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Oral history interview with Helen Bess Clarke and James Mitchell Clarke, 1964 June 24

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with James Clarke and Helen Bess Clarke on June 24, 1964. The interview took place in Point Loma, San Diego and was conducted by Betty Lochrie Hoag McGlynn for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Archives of American Art's New Deal and the Arts project.

The original transcript was edited. In 2022 the Archives created a more verbatim transcript. Additional information from the original transcript that seemed relevant was added in brackets and given an –Ed. attribution. 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 Hoag on June 24th—[Recorder stops, restarts.]—interviewing Mr. and Mrs. James Clarke, C-L-A-R-K-E, at their home on Point Lomos, in—

JAMES CLARKE: Loma.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Point Loma, in San Diego. Instead of interviewing both Mr. And Mrs. Clarke separately, I'm going to do them together because they worked together on a most interesting project for the Federal Arts Period called the Curriculum Project. And it ties so closely together, that I think we should talk to them together. But first, I want to talk to each of you about your own life. Mrs. Clarke, you were—your maiden name was Helen Biss, B-I-S-S?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: No. My maiden name was Helen Strand, and I was married before, it was Helen Bess, B-E-Double-S.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And under the Project, you were known as—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: That's right.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —Helen—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: That's right.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —Bess?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And where were you born, and when, if you care to tell?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: I was born in Helena, Montana in 1904.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And where did you—where were you educated?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Well, we came to San Diego when I was 12. And I had all my schooling from the seventh grade on in San Diego. I thought I was going to be a journalist, and—but I was offered a job as a—offered a teaching contract. And so, I started teaching in 1928, at Brooklyn School here in San Diego.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And you hadn't been teaching long when the Project period began?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Well, I had taught seven years, at the same school, and was offered the job of directing the project in the second year, it was organized in 1934, with Martha Farnum as the director. And then I was offered the job in 1935 and directed the project for two years, which was a most wonderful period of my life, I think.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And why did you leave it?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: I got a leave of absence, and we went up to Berkeley and I had a little

boy.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That's a good reason for leaving. [They laugh.] And then, of course the project was at an end shortly after that, so what have you been doing since?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Well, the project did—went on for some little time. But when I returned, I was assigned as a supervising teacher at Euclid School. And then the next year, I became an elementary principal at Bay Park. And since then, I've been an elementary principal.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Until this week—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Until—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —correct?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: —this week and another day and a half, I will be free to do what I want. [They laugh.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mr. Clarke, I didn't get your middle name, is it—

JAMES CLARKE: Mitchell.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —Mitchell? M-I-T-C-H-E-L-L?

JAMES CLARKE: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Correct?

JAMES CLARKE: The reason I put that in is because I usually write under this name.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I certainly should have it then. And where and when were you born?

JAMES CLARKE: I was born in Miles City, Montana. In 1903, in the middle of a blizzard.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Laughs.] And were you raised in Montana or did you come to San Diego—

JAMES CLARKE: No. My father died when I was a very small child. And my family eventually came out here when I was 11 years old. And it was at this time that I started school. And I went to school here in San Diego, partly in public, partly in private schools. Graduated BA from Pomona College in 1924.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Had you taken a course in English or in writing there? How did you get into the writing field, because you are a writer?

[00:05:00]

JAMES CLARKE: Well, I decided after my second year of college that I would be a writer and that I would take as few English courses as possible. Because I felt that what one could learn about literature, one could learn for himself. And whereas some of the other things, that one could learn in college would be hard to get afterwards. So, I took as broad a course as I could, and my major was actually in psychology.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That's an interesting background. And what did you do after you were through with school?

JAMES CLARKE: Well, I hitchhiked my way to New York. And worked for six months on the old *New York Graphic*, which was at the bottom of the sewer of American journalism. And I wrote book reviews to supplement my salary. I was a reviewer [with a by-line (ph)] for *the Saturday Review*, when it was new.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: How interesting.

JAMES CLARKE: And the old *New York Post* and the old *New York Sun*. And then I got a job on *Adventure Magazine*, which I must say was the old *Adventure*, and nothing like what it has been since. This was the—literary historians will recognize that *Adventure* under Arthur

Sullivant Hoffman was a kind of unique publication, with Pulitzer Prize winners writing for it. And somebody should write at least an essay about this thing. And I was fiction editor of *McClure's*, under the same editor. And then I started—well, actually, I started freelancing in between times. My objective at this point was to support myself by writing magazine fiction so that I could write poetry. And my objective has never changed, but my way of trying to support my writing of poetry has never changed. I tried to support it in a great many different ways, and none of them have worked. And—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Are you not still writing poetry you mean?

JAMES CLARKE: Yes, I am.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Just the ways haven't worked? [They laugh.]

JAMES CLARKE: Well, the poetry is not awfully good. I've published some, but it's not awfully good. And the means have been extremely various, and none of them extremely successful either.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Laughs.] How did you happen to get started in projects out here in San Diego, if you were in New York at this time?

JAMES CLARKE: Well, I was not in New York at this time. I had come back to San Diego. And I had married, and the Depression had forced certain other family responsibilities on me. And I had been able to carry these responsibilities up until about 1935.

[00:10:06]

The problem at this point was that I had been writing a great deal of hack fiction. And the markets were folding up and I was folding up at the same time. I had about all of this that I could stand. And I was about to have our first child—I mean, our first child was about to be born. [They laugh.] And the—I've been living in Mexi—in Baja California. I didn't—the markets were collapsing like a fan. And it was an opportunity, as I saw it first, to survive. And later, after the Project got underway, I saw it as—it became a tremendous opportunity of an entirely different kind.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, you made of it such a wonderful thing. You people on it. Turned out to be a marvelous experience all around. What happened after the projects? Are you still a freelance writer?

JAMES CLARKE: Well, I am now. Well, after the Project—well, the Project was not over, but I was offered a position by Lyman Bryson as editor in charge of something called the Readability Laboratory at Columbia University. And I was there for—well, from 1937 till 1941. In 1941, I went into the Treasury Department as the Head of the School and College Department of the War Savings Staff.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Sounds interesting. Was this in the capacity of a writer, or—doesn't sound like it.

JAMES CLARKE: That's a very hard question to answer. And it really is impossible to answer it without a digression into the relation between writing and policy making.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Does it have anything to do with the projects? I mean, did the projects prepare you for this? If it did, it might be interesting to learn about how it did.

JAMES CLARKE: Well, it did in one sense. It diverted me from being an entertainment writer, which I was in the beginning, except for my verse [ph]. [In a way (ph)]—well, this is, in a sense, out of sequence. Because the Project diverted me even at a certain, well, studious—in the [inner statements (ph)], a studious pursuit, which I had more or less abandoned after I got out of college. I mean, you—you write hack—if you write hack fiction, or maybe any fiction, you're a sort of intellectual dilettante.

[00:15:23]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see.

JAMES CLARKE: You—this is going to be too long.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Laughs.] Well—

JAMES CLARKE: This is an excursion [inaudible].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —you were saying briefly that the curriculum was educational and research work and—got you into being interested in that type of writing. Is that—

JAMES CLARKE: Yes. And it also got me interested in how you can communicate, how it's in the simplest terms.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see.

JAMES CLARKE: And this is important to whatever else I did. I'm not saying it's important to the nation, but it's important to what I did.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Tremendously important thing in anything to be able to do it.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: But you did some writing in the War Department, because we had bulletins in schools.

JAMES CLARKE: You mean in the Treasury?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: In the Treasury, I mean.

JAMES CLARKE: Yes, sure, I did. But the thing is that in order to make any policy effective, it has got to be stated. The better it is stated, the more intelligible it is to the public. And consequently, the more effective it becomes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes.

JAMES CLARKE: And this is, I want to say, a matter in which I transferred what was at this time, Treasury policy, into educational terms. In a way that was apparently extremely acceptable to the schools. We saw something over $2 billion worth of war funds through that school program.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Heavens!

JAMES CLARKE: And—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Certainly is successful.

JAMES CLARKE: —it was a matter of making the war bond program an educational program, rather than merely a savings program.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see.

JAMES CLARKE: Which is the difference between school programs in the First World War. And this is an interesting parenthesis, this was organized and developed by Rex Stout, the mystery writer, who was a much more successful, and I suspect, a more effective writer than I am. But the background of that program was not the same as that in the Second World War. And—well, I guess have a different attitude towards life than Rex does too.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Laughs.] After that was over, did you come back to California?

JAMES CLARKE: Well, I did. For a while, I was—I would like to say something about that Washington period though, which is sort of connected with the Project and with whatever else you're doing here.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Good.

JAMES CLARKE: Is that—well, I must digress at this point to say that I was more or less brought up at a sculptor studio.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: In a sculptor studio?

JAMES CLARKE: Yeah.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You didn't tell us that. [Laughs.]

JAMES CLARKE: After we came out here, one of our—one of my cousins lived with us, it's a woman named Ruth Ball, who was a sculptor. And I was in and out of her studio a great deal during my—well, a period between 11 years and—

[Recorder stops, restarts.]

[00:20:05]

JAMES CLARKE: I was in and out of her studio, a good deal during the years between 11 and the time I went to college.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see.

