



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Homer
Dana, 1964 July 30

Contact Information

Reference Department
Archives of American Art
Smithsonian Institution
Washington, D.C. 20560
www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions
www.aaa.si.edu/

Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Homer Dana on July 30, 1964. The interview took place in San Diego, California, and was conducted by Betty Lochrie Hoag McGlynn for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Archives of American Art's New Deal and the Arts project.

The original transcript was edited. In 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 Lochrie Hoag, on July 30, 1964, interviewing Homer Dana in San Diego. Pacific Beach. Mr. Dana, you were active in the Federal Art Projects in San Diego, working with Mr. Donal Hord on, I think, all of the statues that were created here, and I want to ask you about them for the Archives. Before we talk about the Project period, I'd like to ask you a little about your own life. Do I have your name, right? H-O-M-E-R D-A-N-A?

HOMER DANA: Yes, that's right.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And where are we born? And when if you want to tell us.

HOMER DANA: Well, I was born in the state of Washington, in Ellensburg, in 1900.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And did you go to school in Ellensburg?

HOMER DANA: No, we came to California when I was young, and I have lived here most of my life.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Did you have formal art training?

HOMER DANA: I had some art training in the Santa Barbara School of the Arts. But it was technical training, mostly, bronze casting.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, then you've been a sculptor all your life, too.

HOMER DANA: Well, not all of my life. But [they laugh] I've done a great deal of it. I started in first working with Donal. In order to do technical work. We planned on having a foundry of our own. And I would cast things in bronze, and Donal would model them.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Hm, why [inaudible]—

HOMER DANA: We thought that'd work out very well. But the Depression came along, and we didn't have any money.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Laughs.] [Inaudible.]

HOMER DANA: So, we got some diorite from the local quarries and began developing our own technique in that, because there wasn't anybody who could show us.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: How did you happen to find them diorite in the first place? Do people go out and prospect for such things? Or how does it happen?

HOMER DANA: Well, it started with an egg, believe it or not.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: An egg?

HOMER DANA: Yes, Mr. Fred Rogers of the Museum of Man had an egg about the size of a turkey's egg. And it was black diorite and polished. And he said, You know, you fellows ought to carve this stone because it looks very beautiful. And when we did get a piece of the stone,

we found that we didn't know how to work it at all. We didn't have any tools. We didn't know how to start, and we were completely stumped. But the quarryman and people who made tombstones came to our rescue. They were good friends of ours. And they showed us the tools to use, and we developed the technique for sculpture, which was out of their line.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

HOMER DANA: But they gave us our start.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, that's very interesting. You might say the style trend in diorite had come full circle because when we were in Europe last year, in Italy, we saw many eggs made of what I thought were marble. Maybe they were diorite too. They were very popular as decorators' items. And [inaudible][Cross talk.]—

HOMER DANA: I think they are marble. That's marble country, you know.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It is? That's interesting. The time you were going to start your foundry, I was just curious about something. I believe in those days, there was a man named Guido Nelli who was the only person who had a bronze foundry in the western part of the United States.

HOMER DANA: Nelli.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Nelli, yes.

HOMER DANA: Yes, I remember the foundry. I didn't see it, but I remember that there was that foundry in Los Angeles.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And it has never been replaced, has it?

HOMER DANA: No. No, there's another foundry there, Bayer, B-A-Y-E-R. But I don't believe they do very much in the way of lost-wax [cire perdue -Ed.]. I think they do a little bit, but most of it is sand casting.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well as far as you and Mr. Hord went, it was a good thing that the Depression came along because you might have filled the gap of Nelli's [inaudible] casting things. Although I can't imagine it [would be sculpture (ph)].

HOMER DANA: We might have done a great deal in bronze and nothing in stone. Donal loves wood most of all. He's done his best work in wood. Because —

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Excuse me, just a moment. I think we'll have to wait for that airplane. Just—the tape will pick that up instead of us. Thank you. I think it's far enough gone. I didn't catch what you said. Does Donal prefer working in wood?

HOMER DANA: He likes the wood, and he feels he does his best work in wood. But we began to work in stone because it kept both of us busy. And while he planned them and supervised them, I did the bulk of the—at least the preliminary work of roughing them out. He always likes to finish them, detail the faces and the hands and the parts that require a little bit more skill.

