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Oral history interview with Maxine Albro and  
Parker Hall, 1964 July 27

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# Transcript

## Preface

**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WITH MAXINE ALBRO HALL AND PARKER HALL CONDUCTED JULY 27, 1964, BY MARY MCCHESENEY, IN CARMEL, CALIF.**

## Interview

MARY MCCHESENEY: First, I'd like to ask you a few questions about where you had your art school training. According to this little brochure that you have from your last exhibition, which was in January this year, did you say you studied in San Francisco?

MAXINE ALBRO: Well -- first I began at the California School of Fine Arts and then I went for one winter to the Art Students League in New York. Then the next year I went to the Ecole de la Grande Chaumiere in Paris and then after coming home, I decided to go to Mexico and study with Diego Rivera. I did get down to Mexico and I did study fresco painting with Diego's assistant but I never studied with Diego, himself. I watched him (Diego) as he worked and got acquainted with him and we talked a little bit, a little bit in Spanish, a little bit in English. I enjoyed talking and watching him but I never studied with Diego. Although watching Diego was very beneficial to me.

MS. MCCHESENEY: What was the name of the man you studied with, Diego's assistant?

MS. ALBRO: Paul O'Higgins was his assistant. He was an American young man and helped Diego in many ways.

MS. MCCHESENEY: Was he actually doing murals?

MS. ALBRO: He was helping paint and preparing the paints and so on for Diego. Later, I went to his studio and he helped me there to learn how to do fresco. I learned a great deal from watching Diego and some of the other artists too, Orozco as well and some of the other artists. I went to Paul's (O'Higgins) studio and we actually made frescos so that I could see all the different stages. Then coming back to this country, I knew the technique of fresco painting and had several quite large commissions in fresco.

MS. MCCHESENEY: Were these before you did the Coit Tower mural?

MS. ALBRO: These were before, yes, and then Coit Tower -- and I can't remember just what I did after that. I did several mosaics after that. The one that came after that was the design on the outside wall of San Francisco State College. That was over the entrance of the State College and that was a WPA project. I was supposed to do the designing and never having done any mosaics before and in fact, none of us had, they had to find an Italian mosaic setter who came and taught us how to do it. Now all of this mosaic -- there was no glass used in it, it was all marble from Italy and these pieces of marble would come, and the Italian would show us how to break them up with our hammers on blocks of iron. It was very interesting. I think there were about eight people working and I drew the design first and then we got to work learning how to make the different things that were in the design such as the people and the animals and the flowers. We had to learn how to cut them.

MS. MCCHESENEY: Who were the other people working with you? Do you know the names of the other people who were working with you on that project?

MS. ALBRO: George Gaethke was one. Mr. Neininger was another and --

MS. MCCHESENEY: How long did it take you to complete the project?

MS. ALBRO: We worked just about the whole winter on that.

MS. MCCHESENEY: You did? Was it done in place?

MS. ALBRO: It was quite a large design. It went over a corner entrance into the College, although I couldn't tell you exactly the dimensions. I wish I knew exactly. I suppose we could figure that out but it was quite large. The entrance went across the corner, so the design was more or less of a lunette shape. You remember the picture over here.

MS. MCCHESENEY: Yes. It is at least fifty feet -- probably farther.

MS. ALBRO: I wouldn't say that either. Would you, Parker? Well, I'm not sure.

PARKER HALL: Thirty.

MS. ALBRO: It is quite large.

MS. McCHESNEY: And it was done all in colored marble?

MS. ALBRO: That was done all in colored marble. We had quite a large range of colors. It was soft. The mosaics that are being done now with so much Italian glass are much more brilliant but it was nice because it didn't jump out away from the building at any place and yet it was very visible. I mean, you could see it as you passed and you didn't have to get up and look closely at it. It just wasn't -- the colors were soft.

MS. McCHESNEY: What was the subject matter of the design? Was it a floral design?

MS. ALBRO: Yes, it was. Would you like to bring over some of those pictures? I'm not sure. I think the idea that it was one of the entrances to the college -- I think that influenced me. I had two figures sitting under a tree reading books, perhaps studying.

MS. McCHESNEY: Oh, I see.

MS. ALBRO: Then I had more or less California flora and nature. So I worked in the students and the various flora and something. There were animals. It was purely a decorative thing, as you can see -- butterflies many times the size they should be. If we were thinking about the thing in exact size terms which we didn't.

MS. McCHESNEY: Where is this mosaic now?

MS. ALBRO: We don't exactly know where this mosaic is now. We'd like to know. The college was remodeled and this entrance was torn down and a more practical entrance was made and we heard that the mosaic was going to be taken to the other college, the new one, up town a little ways, out of San Francisco. I think it is called the San Francisco Center.

MS. McCHESNEY: This was then at the old San Francisco State College which was on Market and --

MS. ALBRO: It was Haight and Buckannan. The address of the one now, I'm not quite sure, but it is quite a little ways out from the heart of the city. It is a very nice place. The buildings are lovely. Well, we went out there to try to find it but we couldn't and we talked with some supervisor of buildings and he said he didn't know where it was. That it might be packed away somewhere but that he hadn't heard where it was and that he would try to find out if that was so. However, we never heard from him. So, the chances are that perhaps in getting it off they may have destroyed it. We don't know. That would probably be it. It would be difficult to get off in the first place unless they were exceedingly careful or an expert would try to do it. We had the regular concrete backing and we had our sections of mosaics and there is one picture there showing how we put the mosaic on the different parts.

MS. McCHESNEY: Yes.

MS. ALBRO: These were all the different pieces that we glued mosaics to fact down so that when you put the paper up and pushed it into the concrete then we could peel off the paper.

MS. McCHESNEY: Yes, do you have the photo?

MS. ALBRO: Exposing the right side.

MS. McCHESNEY: Yes. You put in up into the wet concrete in small sections?

MS. ALBRO: Yes. This is the Italian -- this is Mr. Neininger right here. He later went to New York. I have never heard anything about him since. He was awfully nice and a wonderful workman, very talented too. This little Italian who was a mosaic setter, marble cutter, mosaic setter. He was a wonderful help and was good natured. He always had a cigar in his mouth. There are some pictures there working up on the scaffold. It was an interesting project.

MR. McCHESNEY: Neininger was with Jeanne Renault for quite a while back in New York. He is still back there.

MS. ALBRO: Oh, yes. Well, I hope that he is getting along very well because we all liked him and thought that he was a great help to us because he not only was artistic, but he always seemed to know just what to do at the right time.

MR. McCHESNEY: Yeh, he was what you might call a chief technical man for the project.

MS. ALBRO: Oh, yes.

MR. McCHESENEY: He also worked with us on the Herman Volz mural at Treasure Island, on the federal building. He did all the paint mixing and that sort of thing.

MS. ALBRO: Yes, he was very practical and seemed to know just what to do. He was very valuable to us. Then there was George Gaethke. I'm sure you have his name.

MS. McCHESENEY: Yes.

MS. ALBRO: Because later on he did a good many things on his own. When he was first getting started, they put him there as a helper and I enjoyed him too. He was a fine person and he made beautiful lithographs later on, very beautiful. I don't know what he does now. I haven't seen him for a long time.

MS. McCHESENEY: I think he is in San Francisco. This was the last project that you did for WPA, the mosaic?

