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Oral history interview with Conrad Buff, 1965 May 21

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Conrad Buff on May 21, 1965. The interview took place in Pasadena, 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.

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 the 21, 1965, interviewing the artist Conrad Buff in his home in Pasadena, and I'd like to say for the tapes, for the Archive, this is a very beautiful home and interestingly enough it was designed by Mr. and Mrs. Buff's son, Conrad Buff III, who is one of the leading architects in California today. Mr. Buff is a painter, lithographer, designer, muralist, illustrator, and he and his wife are one of the most interesting husband and wife teams that we have in Los Angeles, because Mrs. Buff has written many children's books which Mr. Buff has illustrated, most of them, I believe, for the junior literary guild. They've won awards, and they're very beautiful and we're going to talk about them later. Mr. Buff, do you use a middle initial, or do you have one?

CONRAD BUFF: I do not.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: All right, we'll leave that blank. I wonder if you'd tell me something about your life. I have a misconception right at the beginning, I know that you were born in Switzerland, but I have two different towns for you there. I have Speicher and I have Appenzell.

CONRAD BUFF: Speicher is part of Appenzell.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see. It's a province?

CONRAD BUFF: It's a village in the canton of Appenzell.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see. What part of the canton is it?

CONRAD BUFF: It's in extreme Northeastern part. When you're up in Speicher in the higher part, you can overlook Bavaria, Gutenberg [ph], Voralberg, and Tyrol.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, must be gorgeous.

CONRAD BUFF: Yes, it's a wonderful place.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Our son was stationed for two years in Geneva, [inaudible] there.

CONRAD BUFF: Oh, is that so?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: He's a marine.

CONRAD BUFF: Oh, I see.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And of course, they just put him there, and of course he loves Switzerland. He just thinks of nothing but getting back.

CONRAD BUFF: Yes, if you have nice weather in Switzerland there is nothing like it in all the world, I think the variety of things, life and geography it's really—but the trouble is it's hard to get a clear day there.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Really?

CONRAD BUFF: Yes. Even in summertime, sometimes it's hazy. But there are clear days, but

you have to hit them.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: We were there in March, which we thought would not be nice and it was just beautiful.

CONRAD BUFF: It can be. It can be nice in April, but it can be awful in April.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Really?

CONRAD BUFF: And in May, can be nice, can be wonderful with all the blossoms out, but it can also be very drab. Just whether you happen to track it right.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: All you have to do is look at the mountain and it makes up for weather, I'm sure.

CONRAD BUFF: Well, if the weather is bad, you don't see the mountains.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, that's true. [They laugh.] Fogged in. And for a birthdate for you, I have January the 15th, 1886, is that correct?

CONRAD BUFF: That's right, that's correct.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And I have that you were educated in Europe, and that's all I've been able to find, so I hope you'll tell me more about that.

CONRAD BUFF: Well, I really didn't have much of an art education in Europe. I was supposed to become a designer for embroidery in St. Gallen and St. Gallen is, of course, a center—the European center for embroidery, and they had a school there especially to teach designers, and I was supposed to become a designer for embroidery. But after having spent three years there I came to the absolute conclusion that I was not talented for that sort of thing.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Was this because of your parents? Were they—had they done this too?

CONRAD BUFF: No, they—it was a complicated thing. I was first apprenticed to an uncle who was a pastry cook, and then while I was there, some of my relatives who had been trained in St. Gallen said I was in the wrong field, that I should really become a— make use of my designing ability, and I should go to the school in St. Gallen. Finally, my parents, of course, they were glad to hear that because they didn't think that I was good enough, or I was too good to be a pastry cook. So, they thought it was delightful, and I had a sort of vague idea that I might not like it, but I thought well, it will still be better than to be a pastry cook. So, I went there and inside a few years I completely realized that I was unsuited for that.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

CONRAD BUFF: And so, finally, I went to Munich against my parents' wishes. Of course, my parents were poor, and I went to Munich and studied for two months while the money lasted.

But the money didn't last, so I went home again and then I didn't know what to do. I tried to become—to study for a teacher of drawing in high schools, but that didn't pan out because I would have had to wait for two years before I could get into school for that purpose. So, the last resort was to go to America.

[00:05:30]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, for goodness sakes.

CONRAD BUFF: So, I came to America, and of course for years I had to do ordinary work.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes. Now, what year did you come? And did you come to New York, to the Atlantic coast first, or directly—

CONRAD BUFF: Well, I came directly to Wisconsin in 1905.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Do you have relatives, or how did you happen to choose the United States?

CONRAD BUFF: No, a woman that I used to board with in Switzerland had a brother, a farmer, in

Wisconsin, and I had to have an address, because if you want to come to the United States you have to give a definite address. So, I came to this place in Argyle, Wisconsin.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Argyle?

CONRAD BUFF: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Thank you.

CONRAD BUFF: And the man was very nice, and he took me to the town. He was living out in a farm and he took me to the town and saw to it that I got a job as a milker, and—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Did you have any experience with this in Switzerland?

CONRAD BUFF: Well, my father had a farm, and I was a fairly good milker. But I found that the Swiss in Wisconsin, they milk the immigrants. He would call be at four in the morning and I think that we worked until 10 p.m.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, no.

CONRAD BUFF: And so—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Probably every day because the cows have to be milked every day.

CONRAD BUFF: Almost every day. But my hands got so I could hardly close my hands.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Did it develop the muscles in them though, do you think eventually?

CONRAD BUFF: It didn't last long enough. Inside of four or five days, I was so poor that I couldn't do anything, so I quit. Then I got a job in a cheese factory among the Swiss, near New Glarus.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I'm sorry I don't—

CONRAD BUFF: Near a town called New Glarus.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: New Glarus. G-L-A-R—

CONRAD BUFF: G-L-A-R-U-S

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: U-S, thank you.

CONRAD BUFF: That's a canton in Switzerland, and then there's this town in Wisconsin called New Glarus, because it's composed practically of all of the descendants of people from Glarus.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, I see.

CONRAD BUFF: And they have their vegetables, they're quite well known in the United States for their yearly vegetables.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah. You must have enjoyed being with a group of Swiss people by that time—

CONRAD BUFF: Not my people there, no.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Didn't you?

CONRAD BUFF: No, I was through with the Swiss.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: No homesickness at all?

CONRAD BUFF: No, no. All I wanted to get out in the open, and get away from the city life, so. But here I was treated the same way in this cheese factory. We started at six o'clock in the morning and worked to 11 at night in the cellar.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, no.

CONRAD BUFF: In the wet cellar, making Limberger cheese. And of all—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Laughs.] Damp and smelly both.

CONRAD BUFF: —of all things I can't stand [inaudible]. [Both laugh.] So, I got sick in my chest, and they took me to a doctor, and he thought I'd better not work in a cellar. He thought there was consumption in my family, and so I started to get sick of the Swiss in Wisconsin and I decided I was going to get away from Swiss as far as I could and get out into the open, and I'd heard about the West. So, I went to the depot and bought a ticket for Cheyenne. I just picked out Cheyenne.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Wyoming.

CONRAD BUFF: Well. Is this getting too long?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh no, this is wonderful.

CONRAD BUFF: I see. Well, on the train to Cheyenne, I met a German who had been here for three years and he could speak a little English, so he said, Let's get off together, I want to go to Cheyenne too. So, we went to a saloon and had a glass of beer, and he talked to me, and I couldn't speak a word of English.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, you couldn't?

CONRAD BUFF: No.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh.

CONRAD BUFF: And so, he talked to the bartender, and the bartender said, Well, we could use him as a porter, so I was hired as a porter. And, well, it worked all right for quite a while, and then I had a row with the boss. He had promised to give me more money after I got used to the work, and he didn't live up to it. So, after a while, I got fed up. I thought I wanted to get out into the open, I wanted to work from a ranch, and I heard that the sheep herders were well paid, and you didn't have to have any special training.

[00:10:16]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: If you could stand the lonesomeness.

CONRAD BUFF: So, I hired out as a sheep herder, and worked on the Warren livestock ranch. The Warren livestock family had ranches all over Wyoming.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Is that W-A-R, war?

CONRAD BUFF: Warren.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Warren livestock, I don't know—

CONRAD BUFF: Senator Warren was the owner of—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, I see.

CONRAD BUFF: Senator Warren of Wyoming. And I met the man that was the manager of the farm, was a wonderful man. Ashley Gleason [ph] was his name.

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BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —Lochrie Hoag, on May the 21st, interviewing Conrad Buff. And Mr. Buff, you were just telling me about being outside Cheyenne, Wyoming at the Warren Livestock Company and about the man who was in charge, Mr. Ashley Gleason. About whom you were going to tell me something.

CONRAD BUFF: Ashley Gleason was a young man that just came out of the university. And his father evidently sent him to this Warren livestock ranch. For one reason or another, his health might not be very good. But he was a lovely fellow. And on the way to the ranch, on the buggy—of course, I couldn't speak hardly any—I could not understand hardly any words. But he was very nice, and one thing impressed me. That when we came to a gate, he said, Conrad, will you please open that gate? Now that knocked me over because, in Switzerland, they would have said, Go on, open that gate.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, really? The fact that he asked you to didn't bother you? You'd think

that the—

CONRAD BUFF: He said please. Of course, somebody had to open the gates so that the carriage could get by. And then close the gate again. So that got me for a loop. I thought, Gee whiz, these people are nice. So he said—he told me on the way, You're too nice of a boy to herd sheep. I have work at the farm that you can do. So I worked on the farm there for quite a while. And then I had an accident with a horse. I was milking cows in the morning, and I had to gather in the cows on horseback. And as I rode over the prairie, the horse got into one of those gopher holes.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Gopher holes.

CONRAD BUFF: And threw me forward on my shoulder, my left shoulder. And the horse was lying down and couldn't get up for quite a while. And I got up right away. I didn't feel very much. But after a while, it got bad. And so I told Mr. Gleason, couldn't I go herd sheep now instead of working on the farm? So he said, Well, we can arrange that. So he got me as a sheepherder for 1,000 lambs. He was too new in the business to know that 1,000 lambs couldn't be held together by a man without a horse.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

CONRAD BUFF: So these lambs—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Did you have any dogs?

CONRAD BUFF: I had two dogs but—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: They still couldn't either?

CONRAD BUFF: Well, they're too—the dogs, when it gets hot in the morning, they're no good anymore.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, I see.

CONRAD BUFF: They just lie down and don't work. So, the first time he took me out about 15 miles away from the main ranch to a little house—cabin. It was equipped for a man to live there. And then there was this enclosure for the sheep. Every morning I had to let out the sheep and watch them. Well, the first morning already, they scattered all over the landscape. And the dogs would work for a while, but when they got hot, well, they wouldn't work anymore. So, I had to run around till I spit blood.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, [inaudible].

CONRAD BUFF: But the second morning was even worse.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: They gone farther?

CONRAD BUFF: They gone further.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh.

CONRAD BUFF: And the third morning, they got so far that I couldn't see them anymore. There were little hills. And they got behind the hills, and I just lost them altogether. So, I knew there were two horses staked out. Or not staked out but hobbled.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

CONRAD BUFF: Near the cabin. So I thought that I could take one of those horses. And there was a saddle lying in the cabin too. So, I thought I would saddle a horse and ride after them. But as soon as we got near the horses, why, they would gallop way. Of course, a hobbled horse can still gallop, to a certain extent.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, can they?

CONRAD BUFF: So, I was already done up from running after the sheep. So lucky enough, the food man came along with a wagon and an extra saddle horse tied to the end of the wagon. And I told him about my plight, and he says, Well, you can unhitch one of these horses and saddle it. And I'll run after them. So, he started to go after these sheep. And about 20 minutes later, I had

the horse saddled, and I rode after him. We rode all day, and we only got 800 sheep together.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: My goodness.

CONRAD BUFF: By nightfall, and I would find dead sheep already on the road. About 20 dead sheep that the coyotes had already gotten. So the next morning, a cowboy brought 180 more sheep. He said they were 14 miles down below the ranch.

[00:05:09]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, that he had found that far away?

CONRAD BUFF: That he found, and of course, 20 were never found.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes.

CONRAD BUFF: So, then the man on the wagon was very nice. He was a lovely man. And he said, Conrad, don't worry. I know it's not your fault. They should have never given you 1,000 lambs. The grownup sheep they flock together. But the lambs they want to go after their mamas, and they scatter all over the landscape. He said, I'll tell Mr. Gleason that it's not your fault. And you can keep the saddle horse here. So, after that, I had a saddle horse to herd the sheep. And I stood it for two or three weeks. And then we would take the sheep back to the main ranch. And then I was supposed to work on the ranch again. By that time, I was pretty well fed up with ranch life.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Laughs.] I can imagine. Mr. Buff, had you had time to do any sketching at all during this period?

CONRAD BUFF: I wanted to do it, but Mr. Gleason said, Oh, no. You can't do any sketching.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Not on his time [laughs].

CONRAD BUFF: So that was out. But anyway, maybe I better cut this thing short.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: No, no, don't.

CONRAD BUFF: I went back to Cheyenne, and I got a job in a bakery. And I had some experience with—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Decorating cakes [laughs]?

CONRAD BUFF: And making bread and rolls. But I wasn't really an accomplished baker. So the boss was a German, and he lived on beer and nothing else. And he didn't want to work. So he brought another young fellow in, and this fellow was really not much good. He stole cookies and divided them among the girls. [Betty Hoag McGlynn laughs.] At night, every night, he went out with his pockets full of cookies. And that's—of course the boss discovered that, and he fired us both.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh. What a shame.

