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Oral history interview with Paul and
Alberta von Ottenfeld Babcock, 1965
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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Paul G. and Alberta von Ottenfeld Babcock on May 1, 1965. The interview took place in Glendora, California, and was conducted by Betty Lochrie Hoag McGlynn for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Archives of American Art's New Deal and the Arts project.

The original transcript was edited. In 2021 the Archives created a more verbatim transcript. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: This is Betty Lochrie Hoag on May 1, 1965 interviewing two artists, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Babcock, in their home in Glendora, California. Mr. Babcock, do you use a middle initial or name in addition to the Paul?

PAUL BABCOCK: Sometimes, yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: What is that, please?

PAUL BABCOCK: G.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: G? And Mrs. Babcock, before her marriage and when she worked on the Project in southern California too, was Alberta von Ottenfeld. And that's spelled A-L-B-E-R-T-A, V-O-N, O-T-T-E-N-F-E-L-D. In order to make it easier, I'm going to talk to each of you separately about your own lives before we talk about the Project work. Mr. Babcock, where were you born in Texas and when, if you care to tell us?

PAUL BABCOCK: Fort Worth, Texas in 1905.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And where were you educated?

PAUL BABCOCK: I was educated in Fort Worth high schools, then I went to Texas Christian University, TCU. Then, I came to California in 1929.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Excuse me, did you specialize in art at TCU?

PAUL BABCOCK: Yes, at TCU. I don't—Mr.—let me think, it started with a Z. I can't remember his name right now. I don't think I got anything out of the art classes—[They laugh.]—at TCU.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: No one person was a great influence on your life?

PAUL BABCOCK: Not there.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL BABCOCK: But I went to—then, when I came to California, I came to California to go to Otis Art Institute.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh.

PAUL BABCOCK: And I went to Otis Art Institute for four years.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Was this when Von Kovsky [ph] was there?

PAUL BABCOCK: No—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: He got there I believe—

PAUL BABCOCK: I don't believe so. I don't—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Or was he just at manual arts high school, I guess?

PAUL BABCOCK: I don't think I met him.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And did you start practicing as an artist after that? Or did you work at something else first?

PAUL BABCOCK: Well, I practiced as an artist by working on backgrounds in a studio in Hollywood.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Any particular studio or different ones?

PAUL BABCOCK: What was the name of—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: George—

PAUL BABCOCK: George Paulus [ph] Studio.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: George Paulus [ph]?

ALBERTA BABCOCK: [Inaudible.]

PAUL BABCOCK: Yes, I did my—I did some illustrations on books.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Murals?

PAUL BABCOCK: Well—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Murals before the Project time?

PAUL BABCOCK: No.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: No?

PAUL BABCOCK: No. The Project, I think, was quite a wonderful thing. They put a lot of artists to work working on art every day. [They laugh.] And I think it contributed an awful lot to the American culture myself.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You were on both the easel project and the mosaic project—

PAUL BABCOCK: Yes, I started—I started on the easel project then, when they began to slow down on the easel project things, I went onto the mosaic project under Al King.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I had reference of one painting that you had exhibited at the Los Angeles Museum in June of 1936, at a—an oil called *Mist*. Do you remember that one? I couldn't find a picture of it, but I know that was one you did.

PAUL BABCOCK: No, I don't—it seems that I did some painting, but I mean that I don't remember it. [They laugh.] It was done on the Project?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes. This was an exhibit of Federal Art Project work at the museum.

PAUL BABCOCK: Well, we did quite a number. I remember when I did still lifes, I got bored with the subject of giving them names, so I just called them number one, number two, number three—[They laugh.]—and so forth.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That's always a good solution.

PAUL BABCOCK: Well, it—I didn't know any other solution.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Did you say that the easel project sort of tapered off?

PAUL BABCOCK: Yes, it did taper—[Cross talk.]—it tapered off because the Art Project started doing things for public buildings, schools, and so forth. And whereas, the private individual mostly quite wealthy usually can't afford things like mosaics because a mosaic can run into quite a bit a square foot.

[00:05:08]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

PAUL BABCOCK: So, while I worked on the Long Beach Mosaic, then I did several mosaics after that that I designed completely—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh—

PAUL BABCOCK: —and had others work on.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Olinka Hrdy told me that you designed some, but she wasn't sure where they were.

PAUL BABCOCK: Yeah—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Do you—do you remember?

PAUL BABCOCK: Let's see then, there were two other mediums which I designed in. And that time they called it petrochrome. I—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

PAUL BABCOCK: —it's called terrassa [ph]—by commercial workers.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I believe that Mr. Wright invented that term and—

PAUL BABCOCK: Probably.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —the way of doing it [laughs].

PAUL BABCOCK: The—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: He was given credit for it [inaudible].

PAUL BABCOCK: I designed the one mosaic I remember for the Alhambra High School. The subject matter was early California. Two mosaics that they had on the old Alhambra High School, and now they've moved them over to the new Alhambra High School.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh. Well, it's a good thing they were able to save them. So many of the times they're just wrecked.

PAUL BABCOCK: Yeah. Well—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And especially when [inaudible]—

PAUL BABCOCK: Alberta called them when she heard that they were going to open the new high school and, I guess, tear that one down and use it for something else.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL BABCOCK: And they informed her that they were going to keep them. They were going to move them.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: First time they promised them to give—to give them to me. Later on, they called—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: —and said that the public and the alumni had written so many letters requesting them that they were going to install them.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, isn't that nice? Of course, they have—the government has 99-year rights to all things done on the Project. So, they—

PAUL BABCOCK: Well, it's theirs [laughs].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —wants to do—yeah, it is theirs. Mr. Wright called me the other night and he was quite upset because the Santa Monica Library is moving in their new building and were planning to destroy the murals he did there, which you've probably seen.

PAUL BABCOCK: Oh, the public would never allow that.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And—well, Santa Monica Public apparently is. But I have contacted the archives, and the Smithsonian, and our Los Angeles Museum. And I'm sure that they'll all get right on this [inaudible].