MS. ALBRO: Yes, I believe so. I made lithographs, perhaps it was after that. I'm not sure. I made several lithographs of Indian subject matter, a large head of an Indian, a child's head of an Indian and a picture of an Indian pot in red, black and white. Those were awfully interesting. If I had time, I would look them up and show you. I think that the Coit Tower and the mosaics and the lithographs, I believe were all that I did for the project. Was it WPA? I know that the first was the PWAP, when President Roosevelt first put the artists to work. That was his very first venture at giving the artists jobs. That was fascinating. That was the time we did the Coit Tower. Then later there were many of us that had to stop because it got to be more of a relief project and then later, a little bit after that we were sorry but if we had any other means of livelihood, why we had to step out, giving our place to others who needed it, see? So, that went on, I think, for I don't know if it was a year or not, but then later they called back some of the artists to head projects and make designs and so they called me back to do this mosaic and I think I told you over the phone that I told Mr. Allan when he phoned to me to come -- they wanted me to do a design for a mosaic -- that I had never done any mosaics. I thought it was a fascinating medium but I didn't know anything about it. He said, "That doesn't make a bit of difference. We'll find somebody to show you." That was quite thrilling. I got busy on the design and just as soon as it was ready, why they hired other people to come and got the Italian tile setter to come and show us how to do it. It was really, I think, one of the most fascinating things I ever did. Learning how to do the mosaic and then getting the pattern all made in marble and then later helping to put it up.

MR. McCHESENEY: I guess when you come back on the project, you came back on as a supervisor?

MS. ALBRO: Yes. It was my project, really, but I never felt that way about it, except that I had done the design, because the Italian was showing everyone of us how to cut this marble and there wasn't any of us who knew anything about it. I didn't know any more about it than the rest of them did. So, it was just a question of all of us learning how to do it. So, we all worked closely together and with a great deal of harmony and we all of us enjoyed it. I wasn't the only one who enjoyed it, just because it happened to be my design. They all seemed to enjoy it and it was a lot of fun for all of us.

MR. McCHESENEY: That was sort of the same thing that happened with Herman Volz when he did his mosaic. You know the big mosaic he did for the San Francisco City College.

MS. McCHESENEY: For the new building at City College, the library.

MS. ALBRO: Oh? I guess I don't know about that.

MR. McCHESENEY: He had five or six Italian stone cutters and mosaic workers. He didn't know anything about mosaic work at all when he started his job.

MS. ALBRO: Well, it is easy to learn.

MR. McCHESENEY: Yes.

MS. ALBRO: It's tricky to cut, at first, because you have to get the knack of just how to hit the marble with the hammer. It's tricky but it didn't take us long. Really, all of us got quite proficient at it in no time at all.

MR. McCHESENEY: I think Herman in his job cut out a lot of shapes of stone. He had large pieces.

MS. ALBRO: Oh, large pieces, oh yes. Now, is that somewhere in San Francisco?

MR. McCHESENEY: Yes, the San Francisco City College.

MS. McCHESENEY: At the new college?

MS. ALBRO: We were out there in it's first days, weren't we? But we didn't see his mosaic.

MR. HALL: Is this the new building that Volz -- I mean, we were up there. It was taken down in pieces they said.

MS. ALBRO: Well, I think a nice thing to do next time we go to San Francisco would be to go out there again and spend a couple of hours or more, I think, and since we've been there, there might be more information about it. I hate to think it was just destroyed and thrown away after all the fun we had and so many people enjoyed it. There were a lot of people who like it. I had a nice little color sketch. I don't know where that is. That was picked up with a bunch of photographs by the directors and carried away and I never did see it again. But, I like to keep my color sketches if I possibly can of a project, because if you don't get very good photographs, that's the only thing you really have to look at again. But it disappeared. It was a sketch, I would say about this large, inch scale or something like that.

MS. McCHESNEY: Maybe we can talk about the Coit Tower fresco mural that was done on PWAP before your mosaic at State College.

MS. ALBRO: Yes, that was the first.

MS. McCHESNEY: How did you happen to get on that project? Did Walter Heil contact you?

MS. ALBRO: I was asked. I know that he was the head of that committee, I believe, and there were several of us who were asked. I think he knew that I had studied fresco and I think the first idea was to try to find people who had done fresco so that they wouldn't have to have a long siege of studying it before they could do anything with it. I had been doing fresco since coming back from Mexico, some frescos, and so I suppose that that was one reason why and then there were others who had been experimenting with fresco too. I know Parker had been working in his studio. He had been frescoing all the walls down around Montgomery Street.

MS. McCHESNEY: Oh, ha ha.

MS. ALBRO: So, he was asked to do one and so I've kind of forgotten just how we were given the different wall spaces. Whether we were asked to pick a wall that we would like or assigned one. I know that I picked a wall that faced East. Let's see, these four big murals were done in a center square, if you remember. You came in the door and, to pass by the one I did on agriculture, you go to the left and go around. At first, in walking around I was asked which one of those walls I would be interested in and we were all of us looking them over and considering, you know, the different wall spaces. I said that I would like the one that was way around. You walked way around to the other side and I said that I liked that one and that I would like the subject of agriculture because I knew that that would include all sorts of things, flower-growing and farms and wine-growing -- that is vineyards -- and all sorts of things like that that I enjoyed doing. Well, then in a few days I think it was when I was sketching, Victor Arnautoff, do you know him, came in -- the Russian? He asked me if I would trade walls with him and I said, "Well, sure, Where is your wall?" and he said, "It's right next to yours, just turn left, Right next to this wall that you have picked." He said that for his subject matter he had a feeling that he would work better on that wall than he could on this wall. And I said, "It doesn't make any difference to me at all, I'd just as soon have one wall as another. For my subject matter, any wall would do." So, we traded walls.

MS. McCHESNEY: They were about the same size, weren't they?

MS. ALBRO: They were the same size exactly. I don't know how many feet. It was really quite large. Then, we were all making sketches and that was fun too, because we put great big sheets of paper on the wall and we'd sketch in charcoal and we kept on doing that for some time. Then our sketches would be looked over by the committee and then we made trips around. I went out to a place where there were a lot of hot houses, green houses out towards South San Francisco and I went out there and spent a day making sketches and learning how to -- Then I spent another day going up into Sonoma Country and making sketches of those wineries up there and got in and asked a lot of questions and found out what they did and how they stored it away in those big vats and so on and so on. Then made sketches from that. And, oh I went around a good deal, making sketches, and then I'd come back and work again on my sketch at Coit Tower. We were all of us doing that. That went on until the committee was satisfied with the sketches that we had there. So, then when they were satisfied with that, why we started transferring our design on tracing paper and they began grinding colors for us and we got a man in to do the plastering and the right formulas were given to him. He mixed up the plaster and the marble dust and so on with it, also sand. Then each day we would mark off the place that we wanted to work on. I always worked from the left toward the right. It seems to be natural for me to do it rather than going from the right to the left. So, way up in the upper left hand corner I marked off -- I think we used a kind of red chalk or something -- I marked off a space that I would like to do the next day which was way up here, up in there.

MS. McCHESNEY: Yes.

MS. ALBRO: And we tried always to keep the line where we would end on our design by some sort of dividing line like around the haystack or the tops of these water towers or the tops of a row of flowers or hot houses. You always tried to find something so that when the plasterer would come up to it the next day, it wouldn't show. So, we all began painting. Then little by little and we would get our pieces done. Perhaps I did that the first day. Then maybe the next day I may have done something like that. (Indicating on the photograph).

MS. McCHESNEY: That large an area in only a day?

MS. ALBRO: Well, I don't know, This was quite large, easy painting through there around the yellow hay stack -- I like those -- the hay there and this business. I could almost tell, if I went up there and looked at it; I could almost tell where I divided my design.

MS. McCHESNEY: Oh. Did everybody who was working on the frescos at Coit Tower begin at the same time?

MS. ALBRO: Practically. Because we all were chosen about the same time to do this and then you know, Coit Tower wasn't the only thing that was going on. There were projects all over the city. There was a very interesting project out at the Beach House at the ocean end of Golden Gate Park, and I was really crazy to do that, and made some sketches for it before they told me they would prefer to work here.