CONRAD BUFF: He didn't know who stole them. [Cross talk.] And he just knew that the cookies disappeared. So, then my companion was going to Denver and I thought, it was getting Fall, it would be nice to spend the winter in Denver. Maybe I thought that I might find a job suitable to my ability to draw. So, we went to Denver. But not much was to be found. I had a few jobs around the farms, but finally, I saw—on an art store, I saw some pictures. Exhibited by a name that I thought was German. So, I had thought to look up the fellow. He gave his address. And he lived on a skyscraper, 15 stories. So, I thought I'd go and see him. And I didn't know any elevators. I never heard about elevators. So, I walked up the 15 stories.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, no. You didn't have any wind left at the top when you got there, did you?

CONRAD BUFF: When I came into the room, there were two fellows there talking together. And I said—I introduced myself. And I said, My, how can you walk up here, down every day? And they laughed. [Betty Hoag McGlynn laughs.] They said, Didn't you hear of an elevator? No, I didn't. Well, anyway. The fellow was very nice, and he offered me the use of his studio. He said I could paint little pictures in there. He thought I could sell them for about 50¢ or one dollar apiece. And

so I tried that for a while, but they didn't sell. So, I had to get a job—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: He didn't help you try to place them?

CONRAD BUFF: Well, all he could do is to introduce me to the man in art store. But they didn't sell.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: What was his name? Do you remember now?

CONRAD BUFF: Kleich, Joseph Kleich.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: K-L—

CONRAD BUFF: K-L-E-I-C-H.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Joseph Kleich. Go ahead, thank you.

CONRAD BUFF: He appeared in Los Angeles later on.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, really?

CONRAD BUFF: But he was a very nice fellow. He was Slovenian. But I had to get a job. So I got a job as a milker. In a small town, Palmer Lake. It's a small town in Colorado up in the mountains. It's 9,000 feet high. So, I had to milk and take care of six cows.

[00:10:02]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You always kept coming back to that milking, didn't you [laughs]?

CONRAD BUFF: But I got along fine up there all winter. It was bitter cold, but it was 9,000 feet high.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, you were used to this, though, after Switzerland.

CONRAD BUFF: No, I wasn't used to cold. We had nothing like that in Switzerland.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, you were in the valley then?

CONRAD BUFF: Well, Switzerland has never had that kind of cold weather.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, they don't?

CONRAD BUFF: Maybe up in the mountains, not where I was. But anyway I had a good time. I was working for a man that was working for the railroad. And he had a depot there—a restaurant for the trains. The trains would stop there, and the people would get out and had to have something to eat. So, my six cows supplied the milk. And the railroad company gave us enough coal to heat the room at night. The cabin, and I was very comfortable. However, I had to get up every night at one o'clock to start a new fire because it got so cold. And the cabin was so bad that usually in the morning, the sheets were—the blankets were covered with snow.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

CONRAD BUFF: But anyway, I stood up fine until next spring. And then I thought I'd go back to Denver to see if I could get a job. And oh, that was a crazy thing. I got a job at a map company.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Map?

CONRAD BUFF: Yeah.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Doing topographical maps?

CONRAD BUFF: No. It's just—he wanted me to paint pictures on certain things. Paint the little cabin or something. To show where the location was for this particular— but he made maps for mining companies.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see.

CONRAD BUFF: And I had shown him my drawings and my paintings. And he thought I was

wonderful. And he gave me a fine job. He didn't say how much money I got, but I felt encouraged to rent a nice room in a boarding house. And I have never seen such food that I saw in that boarding house. Every morning there were steaks and chops and everything. And mush and rice and plums, everything under the sun. I never saw anything like that since. The hotcakes too.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Was this still in Palmer Lake?

CONRAD BUFF: No, this was back in Denver.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Denver.

CONRAD BUFF: So, I had a wonderful time while it lasted. But I couldn't do the thing—the picture to satisfy myself. I just wore myself out. And the man said he was very, very, very pleased with it. But I felt that I wasn't doing the right thing. I couldn't satisfy myself. And so I gave that up.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

CONRAD BUFF: And that took a job [laughs] up in Montana, in Billings.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, really?

CONRAD BUFF: And the Little Big Horn railroad.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I'm from Butte. This is all my [inaudible]

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Is that so?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —the state of Montana. I didn't even know you've been there.

CONRAD BUFF: They were building the Little Big Horn railroad at that time, and they needed help. I think there was a town called Lovell, or Lowell. It isn't so far from the Montana line.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Wyoming line.

CONRAD BUFF: Yeah. The railroad shipped us up there free because they needed workmen.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see.

CONRAD BUFF: And when we got there, we had to walk 20 miles across the desert to get from the railroad station to get to where they were working on the railroad. So there we were working. And I met on the train three Germans, who went there also. And about 50 Slovenians. They were really Turks. They looked like Turks and had Turkish attire, baggy pants almost down to their knees. And they followed us. And we walked over the desert to this camp. And the Germans and myself, we were the only ones who could understand each other. The Slovenians couldn't speak a word, couldn't understand a word. So, we were all pick and shovel work.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: In segregated groups.

[00:14:57]

CONRAD BUFF: Oh, well. It was funny, too. When we're eating, we were in tents and long tables. And the Slovenians were on one side, and the three Germans and the Swiss were on the other side. And if the food came and it was given to the Slovenians, they ate all the meat before we got to it. [Betty Hoag McGlynn laughs.] Then we only got the vegetables left—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You couldn't speak to them in their language to tell them that you were complaining.

CONRAD BUFF: Well, the only way we could do it—the Germans could talk some English. And they told the flunkies to set up the meat first on our side. So, after that, we got plenty of meat, and the Slovenians were short. But anyway. The job was pretty monotonous, just pick and shovel work. But one day, well, we were working in a circle. Ten teams were with these hand scrapers. We were picking up dirt. The dirt had been freed from the soil.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

CONRAD BUFF: And then they had to bleach it someplace else. So, the whole company always

went around in a circle.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see. A relay kind of thing.

CONRAD BUFF: Yeah. And there was a horse and a mule that were always in front of the line. That means that they were too slow. They didn't go fast enough.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh.

CONRAD BUFF: So, there was one of those cowboys running the team. And he was a roughneck, and he beat the poor animals all the time. He beat them so hard that after a while, they wouldn't work anymore. The mules refused to work.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Poor thing.

CONRAD BUFF: So, the boss came over to us and asked, Is there a fellow here who can run a team? So I said, Well, I was a farmer, I could run the team. So he said, All right, let's try it. So I went. I felt already very badly about this poor mule that was beaten up. He used to throw rocks at him and hit him with a stick.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Poor thing.

CONRAD BUFF: So, I went to the [inaudible] kitchen, and I asked for carrots. And I got a bunch of carrots and went over to this mule and petted him on the neck and fed him carrots. So, after the carrots were all gone, I went behind the team and said, Come on [tongue clicking].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: He loved your voice because you had been nice to him. Poor thing.

CONRAD BUFF: After that, my team was always last behind. That means it was the fastest.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah [laughs].

CONRAD BUFF: Well, I was mostly interested in getting enough money. And to get—I wanted to go to the Pacific coast, and I thought, well if I worked for a while, I'd have enough money to pay the fare. So after I had some money, I quit. And—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: How long were you there about?

CONRAD BUFF: About three weeks. And the fellow said, Well, that's the trouble. The minute I get a good fellow, he quits. He said, If you want to work with me, I can give you work all year round as much and as long as you want to. I said, Well, I want to go to the Pacific coast. So we quit, and we walked back 20 minutes to Lovell [ph]. And then, from there, we walked over to Billings. We walked all night. And we came to a house about four miles from Billings, a farmhouse. And so—early in the morning, so we knocked at the door and asked the woman who came to the door, Could we buy some breakfast?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

CONRAD BUFF: She said, Why, come in. Sure, we can give you some breakfast. So they give us a fine breakfast. But they wouldn't take any money.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That's Montana hospitality.

CONRAD BUFF: And another thing. The man said, I got a stone quarry in Billings. I'll take you on my buggy to Billings. And it turned out that he was a headman at the Salvation Army.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, for heaven's sake. Well, isn't that interesting?

CONRAD BUFF: So, we worked on the stone quarry for some time. Until I had some money. I thought I could get a job as a housepainter. So, I quit that and I went to Billings. And I saw an architect's name—by the name of Link [ph]. And I went to see him, and he was German. And he came from Lindau, right across the lake from where I was born in Switzerland. Across Lake Constance. So, here he said he could give me a job watching in a new building. Be sort of a spy for him.

[00:20:23]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. As a guard? As building materials—

CONRAD BUFF: Yeah. They had to make the ditches filled with concrete. And these ditches had to be 12 inches wide and a certain depth. And then they had to fill them with concrete. And they had a form that they put in the gravel. For each sack of the cement, they had to fill that form with gravel first and then put the sack of cement in there. And then that form had to be level.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

CONRAD BUFF: Well, I soon found out that the gang that did the work were very, very nice. And they offered me cigars. But I thought that I'm here to do a job not to take bribes. So, I was very strict. And when they had too much gravel, I said, We got no more. You got to put the cement on now. And then they made the ditch 11 inches wide instead of 12 inches wide. So, I went up to the architect, and I said—I told them about it. I said, do I have to be hard on them? And he says, I should say you had to be hard on them.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That's what he was paying you to do.

CONRAD BUFF: That's what you're being paid for. Well, then the foreman got real rough. And—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, what was the advantage to them?

CONRAD BUFF: Well, if they had the ditches narrower, it didn't take so much cement. And if they could put in more gravel for each sack of—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, they had a subcontract?

CONRAD BUFF: Oh yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see

CONRAD BUFF: But they got so rough with me that I thought, well, I don't want to get killed or beaten up by these thugs, so I quit that job. And I got a job in the railroad restaurant.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: In Billings?

CONRAD BUFF: In Billings, as a dishwasher.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, that's always a good way to be sure of eating.

CONRAD BUFF: Yeah. And there I had a very good time. They never had a good dishwasher before. And the boss was an awfully nice fellow. He could manage a restaurant. And we could eat anything. All we had to go into the icebox and pick out a steak and fry it for ourselves to eat. Pick out some peaches. Oh, I thought I never had it so good now in my life.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You almost forgot the Pacific coast, huh? [Laughs.]

CONRAD BUFF: Well, they cooked. This was a night job from seven to seven in the morning. Those days they worked 12 hours, and seven days a week. So, the night chef was a Swede. He was kind of a lanky Swede. He wasn't very good. So, he had to make seven pies every night. And he just couldn't manage those pies. They made an awful mess out of them. So, I made the pies for him. And I did all kinds of work in the morning, I helped, so after a while, the Swede got tired of the job and quit the job. And so, the boss came to me and said, Conrad, can you take this job? He said, You've been making the pies anyway. So, I said all right. And so, I took the job and worked from seven to seven in the morning. And one day, the day chef got sick. He had a cold. He was a really nice fellow, too. All those guys were wonderful people. And he said, Could you take the day job, too?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, work 24 hours?

CONRAD BUFF: So, I worked tonight and the day and the next night. That's 36 hours. And then I got very nervous.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I would think you would.

CONRAD BUFF: I was played out. So, they had a night waiter. About two days after is when the chef came back, and I worked at night again. But I was played out from working 36 hours. And

anyway working 12 hours a day and seven days a week is too much.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Of course it is.

CONRAD BUFF: And I took my work always too seriously, so I was very touchy. And now the night waiter was an Irishman. One of those cocky Irishman. And he had a lot of fun with those dumb Dutchmen.

[00:25:11]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

CONRAD BUFF: And they played tricks on me. He had a few Coronas early in the morning. About four o'clock in the morning when there's not much doing. They came in to eat, and they would order things that I wouldn't know how to make.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, how mean.

CONRAD BUFF: They ordered all kinds of fancy stuff. And so finally I told them, You can't do that to me. So, they just laughed and they called me the Dutchmen. So, one morning I got so sore at them I threw the pan down and told them, Cook it yourself. Then the boss came to see me in my rooming house, he said, You're all right, come back. I said, No, I don't want to come back.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Good for you. I wouldn't either.

CONRAD BUFF: So, he said—well, he gave me—he said, If you want to go to Seattle, I can give you work on a passenger train.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, because it was a railroad restaurant. Yeah.

CONRAD BUFF: Yeah. And so he said, You come to the station at 12 when the train comes in from Minneapolis or somewhere. And I'll talk to the conductor. So, he was there with a handful of cigars and did talk to the conductor and asked if I could work in the dining car.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Wasn't that nice of him.

CONRAD BUFF: So, they gave me a job in the dining cart. All I had to do was peel a few potatoes. And the cooks were awfully nice. And I had a bed to sleep in. And I finally got to Seattle. And the chef told me, If you want to work in the kitchen in Seattle, I can get you a job. I said, No, I don't really want to work in the kitchen. I would like to see if I could get a job painting or something like that. So, I got to Seattle, and I spent a year in Seattle—spent all the winter in Seattle doing all kinds of work, doing house painting. So, in the spring, I decided that I would start out contracting on my own.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: House painting, you mean?

CONRAD BUFF: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: This was what, about 1908 or '09?

CONRAD BUFF: This was 1907.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: 1907.

CONRAD BUFF: No, 1906.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, you just did one year [inaudible].

CONRAD BUFF: That was the year. That was the year of the San Francisco earthquake. I was going to go to San Francisco, but then I heard they had such a terrible earthquake. I decided I was going to stay in Seattle. So, I painted that winter in Seattle. And then, in spring, I started to contract for myself. And I soon had a partner who helped me. And we worked all summer and made quite a bit of money. And in the fall, the rain started in Seattle. I decided I'd come down to San Francisco.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Who was your partner?

CONRAD BUFF: Oh, he was a Welchman. He was really sort of a funny fellow. He lived with a

common-law wife. A very nice girl. And he tried to pan her off on me.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: What? [Laughs.]

CONRAD BUFF: He said, I'm tired of her—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Real partners, huh?