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Good.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It's a terrible thing.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Good.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It's a beautiful mural.

PAUL BABCOCK: Oh, it is. I mean, it's a marvelous mural. Mr. Wright is a very fine artist.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Excuse me.

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BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: This is Betty Lochrie Hoag on May 1, 1965 interviewing Mr. and Mrs. Paul Babcock in their home in Glendora. This is reel two. Mr. Babcock, you were just telling me about some of the other mosaics that you did on the Project—excuse me. [Recorder stops; restarts.] We were talking about the other mosaics, petrochrome mosaics, that you designed on the Project. And you said that—you told me about the Alhambra High School, early California and the name of the two there.

PAUL BABCOCK: Well, the two petrochrome murals I designed were—well, they weren't exactly murals, they were—they were in the form of fountains.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh.

PAUL BABCOCK: Well—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, my goodness.

PAUL BABCOCK: They were inlaid with the petrochrome medium, with the designs. One was—well, designed for Will Rogers' part. And the subject—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, really?

PAUL BABCOCK: —matter was Will Rogers.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I've probably seen it a hundred times.

PAUL BABCOCK: Well, on that [cross talk; inaudible.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Is it an outdoor drinking fountain?

PAUL BABCOCK: Yes. it's in a public park. And the other was a memorial to Franklin Delano Roosevelt at the Roosevelt Park, which is—it was quite an interesting subject matter.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Where is that? I don't remember Roosevelt—

PAUL BABCOCK: They were—they were—they were in two parks around the area of Los Angeles. I don't remember exactly where they are now.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, Will Rogers is out just near where I live.

PAUL BABCOCK: Is it?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Just a few blocks away, yeah.

PAUL BABCOCK: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It's one of those places where we always take people from out of town and never go up ourselves [laughs] to look at anything.

PAUL BABCOCK: I remember on that particular one, the artist—maybe [later becomes a little bit more publicity minded (ph)]. But that particular time, I wasn't interested in anything

except the work which I was doing.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL BABCOCK: And everyone was there. The governor was there, Mrs. Will Rogers was there, the mayor was there, and all the county supervisors, and so forth, but I wasn't there—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, no [laughs].

PAUL BABCOCK: —at the dedication.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: He wouldn't go.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, for goodness sake. What—aren't you kind of sorry now that you missed it?

PAUL BABCOCK: Well, I'm sorry that I didn't meet the governor at that time, and especially Mrs. Will Rogers.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

PAUL BABCOCK: Because I think her husband was quite a delightful character.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: He was one of the great Americans.

PAUL BABCOCK: Yeah.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Did you have help working on this?

PAUL BABCOCK: Oh, yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Do you remember any of them? The names of any of them?

PAUL BABCOCK: No, I don't particularly. I think that project, also, I think was mainly directed by Al King.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL BABCOCK: I think somebody worked under him directly.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: He was in charge of all the mosaic work—

PAUL BABCOCK: Yeah.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —on the Project.

PAUL BABCOCK: And, I guess, his wife at that time was Louise Etcheverry, wasn't she?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes. And she told me that you [worked with her husband on the (ph)] complete interiors, I believe, of the—of the auditorium, is that right?

PAUL BABCOCK: You mean the Long Beach—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Because I didn't know—Long, I'm sorry, Long Beach—

PAUL BABCOCK: Long Beach—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I didn't know there were any interiors.

PAUL BABCOCK: The Long Beach Auditorium is an exterior. It can be seen for miles. It's—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I haven't seen—

PAUL BABCOCK: —quite huge. We had a lot working. And starting on that project, I remember that I was assigned to do a particular job, which was the lace work on the baby that the woman was holding [BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN laughs.] And I went ahead and did it. I didn't think it was anything special. And [laughs] they just about flipped because they said that everybody on the whole project tried to work on it and couldn't do it. [They laugh; Cross talk.]

So, immediately they assigned me the project of handling the laying of all the mosaic.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, had you done this before?

PAUL BABCOCK: No.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: How did you know how to go about it?

PAUL BABCOCK: The artist is adaptable.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh [laughs]. [Inaudible.]

PAUL BABCOCK: The artist—the artist—well, the artist is adaptable and he's a craftsman. They can do many things that people wouldn't know.

[00:05:05]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL BABCOCK: And what would be a project to somebody is just natural to them. They don't think about it. So, from there on I was in charge of all the laying of the mosaics.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, I see. Well, you had a tremendous crew of people to be in charge of, didn't you?

PAUL BABCOCK: Well, there were—I believe there were 50 people assembling the mosaic.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL BABCOCK: And then, after that, there was a special crew that was in charge of the putting up—of the mosaic. Of course, they had to have professional tile setters to put it up because the average person may know something about it, but they have to be licensed and so forth. And it is quite a job putting up a huge mosaic like that.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I would think so.

PAUL BABCOCK: The method that was used to handle the carrying of the tile as the section was done each day, the particular artist who was doing that section used cheese cloth and water glue, which they spread on the cheesecloth, and then laid it and tacked it down. In the morning, they would take a razor blade and cut around it and add to it. And then, when the mosaic—before the carrying of the parts of the mosaic it was probably—oh, it was probably about three-foot squares—they would cut it trying to follow like it was a figure, along the line of a figure.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL BABCOCK: And as much as they could in a square but now it wouldn't be a square exactly.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. You have a jigsaw puzzle [inaudible].

PAUL BABCOCK: Then, they could lift this and stack them, and they were numbered as they took them down.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, I see.

PAUL BABCOCK: Well, then they would un-pile them. And the artist probably went about it—I mean they're putting them up practically like Michelangelo did his frescos, so much each time—[they laugh]—while the cement was in the proper condition to put it up.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Who had done the design for them? Did you help?

PAUL BABCOCK: I helped some on it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL BABCOCK: But the main designer was MacDonald-Wright.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Okay.

