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Oral history interview with Al Hansen, 1973 November 6-13

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Al Hansen on November 6, 1973. The interview was conducted by Paul Cummings for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Funding for the transcription of this interview provided by the Smithsoinian Institution's Women's Committee.

The reader should bear in mind that he or she is reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

PAUL CUMMINGS: It is the 6th of November, 1973, 6:05. Paul Cummings talking to Al Hansen.

AL HANSEN: H-a-n-s-e-n.

MR. CUMMINGS: S-e-n? All right. Hansen. Why don't we do what we always do, start from the beginning?

MR. HANSEN: I was born in Jamaica Hospital on October 5, 1927 at about 11:15 - between 11:15 and 11:25.

MR. CUMMINGS: A.m. or p.m.?

MR. HANSEN: Because, right after it happened, my mother said they brought in lunch and said they were a little early, but she could have her lunch if she really wanted it. Therefore, I'm supposed to have an Aquarius moon and Sagittarius rising, in addition to being a Libra, but I'm not sure.

MR. CUMMINGS: What day were you born, again?

MR. HANSEN: October 5th.

MR. CUMMINGS: Fifth? Right.

MR. HANSEN: Interesting number of art world people were born right around there, in October. We were always going to have a Libra party.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yes?

MR. HANSEN: [Inaudible], David Borden [phonetic], Larry Poons, and - Larry finally had a birthday party, but he didn't invite all the Libras. Nobody could understand that better than a Libra.

MR. CUMMINGS: I see, I see. Anyway, did you live in Jamaica? Did you grow up there? What was -

MR. HANSEN: Yes, I grew up in Richmond Hill, which is between Hugh Gardens, Jamaica, and South Ozone Park. And it's an area recently famous for the persecution of a woman named Alice Crimmins, who is supposed to have - who is thought to be the murderer of her two children, and who has really been tried and chased around, and put in jail finally for working as a cocktail hostess and dating various men while being separated from her husband. You have to really know Queens to appreciate that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Really? All right.

MR. HANSEN: And Queens is a bastion of all the bad ideas of white Anglo Saxon and Catholic humanity coming out of the diaspora and the Greek synagogues, lending its way west through Byzantium Rome, France, and the British Isles, coming here by pilgrim -

MR. CUMMINGS: And it carries on. But let me ask you, do you have brothers and sisters?

MR. HANSEN: Yes, yes. I have an older brother, Robert, who is a half brother. His name is Robert Duckworth [phonetic], who lives out on Long Island. And a brother a year younger named Gordon, and a brother 10 or 15 years younger, named Kenneth. His middle name is Thor, T h o r, which is a kind of family name. I have an uncle from Norway named Thor Thorsen, pronounced -

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MR. HANSEN: And he is now 88 or 89.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Well, did you live there for a long time?

MR. HANSEN: Yes, yes.

MR. CUMMINGS: You go to schools out there?

MR. HANSEN: Yes, yes. I went to school out there completely.

MR. CUMMINGS: Okay.

MR. HANSEN: Public schools, public elementary schools, and a new experiment in education called the junior high school, and then Chima [phonetic] Junior High School, which is now a trouble spot school in Jamaica, and John Adams High School, from which I was rather - I was given a choice of being suspended or expelled.

MR. CUMMINGS: For what?

MR. HANSEN: My friend, Bob Orlando [phonetic], in the cafeteria, asked me to get him an ice cream pop, and then just throw him his. And he was about 75 feet away. And I tossed it to him underhand, and it made a nice, long, looping arc through the air. And with perfect timing, a big bald man with glasses named Bill Clark, who was the principal, opened the door and walked through, receiving the ice cream pop against his forehead, knocking off and breaking his glasses.

MR. CUMMINGS: I see.

MR. HANSEN: For some reason, Bob Orlando, who is now a policeman out there, just wasn't visible anywhere, and was very quick on his feet. And I understand that part of his arrest record now is involved with having to run people down several blocks away. He was also a track man. Very inventive, wonderful guy. I haven't seen him for a long time. And in the next few minutes, I was in the dean of boys office, and for some mysterious reason my mother was there, giving me her, "Oh, Alfred" look. And they told me that were I to go to the Bumpetts [phonetic] food processing products factory, where I worked part time on Atlantic Avenue, and become full time, and not fool around the school anymore, they would be very happy. A lot of my steps, or a lot of my plateauing in life has been through being forced up or down to the next plateau, promoted or advanced, with an assist by the faculty or the powers that be. And shortly after I was arrested with several other kids for stealing a car - which is known as joyriding, if you haven't done - it's automobile theft or grand larceny if you do it a lot.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: But if you just do it once, it's joy riding.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: And then that was like what 1944 was like. And then, for a year, I tried to join the armed forces, because World War II was very popular at the time. And then I got drafted for Halloween of October, 1945 and went off to the service for 3 years.

MR. CUMMINGS: You were in, what, paratroopers, or something, at one point?

MR. HANSEN: Yes, I was in the Army infantry, the 82nd Airborne Division, and did a lot of art in the Army, and -

MR. CUMMINGS: How did you like the military experience?

MR. HANSEN: I enjoyed it very much.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes? In what way?

MR. HANSEN: Well, I had grown up on - I had a very good childhood friend named James Breslin [phonetic]. We both have the same middle name, Earl, except he has an E on the end of his. But Jim Breslin, the writer, and I were kids together, and just - my earliest experiences were with doing art, and artwork, and being good at it.

MR. CUMMINGS: I wonder, when did that start?

MR. HANSEN: From when I was just six or seven months old. If you put a pencil in my hand, I would be quiet. Now I have learned to do art and keep right on talking at the same time. I do art that makes noise from time to time.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, how did your family take this, with your, you know, playing around as a child, with -

MR. HANSEN: Well, they always enjoyed it. A lower middle or upper lower class family isn't usually that happy about children becoming artists, daughters wanting to be actresses, or boys wanting to be artists. Kids wanting

to be artists are usually kind of led in the commercial art direction, or whatever.

MR. CUMMINGS: Practical -

MR. HANSEN: It's looked upon as suspect.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MR. HANSEN: For instance, amongst Italians, a person having a black friend is looked upon as a character deficiency. You know, Puzo had that in *The Godfather*. And amongst WASPs, a boy who likes to draw pictures and paint, this is really quite suspicious, you know. And also, I was very fair as a kid, and one of the - probably one of the last kids in WASPdom to have a Buster Brown Prince Valiant haircut, very much like a Beatle haircut.

MR. CUMMINGS: It's come back again.

MR. HANSEN: Yes, yes, it returned. And I have the pictures to prove it. And people were constantly wondering whether I was a girl, this, that, and the other. I remember that when I was, like, five or six. So, going to school got me the haircut, and what not. So that got me up into things. But something about the always wondering whether I was a girl or something, and always being, if not bright, predatory for information somehow. That led me to always be the kind of acting out one, or the fiend in school, when I was little. I was the one, when the teacher had to go to the principal's office for a minute, would get everyone to throw all of the erasers and the window pole, and everything else, including the teacher's chair and her purse, out the window, because it would be a nice surprise when she came back. So, I seem always to have been involved with this kind of Happening event, or, at first glance, put on a fabric stretching kind of activity.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, did you do any art things in primary school, or second - or in high school?

MR. HANSEN: Yes. And now I think back on it, with all the studying and research I've done, and all my experiences, I see that - I see all my early experience as being singled out as "special," because of art talent, or being driven to express myself in different mediums -

MR. CUMMINGS: In what - how were you singled out?

MR. HANSEN: The one who is best at art is the one who gets to draw the picture over the map of November in chalk on the blackboard. He's the one who gets to draw the turkey and the pilgrim and the Indian.

MR. CUMMINGS: And the Easter -

MR. HANSEN: And like that.

MR. CUMMINGS: And all that kind of stuff, yes.

MR. HANSEN: As a poster to go in the hall, the one who is talented at art gets to do that. Always singled out as special.

MR. CUMMINGS: Did you do things like that?

MR. HANSEN: And then - yes. I'm using real material in this. And then, being a cute little thing with a pug nose and long hair and everything, being that I was always singled out as special, I had to come to terms with the tough kids who were not special, who were special for being tough. Therefore, I was constantly making this balance of if anyone unruly started something, or threw a rock, I threw the next rock. And quite often, I would even, like, move up to not being Iago, I would be Othello. I would throw the first rock, you know?

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, were you interested in sports, or any -

MR. HANSEN: Oh, yes, very much.

MR. CUMMINGS: You know, activities other than the -

MR. HANSEN: But I was never interested in sports in any kind of full or complete or dedicated way. For instance, my really closest friend, other than my brother, Gordon, with whom I had, of course, sibling rivalries - he came along and replaced me at my mother's breast a year after I was born - so Gordon and I were kind of Mutt and Jeff, Oliver and Stanley, knock down, drag out fight kind of contest thing, constantly. And being just ahead of him a year, I usually won, until we equaled out about 14, and he half killed me with a rock. The look on his face I still remember. I have never fooled around with him since. He's still rather big.

MR. CUMMINGS: What does he do?

MR. HANSEN: And -

MR. CUMMINGS: What does -

MR. HANSEN: He is an automobile parts salesman, or something. And he has just moved into a much bigger job in New York as a vice president for sales for some big corporation that is just completely out of my mind, because that sort of thing isn't important to me. And the art thing -

MR. CUMMINGS: Do you - were there any teachers? Did you have any art teachers in high school? You know, whether drawing classes, or you know, anything -

MR. HANSEN: Yes, yes. But I just realized where I got stopped. It was on the sports thing. I love to play sports, and I love football and I love baseball. And I was just delighted as I got a glove, or a ball, or a helmet, or shoulder pads, or whatever. But I wasn't serious about the game. I had absolutely nothing in me that could connect with the game, in terms of something that was important to win. I was a fiend when I was little, for - around puberty and just after - for reading things like *Street and Smith Westerns* and *Zane Grey*, et cetera, not to mention the effect *Buck Rogers* and *Flash Gordon* and *Dick Tracy* and everybody would have on a kid, right?

MR. CUMMINGS: The pulps, right?

MR. HANSEN: The pulps. And the radio programs. But let's avoid trivia. We have all had enough of that. From time to time, we will all be having dinner in a Chinese restaurant with Ivan Karp [phonetic], and we will have to play trivia. Let's not do it here.

MR. CUMMINGS: Who was in the *Green Hornet* program?

MR. HANSEN: Kato [phonetic], and that strange woman who was the companion. Margo.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MR. HANSEN: You know, what was a "companion?" I used to just sit around on the toilet and think about that. "When I'm grown up, I'll have a companion and maybe some kind of a show for her," but I really was interested in the companion. So, I had this kind of like from *The Last of the Mohicans*, from James Fenimore Cooper, Robert Louis Stevenson, *Street and Smith's Western Stories*, and Jim Breslin had an uncle, Tom, who was a state trooper, and another uncle, Jim, who was a sugar broker, or something, or an office manager for Domino's Sugar Company. And he had things that were known as "spicy detective." These were like sexy detective stories and sexy spy stories.

MR. CUMMINGS: For adults, right, yes.

MR. HANSEN: For adults. And the pictures in those magazines, they were like three or four girls running across the beach, pushing down their bathing suit bottoms, and the story was all about they came into some spell, or got drunk and took off their clothes, and what they did, and I would just go nuts reading that stuff. I just thought it was wonderful. But there was always this pulp magazine WASP honor system operative. And I really believed, like a good Englishman, that the game had value in how one played it. Winning was not important, it was how the game was played, you know?

MR. CUMMINGS: Style, right?

MR. HANSEN: So, that might have been part of it. All of my early report cards, they would give me very high marks, and cite - attribute me with very high powers in different directions. Then they would always say, "Never finishes what he starts," or, "Never completes work." I just - and this I see now as my way of - I would constantly lose interest, because I was probably always being held back to the mien of the norm, which is one of the basic things the matter with American education. We've got a lot of programs for rapid advancement, and now we have a lot of marvelous programs where people can be extracted on a kind of contract from a ghetto situation, and through remedial studies, not even have to graduate high school. And certainly the Harlem storefront college thing has put several hundred people in college who would never have gone there, otherwise, or even finished high school.

MR. CUMMINGS: Or Harlem Prep, yes.

MR. HANSEN: Harlem Prep.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: Which has run out of funds and stopped. But I hope some day -

MR. CUMMINGS: I've got to ask you one other thing. Did you have - were there books around your house, or any paintings or pictures, or things like that?

MR. HANSEN: Yes, yes, yes. I've done a lot of work with disturbed children in different ways, and it's interesting - and it's documented - that the problem person who reads a lot is much more reachable and less to worry about than one that doesn't at all, or comes from a non book environment. My earlier memories are of my mother, particularly, and even my father, reading books. There were always books in the house. Books were always valuable. Someone reading a book was not to be bothered. And I was always fascinated at what the grown ups were looking in the book all the time about, and learned to read and write very early. And this was all part of - this is the kind of thing that makes book readers, if they're there, and they're around. I have a friend who turned his kids into book readers by taking anything with a sexy picture, any kind of interesting information, and keeping it on a top shelf. You would have to push over a table, and then put a chair on the table, and then -

MR. CUMMINGS: And get after it.

MR. HANSEN: Yes, you had to be predatory. And whenever he would see them put back the wrong way, he would rejoice. They're really working on that. And then he would put, like, things up here like, *How to Make a Radio all by Yourself out of Spare Parts*, and they would get into that, too.

MR. CUMMINGS: So it was a game.

MR. HANSEN: Yes. So -

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, tell me -

MR. HANSEN: I was always an early reader. And I remember my older brother, Robert, turning me into my mother for - he caught me reading *Anthony Adverse*. And being six or seven years old, he was quite aware that there were hot parts. And I still remember my mother's facial expression saying, you know, absolutely nothing about that. "Let him read anything he wants to read," which made me really give him a look as I walked off with the *Adverse* under my arm, to get back into it some more.

MR. CUMMINGS: How was this relationship with all these children? I mean, since their ages are so spread -

MR. HANSEN: Well, all of my early, formative years were involved with the older and the younger sibling, which was a nice spread. There were also plenty of other kids to play with. We had a house with what seemed like a huge back yard. It's rather dinky now. It was at least 50 square feet. My father was a truck crane operator, and he had his own truck crane, a Mack Truck, and he dug foundations for buildings all over the city. So this giant truck crane with the bucket hanging down in front pulling into the yard grinding away, it was one of those ones with the big gear chain on the side -

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, right, yes.

MR. HANSEN: And the classic old Mack hood, with the big bulldog on the front.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: Huge tires.

MR. CUMMINGS: A child's greatest toy.

MR. HANSEN: So we had the big yard to play in, with the tall tree, several trees, and there was always a swing hanging from a rope or something. Most of the other kids had the lot lines number with the house and the yard and the garage. And so, our back yard was always a place to play. And my father came from - comes from - a completely lower class environment on the docks in Long Island City, and he enjoyed very much the fact that, throughout the Depression and after, and what not, he was making $30 a day, you know, with his own truck crane, hiring out to different construction jobs. And - but he was still a lower class hick. He would go buy Dugan [phonetic] and other large baking companies, where you can go into the company - the store, they always have a retail shop -

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, right, right.

MR. HANSEN: And you can get day old, or dropped and broken a bit cookies by the huge sack, you know.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: You'd get a huge paper bag full of cookies and cakes and just walk around the yard, handing them out to everyone. So my yard was really the place to play, you know?

MR. CUMMINGS: The place to be, yes.

MR. HANSEN: Just like my loft, later, was really the place to have a party, because there would be, like, 300 people there, all going nuts, you know. Or they would do a happening, or put on some theater pieces, whatever. So, I have always had that kind of old fashioned patriarchal thing, a kind of complex about having everyone over.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes, yes.

MR. HANSEN: I mean, this really goes back to the back yard and the big bag of cookies that I could always bring out.

MR. CUMMINGS: Let me ask you. Before you went into the military, was there any indication of going on to college, or some other kind of school?

MR. HANSEN: No. None, whatsoever.

MR. CUMMINGS: Grad school, or -

MR. HANSEN: Where I come from, people don't go to college.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well -

MR. HANSEN: In fact, the only people I knew - if I had an upper, middle class model back then, it would be Jim Breslin's family. His mother, Frances, is a school teacher now in Elmhurst or Jackson Heights, somewhere. And she was a marvelously literate, very beautiful woman, very intelligent. And all of Jim Breslin's posture comes from one kid with a younger sister, Deirdre, growing up in a house full of women. That was the grandmother and his mother and her two sisters and the two uncles who were always out. And in a way, one might say, "Thank God the two uncles were there, and my brother Gordon and I down the block, and the whole yard full of kids," and what not. He had a big yard, too. So, he and I not only Libras and born in October, but we're really like - we both had a big house and a back yard. And if they weren't all in our yard, they were in his yard. And if we got kicked out of his yard, we'd go right over to my yard, and vice versa. Otherwise, we had to play in the street. And he, of course, started as a sports writer and is, unbeknownst to Jackie Leonard and other friends of his now - Johnny Carson and Ed McMahon - is a very gifted artist, and has always expressed himself - my first experience with any kind of formal art training - because his mother was a social worker or school teacher - she knew about the Pratt Institute Saturday morning program, so she arranged for us to go to the Saturday morning school at Pratt Art Institute.

MR. CUMMINGS: When was that, about?

MR. HANSEN: It must have been around the time of the first World's Fair. It must have been around 1939 or 1940.

MR. CUMMINGS: So you were just -

MR. HANSEN: Or earlier. It must have been 1937 or 1938. We were, like, 12 or 13.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MR. HANSEN: Yes. We hadn't even masturbated yet. I mean, we didn't even think of that. We just - we were still looking at the pictures, and wondering why we felt funny in the knees, you know? And Jim - when we were kids, we called him Jimbo, which I guess is short for Jimmy Boy, and his mother and father were separated, which was an unheard of situation. The only other kid whose parents were separated was Roderick McKenzie, down a few blocks away. And Jim's father was very famous at Fordham. He wrote the Fordham marching song, and he was the drum major or something during his stint at college there. And his mother and her sisters, Harriet and Patty, were Bonard [phonetic] graduates. And their house was, floor to ceiling, full of books. And, as I remember Patty and Harriet, they were like Lorraine Day and Joan Bennett. And they were - this was like the early 1930s. They all wore these, like, clingy long silk dresses and cloches and jewelry and cigarette holders. And you'd expect Adolf Monjou [phonetic] to come in any minute. I'm making them sound terrible. They were wonderful, beautiful people.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes, yes.

MR. HANSEN: The first Broadway play I ever saw, Jim's mother took me to.

MR. CUMMINGS: Do you remember that?

MR. HANSEN: Oh, yes. Quite clearly. I forgot what it was called, but it was about American history. And it was in

color. Color movies were very rare then. But this was like a stage play, but I'd never seen, like - I'd been in stage plays in schools, but I had never seen, really, a professional thing, you know? Also, Jim was a sports nut, and so was his family. So friends of the family would take his mother and Jim and I to - and Gordon - to see the Brooklyn Dodgers, or the baseball or football games, and things like that. So my first taste of really going out and what the big time was, or something -

MR. CUMMINGS: That got you out of your neighborhood, though, right?

MR. HANSEN: We would go see movies, Jimmy Cagney movies, and George Raff [phonetic] movies about night clubs. But his mother and her sisters, his aunts and uncles, actually would go to a nightclub or something, you know.

MR. CUMMINGS: A real nightclub, yes.

MR. HANSEN: My - I guess my parents went to nightclubs, too, but it didn't register. You know? The surrogate parent thing, you know?

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MR. HANSEN: I mean -

MR. CUMMINGS: Or you could see it when it was a distant -

MR. HANSEN: My mother was - went to college, or finishing school or something, and came from a wealthy family in New Bedford and Boston, she grew up in - I can't remember the name, one of those wealthy communities up there. And she was orphaned early by a diphtheria epidemic before World War I. She grew up with great aunts or something, who would come down to New York on - they would take horse and carriage down to New Bedford, and then get the steamer to New York, that wonderful boat that used to go back and forth, and stay at the Waldorf Astoria, and what not. So then, here she later, when I am born, you know, in 1927, the 1930s, married to this rough neck with turtleneck sweaters, with a cigarette always in his yap, driving this huge truck crane. So -

MR. CUMMINGS: Where did they ever meet, given the contrast? Did you ever find out?

MR. HANSEN: Well, having an older half brother, that's a whole involved thing that really isn't important here. I mean, I would love to tell it. If they hear this much and say, "Go back and get that from him," I'd love to tell it. But it would be much more fun to tell the story of my first day at school. I didn't want to go. I had been prepped up to it the way we all were, saying, "You're going to school pretty soon now," and then they say, "You're going to school next week," and then they say, "You're going to school tomorrow," and then they say -

MR. CUMMINGS: "Today."

MR. HANSEN: - "Eat your porridge, you're going to school today." You know? And we were all led into this egg crate number that we have here called an education system that way. So, I said I would really rather stay home and draw pictures or something, and play in the back yard. And my mother took a legal sized envelope and filled it with crayons. It was like a carrot before a donkey. Off I went. And they put me in the room, and I had to stand by the desk and tell the teacher my name and how to spell it. And it was a lot - she was a lot like a stewardess, with some kind of flight manifest. It's called the Bailey Identification Card System, or something. I keep confusing it with the Dewey Decimal thing for library books. But -

MR. CUMMINGS: You were a new library book.

MR. HANSEN: But this little card with these little squares and what not was slipped into a place in the book that had a seatbelt. There was a little thing that crossed that she slid the card into. And I was told to sit in a particular seat, and that was my seat, and I must always sit in it. So, I had grave forebodings. I had real misgivings. I just didn't like the way the whole thing seemed. And here and there, my mother stood in the door, and whenever I looked over, she would kind of nod and wave her hand, and what not. And then she was standing in the hall, talking to some other mothers, and I got interested in the kids around me. And then I noticed she wasn't there any more, and I figured, "Well, I am here with all these people, I will sit it out and see what happens." But it was really dull. And one kid after another raised his or her hand, and the teacher would look up their name in the book - which is why the ticket had a seat, it referred to the seat that you were in - and would say, "Mabel Paul, you can leave the room," or, "Edward Sheriff, you can leave the room." And I thought, "Well, I've really been here long enough, and nothing is going on." So I raised my hand, and she looked in the book and said, "Alfred, you may leave the room." And I got up and went out, and I was walking around the hall, and one of the kids who had gone out was coming back. And I said, "What did you do?" He said, "I took a leak." And I said, "Where?" And he said, "In the basement." And I said, "Where is that?" And he said, "Downstairs, you know, in the cellar." So, I went downstairs and looked around. And there was an old man eating a sandwich under, like, a pool table lamp

by a big boiler. And I know now that was the janitor. But he seemed to be really like Sharen [phonetic], you know, or something.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MR. HANSEN: He was really great. And then I saw the tile john and what not, and I went in there and they had these, like - to a little kid it seems like an eight foot high Claes Oldenburg urinal, you know?

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: So, I used the urinal. And I came out, and I was walking around the basement. The furthest thing from my mind was going back upstairs and sitting in that room. I just assumed once you got - you were done that way or something. And sunlight was pouring in the basement stairs, so I walked up into the sunlight. And there I was, in the school yard. And I realized that that's the same place we had been standing before a few hours ago, in the crisp dawn. And I realized that that road went all the way straight back down to where you make a right -

MR. CUMMINGS: Where you came from, right.

MR. HANSEN: And when we came, we made a left.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: If I traced it back and made a right, I could probably just get home. So, I did that. The hell with the bag of crayons. And that must have been around 11:00 or so, 10:00. And around 11:00, Jim's mother, Fran Breslin, called my mother and said, "Are you going shopping in Jamaica today?" And my mother said, "No, no, I'm just enjoying the peace and quiet around the house." And she said, "Well, are you taking Alfred to the dentist?" And she said, "No, no, he's in school today. It's his first day of school." She said, "I'm glad I called. He's got his good clothes on, and he's playing in the lots behind my house," across the street from me. So, a few minutes later, my mother went by and said, "Alfred," you know, and I said, "Hi, Mom," you know. She said, "What are you doing?" I said, "I'm playing in the lots. Where are you going?" She said she was going to Mr. Hartman's grocery store to get some stuff. She said, "I will come by and get you on the way back, okay?" And I said, "Okay." And that's her cool. She was always that cool. Whether it was detectives coming in the door to say, you know, I had, with some other people, taken a care and they would have to take me with them, or whatever it was. So, she came back and got me, and we went home and had milk and cookies and stuff. And the next morning I had to go to school. So I went a couple of times. But they were making me promise not to leave, and all that stuff, and they were watching me extra careful, because the teacher had probably gone crazy when she realized she misplaced one. And for several weeks, I was dragged kicking, screaming, crying, throwing up, doing things in my pants, just a total global reaction against going to be back in that place.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: You know?