CONRAD BUFF: Why don't you take it? [They laugh.] I said, Well, she's a nice girl, but I don't want to be tied up with a woman. So, he said, Well, if you get down to San Francisco into Los Angeles, let me know. I'll come down too. So, when I came to San Francisco, I saw it the whole thing was in such a mess that it wouldn't be possible to get any kind of work.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

CONRAD BUFF: So, I took the boat to Los Angeles.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: We're good on the tape?

CONRAD BUFF: That was in 1907, in September. And I remember it was one of those marvelous clear September days. And it was hot, the air was clear. Those days we don't get anymore, huh?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah, [inaudible] the smog.

CONRAD BUFF: So, I said, Oh, my goodness. What a wonderful country this is. So, I said I'm going to stay here. I'm going to stay here for the rest of my life. So, I got a job in a hotel, I forgot the name of it but on Seventh Street, as a pantryman. I had to cut ice. And every morning at six o'clock I had to cut the ice with a machine.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Did they get—no, they had ice in warehouses there in big chunks—

[00:30:00]

CONRAD BUFF: Oh, yes. Yes, they got the ice in big chunks.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: With sawdust all over it. I remember that.

CONRAD BUFF: Then I had to clean the basement. And I had to be a chicken butcher and a fish butcher. And as soon as the morning, I filled out ice boxes with ice, cubes for the kitchen. I worked on fish and chicken. And then the basement was in such an awful mess that I said to myself I've got to clean up that basement. So, I worked for three days cleaning up the basement. But I got along very well. It was just the kind of job I needed. It would take me until about 12noon, and then I was through until evening. In the evening, again, I had to cut the ice. But all afternoon I had free so I started to paint. And they had an art students league at that time in Los Angeles. And a fellow by the name of Rex Slinkard.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, yes. He had it at that time. Rex Slinkard, yeah.

CONRAD BUFF: He didn't really have it, but he just came back from New York. And he was a big talker. And he talked himself into—rather he talked the other fellow who was running the school out. And he took it over. But I didn't get along with Rex, he was too smart for—he was only a kid.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, really?

CONRAD BUFF: But I was about 20, and he was about 19.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, for goodness sakes. I always had an idea he was an older man at that time.

CONRAD BUFF: No. No, he had studied with Henri in New York for two years. And he was full of Henri's theories. And everything that I did was wrong. Well, I admired certain things that he could do, but I hadn't an entirely different point of view. So, I asked him if I could come up there just to use the studio without criticism. He said, Oh, sure. So, I did that for quite a while until I finally got tired of that job. Because I didn't make much money, and I figured with that amount of money, I could never break even. So, I couldn't go to an art school and study art at the same time as work. So, I got another job as a second cook in another hotel. There I was—I worked all winter as a second cook. And the spring, I got sick. I was spitting blood again. So, I had to quit

that job.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Was it the consumption of something?

CONRAD BUFF: No, it was just a cold. But it was a severe cold. And so, I didn't go to the doctor. I just said, I need some fresh air. So, I had been going to a German singing society. I was actually a very good tenor. And I met the fellow there who was the first tenor, I was the second tenor, and the first tenor was a house painter, who lived at Eagle Rock. And he said, Well, you come out to Eagle Rock, and you can work at my house. Stay at my house as long as you want to until you get well and then you can help me paint. So, I went out to Eagle Rock.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Wasn't that nice?

CONRAD BUFF: So, after a while, I said, I'm going to start it for myself. He was going to go to Oregon. He was going to move to Oregon. And so, he said, You can have my business if you give me \$50. So, I gave him \$50 for his business.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, for heavens.

CONRAD BUFF: So, I started to work for myself. And that was really a turning point in my life. From then on, I was a steady man. I kept on working for years there as a house painter. And that was 1910, from 1910 on.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, you were able to manage this so you had time for your paintings. Because it was your own business, right?

CONRAD BUFF: Whenever I didn't have a job I had a chance to paint for myself. But that lasted—I worked myself into decorating rather than just house painting. And I developed a way of painting walls that was quite unique. At that time, people wanted nicely decorated walls.

[00:35:02]

It isn't like now where they just want one color. So, I developed the decorating to quite an extent, and got into better jobs. Now, there was a building in Whittier called the William Penn Hotel. I think it's still there. And the architect was a very nice fellow, and he gave me the job of decorating this hotel. And he was interested in murals, so I painted a mural in the lobby.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, you did? Is it still there?

CONRAD BUFF: You know, it's a funny story, but no. Well, it may still be there but—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Under some paint, I bet.

CONRAD BUFF: Later on, about 10 years later, after I got married, I thought I'd go and see the mural and see what it looked like. And it looked horrible. I had decorated the whole room, the whole lobby. So that everything fit together. And I had a very nice toned wall, elaborately toned wall to support the picture. The picture was rather delicate, but because the walls were delicate too, it stood out very well. So, when I went to see this thing, the walls had been painted over an awful color.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh.

CONRAD BUFF: And the picture was in a mess. So, I said to the woman, What happened to this picture? So, she says, Well, we redecorated the walls. And then the picture looked too weak, so we had a sign painter put more color in it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, what a shame.

CONRAD BUFF: So, they ruined the wall.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, isn't that too bad?

CONRAD BUFF: It may still [inaudible]. I said, All I asked you to do—you ruined a \$1,000 painting. But all I ask you to do now is to paint off my name there. But I never went back again to see that.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: If I get over to Whittier to tape anybody, I'll go look and let you know if

it's there. [They laugh.] How did you know how to do a mural? You haven't had any experience —

CONRAD BUFF: Well, I had practiced. You see, for all these years I had practiced—

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Painting.

CONRAD BUFF: And I have always been interested in architecture, in the relationship of walls to pictures. So, I was really anxious to do murals. After all, if you could paint an easel picture and you have the feeling for the mural, you can do a mural too. But anyway, during the years, I went—I was still going to the Art Students League once in a while to draw from the nude. And once Costello [ph] who was working for Foster and Klisely [ph]. He was the boss.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Al Costello [ph]?

CONRAD BUFF: Do you know him?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I just know about him. Several people have mentioned him.

CONRAD BUFF: Oh, yes. Well, he was going to that class too, to the evening classes at the school. So, he said, You know, you're a house painter, and Edgar Payne is a good painter. He came from Chicago. And he's got a big job here. And he asked me if I could find a man who could help him out with the rough work. So, I said, Oh, I'd be delighted. So, I met Payne. And he told me what he wanted. He had a big factory, rented—a big factory in Glendale. It use to be a furniture—piano factory. But it went bankrupt, but the buildings were there. So, he had to paint murals for a Chicago hotel. An 11-story hotel. All the hallways and stairways, they're covered with murals.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: What a job.

CONRAD BUFF: And so, he said he'd last about five months. And he had Jack Smith [ph]. You've heard about Jack Smith [ph]?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: No, I don't think I have.

CONRAD BUFF: Jack Wilkinson Smith.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: No, I haven't even heard of that name.

CONRAD BUFF: But you've heard about Payne. Edgar Payne.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That name is familiar, but I can't place.

CONRAD BUFF: Oh, I see.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Was he a local man? [Inaudible.] Los Angeles, man?

CONRAD BUFF: Payne was a Chicago man.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Chicago man.

CONRAD BUFF: But Jack Wilkinson Smith was one of the group of three painters, that were the leaders of art in Los Angeles, in paints and things.

[00:40:08]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: They led the art colony here? Is that what you said? I didn't understand.

CONRAD BUFF: Well, you see, there was Phillip [ph]. You've heard of Hanson Phillip [ph]?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

CONRAD BUFF: And then Jack Smith. And Westerly LeWendt [ph]?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes?

CONRAD BUFF: They were the three celebrated painters.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see. [Inaudible] old masters here.

CONRAD BUFF: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see.

CONRAD BUFF: So, Payne was very nice. And I helped him. And he had Jack Wilkinson Smith to help. And two or three others. I'm getting weak on names.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, it's hard—

CONRAD BUFF: But anyway, we worked there on those pictures for five months. And after that—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Excuse me, Mr. Buff. Were you doing them here to be shipped back to Chicago?

CONRAD BUFF: Yes. Oh, yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see.

CONRAD BUFF: They were taken off the stretchers. We painted them on muslin, and I prepared the muslin. And he would sketch in charcoal. He's sketching where the mountains were. And I had to paint the mountains and the sky [ph]. And then Jack Wilkinson Smith and Payne himself painted in the foreground. And Peterson—[inaudible] a dame by the name of Peterson painted the flowers. She was the flower painter. So, we concocted these picture, oh they were awful, of course. But they were cleverly done and very trite. And then we rolled them up and shipped it to Chicago [inaudible]. But when the job was over, Payne rented a house in Laguna Beach. And this house had a summer house out in the garden, a garden house. And he told me, Well, if you want to come down there to Laguna Beach, we spend the winter down there. You can use that garden house.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, how wonderful for you.

CONRAD BUFF: He found out that I was a good cook. [Betty Hoag McGlynn laughs.] He said, You could cook for me.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It was a mixed blessing then. [Laughs.]

CONRAD BUFF: Well, I always liked cooking. And so, I had to cook breakfast for him and dinner. But not lunch. Mrs. Payne cooked lunch. By the way, she's still—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That's Elsie Payne.

CONRAD BUFF: She's still living, yeah.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Several people have told me I should go and talk to her.

CONRAD BUFF: Oh, yes. Yes. I just saw an exhibition of paints working over in Glendale that she arranged. So, she's still living. But we had a good time all winter. I stayed down there, and we got along fine. He had a little daughter. And I cooked breakfast, and then I painted. He built a new house, and I painted that house for him too on the outside. And the inside. And while I was painting, there were three girls sketching not far from us. One of the girls all of a sudden cried out over a snake, a snake. So, I went over there to see. She said, There's a snake in there. Well, anyway, I guess she just needed—because she wanted to make my acquaintance.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Laughs] I've never heard of that one. Now that wasn't your wife later, was it?

CONRAD BUFF: No. No. No, there were three girls down there. One was Meg Lowry [ph], [inaudible].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, yeah. Is she still around?

CONRAD BUFF: Oh, yes. I saw her the other day.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Does she live in your area?

CONRAD BUFF: She lives in—where does she live now? I don't know exactly where she lives

now.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Is she Ms. or Mrs.?

CONRAD BUFF: Ms. Oh, she lives down in Beverly Hills.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh.

CONRAD BUFF: But she had a sister who was down there also. And two more girls [inaudible] living together. And so, I got acquainted with these three girls, and we became quite friends. And later on, I—Mabel got me a show at the museum for small sketches, the Los Angeles museum. And while we were arranging that show, I met Mary. Mary was the curator. She's the curator of the museum.

[00:45:05]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, she was? Well, how interesting. I didn't know that.

CONRAD BUFF: So that led to my marriage. So, after that, I was married, and we got the house in Eagle Rock.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Excuse me, just one minute. What was her maiden name?

CONRAD BUFF: Mary Marsh.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mary Marsh, M-A-R-S-H.

CONRAD BUFF: Mary, you want to talk about who you were.

MARY MARSH BUFF: Who I were?

CONRAD BUFF: You have to come over here. You have to come over here.

[Recorder stops, restarts.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Over a cup of tea that Mrs. Buff brought, we started to talk about the books which Mr. and Mrs. Buff did together. And this seems like a good time with all three of us here to discuss them, even though they did come after the project period. I think the first one was 1937, wasn't it? The first one you did together?

CONRAD BUFF: That was published in 1937, but we began to work on it in 1935.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see.

MARY MARSH BUFF: Could I take over from the Depression? Because when the Depression came, everyone had to get busy if they could. I had a couple of children.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: This was during the war?

MARY MARSH BUFF: No, that was in '19. The depression was around 1932 or '33, wasn't it?

CONRAD BUFF: Well, the project was in 1933, and then it petered out. It only lasted for nine months. And then, after that, you had to try and find a way to make a living.

MARY MARSH BUFF: And that's where I came in.

CONRAD BUFF: That's where she comes in. [Cross talk.]

MARY MARSH BUFF: Well, then it just started a new progressive school, the first and only progressive school at the time, in Hollywood, on Highland called the—I think it's the Progressive School. Very small groups. And they were started by a group of movie people. And they were going to use this new method of teaching using social studies. And they needed an art teacher, art, shop, craft, what have you, to work with the other people. So, someone thought of me because I had the art training. So, I was over there for three years and enjoyed it very much because it was all new—new program. The groups were very small, 10 or 12.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, wow.

MARY MARSH BUFF: The children were bright. There were no precedents established. You had to dig around every place for your material. It was a lot of fun. And after three years of that—during this time, I might say, Conrad was making silk screen prints, developing that medium. As well as lithography. And he had been—he had made one friend or several friends Navajo Indian children.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: How did you? Oh, you had been down doing the dam pictures with the Navajo countries?

CONRAD BUFF: [Coughs.] No. No, we had—I don't know. Oh, I tell you how I did that. Phil—

MARY MARSH BUFF: Paradise [ph]?

CONRAD BUFF: No.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Dyke [ph]?

CONRAD BUFF: Phil Johnson [ph], I don't know if you ever heard of him. He used to—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Philip Guston, he became later.

CONRAD BUFF: No. No, he used to write regular articles for *Touring Topics*. And he was a photographer. I was an engineer for the city of Los Angeles. But he was a good photographer. So, he was really—had been born on the Indian reservation, the Navajo reservation. So, he spoke fluently Indian. So, he showed me a picture of an Indian girl holding a lamb [ph] [coughs], and I asked him if I could borrow that, so I made a picture—I made a silk screen print out of that, that's the way—

MARY MARSH BUFF: This whole thing started. Yeah.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, well, this was exhibited at the Los Angeles County Museum in 1938. In the WPA exhibit there. It was called *Navajo Child*, that you did.