PAUL BABCOCK: S. MacDonald-Wright. Anybody looking at it could see S. MacDonald-Wright's touch.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Laughs] That's true it shows. Except, I believe, in the flower border didn't—

PAUL BABCOCK: Well, there was—[Cross talk; inaudible.] There were other—others worked on the design. But the main idea behind the design, the main instigator of the design was MacDonald-Wright.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL BABCOCK: Others contributed, yes. It took other artists to draw and add to it. The main idea was MacDonald-Wright's.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL BABCOCK: He was quite a, not only a good artist, but he was a very fine leader.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL BABCOCK: If he respected you, you got along fine—[they laugh]—with MacDonald-Wright. If he didn't, you wouldn't.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

PAUL BABCOCK: I always got along very well with him.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Did he come down very often to watch the work? Or was the—

PAUL BABCOCK: Well, he was around quite a share of the time. He had other things going. He was the main head behind the Project.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL BABCOCK: So, he had his finger in everything that was going on. But he chose subordinates that could handle particular job. And he chose them because he knew that they could handle the job and he could trust them.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That's a wonderful way, relegate—

PAUL BABCOCK: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —work when you have so many—

PAUL BABCOCK: Yeah. I think he was not only a great artist, but he was a very fine leader on the Project.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Did—were you still on the Project when Feitelson or MacGurrin were in charge?

PAUL BABCOCK: Yes, I knew—I knew both of them. And I was on the Project when Buckley McGurrin was there.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I've interviewed both of them, as well as Mr. Wright, and they're great people.

PAUL BABCOCK: Buck MacGurrin was a very nice person. Everybody loved Buckley MacGurrin.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That's why—

PAUL BABCOCK: And still do.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —I was late today. I was having a cup of coffee [laughs].

PAUL BABCOCK: And then, by 19 [ph] [Cross talk.] Buck MacGurrin and anybody that knows him they always smile when they—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

PAUL BABCOCK: —love Buck MacGurrin.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: He had that smile for the whole world, his wife too.

PAUL BABCOCK: Oh, yes.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: He's a humorist—

PAUL BABCOCK: A very fine person.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: He wrote an article—tremendous articles, full of humor.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: He's our—he wrote our preview for [inaudible]. Do you remember very much about that hard winter when so many of the artists were living on the beach? The Kings [ph] told me a little about that, since—

PAUL BABCOCK: I—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —so many of them came down and actually slept on the beach for a while.

PAUL BABCOCK: No, I know nothing about that.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah, a colorful story. I hoped you remember [laughs] some more—

[00:10:04]

PAUL BABCOCK: No—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —parts of it [laughs].

PAUL BABCOCK: I knew nothing about artists living on the beach. [They laugh.] It—as I say, the main thing that I liked about the Project is it put the artist to work doing something positive.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL BABCOCK: And they did—I think it contributed a lot to American culture. I think they did some very fine work at that time.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Do you think very many of the artists who worked on the tile mosaics actually went on with any more tile work?

PAUL BABCOCK: I don't know. They say it's quite an expensive medium.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL BABCOCK: Now, both Alberta and I have done quite a number of murals.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL BABCOCK: And we usually choose more or less the eastern style, which is faster and easier to do.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Now, you aren't thinking of tile—

PAUL BABCOCK: No—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —murals?

PAUL BABCOCK: I'm speaking—I'm speaking of painted murals—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Frescos.

PAUL BABCOCK: —in oil.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oils.

PAUL BABCOCK: We have done quite a number of oil murals, in theaters, restaurants, and so forth. And well, we've done quite well with it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, let's—maybe I should stop and get you born and up to this place too, and then talk to both of you about it because you've done so much work together. You think that would be a good idea?

PAUL BABCOCK: I think so.

[Recorder stops, restarts.]

ALBERTA BABCOCK: I was thinking well, what have I got to say? I just painted and I don't remember much.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mrs. Babcock, would you tell us where you were born and when, if you care to, and where you were educated?

ALBERTA BABCOCK: I was born in Milan, Michigan and I've lived in Michigan for years, and I'm over 21.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: All right [laughs].

ALBERTA BABCOCK: And I went to the University of Michigan, took architecture for a couple of years.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, did you?

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Yes. And then did a considerable amount of artwork before I was on the Project, commercial work in Miami, Chicago, Detroit, and in Los Angeles.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And I have to ask you a question, I didn't get the name of the town in Michigan where you were born.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Milan.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: M-I-L-A-N?

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: They changed the pronunciation—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Yes [laughs].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —didn't they [laughs]?

ALBERTA BABCOCK: They did. It's still there.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And you had done quite a bit of work before you worked on the Project—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: A great deal of artwork, yes. I had been in the commercial art field—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, I—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: —in many towns.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: What kind of work did you do?

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Well, in Detroit I was advertising manager and art director of Flamsberg [ph] Agency, and we handled six of the biggest department stores there. And in Chicago, I worked—I did the fashion for Stevens and the Brack Shops. Stevens was Marshall Field's rival, a very large department stores, and many, many others.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: What did—how do you go the other shops? Branch—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: B-R-A-C-K, it was called the Bracks Shop.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Thank you.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: And it was a sort of a composite of many, many shops, you know, in malls [ph].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Now, were these the advertisements for newspapers or—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —fashion drawings?

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Fashion drawings and everything in that line. I thought I could learn to draw that way, and working 10 hours a day at it for many years—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It must have been a wonderful education.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: It was a very good background.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Had you had artwork at the University of Michigan, particularly, or at all?

ALBERTA BABCOCK: No, I didn't like drawing a cantilever [ph] in the architectural class. [They laugh.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: And so forth. [laughs]. But I did go to Wicker Art School in Detroit and treasured that memory.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Mr. Wicker was a wonderful school [ph] teacher.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And how did you happen to come to California [inaudible]?

ALBERTA BABCOCK: I don't know, it always attracted me, so I came out here and was taught to—in the Depression, of course. I knew MacDonald-Wright, forget where I met him. But he used to go over to my house and finally he said, "Well, you're painting all the time anyway, why don't you join the Project?" Then I made inquiries about it. And, at first, if you remember, we painted at home.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: So, they called for the paintings. And of course—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: The [inaudible] project?