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes. What did you dislike about it so much, do you think? Just being there, or the -

MR. HANSEN: I don't really remember. It was just the vibes. It was some kind of - there was absolutely no opportunity for psychic resonance between me and anything like that, you know. And so it went throughout all my life, even now. Well, not so much now. I think I have conquered it the past couple of years. But now that I am 46, maybe I am calming down. But whenever I was in a situation like the Army or school, or a job that was disciplinarian, it was immediately a test or a strength thing, over who could get out of following the rules, and what not.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, how could you enjoy the Army, though, which you said you did, given the fact that there is a certain amount of discipline there?

MR. HANSEN: Well, I enjoyed it very much, because there was - my whole freak out from American history, the fact that my father and everyone's father had been in World War I, and the way we are prepped to become cannon fodder. And in this sense, anyone growing up in America, from the time of the Civil War on, it was a very earnest attempt to prep everyone to be cannon fodder, and Teddy Roosevelt's great white fleet at the turn of the century. And the singing the *Star Spangled Banner* every morning, to me, is linked inextricably with the fact that, in 1900, 1905, the economy had changed from 1800, 1805. It was 5 percent industrial and 95 percent agricultural, and it had gone through a complete reversal. And we were along the path that seemed glorious, that brings us, actually, smack up to Watergate.

MR. CUMMINGS: Good old Watergate.

MR. HANSEN: Yes.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, what did you do in the Army for all that time, in those different divisions?

MR. HANSEN: I made use of - I enjoyed being in the infantry, and I enjoyed playing soldiers in the lots, and I enjoyed shooting off guns and jumping out of airplanes and running around the airport, and doing push ups all the time. And I also enjoyed getting in trouble and being a troublemaker. And I think I spent the entire 36 months in the Army on extra duty. I was always the one who had to get up - called it the "bolo" [phonetic] squad, you get up and chop the grass on the parade ground with a machete, or double time around with a lawn mower, or shovel sand out of sewers that sand has blown in, or culverts, or something, and do the shit jobs and what not. There was a certain kind of Devil's Island camaraderie amongst the unruly soldiers, you know.

MR. CUMMINGS: What do you think -

MR. HANSEN: That was right where I wanted to be.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yes?

MR. HANSEN: Always with the rebels.

MR. CUMMINGS: Why was that? What appealed to you in that? Or was it just that you liked a certain kind of action?

MR. HANSEN: That's what all the Street and Smith stories were about, you know? And that's what - you can see existentialism beginning in early American literature like Hawthorne and James Fenimore Cooper. *Hawkeye* and *Deer Slayer*, *The Virginian*, the solo cat who has his own set of rules and what not, and all that wonderful bullshit.

MR. CUMMINGS: Kind of early on the road Kerouac -

MR. HANSEN: Yes, Lieutenant Cally [phonetic] wouldn't have lasted more than five minutes with any of these people. And I am sure I'm not being too subjective about this, but I don't think any of the people I knew in the 82nd Airborne in the late 1940s could be gotten to go to Kent State or any place and do anything against college students or other Americans or something. That's kind of a totally new thing. And now I think about it, there was the Pullman strike, and MacArthur did fire on or use troops against the World War I veterans who marched on Washington for their bonus, and all of that stuff. So I guess -

MR. CUMMINGS: It goes on.

MR. HANSEN: That doesn't apply.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes, it goes on forever. What did you do when you came out of the Army? What was your -

MR. HANSEN: Well -

MR. CUMMINGS: What were you interested in doing?

MR. HANSEN: My major idea, the kind of kid I was in the Army, my major idea was to somehow or other go into crime, and maybe go to the Mediterranean or China or Israel and run - this was December 1948 - run guns and smuggle, and have a ball, like Humphrey Bogart in *Casablanca*. "Play it again, Sam," you know?

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: I would really have a place like that. And that was my infantile romantic thing, perhaps the way - but then I was only 25, you know? That means emotionally, an American at 25, I was - or 23 - I was about, emotionally, maybe 12 or 13, you know? A woman of equal age would be emotionally - well, maybe at 25, she would be 19 or 20, emotionally.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, what did you actually do, once you came out? Because you had - did you have a GI Bill, or any of those things that interested you, or were you -

MR. HANSEN: Well, through being an avid reader throughout the time I was in the service, that was the pocketbook era, which led to the experiment with pocketbook production more widely in the late 1940s, it comes right out of World War II and all the pocketbooks that were easy to send around and put on troop ships and barracks, and what not, and Red Cross. And through always reading and what not, I fell in with other unruly types, who were also quite educated, an awful lot of guys who were very good - from very good backgrounds who had gone to prep schools, who were really, like, quite well educated, equal to preps - somebody with a

master's degree from college, from the lower classes. Well, even - and I had one really good friend, Sam Turmboll [phonetic], who knew the Village very well. And I had been the Village a lot, but I was more interested in jazz clubs and night life and bars.

MR. CUMMINGS: When did you discover the Village?

MR. HANSEN: When I was about 17 or 18, before I was drafted in the Army. And I just discovered the Village by accident. I was much more interested in Times Square, and night clubs, and places like that. It was kind of a tradition in my neighborhood that a lot of stand up comics and talkers come out of. And it begins with who is best at telling movies on the stoop next to the candy store. And it works out to a kind of entertainment thing. Out there, even now, in Rockaway Beach in the summer, you will see one guy from one neighborhood holding forth, keeping 40, 50 people on blankets amused while he does imitations of movie stars. And these kind of guys were like a pack of high performance numbers who knew of each other. And they would go to night clubs in Brooklyn and Forest Hills, and what not, and copy down several times, having a beer at the bar and nursing it, memorize different comedians' acts, and then go over to New York and do that, too, and perform them on amateur night, and what not. But there again, like sports, I didn't have any drive to compete with it. I was just satisfied to do that, and dig the others, and be one of them, or a younger one of those, myself. But I was always finding myself toward art. So, the pal in the Army, the Airborne, Sam Turmboll, got out a little ahead of me, and was sending me letters about the fiendish things he was doing in the Village. It just didn't seem believable, the girls he had and the parties he was going to and what not.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: So I think, when I got discharged, I went to the Village before I went home, you know, and met Sam and what not. And then, a funny thing happened, which wasn't really any kind of identification between Sam and I. He got married to a girl, and they had a kid, and she left him, and he went around nuts for a while, and just went hitch hiking, got in jail in Mexico, and some Air Force guys bailed him out, so he enlisted in the Air Force. He didn't know what else to do. He was just completely broke, and on the other side of the country. And in the meantime, I went to the Art Students League, and hung around the Village, and hitchhiked to Florida and Miami.

MR. CUMMINGS: How did you get to the League? What year was that?

MR. HANSEN: The Art Students League must have been 1949, 1950. And I studied there -

MR. CUMMINGS: Who did you study with?

MR. HANSEN: - with John Groth, who I believe is still alive. And a fascinating guy, he works in pen and ink and brush and ink, and he is the art director of *Esquire*, I think, and several other things. And the old *Esquire* from World War II and just after was usually full of these quick pen and ink sketches by John Groth.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: And the Village at the time, the place where everyone lived in the late 1940s was Cold Water Flats.

MR. CUMMINGS: How did you pick the League, though? What was that?

MR. HANSEN: The older artists around the Village would suggest a younger guy with talent go to the League, the way today older guys would suggest to someone of talent who is around to go - probably in SoHo, the place they would tell people to go would be the School of Visual Arts. And before the School of Visual Arts, there was Cooper Union and Pratt, et cetera.

MR. CUMMINGS: But who did you - who were the older artists you knew might have given you this indication? Who did you -

MR. HANSEN: Well, at that time, in the 1940s, one, from time to time, would run across people - see people around like Edward Hopper or John Sloan.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes, but who did you get friendly with, or talk to?

MR. HANSEN: There is a man who died not so long ago named Dehersch Margules [phonetic], who was a water colorist.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yes.

MR. HANSEN: Rather in the Marin [phonetic] tradition. I'm talking about the Village of the Waldorf cafeteria.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, yes.

MR. HANSEN: And the Jefferson Diner, and all of that, and the outdoor art show. And another was a League member named August Von Munchausen [phonetic], who did ballet pastels. And he was a kind of - he was antipathetic. Through the entire modern movement, he was, like, a super conservative. He had traveled with the Ballet Rouge, the Monte Carlo, or something, sketching them, and this, that, and the other. And a lot of other old ones. There was a wonderful caricaturist back then named Jake Spencer. And if I really pushed myself, I could make a big list. But the artists of the time that were talked about in the art world - which was then Greenwich Village - were Walt Kuhn [phonetic] and Stutvig [phonetic], and you know, Will Barnett was like a young radical at the time.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: I remember that I had a kind of very tight sharp pencil drafting style, and a good eye, and I really did it a lot. Various older people kept saying - it was the hip thing to say to somebody who drew tight to say, "Why don't you go study with Kumioshi [phonetic] for a couple of years? It will loosen you up." I guess if you were loose, they would say, "Well, why don't you go to League and study with Bridgeman [phonetic]? It will tighten you up, you know?"

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MR. HANSEN: All these people going around giving advice.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, one way or the other.

MR. HANSEN: You know?

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes. How did you like the League, and how long were you there?

MR. HANSEN: I went there on the GI Bill for a summer. And you're your own boss there. The teacher would come in, John Groth would come in about every two weeks, smelling just a bit of drink in a kind of romantic way, and he would sit over in the corner, and one after one, we would go over and give him the sketch books we had filled up during the preceding weeks, from the model and what not, posing, or - and he would look through the large pulp sketch pads, muttering, "Shit, bullshit, no good, shit, more shit." He would not only do this, he would tear the pages out, crumple them up, and throw them on the floor. It was really a moment of truth, you know.

MR. CUMMINGS: That was criticism with a vengeance, right?

MR. HANSEN: Yes, and it was quite good. It's supposed to happen in your head and in your eyeballs and your fingers, not on a goddamn pad, you know? It is not special. Or, he would take something that had promise, and working over it in charcoal, show you how it could be better. I have done this with brain damaged - I have been hired to teach frequently, and if you even put your finger to the surface of the drawing, they usually break up in hysterics, or go home to their analysts, or come down with mono for two months. But you had that feeling of satisfaction from the drawings where Groth would say, "Well, now, goddamn it, here you are doing something," and then he would proceed to show you why. And there is no point in keeping every goddamn thing you do, anyway. The experience, and the activity, and what you are reaching for is more precious than that particular object. Later, at Pratt, studying sculpture with Ruben Nakien [phonetic] -

MR. CUMMINGS: When was that?

MR. HANSEN: That was much later. That was in the late 1950s, or early 1960s - late 1950s.

MR. CUMMINGS: Like 10 years later.

MR. HANSEN: Yes, oh, yes. Much later. And there is a whole tour in the Air Force in between there, because I got married and had a daughter, and the whole thing went blooey [phonetic]. And being the girl I had married was kind of unstable, I had to figure out how to get out of the marriage, and still have some funds for them, or something. So I just kind of grasped at Sam's model and reenlisted in the armed forces. I was sent to Mitchell Field, quickly found a racket job on the base newspaper, and I was there for a year and a half of the four years. So I would just go out to get paid, you know. I really had it made. It's a country club Air Force base, which is now made into a big shopping center.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MR. HANSEN: It was quite prophetic, you know? Like a cartoon about the military industrial complex there.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: And Ruben Nakien would get these incredibly Junoesque models, Lacheze Meyer [phonetic] type models, and you would work very hard for an hour or so with orange sticks, whatever they call them, lending out of clay this woman. And then he would go around smashing it with his fist. And I recognized immediately the old school, John Groth, this is the tradition.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: And I would also crack up at the reaction of a lot of the kids, because Pratt has a certain cashmere sweater they're not all that talented, because you have to be able to afford Pratt, too.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, you were also older than most of the students, too.

MR. HANSEN: Yes, yes, yes. And this Groth tearing up the things, and Nakien smashing the clay sculptures was also the Zen master going through with the pole, smashing people across the back, you know. It's the temptation - the challenge is to not have it register on your meditation, you know, to just keep on working. But Groth never explained. Nakien explained it. He would say, "Goddamn it, I want it to happen in there," poking you on the forehead with this incredible sculptor's finger, you know, which looked like a large sausage.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MR. HANSEN: "Not there," pointing at the ruined lump of clay -

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: - that had been really getting so nice, you know?

MR. CUMMINGS: How long were you at Pratt?

MR. HANSEN: I was at Pratt about four or five years. In the - as the 1950s got late, we had received from - European artists of New York, like - artists of New York, young artists of New York like myself had received from European artists this kind of gift of the signature look. I'm not sure where I read that, maybe Sam Hunter [phonetic].

MR. CUMMINGS: What do you mean by that?

MR. HANSEN: Well, remember the thing of, "There is no need to sign the painting?" This was really de rigueur not to sign the abstract expressionist painting.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: "IT IS." Remember?

MR. CUMMINGS: Mm hmm [affirmative].

MR. HANSEN: IT IS. Therefore, your name on the back -

MR. CUMMINGS: It is [inaudible] -

MR. HANSEN: Yes, vaguely. It is in the tiger's eye. And we will have to instruct the typist how to type that out. "IT IS", "is" with capital letters, and *Tiger's Eye*, was the titles of two magazines.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: Two quarterlies. So, somehow, the signature precedes the real growth of maturity of American artists into - we have to say abstract expressionism -

MR. CUMMINGS: What - you know -

MR. HANSEN: - because abstract expressionism was the thing that actually suddenly reversed the tide. And the big five or six or eight of abstract expressionism were the first to create a backwash of mannerism throughout the rest of the art world, globally, and actually created - changed New York into the art capital of the world, something people from our generation and even people that did it never dreamed would happen.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: And this is like one of the big things of our time. And -

MR. CUMMINGS: You know, I'm curious, because we're getting off a little bit -

MR. HANSEN: This led to the seven day painter idea. This was a very popular handle, "The seven day painter." What do you do? You paint? How often do you paint? Weekends? "No, seven days," you know? And this we got from Gorky [phonetic] and Klein [phonetic] and Pollack [phonetic], and these guys, and Tony Smith, and -

MR. CUMMINGS: But it goes back -

MR. HANSEN: Oh, of course, of course. But I am talking in terms of my country bumpkin rube colonial American art world experience, and watching that grow and mature and become a machine, you know? "And right on, Barbara, right on" -

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, yes.

MR. HANSEN: And - although there is another side to that. So, a great thing to do, in order to be a seven day painter, would be to teach art. You have a studio space available, you're involved with art all the time, even when you're not working, blah, blah, blah. And I had started to go to college on the GI Bill when I got out of the Air Force after seven years in the service, and -

MR. CUMMINGS: So you spent most of the 1950s, then -

MR. HANSEN: I was in the Air Force from December 1951 to December 1955. And I got out and went into McGraw Hill Publishing Company, I was assistant art director, or editor, whatever you want to call it, or assistant to the art editor of *Chemical Engineering Magazine* for a year, and then I was in their central art department for a year, and then I was with an ad agency for a year. So - and then I got into freelancing. But along with McGraw Hill, I was going to Brooklyn College nights, and I didn't find that too satisfying, although I had a wonderful art course with a sculptor named Al Terrace [phonetic], beautiful guy, very intelligent, wonderful guy I run into from time to time. And I was older than the kid who had been sitting around the coffee shops in Greenwich Village and what not. And in Al I saw a completely mature, hip guy who, in his lectures, would go on for maybe a half hour about the Bert and Harry Peel [phonetic] commercials, and I identified with that immediately. One of my first aestheticians, the first aesthetician or critic to make an effect on me was Zelden Rodman [phonetic] and Gilbert Seldies [phonetic] and the *Old View*[phonetic] magazine, and of course the *Tiger's Eye*, and what not. And it was just starting to come out, or it had been coming out for a while. And I had two good friends from that period in Greenwich Village after the Army, Murray Israel [phonetic] and Lucian Krakowski [phonetic]. And Murray was into social work, psychiatry, and Lucian was at Pratt, and was the head of the foundation. And he advised me that it would be smart to start going to Pratt nights, as they were getting ready to open up an art ed department. So, I began to go to Pratt nights, and I was doing kind of social work during the day. No, no, no. Freelance advertising stuff.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yes, advertising, yes.

MR. HANSEN: And then I met Tony Smith going to Pratt nights, and Tony got me a job at a community center in the west forties, over near the active studio called Hartley House. And the children's - and Tony had been the art teacher there. And somehow, whenever they needed a new art teacher, Tony would recommend someone he thought was worthy, and struck them that this must be treated like a plum, and if one wants to leave or quit, one must contact him immediately, so we could set up the next guy who would use it, et cetera and so forth, find the right person. And so, I was doing that, and then going to Pratt nights. And then Murray Israel had a problem with one of his social work things. It was a halfway house for disturbed girls in Gramercy Park called the Girls Service League, and it was a halfway house for, basically - although it's academic - sexually disturbed teenage girls in their early teens, up until 17 or so. And they needed a summer programming director. They had several guys who had an MSW [phonetic] and what not, who were caught up in the girls' rooms, or quit at the threat, because there were a whole bunch of little Brigitte Bardots [phonetic], and the costume of the time was matador pants and pedal pushers. And Murray thought I would be idea for this. And although I didn't have any degrees, they took me on, and I was getting, like, $100 a week, you know. And that was like, where I come from, that was, like, really kind of an executive wage. And I did that, and I became very involved with the group meetings and the therapy counseling, and the literature available there. And when the thing finally closed - it folded through lack of financial support on the part of the government, the city, and the state, they wouldn't increase the amount they gave it, although their laws dictated the girls had to have a winter coat and a snack between meals, et cetera. So, they just closed it down and kept several of the services going, and sold one building. It went through the block, with a courtyard in between. And one of the women there, who was a worker named Mary Dowery [phonetic], who had been involved in the Harlem Street Club Project, and she wrote a letter to the New York City Youth Board, the people she knew there, and I went and I became a youth board worker with street gangs for the youth board. And a great bunch of guys. I was in one unit that had been Frank Serpico's unit while he was studying to be a policeman, although people studying to be a policeman were in the minority, because they wouldn't usually be the kind of person - because Frank Serpico is a beautiful, unique individual - usually the personality -

MR. CUMMINGS: What did you do with them?

MR. HANSEN: - who wanted to be a cop would not want to do social work with street kids. He would want to beat them up or arrest them, or shoot them back, or whatever.

MR. CUMMINGS: What did you do with these -

MR. HANSEN: It works under the New York City Council of Social and Athletic Clubs, and it's called, The New York City Youth Board. And it's part of the government structure. And it's actually a detached lay social worker using a kind of like field therapist using group, or Gestalt, techniques. At Pratt, I was very turned on by several psych and social courses I had, and a lot of reading I was getting into, and this - the art of integrals, or units, in a field with people seemed to me very, very synonymous to the parts or integrals of a painting, physical and intellectual, being activated or not activated, or a static dynamic. The parallels just were, like, incredibly obvious. So -

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, what -

MR. HANSEN: It synergized me.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes, yes. I am trying to free out the pattern out, here, where you were doing what when.

MR. HANSEN: That's a job, Paul. From the Air Force -

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: - I worked at McGraw Hill for two years, and then into advertising for a couple of years -

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: - during which I was going to Pratt nights in evening school for a degree in graphic art and illustration, while working as a graphic artist and illustrator -

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MR. HANSEN: - paste up/lay out man, whatever.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: You know.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: And -

MR. CUMMINGS: So that gets us up to what, 1960 -

MR. HANSEN: I was becoming a big disgusted with advertising. And Tony got me into this teaching thing.

MR. CUMMINGS: Teaching, right.

MR. HANSEN: With these kids at this settlement house -

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: - 3:00 to 5:00, Monday to Friday. And from - and I was still going to Pratt. And then about 1960 or 1961, somewhere in there, I was a street club worker for the Youth Board, and -

MR. CUMMINGS: How long did that -

MR. HANSEN: One year, just about a year and a few months. And the - in the meantime, they had started the art ed program - department at Pratt, and I transferred into the day school.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I see. Right.

MR. HANSEN: So I was going days and - full time, and working nights full time with the Youth Board. And each week, ultimately, I would steal from one for the other. I would steal from Peter to pay Paul, Paul. And there were times when I couldn't be in my area, and I would have to lie about four or five hours, because I had to be in school. And then there were classes I would cut, because I had to be in the field. I couldn't -

MR. CUMMINGS: What did you do in the field, what was -

MR. HANSEN: I didn't do one -

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MR. HANSEN: Well, the main idea of the job was basically - it could be seen most simply, no matter it was supposed to be, as a way of protecting the citizens' property who elected the government which decided to have this department. So, one's first job was to call up and warn the police about impending gang fights, because this was the era of rumbles, which was wiped out completely by dope, and which - dope, in some ways, in Chicago and the South Bronx, has brought back, although that's a bit pat. But this is certainly part of what has gone on. And the - well -

MR. CUMMINGS: I mean, how did -

MR. HANSEN: An area where there was trouble, or where there had been gang rumbles and a kid had been shot, or guns had been fired or property was continually smashed would have a Youth Board worker sent to it, and it was a lot like Dr. Livingston going into the Congo and holding out a few beads and a mirror and approaching the tribe. You could end up full of blow gun darts that way.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MR. HANSEN: And they've lost - a lot of workers have been killed. It's quite dangerous work. You're handling volatile, anti social, hostile acting out, fucked up kids. And -

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, how did you, you know, get into their world?

MR. HANSEN: The bad apples cherish - the good apples cherishing the bad apples, and feeling like being bad apples, too. Well, one - if you're taking it over from a worker who is leaving, you would go in with him for a couple of nights, and be introduced to the core leaders. And they would usually be the Iagos. It wouldn't be the visual leader. That would be someone else who was really the power. And the worker who had been working with them for a year or a couple of months was backing out, an expert - any of the area chiefs or supervisors, in that they had worked up through it themselves, and were reading everyone's reporting, would be able to do a flying squad number and just land in any area to help, like, blanket it and do something. We had seed money, or funding money, with which we would take the kids for meals and stuff, or buy a kid a baseball bat or a pair of shoes, or a book, or something or other, food, you know. And one of the best ways to stop a rumble - because they happened all the time - would be to get - call leaders, the ones who would lead them into warfare, the war lord and the president or the chief, or whatever - whether they were that formal or not - and say, "Listen, you know, I know you got something going on, but they gave me $20 to spend on you guys tonight. Like, doesn't matter whether the rumble happens or not. Why don't we just go eat Chinese, and we take a cab over the bridge and go have some Chinese food and see a movie, or see a movie and see some - get some Chinese food?"

MR. CUMMINGS: Break it up, yes.

MR. HANSEN: And it's like cutting off the head of a snake, you know? There is a lot of wriggling around, but nothing much happens. I remember once I was - there was -

MR. CUMMINGS: How did they -

MR. HANSEN: I was in a candy store getting cigarettes, and I realized that the gang was going by outside that I was working with. And several of them were carrying, or trailing behind them, things like the - you know that big board that's part of the seats of a bus stop seat or a park bench?

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, right, yes.

MR. HANSEN: They were heading east or south - no, they were heading west, and that was, like, black neighborhood, and they were going to fight them. It was an Anglo Saxon, Italian, German, Irish gang. And I jumped in the phone booth and put a dime in the slot and dialed the first three numbers of the Youth Board emergency number, and I just paused to try to remember which were the right other three numbers, and I was going to get the paper out of my pocket that had it on it. And I put my hand in my jacket pocket, and the door opened and a kid placed a gun against my forehead, and said, "Don't drop a dime in the machine, Mr. Hansen." And I said, "Who wants to make telephone calls?" And I hung it up. And I said, "In fact, you might not find me in the telephone booth again for the rest of my life." So the kid put the gun away. And the people at the counter were doing their work, they hadn't noticed. And I said, "What I really came in for tonight - you're not going to believe this, you think I was calling the cops - I was trying to call my girlfriend, because they gave me $20 to spend on the group, and they were all acting like idiots. I was going to call my girl and take her to a club or to a

show or something, just go out and have dinner, because you guys don't need the money tonight." And he said, "You got $20 to spend on us? Holy smoke," you know, like, "Who are you going to take?" And I said, "Well, you were one of them, you know that. Reno [phonetic], would I leave you out?" You know? And evidently, the worker with the black group on the other side - so this gets to be like counterspy, you know - had called it in. He had heard about it and called it in, and there were police cars everywhere. So, I found out where my guys were, and I took them. But that whole, like, organized rumble thing was just completely wiped out by dope. And I kept -

MR. CUMMINGS: How so? In what - you know -

MR. HANSEN: Well, somebody who is carrying drugs, marijuana or bennies or pills or -

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: - Robitussin A C cough medicine or heroine or cocaine is not going to do anything to bring -

MR. CUMMINGS: Get in a hassle.