CONRAD BUFF: Well, well.

MARY MARSH BUFF: At any rate, what really happened is after three years of work there at the school, things were a little better, and he had been developing this silkscreen business.

[00:50:01]

And somehow or other I became acquainted with Dr. Lane [ph], who was one of the superintendents of schools in the city, and I think he had in his office and exhibition of silkscreens that was there. Because a lot of them sold at the schools. So, I was in the office talking to him one day, and he said, Mrs. Buff, it seems to me that with your knowledge of these people and with your experience in this type of school you've been working, perhaps you two could collaborate on a book on the Navajo which would be more than just fighting and killing and fighting and killing. I thought that was a wonderful idea, and so I came home and talk to Conrad, and he said, Well, we have nothing to lose, and anyway, it'd be a good chance to go to the reservation. [They laugh.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible.]

MARY MARSH BUFF: Well, we went to the Indian [inaudible] where there was a what trading post, and we had accommodations. We were fortunate in getting acquainted with a medicine man and a young man who spoke English, and through him all his family, so we were able to get a pretty close view of how they live from day to day, that was our idea sort of a documentary. And came home, he made a dummy of the book, and I thought, Well, I'll make a few factual statements about it and [inaudible] that. But the more we got into it, the more we decided it had to be a story or else.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Where your own children's story age, did that influence it any?

MARY MARSH BUFF: No, I think I felt that it was dead without a story.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes.

MARY MARSH BUFF: So, not knowing whether I could do a story or not, I tried. And I think we

sent to the Viking press, Mae Massy [ph], one of these silk-screen prints of the Indian child with a goat. She wrote back it was very interesting, wondered about the medium, she was coming to the West Coast for the American Library Association meeting and could we get in touch with her when she'd be down here from San Francisco [inaudible]. In the meantime, we developed this thing and when she got to the Biltmore, we called her, she'd already been sort of— heard about this project from other sources. So, she came to the studio, or to the house, she saw these big Western paintings and she was very sensitive to art anyway, much more than most editors of publishing houses. So, we showed her the dummy and she saw the outline of it and saw these things, Oh, we'll take it, period. Well, that was rather shocking. So, we weren't ready to give it to her at all because it wasn't complete. So, we went back to the reservation, I think for more study and research and eventually we wrote the story.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That was *Dancing Cloud*—

MARY MARSH BUFF: That came out, *Dancing Cloud*, 1937. And he did all the lithographs on that using three plates and proofing [ph] the lithographs himself and printing—separated the colors [inaudible]. So, he made something of a sensation because it was a little different approach, and the colors were so vivid, so that was the way it happened. It was more or less an accident, I would say.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And the next year you both went back to Switzerland—

MARY MARSH BUFF: We went to Switzerland.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You took Mrs. Buff for the first time, probably.

CONRAD BUFF: Yeah, that's right.

MARY MARSH BUFF: Well, he said, All the books about Switzerland are written by—that he had seen—were written by tourists and they didn't know how colorful that country was where he was born. So, I said, All right, we'll go back and live in that place. So, we went to Speicher. I never can say that right.

CONRAD BUFF: Speicher is right.

MARY MARSH BUFF: And lived in a little house away from the town for quite a while, with our son. And we tried—I tried to imbibe that spirit, of course it was new—it wasn't new to him, it was to me. And so out of those experiences came *Kobi*.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: K-O-L-I-E—

MARY MARSH BUFF: K-O-B-I.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: K-O-B-I-E.

MARY MARSH BUFF: And that was done with five color plates, which he also separated.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Lithographs?

CONRAD BUFF: Yes.

MARY MARSH BUFF: That was a big job. Then after that one, what did happen? The war?

[00:55:06]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Let's see, '38. It was not until '41, I think, that *Dash & Dart* came out.

MARY MARSH BUFF: Oh, yes. It was during the war. We couldn't get any gasoline. So, I thought, let's do something close by. So, we could get enough gasoline by careful husbanding, [ph] going downhill and uphill. Downhill especially, coasting, to go to Yosemite. [Inaudible] book on the first year in the life of a fawn. And it was a limited edition, [cross talk] 11th edition. And what happened after that?

CONRAD BUFF: *Big Tree*.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: *Big Tree*, right.

MARY MARSH BUFF: Well, while we were up there—oh, a little later on, we were in Yosemite and I got off the beaten track and went those big monsters and thought the dinosaurs were after me. [They laugh.] [Inaudible.] And when I came back, I was talking to a friend, and he said, My, if those trees could only tell what had happened around them, then that would be some story. That's all that needed to trigger me off and I wrote *Big Tree*.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And that book received the San Francisco Commonwealth Club [ph] award for—it was a book for juniors, by a California writer.

MARY MARSH BUFF: Yes, I was a runner-up too for the Newberry, if I'm not mistaken.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Did that again have a lithograph?

MARY MARSH BUFF: No.

CONRAD BUFF: No, those were all drawings. Lithography didn't prove satisfactory after a while. The plates wore out too fast, so I decided I wasn't going to do any more lithographs and make pencil drawings a third larger than actual size, so it give me more chance to put in detail so after that—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible.]

CONRAD BUFF: [Inaudible.] After that all the black and whites were done in pencil, with the exception of *Peter's Pinto*. That I did in pen and ink.

MARY MARSH BUFF: Yes, they're all done in pencil. No. No, you did—

CONRAD BUFF: Well, some—of course, I did some in color.

MARY MARSH BUFF: *In The Apple and the Arrow* you used another medium.

CONRAD BUFF: Well, I did use paint for color.

[Cross talk; inaudible.]

MARY MARSH BUFF: What do you call that? Watercolor?

CONRAD BUFF: No, not watercolor.

MARY MARSH BUFF: [Inaudible] egg thing.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Tempera?

CONRAD BUFF: Tempera.

MARY MARSH BUFF: Tempera.

CONRAD BUFF: The one I in tempera because—

MARY MARSH BUFF: *The Apple and the Arrow*.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That was in 1951, when you had gone back to—

MARY MARSH BUFF: We went back to Switzerland.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And this wasn't a [junior guild (ph)] book, that was a Houghton Mifflin?

MARY MARSH BUFF: That was Houghton Mifflin. I don't think it was a [guild] book, no.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And *Peter's Pinto* that you mentioned, in '49, was about Utah and Mormon country.

MARY MARSH BUFF: We lived up there are two summers.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It must have been much fun to go up on trips for the project together.

MARY MARSH BUFF: It is much more fun than just looking.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

MARY MARSH BUFF: And Maynard Dixon had a cabin up above Zion Park, and a lovely log cabin. So, we stayed there one summer—a little Mormon village of a couple of hundred souls. And then the next summer, we went over to Wayne County, which is much rougher, and stayed there.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Is that farther east?

MARY MARSH BUFF: It's farther—

CONRAD BUFF: Farther north.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: North up near [inaudible] probably, right, in that area.

MARY MARSH BUFF: Yes. In a pretty rough country. So out of that came this Mormon book *Peter's Pinto*.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And I have two books—

MARY MARSH BUFF: Wait a minute. Ward Ritchie is reprinting that.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: They are? For heaven's sake.

MARY MARSH BUFF: It's gone out of edition after four editions or so. And so, Ward Ritchie is just now bringing it out again.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Are these used in schools educationally?

MARY MARSH BUFF: Yes, they are.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Okay.

MARY MARSH BUFF: Suggested lists. And Ward Ritchie's brought out a beautiful new jacket. I have it in the office there, on *Peter's Pinto*, it'll be out in the fall.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Did you design the jacket?

MARY MARSH BUFF: Conrad did. [Cross talk, inaudible] of our son.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, how nice. Isn't that exciting? I have two books here that I don't know anything more about except their names. One was Mah-mee [ph], and one was *Elf Owl*.

CONRAD BUFF: What was the first one?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I have M-A-H dash M-E-E. And I wonder if it might have been Eskimo.

CONRAD BUFF: Hah-nee, yes. And that's about the cliff dwellers, up on the Mesa Verde.

[01:00:07]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh. Isn't that beautiful?

MARY MARSH BUFF: That's the architect [inaudible].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Isn't that a lovely cover.

MARY MARSH BUFF: That's the new jacket. Well, we were in Mesa Verde. And so, we were taken out to those cliffs and the Indian guide or whoever it was—our park guide told us the story of the great drought in the latter part of the 13th century for 24 years. It struck us as a wonderful theme that we could use. So out of that came *Hah-nee to the Cliff Dwellers*.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: How do you spell that?

MARY MARSH BUFF: H-A-H hyphen N-Double-E. And it would be typical of all the cliff dwellers in that area because the droughts went all through that area. At that time.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It made a lot of anthropological research for you.

MARY MARSH BUFF: It was a lot of fun, a lot of fun.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And *Elf Owl*?

MARY MARSH BUFF: Well, *Elf Owl* was just a little slight thing. We liked the dessert and were impressed with the life in the desert that we don't see, but it's there. And all centered around the water, of course. So we just took a waterhole, then we told the life around the waterhole as seen through the eyes of this little elf owl way up in this saguaro [ph] tree, you see. Because he's a night animal, he sees the night life. And we figured it should be for smaller children, rather blank verse type that we used earlier, since it was for young children.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Do you happen to know the artist Ian Messenger [ph] in San Diego?

[Cross talk.]

CONRAD BUFF: I've met him several times.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, he also loves the desserts, you know. And when I went down to tape him, he was telling me that a couple of years ago, when he was out in the desert, he noticed a little owl sitting in a gopher hole. When he came by a week later, the same little owl apparently was sitting in the same spot.

CONRAD BUFF: Burrowing.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: So, kept checking this thing regularly and discovered that it must have been hibernating and he called the authorities of the—I don't know, wildlife department, whatever was, and he had discovered an owl which no one had ever known about before, and they have made this a reservation—or, you know, no one can go on it, it's a protected area for these funny little owls. [They laugh.][Cross talk.]

MARY MARSH BUFF: Elf Owl just occurs in a small area, too, among those big giant saguaro [ph] trees.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, that really is his name? It wasn't your whimsical name for the little owl?

MARY MARSH BUFF: No, that's his name. East of Tucson.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, the next book that I have was one that—I couldn't find out whether or not, Mr. Buff, you illustrated it, but I know that you went to Guatemala to do research on it.

MARY MARSH BUFF: Oh, yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: *Magic Maize*.

CONRAD BUFF: Oh, yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You both went—

MARY MARSH BUFF: Twice. That was illustrated very definitely in lots of colors.

CONRAD BUFF: Oh, yes. You see, the reason we quit Viking was that they wouldn't give us any color. So—

MARY MARSH BUFF: We quit them only once. [Inaudible.] We came back at the end.

CONRAD BUFF: So, we asked Houghton Mifflin if they would be interested. And they took it right away. So, they gave us all kinds of color for the Swiss book and also for the *Magic Maize*.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, your colors are so beautiful. It would be criminal not to. [Cross talk.]

CONRAD BUFF: Well, color is a peculiar thing, of course, is very costly for the publishers.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes, I know it is.

CONRAD BUFF: And it doesn't have—if they have to reprint it, it doesn't always come out to satisfactory, and it isn't really appreciated very much more considering the expense. So we gave up doing color partly to save money for the publishing, and partly just to make it easier for me because since it isn't appreciated enough by—I said, What's the use of doing color if the book

doesn't go over, [cross talk] so we haven't done color anymore since. But a lot of things now—the publishers have lost the plates so they can't republish it.

MARY MARSH BUFF: Not *Magic Maize*, yet.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: How many of these have they lost the plates one? All of them?

CONRAD BUFF: Well, the publishers lost plates on *Dash & Dart* and *Big Tree*. . But there they were able to save it, I made—some pictures and drawings had been lost—so I had to make those over again. In the case of *Dash & Dart* they photographed the old edition and made new plates.

MARY MARSH BUFF: They were saved, you see.

CONRAD BUFF: But what they're going to do now with *Magic Maize*, I don't know, it's going to be an awful job to make a new plates for that.

MARY MARSH BUFF: It's a legal battle between two insurance companies, who's responsible. [Inaudible.] So, we'll see.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Are you working on another one now?

MARY MARSH BUFF: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: There is no other one after that, now is there? I mean—

MARY MARSH BUFF: *Forest Folk*.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: *Forest Folk*, I don't have that.

MARY MARSH BUFF: 1962.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh. My information—

MARY MARSH BUFF: *Forest Folk* is a continuation of *Dash & Dart* done 20 years before. You see the children that kept writing. They weren't satisfied with *Dash & Dart* when he finished. It's just his first antlers. They wanted to see what was going to happen after that. So, they wrote letters about it. So, 20 years later, we decided we'd go on and see what happened to the boy. He's grown up considerably since that time. So, we took up from there and continued that story. *Forest Folk* in Yosemite mostly, background.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And then you say you are working on one now. Is it a secret or are you supposed to—

MARY MARSH BUFF: I finished the manuscript. And he's starting it on the illustrations. And it's a story of a family in this area before Columbus, Pre-Columbia. And unites this area—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: The Yonder [ph] Indians?

MARY MARSH BUFF: No, larger than that. The Shoshones, you see. I wanted to include all the acorn-eating people with the people that lived along the ocean and with the people who lived on Catalina Island, so I created a story of a trip to them to wait for the Catalina's to come over and bring those precious soapstone bowls that they carve. So, Ward Ritchie is to do that, and Lane Publishing is their distributor.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Ward Ritchie is here, and Lane is up in Menlo Park.

CONRAD BUFF: Yeah.

MARY MARSH BUFF: We did that because it's a local subject. The schools will need it. And Lane has good distribution here. And Ward Ritchie is such a fine artist, and well, they have about 40 illustrations in it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I don't understand. Ward Ritchie's a publisher?