[00:05:21]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: More delicacy.

HOMER DANA: Yes. Well, his health wasn't quite right for heavy work because he had a rheumatic heart. And so, anything that took a great deal of physical exercise, it was best that he didn't do.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see. Well, it's strange that his choice of woods is—with the woods that are hard to work too.

HOMER DANA: Well—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Is it because he's such a powerful man that he likes it?

HOMER DANA: No, he picked them because they were beautiful, not because they were

hard.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see.

HOMER DANA: Most of the hardwoods are very lovely to look at, and also, they don't nick and scratch easily.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh. And they have beautiful graining, too.

HOMER DANA: Very beautiful, yes. And most of the tropical woods that are hard have a nice grain figure, and also, they are dark in color.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. How are they finished as far as the polish goes?

HOMER DANA: Well, they're just finished as highly as we can with pumice and rubbing [ph] stone, and then they're waxed. And that's the only finish they have. And you can always renew the wax if they look a little dull.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: They're so beautiful. I'm wondered why they were—

HOMER DANA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —very soft and shiny. [Cross talk.]

HOMER DANA: Well, we burnish them—that's the one thing—we bone them, as it's known in the circles who finish fine woods. They take a piece of hardwood or a piece of polished bone or something of that nature and burnish the whole surface.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

HOMER DANA: And the wax goes on very smooth over that.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It must be difficult when the piece of sculpture has a fine detail.

HOMER DANA: Well, it takes a little longer, of course.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Great finesse. And you—we probably should talk about particularly the pieces that you worked on for the Project. The first one was *The Aztec*.

HOMER DANA: The first one that I worked on was for *The Aztec*. Well, it's the first thing that I worked with Donal on was *The Aztec*.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see. Did you do any work for the Project not with Mr. Hord?

HOMER DANA: No, but he did something that I didn't work on.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Not with you [laughs].

HOMER DANA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see. But *The Aztec* was the first?

HOMER DANA: That was the one after we found the egg. We did *The Aztec*.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, was this the first large thing you'd done? [Inaudible.]

HOMER DANA: It was the first hard stone, and it was the first stone of any kind after the limestone that we did for the House of Hospitality.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, I see.

HOMER DANA: We only had that brief experience with soft stone, and then we began on a piece of diorite, which, as we look back, it looks like quite a mouthful to chew. [They laugh.] [Loud airplane noise disrupts audio.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: At the time you probably didn't realize it, so you weren't afraid of it.

HOMER DANA: We were young and [loud parrots squawking disrupts audio] we thought if anybody can do it, we certainly could.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You certainly did, too. It's beautiful—[inaudible]. Well, Mr. Hord has told me that many of the artists were living around this area at the time. And this piece was so large that you worked on it back here at his home.

HOMER DANA: Yeah, there were a lot of vacant lots, vacant land around. In fact—
there were acreages—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I beg your pardon?

HOMER DANA: There was quite a large amount of acres that were used for farming before they were subdivided and homes built on them. And people could look four blocks away and see what we were doing from the highway.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I want to interject something for the tape. Mr. Dana is going to make a copy of the photograph that they have here of the work yard as it appeared at that time, and give it to the Archives. Certainly is a change from what you see when you go out there now, with the lovely landscaping and beautiful courts.

HOMER DANA: Well, we liked it when it was wild. The jackrabbits and the cottontails were still hopping around the field, and the quail here. Now they're all gone. The cats have got them.

[00:10:02]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You and Mr. Baker were the only two who worked on *The Aztec* with him, were you not?

HOMER DANA: Baker didn't do very much work on *The Aztec*. He was going to state college at that time. And he helped raise the money from the students. And he helped a little bit with the polishing. But it wasn't until we began the *Guardian of Water*, the Civic Center fountain that he got in and worked full time on it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: What do you mean, helped raise money from the students?

HOMER DANA: Well, they—each student was supposed to give 10¢.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: At San Diego College?

HOMER DANA: San Diego State College.

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

HOMER DANA: That's where they raised the money. At least they raised bulk of it that way.

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

HOMER DANA: And he was the president of the State College art guild. And he wasn't on the Federal Art Project because he was a student.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

HOMER DANA: And the little work that he did in polishing, he was paid a small sum by the SERA.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes, Student Emergency Relief Act. I remember that. Was he living next door at that time, or across the street?