JAMES CLARKE: The result, of course, was that I have a tremendous interest in art. And during this period when I was in Washington, I was rather closely associated with some of the Farm Security people, Roy Stryker and Ed Rosskam, particularly.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Thank you.

JAMES CLARKE: And I'm saying this because it has something to do with my point of view towards this whole business of government in the art, and as a fosterer of art.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JAMES CLARKE: And after the war, I was a consultant to various—well, during the latter part of the war, and after the war, I was a consultant to the War Department and the Committee for Economic Development and some business concern, some corporations. And then I came out here to do a job for the Rosenberg Foundation connected with the public schools, the public school camping program. This resulted in a book with Stanford Press, published about 1950, approximately.

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

JAMES CLARKE: Yes. It's—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Do you?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: It's Public School Camping.

JAMES CLARKE: *Public School Camping: San Diego's Pilot Project in Outdoor Education*.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Thank you.

JAMES CLARKE: And during the—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Pardon me, this sounds like a continuation of some of the curriculum pamphlets, in a way. The same type of approach probably, wasn't it?

JAMES CLARKE: Well, [coughs] the connection really is—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Thank you. Goodness.

JAMES CLARKE: The connection with the Curriculum Project is more with the Columbia—with the Readability Laboratory venture. We did a series called *The People's Library* which was published by MacMillan. There were 11 books, which were an attempt to present knowledge at the—but really, amongst the simplest possible levels, seventh grade reading level or less. And I believe now that this project was futile.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Public schools adopted it and used the books, didn't they?

JAMES CLARKE: No. Not—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible].

JAMES CLARKE: These books that you're looking at are not in this series at all.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see.

JAMES CLARKE: For this series, I did a physiology.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Why was it futile?

JAMES CLARKE: It was futile, because—I think at this point, it was futile because of the very rapidly rising educational level of the American reading public.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That's interesting.

JAMES CLARKE: But anybody who has any really serious interest in knowledge of any kind—and I mean any kind, across the board, from physics on through to aesthetics, say—is capable, in this period, of reading the books that are written by people who are working in the field. And the people who are working in the field can write very much better about—well, about their subject—their particular subject matter.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Because they're better prepared today than they used to be?

[00:25:36]

JAMES CLARKE: No. The people who write about it are not better prepared. It's the readers who are better prepared.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh.

JAMES CLARKE: So that—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see.

JAMES CLARKE: So that anybody who was any really determined interest is perfectly capable of reading the books, which are by scientists or by philosophers or by whomever. I mean, whatever field. And the—at least the—it leaves this area of simplification to the—it leaves it to the journalist. And this is very important, I believe. I mean, good journalism in the intellectual fields, I think is possibly the most important phase of journalism today. But the—journalism very rarely produces a good book. So, I think—this is the reason I think it's futile. It was futile, and the only thing that really came out of that project, as far as impact on the public is concerned, is the work of Rudolf Flesch. And I believe now that this—that the uses to which Rudolf Flesch put the things that we found out are—or have been pernicious.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: What did he do with it? I don't follow what you mean.

JAMES CLARKE: Well—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Because I don't know who he was.

JAMES CLARKE: Well, Rudolf Flesch is the author of a number of books, which have had a considerable impact on the public. The first of them was called *The Art of Plain Talk* which is—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Plain talk?

JAMES CLARKE: Plain talk, yes. Which was a book about the—well, how to write, so people can understand you.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see.

JAMES CLARKE: And the last of them to make a big, public splash was *Why Johnny Can't Read*.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, yes.

JAMES CLARKE: And as I said—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes.

JAMES CLARKE: I think the influence of these books from first to last has been pernicious. I would like to say, in parenthesis, that Flesch is one of the most brilliant people I've ever known. And I only wish that he had used his talents in a different way than he has. Well, anyhow, I came out here to do these camp books, and from that, I went into a State of

California project to do some books on Mexico for elementary schools. And this, of course, connects directly with the old Curriculum Project.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Especially teaching of Spanish in the school?

JAMES CLARKE: No, it is not directly connected with this. It was—the California Elementary Schools have a unit, which is employed statewide, on Mexico. Sometimes, it's combined with a more general Latin America unit.

[00:30:17]

And I was—they could not find any books that suited their purposes. That suited their purposes in the sense that they did not tell the children of California the things that the State Department of Education thought that they should know. And the man who is concerned with this was Jay Connor [ph], who was one of the chief organizers, and perhaps the father of this Curriculum Project here in San Diego. And I was available in the sense that my books that I had written for the Curriculum Project had proved fairly durable, and were still in use. In the late 1940s, they asked me to do these books on Mexico.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Well, actually, one reason they asked this was that they wanted to—the state wanted to reproduce five books that the Curriculum Project had done on Mexico. One on arts and crafts, one on foods, I've forgotten what the other three were.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And these had only been available to the county—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: These were just—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —of San Diego, hadn't they?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes. They were just paperbacks like this. And actually, Dr. Connor [ph] did—well, nobody thought that this was adequate to the need. And so, then they went on from here.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Was there anything in the Federal Arts Project that kept them from having these distributed—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: No.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —throughout the state?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: No.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I wonder why they never did that. Because they're such really great books for children, they should have been used in—

JAMES CLARKE: Well—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —the other cities.

JAMES CLARKE: —this has a—this is very closely connected with the reasons for setting up that Curriculum Project—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes.

JAMES CLARKE: —and the nature of it.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Being local.

JAMES CLARKE: And I think we really—this will become perfectly clear when we talk about why this was done. The educational philosophy—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes.

JAMES CLARKE: —which was behind it. And—

[Plane flies over.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Wait till it goes over.

JAMES CLARKE: In any cases, those—the Mexico texts are a kind of fruition or something, that began with the Curriculum Project.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see.

JAMES CLARKE: And so has some other work, which I've done since, which has been largely aborted. But it—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: But it was based on the work you did for the Project?

JAMES CLARKE: Yes. But that's all about me [inaudible].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, I think that it's very fascinating that all of that came out of it, just one of many.

[Recorder stops, restarts.]

JAMES CLARKE: Thank you.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mrs. Clarke, would you explain what the whole Curriculum Project was, because it was different from the rest of the WPA Projects in Southern California and different from projects in the rest of the country, I understand?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: The Curriculum Project came about because of a person having vision enough to see that the presence of artists and writers here in Southern California could be put to good use for making materials that the schools needed very much.

[00:35:01]

Local materials are not easily available, or material on local subjects, because there isn't enough call for them to warrant publishing them on a national level. Therefore, the Project was proposed so that the government paid the salaries of the workers. The city's—San Diego City Schools furnished the direction, the needs for the kinds of things to be done. The schools furnished the housing and all the materials. This location for it was chosen in the old Lincoln School down in the center of town where there was enough room for this to be located. It was also a very fortuitous location because the audio-visual department of the city schools was right across the street. And the things that people did for the schools, they could see processed and put on the trucks and delivered out to the schools for children to use.

[Recorder stops, restarts.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: When you mention these Lincoln Schools being adequate for the number of people, about how many people were working on the Project?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: At first, there were not so many. But during the time when I was there—and I went there during the—at the beginning of the second year to 1935—at the peak, we had 104 people. This included artists, writers, research workers, stencil cutters, mimeographers, people who collated the material, some binding had to be done. And also, in addition to what we produced there, we—at that time, we had a city school printshop, and we produced four or five titles, which were printed. *Houses Were Trees* here is one example of that. One was on tuna fishing, another was on the airplane industry.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And these were to be used in turn by the school, for the county of—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: This [inaudible]—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —San Diego.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Not in the county, this was for the San Diego City Schools.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: For the city?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And it wasn't used in the county schools?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: No.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Of course, not in the rest of the—[Cross talk.]

HELEN BESS CLARKE: The city school is quite separate. San Diego Unified School District is a big unit in the county, but the county schools are made up of smaller districts. And—

JAMES CLARKE: Don't forget the diorama makers. And—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: That's right.

JAMES CLARKE: And the wood carvers.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: What do diorama makers have to do with this?

JAMES CLARKE: And the model makers.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: These things were done too, under your Project?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Oh, yes. Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, before we get into that, let me ask you one question that I think I should here. At the same time that the curriculum was in operation, the Federal Works Progress also had writers and artists who were on other projects. For instance, the mural artists, and the easel artists. And I presume, Mr. Clarke, there were writers on other projects, or do you know?

JAMES CLARKE: Well, there was a Federal Writers' Project—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Did they send people—

JAMES CLARKE: —going—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —to your curriculum?

JAMES CLARKE: They did not send people—well, some—a few people, I believe, did transfer from the Federal Writers' Project to the Curriculum Project. And the—I have only an impression of the local Federal Writers' Project, which was that it was dominated by journalistic types of people.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:40:18]

JAMES CLARKE: And I would say that it was more politically oriented. The Curriculum Project was, by and large, staffed with people who didn't have any particular ideology.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see.

JAMES CLARKE: And who were—at least the more creative people, were artists and writers first and last. The Federal Writers' Project by and large produced guides. And as far as I know, very little, if anything, came out of that effort in San Diego itself. They—there were—there was a Federal Arts Project about which I know very little. We were—on the Curriculum Project, we had a good many artists and—who were, as I see it, directed toward a more definite objective. That is there was—[Phone rings.]—not exactly a utilitarian purpose, but at least a purpose.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Excuse me.