MARY MARSH BUFF: He's a printer. Really a fine printer. But they have been starting small publishing place—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see.

MARY MARSH BUFF: Rather recently.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, this will be a marvelous book for the schools here.

MARY MARSH BUFF: [Cross talk.] Because these people lived so long ago, so little is known about them, except Dr. Kroger's [ph] book. So, you have to use a lot of imagination. But it's been fun. Hard but fun.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, I certainly have enjoyed hearing about it, and thank you for the tape, for going into it—

MARY MARSH BUFF: Now I'm all through with my section.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Laughs.] Unless there something more that you can add to it.

MARY MARSH BUFF: I don't remember anything more.

CONRAD BUFF: Well, then—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Then we better get back to the Project.

MARY MARSH BUFF: Fine.

CONRAD BUFF: Go back after where I was married, I did decorating. And as I said, I started to do murals. And I met some architects, one architect, a Mormon, who did a Mormon church. And so they—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: In Los Angeles? Or Utah?

CONRAD BUFF: In Huntington Park.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Huntington Park? And did you do a mural?

CONRAD BUFF: I painted several murals in there. And just free, gratis. Just—.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: So, it was a church?

CONRAD BUFF: [Throw it in with (ph)] the big contract. So that was my first real venture into mural painting. So, then I met Allison and Allison. They were doing—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: The architects?

CONRAD BUFF: Yes. They were doing the Edison building.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh. They also did the Times Building about then, did you know that?

CONRAD BUFF: They did that later, yeah.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Was that later?

CONRAD BUFF: Yeah. I had nothing to do with that. But—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: This would be in 1930 or '31 probably. That you met them—

[01:10:01]

CONRAD BUFF: That's right. Yeah. And we got along fine, and then there was a peculiar thing, Mr. Allison told me at the beginning that if I make sketches for these places they had there, he wouldn't ask anybody else.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, really?

CONRAD BUFF: He would have only me. And so, I started to work on the sketches about Midsummer, this was in the spring. And Midsummer he called me up and said Barse Miller had been asked to make sketches to, and he had forgotten about it. So—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That's a strange thing.

CONRAD BUFF: It was between the two of us who was to get the job. So, we were both working

feverishly on sketches, and at a certain date in the fall, we had to meet Mr. Miller, the president of the Edison Company, and he was going to read decide who would get the job. So, we both went to Mr. Miller's office and [headed out (ph)]. So, we made our sketches, and Mr. Miller looked. We had planted them around. Mr. Miller looked at the sketches and said, I want those, pointing to mine.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. But in the meantime, had he forgotten he'd also asked Hugo Ballin to do sketches? [Laughs.]

CONRAD BUFF: Well, Hugo Ballin got—before we ever got there, he got the ing.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, he'd already gotten that piece. I see.

CONRAD BUFF: And he got \$6,000 for that.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Did he?

CONRAD BUFF: But we didn't know that. So, then he asked us how much would it be, and we said \$2,500 each.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh.

CONRAD BUFF: So anyway, Barse Miller was out. Because he said he wanted mine, so I kind of felt sorry for Barse. And I said, Barse, how would it be if you make the paintings with my idea?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I noticed that. [Laughs.]

CONRAD BUFF: And I asked Mr. Miller would that be satisfactory with the Edison Company? If we work together on this thing, he takes my ideas over and painted them according to his own wishes. So, Mr. Miller said that that was all right and Barse, of course, was glad.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That's certainly nice of you. Yeah.

CONRAD BUFF: So that's the way we painted those Edison murals.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, I should tell the tape that I went to visit these to my way over to see Mr. Buff this morning. We're going off the tape, just a minute.

[END OF TRACK AAA_buff65_8422_m.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —Hoag, on May the 21st interviewing the Buffs in their home in Pasadena, tape three. I started to say that on my way over to visit you today, I stopped at the Edison building, which is in downtown Los Angeles, in order to see the murals which were done for them. This was not Project work; this was done privately for the building. And there is one mural over a doorway by Hugo Ballin, who was also a Project artist, and three murals each by Mr. Buff and Barse Miller. And these are up over the elevators, and I was intrigued with several things I wanted to ask you. You just answered one of them, the subject of yours and Barse Miller's were obviously the same thing. You could see that you've been told to have a person with the cogwheel in the first and buildings behind and the deserts even behind that, and the second one the person holding up a light, would be Edison. [Inaudible.] And the third one is a smaller mural [inaudible], a continuation of it. I was interested in your interpretation of this using the hand of God coming down in the first one and the fact that he had a one woman, one man, and he had two men. Was this just—you hadn't meant to have just the same objects on it?

CONRAD BUFF: Well, as I said, I asked him to do—to follow up with my idea. And so, the idea—my idea was to the creation of the electricity and his idea was transporting electricity, through the desert.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see. What were those strange-looking things that dangled from your building? They appear in the first one and then in the last one. They sort of hang down—

MARY BUFF: Here are the two murals.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah, this kind of thing, they look like inverted bells. Yes.

MARY BUFF: These are the two murals

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Thank you. Let's see, this is the second one.

CONRAD BUFF: I think your referring—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: This thing, what is that? Is it something from the end? This whole tower was that electricity tower—

CONRAD BUFF: I think it's part of the—I really don't know what that is [laughs] anymore. But it was part of the buildings.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That existed?

CONRAD BUFF: Yeah.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: As it was at the time. And then this—the cogs on this were interesting.

CONRAD BUFF: That's a Pelton wheel. The water shoots down from here into these cups and drives the wheel around. That's the way electricity is created.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see. Learned something about electricity as well as art today [laughs]. And this one, what is a cogwheel used for?

CONRAD BUFF: This was supposed to be power. This giant drives this wheel and he represents power. And he drives wheels.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see. Well, then this is a man.

CONRAD BUFF: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: In spite of his hair.

CONRAD BUFF: Yes. It's a man.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I was especially interested in the treatment of mountains because I think you do them better than anybody I've ever known. You absolutely catch the— especially the Rocky Mountains coming into the desert. And the ones on the other side are so pale they don't look like rocks, and it's almost a shock when you look at across the—

CONRAD BUFF: His idea where the desert mountains and desert hills, no longer the snow mountains.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: He stylizes them, though. As far as the artist treatment goes and it loses the—

CONRAD BUFF: Yes. [Cross talk.]

MARY MARSH BUFF: Well, he was born [inaudible], mountains, Alps, you see.

CONRAD BUFF: I was born among the mountains—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You really know them. Your pine trees in the foreground too. There was something very funny about the Hugo Ballin mural. I don't know whether you know about it and can answer or not. It was signed and dated in the lower right-hand corner: Hugo Ballin, 1930.

CONRAD BUFF: I see.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Then next to it, there is this circle with a C in it. You know that thing they put for copyright.

CONRAD BUFF: Copyright. [Cross talk.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It says 1931. Who copyrighted this?

Did he copy his own work?

CONRAD BUFF: I suppose. Oh, yes.

[00:05:04]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Does an artist put a copyright on, when he copies something of his own?

MARY MARSH BUFF: [Inaudible.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I just never heard of it for a mural. Did you?

MARY MARSH BUFF: No.

CONRAD BUFF: Well, it can be. You can copyright any picture. So, in case, somebody will want to reproduce it, you would have to get permission. And that was no doubt his idea. Nobody could reproduce that without his permission.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, I see. Protecting himself from that.

MARY MARSH BUFF: [Inaudible.]—copyright prints that were made. Some prints.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I didn't know whether you would have any or whether Mr. Miller would, and, of course, Hugo Ballin is dead, and his— all of his effects scattered all over. So, I went up to the Publicity Department at the Edison building to see if they had old files on the dedication or any material that we could copy.

CONRAD BUFF: I see.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And I talked to the young man there who remembers nothing about it because he wasn't there then. But he did tell me one kind of funny story that I don't know whether you know are not. After those murals were first put in, they had a lot of little old ladies working in, I think, the filing department on that floor, and there were scandalized at the nude figures. And they made such a fit about it that somebody had to come down and semi-clothe them or paint over parts of the human figure.

CONRAD BUFF: Oh, yes. I knew that.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Did you know that?

CONRAD BUFF: He was supposed to put—he had the sexual organs there.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes.

CONRAD BUFF: And so, they objected to that, so they asked him to remove it, and he wouldn't remove it. So, Ina Peterson [ph], who decorated, finally painted over it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, this man was so amused because he said in view of art today people don't think two minutes about this, but because they aren't there it makes everyone so conscious of it. So, it's the first thing they think of when they look at that mural [laughs].

MARY BUFF: [Inaudible.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Changing times, yes. [Inaudible.] Let's see. Was the Phoenix, Arizona— [Cross talk.]

CONRAD BUFF: Yeah, I was coming to that. You see, the Edison murals were the first ones I really got paid for. And then I met Joseph Weston in the California art club. Joseph Weston, the architect, was also a member of the California art club. And he had me paint and decorate a bank in Phoenix, Arizona that he was doing. I did the walls and the murals both. And I think it was a very successful job.

MARY BUFF: And it was hot.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Were they desert landscapes?

CONRAD BUFF: No, it was an allegory on the phoenix—

[Cross talk, inaudible.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible] rises from ashes?

CONRAD BUFF: Yes. And the merchants their displaying playing oranges and then Indians

coming in, and on the other side of the cowboys. I think it's in that book.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: What bank is it? Do you remember the name of the bank?

CONRAD BUFF: No. [Cross talk.] Somebody asked me last night. I think it was First National.

MARY BUFF: Valley [ph] National, honey, I think.

CONRAD BUFF: It doesn't exist anymore.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, it doesn't? The whole building?

CONRAD BUFF: I think it has been demolished. That's the trouble with murals. You know they always—[Cross talk.]

MARY MARSH BUFF: Here it is. No, no, his is for the Manteca [ph]. [Cross talk, inaudible.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: What about the Barlow Medical Library? I don't know where it is even.

CONRAD BUFF: Barlow Medical Library?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Would that be Barlow, California? No, that's—

MARY MARSH BUFF: County medical library.

CONRAD BUFF: The county medical library.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: County medical?

CONRAD BUFF: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Was that a private thing?

CONRAD BUFF: Oh, yes. That was the medical library. The medical association, I think, paid for it. That was a purely commercial job. The architect, Gordon Kaufmann asked me if I would be interested in doing four murals in the medical library. The doctors wanted to have something that reminded them of their studies in Europe. So, the idea was to do scenes of Europe.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, isn't that charming.

CONRAD BUFF: So there's Rosenberg in, Germany and then there is Mont-Saint-Michel.

[00:10:05]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Very beautiful. Very classical treatment of it.

CONRAD BUFF: This book isn't satisfactory. It always falls to pieces.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: They get so heavy.

CONRAD BUFF: I never can put it together again. And then there's the Rathaus in Vienna. In Kings College in Oxford, those four, one on each wall.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I've been there.

CONRAD BUFF: Oh, in Oxford? Is that so?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, I think they're very—they must be ever so pleased with them, aren't they?

CONRAD BUFF: They were very pleased with them, but they don't exist anymore either, you see.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, no.

CONRAD BUFF: The library has completely been rebuilt. And those pieces that are painted on the wall, so.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: What a shame.

CONRAD BUFF: So that's the way it goes with murals. They all disappear. But to go on further, the bank in Pasadena. I forgot the name of it. Peter Myers [ph] bank, you've heard about Peter Myers [ph] who had the bank in Pasadena, and then he went bankrupt and was sent to prison for all types of mismanagement. But anyway, I did a mural in that bank. And that doesn't exist anymore either.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [laughs] Mr. Buff. I think you should stop doing direct—

CONRAD BUFF: That's part of it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, how lovely.

CONRAD BUFF: After the bank went bankrupt, the room was used by a restaurant. And as styles kind of change, more modern things came up, they tore the pictures down and put the wallpaper on it. So that's gone too.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Isn't that a shame.

CONRAD BUFF: So, all those murals went. And they were all painted around 1930. And when the Depression came to its worst, there was nothing anymore. And we've got kind of down on our means. And we had to have another job. We had to do something. Everything I tried to do, I couldn't. I couldn't cook anymore, and I couldn't do this, and I couldn't do lithographs, I couldn't do decorating. There was absolutely nothing to do during the Depression. So, when Roosevelt came in and they announced the PWA, it was a godsend. So of course, I applied. Mary had quit the job or lost the job at the progressive school, so we were without means. I was accepted Merle Armitage was the headman of the group, [inaudible] was the director. And we were given—there were three classes, maybe you know all about that. There were three classes—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: No, I didn't know about that.

CONRAD BUFF: —and a full-fledged artist got \$38 a week.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: 38?

CONRAD BUFF: Yes. And the lesser-known fellows got \$24 a week. And the apprentices got \$12 a week. So, the way it was run, we would submit the sketch first and then if it was approved, why, we would work for a week, and every week we'd show our progress.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You could do this at home?

CONRAD BUFF: Yes, we did it at home. Then we had to bring the picture to the office, and we got our check.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see.

CONRAD BUFF: Of course, I painted mostly large things, too large to carry. So, I used a photograph and then bring the photograph in. So, I got—for nine months, I got my regular \$38 a week, which was, of course, wonderful.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Was this the time that you did the swinging bridge at Black Canyon? And the other Hoover Dam thing?

CONRAD BUFF: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Did the government pay to send you over to do your research? Or did—
[Cross talk.]

CONRAD BUFF: No, I did that myself. I thought that the \$38 a week was well enough, and I could live on that. And then I go out and have a good time with that, because \$38 a week was more than I ever made before.

[00:15:05]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes.

CONRAD BUFF: So that was wonderful. They were the regular mechanic's wages, the carpenters got the same, but I always thought the artist ought to be paid like mechanics, but they ought to

paid.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: But they never had been before?