HOMER DANA: Well, he moved next door just about that time.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

HOMER DANA: Then later—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: He was married then, I guess, wasn't he?

HOMER DANA: He wasn't married till during the Project when the Civic Center fountain what was being done.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Were there other artists who were out here on *The Aztec*?

HOMER DANA: Yes, there were some that were working. A man named Clyde Kelley, who had been—he was considerably older than the rest of us—and he had been an assistant to Gutzon Borglum.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh.

HOMER DANA: And he had done a considerable amount of small sculpture and portraits.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

HOMER DANA: But he didn't do any of the actual carvings. He was more for polishing and things of that sort—a great amount of polishing. At one time there were five of us polishing, rubbing that big figure with carved bones [ph] [inaudible] and water. It was a big job, it was a tremendous area to cover. We had to get it done in a two-year period.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

HOMER DANA: And so, everybody that we could crowd around the stone was welcomed.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Given something and set to work?

HOMER DANA: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Actually, these were all people who were employed by the Federal Arts Projects.

HOMER DANA: Yes, every one of them. We had, at one time, three blacksmiths who took care of the sharpening of the tools.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh.

HOMER DANA: We used the old-fashioned steel tools with pneumatic hammers. Before the days of tungsten carbide. And these tools would last probably five minutes or less than they had to be resharpened, either would break or wear dull.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, it kept the blacksmiths really busy then.

HOMER DANA: Oh, it was a blacksmith heaven here for a while, the anvil made lots of noise, and we had the compressor going. It was a noisy spot in all this vacant field.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, even in the 1930s, wasn't it rather unusual to be able to find blacksmiths? There weren't that many horses around then to have that trade active, were there?

HOMER DANA: Well, these men were both elderly men, the two main blacksmiths and the assistant who learned how to do quite well himself as a man about our age in his early 30s. But the other two were around 60. Men who had grown up in the horseshoe age.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes. They must have been quite amazed to find themselves [laughs] doing something like that.

HOMER DANA: Well, they enjoyed it very, very much. One of them had been a laborer—that is, he worked with labor groups, and his specialty had been sharpening picks. He'd done a great amount of that, but he quickly learned to sharpen the tools.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I think it is most amazing specialty I ever heard of. [They laugh.] And what about when the thing was done? How was it moved? That must have been a great —[Cross talk.]

HOMER DANA: They brought a big crane out here because the things still weighed about 10 tons. And it was not easily transported. They had a big flat truck—trailer, I think it was, the back of a truck. Very low and with many wheels on it, it seemed to me that had about 12 or

16 wheels on this great truck bed.

[00:15:10]

And the crane lifted it onto this, in the vertical position. And it was lashed with ropes so that it couldn't tip during the ride to town. They had wrapped it up with paper, and gunny sack materials, and even rubber tires had been slit open so that the chains wouldn't mar the film.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It's a wonder they didn't have a city parade out of the thing there. That would be quite something to see a move through the seats.

HOMER DANA: Nobody paid any attention to it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, really?

HOMER DANA: [Loud airplane engine can be heard. The sound interferes with the dialogue.] Back in those days, when nothing much [inaudible], something being pulled on a truck, you really couldn't tell under the wrappings what it was. They got it down to the Civic Center and they had another big harbor crane there, two of them lifted the thing from the bottom to the top, and they tilted it so that they could drill, with pneumatic drills, two holes in the bottom. And then they put bronze dowels so that the thing couldn't walk, because things can do that. A slight earth tremor would cause the thing just to walk a little bit [inaudible] walk to the edge and topple over.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Isn't that interesting. I didn't know that. Is the *Guardian of Water* anchored some way that—in a similar [inaudible].

HOMER DANA: That's the one.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, I thought you were speaking of *The Aztec*. This is the *Guardian*?

HOMER DANA: Oh, I was thinking of the *Guardian*. Have I got off on the wrong path?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: No, I have. [Laughs.] Well, is—then is *The Aztec*—

HOMER DANA: No, *The Aztec* didn't need anything like that.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It wasn't as heavy, of course. It wasn't as tall.