[Recorder stops, restarts.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Then I think we should probably go into each one of the different kinds of things that were done by the Curriculum. For instance, in the murals, we—on the tape, so far, I've recorded murals that were done under the auspices of the Treasury

Department murals, which were commissioned murals, and then we've had Federal Art Projects, WPA murals, which were done by the artists under that. And then I find that under the Curriculum, you had artists doing murals.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: But these were done particularly for schools where there were appropriate places for them.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

HELEN BESS CLARKE: And I believe that the first one that we did was the very large project that Charles Reiffel undertook. And that was doing the large pieces for the sides of the Russ Auditorium. On the one side, he used the back country, and on the other side, the waterfront. Then there are two large murals at Roosevelt Junior High School Auditorium. These were done by Belle Baranceanu. And these portrayed early California history, with Indians carrying water—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Portola [ph]?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes, that's right. Yes. The—[Cross talk.]

JAMES CLARKE: What about La Jolla?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: —one that—I don't really—the only one at La Jolla that I recall is the post office one and I believe that Belle did that as a commission from the federal government separate from the Project, but I'm not sure about the—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It was done before your Project, I know. And since it was the post office, it probably was the Treasury Department. Sounds like it.

JAMES CLARKE: Well, I was—there is one in La Jolla High School too, and I don't know who did it. [Betty Hoag McGlynn note: also by Belle Baranceanu –Ed.]

HELEN BESS CLARKE: The one that—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I'll have to check that on the way home.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Aloys Bohnen, B-O-H-N-E-N, did at Snyder Continuation School is one showing different types of work that people do. This was appropriate because of the place where it is.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see. It was kind of a manual art school, was it?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That's very interesting. What were—there's so many things that were under this before we get to the books, which you were both so intimately connected with. You mentioned dioramas, panoramas. What were those done for?

[00:45:11]

HELEN BESS CLARKE: They were done to help bring to life some of the historical aspects for children. They were geared to the studies that elementary school children make. And as a result of that, we have continued to have dioramas made in our audio-visual department.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Were they used in hallways?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: No. They're used for the purpose of children studying the—well, they recreate a situation or a place, and the things that happened.

JAMES CLARKE: It might be historical, or it might be contemporary. Some industry or some phase of civic life or something like that.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Most of them are historical, though, as I recall.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Were these sent to the schools and circulated among the different schools for use by individual teachers?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: These were—they're still circulated in—they were processed and

teachers take them out. They're delivered to the school for them, and they are allowed to keep them for a certain period of time. They ordered them for the period when they are going to be studying this particular phase. We also did models, and I remember one craftsman by the name of Fred Hocks [ph] did several—well, one I remember best is a colonial kitchen, which was made—a great deal of research went into this before he did it and it turned out to be a beautiful job. I forgot what his others were.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Were these paper—papier-mâché or plaster or do you remember what they were?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: I think they were more—objects were carved out of wood. They were beautifully made.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: About how large were they?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Well, most of the dioramas—well, it probably tells here in this thing, but—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Coughs.] Excuse me.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Well, they have listed here, dioramas containing wood carvings of 84 people, 55 animals, 15 buildings and conveyances, and 134 miscellaneous articles. These are just what were done within a period of about seven months.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: This is just amazing. What were some more of the projects done?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: There were a number of exhibits that were made. California flower folders, an exhibit case of commercial woods. Some cases showing the evolution of tools. Good deal was done on sea life, tide pools, those kinds of things.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Did they work in connection with the La Jolla Institute at all?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Or do you remember?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: I am sure they got help out there. Because they used the museums and all places where they could research material.

JAMES CLARKE: That name, by the way, is Scripps Institution of Oceanography.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Thank you. [Laughs.]

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Some of the flat plates that were done included the history of printing, and I've forgotten—well, this says 26 of them. Do you remember the man's name who did those? I can see him.

[00:50:07]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: What do you mean by flat plates?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Well, they were 26 by 37 inch, just flat pictures.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: And these were done in black and white.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Were they pen and ink? Do you suppose?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: I think they were done more with brushes. I'm not sure. [Clyde –Ed.] Kelley did a whole series on irrigation. And Kelley did a good many of the lumber industry pictures also. A whole series was done on transportation. And there were some dioramas on transportation also. And then of course, the tuna fishing came in for a great deal, both in the mimeograph books as well as the printed book that was written, and that was illustrated by Bohnen.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, I think that, probably, we should talk about these books now, because they were—are just fascinating.

JAMES CLARKE: Well, I think one thing we ought to mention at this point is I think we are to give a credit to Lucy Sprague Mitchell, at this point, who was an educator of the 1930s and very well known in her time.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, she's from Stanford, isn't she?

JAMES CLARKE: No. She was—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: [Inaudible.]

JAMES CLARKE: —at the Little Red School House in New York.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That's right.

JAMES CLARKE: And she's the wife of a very famous economist. And the phrase that typifies her ideas is: Here and now. The—and the idea simply was that you could teach young children a great deal better by using what was immediate and present in their environment and widening out from this specific material. This kind of material about one's own environment or local environment, as Helen said before, is practically impossible to get from national publishers or—and even difficult on the state basis. So, that a Project like this, with just pennies from heaven, you can use all of this local material. And this was, in general, a philosophy, which we are all very carefully taught. When we came into the project, we were oriented in this particular way. Many of us were permitted to visit classrooms. And we had Helen and her predecessor who was Martha Farnum and the coordinator for the project who is Martha MacIntosh [ph], who was later on an assistant superintendent here. In fact, we had the best brains of the school system to guide us.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JAMES CLARKE: And so that we had a very clear-cut idea of what this material was for. It was to teach children through what was available to them in their local environment and to make the local environment more available to them than it would be otherwise.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Now whose idea had this been in San Diego to begin this in the first place?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: This was direct—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Was it yours?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: No, no. This was directly the idea of Jay Connor [ph], Dr. Jay Connor [ph], who was in charge of elementary education.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: And—

[00:55:02]

JAMES CLARKE: Jay Davis Connor [ph], yes.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes. And he's the man who's in Oregon, I think.

JAMES CLARKE: Yes.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes. He later went to the State Department in Sacramento, in the Education Department.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Certainly an ingenious thing, and it worked so wonderfully. I—

[Phone rings.]

[Recorder stops, restarts.]

[Betty Hoag McGlynn note: At this point, Mrs. Clarke brought out some wood blocks which we looked at as she continued talking. –Ed.]

HELEN BESS CLARKE: The wildlife fiction, [inaudible] the books about these animals.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You mean these beautiful woodblock plates?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yeah. Because each of those was used on the cover of a story that was written on the Project.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You mean, as many books as there are blocks here?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes. Yes, there are animal blocks. Yeah.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Goodness.

JAMES CLARKE: You mentioned the sculpture of Ruth's too, and I think there was some wood sculpture done at the same time.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes, I think there was.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: What was it used for? Just educational again or—

JAMES CLARKE: Yeah.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: This was your cousin—

JAMES CLARKE: Ruth Ball. Ruth Norton Ball.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes. Tell us about it on the tape. You told me, but it—

JAMES CLARKE: Well, I'll give you—well, let Helen tell you about the project where she did, and I'll give you some more on Ruth later, because she's—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: All right.

JAMES CLARKE: —somebody you probably want in the archives.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes. Good.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: You asked about the wood carving; dolls of many countries were made, and those were all wood carvings. They were costumed and we made a great effort to see that everything that was done was authentic. And we tried to use the people—use their particular background, so that, for instance, the man who did some of these things on Scandinavia was a Scandinavian and had the background in addition to what was looked up, or—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Do you remember the names of any of the people who worked on the dolls? Doesn't matter [inaudible].

HELEN BESS CLARKE: I should remember that man's name. Fred Hocks [ph] is the one who did the models of the colonial kitchen, and he did a good deal of wood carving also. But he is not the one who did most of the costumed dolls. I don't have any names for—well—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I thought you might remember some but—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Well, I should.

JAMES CLARKE: Well, this Ruth Ball thing was that simply she went and modeled a lot of animals in the zoo, so the children could get a—well, could have a little more leisurely time just to find out what they looked like. And most of this came to nothing because of the casting problems. So badly cast, they were pretty well messed up.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Did she cast them herself, or did she—

JAMES CLARKE: No, it was somebody doing casting for her. I don't know who—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: But it just wasn't good—

JAMES CLARKE: —but it's not— not confident. It's very rarely that you can find anybody in this country who can cast. It's a difficult art. In Europe, they can do it, in the United States, they rarely can.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, do they have them in the school rooms and the teacher passed them around so the children could pick up the animals and get the feel of the shapes and all? Was this the point, or were they used in dioramas?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: No. They were much larger than could be used in the dioramas. They were models that were too big for children to pick up and handle, carry around, but they were such that they could feel them and get them in that way. I would say they were, most of them, maybe about 15 or 18 inches long and—

[01:00:33]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Were they painted?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: No, they weren't. They were natural—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Like the little head that you showed me?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: The babies head?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yeah.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible.] Well, the animal books themselves are very interesting because the stories were written by the writers who were in the Curriculum. The research was done by naturalists, I suppose, who were working for this. And they were done—they were typed, weren't they? And illustrated and then run off on a—what kind of a machine?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: They were run off on an electric mimeograph machine.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: They were not printed, in other words?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: No.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: They were mimeographed and then stapled—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: That's right.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —together.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Just the way this is put together.