MS. McCHESNEY: You mean the Beach Chalet?

MS. ALBRO: Yes, I was crazy to work out there, I don't know what's happened to that place now. It may be torn down.

MS. McCHESNEY: Oh no, it's there.

MS. ALBRO: Is it still there?

MS. McCHESNEY: Yes.

MS. ALBRO: I think that Lucien Labaudt went out there and did some designs. Later, he came into the Coit Tower and did the design on the stairway, you know. He did all of us. We all posed for him. We were the people going up the stairs. He put all of us in. It was fun. And with what was going on in the Post Office and in the Library and here and there in all the Colleges and everywhere, every place they could find a wall, why they set the artists to work. They weren't all frescos. Some of them were and some were temperas or oil on canvas.

MS. McCHESNEY: Are these people close up in your mural friends of yours? Are they actual people?

MS. ALBRO: I made sketches of most of these people and one or two of them are people I knew. This was a boy that was working with me.

MS. McCHESNEY: An assistant?

MS. ALBRO: This was George Gaethke, I think, up there on the ladder. This down here is my husband, Parker Hall, right there.

MS. McCHESNEY: Oh.

MS. ALBRO: This was one of the girls. Her name was Clemmons, I guess. I can't remember anybody's name. Then there were a couple of these men who were working up there on the Coit Tower, who were working out in the gardens of the Tower, and so on. I went out and got them to pose. One of these was the plasterer. I think he was that one. I think he was the plasterer. I went around making sketches. This is Stackpole, Ralph Stackpole right there in the corner.

MS. McCHESNEY: Oh, I see. Would one plasterer plaster for all the painters? Would he do all the work?

MS. ALBRO: Did we have one or two?

MR. HALL: I think there were about two plasterers.

MS. ALBRO: Two or three. They were swell too. They were all Irish. Oh, we had a jolly time with them. They always had funny stories to tell, ha ha ha.

MR. HALL: They were highly amusing always.

MR. McCHESNEY: Did you know Matt Barnes?

MS. ALBRO: &

MR. HALL: Yes.

MS. ALBRO: Yes.

MR. McCHESNEY: Was he on that project?

MS. ALBRO: I suppose he was.

MR. HALL: Was he?

MS. ALBRO: I think probably he was.

MR. McCHESNEY: I don't remember him being on the Coit Tower.

MR. HALL: He plastered for Diego Rivera?

MR. McCHESNEY: Yes.

MS. ALBRO: Well, I don't know whether he was on or not. He wasn't there at the Coit Tower.

MR. McCHESNEY: No.

MR. HALL: I don't think so.

MR. McCHESNEY: I don't think he was on the project simply because he had money, I guess a little bit anyway.

MS. ALBRO: Well, he was working with some people and then--

MR. HALL: It's there in the booklet.

MS. ALBRO: Oh, yes.

MS. McCHESNEY: How long were you working on the Coit Tower mural? Was it a year or less?

MS. ALBRO: Well, I can't remember just when we got started. I know that I worked up until about the first of May. Do you remember about when we started on the Coit Tower? I think that it was in the Fall sometime but just when I don't know. I finished about the first of May. I remember that. That was 1935?

MR. HALL: No --

MS. ALBRO: That was the first year that--

MR. HALL: It was before that.

MS. ALBRO: --of PWAP.

MS. McCHESNEY: I think it was '33 or '34.

MR. HALL: '34

MS. McCHESNEY: '34 that they did the Coit Tower mural?

MR. HALL: Yes. From December 8, 1933 to June 30, 1934.

MS. ALBRO: Well, I was sorry to get through. We had a good time; we enjoyed it. It was really a lot of fun.

MS. McCHESNEY: Have you seen the murals since they've been repaired? They were repaired just two years ago.

MS. ALBRO: We went up one day before it was opened. When I told the woman there at the desk that one of the murals was mine, why then she let us in. She took us through her office and around inside there and let us into it through a back door but they weren't letting any of the public in until they could get the places roped off. We haven't been back again since. But, Dorothy Puccinelli did the repair work and I think it is the most wonderful piece of repairing that I have ever seen in any form of art work. I don't know how in the world she ever did it. Here these things were frescos and the color of a fresco mellows and changes from year to year a little bit, you know. But her colors, that I think she did in tempera, were exactly the same and you couldn't even see where she had cut it away and put in new plaster. Couldn't see it.

MR. HALL: Same texture of plaster too.

MS. ALBRO: It was just marvelous. She and Helen Forbes were working out at the Beach. There was a building out there but I don't know what the building is for. It seemed to be a kind of a museum, didn't it? And there was a children's play-yard in it and a nursery and that sort of thing. They did these beautiful pictures of sea gulls and other very large birds of some kind. I think just saying sea gulls doesn't sound too interesting but it really was. If you've ever seen it or ever could see it, I think you'd enjoy it. She and Helen Forbes worked, I think, for about the same length of time or maybe even longer than we did down at the Coit Tower.

MR. McCHESNEY: That was --

MS. ALBRO: Their work was all in tempera, egg tempera.

MS. McCHESNEY: Wasn't that the Women's Lounge at the zoo?

MS. ALBRO: Well, maybe it was.

MS. McCHESNEY: I haven't seen them. I just wondered what building it was in. I'm not familiar with it.

MS. ALBRO: I think it was. I don't know what else to tell you except that we all enjoyed working there very much and worked with a great deal of harmony. The caretaker was an interesting old character too. We enjoyed him. He walked around and we got very well acquainted with him and I remember that we decided that we shouldn't have any more visitors. The visitors were crowding in up there and they were rather disturbing. So, the next morning after we had decided that -- I think it was the caretaker who really wanted us not to have any more visitors -- the next day someone said that I was wanted at the door. So, there were three little old ladies there and they said they knew me very well. I didn't know who they were. I had no idea who they were. However, later it came to me that they were three little women who had a restaurant out, somewhere out beyond there where I had been occasionally when I wanted some good home cooked food, why I'd go out there to them. And, they said that I had told them when I was eating in there one day that if they would come, why I would let them in and take them around and show them everything. I suppose I did say that too, because there were lots of people coming and they were very eager to see, but it happened that they came just the day after we had made this decision that we wouldn't have any more visitors. So, what to do? Well, I said that they had decided just yesterday that we couldn't have anymore people going around in here and oh, the disappointment on their faces was too much for me. So, I said, "Well come on in" then and so I took them around and the caretaker, he was very jovial. He was Irish too. He gave me one dirty look, but after that he was amused about it and I shook my fist at him behind the women's back. We walked down and around and he followed us all the way around til we finally put them out the door, But, we couldn't keep visitors out of there. They came up to the door and just begged to come in. They'd stand, I don't know how many deep outside the window, Don't you remember how they used to do that?

MR. HALL: Yes.

MS. ALBRO: With their noses against the glass, watching.

MR. HALL: Some of the subject matter was very controversial, you know.

MS. ALBRO: A little bit, yes.

MS. ALBRO: So that they came as much to criticize as to see. Not criticize but oh --just newspaper stories.

MS. ALBRO: Well, I don't know. It didn't seem to me as if there was too much criticism. Let me see, was that from the communistic period?

MR. HALL: Oh yes, Victor and the Jewish gentleman over in the corner there.

MR. McCHESNEY: Bernard Zakheim?

MR. HALL: Yes, the library mural, you know.

MS. ALBRO: Yes. He had the communistic books in the mural, that they were reading at the time. I remember, so there was quite a bit in the paper.

MS. McCHESNEY: Well, at one time the project was closed down, wasn't it? Were you there when it was closed down? The story that I heard was that a man named Clifford Wight, who was an assistant, painted a hammer and sickle way up somewhere on a beam that you can barely see, I've heard. Somebody saw it though.

