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Oral history interview with Paul Eliot Green, 1965 July 13

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Paul Green on July 13, 1965. The interview took place in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and was conducted by Richard Keith Doud 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 retranscribed the original audio and attempted to create a verbatim transcript. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Some language in this transcript may be offensive. It is presented as it exists in the original audio recording for the benefit of research. This material in no way reflects the views of the Archives of American Art or the Smithsonian Institution.

Interview

RICHARD K. DOUD: This is an interview with Mr. Paul Green at his home on Old Lystra Road, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, July 13, 1965. The interviewer is Richard K. Doud. [Long audio break.] I think it might be nice just to sort of give us a point of reference. Mr. Green, if you'll just give us some sort of an idea of your background in the theater in the South and some of your own experience prior to this period we're trying to explore—Federal Theatre of the late 1930s. And sort of put yourself in perspective on this so we'll know who we're dealing with here. Be as detailed or as brief as you'd like, but please don't be modest.

PAUL GREEN: [Laughs.] Well, I don't—I've never considered myself to be much of a playwright. I've struggled at the putting down of human stories in dialog and action. And I've done a great deal with little narrative folk stories and a couple of so-called novels. I guess I should have been a road contractor. I like to build roads and to farm. But anyway, a long time ago when I was a little boy I met up with some cruel things in life. I guess maybe they shocked me enough so that I had a backward impulse or resultant urge to give expression to my feelings about them, or to put them down, and thus sort of interpret them. Because as a little boy suffering in some of these things I'd try to write poetry about it or say something. I couldn't do very much with it. And—but anyway I brooded on that—these things that I saw, especially connected with the Negro people. And I guess I got introspective too, and began to spend a lot of time alone. Every Sunday was my holy day. I wouldn't go to church. I'd go into the woods and write poetry and think about things. I called it poetry. It was nothing but doggerel. [Richard K. Doud laughs.]

And so, I hoped that I would someday be able to say something about these things in poetry. And then one day I was in Raleigh, and I met up with a fellow trawling [ph] along a pushcart loaded with books. And he had a set of Shakespeare's plays—nine volumes. And I had heard about Shakespeare some [laughs]. And so, I asked him what would he sell these nine volumes for. And he said they're cheap, they would sell them for 50¢. And I happened to have 50¢, so I bought these nine volumes of Shakespeare's plays for 50¢. And so, when my holy day of Sunday came I took one of the plays that I had heard about, *Hamlet*, and went off and read it. And I thought it'd break my heart. [Laughs.]

[00:05:00]

I was so upset. My goodness. When I—when little Ophelia came in that play and was saying his rue, you know, and sang the song about a father being buried and, "All flaxen was his poll," I just thought my heart would just yell with pain. And so, I guess maybe that was—I decided then some time I would try to put some of these things down, like *Hamlet*, in dialog form.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL GREEN: And I wrote little sketches and mess. And then finally—well, nothing came of it, except an effort to become a producer. I felt very so strong that I got some of the neighboring boys and we decided we'd put on a show in the—in the little village near where we lived. And so, we concocted some kind of a queer—I guess it was a variety show, and hired my sister to play the piano. And we told her we'd pay her a dollar. And she said she

would play the piano for nothing. And there was a neighboring man who could play the bull fiddle. And he said he'd play for 50¢.

So, we got a mule and we put a white sheet on this mule and painted the name of our play. And we paraded into town with this mule. And I saw all kinds of people coming to the show in the courthouse. We had the courtroom—we got the privilege to produce it. And admission was 10¢. And so, we were ready [laughs] to show, and our crier had been out with the mule, Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Come to the courthouse. See the great show, you know. And nobody came. About—I think we had nine people in the audience. We took in 90¢. And we put on the best show we could. And—but that cured me of the drama for—[They laugh.]

And then I came up to the University of North Carolina, and the professor Norman Firsty [ph] once told one day—I was a freshman—he said, They have a contest here for playwriting. And they're going to give a prize. And I said, Well, I've never seen a play. I have tried to put on one, but it didn't—wasn't a play. He said, Why don't you try your hand at it? He was telling his students in English class. So, I got busy and I found a story in the history of the university where a Yankee general came here as occupying forces and fell in love with the president's daughter and they got married. So, I wrote the play about that. I called it *Surrender to the Enemy*. And it was—it won whatever prize there was. And they produced it in the spring in the Forest Theater down there in the woods. The first play was an outdoor play. And the script is gone. I don't know—no copy of it in existence, I guess. But I thought it was good—pretty good.