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Yes, that was lots of fun.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Because you could do as you liked and paint when you like. I feel that you could accomplish more that way.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Because, of course, you could go out on field trips and paint.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Scenery, [can model them (ph)] and all of that. And, later on, when they made us come down—no doubt some people in parentheses, of course, misused it or something.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: But they finally made us all come down eight hours a day there.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, I didn't know that.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Oh, yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And you had to be your painting?

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Yes. We did them down there. And that was more difficult because you didn't have the subject matter.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: No. Did they supply materials for you then? Or did you have to lug all of your own oils and—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: You know, I can't remember. Can you remember that?

PAUL BABCOCK: No, the artist—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: They must have supplied it.

PAUL BABCOCK: —the artist painted what he—what he wanted but he supplied his own equipment.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ALBERTA BABCOCK: I believe so.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. About how many easel artists were there working at the—

[00:15:04]

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Well, I just couldn't remember. And I always exaggerate a little bit. But I would say several dozen.

BETTY LOCHRIE HOAG: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Wouldn't you, Paul?

PAUL BABCOCK: Yes.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: It was a large number of them.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Is that where you met each other?

ALBERTA BABCOCK: No. He—I met him for the first time there, but he was married to someone else.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ALBERTA BABCOCK: And she died later on. And then, we were married.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And were you on the mosaic project together?

ALBERTA BABCOCK: No, I wasn't. I continued on the easel project, and then I worked on many of the murals around because I seemed adaptable, so whatever needed to be done I would work on that mural. And then, later, I was designing benches in the [inaudible] they called it, which is the Greek for colored stone. Then, they called it petrochrome later.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ALBERTA BABCOCK: And I designed some of those benches and things.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I don't know anything about benches.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Yes?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Were they done—

[Cross talk.]

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Those benches for the parks were done.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I didn't know those were done under the Project.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: But it was always painting. It was mostly painting that I did.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, they were using your architectural training background on the benches, weren't they? Because you probably had some training—

[Cross talk.]

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Well, MacDonald-Wright finally asked me to design things. But for a long time, as I say, I did easel paintings and helped with any mural going on. I worked on 10 or 15 of them, I think.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Good heavens. Can you remember any of—any incidents from any of them, particularly?

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Well, what is the name of that brother of the fellow we know in 29 Palms? Dear me, isn't it terrible? I forget people's names. But he seemed to be—[Cross talk; inaudible.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: He was a Project artist?

ALBERTA BABCOCK: [He left the project when (ph)] a mural was half finished.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: And I felt he was a very competent artist and designer. It was fun to work on this huge mural that he had done. And I was doing lots of the foliage because I just naturally did it in rhythms. And some of the people were trying to ask me how I did it and I did show a few, I remember.

And then, I was working on some of the stylized things that—I remember the figure, the rather stiff figure [laughs], didn't enjoy those so much but I worked on those. And then, of course, when I was assisting Alinka [ph] she [laughs] did things in such tiny detail that I didn't exactly send me, but we got along beautifully—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, did not I—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: I suppose.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I taped her about a month ago, and she was trying to remember names of people on the Project and I bet she didn't know your married name.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Probably didn't.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Because—[Cross talk; inaudible.]—the first name of a lot of girls who had been on the Project. And that's—with Alinka [ph] [you just didn't go very far (ph)] She's a fascinating person.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: I haven't seen Alinka [ph] since that Project. Since those days.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: She's doing a lot of industrial design.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: No doubt [inaudible].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That was the [inaudible] of the design mural—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Yeah [laughs].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —wasn't it?

ALBERTA BABCOCK: [Inaudible] she was stippling a mural, you know? Dot dot dot dot dot. [laughs]—[Cross talk; inaudible.] [They laugh.]—oh, dear.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That would become pretty mechanical.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: But it was of great help because, later on, we used all that knowledge to make over a hundred murals and we were paid rather handsomely for some of them.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Now, these—by we you mean you and—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mr. Babcock?

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Where have you done some?

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Well, there was the very large mural. First, it was about 3,000 square feet in the Aladdin Theater. Two 40-foot corridors on each side in the Aladdin Theater in Indio, California. And their theme there—the Arabian Nights. So, of course, that was the theme of the mural. They call their football team the Arabians and all of the names there. That's where the big trees are that were—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, yeah.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: —imported from Arabia. So, it was natural for that subject matter and very delightful subject matter—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ALBERTA BABCOCK: —the Arabian Nights. Scheherazade telling her stories to the Kalif, remember? A Thousand and One Nights.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: And two 40-foot corridors on each side, 100-foot lobby. And then later on, several years later, it burned—a section of the lobby burned. And Paul went down and redid it. He repainted it. And then, later on, the whole theater burned except for the lobby that we had painted and the two walls. The proscenium theater burned, so they rebuilt it. And none of our murals had been lost, but they had us do about two to three thousand square feet more. And had us redo and varnish the whole thing. It added up to 10,000 square feet of work, I remember.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible.]

ALBERTA BABCOCK: And, of course, we were on that for over a year, with eight hours a day work, five months one time, and then two months later on, something like that.

[00:20:08]

And I remember that I hadn't had a dress on in so many months that I was so glad—[they laugh]—not to have paint smeared jeans on at last when the thing was finished.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That's very [inaudible].

PAUL BABCOCK: They—the second project we did there was—I ran into some problems I didn't expect. The [rest of (ph)] the architect was headquarters was San Francisco. The syndicate that owned the theater was somewhere else. The theater was in Indio. And the— I didn't take the architect serious when we were down there varnishing the other part of the mural when he took me in and told me what he thought he wanted. Then he called me from San Francisco on the telephone and we settled a price. He said, "When can you get down there?" He wanted it right away.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, no.

PAUL BABCOCK: So, Alberta Hurley [ph] worked on the design while I was working on something else. Then we took an artist friend we know along to help us. And he was quite a lot of help because there was a lot of work to do which we needed help on.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, I think—

PAUL BABCOCK: Then when we got down there, well, we got into the problem of the architect had promised me scaffolding. And part of the mural, as you know, them—the auditorium or interior of the theater is quite high.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

PAUL BABCOCK: And also—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: 40-feet high.