MR. HANSEN: - attention to himself in public.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: You know?

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MR. HANSEN: And these kids were all - I found one big drugstore down there in the Bushwick section of Brooklyn, and there was a car parking garage next to it, one story high. And the kids would go into the drugstore, buy a bottle of Robitussin A C cough medicine, or some kind of codeine cough medicine, pass it around amongst the three of them, drink a third of a bottle each, and then throw the bottle up on the roof. And this one roof had something like 4,500 bottles there, you know?

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes?

MR. HANSEN: Really fantastic. And I went in and spoke to the druggist, and I called the company, and Pfizer and Squib [phonetic] and everyone else, and nobody knew anything.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: Supposedly, you can't get this without a prescription, but all these kids were going in there and buying it. And so, the kid - a kid can - a kid would say that he wasn't addicted to codeine cough medicine, he just liked to take it regularly. And I would always explained that was like being a little bit pregnant. You can't be a little bit pregnant. You're either pregnant or not.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: And if you need three bottles of this stuff a day, you're hooked.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: And anyone selling hard dope finding out about it can get them on a needle right away, because they've got to have something or other.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: So they've got that. And it's interesting, the connections we see now between - like from the Serpico book and from events in the newspapers, French Connection -

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, yes.

MR. HANSEN: - et cetera, aftermath of the French Connection case. The police were quite actively engaged in many areas in selling heroines themselves, and overseeing dealers, and running prostitution rings and burglary rings, and everything else.

[END CD 1]

MR. CUMMINGS: - ask you a couple of things. You were in that famous class at the New School, weren't you?

MR. HANSEN: Yes.

MR. CUMMINGS: The Cage class?

MR. HANSEN: Mm hmm [affirmative].

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes?

MR. HANSEN: Ah, yes.

MR. CUMMINGS: Ah, yes. And what was so wonderful, you know, besides John grinning, as he was wont to do on occasion.

MR. HANSEN: His famous idiot grin.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MR. HANSEN: Well, I had been working full time at McGraw Hill, and going to school full time nights. And I was like a human clock spring, not overwound, but you know, my God. And by the summer, I started going to Pratt evenings in fall of 1957, I think. And Rosemary Castora [phonetic], I think, was a freshman at that point. She was, like, 17 or 18. Just wandered out of [inaudible] with her little sketch pad under her arm. And I had been working full time days and going to school nights, four nights a week from, like, 6:30 to 10:30, or something. And one pleasure was that after one sketch class, Mercedes Mata [phonetic] would ride me back into the Village in her white Cadillac, and then we would talk all the way over. And then, for some reason or another, we would keep talking while she drove around for an hour, trying to find a parking space close to McDougal [phonetic] Alley.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: Thoroughly wonderful, warm, vibrant, talented, wacky, wonderful woman. And anybody bad mouths Mercedes has trouble with me. And even she will admit that a bit of her goes a long way, at the same time, in all fairness. That's my Libra number, you know, both sides. Another favorite thing was to ride in with Tony Smith [phonetic] after class, and we would ride in and talk. And he would go to Bennington, his other teaching job from Pratt through New York, which is the worst way, just so that we could talk for an hour. And I was married at the time, I had remarried.

MR. CUMMINGS: Who was that?

MR. HANSEN: And my wife at the moment was a wonderful gal named Marvyne. And we had a very good friend across the hall from us - we had an apartment in New York - very good friend across the hall, a painter named Pauline Goldfine, who was an excellent painter who never surfaced or go out, but really totally fine. That kind of - from Kobinski [phonetic] and Coldus [phonetic], if you can stand that from me, Greek color in her work. Just really totally wonderful gal. And Pauline was a kind of a culture vulture, and she was really like - she felt like - she was older than us, a little bit - she felt like taking a course at New School. And she wanted to take, like, a seminar in modern art or Western civilization, or the philosophers, or something. Marvyne thought she would go with her. She thought she'd dig that, too. So, that was the summer of 1958. The summer of 1958. And I thought, "I've been going to Pratt, I've got, like, a B plus average, and I've been going there, like, every goddamn night and everything, I'm really getting a little wacky from this. I will just work at the Girls Service League, and do a few freelance accounts days, and I will do something completely different at night, like extra input." I have always been big on extra input, strange input. People say, "Well, why are we going this way, it's right over there." And I say, "Well, we never walked around the block this way. It's the long way, but what we see we would never see any other way." It's always been like kind of a visual or intellectual predatoriness, or hipness on my part, to do that. I always tell people, like, "Don't come home from work the way you went to work. Go the other way, even if you take a bus over to, like, Queens and around, and back up through Chinatown. Like, vary things so you can have an exciting life." If you - you have to work at it, though, it's hard. And - but it's a lot of fun.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MR. HANSEN: You go ride on a bus you never rode on before to the end and back. The people you - if you meet somebody on that bus, that's the only way you would have met them. It becomes valuable. Charged experiences. So, I thought I would go to the New School, too. And at the time, I had become pals with a wonderful guy named Harvey Gross at McGraw Hill. He was in the text film department. And through him, I began reading more and more into film, because I really dug film. But it's like digging art, and then you listen to someone who has an aesthetic base describing the experience available in a painting, and it's much more, you know? Someone who is an authority on film, and who has made them and studied them and loves that, talking about, like, movies at the time, that time, like the middle 1950s, there were a fantastic number of films that were all seen for the second and third time, the black and white movies that came out of France and Italy right

at the end of World War II. *The Snow was Black*, *In Paisan* [phonetic], and -

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: Blah, blah, blah.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: And it's just a marvelously vibrant, healthy time for film.

MR. CUMMINGS: But, anyway, you went to the school, right?

MR. HANSEN: So I thought, well, I was really involved with film, you know, or beginning to be. And I had just finished reading Eisenstein, and kept going back every eight pages and reading it over again, to make sure I got it all, rather than finish it and read it again, which [inaudible]. So, I looked through the catalog for something that was taking place on the same night at the same time. I thought we would all go together, which seems a bit disgusting to me now. But this was the 1950s, Paul.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Togetherness.

MR. HANSEN: So, I went through the catalog, and I got as far as John Cage's course in experimental composition of music, and I saw that you need no prerequisites, no knowledge of music, no experience. You could come in naked as a baby. And I decided that was the one to take, because Eisenstein said all the forms, all the art forms, meet in the film frame. The one I knew nothing about was music. I had never studied music. I couldn't play an instrument. The pitch pipe, I couldn't identify a note. So, it also said that it would also expose or use very contemporary, the most contemporary, avant garde musicians. And I thought this would be a good thing to, like, fill in on if I was going to make a film, if I get around - if I really make a film, I will have to have a sound track, and have to know the right guy.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MR. HANSEN: It's like an architectural team approach to - movie implies a team. And one person can't really do it, you need, like, several people. And if you read about really good films, you find out that he has an editor, and he has a shooter, and he has a -

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right, right.

MR. HANSEN: So, I thought I would do that. So, I signed up for it, and I was late for the first class. You know, it's history now, Paul, it's history now. As I'm dropping things and picking them up, and stepping on people's feet and bumping into them and finding a seat in the back to be, you know, low profile - that's my middle word, "low profile," middle name - high performance from a low profile, that will really throw everyone off. So, Kate [phonetic] said, "We have just finished sort of saying who we are and why we're here, and where we have been, and what we want to do. So you're the only other one. Perhaps you would like to tell us now." And I really kicked myself for being late, you know, because I got stuck in traffic, and what not. I would like to have had the model of what everyone else said, to either use or department from, depending.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MR. HANSEN: I was, like, naked. And I said, "Well, I am interested in making films, and film making, and I know nothing about music. So I am here to find out." And he said, "Yes, but you have studied music." And I said, "No, I have never studied music." And he said, "Yes, but you know about - well, you play a musical instrument," and I said, "No." And he said, "But you compose." And I said, "No." And he said, "You wouldn't compose music for your movies?" And I said, "No, I would want to get a really very good composer." So he laughed. And then he said, "But you do know something of rhythm." I said, "No." He said, "Harmony?" I said, "No." He said this, I said no, he said that, I said no. And as I kept saying no to everything, his face just kept breaking into a bigger and bigger and bigger grin, you know? And I thought, "Well, now, I am really, like" - it's like the guy that tries to make a move with the chick while the train is going through the tunnel, and as you cop a feel, here you are, hurdling out into daylight, and everyone is looking, including her. There isn't any way to escape.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: Like hand in the cookie jar, you know? And he said, "That's just wonderful." He said it was really great. And he was laughing, and he said, "You're the only one here who doesn't have anything to unlearn." They had all really laid it on, how much they knew and how much they had studied, and how great they were, you know. So, I was the primitive.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Well, what were those classes like? I mean, did he give you problems? Was it set up as

you came in?

MR. HANSEN: Well -

MR. CUMMINGS: What did he do?

MR. HANSEN: Sometimes he would begin by talking about Zen, and sometimes he would begin by telling anecdotes, and sometimes he would describe things. And in a way, he gave a history of music, but it really wasn't pinned down. It was very much the model for the way I teach, without a syllabus, but still touching, again and again, in different ways on certain basic premises, or certain felt importances. And before the middle, about one third point, he demonstrated several ways to make a music notation system for making sounds happen without - well, he made us invent ones, so that it would be about using anything that was not about music, just some kind of symbol structure whereby someone who didn't know anything about music could make a certain number of sounds at a particular time, loud or soft, or whatever, or leave it up to them, over a period of time, and a way for conducting or indicating that time, or forgetting about that, and let it happen as it happens. And each of us - so I began to get to know the people in the class. And now, of course, it's a kind of famous avant garde history story, and all of us have written books and had articles printed in catalog texts and shit, so it's even better, in that it isn't apocryphal, it really did happen.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: In some strange, crazy way, the people in the class were George Brecht, and Jackson MacLow, and Dick Higgins. And Jim Dine was frequently there, and I think Claes Oldenburg came once. Al Kaprow, Allan Kaprow, took it, I think, for several terms running, as did Higgins and some others, and Jackson MacLow.

MR. CUMMINGS: You took it only once.

MR. HANSEN: I just took it that one summer, and then I came back and visited from time to time, because I learned so much with it, I think Allan - I - in some ways, I don't think Allan Kaprow learned anything from it, although he got a very deep appreciation and understanding of Cage. But Allan stayed very much Allan. And with Allan, I think it was kind of like acid tripping or something. I'm more the kind of guy who takes an acid trip and then works on what I experienced or went through for 4 or 5 or 10 years. And I rarely went back, and I rarely contact Cage. And the reason I do is kind of the power of the experience, along with Tony Smith, who I met about the same time. It's a really powerful connection. So is Ruben Nakien, and, well, quite a few other people.

MR. CUMMINGS: Who else would you say was important to you at that point?

MR. HANSEN: Well, Dick Higgins was, to a great extent, in that Dick was just turning 18 at the time. He was a very, very brilliant guy with certain problems we all have to varying amounts. And coming from a kind of old family with a little bit of money, Dick, in - oh, it's not fair to say trying to wear long pants. But here were all these people in their late thirties, early thirties - early thirties and late twenties, actually, who had really been out in the world a little, and here was this guy still with his allowance and the business manager of the family, like, allowing so much for his rent, which was paid by the mail or something, and he had several check books, and several bank books, and totally brilliant guy, capable of instant recall. And Dick's manner was somewhere between archetypal bright, preppy, and Mr. Chips. He was - but what I dug about him, what I liked and felt contact with immediately was that he was a real one. It wasn't an act. And there were those in the class who treated him as if he was an act, or putting it on or something. So they would, like, retaliate, or freeze him, or say, "Listen" - he would try to talk to someone, and they would say, "Listen, I got to go," and they would walk away. And so, I would always make an extra effort to befriend him. So we kind of got to be pals. I could describe it exactly. "You really should go get Higgins and give him 15 minutes in there, if he wants equal time, because it's a bit unfair." He is at my mercy, and -

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes. Well, but it will happen, right?

MR. HANSEN: Yes. He just told me he's eschewing all publishing and what not. I had a letter from him, from his show with Block and Berlin [phonetic]. He is eschewing all publishing and any of that stuff. He is an artist, he has decided, and he's going to be an artist, which is silly, because he always was.

MR. CUMMINGS: Is he going to get up something else -

MR. HANSEN: His two and three dimensional art ideas and what not are just fabulous. I think the Something Else Press he has put into some kind of managership, or sold it, or something. And so, in that he is really an artist now, and that he says so finally, himself, then he can go be a Smithsonian tape, too. He can get his chance. So, to illustrate what I mean by that, Dick would put all his stuff in an attache case. I usually used a shopping bag. Dick had an attache case. I really thought that was class. And I had one from Madison Avenue. I would dream of, like, taking it to, like, a course at the New School or something. So, Dick would put all of his stuff in his attache

case, and stand, snap it together, and while closing the things, raise his eyebrows, look at Cage, who was almost face to face with him at his little lectern thing, or table on this raised stage, a foot high, and, as he snapped the briefcase shut, he would say with raised eyebrows and pursing his mouth, "John?" And then Cage would look up, and then he would say, "Emilio's" [phonetic]? And Cage would say, "Well, no. Really, I told some people I would come by and visit them. I would like to, but I don't" - and Dick would say, "Very well, then." And I would usually say something like, "Hey, Higgins, I will go to Emilio's with you. I feel like a drink, you know." Humphrey Bogart. So, we came to be friends. And Dick and I found each other's lifestyles or attributes, or manner of performance as human beings hard to take, or indigestible regularly with vim and vigor. But I still have the highest regard for him.

MR. CUMMINGS: I was going to ask you about the New York audio visual group.

MR. HANSEN: Yes. Well -

MR. CUMMINGS: Were you a part of that?

MR. HANSEN: I am actually the founder and creator. Dick had some money from his family to - or that he had saved up from his allowance to put on a performance of avant garde music. And one place to do that, just as a group show should be had at The Stable [phonetic] or the Ruben Gallery.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: Therefore - which didn't exist yet, but - therefore, a performance of music should take place at the Kaufman [phonetic] Hall or the Lexington Avenue YMYWHA [phonetic]. And I was rather naive about all these things and what not, and so was Dick, but you couldn't tell it. And we rented the hall for two rehearsal days, I think, and one performance evening. And we designed an awful kind of poster, just set up the way - pretty much centered type, the way the typesetter would do it, if we just left it up to him. And we called it, "An Evening of Advanced Musics," I think, which I still rather like the ring of. And we wondered whether we should - we had a little temerity. Should we be so bold as to invite John Cage to be on the program with us? Should we just cool it, or what? And we thought, what the hell, we would love him to be in it. All the new music I had learned and people I had found, like Martin Feldman [phonetic] and Earl Brown [phonetic] and Max Newhouse [phonetic], and - well, I hadn't found Max Newhouse yet, but what's his name, Dick Maxfield [phonetic], I meant to say, who later committed suicide. All these wonderful people. So, I think I didn't have the courage. Dick put it to him. And Dick said, "One way we can get him" - the truth comes out now, folks - Dick said, "One way we can get him, no one will perform his water musics. He is always - ever time he has had a concert, he has tried to get the water music performed, and no one would do it. So we will do that." And we got him. And we proposed to, and we did get him. He said yes, he would love that. And then, probably working off the idea of water music, Dick composed a piece called *Something for an Aquarian Theater*. And, as I remember, I did a piece called *Alice Dannon* [phonetic] *in 48 Seconds Percussion Piece*. And there was, I think, a Christian Wolf [phonetic] - either Christian Wolf or Carter Higgins [phonetic], who I think is - or Elliott Carter [phonetic], or - I'm not sure. I would have to look at the thing. I've done too much, Paul. I am getting foggy, I can't remember that clearly. But also in that summer of 1958 - well, earlier than that - I had seen Higgins around in the poetry reading circuit. He was very involved with poetry reading. And his things were just strange and different. They weren't different from the other beat poets the way Corso [phonetic] is. They were different in that performance or movement - often part of a poem of his would be to clap his hand four times, or to lift up the table he was reading from, and hit it on the floor twice, or to stand up and walk around the table and sit down. And I was going to all these poetry readings, and I guess it was over in Sheridan Square. The name of the joint, Kiddies, was Pandora's Box.

MR. CUMMINGS: On the corner, right.

MR. HANSEN: And it was above the Circle in the Square, and a wonderful bar.

MR. CUMMINGS: Lewey's [phonetic].

MR. HANSEN: Lewey's, yes. Never let a kid go out with this tape recorder. Take somebody who remembers. And early in the late 1940s, when I got out of the Army, I was incredibly enamored of a woman named Jocelyn Brando [phonetic], who had a kid brother who had just been in town a year or so, who would later turn out to be Marlon Brando. But she called him Bud. And she had a roommate named Mary Crabtree, I believe, who might even be the Mary Crabtree of Crabtree Movers. Mary Crabtree left the old Village to go to Sneedon's Landing [phonetic], because it was the only place that had thatched roofs, and she wanted to learn to be a roof thatcher. And these are the sort of things that happened in the old Village, folks. And I just adored Jocelyn Brando. And often I would be in the San Remo [phonetic] Bar, and one of the bartenders was a guy named Harry Jackson, a very tough Pat, and he remembered me during the late 1940s, 1947 and 1948, coming in in my paratrooper's suit with all my medals and stuff, and he called my "trooper," and sometimes "troop," which I rather liked, which I would now find embarrassing, but which I rather liked, you know, so that kind of set me up. And one of the hero groups in the Village at the time were the returning veterans. And the returning veterans who gravitated towards

taking advantage of the 5220 [phonetic] Club and going to school on the GI Bill were a welcome additive throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s to every intellectual situation, in that - let's say it's something like St. John's in Annapolis, Maryland. The townies, who would amuse themselves by beating up on the faggots from the college with the glasses and the books and the pretty girls would quickly get a fist full of knuckles and a kick in the stomach from the veterans.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: And that's what the late 1940s were like, Children.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, what happened, you know, to keep on going -

MR. HANSEN: So, there were these poetry readings at the -

MR. CUMMINGS: The readings.

MR. HANSEN: - Pandora's Box.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: And there was this kid who was hanging out in there, who wanted to do, in the Village, or the New York Theater, what Brando had done. His name was Jimmy Dean. And he even sought parts like the parts Brando had. I remember there was an unreal play called *Tiger at the Gates*, and Jimmy Dean had played a very - not too effeminate, but really, you know, attractive to an old pedagog -

MR. CUMMINGS: Pedagog?

MR. HANSEN: Pollywog [phonetic] type, a little Arab boy in *Tiger in the Gates*. And Brando - I forgot what the companion piece was for Brando. But if you call me from the Smithsonian, I will research it in the meantime, and tell you. And in that I am - had known Jocelyn very briefly - well, the thing about Harry Jackson was, often Jocelyn would be with some older guy who could really afford to buy her a lot of drinks in the San Remo bar, and Jackson would look over at me, and say, "That's tough luck, kid." And I would say, "Yes, I know. Give me another beer." And anyway, this is where I first saw Higgins, and I didn't remember that until later. During the summer of 1958, I was working in an ad agency called Afton and Courier [phonetic], and this is just before Tony Smith got me the job in the fall at Hartley House. And at Afton and Courier, there was a mail room clerk, a very brilliant guy named Donald McCarey [phonetic], who prefers to be called Max McCarey. And Don was an intellectual, just a brilliant guy. And we quickly became friends. And he was faked out that I was studying in John Cage's class. This was all taking place at Afton and Courier Advertising in the gray building on Lexington Avenue by Grand Central Station. Across the street is a large photo shop called Willoughby's [phonetic], which is now Willoughby Peerless [phonetic], and the record clerk in there was a kid from Great Neck, Long Island, who had been Don McCarey's roommate in Boston Conservatory of Music, and his name was Lawrence Poons, and he was the record clerk. And he would spend his lunch hours, strange little fellow, in the newsreel theater in Grand Central Station. I have never been more struck by anyone than when I met this kid, Poons, of a kind of aura of some kind or other. And I realize now that the reason I got into Brando being followed by Jimmy Dean, was that there was a kind of Jimmy Dean thing about Larry when he was a kid, then. He was 18 or 19 then, and very bright. Plays really incredibly beautiful funky folk acoustic guitar, was the first person to turn me on to Johnny Cash. I think a few years later, when Larry was about 21, he had 9 or 10 Johnny Cash LPs, and insisted on playing them all for me, one after the other, side by side. And I got on to - Johnny Cash is a Pisces, Larry Poons is a Libra, blah, blah, blah. It was a very good -

MR. CUMMINGS: Where did the Epitome [phonetic] Coffee Shop fall into this?

MR. HANSEN: So, Don - the - this was at the height of the coffee shop boom.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: Now, the old Village we're talking about, Jefferson Diner and Waldorf Cafeteria, and what not -

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, that was an older -

MR. HANSEN: And the Chuck Wagon.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Mother's.

MR. HANSEN: This was an old group of people. And Mother's. And there was a place called Mama's, which is also after hours booze. Anyway, now there is one on Thompson Street called The Venus, which is just like that time. It's still going on, probably.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yes?

MR. HANSEN: Yes.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, gee.

MR. HANSEN: Until 6:00 in the morning.

MR. CUMMINGS: Leave it to the Village.

MR. HANSEN: A gay bar at one end, and a straight bar at the other end, and you don't have any trouble seeing which bar you should go to, no matter what you are, when you walk in. It's quite obvious, you know? From the bartender and the people, like, straight and gay.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MR. HANSEN: So, Don McCarey was really avaricious to get a coffee shop in the Village going, to really, like, get into a business. He had saved up quite a bit of dough, and had arranged to borrow some through several relatives. And he had a friend, Howard Smythe [phonetic], who would also come in with at least $700 or $800 or $400 or $500. And Larry Poons was to get money from his parents or something to do it, maybe cash in some war bonds or something. But in the pre coffee shop boom, 1940s - in the late 1950s, this coffee shop boom phenomenon also saw something happening that had never happened before. Articles were being written in the popular newspaper and press about artists. This had absolutely never happened before. This is also a period, the post World War II Village up until the middle 1950s, late 1950s, in which photography, for the first time, really settled into being accepted as an art form. It wasn't fought or discussed or argued about any more. It was quite clear it was an art form. It was also five or six years after Mia Daring [phonetic] had gotten the first Guggenheim to do film work. And we were very clearly into - we can see it now, we couldn't see it then - we were just - we couldn't wait to see what would happen next. It was a time of - now we know that information was doubling in ever shortening periods, much less than - like in decades, or a six or seven year periods, rather than decades. And -

MR. CUMMINGS: What happened to his coffee shop? Let's pursue that for a minute here.

MR. HANSEN: The coffee shop thing was a fixation with Don McCarey. Max was, like, a prime mover, a very charismatic guy. And he set up this coffee shop called The Epitome. And the title - and it should always - Max was very Catholic. He was always like completely closure oriented about things. Things were either good or bad. He lived in a totally black and white world. And he and Larry and Howard Smythe painted geometrically. That is very clinically like Aftomondryon [phonetic], and into, like, Bergoyn [phonetic] Diller. And I'm not sure if Max Bill [phonetic] is accurate, but that just comes to mind. And this was at the height of abstract expressionism sort of conquering New York, and the whole 10th Street, and what not. But these three strong kids -

MR. CUMMINGS: But this was on Bleeker Street, wasn't it?

MR. HANSEN: Yes, it was on - it's on Bleeker Street. There is a souvlaki shop there now. It's right next to the new Circle on the Square.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: Which used to be the Amato [phonetic] Opera.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: But I'm not sure.

MR. CUMMINGS: It was, yes.

MR. HANSEN: Too much has gone on.

MR. CUMMINGS: I remember that, yes.

MR. HANSEN: You can't really keep track of all of that any more, you know, after the population -

MR. CUMMINGS: I'm very curious about this coffee shop for something that we can get into, as it develops here.

MR. HANSEN: So, Don McCarey and Howard Smythe's prime book was the *Dada Book*, by Motherwell [phonetic], which also is probably even a much more influential effect on me than Cage. A wonderfully researched, scholarly book, probably at the time - I think it was published by the Museum of Modern Art.

MR. CUMMINGS: Whittenborn [phonetic], Whittenborn.