And then I enlisted in the war and went over with the British forces and the American forces, and then finally came back again. And then Mr. Koch [ph]—Professor Koch [ph] had come here as a teacher of playwriting. And so, I got in his courses and started writing plays. And I wrote a lot of little one-act plays and a few long plays, and all about—all about the poor whites and the Negros, you know.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL GREEN: The life I had seen. And some of them got put on in New York. And I kept—I did enough of that to feel that I couldn't get loose in New York. I had—first play I had produced there in 1925 won what they called the Belasco Cup. They gave a cup in those days— David Belasco did—for the best short play brought in by groups from all over the country and played in his theater. And this group from Texas brought that play and they won the prize with that. And then—that was '25. And then in '26 and '[2]7, I had a couple of long plays up there. And on through—I think the last one I had up there was about 1940. Maybe a little—maybe—no, up—maybe towards '50 in that particular period, again, American version.

[00:10:05]

But I tried one or two kind of sprawling, big things with music about—a kind of epic. And we did one of them in Boston and it got a good press. And we moved to New York. It was the worst flop I ever saw. Good gracious. On opening night, I had insisted that we open up and go through and never have any intermission. And it was in the Court Theater on 48th Street. Every time I pass that old theater, I think of that night. [Richard K. Doud laughs.]

We had a big crowd, you know, first night. And I was out in the foyer pacing up and down, trying to listen to see how it was going over inside. And Bob—Robert Benchley burst out and he saw me. And I had known him in Hollywood. And he said, Goddamn it. I'm going to smoke. I don't care whether you have an intermission or not. And then he came over and he said, What is it all about anyway? He said, I can't understand a thing you got. Don't understand it. And my heart sank. Well, the next day the reviews were good. I got a wire from Mrs. Isaacs, editor of *Theatre Arts*, I got a wire also from Brooks Atkinson, speaking about the language and all. But I got a notice from Mr. Shubert [ph] to come and see him. And I'm talking too much here really.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Go right—

PAUL GREEN: [Laughs] Well, this is—you said background and [inaudible].

RICHARD K. DOUD: Go right ahead.

PAUL GREEN: But in a way, sort of trying to get at the Federal Theatre to come. So, I went to Mr. Shubert's [ph] office and he was sitting there with his undertaker clothes on, you know,

and I guess he had embalming fluid in his veins, I don't know. But he was sitting there. And he says, Your show will go out of my theater on Saturday night. He said, I've got a leg show coming in, something the people can appreciate. And well, I pleaded with him. Couldn't it wait another week? Maybe we could catch on, you know. And all he said, No chance of it catching on. He said, Nobody knows what it's about anyway. And nobody's interested. It's real rough. And so, I consigned him to hell and left. [Richard K. Doud laughs.]

And went on down to Mr. Claywin's [ph] office, who was one of the Warner Brothers people. And I understood later that he put some backing in the show. And this is the truth, it sounds funny, but I went in his office, and he was sitting there and he had a pistol lying on top of the table. And he was gloomy. And I said, Mr. Claywin, what are you doing with that pistol? He said, I'm going to feel like blowing my damn brains out for putting a dollar in your play.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Made you feel good.

PAUL GREEN: Yeah, very good. So, Saturday night, we were out. Well, this play, I called it a symphonic drama, because I tried to tell the life of a whole Negro village in music, dance, poetry, and all, but tied together with a—kind of a thread of a story. And the idea I was working on was here—was this Negro village—actually a suburb of Chapel Hill. And these people are—well, it's Saturday afternoon, the work is over. They group around the boarding house, they're shooting crap or dancing or telling stories in, sort of hot, broody summertime. And then in the distance every once in a while, you hear this blasting. And the idea is that there's a road being built through the land. And it's undecided whether it's going to go through this village or not.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