PAUL BABCOCK: We also had to do—I also had to do some work on the ceiling. [They laugh.] And I asked him if there was any acoustical plaster—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL BABCOCK: —and he said, "No, there wouldn't be any acoustical plaster." Well, there was. The ceiling was an acoustical plaster and it had just been put on.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: It wasn't dry.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: It had things sticking down an inch, you know.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: How dreadful.

PAUL BABCOCK: So, they couldn't—you couldn't draw on it. So, I got an artist friend to—I'd say, "Go off to a certain point, now come out three foot—[they laugh]—and put a spot." [They laugh.] So, after that—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible.]

PAUL BABCOCK: —well, I had to sort of rough in. And then—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: I thought they were very clever in the way they solved—

PAUL BABCOCK: We solved the problem of putting the—that part of the mural, which wasn't quite as complicated, on with a very soft roller. Part of it we put on with a brush—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Roll that mural on acoustical plastered ceiling.

PAUL BABCOCK: Where we used the brush, we had to use it like we would a stipple. [They laugh.] You couldn't use it as a paint brush.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: I don't dare remark about the number of thousands of pounds of scaffolding that they left in there for us. Of course, they were going to take it out; they finally left it in there. Well, they would have had to. We couldn't have flown up to the ceiling.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Certainly.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: And—

PAUL BABCOCK: Well—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: I couldn't have possibly gotten up there because I don't have that type of strength. And the type of scaffolding had steps about every four feet. And so, to jump up. So, we had to have this other man help because I couldn't get [laughs] up there.

PAUL BABCOCK: The [inaudible] was—[They laugh.] [Cross talk.] It was regular commercial scaffolding; they used it on building buildings naturally. [They laugh.] Steel on the planks. Put up in sections. The—of course, it was quite hot up there in the ceiling. I drank—it was in the desert in the—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh—

PAUL BABCOCK: —summertime.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: No.

[They laugh.]

PAUL BABCOCK: And I thought I would take a huge jug of iced tea with me.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh—

PAUL BABCOCK: I drank all the drinks you could think of, including water and iced tea, and—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: No, you never drink anything alcoholic [inaudible].

[They laugh.]

PAUL BABCOCK: Well, no nothing alcoholic. You could—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: He wouldn't have dared.

[They laugh.]

PAUL BABCOCK: You wouldn't dare—[inaudible] work up there with anything alcoholic. And I don't drink alcoholic beverages anyway. But I drank everything else you could think of. But the main problem on the scaffolding was that we were just ready to draw on the wall and the regular plaster on the wall we used water paint rather than oil paints on it because it was still bleeding, it wasn't dry.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh.

PAUL BABCOCK: And the—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Bumps, painting on bumps.

PAUL BABCOCK: So, we used a water type paint instead of an oil-based paint for that reason. And the project where the scaffolding was—we were just starting to work when the fellow who was managing the work crew told us that he was going to take the scaffolding down. And I said, "No sir, you cannot. The architect promised me scaffolding."

[25:08]

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Well, we would go in the—

[Cross talk.]

PAUL BABCOCK: He said, "Well, every day that this goes over it's going to cost me money." I said, That's not my problem. [They laugh.] My problem is an agreement with the architect that the—[Cross talk.]—scaffolding stays up. So—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: On every project that—there were all kinds of crazy things that come up.

PAUL BABCOCK: We—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: But they were always ironed out.

PAUL BABCOCK: I said we will—we will not work on this mural. I went to the manager of the theater and told him he better do something fast because we were going home and wouldn't work on the mural without the scaffolding. [They laugh.] So, he—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: We're going to pick up our toys and go home.

[They laugh.]

PAUL BABCOCK: He really called San Francisco and got an agreement that the scaffolding was to stay up, or we would never have done the mural. It couldn't have been done.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: That scaffolding looked like a steel forest. It was just thousands and thousands of pounds in this enormous proscenium, you know, we never—I never saw so much scaffolding in my life you know.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Are you doing murals today?

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Well, yes. I did one two or three months ago. They had a—they have a project over here, Mobile Homes, and swimming pools and, you know, main buildings and everything. And I did the five model homes there. And they were in different décor, such as modern Chinese, modern Swedish, and so forth. And we have done many up until now. But, of course, we do so many things, teach and—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, do you teach too?

ALBERTA BABCOCK: We teach now.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Both of you? I didn't know that.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Well, Paul isn't teaching just now because—you don't want to know the history of our life, but he has created a mail order business with these that [had him too (ph)]. And we have to illustrate that and write it, and so forth.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: What kind of—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Well, it's—[Cross talk.] There's various religions and philosophies, diet, exercise, and something to improve the entire person physically, mentally, and spiritually.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, how interesting.

PAUL BABCOCK: Then, we're going to put out a mail order series on art lessons.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Well, the textbook on art is written. And the illustrations are all done in pencil, and they're going to have to be done in ink next. And then—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible.]

ALBERTA BABCOCK: —we will launch that.

PAUL BABCOCK: Yeah.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. We will launch that.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: What are—what are the names of these two things, just for the record? The—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Signs of Abundant Life is the name of the eight lessons, which really consists of 16 lessons, because it's a double lesson. And the textbook on art is called—well, I have a name written on it. It's Mural, Portrait, Design—How to do Mural, Portrait, Design, and Color.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Is more like the name of it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Interesting. That may change its name before you [laughs] get published.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Yes, that's true. But it's a how-to book.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

PAUL BABCOCK: And then we both—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: It's really—

PAUL BABCOCK: —we both do portraits.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, you do?

PAUL BABCOCK: For the [inaudible].