MS. ALBRO: Well, I believe they said that they would close down the place and they wouldn't let any of us continue unless that was taken out. I think he did take it right out as I remember. He was an Englishman you know; he is back in England now and has been for many years, but I think that he kind of liked explosive



subjects.

MS. ALBRO: During the war, Clifford -- we heard about him because we knew the girl he married.

MR. HALL: We knew him in Mexico.

MS. ALBRO: Yes. He was helping Diego Rivera and then he helped him again when Rivera did his commission there in the stock exchange in San Francisco. Clifford Wight during the war was among the group of men that rounded up the old bombs and took them out to a place and set them off and it was a very, very dangerous job, but he enjoyed it and laughed about it. He told us about it one time when we saw him. He told us about going into restaurants with his crew with bombs on their trucks, unexploded bombs on their trucks and they would stop out in front of a restaurant and run in --some little hole in the wall or some place like that and go in to get a cup of coffee or something. The people would just scatter and crowd in the back part and give those fellas their seats and serve them quickly. So, the waitresses would begin running with cups of coffee and feed them as fast as they could, so they would get out. I think that Clifford always enjoyed doing something that would cause a stir. He was kind of that type.

MS. McCHESNEY: He had a lot of fun.

MS. ALBRO: He painted some very good looking things. He had a long-- spaces which were between the various designs. These long spaces that -- I guess I don't have any pictures.

MR. McCHESNEY: Was he the artist who did the long figures?

MS. ALBRO: Yes.

MR. McCHESNEY: Very nice things.

MS. ALBRO: Yes, they are. They are good paintings. He was a good draftsman. Then Ralph Stackpole had a very nice fresco up there.

MS. McCHESNEY: He was upstairs too?

MS. ALBRO: He was just opposite from where I was on the other wall.

MS. McCHESNEY: Oh yes.

MS. ALBRO: His was oil refinery, wasn't it? And all sorts of machinery. He enjoyed that very much.

MR. McCHESNEY: Fredric Olmstead worked with him on that, didn't he?

MS. ALBRO: Yes, I believe he did, Of course, we are awfully fond of Ralph Stackpole because we studied with him and we saw him last summer, that is my husband saw him.

MR. McCHESNEY: Did you see him last year?

MS. ALBRO: He was here in Carmel. He had been down in Mexico visiting his friends down there, he and Jeanette, his wife, and Peter (Stackpole) went down to get them, brought them back and they came to Carmel. Did you know Mrs. Salinger, (Pierre's mother), who used to have a gallery in San Francisco?

MS. McCHESNEY: Oh yes. She was Marcelle Laboudt's partner. (In a San Francisco Gallery).

MS. ALBRO: She lives here now. She lives in Carmel. Her name now is Mrs. Carleson. Well, they stayed with Jeanne Carleson. I just happened not to be here that day and they phoned for us to come down quick but they were just passing through town. Parker went down. However we went -- one time when we were in Paris -- we went to the American Library because we heard that he had an exhibition. There was a gallery there that allowed Americans to show their work. So, we rushed out to it but it had just been taken down and he'd just been there the day before and taken the things away. Can you find that catalogue? Do you know where it is? But, anyway the attendant -- I'll see if I can find it. I think we've almost finished.

MS. McCHESNEY: Well, I wanted to talk to Mr. Hall about his mural too. You were just talking about Ralph Stackpole, the sculptor who did the big Pacifica at Treasure Island.

MS. ALBRO: I wanted to tell you how we had almost seen a very fine exhibition of his stone carving at the American library in Paris. But, unfortunately we missed it but we got a catalogue of some of the pictures and found that they were very beautiful pieces of abstract sculpture. I do wish we could have seen them.

MS. McCHESNEY: Does he ever paint anymore, I wonder? Or just do sculpture?

MS. ALBRO: I don't know whether he paints or not. His wife Jeanette used to paint but she had to give it up because she got so excited over it that it made her positively ill. So, she gave up painting but now she has gone into embroidery paintings. There is a great deal of that done in Europe anyway and so I think one of her pictures hangs in NATO Headquarters over there. Isn't it NATO? The big beautiful new building.

MR. HALL: UNESCO.

MS. McCHESNEY: Oh, the new building in Paris.

MS. ALBRO: One of Jeanette`s designs in embroidery is hanging in there somewhere.

MS. McCHESNEY: Parker Hall, you also did a fresco at the Coit Tower but yours is upstairs. What size is it? I've never been up there to see it.

MR. HALL: Well --

MS. McCHESNEY: Just roughly.

MR. HALL: About 8 x 10 I guess.

MS. ALBRO: It went around the corner.

MS. McCHESNEY: And you were working up at Coit Tower at the same time that your wife was?

MR. HALL: Yes.

MS. McCHESNEY: What is the subject matter of your fresco?

MR. HALL: Sports.

MS. McCHESNEY: How did you happen to choose sports?

MR. HALL: I'm not at all interested in sports but when the assignments were made up there, there was a committee that first passed on what the subjects would be. They tried to make it so there wouldn't be two or three murals all depicting the same idea and the various areas were designated for certain subjects. It happened that the area that I was given was sports. It had to be sports.

MS. ALBRO: In the corner too.

MS. McCHESNEY: Yes.

MS. ALBRO: This was kind of interesting.

MR. HALL: Yes. It was kind of interesting to try to make a design in the corner there. It was rather a difficult place. In the first place, to design something that had to be seen from such a very short distance. It was rather high and it meant that you had to have your eyes roam in various sections all over the wall. But, there was a rectangular corridor up there, maybe about six feet wide and there were -- let's see -- one, two, three, four murals being painted there.

MS. ALBRO: Jane Berlandina.

MR. HALL: Jane Berlandina, and a Japanese boy... I don't remember his name, and Edith Hamlin. She was doing tempera using eggs. That gave one aroma. I was using plaster and it gave another, and it was really quite fragrant. Ha ha ha

MS. McCHESNEY: How many frescos are there upstairs or how many murals are there upstairs?

MR. HALL: Let's see. There is -- one, two, three -- I think Jane Berlandina had a small room at the end of a hall. So, maybe there are three murals, three different murals in the hallway and then at the end, there was a room about eight feet square, I'd guess. I don't know what it was used for. And she did the whole room, four walls. It was rather interesting. Do you know her work?

MS. McCHESNEY: I haven't met her but I've seen the things that she's done around.

MR. HALL: She is Mrs -- ?

MS. McCHESNEY: Howard, Henry Howard (an architect) (a brother of Robert Charles and John Langley Howard)

MR. HALL: Henry Howard, yes. They live in New York now.

MS. McCHESNEY: You had done frescos before this time. You mentioned your practicing in your own studio.

MR. HALL: Yes. Well, I was down in Mexico too when Diego was painting and the thing to do there was just to sit all day and watch him paint. It was just fascinating and of course, as he painted, it required new preparation of the wall and so on. We watched it very carefully and so when we came home, why we had to experiment. Maxine had been painting some murals --

MS. ALBRO: I had come down here. (to Carmel)

MR. HALL: Yes. She was doing some murals.

MS. ALBRO: I had painted the walls of a Hacienda which is now the Catalina School for Girls.

MR. HALL: And I had the job of preparing the wall as she went along.

MS. ALBRO: I had done that and it took the whole winter.

MR. HALL: So I got some practical experience in wall preparation. That's the way I got started.

MS. McCHESNEY: How did the early interest in Rivera's work happen to develop? How did you happen to hear about the fact that he was doing these frescos in Mexico?

MS. ALBRO: Well, everybody knew about it. It was written up and reproductions of his frescos were in magazines and I got awfully interested.