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PAUL GREEN: And it's clear—they said, We got to keep the peace now. The big man said, 'You niggers cutting and fighting, we're going to bust you wide open with this here road.' Ah, listen to that old blasting. They're coming nearer every day. And a feeble-minded boy, he comes running out of the house. He's scared of that loud pouncing down there. Well, the idea is they're all going to behave themselves so this road will go around. But it happens in the—during the night—it's all consecutive, just one evening—jealousy breaks out, an escaped convict comes back and finds his wife with another man. And the other—and well, there's a lot of killing and shooting. And the whole thing blows up. And right at the climax the road hits this place with a great explosion. The cabins totter and the moon falls down the sky. A tree gets blown up. You see these figures fleeing like leaves before the wind. And then we had this great chorus. We had a chorus in the pit of Negro singers, lamenting, you know, interpreting. They didn't have words. There were only vocables. They chanted these—but they were a resonator of whatever happened on the stage.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:15:18]

PAUL GREEN: An amplifier. An emotional—an idea amplifying medium. And I called it symphonic. Well, the result was terrible. But in Boston, we got fine reviews where we tried it out.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Why?

PAUL GREEN: And they seemed to understand it in Boston, but—

RICHARD K. DOUD: That's strange, you know.

PAUL GREEN: Yeah. Well, it was funny. But anyhow, then I kept thinking, Well, how can—how can you do this epic kind of thing? You can't do it on Broadway. We had a big cast and we'd had to have been a smash hit to pay the salaries and the rent. And so, I figured, well, the only way to ever do a thing like this maybe is to find a place where the expenses are not so great. And in the meantime, the Federal Theatre came into being. And I thought, "Well, maybe we can hook up with this gorgeous sort of disguised dole system, you know.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL GREEN: And so, there came a chance.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Well, I seem to have the idea that you're, in large part, responsible for raising the pageant-type play to the level of an art form, or some such. Is that correct?

PAUL GREEN: Well, that—sometimes in these brief little biography things that people get out—well, nearly always now they point to that one little accomplishment, saying that you began this new form.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Did you?

PAUL GREEN: The—well, the first one of the type—call it a type—was this outdoor drama, *The Lost Colony*. And the—you see, if we'd have had this Negro play, which I called, *Roll Sweet Chariot*, taking it from the old song, "Roll Sweet Chariot." And the end of the play—of that Negro play, these murderers and all are on the chain gang and they're digging this rhythmic digging. And their faces are set towards the shining sun. And they'd dig. And the whole village gets in behind and they all dig. And one yells, "Dig on down the road to glory," another says, "Dig on down to freedom, freedom." And so, it ends with this great pantomimic digging with the beckoning sun, which is the new day, that had always eluded them and now seems to be coming somewhat true.

But there in the—actually inside the theater you couldn't get the expanse. You couldn't get the—you just couldn't get what was needed. And later John McGee, a regional director of the Federal Theatre, told me that he produced it in Atlanta. I never did see it. But he produced it in Atlanta in a stadium with 2,000 actors. Of course, the—all the payroll and [laughs], you know, they didn't have to worry about rents or anything. And he said they had a good reaction, good success. I never did see that. But anyway, by way of this Negro play and the terrible collapse financially, I was driven outdoors, to try the next thing outdoors.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well then with the coming of the Federal Theatre, did you become more interested in working in the South? I think before, most of your things were taken north [inaudible]—

PAUL GREEN: Yeah. For instance, to this day, most of my Negro plays have never been done in the South. Never.

RICHARD K. DOUD: For obvious reasons?

PAUL GREEN: Well, take that *Native Son* that Orson Welles did, Richard Wright's novel. It ran for a year or more, I think, on Broadway, toured for a year or two, but always in the North. It's never been below the Mason-Dixon line. And a play—Negro play called *Abraham—In Abraham's Bosom*, which won the Pulitzer Prize, as far as I know has never been done below the Mason-Dixon line.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Is that right?

PAUL GREEN: Never. It's published in a southern textbook. I got a letter from a professor the other day in Louisiana asking something about the play. They read it in the textbook, but it's never been produced in the South.

[00:20:10]

RICHARD K. DOUD: When was this particular play written?