JAMES CLARKE: Except for the wood blocks that were on the covers.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: That's right.

JAMES CLARKE: Those were actually carved as wood blocks. And the artists illustrating worked with a stylus on a mimeograph paper.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: They did?

JAMES CLARKE: Yeah. That's right, isn't it, Helen?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: This is right, yes. Some of the names of them were *Brownie the Golden Beaver*, *Hop—- long the Jack Rabbit*, *Reddy* [ph] *the Mountain Beaver*, *Tommy Broadstripe the Skunk*, *Tawny* [ph] *the Mountain Lioness*, *Tufted-Ear Wild Cat.*

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Were these humanized and animals, Mr. Clarke, in the stories usually, or were they—

JAMES CLARKE: Well, about the animal stories I don't know very much because I never did any of them. Helen would know more about this than I.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: More like Joel Chandler?

JAMES CLARKE: Joel Chandler Harris?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Joel Chandler [laughs] Harris stories, that type of thing or—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Well, no, I don't think they were. I believe we better turn it off [inaudible]—

[Recorder stops, restarts.]

[Betty Hoag McGlynn note: We stop to read some of the stories. –Ed.]

HELEN BESS CLARKE: —are not humanized in the fact that they act like human beings or are given names that way, they're a naturalist account of the animal. And very beautifully written. And every page has illustrations taken from the text, often interspersed with the text, very lively and very artistic drawings throughout the pages.

JAMES CLARKE: Well, the people that worked on these things were especially enthusiastic about the development of their technique of making something effective, with extremely limited means. And they worked frightfully hard on these things. And as I was saying before, one of the advantages that these books have is the lay-in effect that the illustrator and the author had worked so very closely together, so that you got an extraordinary degree or an unusual degree of integration between the text and the illustrations. Including in fact that the layout of text and pictures was made by this sort of teamwork, so that in the end will have—integration is complete, which it never is, unless the layout problem is considered along with the rest of the creative job.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Who was in charge of putting these out, do you remember? Was any one person in charge of coordinating the artists and writers?

[01:05:01]

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Well, this was my job.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see. And one of the interesting things that is done with them is the ink is all brown, and the front covers are brown with a white wood block, and it's a very rich and warm effect. In fact, I think they're some of the most beautiful books I've ever seen. I think it's a shame that they can't be used all over the United States for children. In San Diego, children have been very, very lucky for 30 years [laughs].

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Well, it [clears throat] certainly is remarkable what can be done with mimeographing when you have real artists working on the job

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah. Good artists.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: That's right.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Certainly [inaudible.] And there must have been several dozens of them at least. Does it give a list of how many, or do you remember how many at this time?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Well, of course this is only a partial list. This is—the list that Betty Merrell [ph] has at the city school's professional library, is the thing that would tell the whole story, I think, of the written books.

JAMES CLARKE: However, there was—I'm sorry, dear.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Go ahead.

JAMES CLARKE: There were some people who did a bulk of the work, and this would include Belle Baranceanu and Hilda Preibisius, and [Frank C. –Ed.] Barks, and [Clyde K. –Ed.] Kelley.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Well, Barks was mostly a stencil cutter.

JAMES CLARKE: Yeah.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: But of course, you have to know how to do this in order to convert the artists' work into something that really shows up.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes.

JAMES CLARKE: And he was a lettering man too, if I remember—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes.

JAMES CLARKE: —correctly. Sometimes, Belle and Hilda worked directly on stencils, if I remember correctly—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes.

JAMES CLARKE: —they actually did their own stencils. But I was just trying to remember the rest of the people. It was Bohnen and—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Clearbrook [ph].

JAMES CLARKE: [Bert –Ed.] Clearbrook [ph].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Katherine Alyn, A-L-Y-N.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And one is [Allen J. –Ed.] Stover. Did he do something?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Stover did mostly pen and ink things, except for a few things like this, which he did in oils. But he was mostly naturalist, and did charts and that kind of thing of local flora.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And maps also?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Maps, yes. And then there was a woman by the name of [Martha –Ed.] Jones, who did the most beautiful plates of plants and flowers, working directly from models which were brought in. And those plates were used in botany classes in the high schools.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: They were just beautiful.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And when you say plates, what do you mean? Were they—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Well, I mean, pictures—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Were they watercolors?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: They were watercolors, yes. And I remember the ones of avocados and avocado blossoms, then she did some details set in.

[01:09:58]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And I think the Los Angeles Art Institute library has several of those plates. They have all the Design Index, which is—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —a great project in itself. And there were several folders of things. One was of animals and fauna in charts, which may have come from yours, and one was with plants, and I wonder if it wasn't [inaudible].

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Well, it could very well, because it was just beautiful work. What was her first name anyway? It was Jones, and she lived out in Bird Rock.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, the books we've been talking about are far from the only ones. Do you want to describe some of these other ones, which were done—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Well, I think maybe the two of them that were done on water are good examples of materials that were prepared on the local scene, which was no—available in no other place. This one on water at the missions that Jim did, and which is illustrated by Hilda Preibisius, is still used in schools.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Is this elementary level or high school?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: This is elementary.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: And it starts out with the Padres, "who had no water on the hillside above Old Town. The sprays turn all day long. Cool water throws its long arms on grass and bushes and trees and flowers, all the way down to Presidio Hill, growing things, make the earth green." And from this to the end, where—I mean, it's typical now. "Every year, new people come here to live", is the way it ends. "These people have to drink and bathe and wash dishes. They have to eat and only water that is stored up in rain time can make things grow in this country. So, the more people there are in San Diego County, the more water we will need. That is why our engineers are already planning new dams and reservoirs. That is why we are going to bring water over from the Colorado River. We are like the Padres, because we have to get more and more water to take care of more and more people."

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Our engineers are still just as [inaudible]—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That's right.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: —as they were then [laughs].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It's as important now as it was back in 1937.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: This must have involved a tremendous amount of research.

JAMES CLARKE: Well, I think this is something that we ought to talk about is—excuse me, I'm interrupting because you were going to talk more about this.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Well, I was just going to mention the one that Janette Pratt wrote on water, and it was called *Our Drink of Water*. And this was a printed book. And she took it from—well, she started out with the water that comes out of the tap and traced it back and did a great deal of research before she did any writing at all. And she knew the dams in this county better than anybody. She was a constant visitor at the filter plant. And as a result of this, some models were made of filter plants, and the kind of thing that children like to know and which they can't normally get, can't see.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And her book was done on the Curriculum also?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: It was done on the Curriculum Project, and it was printed at the school printshop.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Is it also still used in the schools?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: I believe it is. Well, many of these things have disappeared because, I think—well, it seems to me that about 1,000 copies were as many as we had printed.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Over a period of 30 years, [inaudible] a lot of them would disappear.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes. It's—then we had a local bookbinder do those books. And this one here is an example of that.

JAMES CLARKE: Well, and—are you through for a minute?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yeah.

JAMES CLARKE: When you said—[inaudible] you were talking about teacher's background books and—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes.

JAMES CLARKE: —I think you ought to explain this. I think maybe a lumber job is as good an example of that as anything.

[01:15:07]

HELEN BESS CLARKE: We did some things which were particularly for teachers, making the research which people did available to teachers in a booklet or monograph form. And this, of course, was, well, chiefly source material. And then the work for the children was—had to be

done in such a way that it was understandable to them. And the *Houses Were Trees* is the story of what happens from the time that the trees are felled until the time that houses are built.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible] a hardbound book? Is that what you call it, when it's—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes. [Clears throat.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Were there very many of this kind that were done?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: There were about five.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Because they were very expensive, aren't they, to put out, too?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Well, they were not so expensive, considering that we had the school printshop, so that the overhead was taken care of. And this was worked in as part of the printshop's job.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I don't know if the tape understood this. This is one of Mr. Clarke's books also, this *Houses Were Trees*.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And it was illustrated by Clyde Kelley and Aloys.

JAMES CLARKE: Aloys.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Aloys.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Aloys Bohnen. Oh, with cover by Hilda Preibisius and Frank C. Barks. It's a beautiful book. You were telling me something about the illustrations before dinner? Would you repeat that? About the [inaudible].

JAMES CLARKE: Well, I think Helen was telling you something about it. There were—children served as models for these pictures, some of them.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: I remember the illustrations better for the tuna book because they chose Portuguese children for that from a Washington School and Mr. Bohnen worked directly from these children in doing those illustrations. And they're very wonderful. I wish I had one of those here.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You don't have one [inaudible]?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: No. [Clears throat.] There was a great deal of material—teacher background material, on lumber. At that time, we brought lumber rafts in here from Oregon.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, I see.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: And I remember, there were many mimeograph drawings of the rafts and the way the lumber went into the mills and—

JAMES CLARKE: Well, I did a tremendous, big thing, which is over there in that stack of teacher background on the lumber industry.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Was this a byproduct of writing this other book or was the result of this—

JAMES CLARKE: They were done—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —of the [inaudible] one?

JAMES CLARKE: The research was done simultaneously. And we had a—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: My heavens.