MR. HALL: Well, Maxine, in the first place, was down in Tehuantepec, Mexico, painting just because it was beautiful. Of course, it happened to be the time when Rivera was painting in Cuernavaca where his most beautiful murals are. There is not a lot of foreign propaganda. It's based on the history of Cuernavaca.

MS. ALBRO: I think it is his finest work.

MR. HALL: He knows the Mexicans and it's part of his blood and it is just a beautiful honest painting. It is by far his most beautiful painting.

MS. McCHESNEY: Is that in a government building there?

MR. HALL: It is in the government building. It's the Palacio.

MS. McCHESNEY: Sort of like the City Hall, isn't it?

MR. HALL: Perhaps you've been there.

MS. McCHESNEY: No. We've been to Mexico but never to Cuernavaca.

MR. HALL: Oh, well.

MS. McCHESNEY: Next trip.

MR. HALL: Yes. You saw the murals in the Preparatorio and the Education Building in the three levels of the courtyard.

MS. McCHESNEY: No, in Mexico City, No, we didn't. We only spent a very short time in Mexico City. We were in Guadalajara more. We saw quite a few Orozco murals but we didn't see too much of Rivera's work actually.

MR. HALL: Well--

MS. McCHESNEY: Were there many American artists at that time who went to Mexico because they were interested in his work? It is rather interesting, during this series of interviews, to find that fresco had developed so much more interest here on the West Coast than it did back East. Even on WPA they couldn't find people in Washington who were trained to do fresco. Part of the project's idea was to have these frescos done. There are no trained people available. So, I'm very curious to find out how -- Somebody told me they thought the climate had a lot to do with it.

MS. ALBRO: Well, it might have.

MS. McCHESNEY: That fresco wouldn't hold up very well in the Eastern part of the U.S.

MS. ALBRO: It might not.

MR. HALL: It seemed particularly adaptable to the Spanish architecture of the heavy walls. Perhaps that's why you don't see many of them anymore. They are not building the type of wall that would be suitable. The reason for the fresco was just to make it a part of the wall but now if you have a wall that isn't plaster, you'd better use something that is a better pigment and so on. I think it might be as you say. The California architecture seems to be the most appropriate for fresco.

MR. McCHESNEY: Was Emmy Lou Packard there at the time you were there?

MR. HALL: Who?

MR. McCHESNEY: Emmy Lou Packard.

MR. HALL: She wasn't there when we were there.

MS. ALBRO: Who was that?

MR. HALL: Emmy Lou Packard.

MS. McCHESNEY: Oh, she was a student of Rivera's in Mexico.

MR. HALL: That was later, I believe. She was there later.

MR. McCHESNEY: She also worked with Rivera when he was at Treasure Island too.

MR. HALL: Yes.

MS. ALBRO: We have a great big book from the library -- is it down on the table?

MR. HALL: Yes.

MS. ALBRO: Great big book, like this.

MR. HALL: "The Fabulous Life of Diego Rivera."

MS. ALBRO: Oh, I had that out a little while ago and I am listed as one of Diego's students. There are several names there and Ian Robinson was one and who were some of the others? Can you remember?

MS. ALBRO: Oh--

MS. McCHESNEY: I remember reading this in the book that Diego wrote called, "My Art, My Life" or, he had somebody ghost write it for him. He mentioned this man Clifford Wight about whom we were speaking earlier as being an assistant in Detroit.

MS. ALBRO: Yes.

MR. HALL: Ian Robinson, William Earl Musick?

MS. ALBRO: But, that really isn't correct. Although I used to watch Diego and I had on occasion taken him some pictures to criticize. Maybe you would call that studying with him --making pictures to be criticized. Still I never really worked under him as a teacher, you know. So, I really don't think that that is correct. However, because I was there such a long time and hung around and I knew Frieda and so on. So, Mr. Wolf, the author, thought I was a student.

MR. HALL: I made Frieda some earrings so Diego gave me a little watercolor which I treasure.

MS. McCHESNEY: You do jewelry work too?

MR. HALL: Some, yes. And I had this studio at 716 Montgomery, Stackpole's studio. He had the yard.

MS. McCHESNEY: Oh, he had the stone yard in the back.

MR. HALL: I was upstairs and just before I had the studio, Diego had it and there were a whole lot of photographs around and I still have them somewhere or another.

MS. ALBRO: We have some reproductions too that are awfully nice. He just left. He left a lot of trash he didn't want you know.

MR. HALL: Well, when he was in San Francisco, he was very nice. He was very likable. Did you ever meet him?

MS. McCHESNEY: No, I never have.

MS. ALBRO: He was really a wonderful person.

MR. HALL: I showed him some work and he told me some things -- not as a teacher, just to help. He was so nice. Always helping.

MS. ALBRO: He was kind and helpful.

MR. HALL: Very kind.

MS. ALBRO: And considerate, no matter how bum our work might be that we would show him.

MR. HALL: On the bigger projects --

MS. ALBRO: He would always sit down and consider it and give us very careful criticism. Maybe you would consider that partly studying with him. I don't know. I never felt that I was a student of his although I was terribly interested in him, in everything that he did.

MR. HALL: He was remarkable. Anything that he saw, he could draw that a year later.

MS. ALBRO: He had the very retentive way.

MR. HALL: In this book it mentions that there were some things that he was able to put in murals that had impressed him about a year ahead. Making portraits of a fellow who was shot while he was in a restaurant, and so on.

MS. ALBRO: He could remember just what he looked like.

MR. HALL: He was quite a man.

MS. McCHESNEY: Did you do any other frescos after the Coit Tower?

MR. HALL: No. I worked on the sculpture project. I did the lecturn, the carved lecturn for the San Francisco Medical College. Is that up on Parnassus Street? That old building?

MS. McCHESNEY: Oh yes.

MR. HALL: I don't know where they are now. I thought that was quite nice. I don't know if I have a picture of that. I also did the proscenium arch over the lecture hall in the school.

MS. McCHESNEY: Carved in wood?

MR. HALL: It was carved in wood. I designed it and carved a little over half of it. Then I was told that I was off the project and some other fellow finished it. He was given it to finish because he was still on the project. I believe his name is on it but anyway I did the design.

MS. McCHESNEY: Your name is on part of it.

MR. HALL: No. I don't think I put my name on. It doesn't matter because anyone, I'm sure, from the way I draw, would recognize it without a signature.

MS. McCHESNEY: Was this on the PWA?

MR. HALL: Yes.

MS. McCHESNEY: How come you were removed from the job? Because you were non-relief? Is that why you were removed from the job?

MR. HALL: Ah---

MS. McCHESNEY: After you'd started this commission, why were you removed?

MR. HALL: Yes. I think there was a cutting down on the number of people that could work on it. Perhaps I was put off because I had a little extra money. I don't know why.

MS. ALBRO: Well, it was, you know, because they changed it. They called it the WPA then because it was a workers relief project and it was only for people who needed it to live on. Any of us who had a little bit, we were interviewed to find out exactly what we did live on and if they found that we had a home and enough to eat, why those were put off. Then later they took us back on again.

MR. HALL: Depending on how much money they had. I think it was incumbent upon those in charge to use up the money.

MS. McCHESNEY: Also they were given certain percentages. They were allowed, as I understand it, a certain percentage of what they called sustaining artists---

MR. HALL: Oh.

MS. McCHESNEY: --- on the project. These people didn't have to be relief people; they could be chosen from people they thought would be able to do a better job. I forgot what the percentage was.

MS. ALBRO: We were awfully glad to get put back on again because we enjoyed it all so much, you know. We were certainly pleased when they called again.

MS. McCHESNEY: When you went back then, what did you do? Did you go back on the project too? After being off for a while?