PAUL GREEN: In 1926.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL GREEN: Or '27—'26. And it happened that I had two plays on at the same time there in New York. And I guess they thought—and so, the fellows at Columbia voted this Negro play because it's sympathetic. It had a sympathetic feeling for the Negro. And that was a story about—and it came out of my childhood. I told you about these cruel things: I was a little boy, went with my father to the railroad siding one day to get a load of fertilizer. And I saw a white man hit a fine Negro schoolteacher. And the Negro schoolteacher was doing nothing in the world. He had this group of little children, Negro children. He was taking them to Durham

for an excursion. And the old train stopped in Angier and it wouldn't pull. It was a wood burner. Shows about how far back I go and how dark eastern North Carolina was. And this engineer—his name was Angier too, and the town was named Angier after his people—he was trying to grease up the old thing. And he's down there under the pile—under the driving wheels oiling away with an oil can. And this cool, tall Negro schoolteacher walked up and looked down. And he said—I was standing there, a little boy, right, watching. And he said, Captain, what time do we get to Durham? And this white man looked out, looked at this fine fellow with his starched collar, celluloid collar, and his yellow vest and shirt. And he—is it all right to be profane on this?

RICHARD K. DOUD: It's all right with me if it's all right with you.

PAUL GREEN: If it's all right with the tape is going. And he said, It's none of your goddamn business when we get to Durham. And the teacher backed back. And the little children were down near the Jim Crow car. There were only two cars on the old train, white car and a Negro car.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

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PAUL GREEN: And these little children were kind of twittering, all dressed out in their frocks and ribbons, and the little boys all clean and scrubbed. And so, this—the teacher said, "I didn't mean any harm, Captain. Meant no harm, sir. No, sir." Well, that infuriated the fellow. He came out of there from under that engine. And there was a confederate soldier standing there leaning on a stick—an old confederate soldier, had a big walking stick. And this white man, Angier, grabbed the stick and whirled it and hit this Negro schoolteacher right across the face and knocked him winding. And oh, it just laid his face open. And the Negro—the little children let out squeaks and they darted up into the Jim Crow car. And the Negro pulled his handkerchief and put it all over his face and it was all dyed red. And his—and all he said was, "Captain—lord Captain, you ruined my shirt." And he turned and blindly staggered on down toward the car and crawled up in it. And Angier, he said, "All aboard. All aboard," and he got in the thing and pulled the bell. And the old locomotive started wheezing off and they went on out of sight.

Well, this play which I wrote many, many years later—I guess 15 or 20 years later—I decided to tell that man's story, that Negro teacher who tried to start a school for his people. And he worked hard and he got all messed up and they finally lynched him. And that was the story. And his name was Abraham. And I got a funny title for it. I got to thinking about, *In Abraham's Bosom*, that is the man, in his bosom were all these conflicting emotions. He was a mulatto, and some of his Negro friends say, "Yeah, he's bad mixed up. White and black make a bad mixture. Head say do one thing, heart say do another. Bad, bad." And so, then I was playing on the Bible for a phrase where Lazarus was in Abraham's bosom, you know [laughs]. So, it was a kind of funny title. And so, the people at Columbia thought it was worthy of recognition of a sort and mainly because of the subject matter. I tried to get Paul Robeson to play the lead. I don't know whether you know of Paul Robeson.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Yes.

[00:25:09]

PAUL GREEN: Very tragic figure also. Very tragic.

RICHARD K. DOUD: I meant to bring him up a bit ago, you were talking about Richard Wright.

PAUL GREEN: Yeah. Well, I tried to get Robeson interested in playing it. And he said, What—he read the script and he said, I wouldn't play in that. It shows my people being brutalized and beaten up. No, I wouldn't. I wouldn't play it. Then we got a fellow named Jules Bledsoe, a great—he had a tremendous voice. He played it. And—but Robeson has been—just to digress a minute—has been a pioneer for his people and took the tragic way of bucking a thing head on.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL GREEN: And—like in his way, he's been destroyed, like this Abraham. In a way, he's had a spiritual lynching. He had a great voice, a great personality, great—could make great contributions, but he simply just would not accept—I was in London once at the Savoy Hotel, and Robeson walked up to the—in London—walked up to the desk and he wanted to register. And they asked his name and—"Robeson." And I was standing there in the lobby. I had known him and was glad to see him. And the man looked. He said, No. We have no reservation for you. I'm sorry. We have none. And he said, Yes, but I wired, and so on, And I got a confirmation back. And the fellow said, No. We're very sorry. We don't have anything. And there he was with his wife, a very talented person. And that sort of thing, you know, just filled him with dark hate. So he, you know, started bucking the thing. And he winds up in Russia.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL GREEN: Accoladed [ph] in Russia. Praised and so on, but still homeless. And I don't know where he is now. Do you know?