JAMES CLARKE: —photographer with an old plate camera. And he and I went all over town and shot hundreds of pictures. It was a kind of fellow who could take a very good picture if you told him where to point his lens. And it's too bad those got burned up.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: All the photographs? I mean, I—well, had an artist made these drawings from his photographs?

JAMES CLARKE: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Here's a log raft coming in [to harbor (ph)].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Isn't it beautiful? This certainly made the teachers and the children conscious of their community, didn't it?

[01:20:01]

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Right.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Very, very exciting, to be able to understand what was going on [inaudible].

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Here are the tools that were used. And you were [inaudible].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: In the whole history of—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: [Inaudible] long before that. [They laugh.]

JAMES CLARKE: Maybe this would be a good point at which to talk about the relation of research to the writing and to the illustrations, Helen.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Well, yes.

JAMES CLARKE: [Laughs.] You know more about those researches than I do.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: [Inaudible.]

JAMES CLARKE: Okay. But we had people who were called researchers. And—just as *Time Magazine* and some of the other magazines have researchers. And these people were supposed to dig up information, and they did dig up a lot of information. Just as a sideline, I found it very difficult to use the information they got because it all came in out of context. And I really don't think that you can do an awfully good job of writing if you don't do your own research.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Secondary sources are no good.

JAMES CLARKE: Yes. Well, sources out of context are not the best, at least the most satisfactory to me; [Well, sources out of context are the least satisfactory to me. –Ed.] a lot of journalism is done this way. But I think it misses something.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, probably when you're going to have to make it very simple for children, you have to know it even better, don't you? To be able to condense the—

JAMES CLARKE: Well, this is the way I feel about it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —thing. Yes.

JAMES CLARKE: To make the kind of simple and general statements that you have to make for children, if you don't understand it pretty thoroughly yourself, you just purely make the wrong statement. You're very likely to.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: So, you ended up doing all of your own research?

JAMES CLARKE: I did most of it myself. [Cross talk.] Yes, practically all of it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: This was true not only for the lumber stories, but for water and for tuna fish and all these different things that you wrote?

JAMES CLARKE: Yes, uh-huh [affirmative], for all of it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Helen, did you want to talk about that too?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Well—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible.]

HELEN BESS CLARKE: [Coughs.] —I wanted to mention all that was done on the fishing industry. We did one hardbound book on tuna fishing. And then this one on tuna clippers, which Jim did. Fishing—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: What is a tuna clipper? The boat?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Tuna clipper is the boat.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, thank you. [They laugh.] [Inaudible.]

HELEN BESS CLARKE: And then fishing is a game, and big fish in little cans is—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, for heavens [inaudible].

HELEN BESS CLARKE: [Inaudible.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It comes out tuna fish sandwich.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes. We forgot about Siegers [ph].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Another artist?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: No, Siegers [ph] was a researcher, but this is all extremely important right here where we live.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I supposed most of the children have come from families—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Well, yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —that are concerned with one of these industries.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: There're great many who are.

JAMES CLARKE: Of course, the tuna industry has changed so drastically, as the lumber industry has also, that these particular books have mainly an historical interest.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, I see you have some on the orange industry too. [Cross talk.]

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes.

JAMES CLARKE: It's almost totally disappeared from San Diego County.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes, grow houses instead of [inaudible] here. [Laughs.]

JAMES CLARKE: That's right, grow babies.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: I remember when we got out this one, *San Diego Has Five Beaches*—I didn't realize you'd written so many of these, you wrote this one too.

JAMES CLARKE: Yes.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: And Katherine Alyn also did the illustration here. Hilda did the cover.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Beautiful cover. Isn't that lovely? Yes.

[01:25:02]

HELEN BESS CLARKE: These were printed from the woodblocks in our printshop.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: And La Jolla, Pacific Beach, Mission Beach, Ocean Beach, and Coronado. It's really quite interesting reading.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: What is it, the historical background or the physical description of

the physical property of these beaches?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: It's more the physical description.

JAMES CLARKE: Well, it does have a historical element in it, which I—which is quite important. The reason that San Diego has these beaches is because they were part of the original pueblo. In other words, when the Spanish government founded San Diego, it gave San Diego a great deal of land. I won't go into the history of this, it's part of the laws of the Indies which established these pueblos in a certain fashion. So, that it made all of these beaches around here municipal property from the beginning. There was never any problem of it's being private land.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Wasn't that fortunate?

JAMES CLARKE: So, it made us a continuity and rationality of development of these beaches, which is really quite unusual. And it's a part of San Diego's heritage. When we talk about selling off some of our pueblo lands, this is what we mean.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, there is a high school down here, the Dana High School, which has murals of the history of *Two Years Before the Mast* in it—in the mural, I mean. That also is part of your promontory, isn't it?

JAMES CLARKE: Your—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: The history of the whole—of the hides being brought?

JAMES CLARKE: You're sitting just about on a place where the hides came in.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, really? The way he described them being thrown over the cliff?

JAMES CLARKE: No, no. That's at the Dana Point—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes.

JAMES CLARKE: — where the hides came over the cliff. But the San Diego hide houses were about, oh, perhaps 600 yards out along the point from here. They are part of the military reservation in the present time. But they landed all along here.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And then also, didn't they have smuggling of Chinese from the coast here?

JAMES CLARKE: Well—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Or is that hearsay?

JAMES CLARKE: This is one of the things that us waterfront people don't talk about.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: All right. [Laughs.] Anyway, it hasn't anything to do with the Project. I shouldn't—[They laugh.]

HELEN BESS CLARKE: This is a different kind of thing which we haven't mentioned. We did a poetry supplement for each of the social studies units that were used in the elementary schools. And this—each of them had a different cover. This was done by Ora Dobbs. And the material is the result of the research that was done. This is—was to go with a unit on communication and records. And—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible] scaled for age?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Or for years in school?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes. This has been a sixth grade unit. And we mentioned the fact that the Project was located right close to the audio-visual department. But it also was close to central library so that our people could use the facilities there for this kind of thing. And these have been used greatly. Well, of course, our units have changed a great deal as a result of the new state framework. But these were used for years and years. [Inaudible.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Did you have a group of people working with you doing research, deciding about poetry, for instance, to get these out?

JAMES CLARKE: Well, Helen would know about this more than I—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: This wasn't under the writing end of it?

JAMES CLARKE: Well, yes and no. Each of the writers would have his own individual project. I would come in and [inaudible] I would turn something in. And next time I would come in, would say, How would you like to write about canning tuna?

[01:30:08]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see.

JAMES CLARKE: So, I'd say okay. And—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Maybe we would already have had someone doing research on that, so that there would be a considerable file of material on it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see. I wondered about the poetry in particular, isn't this selected poetry for the study?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: This is all selected poetry, yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I just wonder who did that and how they went about it? Did teachers decide what poetry they wanted? [Inaudible]—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: No. The research person simply found all the poetry on—that had anything to do with communication.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: And then we winnowed it and decided what to use.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And there were several of this type?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: No. There had to be many jobs that were versatile enough [laughs] so that different people could use them or so that they could be used to fill in gaps because these people worked for an eight hour day.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You mean enough to keep the people busy, who were on the Project?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: To keep people living. Yes, this is right.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: This might be a good place to discuss the thing you were talking about a while ago about the people who were on the project, and what value you feel that it had for them. Whether it carried them on to other things?

JAMES CLARKE: Well, then let's talk about why it's called the Lincoln School Follies. [They laugh.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, that wasn't on the tape before. It was called at sometimes.

JAMES CLARKE: Now this was my personal name for it. There's got to be fairly commonly used. You can tell about the people and then I'll tell about some people.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: [Laughs.] Well, I think I said before that people had a good deal of emotional attachment to the Project because they felt that what they were doing was—well, didn't only feel that it was worth doing, they knew that it was because of seeing things being put right to use. And then as Jim said earlier, many of them were—it was set up so that they could go into a classroom sometimes to see the kind of thing that a particular age child did, what they were like, the kind of things that they needed. And then, I remember there were some times that we made arrangements for these people who'd worked on materials to go into a classroom to see them being used. And this had a terrific impact on their whole feeling about being worthwhile and doing a job that was really necessary.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I wonder it didn't make a lot of teachers out of many, many of the workers on the Curriculum?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Well, of course, a good many of them were pretty old to undertake teaching if they had been able to.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You didn't have an age limit on that?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: In those days, we didn't hire teachers over 40.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, I see. [They laugh.] Times have changed.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: More babies.

JAMES CLARKE: I think that's a very true and fair statement. A lot of these people are pretty badly beaten up by the Depression when they came in. And they came in in their clothes they bought 10 years before and it was some very odd costumes indeed. [They laugh.] And the pressures on them had made some of them kind of odd and erratic and temperamental. I never have seen so many temperamental people collected in one place in my life [they laugh] and all kinds and descriptions.

And there were certain percentage of these people who have been kind of misfits. Who hadn't really found themselves and who really found a useful outlet for their abilities in this Project.

[01:35:24]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Probably for the first time, some of them.