MR. HANSEN: Herr Whittenborn always strikes, doesn't he? Beautiful man. And the - Max's closure orientation. The name of the store, wherever it appears, or in any way, must be as it appears in the dictionary, with the accent, et cetera -

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MR. HANSEN: Just like that. And they painted this on the - a chair painted white, and they painted this on the seat of the chair, and hung it outside, kind of at an angle, so walking from east to west, you wouldn't notice it. Walking from west to east, you would see it on the seat of the chair. And it was a coffee shop that might be a gallery. The toilet was - the counter was to the right as you go in, there were chairs on the left, and it was a typical kind of converted vegetable store situation. And the off Broadway boom was quite strong, the coffee shop boom was quite strong. Johanna Lawrenson [phonetic] had written her article in *Esquire Magazine, A Can of Beer, a Slice of Pizza Pie, and Thou Besides Me*, which was about people hanging out, artist kids hanging out, in Washington Square Park.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MR. HANSEN: This was followed a few months later by an article in the *Sunday Times* by Dorrie Ashton [phonetic] on how hard it is for an artist to find a place to live, et cetera, and so forth. And these were very big turn ons. I remember in the late 1940s, all of us riding the Fifth Avenue bus up to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and getting off to look at a - I think it was by Nivola [phonetic], Constantin [phonetic] Nivola, a cement concrete relief thing in the entrance to an apartment house which was really not on Fifth Avenue, but around the corner on -

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, right, yes.

MR. HANSEN: - 81st or 82nd Street. Modern art actually being incorporated and it was just a few years, in the late 1940s, since DeCooney [phonetic] and the rest picketed the Modern for not showing American abstract -

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right. But now -

MR. HANSEN: And here is all of this, like, kiddie population bomb going off in Greenwich Village, and the coffee shop boom, and the phenomenon. And Don felt that, and wanted to set up a coffee shop that was a gallery, which was very like conglomerate structure, mixed media, collage -

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes, because I remember readings happening there, and, you know, the sound, Dada sound being -

MR. HANSEN: At first it was going to be a gallery coffee shop. And then there was so much poetry reading going on, and what not, he wanted to have poetry readings there. And he asked me if I would, like, make it happen. He didn't know how to go around and talk to people, and - which is why he has never shown. He is a very fine artist, and he has never shown because he could not stand to propose a show to someone and have them say no. This is also the personality that is a bit of a bastard, as a cruel person in their own right. They're just not going to take a chance on not getting shown, or being turned down. So, I said, "Sure, I would go around and set one up for you." I had been very involved with going to all the coffee shop readings. There was the Gaslight, and one of the first was Pandora's Box. I think Anatol Briard [phonetic], or Vance Pujali [phonetic], or people like that were, like, sparking readings there, and what not. And this had been going on for some time. And it wasn't anything new, it was like a replay, but really big. And all of the - it's quite simple. It's academic, that a large number of poets are effeminate, or homosexual, or whatever. And the majority of the poetry readings were all male. So I thought it would be fun - there must be girl poets - I thought it would be fun to, like, go around and get up a reading of girl poets. So, I went around asking different guy poets who a good girl poet would be. And the majority said, "Chicks can't write poetry, man." And here and there, one or two people would say - like, I think Paul deMaria [phonetic] said, "There is a young girl from" - what's the college outside Philadelphia?

MR. CUMMINGS: What, Temple?

MR. HANSEN: No, not Temple. A little classier, or something, a little bit -

MR. CUMMINGS: Bryn Mawr, or something?

MR. HANSEN: There is a girl at Bryn Mawr who is dropping English lit to study nuclear physics. Her name is Diane DiPrima [phonetic]. She's just a young kid, but she is terrific. So, I went and found Diane DiPrima. And there is a girl named Hazel Ford [phonetic]. And I even called up Muriel Rickhauser [phonetic], who is in the phone book, and she gave me a couple of names of young girls she had had at Barnard [phonetic], or Columbia or some

place. And we got up this poetry reading of girls, which completely faked Don McCarey out. And -

MR. CUMMINGS: Was it successful? Did it work?

MR. HANSEN: It was marvelously successful. And my younger brother, Kenneth, when he went to Hobart - he was going to Hobart at the time, I think - and he had an English prof there who told him that if they were ever down in New York City on the weekend or something, to be - find out whether there was a poetry reading at The Epitome Coffee Shop, because that's where the best poetry readings were. The counter and bar was to the right, as you go in. The tables were to the left, and then you - there was a partition into a back room, which had tables and what not around. The john was in the right rear corner, and we called it the "John Cage." And using masking tape, Larry and Don or Howard or someone - we can find out, these people are all still alive - had painted it in stripes that went around. So it was kind of like kinetic linear - they were like puce and chartreuse and forest green and fire engine red. It was the most unsettling place to look on the wonders of nature. And one of Don McCarey's basic axioms was that one could not be an artist without having read the Motherwell book several times, and that one was not allowed to buy it, one must steal it, and this made it pure information or something. He was always, like, full of riddles and adages and sayings of how a thing could be without any - there could be no -

MR. CUMMINGS: It's the -

MR. HANSEN: Yes, it had to be that way. So, part of the poetry readings were - I was going to Cage's class at the time. So I guess this was in middle to late summer. And Dick Higgins and I had several Sundays - used the Epitome to have people perform notations of ours involving local sounds, or -

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: - using different percussive instruments. And the reason many of these things are called percussion works is that Cage said it just comes about through what exists. A thing that is neither strings nor brass nor wind is automatically percussion. So, if you're a -

MR. CUMMINGS: It's a catch all.

MR. HANSEN: - slamming down a trash can, this is percussion. If you are clapping two pieces of 2 x 4, or operating a 5 and 10 toy, this is percussion.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: So, like a sparkler, or whatever, for sound. So, an important part of each poetry reading was to have a couple of Dada works read from the book or something. And Higgins and I just naturally began to perform works and stuff there. Dick Higgins had a wonderful poem called *Canzona*. And *Canzona* was a kind of non notation. I think it began with an upside down apostrophe, and then there was no line of type, but - and the place where, if there had been four or five lines of type that ended like a widow, or a line or half a sentence. There was a right side up apostrophe. And the way he performed it, it was as elliptical as a notation. He would come out and sit at this little table on a platform under a spotlight, and announce that he was going to read - or have it announced that he was going to read - his poem, *Canzona*. And he would sit there, and he would put his bookbag next to the chair, and then he would take off his coat and put it over the chair, and put his hat on the floor, to the left of the chair. And then, he would open his notebook, and take out a kind of like term paper, or doctoral thesis, a folder of 8 x 10 pages, and put it down, and then go back and look through it for the thing, finally, and take off his gloves and put them to one side. And then he would put a glass or an ash tray or something, so the book was held open, rub his hands together, and then he would reach into his brief case, and take out a rubber glove, and very carefully and pointedly fit it down over his fingers, pulling them down, and then pulling it on to his whole hand. And then he would look, from time to time, to make sure he was doing it right, as if it said just how to do it there. Then he would get out the other one and do that. And then, once he had gotten them all on, putting one finger on the text and, like, finding where his place was - only there wasn't any text - he would remove the first rubber glove from his left hand and put it back in the bag, and then slowly, also checking to make sure he was at the right place, take the other one off and put it back in the bag. And then he would close the notebook, or whatever, and put it back in the bag and zipper it up. And then, he would put on his gloves and pick up his hat off the floor and put it on his head, and he would stand up and bow, and everyone would applaud, you know? A guy I had seen around the Village, who looked like a kind of Martian, and a guy Don McCarey knew from a pad he had up in the upper west 50s or 60s, the guy had a little storefront store and he was an artist. He was a painter and a writer/poet. And in the window of the store - on the glass of the window of the store he lived in up there in the east [sic] 50s or 60s, it just said simply, in white paint from the inside, "Taylor Mead [phonetic], Artist." So, Don got Taylor to come and read. And Taylor began to read from his *Anonymous Notes of a New York Youth.* And shortly after -

MR. CUMMINGS: What did Poons do there?

MR. HANSEN: I promise that's next. Afterwards, shortly after that, Ron Rice [phonetic] got Taylor to just - to be in an underground movie. Underground movies were starting, a natural outgrowth of off Broadway shoestring theater were shoestring films. And what Ron Rice did with Taylor Mead was just let him do whatever he wanted to and shoot him. There might be a paragraph like story line or something. So it was a very much kind of happening thing. Now, we get into Happenings, too. A signature part of every poetry reading at the Epitome Coffee Shop was the announcement that R. Mutt [phonetic] would now read Tristan Zarr's [phonetic] poem, *Roar*, and that was Larry Poons.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: This was always with the Madison Avenue Harris Tweed top coat -

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MR. HANSEN: - that buttoned up to the neck.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. I remember that.

MR. HANSEN: And 15 or 20 neckties tied around the little collar, and what not, and then the collar folded down. And he would unscrew the actual toilet bowl seat from the toilet bowl in the John Cage toilet, and put it around his neck. And on his head he usually wore a - if you know the early 1890s, 1900s comic strip, *The Yellow Kid*, who wore a tin can on his head, as a hat, he would take a kind of pot or plastic container from the kitchen area behind the counter, and put it on his head. And then, he would come out very ponderously, and a special table was set up with a chair next to it, and with the chair on the table, and Poons would move to the chair and step up on it, and then step on to the table, and sit on the chair on the table, and proceed to read Tristan Zarr's *Roar*, which is just the word "roar," going on and on and on, and I think ends with the sentence, "He thinks he's pretty cute," or something like that. I'm surprised I forget it. And this would receive a big ovation.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: I remember one particular night - and we started improvising there - one particular night, Poons was reading *Roar*, the place was packed. There were chippies, teenage runaways, poets, madmen, freaks, literary professors from different colleges, everybody just completely swamping the place, wall to wall. They must have been 60 people over their limit, which should have been about 87 or 74 people. And as Poons began to read *Roar*, Howard Smythe stepped out from behind the counter with a big handful of nails and a hammer, and proceeded to nail around the edges, Poons's shoes to the table top, and finished, and stepped behind the counter as Poons finished the poem. And at this point, the door burst open, and this giant Irish cop, who said, "Now, just what the hell do you all think you're doing in here? You, what are you doing, sitting up there on the table like a fucking dummy? You know, you got too many people in here. You're going to have to get out, you're going to have to open up. This is against all the fire laws. In fact, I'm going to have to give you a ticket. Okay, now you, come on, get down from the table." And Poons, with great dignity and ingenuousness, tucking in his chin in a kind of like Jimmy Dean way, said, "I can't." And he said, "Well, don't give me any of that shit. I'm telling you to get down from the table. Get down from the table. There is nothing the matter with your feet, is there?" And Poons said, "Yes, in a way." And he said, "And that's why you can't get down from the table?" And Poons said, "Yes." And he said, "Well, what's the matter with your feet?" And Poons said, "Well, it isn't my feet, it's my shoes." And the cop was really getting ready to go over and bust him in the face with a club, which could have happened today, let alone then, in the 1950s, height of the McCarthy era, and what not. I think Edward R. Murrough was just killing McCarthy about then. So - television - so, some little girl said, "He can't get down off the table because his feet are nailed to it." So the cop went over and looked closely, and said, "Who the hell did that?" And the way he said it, you know, whoever was going to do [sic] it was going in the slams, or something, or really going to be taken down to the station house. So, Smythe said, "I didn't see who did it, but I will get him loose," and he just sort of came out with a hammer, and started to pry Larry's feet loose, and what not. And then he had trouble walking, because he had all these nails - it was really beautiful. I did a - I wrote a long -

MR. CUMMINGS: How long did that place stay open? It wasn't there very long, as I remember.

MR. HANSEN: Not too long. I remember much later, must have been 1961 or - must have been 1962 or 1963 - 1962 - I was in the Figaro [phonetic] Coffee Shop with my daughter, Bibbe - no, I was in there with Danny List [phonetic], the guy who writes the hub cap things for the Village Voice, and we were waiting for my daughter, Bibbe, to meet me there, because she was taking classes with Alice Speback [phonetic] at the Herbert Berghoff [phonetic] Studios, over in West Martin, or wherever it is -

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: West Bank Street, and down by Len Lai [phonetic]. And I saw, out the window, police fastening clothes lines to telephone poles, and putting it, like, around the headlight of a car, and the next telephone pole,

and then around the parking meter. Whenever the police put up a clothesline perimeter like that, that means a murder has taken place, usually a shooting, and they're protecting the area for clues, et cetera.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: A classic police work thing. And it turned out that the person who rented the Epitome Coffee Shop to Don and Harry and Larry was an old Italian man named Peppi [phonetic], and it had once been a kind of after hours, late night place called Peppi's. And in that it was dimly lit, and what not, all kinds of fiends and bums would come in there, because there was a kind of dope fiend thing beginning to go on then. And junkies always came in to the Epitome Coffee Shop, and Don and I talked at length how to get rid of them, because they were comatose and surly, and they really couldn't move. They were, like, stoned out of their gourds. And we decided that in that a person who overuses drugs has very tender eyesight, we would put in 300 watt bulbs, because in that it was a kind of literary art kid hang out, The Epitome, nobody would really mind bright light. That's always bugged me in places like Max's, and the Broom Street Bar [phonetic], you can't really, like, look through a newspaper, or check something out, or -

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MR. HANSEN: - write an address down.

MR. CUMMINGS: That's because they remember all those dark, Humphrey Bogart bars.

MR. HANSEN: So we'd put in these - put in all these huge, 300 watt bulbs without any frosting, or anything, just naked, pure radiant electricity. And as the sun went down, the junkies would start to come in. And we would turn on all those lights, and they would jump, as if shot, and get up and shuffle out. "What the hell is going on," you know. They would leave. It worked beautifully. And then, they rented the place from Peppi. And then when they left it - and I don't remember the exact date, I am sure Poons would know - when they left it, it became The Café Rafeo [phonetic] shortly after. And I forget who the kid was. There was a wonderful Bohemian kid who had a reputation in the Village of the late 1950s and early 1960s, very much like Gallahad's [phonetic] over on the East Side, Gallahad and Groovy. But he had that kind of rep. Everyone knew who he was. His name was Von Benson [phonetic] or something. Anyway, there was some altercation with Peppi, and - I'm tempted to say, "Poor old Peppi," but Peppi killed the kid in the liquor store next - entrance to the liquor - the argument began at the restaurant, and then went across - he wanted more money or something, and the kid wouldn't - Von Benson, or whatever his name is - wouldn't pay it. And Peppi went to get his gun, and the kid went to get a bottle of booze in the liquor store, and Peppi ran across the street and shot him down in the entrance to the liquor store. And then Bibbe showed up, and we were all digging that. And right now it's a souvlaki joint.

MR. CUMMINGS: Somewhere in the midst of all these - you, at some point, started getting involved with the Happenings or -

MR. HANSEN: Yes, all that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Café a Go Go [phonetic], several Sunday places in these activities. But what about Kaprow? Were you involved with any of the Kaprow events -

MR. HANSEN: Well -

MR. CUMMINGS: - and activities, or Happenings, or -

MR. HANSEN: Well -

MR. CUMMINGS: Where did you get into -

MR. HANSEN: At McGraw Hill, and in different - particularly it was Afton and Courier Advertising Agency in 1957 and 1958.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: And before left, I was at McGraw Hill like in 1956 and 1957, and at Afton and Courier in 1958. So, somewhere towards the end of McGraw Hill in 1957, I became involved with off Broadway theater. I had had a lot of experience on service newspapers, and doing public relations work in the armed forces, and it was a good way to run around and meet important people, or - not important, naturally important, but very interesting people, because, you know, being in the service down South is like being buried, so you have to read the papers. And anything interesting going on, you can go get in it if you have a mouth like mine. And you know, a bit of the weasel doesn't hurt. But, again, just being predatory, like seeking out a scene I want and making it, and I go looking for scenes and activities and particular people, the way some guys go cruising for - the way some people go cruising for a sex partner. And I remember at McGraw Hill, Harvey Gross and I used to go to a different place

for lunch each day. We did a research on cheesecake. And we actually decided in favor of the cheesecake at MacGuinness of Sheepshead Bay [phonetic], which is very fudgy and thick - like Wolfie's [phonetic], and they're both in Brooklyn and Miami Beach - rather than Lindy's [phonetic], which is supposed to be famous for cheesecake. A lot of people tout Lindy's cheesecake as being superb, but we really didn't care for it. We both agreed that we would champion MacGuinness of Sheepshead Bay's cheesecake, the really thick, fudgy kind. It's a particular kind of - there are just four or five kinds of cheesecake. And we totally agreed that we totally abominated the dry kind of spongy, really dry cheesecake. And then we did a study of candy bars, getting one or two of each candy bar you could possibly obtain, deciding which one was better. And we realized the - there were, like, top candies that were so uniquely different, one couldn't be better than the other. They were all great. And the top ones, of course, are the top ones. Of course, Hershey Bar with Almonds, and Hershey's Bittersweet and Hershey's Milk Chocolate are superb. Baracini's [phonetic] doesn't get into it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: We're talking about just what used to be a typical candy bar.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: And the Mounds Bar and Chunky's and Milky Way.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: They're like basic time honored candies.

MR. CUMMINGS: Die hards, yes.

MR. HANSEN: There is nothing like a triple based play, three horse parley that wins, or a home run where the ball goes over the fence. And now I have come to believe, over the past 10 years, that art is a high performance cybernetic grid that you could lay across any field of human endeavor known to people kind. And the high performance area is where art is taking place. This is sort of like one of my basic tenants, or basic theories. And then, from that, Harvey Gross became very busy with film making in different ways. I wasn't getting anywhere being a publicist for off Broadway theater, because if you don't have - if you can have a publicist and the Union or the Guild finds out about it, then you're in bad trouble.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: They will picket you, and no reviewer will cross the picket line, because they have their thing.

MR. CUMMINGS: And the unions were beginning to come in off Broadway in those days.

MR. HANSEN: Along with the real estate operators, who, through trying to save plays, found out that it was really quite simple, and this kind of - the kind of Broadway theater where love comes from the audience to the stage, rather than from the stage to the audience, is very much like lot lines architecture and bubble gum rock, and the ordinary, the mediocre that is usually instantly successful, and that most people are, like, very broadly mediocre and barely competent at seeing or hearing or understanding, or anything. But otherwise, you wouldn't have a paper like the *New York Daily News* have the largest subscription and publication thing of -

MR. CUMMINGS: Anyway, back to the -

MR. HANSEN: So, I began going to galleries, just the way we had explored candy bars. I rediscovered galleries. And every lunch hour I would leave a little early and go - I would either take the 8th Avenue subway up to 57th Street and walk across, looking at galleries. I would go in some place and get a roast beef on rye to go and a coffee and stuff, and a piece of apple pie, and eat it in a cab, if I was late, or I would take a bus back down to 42nd Street, walk over to the building, and it would be, like, an hour and 15 minutes lunch, and I would have seen 10 galleries. And that's how I discovered the Huntze [phonetic] Gallery. And Kaprow had his - no, that was when I was at Afton and Courier. But I can't pin it down. I'm just really -

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes, Huntze was on 59th Street then, wasn't it?

MR. HANSEN: Yes.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: Central Park South.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: And I didn't know what brought me up there. I think I was on the old Stable.

MR. CUMMINGS: Around the corner.

MR. HANSEN: And I got to talking to some men there, or some girls there, or something, and they were going to look at the Huntze next, and I'd never heard of it, so I went. And that's the first time I ever laid eyes on Ivan Karp [phonetic]. Oh, great day. And galloping Gemini Karp.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: And Kaprow's exhibition was up. The pieces I remember from the exhibition at The Stable - and maybe I just think I remember them - but was the first time I saw the sculpture of Gabriel Kohn [phonetic]. I think it was a one man show by Gabriel Kohn. This is a fascinating thing, now, to do anthropology on one's self, and go back and find out if there was a Gabriel Kohn one man show at the same time that Kaprow's great environmental -

MR. CUMMINGS: Great memory check, yes.

MR. HANSEN: - whatever thing was at the Huntze, you know? It might easily be two years apart, I don't know. The Kohn show might have been in 1965. No, it wasn't that late, but - The Stable was at the new place by then, I think. But, anyway, I didn't really have an instant access to that particular Kaprow show. I - where my head was at the time, I saw it as a kind of getting back to the boards art using really funky materials and stuff, which came to be the kind of hallmark of the neo Dadaists, which was Kaprow and myself and a lot of others a year or two later, 1959/1960, that winter season. And Dine and Oldenburg were in that, too. Red Grooms [phonetic], a lot of people - Marisol. So, my aesthetic connection with that Kaprow show was I had been reading in architecture a lot, and the architectural news at the time was involved with a thing called The New Brutalism in London. And I saw this as a kind of American rude form of New Brutalism. So there was a likeness and a complete dissimilarity. But I was really, like - I was flashing on that, is the best way to describe it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MR. HANSEN: I was flashing on these connections, saying, "I don't know what it is, but it is Brutalism. I don't know if it's new, or re Brutalism, or what."

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes. Right, right, right.

MR. HANSEN: And I never thought to call it Dada, for some reason. And this is all, like, part and parcel. So, the next time I saw Kaprow was in Cage's class. And it wasn't until, like, a year after Cage's class that I realized Higgins was the same Higgins from the Pandora's Box, and like that.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well -

MR. HANSEN: The - from the time I was very little, I was always involved with theater things. I was involved with puppets, I was involved with - my older brother Robert, and my brother who is a year younger than me, Gordon, and I would cut out all the naked - except for panties and bra - Tillie Toiler dolly cut outs from the *Journal American Funnies* on Sunday, and other things we could find. And we would make our Jungle Gym a huge compound of stakes, a stockade, and we would put a stake down all over in there, and we would tie all the Tillie the Toiler dolls and panty ads from catalogs cut out very carefully to the stake with thread, a little piece of string, and put straw and grass around their feet, and we would burn them. Does this mean my mother was a tough, hard woman? I don't know. Were we fighting approaching sexuality? I don't know. It's never one thing, it's always constellations.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: And in a way, this becomes kind of a set piece or theater event happening thing. I was also always a great one, as a kid, for delivering bombshells at the wrong moment, in I would say the wrong word or recite a dirty limerick at the right moment, when none of - the staid, frostbitten looking aunts and uncles were all sitting around with cake on one knee and a cup of tea on the other, I would suddenly announce a dirty poem or something, or say, "Does anyone know why Vivian Leighed [phonetic]?" And an uncle, who had had a few shots of Scotch in the kitchen with my father said, "I don't know. Why did Vivien Leigh, Al," poking the guy next to him. "Because, Preston forced her."

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: This is exactly the type of bombshell I mean, you know. I would be led a foot off the ground by my left ear out of the room by my mother, you know.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: Who would not explain what I had done wrong. And I knew, and didn't know, at the same moment. In junior high school, I was in a play which was a movie with Shirley Temple and somebody who was in an Indian turban named Ram Dass [phonetic]. And Ram Dass is the transcendental name Gordon Alpark [phonetic] took for himself, which, in that someone told me he was a homosexual, could be described as "Rammed Ass." This Ram Dass was D a s s, or Ramadas [phonetic], or something. And there was some part of the play where I was supposed to mix some liquids in test tubes or something. And at the right point of the play, which was just put on once - it was for assembly - I tipped everything over, including the table, accidentally, and just ruining the whole play. And this showed the teacher who was running things - it was that kind of stuff, you know, which I flashed on a lot as a Youth Board worker, working with disturbed kids and teenage gangs, and what not. There is the testing going on all the time, you know, and oat feeling, and what not. And a lot of times I get into a rap, or something, and friends say, "Well, listen Al, don't start another one. We've got to go, we're expected across - come on, Honey," you know.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MR. HANSEN: And I sort of follow them down the loft and down the stairs to the corner, telling them the end of the story, the wife smiling apologetically, and -

MR. CUMMINGS: Like, "Harry, let's get out of here."

MR. HANSEN: - looking across the street - yes. Then I'd call them up around 11:30 at night and say, "Just one more thing." "Come on, you know, leave us alone, for Christ's sake. You're beautiful, but you're impossible. You're a big pain in the ass a lot of the time."

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. I think that's going to have to be the end.

[END CD 2]

MR. CUMMINGS: So, this is side 3, and it's the 13th of November, 1973. Paul Cummings talking to Paul Hansen. And, for example, Bob Watts, where does he come into this?

MR. HANSEN: Well, the people that were in Cage's class, or who frequented it, like George Brecht and Allan Kaprow and George Siegel -

MR. CUMMINGS: Douglas [phonetic] college, right?