RICHARD K. DOUD: No, I don't.

PAUL GREEN: I ought to get—I'll get *Who's Who* in a minute, and see if I can find about him. Let's stop just a second and look that up.

RICHARD K. DOUD: All right. [Recorder stops, restarts.] Well, now we know. He's still [inaudible]—[Cross talk.]

PAUL GREEN: Yes. We looked up in *Who's Who*—American *Who's Who* and Paul Robeson is not in there. But he has a long write-up in the British *Who's Who,* and a fine write-up in the international *Who's Who*. And of course, the telltale stigmas there show up in his visit to Russia and his winning a Peace Prize over there and being honored by the Russian people. So it is. It's too bad, too bad.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Well, could we sort of talk a little bit now, or have you talk a little bit now, about the general state of theater in the South or the Southeast in the early 1930s? What was going on down here and who was doing it? And what was the general [inaudible]—

PAUL GREEN: Well, I would like to go back just a little further. It's rather interesting. Maybe this is apropos. The scholars—the fellows in Harvard and so on, especially in Princeton—like very much to talk about two strains in American life, the puritan strain in—out of New England, and the so-called cavalier strain that emanated mainly in Virginia, South Carolina, some parts of Maryland, and here and there, and little bits in poor white North Carolina. Well, it happened that the early theater activities were much more appreciated in the South, Southeast of course, than they were in the North. And they had—they had a fine early little theater at Williamsburg, Virginia. George Washington used to attend. He was a great playgoer. He loved to play cards too. He liked to gamble and he loved to bet on horse races. He liked cock fights. And there was that gaming—sort of gaming, free streak in the southerner—the southern aristocrat—

RICHARD K. DOUD: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL GREEN: —that was lacking pretty much in the New England. And so, the theater which was—you know, was a child of the devil, and had to be disguised so that nearly all the southern cities when I was a little boy had what they called the academy of music or the opera house. And they never would speak of it as a theater.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:30:22]

PAUL GREEN: So that little Williamsburg had a resident company there for a while, the Hallems [ph]. And of course, in Charleston, there was a fine theater there. And there was in Charleston also an early interest in music, the St. Cecilia Society. And so in New York, of course, being halfway—half puritan and half cavalier, got along pretty well. But I've got a lot of playbills I could show you of the 18th century showing all kinds of towns—even in North Carolina, Edenton, Fayetteville, Wilmington, little, teeny towns had that theater, and they had their visiting companies. Hillsborough right across over here 12 miles from Chapel Hill had a theater, of a sort. Often it was just a barn or a room fitted up. And—but they—like the

theater.

Well, the Civil War and the rise of—well, the rise of a narrow mind and orthodoxy religious streak, which was not the puritanism, but it was something more fierce and demonic in the South, resulting in all kinds of creeds and queer happenings, sort of took over. And they passed a law at this university, still on the books of North Carolina. Asked a lawyer to bring up and get it amended. Or get it rescinded. But there was—and it's still on the books—a law that there should be no theater, no production of any play or any theatrical activity within three miles of the campus of the University of North Carolina. I think it was three. It might have been five.

Well, so for—the South became a decadent place. It had once raised great leaders, great statesmen: Jefferson, Washington, the Pinckneys [ph] in South Carolina, the Rutledges [ph], and even a misguided fellow like John C. Calhoun, a great power in the life of the people. And over here in Virginia, a little piece of land 125 miles square produced seven presidents. But after the Civil War, and the rise of the Negro specter, and the freezing of the South into a democratic one-party system, our leadership perished, and so did our culture such as we had. And the evangelical hedge-priest and the Ku Klux Klan-type of thinking—still with us here today in the South—took over, so by the 19—well, as late as 1923 or '24, the culture of the South was practically dead—we'll say 1920. There were—in all the state universities libraries of the South below the Mason-Dixon line, there were not a number of books equal to the library of Harvard. There was not a single symphony orchestra. There was not a single art gallery. There was not a single flourishing theater in the South.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Good grief.

