded Sky", a big kind of a red one; I don't even know where it is. And there's one in the Smithsonian collection, which I think it's called "Northern Birth," that has no figuration at all.

MK: I see. Well, was there also a period when human figures played very little role in your work and when you were much more predominantly interested in the landscape? A few works I've seen from, say the 1940s deal with the landscape much more. Was that associated with a move toward abstraction?

GA: I think that all during that period I was drawing from people and things. When you do a lot of drawing, little figurative things-- whether you're sitting in a depot, or working from a nude, or drawing people sitting around a room, which I've done a lot, or in the tavern-- that seems to take the place of whether you're doing a figurative thing. But pretty soon...

MK: But then your painting might be different?

GA: Then the painting might be rather abstract or maybe more landscape, a long period. I've never been

completely won over to the pure school of landscape painting, though, or the pure school of still life, or the complete and pure school of abstraction. Because it seems to me that they are always the background for development of all the richness of the later forms of development on the earth. And to me, the highest form is man. I can't communicate with the birds. I can't even communicate with my cats very well, you know. I try, and I'm not [stuck] in the jungles...

MK: Right. Well, you think on a different level.

GA: ...I wouldn't be too happy with all those birds and pythons, and hippopotamuses, and one thing and another. I just don't really think I have... I think there's a close communication between man and horse, and man and dog, and man and cat, that we know _____; as far as I know it would be our closest communication. Maybe other people have closer communications with other kind of animals, maybe birds, I don't know. Even Morris Graves, used to refer to certain people he didn't like very much as a birdbrain. (laughs)

MK: He did! (laughs) _____ _____ in his painting.

GA: Yes. And he wasn't too happy about communicating, I don't think, with birds, as wonderful as they all are. And certainly _____ as well as he can do them, as no one else.

MK: Why do you think the human figure played such an insignificant role in his work?

GA: Well, this always puzzles me, and it puzzles me when people just spend a whole lifetime-- like Morandi doing still lifes of bottles. I saw his retrospective at the Venice Biennale a number of years ago, and they were all quite different and they were beautifully painted. But how anybody could spend their whole lifetime painting bottles, I can't understand. And I can't understand when people do only landscape because-- maybe this is just silly in the realm of painting, and I'm sure this idea will always be challenged-- it seems to me that the landscape is the preparation for all of the greater, later forms and the more complex forms of fishes and worms and all of those things that crawl, and then they finally fly, until we get up to those later forms, all those four-legged forms, and the wonderful things with the birds, and then we get up to man for some strange reason. I'm not going to pretend that I like any of those forms as well as I like man.

MK: Is this something that you talked about with Kenneth Callahan, for example? He must share your empathy, doesn't he?

GA: Earlier, Morris I think had more relation and more interest. He did some figurative things. He did some portraits. He did a self-portrait which was very stunning!

MK: That's true, yes.

GA: And he did some other little figurative things. I don't know what happened to them. But then when he got off into the surreal school, it didn't seem that he would need that; you could make a chair seem symbolic or something like that. But...

MK: And he never came back to the human figure.

GA: No, but he always loved birds; he did birds very early. He did birds in high school, and I saw some somewhere, something somebody got ahold of. He did wonderful designs, rich designs of birds.

MK: Why? Do you have any idea why birds more than dogs, horses...?

GA: Well, I don't know, I think he just had birds around. I said to other people who were drawing birds, "Well, if you want to know about Morris Graves, he didn't get all those birds out of books; he had birds around him." He had lots of chickens, and he kept crows; he had a whole studio full of these birds. We all went to the zoo. We drew birds and we drew orangutans and we drew zebras and elephants and everything in any good zoo. Morris has drawn from zoos a lot, and real birds; they're not all from books.

MK: Sure.

GA: So once again, that's why he had an authority. So many people, and young people particularly, draw only from books and photographs; you just know when you see them that they haven't really studied real birds very well. Or they haven't studied horses very well, or they really haven't looked. One of the most important things [is] drawing from the real thing. [To] people who talk about things authoritatively, not only painters, people like Henry Moore and people like that, it makes you understand more about what you're doing. If I would spend time drawing you and concentrating on -- the very fact that I would have to concentrate so hard on the drawing -- I would know more about you than from a photograph. I think this applies to everything; it applies to the birds in the zoo, and drawing horses and drawing cows and all of these wonderful creatures.

I can't help but think that the universe and the preparation was all for later evolvement, not only of man. That might be almost one of the most unique and highest forms in the entire universe, and that's pretty hard to think about. When we think about the entire universe, we have to think about eternity, and I don't know how one can think about eternity. I'm glad we have the Word.

MK: Yes. Covers a lot of ground.

GA: Yeah. Covers a lot of ground. Oh, one of my difficulties is thinking that right now I'm alive in the universe at this second, that I am on the earth and I'm just as much in space as if I were way out in the constellation of Hercules. I know it cerebrally; I know it intellectually-- but to really sense and know that right now I am as much in space as anybody who'll ever go out there. We don't know where we are in space; we think we're at the edge of the Milky Way, and in the solar system. This is one of the reasons we think about poetry, we think about history, and we think about painting; those are some of the important things. So I have to think [that--Ed.] the preparation of the whole system is to bring about higher manifestations; and God knows why, I have no idea! Maybe if we even had quite an inkling of knowing it, we probably wouldn't have to do anything then; we probably would have arrived at some place of knowing. But I don't see that much in my experience, yet, and I'm not very good at meditation. I can't really know for sure that I am in space. It's hard for me to know.

MK: Did any of the people you associated with closely attempt meditation in the way of arriving at subjective certainty?

GA: Um hmm. I've known people who practice meditation, off and on. And I know somebody that swears that they have had the experience of this thing I talk about, which is very difficult for me even to think about.

MK: They feel that they have achieved that kind of perspective?

GA: Uh huh. Well, I've known one person who said that they did. Now, there's no way that I will ever know that they knew, you know.

MK: Sure. No way to verify.

GA: No. And I'm glad that they have and didn't paint [it--Ed.] (laughs)

MK: You wonder how they [could] paint.

GA: It seems to me that it would be such a trauma -- I'm not talking about the negative trauma.

MK: No, no; the immensity.

GA: I'm talking about the _____ trauma. I'm talking about that where Saul was converted to Paul on the road to Damascus. And, of course, he fell down, with enlightenment.

MK: Did Callahan, or Tobey, or Graves, or Wesley Wehr, or Sherrill van Cott, or any of people you knew experience anything like _____?

GA: Well, we used to talk about things like this, and we all were into astronomy and astrology a little bit, and a lot of things like that. But I don't know whether we ever discussed this particular point or not, of the realization, which is, I presume, existentialism.

MK: Did they talk about other kinds of realizations?

GA: I do remember Tobey and I were walking one time, and I think it was in that very bad time of threat of war or-- it was not a nice time, a number of years ago-- and we were wondering what they were going to do with the Denny Regrade [Seattle district-Ed.] and we had been to dinner, so we walked out in the evening. We got out there in one of those kind of empty-- a place where they had bulldozed and everything-- it was kind of ruined. It was dry; it wasn't muddy or anything like that. So we were looking down, and he finally just said, "Well, I have no idea what it's all about at all." And I knew what he was talking about. (chuckles)

MK: Um hmm. At every level.

GA: At least he admitted it. "I have no idea what it's all about." [pause] So that's the beginning.

MK: And very often the conclusion, also.

GA: Yes.

[END OF INTERVIEW]