MR. HANSEN: And those - we're down at Douglas College, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, and Bob knew them from that, but he was - he had always been an artist, and rather into, you know - going for master's and doctorate's and what not - a scholarly fellow. And he was very interested in - he was much more - an older person than us, who was into clearing the boards. Or perhaps he was never able to digest Tashism [phonetic] or abstract expressionism as his performance area. So, with a reaction to that coming out of the young experimenters that were labeled neo Dadaists, the happening junk art people of 10th Street and the Ruben Gallery those days, the late 1950s, early 1960s, Bob Watts knew all of us, and had access to the same information.

MR. CUMMINGS: How come all these people were at Douglas College?

MR. HANSEN: Just chance.

MR. CUMMINGS: But it's amazing, isn't it?

MR. HANSEN: No, it's just a chance thing. How come all those particular Japanese were in an industrial city, like Osaka [phonetic], which I think is a lot like Buffalo or Port Newark? But there were all those Kitai [phonetic] people there. Just somehow, some - there was a growth in an art department, and they got more teachers, and they happened to be experimentation prone, or eclectics, or something, and -

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MR. HANSEN: - how come all these Kitai people, you know?

MR. CUMMINGS: Anyway, getting back to Watts, when did you meet him first, do you remember?

MR. HANSEN: Well, it was at that time, late 1950s, early 1960s. And Bob Watts's value to me is that, back at that time, he and George Brecht were very involved with doing research and devising kind of art programs, or programs of art ideas, or, like, position papers on process art, or the process of art, which proved to anticipate

all of the concept and documentation art that perhaps leads [inaudible] to think in terms of the disappearance of the art object. I don't think the art object has disappeared as much as that those - that large group of artists is involved with exploring the process of art. It's as if they had all of the stuff taken out of their studio, and they're really sort of getting back to the boards, or something. Proof of this might be Mel Bachner's [phonetic] recent exhibition of drawings, which, to certain followers of his, seemed to be anti everything he stood for, and that is an unsalable product. Yet, here are these - this beautiful series of big, very professional, very 20th century -

MR. CUMMINGS: Clean, flat, hard edge -

MR. HANSEN: Clean, yes. Fingerprints in the chalk, just so. White chalk and charcoal. Program things, but on paper and in signed editions. And I don't see anything wrong with that at all. Mel has made a statement, and now it's time to, like, get a nice loft to live in, or something. After all, he's a little over the hill, he's in his late 1920s. Why shouldn't he settle down, you know, and accept the fact that he is - he and Dennis [phonetic] and the rest could become a sort of academy, or something. Because, in truth, they certainly are. I am not really into - I'm much more into my own work now, so there was a time, like 10 years ago, where I would be able to [inaudible] perhaps, like, what the axes within the concept -

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, true, yes.

MR. HANSEN: - art of this documentation group were, you know, from core to relevant people.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, did you find that the Cage classes and the activities of those people - and yourself, particularly, afterwards - began to kind of focus what your interests were? Was that a -

MR. HANSEN: Yes. For me, myself, my interests were always diverse. And in the old Village of the late 1940s, older artists would urge me to settle on one thing and work at it. You can't do everything. And I was really obsessed with the fact that I might just be a dilettante. But I really couldn't keep from being very deeply involved in looking at films and reading about film one week, or looking at films very much and seeing all the black and white movies coming out of Cinema 16 and France and Italy and the end of the war, and reading deeply into American translations of - English translations of Oriental poetry at the same time. And then, the next week, I would be making copious notes for the outline of a novel or something, and composing sound structures, and doing collages at work, during my lunch hour. And -

MR. CUMMINGS: When did you start doing collages?

MR. HANSEN: I became involved with collage during that kind of late 1950s, neo Dada period. Another strong influence on the -

MR. CUMMINGS: The late 1950s, or the -

MR. HANSEN: Late 1950s, yes.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MR. HANSEN: Up until that point, throughout the middle 1950s, I've been involved with geometric art.

MR. CUMMINGS: What brought the change?

MR. HANSEN: Well, I think the change was just natural, although the air was filled with change at the time. Now that I think about it a little closer, being involved with Kaprow and Jim Dine and Oldenburg and Red Grooms and Marisol, and a lot of those people at that time, that whole, like, 10th Street climate, which was very downtown focused, and we referred to uptown as Uptown, and -

MR. CUMMINGS: The other side of 14th [phonetic] Street, yes.

MR. HANSEN: And in many ways, 10th Street could be seen as a kind of place to break horses to be ridden uptown.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: And there was a really strong reaction to that on the part of young people. But at the time, I was going to Pratt, and I had just transferred from the night school into the day school. And the art ed department was new. So I was going now days to Pratt for a bachelor of science of degree in art education.

MR. CUMMINGS: Who did you study with, then, in the day classes? Because we talked about the night ones.

MR. HANSEN: Okay. The Pratt Art School had just sort of - like a large number of faculty had sort of gone

abstract expressionist. Or, with a final digestion - and usually that happens quite quickly in universities - of Greenberg [phonetic] and Rosenberg [phonetic], sort of being the basic two guys to have really a taxonomy, or to have found out the criteria - and, of course, Mercedes Mata and Pavia [phonetic] and the club and the whole thing. But once the real - like real criteria existed, then Pratt went abstract expressionist. So there is quite an influence on the part of young teachers to have people work abstract expressionistically. The deterrent to this was Jake Landau and Gabriel Lademan [phonetic], and people like that in the graphics department, who were, like, a bastion of expression, in terms of a - people were still in their paintings, you know.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, more control, yes.

MR. HANSEN: So they were tearing off a different kind of veil, but they were looked upon as people who were still involved with working from nature, whereas there was a big push in the other part of the school towards working in terms of one's reaction to experience in nature, and just working purely. And they weren't really at war, but they were certainly, like, you know, they didn't have lunch together so much.

MR. CUMMINGS: Did you have any student friends there, in the day classes, that -

MR. HANSEN: So I had to come to terms with the fact that I was going to be going to school on the GI Bill within this framework. And coming from all the turn on I had from neo Dada and what not, I made my own, like, synthesis, or synergy between working with found objects and trash and stuff, and Tashism. So, in that products I did were disparate, one from the other, and didn't have a signature look. I was always attacked by galleries I approached for - they would say my work didn't have integrity, which means it's not of a pieced look. And that is still, to a certain extent, very strong. And I don't see why it shouldn't be. This is - the lack of integrity is really in the purchaser, who places it on the gallerist, who then looks for this integrity look in the artist's work. And perhaps Bruce Nellman [phonetic] is the major person who comes to mind who beat this, with his wonderful first show at the Costelli [phonetic] Gallery, where we saw through enough disparate works a signature look in a completely different direction of exploration or eclecticism. To me, that's the value of Nellman.

MR. CUMMINGS: Do you think that you have developed that over the years, a certain -

MR. HANSEN: Yes, but I didn't -

MR. CUMMINGS: - quality that -

MR. HANSEN: I didn't have access to the - perhaps I didn't have access to showing what I was doing at Leo's [phonetic], because I was too busy going to get Leo's moccasins from the cobbler, and spackling up the nail holes, and walking and saying I took a cab, and then going and having a marvelous lunch with some nice charmer at Starks Madison [phonetic], you know. At that time, I wasn't that interested in showing, either. I showed invitationals and group shows at faraway places that a friend was getting up, and asked me to include a piece or something.

MR. CUMMINGS: When did you start using the Hershey Bars?

MR. HANSEN: Well, this problem of the signature look, and their projecting their lack of integrity into my work and saying it didn't have integrity made me think there must be something I could use, and I would just put it into each thing, like the guy who did the artwork on the bricks on Italy. So, I did research. I figured I've got to go into R&D. So I began to R&D the problem, and one thing I liked very much - and it comes from early works of Kaprow and several other people - was putting words or sentences or talking into paintings. And later, I was very excited by Gutenberg [phonetic] Galaxy, and all of McLewan's [phonetic] ideas, in terms of this. But, like, at the time, I wanted to find something like that, so I used these kind of cheap 14 x 17 or 12 x 14 cheap cardboard movie posters they put up on telephone poles with shingle nails, one over the other. It gets very thick.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: Now, if I tear them up, the story and the meaning of the word, and taking words out of words, and making language literary collages -

MR. CUMMINGS: What appealed to you about the words? Was it the letters or the -

MR. HANSEN: So, from all my experience in advertising, the Hershey Bar wrapper was famous, because they didn't advertise, they didn't have an ad agency, and it was a top selling bar, and was included in any kind of fine design listing that a hip ad man would make in an art direction magazine, or a consultant lecturing to all the ADs [phonetic] and paste up men in McGraw Hill in the big assembly room, conference room. People frequently would cite the Hershey Bar. It was very good candy.

MR. CUMMINGS: And the - yes.

MR. HANSEN: So, I decided to do a series of six or a dozen collages using Hershey Bar wrappers, and I literally never stopped. The first six or seven, as I finished them, I named them Charlie this, and Charlie that. So there was Charlie Chan and Charlie Chaplin -

MR. CUMMINGS: And why was that -

MR. HANSEN: It doesn't matter, I mean, just -

MR. CUMMINGS: Just a name?

MR. HANSEN: Just an abstract thing, yes. And they were just like fields of letters and - with torn edges on the pieces, and what not. Now I use a scissor, and it's much cleaner, but that's pop art and new geometric art probably affected me that way. Also it's quicker, and -

MR. CUMMINGS: Did you start making words in the first ones?

MR. HANSEN: Yes, yes. "He, hey, her, shy," and like that. And this is exactly what I was doing with these movie posters and things.

MR. CUMMINGS: Describing words in the collages.

MR. HANSEN: Yes, yes. With all my experience in advertising, and getting into social work in the early 1960s, these Hershey collages were first done, I guess, in 1961 or so. And I had just - I'm still involved with language and communication and information theory.

MR. CUMMINGS: When did you start making figures in them? Were they - was that early, too, or -

MR. HANSEN: No. First there were fields of letters. And the - I have to show you some pictures somewhere of - the first figures were incredibly crude, hulky, lumpy monster numbers. And that kind of rough edge, or shape, for such a primitive figure, was very much out of, I guess, the New Brutality in architecture, and it was out of also abstract expressionism, and it is. And it was also very much out of DeBufet [phonetic], and the primitive children's drawing kind of very stark figures he was doing at the time, like the man made out of lumps of coal, and the cut up painting forming somebody, or something. But anyway, then the burned edge crude figures, and what not, that Oldenburg was doing are just really quite - very clearly influenced by them, and I have never been bothered. I have sought, like, influences.

MR. CUMMINGS: In what way?

MR. HANSEN: I have - in going to do something, I would never hesitate a minute to go ahead and include in something someone else had been doing that I thought was quite strong, and quite good.

MR. CUMMINGS: If it served your purpose.

MR. HANSEN: If it served my purpose, or even just to see how I felt about it. Or, to try to find out more about what they were doing, in a way. I guess it was much more like synergizing my own thing. But being an art book and an art history book reader freak, I was always very involved with constantly finding out more about the past of art. And there were a lot of things that I thought were original and unique, and I would find out some guy did it in Czechoslovakia in 1912, or there was a guy who did this in -

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: - that Da Vinci and Michelangelo thought was a nut. Like that wonderful expressionist painting, portrait head, three quarter view of a man found in a mummy tomb from the middle kingdom or something. And you know, this - like this kind of painting existed back in the same time as the dictated style of side view wall painting, and what not. So -

MR. CUMMINGS: Now, one of the things that is interesting - because you started doing Happenings when? What was your purpose?

MR. HANSEN: Well -

MR. CUMMINGS: I mean, they fall in this period here, in the late 1950s?

MR. HANSEN: Yes, yes. I was very involved with, like, the idea of an artist theater, or in doing a piece in Cage's class. What the people were doing, visually, would be important to me, as well as the sound they were creating. So, I would want the man who squeezed the rubber mice three times, according to the notation now and then, to stand and do it in a very pronounced way, and then put it in his pocket and bow, and then return to his seat,

rather than just squeezing the mouse any old way. Part of this, I guess, is because, in a seemingly and apparently anarchist situation, people tend to undertake a freedom that you didn't have in mind.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, no, it's very interesting. Because, in a sense, you were then developing a performance.

MR. HANSEN: Yes, yes.

MR. CUMMINGS: You know?

MR. HANSEN: And as a kid, I was always a great one for getting everybody together to put on a play or a show in the garage, or under the cherry tree, or in the back yard or something. And while planning this western play we were going to put on in Jimmy Breslin's garage, Breslin would want to bring in, like, airplane pilots or aviation, and I would also want to have a little of, like, Chicago gangster going on. And we never could really agree on the play. And I see, like, back then, we were still - we were really involved with that thing, you know, truly, like, meant to be operating the second half of the 20th century. It's like that's my time, time and space.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, the first Happening was after the Cage class, right?

MR. HANSEN: Yes, yes.

MR. CUMMINGS: I mean -

MR. HANSEN: And during that time I was involved with those poetry readings we talked about.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right. But how - what was your first Happening? Is it in that marvelous, crazy book you did, or -

MR. HANSEN: Well, the -

MR. CUMMINGS: Or that's not -

MR. HANSEN: I guess the first one was the - where certain performances in Cage's class, and just before that, the multi film thing, which was done in a large stairwell of the Albert Hotel - which is named, not many people realize, after Albert Pinkenrider [phonetic].

MR. CUMMINGS: Because his brother was the manager.

MR. HANSEN: During that period, the Hotel Albert and the - getting to know a lot of musicians, like Earl Brown, and his wife, Caroline, and the Merce [phonetic] Cunningham Company, and the Judson [phonetic] Dance Theater, and Jimmy Warring's [phonetic] dance group, working with them, doing sets or props, and just digging them, and all of these people, it was really like a proper milieu for someone who is tuned up to be able to receive the signals, to start reacting to the signals. And I guess that is just the shape I had slowly worked myself into at the time.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, had you been in other Happenings before you started doing your own? You were in some other people's, weren't you?

MR. HANSEN: Yes, I was in several of Kaprow's. I remember one funny thing at the Ruben Gallery. We were putting on a - it was a Bob Whitman, Jr. Happening, or a Kaprow Happening, and Jim Dine had a red ball from rubber band on his nose, like a clown, because the clown has always been his private image. And all of us took a particular - many of us took a particular image, or look, which is the way the Dadaists took a Dada name. And I began calling myself Viking Dada, in pronunciamentos, and stuff. And Claes Oldenburg has always seen himself as Scarlet Pimpernel. And, for instance, Walter Guttman [phonetic] has this, too, and he calls himself Hawk Serpent, you know?

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MR. HANSEN: And -

MR. CUMMINGS: What were some of the other people called?

MR. HANSEN: I can't remember now. But Jim Dine was really involved with the idea of, like, the firemen, and the house on fire, and then the locomotive engine thing, which also had burning wood, the branches in a baby carriage.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yes, right.

MR. HANSEN: And this kind of meld. And now I've become aware - I met Gunther Grahs [phonetic] in Berlin, and we were sitting in his kitchen, drinking white wine and talking for hours, and Grahs did a play called *Ten Seconds to Buffalo*, in which there is a locomotive. And it was written in 1957, and performed in Berlin, I think, in 1958, about the same time - just shortly after Grooms did his *House on Fire* at the Delancey [phonetic] Street Museum, and then the locomotive, huge cardboard locomotive thing at the Ruben Gallery. And it's as if - sometimes it's as if the earth moves through a particular cloud of dust in its orbit, and people are affected to do certain things during that time.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MR. HANSEN: We found out about the Kitai people later, but they had had a huge show at the Martha Jackson Gallery in 1952 or 1953 - or 1955. And they had been working since early 1950s. And -

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, what -

MR. HANSEN: So, we were standing backstage, and I had been involved with trying to do public relations for off off Broadway theater groups and stuff - that's where the girls are - and I had a copy of *Show Business* with me. I also - in the summer of 1958, I had a theater arts gallery with Ira Billeret [phonetic] of *Show Business*, in Times Square and 46th Street, in a hotel basement. And I had a copy of *Show Business*, and I was reading it. And I'm with make up and everything, ready to go on. I'm wearing, like, a chromium plated derby, which was a trumpet mute or something, and the - my coat, with the neckties around my neck that Larry wore as R. Mutt in the readings of *Roar* at The Epitome Gallery [sic]. And Jim Dine has got this clown make up on, and a skull cap, and this rubber ball nose on a rubber band around his head. And he bent over to see what I was reading. And he said, "What is that?" And I said, "It's a theatrical paper." And he said, "Are you in theater? Are you involved with theater? I didn't know that." And we were getting ready to go on, but this is how clearly we saw what we were doing, as painting as theater or theater as painting, or something, without any idea of being in show business, or anything. The endings of Happenings were always totally crude. Everyone would sit there, not knowing whether it was over, because it was completely impossible to tell.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: And a voice from behind would say, "It's over." And everyone would sort of rustle a little, as if to say, as an audience mass, "Oh." [Applause.] You know? "Bravo." But there was absolutely no way to tell.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MR. HANSEN: We did a couple of Monday night performances at the Living Theater at 6th Avenue and 14th Street. Nick Turnovitch [phonetic] went nuts, trying to get us all to realize that we really had to practice a bow. We didn't want to practice anything. We just didn't have anything - we were in a much more condensed event. Like it would be perfectly natural for us to just, like, come down off the stage, or take out a cigarette and light it, and smile at a friend, or something, like the little kid in the community center who comes out, he's memorized his line, and he walks out and he looks around, he sees his mother in the audience, and he says, "Hi, Mommy."

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: You know, the way - he's supposed to say, "The car is ready," or something, or, "Can I have an ice cream?" It's out of his mind completely.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: "Hello," you know, he's, like, talking to people in the audience, it's just like really quite primitive, like children, you know, as far as it being an organized theater thing.

MR. CUMMINGS: What did you do at Judson in either the theater groups, or some of the dance things that went on?

MR. HANSEN: Well, Judson was going on all the while I was working in advertising days and going to Pratt nights, and doing artwork every scrap of the time in between, at work and at school at night and around, and living in small apartments and what not. And so, Judith Dunn - Judith and Bob Dunn - setting up the Judson Dance Theater to have a place for young dancers to experience choreography, learn how to do it and choreograph pieces of their own, a lot of the people from Cage's class who were making sound tapes and things for dances, or doing props for Jimmy Wehring [phonetic], who would go to his - he would have, like, meetings about art. So, in a way, we're into a thing almost like the club, where there are several places where we would get together and talk, or demonstrate stuff.

MR. CUMMINGS: The Judson Gallery had opened already, hadn't it? Didn't that -

MR. HANSEN: I think so. I think so. I think so, but just -

MR. CUMMINGS: Because, as I -

MR. HANSEN: Part of my working now to get together more than a curriculum vitae sheet, and just really start to line up my - like I'm working now on finding shreds or clues to the exact address I lived at all those times. It's just fascinating to me, you know?

MR. CUMMINGS: You moved around a lot.

MR. HANSEN: Yes. And my income must have been at least $2,000 a year through the late 1950s and 1960s, just through - I would have, like, a $2,000 advantage each year, just from jumping the rent, letting it go, like, 3 months behind and then moving suddenly, and getting a new place, and doing that. Like, often, I moved three or four times a year, you know? I just couldn't get interested in things like paying the rent and stuff. I was much too involved in, like, reading and studying and making and doing.

MR. CUMMINGS: But now what things did you do at Judson? Were there any particular things you were involved with there, or was that just an interest?

MR. HANSEN: Well, Arlene Rothline [phonetic] and Philip Corner [phonetic] kept urging me to come to the Judson meetings, and I just - I didn't have time. I was involved with the Ruben Gallery and Cage's class, and The Epitome Coffee Shop, and advertising, and going to school nights. There wasn't any room to, like, put another stop in there. And -

MR. CUMMINGS: What did you do at the Ruben Gallery?

MR. HANSEN: The -

MR. CUMMINGS: Because that started, what, about 1960?

MR. HANSEN: Yes. The apocryphal - probably apocryphal - story is that - what really happened is probably a cartoon of this - the apocryphal - I feel it's apocryphal - the apocryphal story is that somebody left, like, $1 million to the Ruben Gallery - to the Huntze Gallery, up on Central Park South, and everyone freaked so, and got into an elbow fight over it, that the whole thing just sort of disbanded, or there was some loophole through which the heirs could say, "Okay, we're contesting it until you all calm down," and - because the people running the Huntze Gallery on Central Park South were Dick Bellamie [phonetic] and Ivan Karp [phonetic] -

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: - who were to the key men in the 1960s. And Kaprow, wanting that performance exhibition experience, which had just been a co op up around the corner from the Stable Gallery of young artists, uptown instead of downtown, Kaprow found a place down on lower 4th Avenue to have similar performance and exhibition space. And it would kind of like be his workshop. And, in between, anybody he knew, or who wanted to, could have a show there. And Kaprow always had an openness beyond democracy kind of view of how a place like this could work. Anybody could really do anything. It's -

MR. CUMMINGS: Who funded the activities, though? I mean, if you wanted to do something else, did you figure out how it was going to get paid for, or -

MR. HANSEN: Using the Living Theater mailing list, which was one of the best and most complete and up to date at the time, they sent out a large mailing for his 16 Happenings in 8 parts, or 8 Happenings in 16 parts, whatever it was. It was a beautiful undertaking.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: But the product was beautiful, but there was some gifting and reactions to that. And then there was a big Blow Zero show with, oh, everyone.

MR. CUMMINGS: When was that?

MR. HANSEN: That was the winter of 1959/1960 at the Ruben Gallery. And the Blow Zero show had a rolled up ball newspaper mountain by Kaprow, and a large machine art piece called the Hep [phonetic] Amazon by me, with vacuum cleaners and razors and hair dryers going on and off, according to a micro switch thing. And Marisol Escobar was very young then, and she had a piece in the show, and I think Rossyln Drexler [phonetic] and Rauschenberg and Jasper and Red Grooms, and Jim Dine and Claes Oldenburg. Oldenburg was doing these giant kind of long arm things of coat hangers covered with newspaper. And most of us worked in these kind of like junk materials, because it was all we could afford. A big influence on that whole neo Dada/Happening period

came from Provincetown and a man named Jan Mueller [phonetic], who was a young artist on the scene who was European trained. And the strong focus of New York artists, who are almost an axis unto themselves, would go to Provincetown summers. And, of course, they're influenced by Hans Hofmann [phonetic], who had a summer school there. And Jan Mueller was a renegade. He was rather an expressionist, and the figure was in his work. And from his work of that time, it's very much - it was kind of like reaction to abstract expressionism and an insistence on having a contact with what could be experienced of nature visually in Jan Mueller's work. And I think it affected, or was agreed with, by Kaprow and Emilio Cruise [phonetic] and Bob Beecham [phonetic], and, oh, Dominic Capobianco [phonetic]. They're a fantastic range of artists whose work is quite -

MR. CUMMINGS: well, what -

MR. HANSEN: - as different from each other's as the Cobra movements.

MR. CUMMINGS: - did Beecham have to do with this? Yes.

MR. HANSEN: But they are like of a kind.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes. Well, Beecham was never involved with Happenings, right?

MR. HANSEN: No, but Bob Beecham was, like, a Provincetown artist for the longest time. And Beecham comes from - or his work is relevant to Mueller's work, and that kind of thinking. And I still remember the delight I experienced from a large sculpture Kaprow, might still have, The Giant Man, made out of newspaper, or plaster, or plaster of Paris banded or something, painted black with a hard on. Huge, primitive thing, you know, standing in this bedroom. And about the same time, or shortly after, George Siegel was very excited, and was jumping up and down for everyone to come and see this sculpture he did of, like, a Nazi motorcyclist riding into Poland or France, Paris or something. And it was like a large, lumpy, plastic guy sitting on a really old, fucked up bicycle. And Kaprow was so excited by how George was carrying on about this figure, that he ran over to look at it, and it was this, like, plastic figure on a bicycle. And that was the Siegel and the Blow Zero show. It was really, like, funny looking. It was this ridiculous, slabby kind of thing, you know, like a -

MR. CUMMINGS: It probably wasn't a cast figure, they way he's done it.

MR. HANSEN: No, no. But I think, like, in a crude way, he tried to make it from a figure of real plaster, or something, and it was just like - it was really, like, eclectic work, you know, process wise. And I - George Brecht, at the time, was a research chemist with Johnson & Johnson's personal products division, and was awarded a patent on a new Kotex. George is actually like a very gifted musician and theorist and research chemist. And so, George Brecht, to Happenings, an event, and concept artwork is very much like Gauguin, you know? He always liked art, and then he just, like, it became more important than being a research chemist, or something. And -

MR. CUMMINGS: When did you decide to do a Happening on your own, and not, you know, be a character in somebody else's -

MR. HANSEN: Well, the performances in Cage's class led to a music concert of advanced music that Dick Higgins and I did at the Kauffman [phonetic] Hall.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: In the Lexington Avenue Y, up in the 90s. And there, I was really able to make pronounced the theater aspects of an experimental sound work. And I just fell in love with that immediately. I did four or five Happenings at Pratt during the next couple of years at different times, using fellow students who were much younger. I was in, like, my late 20s, early 30s.