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Paul is the one that does portraits. They call him the Rembrandt of the

west. And he has very, very wonderful commissions. The Democratic Party commissioned him to do Isaac Stevenson [ph] portraits. A lovely letter from Isaac Stevenson [ph] complimenting him very highly. Then the city fathers here, like the bankers and newspaper people and so forth, invited him to do Bonelli, of course. He's a Los Angeles supervisor, as I'm sure you know.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: And they gave a lovely dinner, champagne dinner, at the Charter Oaks Country Club and presented it to Bonelli.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I hope you were there.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Oh, yes.

PAUL BABCOCK: Yeah, I was there.

[They laugh.]

ALBERTA BABCOCK: I made him go this time [laughs].

PAUL BABCOCK: Well, in the first place, I'm quite an admirer of Frank Bonelli. He—I think he is one of the few politicians I admire.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That's good.

PAUL BABCOCK: So, I was happy to go.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, that was very nice that you—

PAUL BABCOCK: Part of the dedication, I mean, not the dedication but the—well, appreciation—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL BABCOCK: —affair for Frank Bonelli.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Did you know him—excuse me.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Pardon me, so sorry. Go ahead.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Did you know him personally before?

PAUL BABCOCK: I hadn't met him before. We'd been invited over to our newspaper publisher's house, but we were out someplace else that evening. So, I hadn't met him up to that time. But he is quite a charming, wonderful person.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And did you do Stevenson [ph] in [inaudible] or—

PAUL BABCOCK: No, I did it in [inaudible].

ALBERTA BABCOCK: I went to the \$100 Democratic Dinner down at the Beverly Hilton. And I was amazed to discover he intuitively had done his skin tones in sort of red violets, and that's just the color he is.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, how interesting.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Isn't it?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —never seen him.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Isn't that strange?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes, it is. What [inaudible] or do both of you paint [ph]?

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Well [inaudible]—

PAUL BABCOCK: Well—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Bonelli has it in his office and—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, does he?

PAUL BABCOCK: Bonelli has it in his office for the county building.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Stevenson [ph]—

PAUL BABCOCK: Wherever Stevenson [ph] has his I do not know. We received a very nice letter from him saying he was quite complemented [inaudible] portrait.

[00:30:07]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I hope that you will let us, on microfilm, make copies of some of the work that you're doing.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Be delighted to.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Good.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: We have quite a bit of material. This is the portrait hanging on the wall that I just did of that girl, and she had paid for both the portrait and the frame and hasn't called for it. And I [laughs]—I'm going to have to get in touch with her and find out why she doesn't come and get it since she has paid for it.

PAUL BABCOCK: I did a portrait of her marriage counselor. That's what [laughs]—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Oh, that is a funny story.

PAUL BABCOCK: No, let's don't go into it.

[They laugh.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible.]

PAUL BABCOCK: Well, it might be to this extent. After I—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: [Inaudible.]

PAUL BABCOCK: After I had painted the portrait, as all artists do, people want your name on it, so I signed it. Often, in my paintings I don't put—I don't bother putting my name on them until somebody wants to buy them, then I have to sign them.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

PAUL BABCOCK: But I signed this and when she came over, she just raved about it. And then, she sort of laughed and said, "Well, would you mind if you painted your name off and I could put my name on?"

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [laughs] Oh, no.

PAUL BABCOCK: And I said to me it was just a commercial—[they laugh]—portrait, so I didn't care. But when Alberta found out about it, well, Alberta got mad.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Well, I said there's a word for this it's called plagiarism.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah [laughs].

ALBERTA BABCOCK: How terrible. [They laugh.] He said that he didn't care, so that this lovely portrait hanging up in a prominent place in Pasadena where 2,000 people come every Sunday with this girl's [laughs] name on it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Why that's—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Oh, dear.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, I certainly would go over and put little quotation marks—[they laugh]—around her name, you know, for the title put your own on. You—

[Cross talk.]

PAUL BABCOCK: Well, there were—there were certain things that you make—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: It's a beautiful painting.

PAUL BABCOCK: —that you would go to war for to protect your name, you know? But this—
[Cross talk.]—to me was a commercial—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: We had—

PAUL BABCOCK: —job. And I didn't particularly care. But Alberta got quite mad about it and this woman broke down and cried over it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, for heaven's sake.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Shame on you, that's called plagiarism, you shouldn't do things like that. I was scolding her, like you would a child you know. And, later on, I've done her portrait so life is very strange. And we didn't mention any names, so all this—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: No.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: —is perfectly all right.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: We had tried out a painting of an artist friend of ours has done a couple of years ago, after living with it decided we wanted to keep it. And he was over for dinner last week and realized that he hadn't signed his name. And he couldn't find any place where he could sign it where he felt that it wouldn't destroy the balance, [laughs] so we got out one of these felt pens, you know, and dark grey area in black. His name is on it, you have to get it against the light to see it [laughs].

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Interesting.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: We decided to buy it but it—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: We have put designs on many things. Such as we had a plastics factory and did display art on lampshades and all sorts of things for a while. And it's just amazing the number of things that art can be adapted—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: —to, in the sense of [inaudible].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Have you taught in schools too?

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Well, I—yes, I teach now under the Glendora Unified School District, the Adult Education Class.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: I've taught at—taught art in adult education classes for about 15 years. I started with Palm Springs when we lived there for eight years. And I taught the Recreation School there, then I taught in Arcadia for 10 years, and I was—I taught simultaneously in Monrovia. Then I taught Citrus College and now I'm teaching here in my studio under the Glendora Unified District, Wednesdays and Thursdays—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ALBERTA BABCOCK: —and have for several years. And have about 2,500 students in my files in just this area.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Isn't that—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Yeah, I have about 100 a year; had 100 a year in Arcadia. It doesn't take long to count up to that number when you—if you took 100 a year and teach for 15 years [laughs].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You have children too. I hear voices—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Yes. [Cross talk.] Those are the dancers that rent the studio—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, I see.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Mondays, Tuesdays, and Saturdays and they're getting ready for a recital. But the child—the girl that was in here, 14, is our youngest daughter. And we have two others, Marsha [ph] is the younger one, and then Karen [ph] the older one, and Pat's [ph] the middle one.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, this is the busiest household I've ever been in.

[They laugh.]