PAUL GREEN: It was what H. L. Mencken called the "Sahara of Bozart." [Laughs]. And—but—so there we were. It was just incredible. And we became the land of the demagogue, the Herman Talmadges, the Bilbos [ph], the Alfalfa Bill as far as Oklahoma, and Ma Ferguson and Pa Ferguson in Texas. And—well, you know the story.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL GREEN: And North Carolina produced some pretty near demagogues. One of them, Bob Reynolds, Senator Robert Reynolds, later murdered—led the murdering of the Federal Theatre. He was still—because in this case Communism was the cry. But the boys—a lot of boys went away from here, like me, went to Europe in American Expeditionary Forces.

[00:35:07]

And I remember going to the Paris opera in my hobnail shoes, after the armistice, with a French girl and looking on and seeing the opera Thaïs. And I never seen such things. Well, there were hundreds of thousands of fellows from the South like me who had never been anywhere, but they went and they saw. They saw the Louvre. They saw Venice. They saw Rome. And they began to look around. And so—well, there were many other reasons, of course, the coming of easy communication, the radio, the automobile, and so on. And things began—and better highways. And ideas began to travel. And so, the South began to limber up, wake up, and become conscious of the rest of the world, and began to do things. And like a fellow pent up, often when he gets loose, he really can make a splurge, you know.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL GREEN: So, this university felt the impulse. And when I got back from the war Tom Wolfe was here, George Denny was here, Hubert Hefner, Jonathan Daniels, and a whole group of us. And all of us became rebels. We were going to, you know—and we began to jeer at the old South, laugh at—and I remember Tom Wolfe and I went one night to hear the three candidates for governor. And they pulled off the same old stuff. Well, we laughed at 'em. We jeered 'em. And one fellow yelled, Oh, the great commonwealth of North Carolina, and you'd hear, Yeah! [They laugh.] Well, that'd been unthought of earlier, because rebellion was in the air. And first thing you know the teachers here—we had a very wonderful English professor named Edwin Greenlaw, later became head of the graduate school at Johns Hopkins University. And he felt it. And so, he began to look around, what can we do, you know, here, to sort of—and so he decided one thing he liked to do—he got the idea that North Carolina was a very special state in many ways, one way being its great folklore. Its tremendous body of mountain music, and its folktales. The South is full of all this stuff, you know, exaggerated talking, and so on and so on.

Well anyhow—so, he looks around and he gets an amazing idea that he would like to get somebody to come here and do something about this folklore. And so, he got in touch with a fellow named Koch, Koch who had started the Bankside Theater at the University of North Dakota. So, he brought Koch here. And Koch wanted to start, of all things, a course in playwrighting and let the students get credit. Well, the campus just blew up. The old professors said, What? Give credit—university credit for writing plays? Never heard of such a thing. Well, Greenlaw stuck by him and got it into the curriculum. And Koch happened to be—well, he was just part of the awakening of the South. It happened—it happened all around. You—and is in full tide today, with practically every southern city of any size with its orchestra, its art gallery, its resident theater groups, you know—you know the story.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL GREEN: And with its tremendous surge and splurge of writing, especially in the novel and in poetry, but novel mostly. The southern playwrights, Tennessee Williams, DuBose Heyward—there have been—well, not many. Not many. But we've—we have produced a tremendous lot of tale-tellers, tellers of tale, you know—you know, William Faulkner, Robert Penn Warren, and on and on, just dozens and dozens. But—so the—by the '30s, this playwriting thing was pretty well going, especially here. And it was based on what Professor Koch called folk play. He believed in the folk. He had a romantic idea about the folk. And he had an amazing gift of—some of the New York theater people used to come down and visit. And we'd always have Prof around. And he was very wonderful. He could recite a lot of Shakespeare—he was as an actor, a real actor. But he didn't have any profound comprehension of what you might call theater aesthetics.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:40:16]

PAUL GREEN: But he had a wonderful way of making everybody feel good and feel that this man cared about me, you know. So, he had everybody writing plays. You never saw Chapel Hill—people who couldn't write plays still wrote plays and he produced them. And as soon as—soon as he faded from the picture, that died. You don't—you don't get any more of that here now. It's become a—they produce plays here, but mainly out of New York or some of the old classics.