MR. CUMMINGS: Was that -

MR. HANSEN: I was in my early 30s.

MR. CUMMINGS: - gallery thing?

MR. HANSEN: And the - I lived in the basement of a building which had a big yard. And I called it the Third Rail Gallery of Current Art, because I was still involved with the idea of plugging in a work, and actually having things move or work in it, from this guy, an American who lived in Sweden a lot - and I think he's still there - named Nelson [phonetic]. He had a fantastic show at an upstairs co op across 6th Avenue from the Living Theater, above 14th Street. And the artist whose machine works I saw before him were a man named Philippe Hiquily.

MR. CUMMINGS: Contemporary.

MR. HANSEN: So, I found out about Tingley [phonetic] after working this way a lot myself, making machine art

pieces. And it was just a brief - I never lived in a space where I could really build a, you know -

MR. CUMMINGS: A loft -

MR. HANSEN: I designed one piece back then called The Myth of Sisyphus [phonetic], which has a central column elevator platform that takes a bowling up to the top and releases it, thundering down a circular route around the outside. And the timing is such that the thing will get back so that the ball will slam into the box and be raised up again to come down, you know? And it's to be made out of angle irons and what not. I just never could afford to make it. What I am enjoying now, with the moderate success I have had, is that it will be possible to do replays of certain ideas, and finally build them, et cetera, you know, which would be dated from roughly the time I thought of it, like 1957/1958, to whenever I finish it, you know. So, maybe I would have, like, a one paragraph explanation etched on a plate and fastened to the base, you know, so people wouldn't be thrown off, like, "He's losing his integrity again, he's losing his integrity again." You know? It's not like that. I think I am - a person whose lifestyle and process reinforced me a lot, in that he constantly explored in different directions continually was Picasso. Another super dilettante I got reinforcement from, and enjoyed finding out about because it made me feel better about not having integrity, was Jean Cocteau, who would turn his hand at anything.

MR. CUMMINGS: Certainly was a super dilettante.

MR. HANSEN: From Cocteau into the Bow [phonetic] House people, and the Dadaists themselves, and reading about them after having been doing neo Dada for a year or two, I was delighted to find that Oscar Schlemmer [phonetic], in the 1920s, wrote a theater manifesto in which he said, "Let there be a theater of happening situations and events." And these were the names all of my friends teaching in college were using for their works, and -

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, was he discussed ever amongst, you know, the Kaprow -

MR. HANSEN: Oscar Schlemmer?

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes, amongst people like Kaprow and the other old -

MR. HANSEN: Never, never. On his first - I think on his second trip to Europe, Wolf Vastel [phonetic] stayed at the Chelsea Hotel up there somewhere in 1964. And he had been here earlier, in 1963, and stayed at my loft in Chinatown, which also is called the Third Rail Gallery, and - but of Time Space Art. I dropped the "Current Art," and I wasn't interested in plugging anything in any more. I was interested in plugging myself in. And I showed Vastel the Bauhaus theater manifesto book, and the Bauhaus theater book was put out by Wesleyan. It had just been published, like, within the past year, and I showed it to Vastel, and he went crazy. He hadn't known of it.

MR. CUMMINGS: That's funny.

MR. HANSEN: So, now I've met experimental writers and what not, like Ossie Wiener, and Ossie was very involved with a literary group of experimenters who, in Vienna in the late 1950s, did actual Happenings, and called them a "Happening." German preference is to say something like, "This is an action," and by - to make an action, or present an action, means an event or happening situation will be performed.

MR. CUMMINGS: How did you develop the ones that you did at - in Brooklyn, with the gallery in Brooklyn?

MR. HANSEN: Well, I just - I loved the whole idea of a Happening. The word was labeled onto the theater pieces we were doing by - in one of John Cage's classes, where he explained that to experiment is to not know what's going to happen. If you know what's going to happen, you're doing good work, et cetera, but you're not experimenting. To experiment is to set up a framework within which serendipitous things can occur. You can find out or see something new. And he felt the only way one could find a unique and personal statement was through experimenting, fresh inputs, diverse material, looking in different directions, and that when one was truly experimenting, then the product of the experiment was whatever happened. And in the same way that one had to empty out one's mind and just forget everything you knew in order to look at new art, so with the Happening, one had to surrender to the matrix, and prepare in advance to accept whatever took place as the Happening. So the product would be a Happening. And I thought that was just marvelous straight thinking. And it was very sharp, as I began to perform after that class in different Happenings of Oldenburg and Kaprow, to see that they had five or six rehearsals, and that everything was, like, in mimeographed or type written sheets. Today, they would be Xeroxes. And everyone had to be right on time with what they did, and no one could bring anything in of their own.

MR. CUMMINGS: It was -

MR. HANSEN: It was - they were all, like, strictly - so -

MR. CUMMINGS: But they have never learned improvisation.

MR. HANSEN: Well, most of them are -

MR. CUMMINGS: A different kind of thinking, all together.

MR. HANSEN: I don't think Allan is a good improviser. It's not where his head is, and it's not his thing. I would be delighted with anything Claes Oldenburg or Jim Dine or Larry Poons thought would be a good thing to put in a piece of mine. And I would welcome it. Also, by some kid, a young colleague. But I would only - I am much more interested in, like, this pure idea that I get from Cage, of what it is to experiment. So, the majority of Happenings I have done have been a framework within which I wanted - like a skeleton I wanted people to come hang meat on, and then we would see how it looked. Like, to make a monster. So, it would be the same kind of monster as an opera, like a big, clinking, clunking monster machine kind of work, but with an inside out -

MR. CUMMINGS: So you never produced scripts.

MR. HANSEN: I was more involved with the fellow performers than the audience. So I would have a time space chart of what would happen at what time in what space, because someone - each person didn't have any idea what the others were going to do, either. We didn't rehearse it. We talked about it, and planned some things. A dancer might rehearse her part in the space, but then I would want the guy who wanted to drive - or let's say one person said, like, "For my part, I want to ride through on a bicycle with transistor radios all over me, going softly. And I want to do that blindfolded." I said, "Well, you have to do it before or after the dancer, because you're going to run into her." Well, let's say the dancer wanted to perform blindfolded, and memorize the space and count it off in her head. "Okay, the guy who is going to, like, go through holding a ladder over his head saying numbers might take the dancer's head off." I mean, in that respect -

MR. CUMMINGS: Still, it had to do with some timing, right.

MR. HANSEN: Yes. So there would be a kind of very loose time space planning, but it would be quite amorphous. And -

MR. CUMMINGS: But were they anecdotal? Was there story lines, or -

MR. HANSEN: Yes. Some people would want to do something, and I would kind of shape that. I would - which made me realize that I wasn't letting go. I wanted to let go completely, and I did a lot where it was just anyone could come and do whatever they wanted. But then I became more interested in the idea of - I was affected by not being that turned on by everything people did. And particularly in the ones I did at Pratt, where all the participants were younger, I wanted the performance to be my participants. And I was upset that I would have, like, several $2 or $1.59 police cars or something from the 5 and 10 for the sound their siren made. So, I wanted someone at a particular point to, like, from time to time, make the siren noise with the car, and stop it or let it go a long time. So, several things would happen, in terms of it being an anarchist situation within which people were free to do whatever they wanted.

MR. CUMMINGS: But did you think -

MR. HANSEN: But a person would, like, do the siren sound too much, all the time.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: Just, like, keep doing it, hog the whole thing, which isn't good basketball, good teamwork. Or, they would stomp it flat, or someone from the audience, they would set it out across a performance area, and someone on the other side would stomp it flat. Because if there aren't any rules, like if Rex rules, and there are no rules, and it's a completely anarchist situation with no one in charge, why can't you do whatever you want? So toilet training problems would get into it. I have had the most incredible stuff and things, like, destroyed. Somebody thought that was a good thing to do. A dancer would be working with a ball, and then put it down and go to do something else, and somebody from the audience would get up, as if mesmerized, walk out and kick the ball hard. But it would be going on in the loft I lived in, and maybe I would hang a sheet over a floor to ceiling thing of dishes and food and stuff, and it would hit that, and like, break a whole bunch of plates and it would clatter down. But if the guy went to kick the ball again, I would walk over to him and say, "No, that's enough," and put the ball on my head and go somewhere else and then go off. I wouldn't say, "Hey, no, don't do that." You have to surrender my way. I surrender, and let whatever takes place take place. But even though I would explain to people ahead of time, "Don't hurt yourself or fuck up the place or break things," a lot of people do that. So, I became more focused on really, like, setting out more clearly what I want to do. It's not fair to them to hate somebody afterwards because they broke something -

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: - when you didn't make it that plain that they shouldn't have.

MR. CUMMINGS: I am curious about one thing. When you -

MR. HANSEN: In terms of an ideal.

MR. CUMMINGS: - conceived of a Happening, would you think of the characters as characters, or as individuals playing roles, or were they kinetic objects, or -

MR. HANSEN: Yes, how they looked, or who they seemed to be was important to me.

MR. CUMMINGS: In terms of what?

MR. HANSEN: In terms of there not being any linear meaning. To have a linear meaning potential, but still to keep it unhinged, as a favorite word of mine, that - and the way people looked, or their aspect, or let's say - technically, we might say, "according to the variety of persona," I loved to have, like, masks and hats and pieces of wood and a canoe paddle and different stuff, a bow and arrow, so that people could do a particular thing, and then go off and work the lights for a while and look at it. I wanted everyone in it to, like, get out of it and see how it is. You can't do that in classical theater, in more academic theater. You're not allowed to leave the stage and look at the play. You can't see the play, because you're in it. But my kind of thing, I wanted everyone to, like, take a crack at just sitting and watching for a wall.

MR. CUMMINGS: So they never really -

MR. HANSEN: And that would ensure freedom and openness.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MR. HANSEN: Not everybody on all the time doing everything, which is how all of the earlier 10 or 15 were, they just went on, you know? And I would develop signals to get people out. I also found that actors and actresses, or the kind I got - I'm sure there are some that would be good at it - but the kind I got would - I would ask them to read, like, several sentences from *Psychopathia Sexualis*, and then just turn 20 pages and read several more sentences. And they would read page after page after page after page after page. So, I would have to go out and put the actor reading it steadily over my shoulder. Like, just go out and say, "What you're doing is terrific," pick them up, put them on my shoulder, carry them off, and say, "That was fabulous. Now, I want you, like, to just stand here, and from time to time just change the light switches, so the lighting will change," et cetera.

MR. CUMMINGS: You have to program actors.

MR. HANSEN: And that is part of my acceptance of what could go wrong, and how I would handle it. Someone is going to be in a thing free, and depending on the $40 you're going to make from all the $.50 to make the rest of the rent, you don't have any right, if the person didn't understand, or has it all screwed up, to say, "Goddamn you, you son of a bitch, you will never be in another Happening of mine. I will kill you," blah, blah, blah. I mean, I have seen different Happening people, who I will not name, do this to people after a performance.

MR. CUMMINGS: Who? Who?

MR. HANSEN: And the people have broken down and cried, you know, because they were entering into, like, Freedomsville finally, like children, with stars in their eyes, and here, the person is yelling at them, you know?

MR. CUMMINGS: How many -

MR. HANSEN: I will just name one I have seen that. Dick Higgins.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MR. HANSEN: But during the 16 Happenings in 8 parts, or whatever, there was - this is like the audience and the performing area - the Ruben Gallery is divided into 3 rooms, or 4, actually. It was kind of like a service/backstage area. And at different points, according to your ticket, you had to stop and go into a different room. So each person experienced it from one of the three rooms, each of the three rooms. And at one point, a kid raised his umbrella and opened it and closed it several times, and put it down. And he was taking part. He was moved to take part. And Max Baker [phonetic], Anita Ruben's boyfriend, rushed over to him and said, "You do that once more, and you're out on your ass, fella." And I thought that that was terrible. I thought that he misunderstood the whole thing, and everything we stood for. And I pointed out to my wife of the moment that that was really a shame. But he was a very helpful guy, and he was very involved with the gallery, and he was Anita's boyfriend, but we would have to explain to him how it works later. And during the intermission, I overheard Max - Allan Kaprow came out, and I was wondering whether I should mention it to him then, or just wait until later, because

everyone was busy, and they had it all timed and planned and rehearsed. And Max went over to Allan and said, "There is one son of a bitch opening and closing his umbrella, but I told him, like, to cut it out. I cooled him." And Allan said, "Thanks a lot. If he does it again, throw him out." And I thought, "My God," you know, Allan doesn't understand what a Happening is. And I was really messed up in my head by that. But I realized that Claes's process was different. Jim Dine always did a rather one man show, solo event kind of thing. George Brecht would rather appear from behind the scenes somehow, give instructions or notation work for people to do any way they wanted to. Or, in a Jimmy Wehring piece, he was behind curtains with several friends, and they made magic marker and spray lines and stuff, and threw confetti over the top, and it was quite mysterious and private, you know? Research chemists, you know? Great dignity and coolness. Kaprow and I were working like bastards when the Below Zero show closed, picking up stuff - I had to take apart this whole huge door to a room with a table, machinery thing with vacuum cleaners and hair dryers and razors and heavy equipment, and what not. George Brecht came in, put everything back in his little Experience suitcase, closed it. Said, "Anyone want to go for a beer?" And I said, "No, I got three or four more hours' work. A guy is coming to" - he walked out with this, like girl's skate box in his hand, and that was his piece, you know? It's going to be in the Onash [phonetic] Gallery show Thanksgiving. It still exists. But now it's old.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MR. HANSEN: All the things in it are, like, rather tired. I remember when the Indian clubs in it were new, when it was a new clothesline, when there were fresh bags of confetti in it, when the little, like, toy -

MR. CUMMINGS: Sparklers.

MR. HANSEN: - sparkler or pinball game was new, and now they - the plastic cover is all, like, bended and rippled and old. You know, it's getting old.

MR. CUMMINGS: It's got patina.

MR. HANSEN: He's got to go back and refurbish it.

MR. CUMMINGS: How many Happenings did you do, that you, you know, produced for yourself?

MR. HANSEN: Just about 100.

MR. CUMMINGS: That was a weekly event.

MR. HANSEN: Often I would do two shows a night, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday night. And on one of the nights absolutely no one would show up, and we would be all set up for it. So we would just sit there. I remember once, the - people usually, like, find their way to my loft and live there or something, sort of a stray Andy Warhol number going on. And one night we'd been doing this several weekends, and there were several dancers, like Phoebe Neville [phonetic] and Meredith Monk and Joe Jones, the music machine guy, and Bill Meyer [phonetic], who did some really beautiful work, and just, like, dropped out of Happenings and art, and what not. He is still an artist somewhere, but he doesn't do Happenings, and my girlfriend, Valerie Herubis [phonetic], who has the [inaudible] shop now on West Broadway. And we were just, like, kind of down. Maybe we had run out of wheat germ three days before, or something. So we decided - we were talking about how could we do a Happening. I put an ad in the Village Voice, so people were coming. And how could we do a Happening, like, without doing a Happening? So, I thought, "Let's just each continue doing what we would rather be doing, rather than do a Happening." And I had a huge stack of 9 x 12 plastic drop cloths, and some bigger ones, and I hung up strings and stuff. And using masking tape, I made a tunnel from the door into the place, and then several lanes you could go down. And what Bill Meyer really preferred to do was have a haircut. So I think Phoebe Neville gave him a haircut. And what Valerie really wanted to do was get the ironing done. So in one section of this maze she was ironing. And I wanted to work on some collages and a sketchbook. I had found some really - I had a nice pile of stuff to work on collages. And I think Joe Jones ran the phonograph, or something. And people came in, and we didn't have anything to do with them. They just stayed in the tunnel. We put a couch and some cushions in the tunnel, and a jug of wine and glasses. And some people went out and got hamburgers at the Grand National and came back - this was on 2nd Street, just east of Avenue B, next to Mobilization for Youth. And it worked out fine, became quite enjoyable. We got bored with what we were doing, went into the tunnel to, like, sit and drink wine and talk to people. And some people asked if we'd mind if they changed the records, because I was kind of doing a soundtrack thing, playing varieties of music, like electronic and a little Tchaikovsky, and some Japanese rock from Zhang Hai, or something. And so, it was really, like, a very pleasurable experience. And I think that particular Happening was a blank title. It was like a quote sign, blank underlining, like an underlining but no word, end of quotes, and that was the ad in the Village Voice. It was, like, just a space. It was no title.

MR. CUMMINGS: How many people did you get to a -

MR. HANSEN: It was an untitled work.

MR. CUMMINGS: - to a Happening on the weekends, like that?

MR. HANSEN: Well, on 2nd Street, it was usually, like, 15 or 20 to 3 dozen. That would start to get kind of crowded. So, if, like, in a smaller, medium sized loft, if 24 or 25 people got there, we would tell them there was a second show, they would have to pay in advance, and -

MR. CUMMINGS: Do another one.

MR. HANSEN: We would immediately get a few more bottles of wine and pass it out to the audience that was there, and then we would limit ourselves to, like, 40 minutes or an hour. And some of us would take turns, like, sitting outside, talking with people on the stairs or something, who would go for a bottle of wine or something. We would bring stuff out to them. And once the first people left, we would have the second people in and do a second show, which was usually, like, 20 minutes. And then, the $20 or $30 we collected, we would all go have hamburgers and eat, and buy packs of cigarettes. And the girls would immediately extract $7 a piece for hose or make up or car fare to work or something.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: And so it was really, like, quite Bohemian and organic, you know?

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, what do you remember, as being from your point of view, the most productive or successful ones? By title -

MR. HANSEN: Eight or nine I could remember that were just marvelous, because there was often a product from doing this kind of open ended skeleton thing that people should come and hang stuff on, or take part - be my colleague in, that were just marvelous. It's like being a voracious reader. You really have to go - if you like science fiction, for instance, you really have to read and awful lot of them to come across the great ones, but they do come along, and you develop an ability - like a preference for certain writers, or something. And I always had a preference, like, for particular people. But there were several big Happenings I did at Pratt that were, I thought, just stupendous. I did a program of abstract expressionist theater there, which the entire avant garde either was in, or came to look at. I remember Merce Cunningham [phonetic] and Carolyn Brown [phonetic] and Remi Charlotte [phonetic] and John Cage and Tony Smith, a whole bunch of people came all the way from New York, just to see this program. I wanted Jim Dine to be in it, but he demanded the gym, and the gym had just been revarnished. So I thought his wanting the gym was irrational. I guess he wanted the gym because he felt like it, and he said it was like telling him he couldn't use the color red. And he also didn't understand that there wasn't any money, it was just like one of the student event programs, or something. And maybe if we went back over the books, we would see that Henry Rawley [phonetic], who was one of the evening school administrators, made some money from it or something. I don't think so. It was just an opportunity to use the main hall to put on this big show.

MR. CUMMINGS: What about the famous parasol from Marisol, which is one that -

MR. HANSEN: Well, that was the one I was thrown out of Pratt for. And thinking in terms of the Happening as being time space art, so that it went on for a while, and was the creation of the artist making it, as much as a novel or a film would be, or a poem would be, the handling of time, et cetera, was completely up to the progenitor, or the producer, so - the maker. So, I was more involved with his kind of, like, really, in a predatory way, having something take place that kept opening up and opening up, like tearing away veils. Or, more closely analogous to that would be peeling the leaves off a cabbage or an artichoke, or opening an umbrella to have a theater piece that has sort of like erected itself and went off like opening an umbrella, or a parachute opening.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, how does -

MR. HANSEN: And with parachute opening, I thought of, like, a parasol. And I thought Parasol from Marisol. And then, to keep it from being - so it was like an armage [phonetic], you know? And - because I think she's the greatest.

MR. CUMMINGS: I saw her yesterday, drifting around.

MR. HANSEN: And I called it, "Parasol 4 Marisol," and then I made it "Parisol 4 Marisol." And I was really thinking about this thing, and, like, kind of working it out, what I would have and what I wouldn't have, what I wanted and didn't want, kind of like making the framework idea. And I was in the old chuck wagon. And Ed Reuta [phonetic] asked whether I would come and do a Happening for his class, because it was - he was teaching evening school, and what not. And I said I would, and we agreed we would do it, like, the following Thursday, or something. And I got some students together to help me, and I got together and met with them several times. And during the day we were going to, like, get stuff. I would have some money, and I would go get stuff, et cetera, and send them to get stuff, and we began talking about how it would take place, and we would do it. And most of the students

punked out, or disappeared. Or the ones who were talking to me, like, didn't have it to do that. "I've got something better to do." But, just with five or six student friends, we went ahead preparing to do this. And then, in the late evening, late afternoon, Ed Reuta said that so many people were interested, and several other evening school teachers said they were going to bring their classes, so we should have it in a bigger place. And just across - down the hall and across - from his painting workshop room, studio room, was a huge room that the interior design department of Pratt had just had redecorated, all new sanded tables and peach painted walls. Just totally good, you know? Brand new. So I thought we should be particularly careful not to mess it up. And Ed Reuta was in the evening graphic art and illustration curricula, or painting curricula, and he was using a day school industrial - interior design classroom that had just been completely refurbished. And I was in the art education department in the day school. And you just, like, don't do that without asking anybody, if anything is going to happen. The only way to cool it through using that room would be to leave it just as we found it. So, one of the elements of the thing was going to be - in terms of this opening up like a parasol - one element was going to be a boy or a guy or a girl riding on - painting on the wall, with poster colors, the word, "Locomotive," starting at the middle. So it would be "O," and then the C before it, "C O," and then, "O C O," and then "O C O M," so you really couldn't be sure what it was until it was, like, really there. It would be "locomotive," or "locomotion," or "locomotionic," or something, or "non locomotionic," like. But we couldn't paint on the wall the way we could in a studio room, where everyone, like, wipes their brushes on the wall, or shakes them off against the wall, because this place was just refurbished, and interior design students all, like, wear ties and smocks, you know. They're like the whatchamacallit students at the Art Students League, and you can spot them right away. Bridgeman students, or whatever. They're quite dignified professionals, you know? So, I put drawing paper, big sheets of very heavy drawing paper up on the wall with masking tape, and I thought, "I'll just take them down softly afterwards." So the guy who was going to paint this word got there late, at the last minute. He had been drinking and he had two or three teenage whores with him. And he took the poster colors and stuff, and went over by there, and started drinking some more beer. And then, after all of the classes were there, and five or six other events were taking place in concert, or one after the other or something, we were, like, completely engulfed and crowded by new classes pushing in to see the Happening and everything. And I was in the doorway, completely cut off from it, operating the lights, turning the lights on and off in the room. They had a big light switch plug thing, you know, it was really, like, making the lights change from time to time. Every time they got really dim it was nice, but the photographers would yell. Rizard Horowitz [phonetic] took pictures of it, and several other people. Ron Barnett [phonetic] took pictures of it, too, and Leonard Sonard [phonetic]. And I looked over, and this kid is painting "Fuck God" on the wall. Well, he's just painting, like, "F U C," but really, like, on the wall of these, like, really good tempura paints, which you can't get out of chem tone on a wall, you know.

MR. CUMMINGS: A big blend, right.

MR. HANSEN: It just makes a mess. And I called out to Bob Tieman [phonetic], and Hogie [phonetic], and a couple of guys, like, "Stop him," you know, "That's not what I want," and they're saying, you know, "You're being ridiculous, it's a Happening, you know?" And I said, "No, he's not doing the right thing," you know? And afterwards, the kid came over to me with kind of a - so he wrote "Fuck God" on the wall. And it was 1961. I mean, it wasn't that big - McCarthy had been dead a couple of years. But the dean of the art school was named Albert Christ Janer [phonetic], who was a wonderful guy, I mean, but we just had a new president, whose name I can't remember. He came from us from UNICEF. And the week before his wife died - she fell down the elevator shaft accidentally in Brooklyn Heights, where they lived - and there is also, on every campus, the Newman [phonetic] Club. Well, some people from the Newman Club saw the "Fuck God" on the wall, and they got a team together, and proceeded to call up the president every 15 minutes cruelly, all night long, yelling about this terrible thing. Al Hansen had a bunch of drunken people nude to the waist in a Conga line, chanting, "Fuck God."

MR. CUMMINGS: It got better.

MR. HANSEN: And it wasn't like that at all. There were -

MR. CUMMINGS: We're going to have to -

[END CD 3]

MR. CUMMINGS: Side four. Right. Back to Pratt.