PAUL BABCOCK: Well, I—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You have so many beautiful things around I appreciate that we have time to visit.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Thank you.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible.]

ALBERTA BABCOCK: These are my two pieces of sculpture, they're ceramic sculptures. And I had to pick up six more units at the college two years ago. So, the instructor allowed me to do sculpture on the side and use the kiln. And I was thrilled to death because I've always wanted to do it. And this is *The African and the Missionary*, is the name of this pair.

[00:35:02]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Beautiful.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Thank you.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It's beautiful.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: [I like red things (ph)]. We need to do some more of it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: We should really tell this tape about your lovely old Chinese [inaudible]. Do you call that a statue in a three figure by—[Cross talk.] Oh, it's a—

[Cross talk.]

PAUL BABCOCK: It's a wood carving.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: It's carved in wood.

PAUL BABCOCK: It's a wood carving that's probably several thousand years old. It's been painted many times. And one of the charms of it is the paint peeling off in different layers. And it's really, really an antique.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Well, I believe the age is 1,500 years. It's—it still has an odor too. When you pick it up and we don't know whether it's ginger or camphor.

PAUL BABCOCK: I think it's camphor.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: It's very fragrant.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It's particularly interesting to talk about on the tape because you told me it was a gift from—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: MacDonald-Wright.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: MacDonald-Wright, when you were married.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: It's three graces. I understand that they're men in the Chinese mythology. It's faith, hope, and charity. I mean they're little—they're men.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, they're very beautiful. I'll be interviewing him again in two

weeks, so I'll have to tell him about seeing his wedding present.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Well, I envy you. I should like to see him with you. I'm very fond of MacDonald-Wright.

PAUL BABCOCK: You know one of—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: I admire him very much.

PAUL BABCOCK: One of the problems of teaching is that the artist wants to be painted himself. [They laugh.] I remember I had a life portrait class out here in the studio. And I did a nude while teaching the class, and that was quite a project [laughs] to do that.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I'd think so [laughs].

PAUL BABCOCK: The—we had an old artist friend, Will Foster [ph].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I've heard that name.

PAUL BABCOCK: Well, Will Foster [ph] was quite an individual. He loved to paint. And the people—the people flocked to his classes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, this is—isn't there the Foster book now?

PAUL BABCOCK: No.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: No, there are three Fosters. [Cross talk.] The one that does *Prince Valiant*, the one that does the art book, *Foster Art Books*. But this is—Will Foster [ph] was one of the highest paid commercial artists in the old days.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, I—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: He retired and he taught over there in the Chouinard and Otis District.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL BABCOCK: But he was a very, very fine artist. And he loved to paint. And if people wanted to come to his class while he was painting, fine. [They laugh.] I remember one—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: He sat there and painted. That's the way he instructed.

PAUL BABCOCK: I remember one time—[Cross talk.] Alberta had—Alberta had prepared a canvas for me and it wasn't properly prepared. [They laugh.] And Will Foster [ph] came around and he said, "Where you'd get that old piece of paraffin?"

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh [laughs] no.

PAUL BABCOCK: "If you can't afford a good canvas, I'll give you one." [They laugh.] He said, "It doesn't make any difference about some people paint on—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Well, I liked the way it was—[Cross talk.] I signed a piece of white [inaudible] with white lead—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ALBERTA BABCOCK: —and I liked that way. But Paul likes better textures.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ALBERTA BABCOCK: He wants the most expensive linen with a thin—or he likes—

PAUL BABCOCK: No, I—I'm not particular about linen. Cotton is very good. The only difference between a cotton canvas and a linen canvas, as far as I'm concerned, is the linen canvas might last a few hundred years more. But the cotton canvas is very good. Lately, I've—usually being busy, well, I usually use a canvas board or any kind of board, just put a coat of whiting on it first. I don't even bother stretching canvases anymore, too much trouble.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh.

PAUL BABCOCK: Except when you do a portrait of someone where you have to have special canvas. Otherwise, I don't bother.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I've got one of the artists that I've interviewed had invented the first all automatic [inaudible]. Have you seen that?

ALBERTA BABCOCK: No.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: The electric thing.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Oh, my goodness [laughs].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It's really quite wonderful. You don't have to move anything. I mean [inaudible] put it up or down or sideways, whatever you want.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Well, artists—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And several people have them.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: —are very great inventors. I understand that almost all of the inventions made for the benefit of mankind have been made by painters. Did you know that?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: No, I didn't.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Marconi was a painter and—well, Leonardo Da Vinci is a prime example. But they are creative and they think up things, you see?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Who was our early American [inaudible]?

ALBERTA BABCOCK: The what?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible.] [Recorder stops, restarts] We had an interruption while we went to the studio and looked at some magnificent work out there. And I've just come in and we're talking about the artist session. And Mr. Babcock was starting to tell me about having seen his work in Mr. Wright's [inaudible] when Mr. Babcock was a young man here. And I wish he'd tell us that for the tape.

[00:40:05]

PAUL BABCOCK: Well, when I was going to art school in the early '30s, this was at the Otis Art Institute, I visited the Spindell [ph] Galleries on Wilshire Boulevard. And for the first time, I saw both the paintings of S. MacDonald-Wright and Nicolai Fechin. And I admired both of them very much. And MscDonnel-Wright is a great draftsman in his own right. And he called us—both him, Nicolai Fechin are two completely different types of artists. Nicolai Fechin, I saw some of the drawings—pencil, and charcoal drawings, of Nicolai Fechin. I consider Nicolai Fechin one of the greatest draftsmen of all time. Now, I have seen some great draftsmen in my time, including Michelangelo. But I don't think any of them could surpass Nicolai Fechin as far as being a draftsman. And the Indians that Nicolai Fechin has painted in New Mexico—Taos, New Mexico, I consider some of the most charming and most [inaudible] paintings I've ever seen. The—he didn't often bother too much with design. But as any artist would know, portrait or figure is a design in itself.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

PAUL BABCOCK: And I—actually, the very fine work of Nicolai Fechin and his draftsmanship, and his color, and his technique is really marvelous. It's—I know the caretaker there. I have talked with them about Nicolai Fechin. He said Nicolai Fechin was nearsighted, and he worked very slowly. But you would never know it from his work. It has a sparkle and a zip.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: I have some of his things. I'll bring them and show them to you.