HOMER DANA: It weighed about a ton and is on a big base, and it's close to the ground. And sometimes, the college students show their strength by getting a hold of it and seeing if they can't lift it up from the bottom.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, no [laughs].

HOMER DANA: Tip it, you know?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It's a wonder that they don't get hurt. It must be very heavy. Well, we better back-track a bit here then, because when I asked you which people were working on this, I was thinking of *The Aztec*, and you're thinking of the *Guardian*, this Clyde Kelley, for instance.

HOMER DANA: No, those are all on the *Guardian of Water*.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: All on the *Guardian*. Let's go back to *The Aztec*, then just a moment.

HOMER DANA: Donal and I worked on that together.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Just the two of you?

HOMER DANA: And George Baker did a little bit of polishing [inaudible], all.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And then the *Guardian* was the next big thing that was done for the Project.

HOMER DANA: Yes. Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And that was when all these people came in?

HOMER DANA: There was quite a number of them. In addition to the ones that were carving the stone.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Excuse me just a minute. [Laughs.][Inaudible.]

HOMER DANA: Close the door, maybe.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Let me close it. [Laughs.] I love to hear them, but I just don't want them to drown you out. [Referring to the noise the parrots were making. -Ed.]

HOMER DANA: Little monsters.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: They want to be on the tape. Now back to the *Guardian*.

HOMER DANA: In addition to the group that were carving and working in the blacksmith shop, there was another group of seven people who executed in—in—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mosaic tile?

HOMER DANA: Mosaic tile. The designs that Donal had made.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Now, did they work here too?

HOMER DANA: No, they worked in a loft in the B Street Pier.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, for goodness sakes.

HOMER DANA: And it was a pier that wasn't used much, and they had a great deal of space that belonged to the city, and the city loaned it to them for that period of time. And so over 100,000 pieces of tessera tile had been cut into tiny pieces in that drum, which shows the—if you have seen it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, yes.

HOMER DANA: The clouds at the top and the mountains and the orchards and finally down to the sea.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: The idea of the water is in the air to the land, to the ocean and back again.

HOMER DANA: Mm-hmm [affirmative.] And the great need we had for water here in this country.

[00:20:05]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Now, did they work on small sections of tile and then take those down and put them on?

HOMER DANA: What they were doing—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible.] [Cross talk.]

HOMER DANA: The design was reversed. And it was waterproof—fairly waterproof paper had the design reversed. And these pieces of tile were stuck. Each color was indicated—each part of the drawing was indicated there. And they were just filled in and stuck—glued to the paper. And then when the paper, in sections that fit together, not always square but sometimes for the design, and the mortar was put on this drum. And they took these things and gauged precisely so there would be no overlap and no gap. And they put this on and tapped it in there till the cement grout that had been spread on the drum came through the tile.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oozed between the tiles and held it.

HOMER DANA: Mm-hmm [affirmative.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That's interesting.

HOMER DANA: And when it was set, then they wet this paper and peeled it off. The next problem then was to clean it and polish it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. It must have been a big project, too.

HOMER DANA: It was. Just laying that was quite a phenomenal thing, to have it come out just exactly right. Because they could have put too little of a cement grouting on and it would have overlapped. They could have put too much on and there would have been a gap. But it came out perfectly.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And then around that in the outer bow [ph], there are the dolphin patterns. Those must have been carved in place, weren't they?

HOMER DANA: Those were carved in plaster. We made a circle so that they would be just exactly the right curve. So, they could fit and not have an overlap or a gap. And they were taken to a commercial casting company down there near the Civic Center fountain. [Inaudible.] And the man who did this work had a vibrating table. He put the same stone that the *Guardian of Water* is made of. And it was crushed and sifted. And these were put in the cement. So that the whole surface is—it resembles very closely the *Guardian of Water* figure, in color.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see. Wasn't that clever?

HOMER DANA: And also, it looks like a carving because the mold is made from the carved plaster, rather than something that's modeled. There's a big difference. The surfaces are sharper, and everything is much more definite.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Was that a technique that you and Mr. Hord worked out for it? Or is this generally done—

HOMER DANA: Well, no.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I've never heard of such a process before.

HOMER DANA: I don't think that sort of thing has been done. But Mr. Hord wanted it to have a carved look.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It certainly does have.