MR. HANSEN: So, I worked in the room until about 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning with several young friends: Zena Weiss [phonetic] and Carol Yenke [phonetic] and Cynthia Mailman [phonetic], I believe. And everyone had gone away. And we cleaned up every bit of mess, swept the place completely, cleaned off all the tables, and took everything away. And I got a sponge and Brillo and what not, and you could vaguely see the fact that "Fuck God" had been there, but there was really, like, this big smooch on the wall. So, everyone made the proper department to departmental complaints, et cetera and so forth, and it was really getting to be a big furor. So much so, that over the next four or five days it was incredible. Henry Rawley, who was at Newport's [phonetic] state teacher's college now, was a director or assistant director of the evening school at the time. And he called

me in, and said that he had to save himself. His story was that I had just come over with a bunch of drunken yahoos from New York and violated one of his teacher's classrooms, and it was not official in any way, shape, or form. And Ed Reuta kept insisting that wasn't true. He didn't want to talk to anybody about it. But he had asked me to do the Happening, and that was that. And he said Christ Janer had called him in, and what Christ Janer said to him hadn't been said to him since he left Texas. He said, "Last time I was talked to like that, I was in Texas, and I was in bad trouble," you know? And Wickheiser [phonetic] kept hearing from Christ Janer. Wickheiser was the department - art education department - chairman, and he kept hearing from Christ Janer, who was the dean of the art department, who kept hearing from the president, who kept hearing from the Newman Club. And every time - third time - the Newman Club would call the president of the art school, he would call Christ Janer, and Christ Janer would call Wickheiser, and Wickheiser would send people out to look for me, to give me the latest bulletin.

MR. CUMMINGS: Down the line.

MR. HANSEN: So, Bob Watts had told me once about, in southwestern Mexico, there is a town, and the majority of the population is Indian descent, rather than Spanish descent. And there is a Spanish church there. And in the plaza, there is a walking John the Baptist statue. The walking John the Baptist is approaching the church. And quite often - the first Mexicans, like our American Indians - the Mexican Indians digging the church would frequently leave a sheep with its throat cut on the church steps. And this goes back to Aztec rituals, and primitive religions, and what not, in the way - the church would much rather have money, but they will take property or clothing, or you know, like, volunteer work. So, this area, the Indians are particularly involved with celebrations and festivals and stuff. And there is about one or two a week. And one of the high points of it is always a drunken Indian climbing the walking statue of John the Baptist, who is usually walking with one hand held out. He was the outside man. He went out collecting. And then, the Indian would then back out on the arm, and take a crap in the outstretched hand of St. John the Baptist, the walking statue approaching the church with a handful of Indian shit. The Indians thought this was just really funny. And Bob Watts said, "What they are doing to you over this thing is, it's as if the police went out and arrested the sculptor, you know?" Wickheiser who is a damned good guy in many ways, but everyone was caught in this trap, you know - Wickheiser's approach was that if you're going to be a teacher, you have to learn to be a cog in the machine, because you sure can't change it. Well, he was in his fifties. We were to find out in the next couple of years in the 1960s - this was 1961 or 1962 - and the next couple of years of the 1960s, like, within a year or two, the Beatles were going to come here, and John Kennedy and everything. Nothing would ever be the same. And I had - I still have somewhere - a letter that says, "According to our discussions, we feel you should continue your education elsewhere," signed by Frederick Whiteman [phonetic] and Albert Christ Janer and Ralph Wickheiser, and maybe someone else, but at least those three. And the students were getting ready to rise up and picket and protest. They had been, like, anti atom bomb protesting day and night, all over the school. This was in the time of CAN [phonetic], VA [phonetic] and the freedom bus rides of the 1950s, leading into more and more action, and what not. And it was as if, in dying, McCarthy freed everybody up to really go ahead and protest.

MR. CUMMINGS: To do it, yes.

MR. HANSEN: And make the scene, liberally.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: And so, after the Christmas vacation, school started up again, and it developed that I couldn't - I would really be kept from registering the next term, and that if I didn't leave now, that they would make it very hard for me to transfer credits or anything. So, I just left, because I had been involved with the whole idea of revolution and change through education. And through what I had seen of education through majoring in it, I really felt it would be done much better through films or theater works, or writing novels. And I valued all the social studies and psychology and art experience and instruction I had gotten from a fantastic number of terrific people at Pratt: George McNeil [phonetic], you know, a legion of them; John Pyle [phonetic], Tony Smith.

MR. CUMMINGS: You know, I was going to ask you. One thing that appears -

MR. HANSEN: It was time to move on.

MR. CUMMINGS: - about this time is the Fluxus event.

MR. HANSEN: Yes.

MR. CUMMINGS: And the -

MR. HANSEN: Well, Fluxus is uniquely the product of George Maciunas, and Fluxus, Maciunas felt, more properly was a wider, better used label than "Happenings," that covered things like just singular events, or the kind of very precise posit that George Brecht or Yoko Ono would make by just putting some words on a card. This is

kind of like - hers always had a kind of haiku flair in it, and this kind of like Zen containment and minimality.

MR. CUMMINGS: Where did he come from, Maciunas?

MR. HANSEN: Maciunas is Baltic, I believe, Estonian or Lithuanian or Latvian. And like Cristo, his early years are inextricably entwined with the end of World War II, and DP [phonetic] camps, and moving around, and what not, and gravitating towards Paris and different art world places. George was that unique kind of organizational genius who could really, like, build something up. There was some kind of - a lot of avant garde artists were coming to the Museo de Art [phonetic] or something in Paris, for some kind of action/Happening program. Vastel [phonetic] was involved, and Filieu [phonetic], and Emmet Williams [phonetic], and Dick Higgins and Allison [phonetic] went over for it. And they always saw to it that many works by a lot of us - they would collect notations before they went to a thing like that. So, Maciunas, with his really, like, good feeling for accurate organization, had arranged a tour of Kuntzverians [phonetic] and Kunzthallas [phonetic] and art places, galleries, and theaters all over Europe. And this became like a Fluxus tour. Fluxus means, simply, a gushing forth. The whole idea of the benefits one gets from experimenting, whether one does it in a very severe academic way, or whether one does it in the goofing on the seriousness of art way, the way, let's say, Oldenburg does. And so, these people came back in the early 1960s, 1962 or 1963, came back to New York, and kept carrying on about all the things of all of us they had performed, and that Maciunas was coming here. And at the time, I think I was working for the PVI Gallery, Patricia Van Ingin [phonetic], up on east 73rd Street. And she and I had been thinking of doing a multiples number based on Danielle Sperry's [phonetic] additions, MAT [phonetic] - "multiplicacion arte technologique," or something. And the editions thing of Sperry, preceded by the little grocery store in Copenhagen, or a suburb or Copenhagen, that you rubber stamped everything a certified art object - that actually preceded or was about the same time that Warhol and others were beginning to get into popular mundane objects and iconocizing them here. So, this kind of like idea of a store, or producing multiples of an artwork, rather than individual artworks, to make an object, the way you do an edition of prints, I thought was really one of the strongest ideas that had come along. And I had this loft in Chinatown, I had been kicked out of Pratt. And I was trying to get together the lumber to build showcases. And I wanted different people I knew, like Watts and Allison and Higgins and Joe Jones to make objects in series, so they could be one on display, and the rest could be packaged on a shelf identical to it, like Baracini's [phonetic] chocolates, you know?

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: The way you would pick it from the display one, but you get a gift wrapped thing to take off.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MR. HANSEN: People come back and complain later the batteries didn't work, or something, so it's like real department store kind of thing. So, Herbert Reid [phonetic] had said in one of his books - I forget which one, but in the 1930s, I guess - that one thing you definitely could not do is reproduce art the way you could reproduce a product for the marketplace. It just didn't work that way.

MR. CUMMINGS: But what do you think about that period interested people in doing multiple objects?

MR. HANSEN: I don't know. No one seemed to understand what I was saying. And about six or seven months went by, and everyone began yelling, "Maciunas it here. He's come to America." And they had the first meeting. And Maciunas explained that what he wanted to do was set up - get a - he had gotten a place on Canal Street, and he was going to fix it up, and it would be a store, a Fluxus store, where people could buy art objects and stuff in series, and what not. And everyone was saying, "Isn't that wonderful?" And I had been saying it for, like, the preceding year, and nobody understood what - they kept saying, "What do you mean?" Somehow George saying it, they thought it was a great idea. And they had that Fluxus store on Canal Street, where Higgins had his loft studio, and which came to be the place where a lot of the Japanese artists stay, 359, 363 Canal, right around there. And they're still there. It's like Nam June Paik, Io [phonetic], Kiboto [phonetic], they're all in there.

MR. CUMMINGS: What do you think Fluxus really did in those early - the first few years? I mean, did people go there and buy things?

MR. HANSEN: Most of the -

MR. CUMMINGS: They did catalogs -

MR. HANSEN: Most of the art movements that made it, made it through somehow having writers write about it. And I guess that goes right back to [inaudible] writing the first novel and making the hero young Reffa [phonetic], an artist. It had never been done before. And whenever art gets into, like, where it had never been before, it's usually - like a charismatic explosion occurs. And I remember how excited I was in the late 1940s, when Johanna Lawrence and some other - Helen wrote a story about the young artists and what not in Washington Square Park. It was called, *A Bottle of Beer, a Slice of Pizza, and Thou*. And then, Dorrie Ashton

[phonetic] wrote on the Times entertainment page, on the cover, an article about how hard it is for an artist to find a place to live, and what not. And this must have been in, like, 1949 or 1950. And it was really shocking that, like, the big media was actually, like, saying something about an artist. This was shortly after an American abstract artist couldn't get shown in the Museum of Modern Art, or -

MR. CUMMINGS: You know, it's interesting, that that always appears to be what happens, that it -

MR. HANSEN: You can only see by looking -

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MR. HANSEN: I love McLewan's [phonetic] idea of history is a rear view mirror. You can't really be aware of it while it's going on. Like all the Esprit de Scalia [phonetic] later help you really, like, be able to see an area in some kind of richness, you know, and see what was working. But you don't know it at the time. We didn't know any of this at the time. It was just like the next kick, the next thing to do.

MR. CUMMINGS: Did you do anything with Fluxus? Did you have any particular - like, you know, particular activities, or -

MR. HANSEN: Well, everything I was doing and working on and planning -

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MR. HANSEN: - was in the Fluxus mode. All of my friends were in the Fluxus thing. But George Maciunas and I didn't hit it off. That first meeting was in Allison Knowles's [phonetic] loft. And the first thing I was told was that I couldn't smoke. This turned out to be very good advice later, but at the time -

MR. CUMMINGS: At the time, yes.

MR. HANSEN: - I was just - the only person you can't smoke in front of is your Aunt Tillie, you know? And I was told Maciunas had asthma and would die in six months, perhaps, like he was really quite ill, and you couldn't smoke in the same room. Maciunas is a bit of a wonderful terrorist. I got to know him quite well in the past years since the late 1960s, and I like him quite a bit. He's a wonderful nut.

MR. CUMMINGS: What's happened to him?

MR. HANSEN: He's in his basement on Worcester Street, and he has everything catalogued and indexed, and he's constantly printing new stuff. And Maciunas didn't just support this idea of Fluxus he had created, and the people in it, he actually produced their works. Maciunas would work in advertising, doing record jacket designs and type displays and magazine layouts and stuff. And with the money, he would have Yoko Ono's grapefruit book printed, or George Brecht notation cards printed, and all kinds of things, but Albert Fein [phonetic] and Bob Watts and Joe Jones and Allison Knowles and Fluxus really was a gushing forth. And Maciunas had that gift. He was also the first person to get artists to cooperatively buy buildings. He began that entire thing. One of the first people in one of his first buildings, the 80 Worcester Street building, was Ellie Raman [phonetic], who later - a few years later - with Gene Black and Bob and Igrid Wegand [phonetic], began the kind of SoHo movement thing, and began pushing to get it made really legal to live in a light industrial building. But - and this is the strength of Maciunas. He has really been really strongly in there. Also, he is a fiend for documentation and the particular date of a thing, and collecting pictures of it from the photographers afterwards. Photographers would always come to my Happenings and shoot them, but if it wasn't Peter Moore [phonetic], I never could get pictures from the guy later, except for one or two girls, Terry Chute [phonetic] and a few others.

MR. CUMMINGS: So, what -

MR. HANSEN: But the majority of pictures of my works are Peter Moore, going around and shooting every one of these things that happened. And now, I need Peter's photos to find out the date, because he has it all dated.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Well, how did it come about that you wrote the *Primer of Happenings* and *Space Time Art*, and - which was published in 1965?

MR. HANSEN: Well, Dick Higgins and - written in 1964 - Dick Higgins had the Something Else Press, and it was devoted strictly to new works in this area. Dick's love of history, and the fact that he is a bit of a - Dick is, in some wonderful and some awful ways, and none of us would agree on which should go under each of those headings the right way or the same way, you know, any of the people involved - but he is a kind of pedagog demagog. And Dick wanted to publish a book about Happenings, blah, blah, blah, you know?

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: So I began writing it, and -

MR. CUMMINGS: Was it your idea, or his idea, or how did it -

MR. HANSEN: No, I had been putting notes together and thinking about it, but Dick really pushed me to do it. And there are some things in the book that are all wrong. And I became fascinated at how the typesetter - the typists and then the typesetter - kept taking the word "causal," because I was making the distinction between the 1800s, the 19th century, being a causal thinking thing, and after Einstein and Cezanne and the turn of the century, the universe became "contingent." And Dorrie Ashton once wrote on a paper of mine, "contingent upon what?" And, of course, the answer is "contingent upon everything." But I love Dorrie Ashton, and she can write anything on any paper of mine or me she wants. I just think she is great, and a really strong woman, intelligent woman. And -

MR. CUMMINGS: So how was the experience of doing a book, and going through all that stuff, and -

MR. HANSEN: Well, I did it, just the way I do a Happening. Higgins and I would get together with a giant gallon jar of Rexina [phonetic], and he would have 20 or 30 questions ready, and he would ask me and we would tape it, and then he'd have a typist type it up, and I would go through. And anything that struck my fancy, I would enlarge on with a key number and an arrow or a carrot. And then he would have that typed up, double space. And then, I was running the HCE [phonetic] Gallery in Provincetown at the time. Ivan Karp wanted - had done it for the longest time, and wanted me to take it over for him. And Higgins would show up with a giant mushroom collecting bag on his back, and leave me the manuscript, and then he would go off mushroom hunting for a couple of days. And he would appear out of the woods and bogs with a huge bag of morels, come and pick up the manuscript from me, in whatever form it was in at the time, and go to the airplane and go to Boston and back to New York. And a week or two later, he would come back with the next version. And I was alarmed at how the typists and proofreaders kept changing the word "causal" to "casual." Then I finally got them to change all the "casuals" back to "causal," including the "casuals," the few "casuals." So, my main focus on the goddamn thing it was like Fibber McGee and his closet in a way.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: Every time I looked through the thing, the "causals" were all wrong. So I didn't read it until I got the blues. And there is nothing you can do about anything in the blues.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right, yes.

MR. HANSEN: Because it was at the binder's already. And when I saw that the typists, who were Barbara Moore [phonetic] and Lettie Lou Eisenhower [phonetic], had rewritten parts of the text, I was really - non plussed would be putting it mildly.

MR. CUMMINGS: Lettie Lou is irrepressible, though.

MR. HANSEN: In my book - and they had all been there. They had a perfect right to think how they thought it was was how they thought it was.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MR. HANSEN: "Al must have been drunk, he doesn't know."

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: But, for instance, they - I described how Bob and Judy Dunn began the Judson poets theater thing, and how it came to be called that, and what went on there, and it's changed to Yvonne Rainer [phonetic] and Bob Morris [phonetic] created the Judson Dance Theater. It just isn't true. I was at the meeting - after two or three years, they had a meeting about whether they should call it that, because they were going to perform at the Gramercy Arts Theater in the summer, and they wondered whether they should call themselves that, working out of Judson. And it was a three hour harangue. And, finally, Freddie Herko [phonetic] proposed we call it The Bob and Judy Dunn Dance Theater, and that gave it the proper focus. Bob and Judy Dunn are so rather Mormon, or low profile people, in terms of anything like that, that Yvonne Rainer said, "I propose we name it, formally, The Judson Dance Theater." Bob Morris said, "I second the motion." It was passed, and that was that. And as Bob Morris said that, Steve Paxton [phonetic] was raising his hand to second it. And so, legally, on the papers, someone reading back just that far and no further might feel - there might be some little bulletin on how it was named, and some typist from the church did that. But that's like - it had been going on two or three years when that happened. And the next time I saw Judy or Bob Dunn anywhere on the street, I would crawl under a car to escape their going by, because they're not the people who would seek being written up. And to actually have put in how important they were in this period, and what an integral part of the constellation of effects on

everything that's been going on they were, and then just have it expunged blew my mind.

MR. CUMMINGS: Did that - yes.

MR. HANSEN: Just blew my mind.

MR. CUMMINGS: That's history, though. But did that book do well? Do you know? Did he sell lots of copies for you?

MR. HANSEN: Yes. I am proudest of the fact that the largest number of sales instantly was at the Berkeley bookshop in the six months or a year preceding the riots.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, yes?

MR. HANSEN: The Berkeley Riots, yes.

MR. CUMMINGS: Funny.

MR. HANSEN: Here and there, someone would use it as a book for a cause, some hip professor someplace at Hogwash, Alabama, or something, would order 84 copies for a lecture class, or something, you know?

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: Had I known then -

MR. CUMMINGS: What I know now?

MR. HANSEN: - what I know now. I should have approached the programming board of that university to come down and do a demonstration Happening for a grand.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: Or a big ass lecturer. You know? It never even entered my mind. I would just say, "Hey, that's great," you know?

MR. CUMMINGS: Anyway, you had mentioned one of the great - the grand dame of the Happening world was this Lettie Lou Eisenhower.

MR. HANSEN: Yes.

MR. CUMMINGS: Was she in many of your events, or not?

MR. HANSEN: She might have been in one or two of my pieces. I don't think so. We were in others.

MR. CUMMINGS: She was with Kaprow -

MR. HANSEN: We were in the work of others. And -

MR. CUMMINGS: - avant garde.

MR. HANSEN: Going to Douglas, or whatever, up to a master's, I think. Lettie was in many of Allan Kaprow's pieces, and was certainly in many of Bob Watts's pieces. And she worked with Mike -

MR. CUMMINGS: Kirby?

MR. HANSEN: Mike Kirby in his Civil War thing, and what not. She was in a lot of Mike's work. I think she was involved with Bob Whitman [phonetic], et cetera. She was in a lot of Higgins's pieces, several big Higgins - he even wrote a thing for her that was done in the Sunnyside Boxing Arena called *The Tart*, for Lettie Lou Eisenhower. Io was in it, I was in it, a lot of us were in it.

MR. CUMMINGS: What do you - you know, it's curious about Lettie Lou, because she has been in all of those things, and she still seems to be -

MR. HANSEN: Lettie was very involved with kind of sound and movement art, and making sculptures that talked or moved and did different things. But Lettie is - it would be interesting to hear what she thought about this, but Lettie and I always hit it off, and she was always very rambunctious about anything. She was, like, really for it. She would, like, enter into a thing and really do it.

MR. CUMMINGS: A lady of passion.

MR. HANSEN: Yes. And I remember a large number of kind of junk object art things. Like she had a kind of very rusty bunged up oil drum hanging from a hole in its bottom, hung upside down in a loft with a few clappers in it of odds and ends of junk metal, like a huge, booming bell kind of thing. And then she did some - in 1963 and 1964, she did some sound kinetic works with tape recorders in them, and lights that went on and off, and a mat that would turn it on, or something. And Lettie, probably through banging her head against not being able to get a really good show, or to follow through on really getting together a show and showing - she was involved with Roy Liechtenstein, and he might have damped her out to a certain extent or something - but Lettie just went back into the institution. She's been teaching ever since, at Brooklyn College, and in Jersey at different colleges.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MR. HANSEN: Queens, different places, just, like, teaching up a storm, doing guided art tour trips, and stuff. And so we might feel she is in, like, a germination stage from which she could come out and do something any time, because she has the sensibility and the talent and the promise. Dorothea Rockburn [phonetic] was in the art world, just as Kristen's mother, and a pal of Sally Gross [phonetic], and the whole, like, part of the Provincetown gang, and look how Dorothea Rockburn surfaced into a major American artist, you know? A lot of kids are saying, "Where the hell did this Dorothea Rockburn come from, or who does she know?" Dorothea has been around, like -

MR. CUMMINGS: Takes a long time.

MR. HANSEN: She was at Black Mountain College in the late 1940s or early 1950s from Canada when she was 16.

MR. CUMMINGS: I was going to ask you, I read somewhere that you once had a thing called "danger music." What is danger music, and danger other things? What does that come from?

MR. HANSEN: I think -

MR. CUMMINGS: What's it about?

MR. HANSEN: I think Dick Higgins decided to do some danger music. And he wrote Nam June Pike that he was doing danger music. And I think one of the first danger musics was to scream 17 times, incredibly loud. Now, Higgins is a very big guy. And when he screams as loud as he can, he squirts his throat and gargles with lemon juice for an afternoon before, and he prepares for it the way Carlos [phonetic] or Marilyn Horn [phonetic] does.

MR. CUMMINGS: So it's a production.

MR. HANSEN: And Higgins screaming 17 times doing this piece, if you can get a bottle of vodka or wine in him first, is really something to see. That was - one of the first danger musics, I think, was the screaming piece. And there were several more, but -

MR. CUMMINGS: Where does the term derive from?

MR. HANSEN: To perform music that would be dangerous, perhaps.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I see. Something could happen, in one way or another.

MR. HANSEN: It might be that simple.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: But again, we would have to go to Dick.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: But I think that's it. Nam June Pike wrote him back from Japan or Korea, a danger music piece devoted to Dick Higgins. I forget the title, but the notation instruction to the performer was to crawl up the vagina of a living whale.

MR. CUMMINGS: Where do you go from there, as they say?

MR. HANSEN: I don't know, I would have to see a chart. I would hate to pull both feet up in there.

MR. CUMMINGS: I see.

MR. HANSEN: I would want to keep one foot in the pool room, folks. A large condom, you know? Dick Higgins, the whale prick, I don't know.

MR. CUMMINGS: There are a couple of things sort of into the 1960s -

MR. HANSEN: The idea of danger music might have preceded the whole destruction in art thing that Gustav Metzger [phonetic] and certain -

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes, because that -

MR. HANSEN: - people got into in the middle to late 1960s.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MR. HANSEN: 1965 and 1966.

MR. CUMMINGS: Now, what about that? What's it called, the - over there? Destruction in art in London in 1966, right?

MR. HANSEN: Oh, there it is. Yes.

MR. CUMMINGS: You went over there for that, did you not?

MR. HANSEN: Yes. And I first heard about it - I was running the Something Else Gallery from Dick Higgins's living room in his townhouse on west 22nd Street, and a very breezy, chatty guy named Mario Meyer came in, and said he was from England and this, that, and the other. And I gave him a copy of my book - or made him buy one, I forget - and he said he was having a destruction in art thing in London, and he wanted to get Jim Dine and Oldenburg. And I said, "Well, they don't have anything with destruction. You know, it's this guy, Ralph Fortiz [phonetic], who is really, like, destroying stuff. He's very into destruction." And John Chamberlain [phonetic] and Armand [phonetic], like they're people really using destruction. And basically, a key part of the process of abstract expressionism was to keep going back in and destroying the image, taking a chance on ruining the nice, pretty things that were happening, and find something greater. It was a really wonderful thing to watch an abstract expressionist - a real one, a seven day painter - work. As it became popular, the paintings got thinner. There was no point in painting on it seven days, if there is a guy up there waiting with a check in his hand at the Janus [phonetic] Gallery, or whatever, you know? So they would send a guy - two guys down to hold DeCooney [phonetic], and two guys to carry the painting out, you know? Once it is out, DeCooney would go to work on the next canvas, you know?

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: I'm simplifying, and I don't want to sound like I am making fun of them. This is a marvelous, strong thing. But that's how I saw destruction in art, if anyone is going to do it, in terms of continuity. So -

MR. CUMMINGS: What did you do in the London thing, though? What -

MR. HANSEN: So one thing - one of the things that made the destruction in art symposium a success was that my book had been published, and it had, in the - it listed everyone, many people who did that sort of thing, and it also listed a lot more people with their address, so you could write to them and ask them what they did. There wasn't room for them in the book, so we just put them in the index, with their address. No page number, like you have to write the address and ask them what they do, which was one of our - I forget, I don't know whether I thought of that, or - no, I was so upset that everybody couldn't be included. Higgins wanted to hold my book to just American Happeners. It doesn't cover all of them. But he wanted to exclude everyone from outside of America. And Higgins was properly being the producer of the book, or the publisher. He has to have focus -

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MR. HANSEN: He wanted it to come out at the same time as Allan Kaprow's book by Abrams [phonetic], and for it to be singularly different and unique, but very good, so that everyone ordering the Abrams book would order mine, too. Anyone getting a Happenings book would get the two of them, you know? And then, they both came out in pocketbook about the same time, I think, in soft cover. So - what was the question?