JAMES CLARKE: A lot of—not a lot, but a certain percentage for the first time really found some outlet. And for the whether writers and artists, it was a great thing because most of the artists and writers, or at least a good many of them, felt not so much concerned with making money as long as they could make a living. But to do something that had value, to have your picture looked at, to have your book read, and you know it was going to be read, to know that is really useful. So, that people really turned to and did the very best they possibly could. And I think it galvanized some of the people, like Charles Reiffel, I'm sure, would not have been productive at the age—as productive at the age of 70 as he would have been if he hadn't been given the stimulus of knowing that he was doing something for an audience that would be receptive to it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I'd like to interrupt to say that Charles Reiffel is one of San Diego's very finest artists. He was mainly an easel painter, oil paintings. And he, as you told me, he did experimental work with grease crayons and watercolor medium too. And he was a rather elderly man, I believe, when the Project started, wasn't he? And the Depression had struck him, and he probably couldn't have gone on making a living for himself without its help. Now, how much work did he do for the Curriculum? I didn't realize, except for the panoramas, the murals, that he had done the easel paintings for the Curriculum.

JAMES CLARKE: He—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: He did a terrific number of easel paintings. And I think—I don't think you call them easel paintings, the ones that are large enough to hang on the wall, do you?

JAMES CLARKE: No.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: No.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: He did a great many of them on the on the back of Masonite. You know, how rough this is and made a very good texture.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: And then we had someone who made very plain wooden frames for them. And one of the very helpful people in guiding artists was our art supervisor, Lotta Perry. Who had a great deal to do with the kinds of projects that these people did.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: She was from the school board?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: She was the city school art supervisor.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see. That's P-E-R-R-Y?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, the paintings that you've just described or like the ones that I saw today in the San Diego Civic Auditorium—oh, Civic—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Center?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Civic Center, yes.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: They're hanging in various offices.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: But I still don't understand how that came out of the Curriculum. It sounds like a Federal Project thing. I'm just curious about whether artists were doing things that were to be hung on the wall? They were not educational, in that sense.

JAMES CLARKE: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: These were just paintings to be enjoyed.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Well, this is true. However, he painted local subjects. As I said, I don't think I knew what sycamore trees were [they laugh] before I saw Charlie Reiffel's paintings.

[01:40:00]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see. Of course, many of them were of scenes, particularly the old San Diego Town. Old Town, you call it.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: I think probably he was taken on in the first place as an illustrator, but [clears throat] his talents were not illustration.

JAMES CLARKE: Well, the Project was extremely flexible.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes.

JAMES CLARKE: Which was one of its advantages. People came in like pouring something into a hopper and what they were good for, they got used for, which is one of the advantages of having had this thing administered by school people, I think. Because school people are accustomed, they're habituated to finding out what their pupils are good for and to try to help them realize this potential. And this was the whole spirit of this Project, was to utilize the potential of these people.

And I have been puzzling quite a bit about this problem that has just come up as to the work of Charles Reiffel and some few others who were doing easel paintings, and murals. The—a part of this Project's intention really was aesthetic—education in anesthetics. And again, this was a here and now proposition; let's take our own materials and use this in a creative way as the person like Reiffel could do. And the intention of some of us, at least, was to write as well as we could for the children.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative], mm-hmm [affirmative].

JAMES CLARKE: And certainly, Reiffel wanted to paint as well as he could for the children. So that you had a kind of conjoined aspect which I think is typical of that particular time. The United States was documentation crazy at this time. You had all kinds of people doing this that started before by Bellows in the Ashcan School in New York and—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: The regionalists all over the county.

JAMES CLARKE: And regionalists, most especially Benton and Grant Wood. And in a manner

of speaking, Reiffel was a documentary painter and a very good one, I think. And he documented his whole landscape as it was at this particular time. One of the difficulties, of course, with documentary painting is that it dates so. It has to be awfully good or it becomes only of historical interest. But it's my feeling that the Project did have these—both an aesthetic and an informative purpose. Wouldn't you say this is true, Helen?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah, definitely.

JAMES CLARKE: And it was managed in the spirit. And Reiffel was happy as a clam. He was a small, wiry person. As I told you earlier, he's been apprentice to a—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Lithographer.

JAMES CLARKE: —to a lithographer. And if you paid him a day's wages, he'd do you a day's work. And he did a tremendous number of pictures.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: And he did some work on Saturday and Sunday for you too.

JAMES CLARKE: He was very happy doing this because somebody was going to look at these pictures. And he had enough to eat on. And actually, those starvation wages that we were getting were enough to keep us in, well, more comfort than people might imagine. My first wife and I lived on $60 a month that we got out of this Project for quite a while. And we did not live badly.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Didn't you get a writer's salary of [$]94? [Betty Hoag McGlynn laughs.]

[01:45:03]

JAMES CLARKE: No. I don't know why.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Some things slipped, sometimes.

JAMES CLARKE: I guess I did after a while. I guess, I—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: I think you must have.

JAMES CLARKE: I was in some kind of other category.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Did Reiffel do any of these books that we've been talking about?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: No.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Although he was an apprenticed lithographer, he didn't do training in this work?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: No.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Was he any help in teaching any of the people who were on this Curriculum? In that field? As a teacher? Advisor or anything?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Well, I think he was a help in that he was a real—he had a lot of morale value.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

HELEN BESS CLARKE: He was—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Must've been very inspirational?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: He's that kind of man.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes. But as far as actually teaching any of the other artists, I don't believe that this—and technique—I don't think that this happened.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah. Was he an established artist here, and well known at the time [inaudible]?

JAMES CLARKE: He had a national—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible.]

JAMES CLARKE: He had a national reputation at this time, yes. He was out of the Silver Mine School—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: He had an international—[Cross talk.]

JAMES CLARKE: —in Connecticut.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: He had an international reputation.

JAMES CLARKE: Did he?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes.

JAMES CLARKE: Did you know he'd exhibited abroad? Maybe he did, I don't know.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes, I—I'm not sure where this came from, but I remember that it—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It was wonderful to have him in the group. Were there any other painters like him or of that caliber who were working for you? Any well-known painter, that's what I'm trying to say.

JAMES CLARKE: No. The only writer who became well known in that group was a fellow named Charles Booth who did just one book. He did a book on oranges. And this is a kind of a nice story that maybe I should tell as a story. He was a mystery story writer, and had been making a very modest living for number of years doing mysteries. And he did one called *The General Died at Dawn*. And he went broke just about the time he finished it. So, he came on the Project. And all his friends, including myself said, Charlie, this story will not sell. What's the matter with you, anyway? So, he didn't say anything. He just kept sending it out, and it did not, at that time, at least sell as a book. But he sold it to the movies. And he got the call when he was—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: *The General Died at Dawn*?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

JAMES CLARKE: He got the call that it had sold at—when he was on the pro—one day when he was done at the project working. So, this was a really big, dramatic thing, [Betty Hoag McGlynn laughs.] $10,000 for Charlie Booth. And $10,000 in 1935 was an awful a lot of money, I'll tell you.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: A millionaire. [They laugh.]

JAMES CLARKE: So, he immediately left us and went to Hollywood. And he got an Oscar for some spy story, either *The House on 96th Street* [sic] or something like this. I don't remember the exact title. It was *The House on 90-something Street* anyway. And became—apparently, his talent was for writing movie and moving picture stories. And so that—he was such a nice person that nobody on the Project or elsewhere felt in the least—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Envious.

JAMES CLARKE: —envious of him, of his—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, that's a nice thing to know.

JAMES CLARKE: I hardly know any other writer—I've hardly known any other [they laugh] writer in my life who could—[They laugh.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible.]

HELEN BESS CLARKE: But you know this is a place where Doc Quirk should be talked about, also.

JAMES CLARKE: I think so too.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Who is Doc Quirk?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: [Inaudible.]

JAMES CLARKE: Well, his name was Leslie W. Quirk.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Was he a writer?

[01:50:02]

JAMES CLARKE: He was a writer. And he was called Doc Quirk because some cartoonist had a character name Old Doc Yak. Somebody called him Old Doc Quirk. So—

but he had been editor of the *American Boy*. And he had a writing school and had written a whole string of boys' books, which have been very successful. The boys' books of the Ralph Henry Barbour type. I remember the first one was *Baby Elton, Quarterback*. [They laugh.]

He'd also been a collaborator with a very successful *Saturday Evening Post* writer named Horatio Winslow. And, the reason, I think the story is—one reason I think the story is worth telling is that the '30s were a time when literary taste and literary markets changed very drastically. And Doc Quirk had the misfortune to write a war story at the wrong time. And the change in taste that came with the Depression just wiped out these books from which he'd been making quite a decent living, small royalties, but each of them kept coming in. And it not only wiped Doc Quirk out from a literary standpoint, but it wiped him out—almost wiped him out as far as his personality was concerned. It just crushed him. And finally, one of his friends got a hold of him and dragged him, protesting, down to the—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: This was Mernie Mitzer [ph], wasn't it?

JAMES CLARKE: Yes, it was Mernie [ph]. Dragged him down to the Project. And we finally talked him into going to work because he was so discouraged and his pride was so deeply wounded, that he could hardly stand to do this. But—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: He quit several times, and had to be brought back.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, really?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes.

JAMES CLARKE: Again, it was this thing that is more common in schools and elsewhere, is to work with the person until you bring out the potential that this person has. When we finally got Doc stabilized in his job enough so that he became the—well, a production editor. The one who put the books together, saw that the commas were in the right place and that everything was spelled right. And that things got out. And he was very good—I mean, you don't get to be editor of *The American Boy* without knowing something about this kind of job.