MR. HALL: It was only to do the wood carving.

MS. McCHESNEY: Oh, I see.

MR. HALL: I finished the mural and then, I don't know what I did in between. I think I was on continuously but I'm not sure. I made some drawings and so on. My lithographs I didn't do on the project, you know. That's all I did.

MS. McCHESNEY: Who was the head of the sculpture project when you went back on?

MR. HALL: I think Joe Danysh. That is, I don't think it was the sculpture project. He was in charge of the art project. I don't think as far as my job was concerned there was anybody over me.

MS. McCHESNEY: Oh, you were just given a project, you made a design and then went to work.

MR. HALL: Yes, I was given the wood carving.

MS. ALBRO: Parker, professionally is really a wood carver. He did paint too for his own amusement but he was really a wood carver and stone carver.

MS. McCHESNEY: And the proscenium --

MR. HALL: I studied with Stackpole.

MS. ALBRO: He did some beautiful things.

MR. HALL: And of course, we all got interested in cutting directly in stone, you know.

MS. ALBRO: When you were in Paris -- this was before we were married -- he studied with Maillol.

MR. HALL: No. Bourdelle.

MS. ALBRO: What? Bourdelle? Oh, it's Bourdelle.

MS. McCHESNEY: With Stackpole you studied at the California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco? When he was teaching there?

MS. ALBRO: Yes.

MR. HALL: Did you attend there too?

MS. McCHESNEY: No, I went to the University of California.

MR. HALL: Did you? What year were you there?

MS. McCHESNEY: At Cal.? 40 to 43

MR. HALL: Oh well --

MS. ALBRO: That makes you her grandfather, doesn't it?

MS. McCHESNEY: I wasn't in art either. Ha ha ha

MR. HALL: Oh. I graduated in '19. Everybody says I9 what?

MS. McCHESNEY: Ha ha ha.

MS. ALBRO: We just love seeing them again up in San Francisco. You know Ruth Cravath and her sister-in-law Dorothy Puccinelli, Dorothy Cravath and who are some of the others? Bob Howard -- Adie. (Adeline Kent, deceased; Robert Howard's wife)

MR. HALL: Are you going to contact the Bruton girls down here?

MS. ALBRO: You know Adie, Adie Kent. Oh, the Bruton girls --

MS. McCHESNEY: Yes, I hope to. I don't know about this trip.

MS. ALBRO: Are they home from Europe?

MS. McCHESNEY: I didn't know they were away. I have an address in Alameda. I must check some of these names with you.

MS. ALBRO: They've been in Europe but they may be home.

MS. McCHESNEY: Oh.

MS. ALBRO: They live over in Monterey. They are swell. We're just crazy about the Bruton girls. One of them lives down in Ojai but the three of them went off together. They go off together on these trips. A couple of years ago they went to Greece and now they are in Europe. We always see their pictures when they come back. We enjoy them. They were on some kind of a project too.

MS. McCHESNEY: Yes. They did quite a few mosaics.

MS. ALBRO: They did a mosaic over on the College campus. (University of California -Berkeley)

MS. McCHESNEY: Yes, in front of the old art gallery with Florence Swift, I believe. I forget.

MR. HALL: Yes, that's right.

MS. ALBRO: I hope they are home because I know that you will enjoy going over to see them. Helen is a marvelous person. She is so exuberant and so frank.

MR. HALL: Another one who was on the project down here was -- ah -- oh, what was her name? She died --

MS. ALBRO: Oh, Henretta Shore.

MR. HALL: She did a mural over in the Monterey Post Office.

MS. McCHESNEY: Oh yes. I have her name, is she dead?

MR. HALL: She died, yes. And, I think her mural is in Monterey.

MS. McCHESNEY: In the Monterey Post Office?

MR. HALL: In the Monterey Post Office.

MS. McCHESNEY: I'll have to go look at it.

MS. ALBRO: That's Pacific Grove, isn't it?

MR. HALL: It's Monterey.

MS. McCHESNEY: Were either of you on the project down here in the Monterey area?

MR. HALL: No. We were living in San Francisco.

MS. McCHESNEY: After you'd completed the second wood carving that you did for the hospital, was it a proscenium arch?

MR. HALL: Yes, it was in the lecture room of the Medical College, the University of California Medical School in San Francisco.

MS. McCHESNEY: The Medical College, yes.

MR. HALL: That was all that I did.

MS. McCHESNEY: How large was that? The carving?

MR. HALL: It was a running design following the proscenium arch about a foot and a half wide, all the way around. It was wood, walnut. In those days walnut, you could buy. Now, it's just used for jewelry. Ha ha. I think it was about 35 cents or 40 cents and we thought it was pretty high for a foot then. Now, I think it is about \$2.00. But, that was WPA. If we wanted to go on it, we could have walnut. It was a series of squares, about a foot square, each one having the symbols of something to do with the medical profession used in a decorative sort of way.

MS. McCHESNEY: Is it a deep relief or low?

MR. HALL: Rather -- not very deep. It was three quarters of an inch or so, you know.

MS. McCHESNEY: You carved it in your studio and then had it put in place?

MR. HALL: Yes.

MS. McCHESNEY: Is it still there? Is it still in place?

MR. HALL: Oh, undoubtedly. Is that still the medical college or have they moved? I know. It was on Parnassus Avenue, I think.

MS. McCHESNEY: Bernard Zakheim did some murals there as I recall. I think the building is still there. They've added so many new buildings on the hill. It's a huge complex now. I imagine the old buildings are probably somewhere in that maze if you looked around.

MR. HALL: I'd like to see it.

MS. ALBRO: That'd be fun to take a look at it.

MS. McCHESNEY: That was the last project that you did on the WPA?

MR. HALL: Yes.

MS. McCHESNEY: Well, how would you sum up the period? How would you sum up your experience on the WPA? Do you think it had much of an influence on you as an artist? Or on your career as an artist?

MS. ALBRO: That would be hard to say. I don't know. I think that it gave all of us a tremendous boost because we were offered these nice, big walls which isn't a very usual thing. That certainly must have been quite a feat to accomplish for many of us who hadn't worked on big walls and had only worked on canvas, easel, you know. To have a larger wall to design for and to think about it in an architectural way, undoubtedly was a very fine influence and very encouraging for most of us who went on to do other bigger walls too -- not bigger, but big walls. I think that the influence was wonderful and the encouragement, the opportunity, you know, having the opportunity to design and to work in a group and in a big way --

MR. HALL: Was it after that when you did the mural in the Vallejo High School?

MS. ALBRO: I believe it was after that.

MR. HALL: That was tremendous.

MS. McCHESNEY: Was this a WPA project?

MS. ALBRO: No. That was a private project, through an architect. The commission that I had down here on one of the large haciendas was very interesting and that was done before. That was done just a little, about a year before. Oh, here it says -- now this was a picture, a reproduction that came out in the "Arts and Decoration." It



says here, "May 1932." See, that was quite a long time ago.

MS. McCHESENEY: Oh yes.

MS. ALBRO: That was fun. They had these perfectly charming little buildings. It was quite an extensive place. They wanted to give it the overall feeling of perhaps a monastery, you --- END OF SIDE ONE

MS. McCHESENEY: (Present also is Robert McChesney) We were just telling about the first fresco that you did when you came back from Mexico, I guess it is. The first large one, is that right?

MS. ALBRO: Yes.

MS. McCHESENEY: This one on the Hacienda here in Carmel.

MR. HALL: When you first came back from Mexico, wasn't it?

MS. ALBRO: Yes.

MS. McCHESENEY: These are outside, aren't they?

MS. ALBRO: They are outside.

MS. McCHESENEY: How are they standing up?