CONRAD BUFF: They had never been paid.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Now I don't know whether it was off the tape, I think it was, that you told me that you realized the historical importance, too, of doing a pictorial record of a building that dam. I think it's quite interesting that you took that on yourself because, of course, it is important as well as being—[Cross talk, inaudible.]

CONRAD BUFF: Well, that's right. I thought we ought to do something that was of some real value, besides just painting pretty landscapes. So, the thing was for me it was a wonderful time. I had never produced as much work in such a short time as I did during those nine months. But of course, it came to an end. A lot of artists were again struggling trying to make a living. And we had to do something, so we got out—the idea of doing books. But in the meantime—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I wanted to ask you some of the details about these. Now from an old *California Arts & Architecture* magazine in April 1934, there was a reproduction of the swinging bridge, which I believe you have a photograph of. And it was said that it was being done for a mural for the Santa Monica High School. Was that correct? Did you plan to use it for a mural?

CONRAD BUFF: Well, I did a mural, but that wasn't the—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Subject?

CONRAD BUFF: That wasn't the bridge, no.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You did a mural in Santa Monica?

CONRAD BUFF: Not a mural but a large painting. I suppose it still hangs down there. It's very large. It's about as wide as this wall.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: For heaven's sake, I'll have to go down and see them.

CONRAD BUFF: If it's still there. One never knows what they do to pictures nowadays. So—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Do you remember the name of that?

MARY BUFF: Westward [ph]?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Westward [ph]?

MARY BUFF: Wasn't it?

CONRAD BUFF: I don't remember.

MARY BUFF: [Inaudible.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I know it was exhibited at the Los Angeles Art Museum in March 1934. [Inaudible.] And then, about that same time, you did another one that looked just beautiful. It was called *Cathedral Mountain, Alaska*.

CONRAD BUFF: Oh, that's just a painting, yeah.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Uh-huh [affirmative]. *American Magazine of Art* reproduced—

CONRAD BUFF: Oh, is that so? I don't remember. There's a lithograph of that back in the hall there.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, goodness. Arthur Millier wrote the article at that time, and it's one of the fascinating articles I found because he analyzes the situation of artists painting in Southern California right at that time. He brought up the trends of the leading people who were carrying on the old school of Bierstadt [ph] and the rest of them within these different fields. And if you don't remember it, you might be interested to know that he put you in as one of the rugged individualists.

CONRAD BUFF: Oh, is that so? [Laughs.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: At this time. He said you had abandoned the impressionism and lightened shades—light and shade method of rendering and were painting from an architectural viewpoint, which gave the importance of form versus scale. The austerity was relieved by elaborate textural treatment. And I thought it was a very interesting analysis.

CONRAD BUFF: It is. Was very good.

[Cross talk, inaudible.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I've been interviewing him too. Incidentally.

CONRAD BUFF: Oh, is that so?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: He's a fine man.

CONRAD BUFF: How is he getting along?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Fine. He's just gone up to his lovely rocks to paint this week.
[Inaudible.]

CONRAD BUFF: I haven't seen Arthur for years.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: San Luis Obispo, where the rock country is.

CONRAD BUFF: Oh, yes I remember, Bishop Rock. Well, well. Is he painting?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes, just etching. I don't think he does any paintings.

CONRAD BUFF: No. I thought maybe he started it. No, he's doing etching. These are some of the murals I painted for the Mormon church.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh good.

MARY MARSH BUFF: There's another lithograph of that same period.

CONRAD BUFF: That—[inaudible.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: This is much more realistic than your later work, isn't it?

[00:20:00]

CONRAD BUFF: Yes. Oh yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: 1929.

CONRAD BUFF: Well, that's the lithograph in there.

MARY MARSH BUFF: There's the mural they put wallpaper over.

CONRAD BUFF: But I've shown that already.

MARY BUFF: Oh, you've shown—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes, thank you.

CONRAD BUFF: But later—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Excuse me. Can we just finish this one year? With one more thing that came out at that time, before this was over, was one of your paintings being accepted in the encyclopedia Britannica's collection.

CONRAD BUFF: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And C. J. Bulliet, or Bulliet, I suppose you pronounce it, the art critic, talked about that in *Art Digest*.

CONRAD BUFF: Well, I never knew that.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That was—let's see. What was the name of it? It's a peak in Arizona and

—

CONRAD BUFF: Agathla.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Agathla. I realized something about almost all of the ones that I have seen of your paintings, and I wonder—it's almost a trademark of yours and I wondered if you are conscious of it? Your peaks disappear off the top of the page.

CONRAD BUFF: Oh, yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You can almost be sure that it's going to be yours at just on first glance because of this wonderful feeling—

MARY BUFF: Going on, and on, and on.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —peak as if it were so big, you couldn't possibly get it all on the page.

MARY BUFF: [Inaudible], in that book, I think.

CONRAD BUFF: You know, this book is going to pieces.

MARY BUFF: [Inaudible.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: This—do you want to hear what you said about that painting yourself, at that time? Have you forgotten Mr. Buff?

CONRAD BUFF: Pardon?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Would you like to hear what you said yourself about your own painting at that time if you've forgotten?

CONRAD BUFF: Oh, yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You said there was an emotional quality about mountains, standing out alone on the flat desert, as relics in primeval times. And that's almost what you said about the redwoods. It's interesting to have the same feeling of nature. Let's see. I wanted to—you've told us about the paintings, and you didn't do any murals for the Project. Is that correct?

CONRAD BUFF: Not actual murals, no. The biggest one was the—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Santa Monica High School, large painting.

CONRAD BUFF: I did that for the Project.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: But no fresco? [Inaudible] murals.

CONRAD BUFF: No. We hoped that we'd have the chance there were no walls.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes, it was over before then. Now, what about the lithography project, did you work down in the—

CONRAD BUFF: Yes. You see, after the first Project fell to pieces, because Congress wouldn't allow any more money, it had to stop. But then another project was started where artists could work for half a day and get \$90 a month. And of course, I wasn't interested in that really because I didn't really want to work only half a day. I would've been glad to work had things been going all day. But MacDonald-Wright called me up one day and asked me if I knew anybody that could teach lithography. Well, I had done quite a bit of lithography for the books, and so I said, Well, what I do? He said, Well, that would be fine. So, I went over there, and I started this class in lithography. But the trouble was the government was so slow in furnishing the materials that I had to furnish my own zinc plates and my own paper, hoping that the government would reimburse me. But one day, MacDonald-Wright said, Well, you better go through all of that, if you try to collect money from the government, they'll put you in jail.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Laughs.] What a horrible thing.

CONRAD BUFF: Well, that was a joke, of course, but he meant that—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You might not ever get it.

CONRAD BUFF: I might never get that money. And everything—we couldn't get any stones—they wouldn't—at first, I was supposed to get a press, see if we could buy a secondhand press, and I knew that they had three presses in one of the firm's downtown. The secondhand presses that they were glad to sell for \$100 apiece.

[00:25:00]

So, I was supposed to go down there and investigate them and report on them. So, I went down there and I reported that they were a good buy, and they were in good order. So about a month later, they sent me down again to see if I could buy a press. So that was the second time. So finally, the third time, they sent me down again, and they finally said they couldn't buy a press, they could only rent the press. But they would pay \$25 a month of rent. I thought that was a pretty good deal. And I thought I would like to buy a press, but I already had a press, so my family was against my buying another press even if I could rent it at a high price. But then we had trouble getting stones, they wouldn't buy any secondhand stones they'd only buy new stones. But new stones were very expensive. But old stones were very cheap because the lithographic factories and outfits were getting rid of their stones because—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: They wear down?

CONRAD BUFF: No. The new type of lithography was done from zinc plates. There was no more use for stones.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, I see.

CONRAD BUFF: So, then they got rid of all the stones, and we could buy it for almost nothing.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Where did they get rid of them? Just did all the artists buy them?

CONRAD BUFF: Well, I don't know, except—oh, there's a big, in Seneca [ph]—the the company in New York was dealing in all kinds of materials for lithography. And they were selling these presses and these stones too. So, but then finally, the government said they wouldn't come by any. They couldn't buy secondhand stones. They could only buy new stones. So the thing lasted so long, everything went wrong, I said to MacDonald-Wright, Who wants this thing anyway? He says, Well, that's up to you. I said, That's too much trouble. Because I can't supply more of my own stuff and the government doesn't want to buy stones, you can only rent them. And I don't want to go into the renting business, so I quit.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, eventually, they must've gotten their stones because several artists like Dorothy Jeakins, who was on that Project, told me—

CONRAD BUFF: Oh, Dorothy Jeakins, whatever became of her?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, she's doing wonderfully. She's one of the top costume designers for the motion picture industry. I think Paramount or something. And I interviewed her last year before she was sent to Japan for three or four months, research for a new picture. And she is just charming. Lovely person.

CONRAD BUFF: She was a charming girl. I know she was doing some lithographs. I know—I recall one episode. As I said, I was supposed to teach these people, and I supplied the zinc plates because the government wouldn't buy the zinc plates. So she brought in a head of lettuce, and she wanted to do this head of lettuce. I said, Why don't you pick something simple? So, I went down to the store and got an orange and an apple, and I said, Try this. It will be a much easier to try this new process on a simple thing. So, she started to cry. She said, Why don't you let me do the thing I want to do? So I said, Go ahead and do the lettuce if you want to do the lettuce.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Did she do it?

CONRAD BUFF: Well, in the meantime, I quit. [They laugh.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You don't know whether it turned out.

CONRAD BUFF: Well, the lettuce was an awfully difficult thing to do.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I would think so.

CONRAD BUFF: Even the medium that you know. But to do it in a new medium, however. I figured that's—[Cross talk, inaudible.]—none of my business. But she was a lovely girl.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: She's a lovely woman. And they apparently did eventually get their own stones because I know she told me with great fervor about how wonderful it was to be able to have their own on the Project.

CONRAD BUFF: Oh yes. I know they had one of the fellows a fellow by the name of Winter—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Danny Winter?

CONRAD BUFF: I guess so. He bought the press. He bought the fine press for \$100, and he rented it to the Project.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And that's how they got their press.

CONRAD BUFF: Yes. So, it was really a good deal for him because he only paid \$100 for it and he got \$25 every month.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: In six months he was ahead. [Laughs.]

CONRAD BUFF: Yeah. But the whole thing fell to pieces.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, then you left that project. Did you go on the easel project next?

[00:30:05]

CONRAD BUFF: No, there were no more projects. There was nothing. I left. Well, the new decision by the government was that they were supposed to do mural competitions. And whoever—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: This was done by the Treasury Department?

CONRAD BUFF: Yeah.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

CONRAD BUFF: And the artists could compete, and thereby [has a tale (ph)] with Armitage. I suppose it's all right to tell this. Because he—

MARY MARSH BUFF: I don't know.

CONRAD BUFF: Huh?

MARY MARSH BUFF: I don't know. It's up to you.

CONRAD BUFF: He had—Armitage was head of the department of competition for the post office in Beverly Hills.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, I wanted to ask about that. I just saw those murals the other day. Some are by Charles Kassler [inaudible]. I'll tell you more about it in a minute once you tell me your story [laughs].

CONRAD BUFF: Well, Armitage had a sweetheart. I forgot her name. And she was a dancer. And she started to do lithographs. So, he wanted her to do some murals. Now the whole project was like this. You supplied sketches, and you put them in a sealed envelope. So, without any name on it. And the sketches are not supposed to have any name. And so they were supposed to award the thing without knowing who did it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

CONRAD BUFF: But Elise Seeds [Cavanna], that was her name.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Elise?

CONRAD BUFF: Elise Seeds.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: No, I haven't.

CONRAD BUFF: She submitted a sketch, but of course, he knew. She was practically his wife. So, he knew whose it was. And Kassler was his closest friend.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, for heavens.

CONRAD BUFF: So, he awarded first prize to Kassler and to Elise Seeds. Each one was to do one on each wall.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, for heaven sake.

CONRAD BUFF: And will Barse Miller and myself and two others were awarded sort of a—

[Cross talk.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Honorary mention or something.

CONRAD BUFF: But these two were supposed to get the job. But then the architect—one of the architects had actually asked me to take apart this competition. He said, I would like to have a good job and those in the competition [inaudible] to do a good job. And I said, I'm not taking part in any competitions anymore. He said, Well, just do it for me. So, when the thing came out that Elise Seeds and Kassler were supposed to do the murals he blew up. He went to Washington and complained.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, how did they get through Armitage's hands, anyway? I thought those sealed—

MARY BUFF: Bids.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —bid went straight to Washington.

CONRAD BUFF: Supposedly, but he managed to send them.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: He interceded them.

CONRAD BUFF: He managed.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: How do you spell her name? S-E-A-T?

CONRAD BUFF: Elise, S-E-E-D.

MARY BUFF: S-double E-D-S.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible.]

MARY MARSH BUFF: I don't know whether that should be in a private segment.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, apparently, Elise got done out of the mural because there is a series of seven of them cast [ph]—

CONRAD BUFF: I was going to come to that.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, I'm sorry.

CONRAD BUFF: The architect went to New York, and he complained. He said he absolutely refused to have this girl's work up there. She wasn't a mural painter. She didn't know anything about it, and she was just Armitage's girl. And so Washington cut her out, and passed up both of them.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, I see.

CONRAD BUFF: Then, later on, under a special project, Kassler got a job to do the rest of the walls.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Those are—I haven't heard of them at all until I happened to see them in there, a few weeks ago. And I was fascinated, and I thought I would like very much to talk to him. I haven't been able to find them. Even Stevie [ph], you know, Frank Stevens [ph], doesn't know where he is. He used to live right out by him.