PAUL BABCOCK: The fact is—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: They're reproductions, of course.

PAUL BABCOCK: —in *Arizona Highways* I saw Nicolai Fechin was in a particular [undetermined loud noise; inaudible] a number of years ago and I picked up a copy. Had I

known what was going to happen, I'd have picked up several copies because Alberta took it to one of her art classes and somebody took it. And years later, some fellow knew that I admired Nicolai Fechin and missed that magazine. So, when he was in New Mexico traveling he saw a copy for sale for five dollars, picked it up for me and I paid him five dollars for it. [They laugh.] I would have paid much more.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Wasn't it nice that he did that?

PAUL BABCOCK: Yes. I was very happy. And I still have the copy and I'm not letting it out of the house. [They laugh.] Because—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: No more sending it to art classes.

PAUL BABCOCK: No. Nicolai Fechin I consider one of the great artists. He was brought over here originally by Herbert Hoover. And I think Herbert Hoover did this country a great favor when he brought Nicolai Fechin over here. And Nicolai Fechin, some artists find that a little struggle to become recognized, but Nicolai Fechin was recognized at once. And well, he should have been.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: He was a developed artist when he came.

PAUL BABCOCK: Oh, yes. [Loud mechanical buzzing] He's just a wonderful artist and people have admired him. Lots of times, they—the artists will be admired by a few collectors, but Nicolai Fechin seems to be admired by everyone.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Partly—that was partly his subject matter too, don't you think? That doing—

[Cross talk.]

PAUL BABCOCK: And I like Nicolai Fechin just as much today as I did then.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, that's [inaudible] for him.

PAUL BABCOCK: Oh, yes. He was quite unusual. An artist was recognized as great by everyone.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

PAUL BABCOCK: Quite an unusual thing.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You know mentioning Mr. Wright reminds me of something I wanted to ask you. Since you were obviously interested in oriental philosophy too—

PAUL BABCOCK: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —did any—did that have anything to do with knowing Mr. Wright? Because I feel that his interest in it did influence so many of the people, for instance, Jimmy Redmond [ph]. I don't know if you knew him when he was here; he was quite a linguist. Went into the Army because of this and he developed it—because of interest in Zen Buddhism from Mr. Wright. And the oriental motif is in so many of art that we see in murals in this area because of our [inaudible] been influenced by Wright.

PAUL BABCOCK: No, I know—I know—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible] you got it from there, or do you feel—

[00:45:12]

PAUL BABCOCK: No, I know a lot of artists, including the French School of Art, were influenced by the Orientals. But I don't think that I ever was. I admire some of the Chinese and Japanese artwork. No, I wouldn't say that it had anything to do with—anything to do with my life because—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I didn't see any in the paintings I've seen and I didn't feel any of it. But since you're—because of your Science and Abundant Life course I know you might be interested in it.

PAUL BABCOCK: Well, I'm interested in all religions. I think they all contribute. And I think that the reason why there are many religions in the world is because the Lord likes an outlet and according to the ability to people to receive.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Correct.

PAUL BABCOCK: But, actually, I am 100 percent Christian. But I have no objection to the Buddhists or any religion. I think they all do their part and there is a reason for them. But—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Like different trails up the same mountain [laughs].

PAUL BABCOCK: Buddhism and Zen Buddhism do not particularly interest me because I am fundamentally a Christian.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL BABCOCK: And I'm interested in philosophy of our Lord—as number one [laughs].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes [laughs].

PAUL BABCOCK: But I have studied comparative religions.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL BABCOCK: But fundamentally, I'm a Christian.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, good. I—it's very interesting. I want to—[Recorder stops, restarts.] Mrs. Babcock, before I start looking at those, I wanted to ask you one question that your husband really has already answered for him, but I wanted to ask you too, and then we can finish taping and look at them.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: In general, what do you think the effect of the Project was on American art and California art, pro and con?

ALBERTA BABCOCK: Well, I very definitely think it was one of the most wonderful things culturally that has ever happened in this country. And I think that we should have a minister of culture now, and it should be similar things going on. I understand every country in the world has a government art project except—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: —us. And I hope that it will happen very soon.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I certainly do too.

PAUL BABCOCK: Well, the thing that's interesting is that—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: I honor Roosevelt for having done that.

PAUL BABCOCK: President Johnson has—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: We need a pair of—

PAUL BABCOCK: At least I've heard talk.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL BABCOCK: I haven't seen any action yet, but I've heard talk the fact that they were going to start a foundation of the arts.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: I've heard a great deal of talk too.

PAUL BABCOCK: Well, now—

ALBERTA BABCOCK: But that's—

PAUL BABCOCK: —he usually carries through what he starts, so I imagine they will.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It looks like it's going to be things one at a time. And that was one of the things he specified in his State of the Union message. I think they'll get to that—

PAUL BABCOCK: Well, they—he will do it because when he starts a project, he seems to carry it through. I don't particularly care for the war projects from him right now, but that's [laughs] another field I'd better keep out of.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: The man who's head of the Smithsonian has a big campaign on to collect paintings by artists, which have been hidden away and lost. And many of them by artists who are like you two still doing excellent work today. And some of those eagle paintings that went to schools have been put up in attics or down in the basement and they're trying to find all of those. And there's got to be many of them that are very valuable. [Cross talk.]

Your article said that Johnson's daughter had chosen one that was done by Stuart Davis [ph], I believe, on the Project for—she chose it for her own bedroom. And it was one that's been lost ever since the Project days. I certainly am grateful to you both for this interview. I've enjoyed it so much.

ALBERTA BABCOCK: We've enjoyed—an honor to have you here. And we wanted to compliment whoever is responsible for doing something like this because it's very gratifying to an artist to know that somebody cares.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Thank you.

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]