MS. ALBRO: Quite well. They are a little faded but I think they've held up pretty well. They've made changes over there at the school. They've had to enlarge it but not this little patio, the little place where the buildings were so cute. They had a cobblestone floor. Those, I think, are still just the same. I don't think they have been changed at all. But there are parts of the buildings that have been changed. I think that if you would go over to the school, you could see them. If you cared to see about it, I don't recommend it especially, but if you have lots of time, if you'd like to do it, why you could go to the Catalina School and you could ask for Sister Karen, she being the head sister over there. I'm very fond of her, she is a charming woman -- and she would show you. She would show you that little patio and tell you how the frescos are doing. I haven't been over there now for several years.

MR. HALL: Mr. Mack, who owned the place when we were working on it, was quite a devout Catholic at that time. He had just been converted to Catholicism a little before. So, he liked decorations rather stressing the ecclesiastical symbolism and so on. And on the entrance there, I made a little Saint Christopher in a niche.

MS. ALBRO: It's awfully cute.

MR. HALL: I believe it is still there.

MS. ALBRO: It is there at the front door.

MR. HALL: I also did two angels. I presume they are angels. They are figures with wings. One I think has a lamb and one, something else.

MS. ALBRO: So, you could ask to see those, too, if she would show them to you.

MR. HALL: Those are in limestone.

MS. ALBRO: Well, he happened to like our work and so he wanted us to do them. The thing is, when Mr. Mack first started this building, he saw something of mine in an exhibition and he phoned to me and said that he was building a large place down in Monterey and that he would like to have something of mine somewhere on the walls. So, I said, "Well, I am on my way to Mexico and I won't be able to do anything, but if you want to wait until I come back, which will be almost a year (I went down with the idea of staying about eight months) I will be certainly glad." He said, "Well, that's just fine. That makes it better than trying to do something now because then the place will probably be finished." When I came back and I went to see him, he still wanted me to come. I said that in the meantime I'd learned to do fresco painting. I said, "If you'd like to have me do something, why I would be very glad to give it a try." So that was my first job after I got back from Mexico. And I was delighted to be able to put into practice what I had learned about fresco painting. Then, it was after I had finished this -- a few years later, wasn't it? When the PWAP started in. So, then I had this experience back of me and I could go ahead then with fresco work there. This was one of the commissions that I had after the Coit Tower. This was through an architect. See this, it doesn't fit together very well right there but -- (looking at photograph)

MS. McCHESENEY: Oh, I see. It's at Vallejo High School?

MS. ALBRO: This is the proscenium arch. And what condition it is in now, I don't know. I was back there and went in to see it quite a few years ago. It must have been at least five or six years ago that we went ahead and saw it.

MS. McCHESENEY: Who was the architect?

MS. ALBRO: Ah -- do you remember him?

MR. HALL: No, I don't.

MS. ALBRO: Now, let's see, I have a --

MR. HALL: I don't think we ever knew, as a matter of fact.

MS. ALBRO: Oh, I knew him quite well because he had another big project that I worked on.

MR. HALL: Oh, did you? It wasn't Phleuger was it?

MS. ALBRO: No. It wasn't Phleuger.

MS. McCHESENEY: How large was this mural? It looks quite large.

MS. ALBRO: That was quite a big one. I thought I had a newspaper clipping of that and I do somewhere, but not here.

MS. McCHESENEY: This was done in a new building?

MS. ALBRO: Yes.

MS. McCHESENEY: And it is done in wet plaster technique, the fresco technique?

MS. ALBRO: Another fresco that I did was down at the Allied Arts Guild in Menlo Park. I went down there -- this was one of them that was -- this book of mine is coming to pieces.

MS. McCHESENEY: What part of the Allied Arts Building is it in?

MS. ALBRO: They're in Menlo Park, just -- well kind of out in the country, but I think you could find it easily if you are going past sometime. It is just after you pass through Palo Alto. Menlo Park is the next one, south of San Francisco.

MS. McCHESENEY: Oh, yes.

MS. ALBRO: -- on your way to the city.

MS. McCHESENEY: The Allied Arts group is sort of an organization of artists who show their work there, isn't it?

MS. ALBRO: Yes. Well, we haven't been there now for such a long time that we don't know what they are doing. This was the whole fresco. This was a little roof there just outside the wall as you start in. It is all grown up now with trees and shrubs and things. But, this was the patron saint of craftsmen. What was his name? Then I had these little medallions of -- I think -- do I have it here? Let's see, what does it say?

MR. HALL: The Allied Artists Guild started as a place where there would be art in action all the time. Since then it kind of changed and they have, I believe, some little shops. Originally it had a different idea.

MS. ALBRO: The people who started it wanted it to be a regular craft center. To show what's going on, you know.

MS. McCHESENEY: Oh, I see.

MR. HALL: Now it is run by some hospital.

MS. ALBRO: Yes, there is a children's hospital there in Palo Alto and the women that run it own the Guild.

MR. HALL: Yes, there is no hospital there, but the revenue goes to the hospital.

MS. ALBRO: Yes. This was another wall in the place.

MR. HALL: So, there isn't much art in action going on now.

MS. ALBRO: This was very authentic as I was so influenced by what I had seen in Mexico. This is back in the pottery department.

MS. McCHESNEY: You've done quite a few murals there.

MS. ALBRO: Yes, there were four or five. One has been taken down because they had to remodel the building. Mexican and Indian themes.

MR. HALL: There again, it's the California architecture where the fresco fitted in so nicely.

MS. McCHESNEY: It does, those columns really frame them as you look through. That shot there looking through the garden into that little portal, whatever you call it?

MS. ALBRO: This was that little patio over here. One fresco, I think it was a tempera, washed off the wall and so Sister Karen had me come over and do it again. So, I went over. That was inside of Mr. Mack's little study. I painted the Virgin of Guadalupe on the wall. I was just full of this stuff on account of being in Mexico, just reeking with it. There is nothing I loved more than painting the Virgin of Guadalupe. Ha ha ha --- I'm not Catholic, but I just loved these things. They were so Mexican and so charming and, oh, I just had the best time. So, I worked there. Oh, this was the one that washed off the wall. Little Virgin of Los Remedios and so I repainted that again after the sisters moved in.

MS. McCHESNEY: Wonderful.

MS. ALBRO: They were a jolly group, those sisters and they did everything. They just did everything. They repainted the whole interior and they fixed the floors, gardened, what an energetic bunch of women. They were really remarkable.

MS. McCHESNEY: Parker did you get any mural commissions or any other sculpture commissions from -- being on the PWA[P] or WPA? Did anything develop for you along that line?

MR. HALL: Not directly, no I did a figure out there at the same High School in Vallejo.

MS. McCHESNEY: A carving?

MR. HALL: A wooden carving over the entrance way. It is supposed to be Cleo, the goddess of history. Sort of the muse of history, you know.

MS. McCHESNEY: This is a relief, not a free standing figure?

MR. HALL: It was a free standing figure in a niche. It is about four feet high, I guess. She's holding a book.

MS. ALBRO: It's very attractive. Have you a picture of that?

MR. HALL: Oh, I don't know, I think that the book now has fallen off or something.

MR. HALL: Oh, I don't think so.

MS. ALBRO: Yes, I think so.

MS. ALBRO: Really? It was all right when we were there about five years ago.

MR. HALL: Was it?

MS. ALBRO: How would it fall out?

MS. McCHESNEY: This was carved in walnut?

MR. HALL: It was rather inaccessible. It was wood and it was painted. It gave a very nice effect when it was new. I don't think anybody took care of it up there. It's been a long time. It may look much better now.

MS. ALBRO: In school that way, they usually do take care of things.

MS. McCHESNEY: What kind of an influence do you think being on the WPA had on your career as an artist or didn't it have any?