HOMER DANA: And Mr. Linda [ph] was used to—or Mr. Little [ph] it was. He was used to making things by that process from models that had been modeled in clay. So, it was just a simple thing for him to make a cast from a piece of plaster, and carved, just as simple as making it from some clay—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

HOMER DANA: —been modeled.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: What was the next thing that was done? The Coronado limestone frieze?

HOMER DANA: Yes. That was the next big job, yes. And Mr. Hord and George Baker did the bulk of the carving. During that period, I was not working on the Federal Art Project. I carved for two years on that *Rest on the Flight into Egypt*. That was done during that time but not on the Project.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: But you were probably working on that here in the yard, had all that activity around about you

HOMER DANA: I helped on it but I didn't do much of the actual carving. Some of the finishing, the sanding, and smoothing up of the surface I worked on that George Baker and Donal Hord did all the carving.

[00:25:11]

Donal Hord would sketch the design on the stone. There were four pieces of limestone set together in an easel. And they were separated by just an eighth of an inch. So that when the

concrete that they're set in would fill that, the design would be just right.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see.

HOMER DANA: So, they carved on that and then they were finished. Each one of them was disassembled and put into crates and stored till the time to assemble them all.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: They certainly are beautiful. That's an interesting project. [Laughs.]

HOMER DANA: Yes. We sometimes wonder what's going to happen to it because it's an old school building and will probably demolish, and everything will be taken out to the dump.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, couldn't the panels be taken out?

HOMER DANA: Yes, if somebody wanted to.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: So, I hope one of the things that come out of this Archives work is some greater interest in what can be done to preserve these things, I find it happening every place artists have murals which are beautiful things which that are put in buildings, which are going to pieces like MacDonald-Wright's in the library. They're going to tear that down from the library. Here, these things—of course, they're on panels so they'll be able to take them off easily.

HOMER DANA: Yeah, that is a newer trend.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes.

HOMER DANA: Instead of painting them in fresco on the walls.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Did you work on any other things for the Project? I imagine that was close to the end of the period of it, anyway, wasn't it?

HOMER DANA: Yes, there were a number of small things that we worked on during odd times. There were five or six little things that we worked on.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: These were mostly of wood, weren't they?

HOMER DANA: No, they were marble. I worked on one—I made a head of my own design. And there were a number of things that Donal designed that we both worked on. And these have been scattered around the country. I don't remember where most of them are.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: This was the announcer [ph] that Mr. Cahill was hoping you would do smaller pieces that could be shown around?

HOMER DANA: Well, that was due to his suggestion that he would like to have things to take around and tour the country and show what was being done in various places, that we made some little things in marble and limestone. And there was one figure in wood—in *lignum vitae* that Donal did. It was to be for a model for a large figure in stone in Santa Barbara. And I don't know exactly the details, but the lady who was going to sponsor it was old and somehow or other the model got into a library, I think in Santa Monica, and nothing further was done to it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You don't know whether it's still there?

HOMER DANA: Mr. Wright would probably know. I think he, being the state director of the Art Project, I think that he requested it go there. Somebody requested it of him.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I'll ask at the library too. They may have it. [Inaudible.] [Cross talk.]

HOMER DANA: There was one other figure that we did for the Herbert Hoover High School in Mexican onyx marble. I'd almost forgotten that.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That's the young girl.

HOMER DANA: Yeah. You haven't seen a picture of that, have you?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes, I believe it's in the big folder, you showed me.

HOMER DANA: Yeah, I guess so.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You didn't care for her as much, I gather?

HOMER DANA: Donal didn't care much for her.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see.

HOMER DANA: It was not a very satisfactory stone because sometimes it would split and—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Which stone was it?

HOMER DANA: Mexican onyx marble, they call it Mexican onyx, but it's an onyx marble. A very hard stone. And—

[00:30:09]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Is this characteristic of all Mexican onyx or was it just this one lump that split particularly?

HOMER DANA: I think it's characteristic because most of the things they do in that are pen sets for a desk. You know, small things.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible] the splinters. [Laughs.]

HOMER DANA: Yes. But this was a thing that weighed many hundreds of pounds. And it was a figure of a young girl with her legs crossed with a handkerchief wrapped around her head, like the girls did at that time. And she was reading a book she held in her lap. And she bent down like that. It looked very natural. And one day, the face fell off.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Laughs] Oh, no. The face?