CONRAD BUFF: He was a one-armed man.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: He was? I don't remember that. You don't you have any idea where he is, do you?

CONRAD BUFF: No, he disappeared.

[00:35:01]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, anyway, these murals are quite interesting historically because they're only ones that I know of where there appears the pay door office for WPA. And there's one where all the people are waiting to get their check. And then the next one is where coming out and when they're going in— they're sitting down with holes in the soles of their feet. You know, all terribly depressed looking. And when they're coming out they're beaming, and they're walking over to stands of fruit and vegetables were there are women sitting huddled up in shawls and little children crying, and these men are buying things with their money. So, it's just a historical novel. Or as historical records they are quite interesting. But they're very pale, and I can't decide whether they bled out or faded out in color or—

CONRAD BUFF: The fact is that Kassler was a good artist, but he wasn't a mural painter. He didn't know anything about fresco. But he was a great talker. He convinced everybody that he had a new method of fresco painting. And he did one at the public library right before the children's patio.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I haven't seen that. I keep meaning to go down.

[Cross talk, inaudible.]

CONRAD BUFF: It disappeared. It faded out entirely.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It did?

CONRAD BUFF: So [inaudible].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: So then his new technique probably doesn't last very long.

CONRAD BUFF: I haven't seen the Beverly Hills job. It may be all right now, but I know that the public library job was a fizzle [ph].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, I tried to find out more about them by going to the postmaster. And they looked up the books, and they have all the records of the dedication of the post office. But the murals weren't done then, it was done in, I think, 1931, or something, and the murals were later, I've forgotten, '35 or something like that. And they're only signed in one spot. And they're up so high and there's kind of a valence board, and you can't even see the man's name, you just see kind of squiggles. Well, we look through all the records at the post office. Of course, nobody remembers, there are all new people there. And they got kind of interested in it, but we couldn't find anything about it. So, I went home and got my husband's spy glasses from his sailing boat [laughs]. [Inaudible] down to the post office one day and stood there with this thing focused on—of course, everybody in the post office was wondering what's going on. But I could see it, but I don't know what was the matter with him when he wrote his name, he did like this. Because Kassler would be like that, wouldn't it?

CONRAD BUFF: Yeah.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: There's a great big blob of black ink here, so it looks like—and then the date. And I wondered if maybe it was another artist I hadn't heard about. It's very strange. Usually, people are so careful about where they put their names on a mural.

CONRAD BUFF: I don't know why he would've have done that.

MARY BUFF: Armitage might know where he—

[Cross talk, inaudible.]

CONRAD BUFF: They were buddies, yeah.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Napolitano is another one that he would know about that I can't find.

CONRAD BUFF: Who?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Napolitano.

CONRAD BUFF: Never heard of him.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Really? He did the music room at Pasadena College.

CONRAD BUFF: Oh, is that so?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible.] That's very interesting. You showed an oil painting about this time at the Los Angeles Museum called *Morning*. This was in June of '39. And I wondered, since it was a painting, whether you did any paintings at all. You said you weren't on the easel project, but I was wondering if you did some paintings for the WPA—PWAP. That could have been a project show or just a [cross talk, inaudible] California show, of course.

CONRAD BUFF: There is a painting of mine that the museum picked out from—you see when the PWA project came to an end, they exhibited these pictures someplace, and they let public institutions pick out pictures that they wanted. So the museum picked out the very large thing. It's as tall as, I think, this room here, of the of building the Boulder Dam.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, I see. I'll have to ask them to see it there.

[Cross talk.]

CONRAD BUFF: I don't know what they did with it. They used to have it exhibited in the stairway in the early '40s, but then they changed the way—I don't know what became of it.

[00:40:03]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I want to add for the tape, too, that Mr. Buff has received all kinds of awards for his paintings and has been hung so many places, I won't read the whole list, but I know that they're owned by the National Gallery in Washington, D.C.

CONRAD BUFF: Those are lithographs.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, are they?

CONRAD BUFF: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Thank you. The Boston Museum, the Chicago Art Institute, the Detroit Institute of Art, the Palace of the Legion of Honor in San Francisco, and the Cleveland museum.

CONRAD BUFF: The British Museum.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: British Museum too? I didn't have that one. And San Diego Fine Art Society, in the park, I presume.

CONRAD BUFF: Those are all lithographs.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: All liths?

MARY MARSH BUFF: San Diego Museum has something of his in their collection.

CONRAD BUFF: Well, they have a stone. A lithographic stone.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Do they own the stone itself?

CONRAD BUFF: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That's interesting.

CONRAD BUFF: With a drawing on it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I'm just curious. As an artist, do you allow them to make any prints from it, if they want to?

CONRAD BUFF: If they wanted to, but they won't. The museum just wanted to have a stone with

the drawing on it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see. As an example of what one looks like. And then the Los Angeles public library has one. What is that? I don't remember seeing it. *Who's Who* says that.

CONRAD BUFF: I don't remember. They may have a lithograph too. I know they don't have a painting.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That place is so big you can't get around and see everything [laughs] they have down there.

CONRAD BUFF: That's the peculiar thing about those lithographs. A friend of mine bought those lithographs. And he said, Would you mind if I send them to the museums as a gift. So, I said, Well, I don't care. So he sent these lithographs around to these museums.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: What a lovely thing to do for you.

CONRAD BUFF: And he said he sent one to the Luxembourg in Paris, and they wouldn't accept it. They said they would only take things from French artists. But the British Museum acknowledged one and all these other museums. It's very likely that the Los Angeles Museum has one as well. But it caused me some trouble because it was published like that, that I was represented in these museums. And then somebody went to the Metropolitan Museum and asked if they had a painting by Conrad Buff. And of course, they said no, they didn't have a painting. So, they wrote me a letter and said I was a swindler. [They laugh.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, no.

MARY MARSH BUFF: Works represented, I think. [Inaudible.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, that's the way it's stated, yes. In *Who's Who* it's 'works' and so it could be anything. Isn't that silly of someone to get upset.

[Cross talk.]

CONRAD BUFF: They should have put that in that they were lithographs.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, I suppose that where they're gathering information about many people, they probably can't break it down and have for each one. Although I thought that what they did was write the artist himself and ask him to fill in the form. They probably don't [inaudible] each year.

CONRAD BUFF: Oh, yeah.

MARY BUFF: Each year additional things.

CONRAD BUFF: But in regard to these murals, you know, when they picked out four, Barse Miller and myself in Washington, they said that those were picked out would automatically be awarded other murals. So, then nothing happened for a long time. And so finally Mary wrote a letter to Washington to the director of murals. [Inaudible.] Said, we were promised [inaudible] [Background noise obscuring audio.] And so finally I got a mural up there.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, you did?

CONRAD BUFF: Manteca.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: What?

CONRAD BUFF: Manteca.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: *M*, is that *O* or an *A*?

CONRAD BUFF: A-A.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: A-M-T-I-Q—

CONRAD BUFF: That means butter. The Spanish name for butter, Manteca.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I'm sorry, M-A-M-T-I-Q-U—

MARY MARSH BUFF: No. M-A-N-T-E-C-A. It's in the post office.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It means butter.

CONRAD BUFF: It's a town called Manteca because they have a lot of cattle up there and grapes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Was that the subject of your mural?

[00:45:04]

CONRAD BUFF: Well. When I got this notice that I was supposed to do a mural up there, I sent in a design. Because they grow grapes up there, with grapes, and wines and people picking grapes. So, they came back and said that it was a weak[inaudible]. They wanted a more powerful thing. But I did it in watercolor, and I thought well they would understand [inaudible] oils. But anyway, I got mad, and I said, Oh, the hell with it. And Mary said, Well, send in something. So, I had a sketch I did of hills here, local hills, and I sent that in. And they accepted that. [They laugh.] So, the funny part up there—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: The butter people have Los Angeles Hills, then.

CONRAD BUFF: This is just a charcoal sketch I sent in, not the finished product.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, that's beautiful.

CONRAD BUFF: That was a nice thing.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It must've come out a very fine mural.

CONRAD BUFF: Yes, very nice.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You were lucky you didn't have any door to go around, then. So many of them had the postmaster's door in the middle. What are the colors? Like the ones in Edison? Predominately brown, with a lot of yellow?

CONRAD BUFF: More like that.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: More intense?

CONRAD BUFF: Not quite as intense as that, but—

MARY MARSH BUFF: Red, browns.

CONRAD BUFF: Red, browns, green trees here.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And an old mule like the one that you knew how to drive [laughs], with carrots?

MARY MARSH BUFF: Supposed to have that sketch here, but [inaudible].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That's very nice.

CONRAD BUFF: The sketch was hanging up there for a long time. I don't know what became of it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Was this finished one that you did a direct fresco on the wall?

CONRAD BUFF: No. I never did a direct fresco.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Did you work on it down here then instead of canvas?

CONRAD BUFF: It was down on canvas and pasted up.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Did you have any assistants working on it with you?

CONRAD BUFF: No. It wasn't large enough so—oh, when I pasted up, I got a local painter up there to help me pasted up. But that's all the assistance that I had.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Do you remember the size of it?

CONRAD BUFF: No, I don't. I think this is it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh. Isn't that beautiful.

CONRAD BUFF: I think it was about four feet here and 13,15 feet there.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, they must have been pleased with that.

CONRAD BUFF: Well, the funny part was, when I first talk to the people there, they had a Democratic postmaster. And then, by the time it was finished and hung up, they had a Republican postmaster. So, he was sore. He didn't want any Democratic murals on the wall. And he said, Well, the picture is alright, it's a good picture. But it doesn't show our landscape, it, it shows the landscape down in southern California. [Mary Marsh Buff laughs.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, did you write back and tell them the story of why [laughs] it happened?

CONRAD BUFF: I had my money, and I was satisfied. But I don't know whether it's still there or not. You never know about murals. Maybe some new postmaster didn't like the idea and had it painted over. A lot of these post office murals have been painted over.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You know Don Totten did one that sounds very beautiful, a Bruin [ph] hills picture in Grant Elementary School in Pasadena. And that was wrecked, the school as least. And he heard that mural was taken up to Bakersfield. And I wonder if the Board of Education can help me find —do you suppose they would know what happened, in Pasadena here?

MARY MARSH BUFF: The audio-visual might, and the Art Department might. And maybe the Board of Education.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: The audio-visual or Art Department. He's very ill and has no way of tracing it. And I'd like to do it and try to find it for him as well—

CONRAD BUFF: What's the name again?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Totten, Donald Totten.

CONRAD BUFF: Never heard of him. Well, you see, I've been out of things for years now, and I don't know the young painters' names.

[00:50:08]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, he was on the Project, he was a friend of Ralph Costello's [ph] and Jimmy Redmond's And I think he was sort of a Wright disciple. I kind of gather, I mean, he was interested in Buddhism [inaudible].

CONRAD BUFF: I know that Wright had quite lot of disciples. I know Redmond, but outside of him, I don't know.

MARY BUFF: Ralph Costello [ph] you remember.

CONRAD BUFF: Of course, but Ralph Costello [ph] was not a student of Wright's [inaudible].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Do you know Jimmy Redmond well?

CONRAD BUFF: I didn't know him well, but I knew of him.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: He came up to Montana with Stevie [ph] in charge of that project.

CONRAD BUFF: Oh, that's right. Oh yes, you mentioned Stevenson.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Stevens.

CONRAD BUFF: Oh yes, I remember him. He was a nice fellow.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes, he certainly is.

CONRAD BUFF: Is he still around?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. He lives over in the Silver Lake area [inaudible] and he has a fabulous collection of paintings. I don't quite understand—well, I do understand. He started in the Art Students League to be an artist. And then decided he wouldn't be a good artist himself, but the artist needed help.

CONRAD BUFF: Oh, yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: He sort devoted his life to buy things, I presume, for when artists needed help during the Depression. And as a result, he has some pretty fabulous paintings.

CONRAD BUFF: I bet.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And I don't think he puts them out on exhibit or loan or anything.

CONRAD BUFF: Is that so? Well, he was closely connected with the Macdonald-Wright group.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Good friends, yes.

MARY MARSH BUFF: Do you remember the artist who was here the other night, Anders—

CONRAD BUFF: Aldred. Anders Aldrin.

MARY MARSH BUFF: Anders Aldrin.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, did you know him? I've been trying to find his address.

CONRAD BUFF: Oh, yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: He was on the Project.

CONRAD BUFF: He was on the second Project.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes.

CONRAD BUFF: Yeah.

MARY BUFF: I'll get—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, I would appreciate it.

CONRAD BUFF: He was here the other night for supper. And I told him that you called up, or that you wrote a letter, and I said, In case you would like to know—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Bless your heart.

CONRAD BUFF: —I put down the telephone number and address.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That was very thoughtful of you. I want so much to get these people in. Our grant is actually running out, you know.

[Cross talk.]

CONRAD BUFF: Yeah.

MARY MARSH BUFF: His address is 2858 Alessandro Street. And telephone number is—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That's over in the Silver Lake area.

CONRAD BUFF: No, it's—

[Cross talk.]

MARY MARSH BUFF: 12485.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Good. Thank you so much. There were some other people that Millier wrote about at the time he wrote about you. And I can ask him too, but I thought as long as I had the list with me today, I'd ask you if you knew if any of these people were on the Project because

I haven't found anything about them. Apparently, Kuniyoshi was working here then.

CONRAD BUFF: Kuniyoshi.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Kuniyoshi.

CONRAD BUFF: I didn't know he was here.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I didn't even know it either until I read this article.

CONRAD BUFF: I know he studied in Los Angeles, but I didn't know at what time.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And Mitchell Siporin was on the Project.

CONRAD BUFF: [Inaudible.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You don't you know him? And Lee Blair? Or James Patrick? He helped Millard Sheets with one of the [inaudible].