MR. HALL: Well, I think it had, as Maxine said, given us a little boost at a time when we needed it and it made us think that everybody wanted art. There was a little let down after that. Ha ha

MS. McCHESNEY: Ha ha ha --

MR. HALL: But it rather established us, I imagine. It is an interesting question. I've never thought of it. We just

kind of went on from there.

MS. McCHESENEY: Do you think it might be a good idea for the government to sponsor art in the United States again?

MR. HALL: I don't think so.

MS. McCHESENEY: You don't think so? Why would you say that? You don't think that the product was of enough value or that it didn't help the artist enough?

MR. HALL: Well, I don't know, that would take a lot of thought, wouldn't it? It never occurred to me.

MS. McCHESENEY: Many European countries, of course, do. Most Scandinavian countries have for years in one form or the other. You know, established some kind of pension system or commissions.

MR. HALL: Europeans seem to adapt themselves to a welfare state and art seems to be one way of getting them started. People begin to look at pictures perhaps before they read books. And I think that we've had enough of that in the United States and I don't think the artist is really helped much by government assistance.

MS. McCHESENEY: We were at that time though.

MR. HALL: It had an effect on the large corporations because they saw the advantage of art as an advertising media and also obliquely from their collections. They would get collections regardless of the subject matter. But, the fact that they had them was advertising. Now, I think the private corporations have taken over. I don't think the government will be necessary again. Of course, the government is us; we always think it's someplace out there.

MS. McCHESENEY: Yes.

MR. HALL: It's always over there someplace. I don't know. I wouldn't come to a conclusion. These are very interesting questions but I'll have to think about them. I really never thought just what the effect of that was. It undoubtedly had quite a boost for the artist.

ROBERT McCHESENEY: I imagine there would be a lot of artists out of business right now, if it hadn't been for the project at that time.

MR. HALL: You mean they got started at that time.

MS. McCHESENEY: I've interviewed quite a few people who are rather well-known artists now and they think they probably never would have gone on or stayed with art if they hadn't been able to be helped a bit just in that very crucial period. They were people, of course, who were probably 22 or 23, coming out of art school and then there was absolutely nothing. So if you didn't have that to fall back on, you would have gone into anything else but you wouldn't have stayed with art. Dave Slivka, you know him? He is a sculptor in New York now.

MR. HALL: After having the opportunity of working, then they can get a job saying that they have done this work and if they had not had somebody to sponsor them, they wouldn't have had that. Undoubtedly it helped the artist.

MS. McCHESENEY: You weren't on the lithography project though?

MR. HALL: On what?

MS. McCHESENEY: Lithography project -- you were just on the sculpture project?

MR. HALL: -- I did some lithographs. Was that on the WPA project when we printed lithographs?

MS. McCHESENEY: Yes. Ray Bertrand was in charge.

MR. HALL: Well, was it he that was getting paid or was it we?

MS. ALBRO: He was getting paid too, because he was doing all this printing. He printed these.

MR. HALL: We didn't have to turn these over to WPA though.

MS. ALBRO: Yes, they allowed you to keep one of each.

MR. HALL: Oh, was that it? Well, then there were some lithographs that I did on that. Not many.

MS. ALBRO: I just thought I'd bring those down.

MS. McCHESNEY: Yes, I'm glad to see them. That's fine. How long were you on the lithography project?

MS. ALBRO: How long was I on the project?

MS. McCHESNEY: No, the lithography project. But, those were things you did in your own studio then and just took down to be printed?

MS. ALBRO: No. I went to a room, a large room, that would have several people working in it, doing lithographs. I used their crayon and their paper and their stones. Carrying these large stones to your studio would be impractical because they are so big and heavy, you know.

MR. McCHESNEY: Some nice stuff here.

MR. HALL: Ray Bertrand.

MS. ALBRO: Ray Bertrand, yes. I got him to print some of my others afterwards. He went over to Marin County to live. I've never seen him since, so I don't know. But he is a good printer, a good craftsman.

MR. HALL: A good craftsman.

MS. ALBRO: He was a very good printer. We had made a good many trips to the Southwest. I enjoyed the Indian subject.

MS. McCHESNEY: Somebody was telling me that when they were in New York or Washington, they went into a public building and looked up and there were some of their lithographs from the project days hanging in Washington. Who was that? Was it Herman Volz?

MS. ALBRO: These are all in Washington.

MR. HALL: Well, we did the same thing. I remember when we were in Washington, we saw one of yours.

MS. McCHESNEY: Oh, you did? In Washington?

MR. HALL: Yes.

MS. McCHESNEY: And whereabouts was it?

MR. HALL: It was in the Library of Congress, I think, they have a lithograph of Maxine's.

MS. ALBRO: They have them all in the Library of Congress, I believe, but I don't know where it was that we saw this. Was it there?

MR. HALL: I did one of early California and they put it in the map collection.

MS. McCHESNEY: Ha ha ha --

MR. HALL: They have a lot of categories there, I suppose.

MS. ALBRO: You made some maps, didn't you?

MR. HALL: Well, it was early California, San Francisco. It wasn't exactly a map.

MR. McCHESNEY: These are very nice.

MS. McCHESNEY: Aren't they, though?

MS. ALBRO: I love doing this, just love it.

MS. McCHESNEY: Is that where you learned to do lithographs, on the project? Had you done them before at art school?

MS. ALBRO: I had learned in New York.

MS. McCHESNEY: Oh, that was in New York.

MS. ALBRO: When I went to the Art Students League.

MS. McCHESNEY: I asked because several people told me that Ray Bertrand, in setting up this project in San Francisco, revived a great deal of interest in lithography which apparently had sort of been neglected out here. Which was probably not true in New York, but I guess around San Francisco there was very little done.

MR. HALL: Very true.

MS. ALBRO: He was printing for quite a good many people. He got so that he was an excellent printer and he was printing at the art school there too. I felt that he did a very fine job with these. He hadn't had much experience in doing the color. I told him that if I did any at all, I'd like to experiment with color. So, he was enthusiastic about doing it too. See, these required two colors. I did another one later. I went down there where he was working. But that wasn't on the project. That was later. I would like to do some more lithographs. If I lived in a place where I could get the stones easily rather than here, I would certainly do it. But all these years I haven't done any because we've been living here and unless we go away somewhere and stay for a while long enough to do some, why that would be the only way I could do it. There is no one around here.

MS. McCHESNEY: Did you do any other large murals after you'd done the one at the Vallejo High School?

MS. ALBRO: I think that I did some in some private homes. There was the one at the Allied Artists Guild, those---

MR. HALL: A beautiful one in Berkeley.

MS. ALBRO: And the one in, yes, in Berkeley.

MR. HALL: It's in a private home. It's just a shame that more people can't see it. It was in the Italian style.

MS. ALBRO: Julia Morgan was the architect, and she asked me to do a fresco in there because she said, "It's like so many of the Italian buildings that had to have decoration to finish the building." To make it look right, you know, with the long plain walls and the columns and all. So, I had the fun of doing one there that was about as long as that wall, I guess. There were several others. Up on Twin Peaks there is a lovely new home where I did some decorations on the walls.

MS. McCHESNEY: You've had quite a career then as a fresco painter and muralist?

MS. ALBRO: I was very busy for several years.

MS. McCHESNEY: It doesn't seem to be of as much interest now among architects.

MS. ALBRO: Not so much. Not in fresco. Mostly it's mosaic. I believe. I'll see if I can find that in here.

MR. HALL: I think it is the character of the walls. It's not a plaster wall anymore. It's not a stonewall. And there is no sense in using the plaster technique in a place where you can really make it more permanent with the modern pigments.

END OF INTERVIEW WITH MAXINE ALBRO AND PARKER HALL