HOMER DANA: There was still enough [Betty Hoag McGlynn laughs] bulk to raise the head up a little bit and carve a new face on it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: How perfectly amazing. [Laughs.] But you haven't seen a seam line before, or any—

HOMER DANA: No. All of a sudden, off it came.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It must have given you a very uneasy feeling of that dedication ceremony with everyone around [laughs].

HOMER DANA: We had several uneasy moments on that. And also, on some of the others, there was always some catastrophe that nearly wrecked something. I remember during the time when the *Guardian of Water* was being carved, the lady holds a pot, a Mexican pot in her hand. And one of the boys got to working, and not too familiar with the pneumatic tools, and this hand—he worked in there between the fingers, and suddenly the finger came off. [Betty Hoag McGlynn laughs.] And the whole pot had to be re-carved. The hand had to be brought in. And in consequence, the hip on the opposite side had to be carved back. And the pot is now a little bit oval instead of perfectly round in order to take care of that part because that was about two inches off the side that came off with that mishap.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Isn't that an amazing thing that they were able to do that [laughs]?

HOMER DANA: We were always able to save it, but sometimes it caused a great deal of consternation.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Laughs.] I would think so. Finding the face on the book, that must have been a ghastly experience.

HOMER DANA: That was.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That was an unfortunate statue all around, apparently, because Mr. Hord told me before that he designed mosaic murals to go around the base of it.

HOMER DANA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And there was some—someone in power who didn't want that particular design on it so they wouldn't have it finished.

HOMER DANA: They didn't want mosaic of that kind. They just put some colored tile around it, no design in particular.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Isn't that [inaudible]? What were any of the other things that happened, do you remember?

HOMER DANA: Offhand, I can't think of anything. I do know one, of course, during the time when *The Aztec* was being done, I became too ambitious of my newly gained knowledge of tools. And I drilled a hole in where I thought it should be. And then I almost ruined that because where he sits down there—the hip is in a little bit farther than it was originally intended. I almost ruined it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Laughs.] Goodness. Usually, when I talk to artists and things will be changed easily when anything happens. I never thought of this aspect of being a sculpture.

HOMER DANA: No, especially in the carving end of it, where nothing that's taken off can be cemented back. It has to stay that way.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I wonder if sculptors sometimes use the new miracle glues and do a paste things back. Now that they have it where it's going to be [inaudible].

HOMER DANA: It's possible that they do. I think it's done a little bit, especially in the marble industry.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Because think the ordinary person probably wouldn't know the difference.

HOMER DANA: No, and if it's not out in the weather, it probably would stand all right.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Does the weather spoil [inaudible]?

[00:35:01]

HOMER DANA: Well, the action of the air and sun and water tend to deteriorate anything like that. It even deteriorates the diorites themselves, over a long period of time. They have some that are over 5000 years old that were done in Egypt in that same stone, which looks just about as good as ever.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I think it is the thing that lasts 5000 years that's about all you can expect, don't you?

HOMER DANA: Well, yes. But I don't think that they would have stood up—any kind of glue would have stood up that length of time. Probably only 10 or 15 years would be about the limit.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Getting back to the other thing that you did. These smaller things for the Project. You don't know where the head is that you did then?

HOMER DANA: No, I've never heard of it since. There is one little figure of a beggar woman that is in the Museum of Natural History in New York. And there is also a little standing figure, very simplified. It was done primarily to keep one of the blacksmiths, the helper, busy. They didn't want to lay him off. And at that time, there was nothing that he could do in the blacksmith shop. He had worked at the onyx factory polishing onyx. And he liked to polish. So, when Donal had finished this one, why, we turned this over to Ernie [ph] and he sat all day long, [Betty Hoag McGlynn laughs] and he polished and polished and polished until it had a mirror-like finish. And the last I saw that it was in the—I believe it's called the Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: In San Francisco? Still [inaudible]. [Laughs.]

HOMER DANA: Yes. And there was another one, of course, that was a Mexican mother and child. Infant in a shawl over the mother's shoulders sort of plodding along, and that was

during the time that Franklin Roosevelt was alive. That was one of the things that he liked and kept. And so far as we know, it's in the Hyde Park library now.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That's interesting. These were standing—or a standing figure carrying her child?