MR. CUMMINGS: What did you do with destruction in art?

MR. HANSEN: Well, Mario [phonetic] used my book to get more people to come.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: And I said he should ask each person to find three, so it would be a pyramid club thing. So, the destruction in art symposium in London, in the fall of 1966, which they call Dyas [phonetic], became, really, like a huge party meeting of - everyone had been doing Happenings and actions, along with everyone - many people were into concrete poetry.

MR. CUMMINGS: Which has never caught on here, has it, really?

MR. HANSEN: Yes, it's - but it's a very viable, steady, subcurrent movement. I couldn't urge a bunch of kids who wanted to form a gang and make a name for themselves to do anything more than just take the idea of concrete poetry, and working letterism, or whatever it's called now in France, and really give that a go. Because the people with the books, and who are into writing letters and literature critics will - they can really tie into that. That's a number they can go for, the way the media could go for pop art. It's like a celebration in return.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MR. HANSEN: And we all met each other finally. People had heard about - Vastel had been going back to Europe and telling different people about me, I had been telling different Americans about all the Germans.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: And then, here we all were in London.

MR. CUMMINGS: Was he the key to Germany, Vastel, and his -

MR. HANSEN: Well, he was one of several Germans. Perhaps he was one of the only Germans from the area of, like, Happenings and actions who made it his business to come here regularly.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: Because, as I've said, he didn't even realize, until he had come here the second time, that it -

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: - my way of thinking, it begins in Germany, in the Berlin cabaret, and the experimental theater ideas of the Bauhaus is where I see Happenings beginning.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, you -

MR. HANSEN: But someone else - a kid from out West could decide this is what he's going to do all his life, and insist that it comes from the rodeo and the circus, and -

MR. CUMMINGS: Comedia del arte.

MR. HANSEN: - comedia del arte and the pre Lenten rebels, and New Orleans and France, you know, it's -

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MR. HANSEN: The Beaux Arts in New York, which is kind of like a drag party concert -

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: - is very much a kind of Happening thing in that respect. You can't tell what you're going to see next, and whether the costumes move or light up or not, or whether the men or women - it's a Happening kind of thing.

MR. CUMMINGS: But what's - you know, to go back to London again, what did you feel you accomplished by going to London and being involved with this? Meeting those people? Or was it a -

MR. HANSEN: Well, I kind of broke my travel cherry, and I kind of broke my isolationist, just from New York experience cherry. No matter how much you can read theory, to actually literally go to another country and meet people who have been doing what you're doing - so it was like a convocation - it was like a congress or a seminar of gun slingers. People kept going up to each other and saying, "What's your name?" And the guy would say, "My name is Ossie Weiner, what's your name?" And I'd say, "Al Hansen." "Oh, I've heard about you," you know? "Draw," you know?

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes, yes.

MR. HANSEN: Pow, pow.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: It had that kind of quality to it.

MR. CUMMINGS: Wasn't that where Ralph was going to kill a chicken or something? That was such a -

MR. HANSEN: Yes. In London, Ralph Ortiz [phonetic] was into destroying pianos. And he is a very big, very strong guy, tallest Puerto Rican in the world, perhaps.

MR. CUMMINGS: True.

MR. HANSEN: And nobody can really, like, go into a piano with a fire axe the way Ralph Ortiz can. And his focus, like Manuel's, is quite Catholic. He sees the devil in the piano, and goes to kill the devil in the piano, or let it out. But in the process, the piano is destroyed. And it's like aiming beyond the chin you're going to hit, if you're a good boxer, or beyond the boards you're going to break if you're a karate man.

MR. CUMMINGS: But does he think about that in terms of the furniture that he burnt? You know, he would burn and throw into the ocean, and you know, mangle one way or another.

MR. HANSEN: I'm not sure. Certainly ask him. I just ran in - I haven't seen him for a couple of years. He has been involved with politics, and he is interested -

MR. CUMMINGS: Museo -

MR. HANSEN: - thing, and now he has tenure and he's teaching down at Livingston.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

MR. HANSEN: Part of the Rutgers, State University of New Jersey complex. He is in the Livingston branch.

MR. CUMMINGS: What is it about Rutgers? They get all these unusual people.

MR. HANSEN: Well, the State of New Jersey is rather repressive and reactionary, and perhaps that is like good, fertile ground. Perhaps many radical artists could get easier employment at the state university with New Jersey than they could figure into NYU or Columbia, or something.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, of course.

MR. HANSEN: I don't think it is any one of those, but that might be part of it. Perhaps not being able to pay what a New York school artist would want to get, they have to take somebody who looks kind of hot from Ohio or Oklahoma, or a student who graduated -

MR. CUMMINGS: Somebody who is not as -

MR. HANSEN: - two or three years ago.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MR. HANSEN: Because I think there are quite a few people working at Rutgers and New Brunswick and Douglas College who were students there, or something. Well, I'm basing that on Gary Keanes.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MR. HANSEN: And now I'm not so sure.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MR. HANSEN: But back at the time, late 1950s/early 1960s, Lucas Simaris [phonetic] and Steve Vacey [phonetic] and Robert DeForest Whitman, Jr. and Buddy Eisenhower were all students there, coming to be - and teach and stuff. And now I find myself getting all my kids together each fall, over at Rutgers Newark, to be in the avant garde festival. This is really like quite a nice -

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, really? When did that -

MR. HANSEN: The avant garde festival is really quite a nice showcase for, like, young artists who have just stopped being students, or going to graduate in a minute, and this is a nice, like - it's a kind of 10th Street for them if they're interested in any kind of performance or experimental area. For a realist, it wouldn't be the thing.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: But then they wouldn't have that much trouble.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MR. HANSEN: This is quite popular in the marketplace right now.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right. What about the Festival of the Avant Garde 1963 that - I have forgotten her name -

MR. HANSEN: Charlotte Mormon [phonetic].

MR. CUMMINGS: Charlotte Mormon, right.

MR. HANSEN: Well, there was a woman who put on shows every year in the old Village named Nell Boardman [phonetic]. She was in charge of the outdoor art show. No nudes, no politics, nothing controversial. And, in a funny way, Charlotte is kind of the Nell Boardman of avant garde art, in that she is -

MR. CUMMINGS: The contrast is about as wide as you can -

MR. HANSEN: - in that she is great at prying loose from service institutions - like Con Ed and the phone company and Department of Marine and Aviation and big corporations - support, even if they just lend trucks for the avant garde festival or parade, et cetera.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: She, of course, has to promise them there will be nothing obstreperous in it, which is always very funny. Many artists at the time of the avant garde festival erecting itself each fall are very upset, and carrying on, stinking about how can artists agree not to have anything political, or any nudity, or anything and what not? And I always tell them, "Agree to anything you want, and then take off your clothes twice as much once it opens up." I mean - or on the last day, or in the final hours.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MR. HANSEN: Shoot your gun, do your thing, you know, like you really have to decide. You're here, beefing about it, you haven't walked off in a huff.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: I think a lot of good people are missing from the avant garde festival.

MR. CUMMINGS: Really? Who, for example?

MR. HANSEN: I think a lot of people are missing from it because they wouldn't have anything to do with something that was establishment helped that much, to where the lower class of the establishment is helping, who - like Con Ed and the phone company, where they don't want any nudity, or any political stuff, or anything like that, blah, blah, blah. It's just institutionalization -

MR. CUMMINGS: But still, I mean, it's 10 years old.

MR. HANSEN: - protecting itself.

MR. CUMMINGS: In the last few years, you have gotten dozens and dozens of people -

MR. HANSEN: Well, they have always been fantastic people, like Shirley Clark [phonetic] and myself, and Otto Pina [phonetic], and Ken Dewey [phonetic], and what not. But there are also, like, kind of strange types, too, or things that aren't too well thought out or something. And a lot of people attack it as a festival of misfits and losers, you know? And -

MR. CUMMINGS: What do you think it's done - I mean, it's been happening for 10 years. Seems like a long time.

MR. HANSEN: Well, in the avant garde, not a totally useless term, but rapidly becoming, like, a misnomer. As we start to say "modern art" again, which used to be a misnomer, now it becomes, like, a misnomer to say "avant garde" art, because the avant garde is alive and well, but art, as a form with a capital "F," has always been under attack from above and from outside. And during the past 5 or 10 years, it has been attacked vigorously from within, by the artists themselves.

MR. CUMMINGS: Why is that, do you think?

MR. HANSEN: I think it's the only way we can get at the - what the new ideas will be. And there are still people living a neolithic culture existence, a small number.

MR. CUMMINGS: I mean, do you -

MR. HANSEN: There are still people painting representationally, like the Banfa [phonetic] Gallery 000 Brush Set, Alvin Ross [phonetic] -

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MR. HANSEN: - and Cadmus [phonetic] and Vickery [phonetic], and just fantastic artists of great value. But the media isn't interested in them.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: They're not in the back room at Max's Kansas City.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. But -

MR. HANSEN: They don't take acid trips and jump off roofs.

MR. CUMMINGS: Some of them do, and still paint eggs and flowers. Do you feel that part of your activity has been in the internal -

MR. HANSEN: Like watching someone take a shit through their mouth, isn't it? I just could go on for hours.

MR. CUMMINGS: But don't you feel that - I mean, do you feel that some of your activities had been part of this internal questioning and reappraisal?

MR. HANSEN: Yes. I am more interested in bringing together, in the art form, a variety of criteria for which there are separate forms, or modes. For instance, in the shaped canvas on the wall, it's in the shape of an American flag, perhaps just a hair bigger. But the stretcher is made in that shape, and then canvas is stretched on it. So, like, rather than do a pop art object, or celebrate or iconocize the idea of a paper flag kite by enlarging it and building a big icon to it or something, I have just, like, recreated the shape. And of course it's a pop art object. It has a hot dog with mustard rampant and a burned bun. But what I like - what's important to it to me is that it gets away from the square or the rectangle. So it's a shaped canvas. But, at the same time, it's a pop art work. And if you could see slides or photographs or, like, a dozen different ones, the thickness of the red and white stripes varies, although the red and white stripes are the same width. But some of them are quite thin. And in others, the star pattern is quite small, and this kind of kinetic optical art thing that goes on. So, it's -

MR. CUMMINGS: It's also a flat pattern, hard edged image.

MR. HANSEN: Yes, so it's conforming to at least more than two, even if just in constellational shreds of a way criteria or taxonomies. And at the same time, it's a pleasing, like, competent work of art, that someone could enjoy having. Like it becomes, like, somewhere between a tub toy and a good old hat, you know, that you just don't want to throw away. And that's my view of myself as, like, someone who is really involved with doing something competent. I'm not really trying to think of something great nobody ever thought of. I find so much activity and pleasure in working together, different mediums like -

MR. CUMMINGS: The craft -

MR. HANSEN: The space in the big Hershey Bar wrapper collage -

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: - using all the fonts, this - I just love that. I sort of get - I guess I get a lot of pleasure from the process, the process is probably more important to me than the product, because I'm not even bothered at the fact that I do varieties of products, you know?

MR. CUMMINGS: But do you see the things are related now, over the years, as you look back over a period of time? Do you see a relationship between the collages, for example, and -

MR. HANSEN: Yes, but in an intellectual way. Like the Hershey Bar wrapper women are the pneumatic breath, sexy figures from temples, and daily pictures, and have a mild erotic [inaudible], with the word "Oooo," always between their legs. But the Tashist space of the feel of letters, and what not, or the kind of mild kinetic quality of that, the combination of them, like, that's my continuity in that.

MR. CUMMINGS: What has gotten things happening for you in Germany in the last, what, three or four years, two or three years?

MR. HANSEN: Yes. Well, I'm doing a Frank Lloyd Wright.

MR. CUMMINGS: Seventy years later?

MR. HANSEN: I'm going around third base, towards home plate. The only place I have had real attention, and being sent round trip airplane tickets, et cetera, is - I have had a little of that in America now and then, but a lot of it I drummed up myself for - they needed somebody from Manpower to fill in for a star who couldn't make it, or fell off a pill or something.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: And so, I would jump into the hole.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, what -

MR. HANSEN: And they would give me half as much.

MR. CUMMINGS: What kind of response, and who did you start doing things with?

MR. HANSEN: Well, there was a big Happening Fluxus documentation exhibition at the Koln Klintz Verein [phonetic] in Germany, that was prepared by Howard Zeman [phonetic] and Wolf Vastel. And the factual resource was a Happening archive by a man named Hans Sohm.

MR. CUMMINGS: Where was he?

MR. HANSEN: He lives near to Stuttgart, Germany, in a little town called Markgrininham [phonetic]. He is a dentist. And he is obsessed with collecting any kind of information or data or objects by a Happening, Fluxus concept, object makers. And so, the catalog is a very good resource for people interested in this area -

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: - because it is Sohm's chronology from his archive. And they sent me a round trip plane fare to that. So I went to it, and a lot of people I know who had been a bit shaky, as far as being able to get a show in a top gallery or even the next to top gallery, or a lower rung top gallery, were introducing me to their dealers, and laying on me a catalog of the retrospective they did at this or that, and many of them were living in big pads, and making good dough. And I said to myself, "Hey, hey," and started writing letters and answering letters, when I got them, punctually - much more punctually than before -

MR. CUMMINGS: Makes a difference, doesn't it?

MR. HANSEN: Yes. And I kept going back more and more. And on each trip I would make some new contacts for new work, or a new thing, and I would go over and just sort of hang around in the art world, the way a lot of them are coming here and hanging around the Spring Street Bar. And they are coming all the way from there to sit around the Spring Street Bar and show a [inaudible] and John Webber [phonetic] and what not, and I am going where they came from to show, like, where they don't want to show them, or something.

MR. CUMMINGS: Well, how - you know, what galleries have you been involved with?

MR. HANSEN: There was the first gallery, the first place I showed. The first places I have shown in Europe I'm a bit shaky on, because sending friends work or friends bringing back things, or friends presenting a notation to be included in a collection or something, it's really, like, I'm just slowing getting together things like that now, myself.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. But, say, in the last couple of years, what did you -

MR. HANSEN: But after the Happening/Fluxus documentation show in Koln, I went to - I went back the next year to show with the Inge Baecker Gallery in Bochum. It has the finest theater in Germany, and the finest performances of plays, et cetera. And there is this little gallery there, run by this woman, Inge Baecker. And she wanted to open a gallery specializing in Happening/action/Fluxus artists. And she has, in the past three years, shown all of us, most recently Bob Watts, Jeff Hendrix [phonetic], Joe Jones, myself, Allison Knowles. She wants to do a Yoko Ono show, but doesn't realize how easy it would be. The grapefruit book exists. Put together the show, as you would objects from George Brecht notations. But then maybe Yoko and George wouldn't want their notations to be construed that way. I don't know. But I think Yoko would be just delighted to show by anybody who specialized in what she is known for, as, and I think many people are put off by the fact that she is married

to Lennon, and has his money reinforcement to actually explore, in an interesting way, popular music and combine avant garde concepts into avant garde - I run into young people who are just knocked out by a lot of the things Yoko is doing, in terms of post rock explorations. And the next gallery that wanted to show me was Renee Block, who is one of the - who is the oldest avant garde gallery in Germany in that - well, he is the oldest gallery who shows Happening/Fluxus people.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: Makers of multiples, and what not. And Block began this gallery on his bedroom walls, working as a waiter, and has slowly built it up into a big thing. Through being prone to that direction, he got Boyce [phonetic] very, very early. And I guess Boyce is his biggie, in the way, you know, whoever had Klein [phonetic], that was his biggie, and whoever had Pollack [phonetic], that was his biggie.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MR. HANSEN: Whoever has Oldenburg, that's his biggie.

MR. CUMMINGS: What about -

MR. HANSEN: I want to be Block's next biggie.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right. Now, the next -

MR. HANSEN: And -

MR. CUMMINGS: Where did [inaudible] come into this?

MR. HANSEN: In and around, I have had things bought by collectors that gave the work to the Dartman [phonetic] Museum, or the Duisburg [phonetic] Museum, or the Archen [phonetic] Museum, or whatever.

MR. CUMMINGS: What kind of things do they have of yours?

MR. HANSEN: My first show, the thing with Baecker, I wanted to show the variety of things I do. I wanted to have no integrity. So, I had Hershey Bar wrapper collages, drawings, junk collages, notations for Happenings, notation plans for Happening architecture, sociology/psychology pieces, and found objects, and perhaps a couple of more things. Oh, experimental photo works, using four for a quarter photo automat strips and things. So, there was really a nice variety. And different people who had heard about me or knew about me came and bought things and went off in different directions with it. Some people who collect Happening/Fluxus people got one of each, and some just got one of what they didn't have anything of yet, et cetera.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right, right.

MR. HANSEN: You know? Right.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: The guy who didn't have any Hershey Bar wrapper collages could cop one.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: And the guy who had three or four of those could cop some notations. And then, the show with Block was more notations with just a few Hershey Bar wrapper collages, and an addition of pebbles, each one in a German matchbox with a little face drawn on it, as if -

MR. CUMMINGS: Just like those?

MR. HANSEN: They were pebbles, the kind of pebbles you see in Europe that are volcanic residue, and have a line in the different color stone around the center of the stone. So the line became like a headband. That was, like, an addition of 100. And notations for Happenings -

MR. CUMMINGS: What are notations? Is that like a script, or ideas, or -

MR. HANSEN: A notation is, like to play the cello part in a concerto, the cellist must have the notation.

MR. CUMMINGS: I see.

MR. HANSEN: Like the music notes.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: What to do, when.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: So, the ones I had in the show at Block were more really like Happening notations, in that - and they were ascribed for someone else to do. So, each one was, like, not so much - some people saw them as [inaudible] to the people named in each one, but it was really like this was something I wanted that person to do a Happening with.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

MR. HANSEN: But I would have to, like, take pictures and send them a picture or something.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: Or have it done as a print, or something.

MR. CUMMINGS: I see.

MR. HANSEN: And, now, then in the past year, I have gotten involved in etchings, because there is a big print market in Germany, and I have been exploring the medium of etching, cold needle, and - which I think we call silver point.

MR. CUMMINGS: No, that's etching. Silver point is a drawing thing.

MR. HANSEN: Right, right, right. And see? I'm not an etcher. And -

MR. CUMMINGS: How do you like print making?

MR. HANSEN: I like it very much. I love the medium.

LITTLE MOON: Dry point?

MR. HANSEN: Yes, I meant dry point, exactly.

MR. CUMMINGS: Yes.

MR. HANSEN: Thank you, Little Moon. And now I am really having fun, like, just making pictures, you know. And why not? I am a distinguished, cultured 46.

MR. CUMMINGS: You mean pictures, in terms of images and prints and -

MR. HANSEN: Yes, yes. It's maybe - you know, it's like a cartoon facet, or - I enjoy doing the wrong thing, like to do in a picture what you shouldn't do, and make it work somehow.

MR. CUMMINGS: How did you decide to use this plan of the outline of the city of Berlin? What is that -

MR. HANSEN: Well, all Americans are involved with the wall, and the idea of the wall, and this, like, economic outpost, you know, in enemy territory behind the iron curtain, within a wall, these people living in this city. But, of course, we see it romantically, from our viewpoint. Berliners, themselves, must be affected by the wall. There is the walled city of legend, and the idea of a state of siege, and what not. This is like a replay of the Middle Ages, the late Middle Ages, a city under siege being supported by the airplane, the 20th century vehicle. And I am always interested in the shape of a place, or getting a map of a city I am going to go to and looking at it. I don't want to arrive there and start figuring - I want to know beforehand, like, where to go and what to look at, and this, that, and the other. It's like an economy, a philosophical economy. So, I was really - I couldn't find a map that had a complete thing of the wall. Edges of it that weren't important kept going off, and what not.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: And when I came back from that Happening/Fluxus documentation show, part of which was Block flying a selected dozen of us up to Berlin to do a program of Happenings in the Forham [phonetic] theater up in Furstendam and then back, I didn't have any - I bought every map of Berlin I could find in Berlin, and I couldn't find any that had the complete outline of the wall. And I wanted to do a series of drawings based on the entire shape of the wall, and what not, and I couldn't find one. Then a friend of mine, an artist named Joanne Stamera [phonetic], found one in an old *National Geographic Magazine*, and I had it photostated up, and that's the particular map shape I used for the wall thing. And, of course, there is no wall around East Berlin, there is just a

wall around West Berlin. Leftists and pro East people in West Berlin will point this out to me, that there is no wall around the East. There is a guy standing with a machine gun who wants to see your pass, but there is no wall. And -

MR. CUMMINGS: That's not a wall.

MR. HANSEN: Right. Because there is no point in having a wall around East Germany. It's like East Berlin is in East Germany. The wall is just around the West. But I am involved with the shape, or the idea, of what the limits of Berlin are, per se.

MR. CUMMINGS: So, now you have a show coming up at Gerschpeigal [phonetic], right?

MR. HANSEN: Yes.

MR. CUMMINGS: When is that?

MR. HANSEN: Thanksgiving.

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, that's soon.

MR. HANSEN: November 23rd, yes. I've got to go to the airport now, Paul. I've talked too long.

MR. CUMMINGS: I have my international client lady. What galleries have you worked for, besides ACE [phonetic] and PVI? Somehow, you have been associated with -

MR. HANSEN: I worked a little with Gertrude Stein, in her formal location, up a little higher. I worked for Florence Wesselman [phonetic], who had Southampton East, Limited, I think. And I worked for Joe Cornbly [phonetic]. All of these are, like, anywhere from - Gertrude Stein was like a week now and then repainting the gallery, or building some stuff, or carrying the Yayoi Kusamas [phonetic] in and out carefully. There was one point where Yayoi had 10 1 man shows in a month and a half.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: In every gallery in New York. And I think she still owes the trucking bill for that. None of the galleries want to pay it. And another one - I guess the one I worked in the most was Leo Castelli [phonetic]. And I worked for Paul Biancini [phonetic], when he moved from 78th Street to 57th Street, where the Howard Weiss [phonetic] Gallery was. I think it's 52 West 57th. I immersed myself in the gallery scene. I became a friendly regular visitor, who would use the phones, steal stamps, et cetera, at AM Sachs [phonetic], and, oh God, I don't know how many other galleries. And I built a wall for Pretty Eyes Bob Elkon [phonetic], in the front of his gallery, give him a little extra viewing space in front of the windows. And it's just like one job. And I think I went to paint the gallery or something, and we couldn't agree on the price. I wanted more than $.40 an hour, so I didn't do that. But Elkon is okay. And then I did the gallery in Dick Higgins's living room. The Something Else Gallery is like another four or five month thing.

MR. CUMMINGS: That didn't last very long, did it?

MR. HANSEN: Yes. I think his legal advice apprised him of the fact that he could not take it off his income tax, in that he hadn't taken out a dba, a "doing business as," or anything, you know?

MR. CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

MR. HANSEN: And that was the end of the gallery.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: Also, there was a petty cash thing of, like, $350. Whenever anyone important came in, I would take them around to El Quixote [phonetic] for a beer or two, or to talk to them, or take people to lunch who were going to write up one of the exhibitions. And Dick didn't agree with me that should have been done, because he seemed very surprised a month or so later, to find that the petty cash was completely gone. So, I -

MR. CUMMINGS: Lots of sales -

MR. HANSEN: So I [inaudible] stripped my royalties for the Happening book back into that, although he probably took the missing thing as a tax loss.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: But even so, between us, he had laid out a couple hundred, and I had - I was responsible for it, whether I spent it all or not.

MR. CUMMINGS: Right.

MR. HANSEN: At the time, living in Dick Higgins's house was Emmet Williams [phonetic], Wolf Vastel, Ben Patterson. Several people got at least a tenner out of that petty cash thing. But I sort of - I took the rap for the group, because theoretically - not theoretically; actually - I was running the gallery as a petty cash allocation. The petty cash was completely gone. And this came as a big shock to Dick. And I held myself responsible.

MR. CUMMINGS: For his patronage.

MR. HANSEN: I take the rap for the group, yes.

MR. CUMMINGS: Okay, wow. Since -

[END OF INTERVIEW.]

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