He—well, it saved his later years for usefulness and saved him as—I think, as a person. I'm quite sure that he would have committed suicide otherwise. He never talked about it, but he was discouraged to the point where—and he was an extremely useful person, both on the Project and afterwards, because he became sort of production editor for the city schools. Which he—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Until he was 65, and I believe after that, they hired him for brief periods of time.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: As an advisor?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Because of his value.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Isn't that wonderful?

JAMES CLARKE: And he was really a wonderful person. It was just that—it just really wiped him out, and he lived alone, he was not married, and he just didn't have anybody to help hold him up.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Wonderful for him and wonderful, obviously, for the Curriculum because he must have contributed a lot to his—[Cross talk.]

JAMES CLARKE: [Inaudible.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —fine caliber [ph].

JAMES CLARKE: It's hard to get these books out. They wouldn't have this kind of, well, finished, almost professional—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Professional.

JAMES CLARKE: —look about them if it hadn't been for Doc.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: This is right.

[01:55:10]

JAMES CLARKE: I mean, it just got a really first-rate professional editor off the bargain counter, is all.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That certainly is a thrilling story.

JAMES CLARKE: And he was very happy with us, too.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Another one that you mentioned was Booth, who was that?

JAMES CLARKE: This is a fellow who wrote *The General Died at Dawn.*

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, yeah.

JAMES CLARKE: It's Charles Booth. It's Charles W., I think.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And then, Belle with the unpronounceable last name?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Baranceanu.

JAMES CLARKE: Baranceanu.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Would one of you spell it for the tape? [Laughs.]

HELEN BESS CLARKE: B-A-R-A-N-C-E-A-N-U.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: She was—came from a Romanian immigrant family, I believe, in New York—I mean, Chicago.

JAMES CLARKE: Belle had been a dancer.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible] fine education.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: She's trained for ballet, didn't she?

JAMES CLARKE: Yep. Though for Belle—Belle was pretty young at this time and this is a different kind of opportunity that this thing gave, because of all [laughs] those walls to paint on, and [they laughs] all those books to illustrate in, and you got paid enough to live on in. So, what more did you want?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah. Well, it's a wonderful thing for all [inaudible] and [inaudible] people that way.

JAMES CLARKE: I don't think—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Reproduction was something of a problem because there is a limit to what you can do with stencils. But—and there was not the money to have cuts made of drawings to reproduce in that way. And this is one reason why we turned to linoleum blocks. And I don't think Belle would ever have really perfected the use of linoleum blocks if it hadn't been for this need.

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BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: One of the beautiful books that was done under the Curriculum was

called *Birds Were Different Then*. And you started to tell me, before we turned the tape on, about this woman who wrote it.

JAMES CLARKE: Her name was Engracia de Rosado. And she was a refugee from the Mexican Revolution. Except for being a little heavy, she is a very beautiful woman with very lovely skin and beautiful big eyes, and a very quick wit, and evidently been quite well educated. And I don't know how she got on the Project or what her qualifications were. But I'm quite sure that she did not come on as a writer. But it was one of those cases that I was mentioning a while back where the Project used people to the best advantage it could make of them, and we found that she could write and that she had this store of Mayan legends. And she began writing them one by one. And they turned out very well and with some skillful editing by Doc Quirk, it made a really, quite a nice book.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: I think she may have been taken on because of her knowledge of Spanish in the first place.

JAMES CLARKE: Maybe. There was some work done in Spanish, one of those books in the stack is—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You mean, she translated some of the books into Spanish? For ones that had already been done?

JAMES CLARKE: No, there was a Mexican Project book or two. Wasn't there? Wasn't there a book of recipes or something?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes, I think something like that was done. I don't remember exactly.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: One of the wonderful things about this book that we're speaking of is the illustrations. Who did the—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Hilda Preibisius did the illustrations. And they were done with watercolor and were the most beautiful colors. This is one regrettable thing that we couldn't reproduce in color. Because those were just gorgeous.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: These line drawings are still beautiful.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: The watercolor paintings that she did ones that you said were burned when the audi—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: I suspect that they were burned in the fire at audio-visual. There are so many things lost in that.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Great many of the records of the Project?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: A shame. The woodblocks for instance from all of the animals' stories? Were they in that fire?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: I don't know.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You don't know if those exist?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: I don't.

JAMES CLARKE: I think they must have been in—all of—most of the dioramas and models and I'm sure quite a number of Reiffel's pictures and all sorts of things went up because it was an old frame building, and it was just stacked.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible.]

JAMES CLARKE: It was like three grandmothers' attics.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: You know, this reminds me that we had some people also measuring ability level of reading material for children. And we had several people who became quite

proficient in this. The method that we used chiefly was—

JAMES CLARKE: Lewerenz.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: —called by Lewerenz, L-E-W-E-R-E-N-Z—method of measuring numbers of syllables and—I don't really remember what it all entailed, but we managed to come out with a grade-level placement of materials. So, that if we were writing something for third graders, we were fairly sure that we were not too far off on it.

[00:05:13]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I wonder if any of those people went on to positions with the numerous IQ placements around the different schools today because they [inaudible].

JAMES CLARKE: I don't think so. Because this measurement of reading difficulty is quite a different matter from—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Psychological testing.

JAMES CLARKE: Yes, from measuring intelligence. It's quite different. And there are several different systems for it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JAMES CLARKE: The—and it can be a very great hazard to a writer. If a writer is too conscious of his vocabulary level and his sentence length, it stiffens up his work, very often editing to grade level will ruin his work, too.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Gives his muse arthritis, as it were. [They laugh.]

JAMES CLARKE: Yeah, that's right. And this was one of the things that Doc Quirk helped to do, is to keep people's prose from stiffening up on this thing. I, myself, worked out an approach to this problem which is different from most of the formula approaches. But this is a very long story that I don't think I can tell to this day. It has to do with a lot of rather complex, complex things. And it's not for this—should I tell you something about Ruth Ball?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes, I wish you would, please.

JAMES CLARKE: I don't think that the Project did anything much for Ruth because she was—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Excuse me, may I interrupt just a minute to go back in case they don't get the two tapes at once?

JAMES CLARKE: Yeah.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: She was the cousin with whom you lived, or some relation, when you first came to San Diego, and was an artist?

JAMES CLARKE: That's right. And she was a sculptor on the Project, and did the animals in the zoo which were so badly cast. She lived with my family which is—but she was not by any means young when she came on the Project. As nearly as I can figure out, she was born sometime in the late 1870s. And one of the things that happened to her was that as a child, she fell of an apple tree on her spine, so they had to cut pieces off it progressively, which never does anybody any good.

UNIDENTIFIABLE SPEAKER: Suffered a great deal.

JAMES CLARKE: And between—she was educated—I mean her art education was at the Cincinnati Academy of Fine Arts, around about the turn of the century. And as I told you, she traded work with [Frank –Ed.] Duveneck who was at the institute at the time she was there. And she has work in the Philadelphia Museum of Fine Arts, and in Cincinnati, and I think, St. Louis, and San Diego has a little child figure of hers. And she was a very outgoing, imaginative, extremely erratic person. And she came out with us in 1916 and was given—after the exposition folded up, they gave her, oh, maybe about 75 feet of one of the upper stories of one of those old buildings. It was just a loft, which she inhabited in a jumble of plaster, wax, clay, objects of all descriptions and kinds. [They laugh.] But—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Chicken wire.

[00:10:00]

JAMES CLARKE: Armatures. She—it's my own opinion that she's an interesting example of a person who never realized their full potential, partly from personal reasons because of her illness and domination of her family. And I think that this made her vulnerable to influences that were against her best direction. That what she really had a talent for was the kind of quick sketch in clay or wax, which some of Degas' figures are good examples.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JAMES CLARKE: And that when she was working this way, she worked very well. When she—there were two influences that were brought to bear on her. Earlier, people kept wanting her to do the kind of baroque decorative sentimental fountains and [backs for (ph)] mirrors and this kind of thing that was so popular. And sentimental portraits, as well. And later on, this became—especially, the sentimental portrait thing, became complicated by the fact that she got a commission to do a gate for the Marine Corps when they built one of their first buildings down here. And they insisted that the cannons and the eagles be measured with a—to the millimeter. And all smoothed out. And she really [they laugh] went out of her mind doing this that I don't think she ever quite recovered because from then on she tried to make everything slick and smooth—or nearly everything. Which had its advantages because she can cast something that's slick and smooth pretty easily. But if—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible] sketch.

JAMES CLARKE: But if it's a sketchy sort of thing, it's murdered in casting because it's all full of undercuts and small surfaces, and an air bubble in one of those small surfaces and you've had it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah.

JAMES CLARKE: So that she—well, towards the end of her life, she did some odds and ends of things. She has a statue of Christ sitting in front of a church over in the Negro district, a Catholic Church. She did for the church. She became a Catholic toward the end of her life. And whether she was ever paid for this, I have no idea. But anyway, it's a big thing that's sitting over there in cement. And—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: In San Pedro?

JAMES CLARKE: No.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I mean, San Diego?