HOMER DANA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I remember there were some other things in limestone. I can't remember exactly what they were. I know one of them was a kneeling Mexican woman. I can't remember what she was doing.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, let's see, there's one where she's making—what is the cornmeal? Isn't there one with a bowl where she's kneading—

HOMER DANA: That may be the one. I don't—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I think I've seen a photograph of that.

HOMER DANA: A long time ago.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Then, when the war came along, that was the end of the Project.

HOMER DANA: Yes, the Project was folding long before that. I believe that we were kept on longer than anyone else, simply to finish up some of the projects that we were—had going. And that was in 1940.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And then you have been here with Mr. Hord ever since, haven't you?

HOMER DANA: Yes, I have been working with him. Except for an interlude during the war, when I worked as a photographer at the aircraft factory while we have been doing those other large diorites.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see. Well, then you did very beautiful photographs in the first place which you're going to get the Archives.

HOMER DANA: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. But we—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Beautiful photographs. I supposed they were professional, but then you are a professional.

HOMER DANA: Well, I did work as a professional for three and a half years down there. And what I know about photography I learned during that period.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Which aircraft was it?

HOMER DANA: It was a Convair.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Convair. That's here in San Diego—

HOMER DANA: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: There goes one [inaudible]. [Laughs.] [Noise of plane overhead - Ed.] Can you think of anything else that the tape would be interested in that you remember about it that I haven't thought to ask you?

[00:40:19]

HOMER DANA: I can't think of anything about the Project at all that is interesting. Lots of little things come to mind, and I realize, well, that didn't really have anything to do with it.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Did you—you've seen so many of these people are working together on these activities, did you think it did a lot for the individual artists, having the chance to be with Mr. Hord and see him work? Could you—

HOMER DANA: Well, I'm sure that a number of them gained a great deal from it. I can't think offhand of anybody who has ever worked with him and who became great artists.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: If they went on becoming artists at all [inaudible]. is something

because I think many of them were able to just keep alive because of it at the time.

HOMER DANA: Well, George Baker was a very meticulous worker. He had some art training. In college, he was an art major there. And he was a wonderful craftsman, and anything he did was finely finished and perfectly fitted, whether it was building a house or a cabinet or doing sculpture. But he, unfortunately, did not have an original turn of mind.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

HOMER DANA: And at one period when he felt that, being married, he needed a little bit more money, Donal said, Well if you can prove that you are a creative sculptor, I'm sure that the supervisor will give you a next rate higher as a professional sculptor. And George had an awful time thinking of anything to carve. He had the piece of limestone. But he held his head, and he moped around for days. He just couldn't think of an idea to put into stone. And finally, he did a squatting old man with a long beard. And that got him his increase in pay.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It did [laughs]? Well, I thought one of the most interesting things about Mr. Hord's work was something I read about him telling about how he always liked the Eskimos, he feels that there's a spirit in the rock—

HOMER DANA: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —the feeling of it which he brings out. And so apparently, that didn't rub off on George Baker, that's too bad. [Laughs.] That approach is—

HOMER DANA: Well, George has been a fine and excellent craftsman. But there's a difference—quite a difference between the creative artists and the fine craftsman.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Of course. Well, it takes both of them in the world.

HOMER DANA: They have so many of those fine craftsmen in Italy who are not creative, and they reproduce, over and over again, little figures are sold in markets everywhere. They'll spend a lifetime making two or three figures over and over again.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I wonder how they can stand it.

HOMER DANA: Well, it's because they don't have the creative flair. A person who does hates to repeat themselves. Donal never likes to make a detailed sketch because he feels he put everything in the first time doesn't have anything left for the second.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That's why there's changes in his little models and the final thing. [Inaudible.] Well, I certainly thank you, Mr. Dana, for the interview. It was very enjoyable. I appreciate that you've taken time to tell us—[Cross talk.]

HOMER DANA: Well, I only wish that I could think of more things. I think of them tomorrow.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, I hope I'll come back, and I hope you'll let—you'll tell me about them next time.

HOMER DANA: Okay.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Good. Thank you again. Bye.

[END OF TRACK AAA_dana64_8488_m.]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]