CONRAD BUFF: I don't know him.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Sheets I just can't get an answer out of him because he's the busiest person, I guess, in the world. Every time I call, he's off in Europe or off someplace [laughs].

CONRAD BUFF: [Inaudible.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It was a Ruth Miller who studied with Lorser Fietelson, he'll probably know. George Samerjan [ph] who was a fascinating character, was on the Project, I discovered.

CONRAD BUFF: He certainly was.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes. And he's disappeared, and no one knows where he is.

CONRAD BUFF: Oh, I know where he lives.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Do you? You do know?

CONRAD BUFF: I can't give you the address but—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: He is in town?

CONRAD BUFF: Oh yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Still with the Beatles haircut?

CONRAD BUFF: Well, that's a funny story.

MARY BUFF: [Inaudible] haircut.

CONRAD BUFF: You know that he did the mural at Bullocks [ph]?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes, in the sports department. Half wood and half painting.

CONRAD BUFF: Yes. Well, I knew him well, and we were quite friends for a while there. And he actually asked me to go in and on the Phillips [ph] thing with him, but I had known of his awful temperament. And how he threw things out when things didn't suit him. So, I said no, I didn't think we better get in together. So, he got somebody else to help him. But he got \$17,000 for that.

[00:55:20]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Good heavens. Well, that was for Bullocks, that wasn't the Project.

CONRAD BUFF: No, that was Bullocks. Well, he was a queer fellow. And for no reason at all, he'd throw you over. Some editor from *The Dial* from New York came with his wife to Los Angeles— [Phone ringing.] [Inaudible.] So I told them they ought to [inaudible] go see George Samerjan [ph].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: George [ph] made an appointment to tape this man, to meet him?

CONRAD BUFF: Yes, I called up George and said, Can I bring this editor from *The Dial*? He said, Oh yeah, sure. So, I took them over, that couple and Mary and I were in the car. And as we went up to his house, to the door, and I introduced these people to George. And we were going to go inside in, and he says, You can't come in, you've see my pictures already.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: To you?

CONRAD BUFF: Yeah. [Betty Hoag McGlynn laughs.] I said—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: What strange conduct.

CONRAD BUFF: He had played several things like that before, and I forgave them because I thought he was a queer character. I said, This is too much.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Why, yes.

CONRAD BUFF: And I completely broke with him at that time. I waited outside for these people to come out to the car and took them home. But anyway, later on, he came into the Project, and the strange thing was, on Saturday we all came to get our check. And then we had to take a number, there were so many people waiting. We took a number and then according to the number we went into the office. n So I had number 17. And when George came in, it would've been number 21 or something like that. And I said, George, you better pick up that number because you have to wait a long time if you don't get a number. George said, Me? Ha! And he walked right into the office.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Laughs.] And got away with it?

CONRAD BUFF: Got away with it.

MARY BUFF: Oh, yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Isn't that funny? He was a Maygar [ph], wasn't he?

CONRAD BUFF: No, a gypsy.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

[Cross talk.]

MARY MARSH BUFF: Very interesting painter.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: He was.

CONRAD BUFF: Very interesting man, very interesting painter. And of course, spectacular with his bang, he had black bang. But, then, what I was going to say, that was, of course, a long time ago. About three or four years ago, I went to go see an architect friend of mine who lived in that neighborhood where his house was. Where George's house was. And I said, By the way, do you ever hear anything about George? Is he still around here? And so the wife said, Why yes, I saw him the other day. He was coming out of the store with his wife as usual. His wife carried the packages. [Betty Hoag McGlynn laughs.] And he walked by. That's a great man, but he said he had silvery white hair now. So, I said, Would you mind coming over with me to see him? So, he said, No. So, we walked over the hill, it wasn't very far, and I saw the house. Oh, what a house. It was so dilapidated. Weeds were growing all over the garden.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: His poor wife can do everything probably [laughs].

CONRAD BUFF: And the steps [inaudible] around were falling to pieces. We heard the radio going inside. So, we walked up to the [inaudible] and knocked at the door and the radio stopped. So no answer came. So I went to another door, and I knocked again, no answer. So, my friend said, Let's go walk around the house. I said No, he doesn't want to see us. He might shoot us, if [inaudible].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I guess you couldn't tell. With a character like that.

CONRAD BUFF: So evidently he's gone downhill completely. Nobody knows of him anymore, and nobody sees his pictures. Annita Delano—you know Annita Delano?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: The name is familiar. I—

[00:01:01]

CONRAD BUFF: She's a professor at UCLA, teaching art. And she use to know George Samerjan [ph]. But she got him that job at Bullocks.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That long ago, huh?

CONRAD BUFF: Yeah.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, I do know her. She's in interior design.

[Cross talk.]

CONRAD BUFF: She's a big, fat woman.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes, dark. Uh-huh [affirmative].

CONRAD BUFF: Well, anyway, about 10 years ago I met her, and I said, Oh, do you ever see George Samerjan [ph]? She says, Oh yes, I saw him the other day. And he's still working.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I would like to go interview him. Do you think I'd dare? Do you think it would be safe? He really sounds—

CONRAD BUFF: He wouldn't do any harm. Whether he'd open the door for you, I don't know. [Inaudible].

MARY BUFF: [Inaudible] I'll try to look up Bradner [ph] [inaudible].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: He probably doesn't have a phone.

CONRAD BUFF: He wouldn't have a phone.

MARY BUFF: I'll try to look up Brandy [ph] [inaudible].

CONRAD BUFF: Oh, Brandy [ph].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: He was a friend of Hartmann's. You know the other character, Sadakichi Hartmann.

CONRAD BUFF: Oh, was he?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: They were together all the time, at the time before the Project, in the old Art Students League. I've heard quite a few stories about the two of them together. That was quite a pair, I'm sure. It must've been. [Laughs.]

MARY MARSH BUFF: [Inaudible] is an old friend of [inaudible.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes, he did that wonderful portrait.

CONRAD BUFF: Yes.

[Cross talk, inaudible.]

MARY MARSH BUFF: [Inaudible].

CONRAD BUFF: No. Well, maybe he's dead now. I'm sorry I can't even tell you where you would find him except that he's—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: What general area of town? Or I can try this teacher at UCLA she might be able—

CONRAD BUFF: If you contact Annita Delano, she will very likely know.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I'll ask her. Another one I wanted to ask you was Warren Newcombe [ph]. Did you know him? He was on the Project.

CONRAD BUFF: I know the name. I must've known the fellow, but I can't recall.

MARY MARSH BUFF: Isn't he in that—book called *The Painters of the Desert*?

CONRAD BUFF: No. Oh, no.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Charles Kassler [ph] we talked about. Henri De Kruif [ph] is dead, I'm sorry to hear.

MARY BUFF: [Inaudible.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And Phyllis Shields, I can't seem to get a lead on either.

CONRAD BUFF: I don't know her.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I thought—with women it's really bad, because they get married and forget their other names.

MARY MARSH BUFF: [Inaudible].

[Cross talk.]

CONRAD BUFF: I doubt if she—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: There was a Robert Gilbert [ph] in this group that I hadn't heard of, that was on the Project. Oh, and my letter was returned from Oscar Van Young.

CONRAD BUFF: Oh?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And I wondered why, because I understood that they were both artists.

CONRAD BUFF: Yes.

MARY BUFF: Yeah.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And they were both in town.

CONRAD BUFF: He teaches in—or he did teach [inaudible]—what do you call that college?

MARY BUFF: [Inaudible.] City College?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible.]

CONRAD BUFF: He had a class there. You might call up—

[Cross talk.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I'll call and ask them. Because I had all my stamps on the letter and it came back with no forwarding address. I think that covers all the people I wanted to ask you about.

MARY MARSH BUFF: [Inaudible].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Isn't it fun? [Laughs.] Well, I always ask people as kind of a final thing, what they think of, in general, of the overall picture of the project was as far as the American art goes, pros and cons.

CONRAD BUFF: It was a wonderful thing as much as it helped the artists over a terrible period. Without that a lot of artists just couldn't exist, they would have had to go on public relief.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, besides sustaining them physically, do you feel it was a good thing to introduce a lot of people, for instance, in lithography, a lot of people who wouldn't have gone ahead with it or you think—

CONRAD BUFF: Sure. I think it did a wonderful thing. I think they should do it now. The government ought to support art in some way or another. It's more difficult, almost now than it was at that time. No artist can make a living at it anymore. Everybody has to work—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You have to teach or do something.

CONRAD BUFF: Teach, or just go and work five days a week at someplace else. Oh, the situation for artists is absolutely terrible. The government would certainly do a fine thing if they could install some sort of an office whereby they would hire artist it work like journeyman.

[01:05:20]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I don't know whether you feel this from your son's work too, but I think our architects are also doing work in which they're welcoming more applied decorations and more work for the artist. Don't you? Or does your son think this?

CONRAD BUFF: My son hasn't had any work for an artist.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Is he very much against it?

CONRAD BUFF: He's not against it, but there's never any money left. The prices of buildings have—costs have risen to such an extent that they can just have the bare walls. And even painting is getting ousted because painters had such high prices. So, they try to do things [inaudible]. They do all types of houses without paint. No, [inaudible].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I had wondered if the mural renaissance at the time of the Project, and it really was a renaissance, had affected easel painters and accounted in part for so many of our painters doing large scale things like yours.

CONRAD BUFF: Oh, it's possible. But I don't know how the large-scale stuff came in lately. You know, the museum, for a while there, had a restriction on sizes that this was the largest size that would allow.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Probably for handling, don't you think? For ease, or something?

CONRAD BUFF: Then they used to charge three dollars to submit the painting. And if it wasn't accepted, you were never refunded the three dollars. So, I quit sending pictures to the museum. But just about when it stopped, all of a sudden, the sizes shot up. They have pictures that are covering a whole wall. I don't know how these things started. I don't know if it started in New York. Now the pictures the size of this wall are small.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And is—I think a strange trend if that the artists want to sell their painting because—

MARY MARSH BUFF: No place to put it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: There just isn't. A little smaller now—

[Cross talk.]

CONRAD BUFF: Well, I think it's practically no sale for artists' work. You hear a lot of big prices being paid for a handful of people in New York. But nobody otherwise sells anything. No, the thing has gone completely haywire.

MARY MARSH BUFF: Isn't it partly too, in some cases, a desire for status. And also, to the desire of an income tax problem.

CONRAD BUFF: Oh, people buy—

MARY MARSH BUFF: [Inaudible.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh yeah.

CONRAD BUFF: So, some collectors buy pictures, and then they give them to a museum. And they charge it off the income tax. Things like that. Some people want to have the postmodern things. But that's all very small, just like sand on the desert. The actual thing is sort of artists do not sell pictures anymore.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, it'll be interesting to see if Johnson's aid to all these things is really going to improve [inaudible].

[Cross talk.]

CONRAD BUFF: I don't know. It's a very difficult thing because we got so many artists now and there's no more standard. You can't charge things anymore, because some of the craziest things are trumped-up with great stuff. I suppose Macdonald-Wright has been able to tell you about that.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, we haven't talked—you mean today?

CONRAD BUFF: Yeah.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: We haven't gotten into that.

CONRAD BUFF: Oh, I see.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I'm almost afraid to because I know perfectly well some of the things that [inaudible.]

CONRAD BUFF: [Inaudible] the lowest period in art that ever existed. And the trouble is, all standards disappeared. Now juries pick out the silliest things, [inaudible] prizes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I think it's a very confusing art world today. There are so many different schools. And you have to admit, some of the people in the vanguard are serious about what they're doing.

CONRAD BUFF: Sure.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: But there are also followers who don't know that—

CONRAD BUFF: Well, there are so many more artists. Even housewives start to paint.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I think a lot of that goes back to the Project too. I know I went down and took sculpting classes, model drawing classes, and I think a lot of people became Sunday painters.

[01:10:05]

CONRAD BUFF: Oh, yes. [Cross talk, inaudible.] In a way—it's a healthy thing, in a way, so many people can engage themselves in doing useful work. But the standards have disappeared and what are you going to do about it?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It would hard to set up a board for accepting work, for instance, today, wouldn't it?

CONRAD BUFF: It's practically impossible.

MARY BUFF: Hard to be on a jury, or to be an art critic.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, even in the time of the Projects, with different competitions for exhibits, I know that they had juries that tried to represent two schools, the Eucalyptus School, and the modern school, as they called it at the time.

MARY BUFF: [Inaudible.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

CONRAD BUFF: But I always thought that it was a good idea to have two or three different classes, different juries.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I think it's good, too, but I just mean today it would be very hard because you'd have to have tremendous jury to cover all of these.

CONRAD BUFF: Yes. You see now, they get maybe 3,000 pictures sent in. They can only take about 50 or 60.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, can you remember anything else about the Project to tell us?

[Cross talk.]

MARY MARSH BUFF: We all felt elated that such a thing had happened. The Theater Project was

so wonderful, you remember?

CONRAD BUFF: Yes.

MARY MARSH BUFF: And the Writer's Project too. And how much more secure everybody felt, and spiritually too.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You did feel that, at the time?

CONRAD BUFF: It was a wonderful thing.

MARY MARSH BUFF: Wonderful to feel that there's an interest in it.

CONRAD BUFF: They produced good plays in that short period. They produced several very good plays and they wrote some very good books. It's too bad that that can't be repeated, but I don't see how it would be possible.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, let's hope it will work out that way. [They laugh.] I thank both of you so very much. I enjoyed this interview.

CONRAD BUFF: You're welcome.

[Recorder stops, restarts.]

Postscript. I'd like to suggest that the Archives write to UCLA, Library Department, Oral History Division, and borrow a copy of Elizabeth Dixon's interviews with the Buffs and also with all of the microfilm material much of it from the Project period.

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]