JAMES CLARKE: In San Diego, yeah. She lived here from1916 until about, what, five years ago, when she died. And toward the end of her life, she spent most of her worktime working with mental patients at the Naval Hospital. She was very good for these patients because she was so accepting of everything they did. And with—almost all the boys that—she had a studio, and the boys would come in and work in her studio. [Coughs.] Great many of them did fairly respectable amateur pieces. How the therapy worked out, I don't know. [They laugh.] But the Navy was very fond of her. And so, that it was not an unuseful life in any respect. It just always seemed to me too bad that the talent (ph) never produced more. But it is perhaps somebody that the Archives should have a mention of.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes, she sounds like a very interesting sculptor. It's good to have that material [inaudible].

JAMES CLARKE: Because there are—I suppose these pieces of hers are mostly in basements in t museums.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: These things are all coming out—[James Clarke coughs.]—like a revival. It's like women's clothes. If you wait long enough, it comes back. [They laugh.] Great many.

[00:15:01]

JAMES CLARKE: Well, I was wondering about this—in a period when everybody is doing non-

objective pictures, you could scarcely do something like this Curriculum Project. And as I said before, it was a period of documentary art. And you couldn't marry the instructional element to the aesthetic element and come out with a good deal of value.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JAMES CLARKE: And this is one of the things that I've been wondering about in terms of the talk of government support of the arts. I think it's fairly rare that the artist produces something entirely on his own. That is to say, it seems to me that in the history of art, most of the really effective things have been done because society has pointed some direction.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes, usually the church.

JAMES CLARKE: That's right. Usually, the church or even such things as the early Rembrandts and the court paintings in Spain, and Velázquez and so on. An artist, like as Rembrandt did in his later period, may find something that he simply has to say, and go ahead and say it. But this generally comes out of some background in which he has—society has given him the direction.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Do you think that's why the Curriculum was so very successful, because it was answering society's need through the school?

JAMES CLARKE: Well, I think we all felt this and—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And your work certainly shows it.

JAMES CLARKE: —we may have produced better work if we hadn't had this direction, but I don't think so. I think if we had been better artists, we would have produced better work within this framework, because I have worked a good deal under various kinds of direction. What I'm trying to say, I think, is that if the direction is not too confining and the artist or the writer has something to say about what is to be accomplished and how it is to be accomplished, he may be more free than he is when he is responding to purely commercial demands as so many writers are, especially when they're writing for magazines, or even in writing books. Very often the writer is responding to publisher's demands and critics' demands.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JAMES CLARKE: And it's possible, I believe, for the artists to be freer in the right kind of a government circumstance, or just as free, as he is writing for the market as it exists. Because to write for the market, you inevitably create a piece of merchandise, which is treated as merchandise. And this is a very big problem. And as far as school material is concerned, the restrictions on the writers and the artists when you're producing textbooks, or any material for the schools for that matter, are very much greater than they were on this Project or than they were when I wrote the Mexico text for the state.

And the reason for it is that instead of having to satisfy people who are in effect collaborating with you in a relatively small number, you're having to satisfy strangers, all over the country. You're having to satisfy curriculum commissions and boards of education, everywhere, who have different prejudices, different desires, different needs. And the restrictions that they put on the writer through the publisher. Publishers are quite well aware of this, as I understand it, but they can't do anything about it. They are trapped, so the artist is trapped.

[00:20:34]

There is no comparison, for example, between the pictures that Hendrickson did for these books of mine under relatively free circumstances for the state, and those that he is doing under very much more restrictive circumstances for one of the large publishing firms.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

JAMES CLARKE: This, of course, does not answer all the questions, I think. One is a question of audience. A government can pay, can support the writer or the artist. But he can't buy the artist or the writer an audience. The government cannot do this. And I don't know how to

answer this question. And I don't know how to answer the question of how much direction you need to give to an artist or group of artists or writer or writers, and at the same time, give them enough freedom.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Maybe some composite of these tapes of talks all over the country will give us a better perspective. What do you think about it, Mrs. Clarke? You've been quiet. Generally, you agree it was a worthwhile thing at the time?

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Oh, I should say so.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible].

HELEN BESS CLARKE: I was thinking that the kind of direction that they had was tempered by freedom. And the whole climate of the thing tended to free them to do their best.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. It's this wonderful spirit that existed. Fellowship and cooperation—

HELEN BESS CLARKE: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —that certainly inspired them, [inaudible] beautiful. [Inaudible]. [Recorder stops, restarts.]

JAMES CLARKE: There's something that has puzzled me very much as to what the relation of [inaudible], or rather the painter and the sculptor to the architect should be, how do you work this out so it's fully effective? Because, for example, in Mexico, they gave Diego Rivera and Orozco some beautiful spaces to work in. Superb spaces to work in just because that type of architecture, those old buildings, provided these spaces. Now—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [The heart (ph)] of the architecture.

JAMES CLARKE: The buildings, of course, were built a long time before but spaces were there. I mean, they had been—the spaces had been designed into the buildings. All you had to do was put a picture in it. And—[inaudible]—for example, in the case of these Reiffel murals for the Russ Auditorium, the space was abominable. It was much too tall for its—

UNIDENTIFIABLE SPEAKER: Width.

JAMES CLARKE: —for its width.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It has a doorway cut into the arch where he had to do the design, and [couldn't even see it (ph)].

JAMES CLARKE: They had to cover those paintings finally with hangings for acoustic reasons.

[00:25:03]

If there had been any amount of planning done, either for acoustics or for art, but preferably both together, you would have come out entirely differently. And I'm thinking again of sculpture in some of the buildings in Mexico. Some of the churches, say, in Guadalajara and most especially, the old—they called it a *convento*, what it actually was was a missionary headquarters in the town of Tepoztlán. This building is so massive that it is almost like a hill. Little grasses and trees grow on its roof which is made of great huge stones. But the front of it is covered with some of the strangest bas reliefs [ph] I have ever seen. They're part Az—they're slightly Christianized Aztec. So, that they come out angels, but they look like a—they looked pretty Aztec.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Are these 19th century?

JAMES CLARKE: Oh, no.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Earlier?

JAMES CLARKE: They are at the latest 17th century, or probably very early in the 17th century. I'm sure this building was built within 100 years of the time after the conquest which was in 1519. And I think probably, they're 16th Century.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Real little putti. I see. [Laughs.]

JAMES CLARKE: That's really, really old. But the use of the space is—it seems to me that the architect must have had in mind something of this sort up there. And he had his workman, and he told him in a general way what he wanted up there, and they put it up there. As if this thing has sort of grown together between the craftsman sculptor and the architect who is designing this.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That integration certainly will have to be done if anything's ever done with the government in working with the arts.

JAMES CLARKE: I think we made too many mistakes of this kind when we're throwing murals — or putting murals on walls all over the country in the '30s.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: They almost gave the country a distaste for murals because of it. It's been a good lesson. And sculpture in many cases.

JAMES CLARKE: Of course, so much of this kind of thing gets lost. If you go around New York City looking for architectural sculpture, you will find it in the most amazing places, on doors, on lintels. Lintels—there's one building in midtown when you look up, which very few people ever do, here are these great over life figures of, I don't know what, looking down at you. They're just peering over the parapet.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: These are Victorian things, you mean?

JAMES CLARKE: Well, they look more Gothic than Victorian. [Betty Hoag McGlynn laughs.] I swear they do. And a bo—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I think San Francisco has a lot of this.

JAMES CLARKE: How they got there—they're just up there on the roof looking over at you. [They laugh.] Well, you just forget how much of this stuff is done. Maybe this is an area of public education that ought to be emphasized a little bit.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: I think the architects revolted completely against it in the international style that we have had for the last 20 years or so in America. And I think that it has left a lack of warmth about the buildings that people have objected to. And I think all architects are very conscious of this lack of ornamentation, and have a desire, I think, that our different building products today are indicative of this. For instance, the many grills and arches that have suddenly become popular are answering it. But I think that they are overworked, and we're going to be tired of them and some of us are already. And we're going to be ready to let the artists step back into the picture and work with the architect.

JAMES CLARKE: Well, you got to give him something better to work in than cement. This is, I think, is a good part of the reason why decoration went out of fashion. Because what you can do in stone is a couple of centuries away from what you can do in cement. You just can't make anything out of cement that looks—

[00:30:20]

HELEN BESS CLARKE: There are other things that—

JAMES CLARKE: [Inaudible.]

HELEN BESS CLARKE: [Inaudible].

JAMES CLARKE: You would think so. [Recorder stops, restarts.] This is a footnote on the Curriculum Project, is that we were not required to do all our work at the Project itself. It was — for certain kinds of artistic products and for some writing, it was just out of the question. There wasn't—you couldn't get off by yourself enough to do anything so that we were permitted a good deal of freedom. And we were not paid to work all the time. We worked intermittently which was probably a good thing because we probably were more productive than if we did an eight hour grind of it every day in the same place. The—my later experience with various types of writing jobs convinces me that it defeats its own purpose to the have writers and artists on a regular production schedule.

UNIDENTIFIABLE SPEAKER: You can't punch a time clock and [inaudible].

JAMES CLARKE: Or even be in the same place, they go dead (ph). They just figure they're getting paid to be there. And this is almost inevitable, even if they fight it, the feeling overcomes you.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. It's interesting that they didn't have to at that time. I think I have kept you two up much too late already.

HELEN BESS CLARKE: No.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It's been a wonderful tape, and I've enjoyed it so much. Thank you so very much for telling me all of this for the Archive.

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]