But Professor Koch came here in 1918. I got back from the war in '19. And my wife wrote the first play that he ever produced. And he would—and he was so right, I think. But that's why the professional theater people would laugh at him. They'd say, Well, he's a dear old fellow, but hell, he [laughs] likes anything on the stage.

But he figured—he said, Never mind about the faults too much. Time will take care of that. What people need is encouragement and not criticism. And so, he instituted—he had the whole town—even the guys that were opposed to him, ultimately, would all come. And he'd have these plays—three one-act plays, sometimes a long play, and have all the people there. And then they'd do a play and they'd have an open discussion. And the butcher and the barber, and Mr. Bermon [ph], the clothier, people who knew nothing about—would enter the discussion and say, Well, I think so and so, when she comes in the door there, don't you think maybe she ought to show more surprise or something?

And so, he had the whole town interested in this thing. And he represented—in a very shining way he represented the new South emerging in the world of the theater. And so—well—oh, I wish I'd gone—I've got a cabin in the woods. All my theater things are down there. I have a lot of pictures with him and—a wonderful fellow.

The—and when the Federal Theatre came along, he—I think he became a regional director. But he's right in there, and was a great help to Hallie Flanagan. And he didn't worry about this and that and the other, whether—who paid for it, just so we're getting—thing—

RICHARD K. DOUD: Sure.

PAUL GREEN: —you know, just the way she was.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Well, you mentioned, I think, a Mr. McGee, did you, who was—

PAUL GREEN: Yeah.

RICHARD K. DOUD: —the local—the regional director for this area.

PAUL GREEN: I think—could—I can—[Cross talk.]

RICHARD K. DOUD: Do you want me to turn this off?

PAUL GREEN: [Inaudible] get his title—

[Recorder stops, restarts.]

PAUL GREEN: [Inaudible.]

RICHARD K. DOUD: We were looking up some information on Mr. McGee. Could you sort of pick up now and tell me what your association was with McGee and how you sort of got things going here?

PAUL GREEN: Well, I started to say that this—we were talking about Mr. Koch—Professor Koch and the burst of playwriting here at the University of North Carolina as being even more than typical of the creative awakening in the South. While I'm sure that the playmaker work here—the drama work here at the University of North Carolina took on a wider and, yes, even more intensive reach with the coming of the Federal Theatre. And one of the liaison agents in that was John McGee, who, as I remember, was a regional director for the Southeast, or the South. Anyway, I think he later became second in command to Hallie Flanagan, who was the head of the Federal Theatre. Anyway, John was a man of importance in the—I guess you call it Project. And he came here often and discussed plans for the South and relation of the theater centers—possible theater centers in the South with the movement out or with the energy flowing out of Washington and the talents.

[00:45:03]

And I mentioned that he did—he produced a number of WPA or Federal Theatre plays in this region. I'd have to look him up in the correspondence to see just what he did do, but I'm sure he was—and of course, I must say that I was a little bit suspicious of the whole thing. It was a funny—I guess—guess it was part of that old stand-on-your-own-feet feeling. Because I never forget the calamitous groan that come out of me one day when I walked up the—to the campus to my class and there standing over, all dead and desolate, were the steam engines, the steam shovels, and the excavating scoops and all that had been used the week before—had been at work in digging foundations for university buildings. All idle. And in their place was a multitude of human beings, men with shovels. And obviously you look at it, well, it'd take 100 men with shovels to do what one of these things would do in no time.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Sure.

PAUL GREEN: And I said oh, what is the world coming to? So—well it was kind of a disguised dole use, of course. They did some work and they got paid for it, although the—well, I guess you might say the activity with the shovel was—had something to do with manly honor. It made them feel they were doing a little work and weren't completely charitable objects. So, when the Federal Theatre came along and I found all kinds of people on the payroll as actors or technicians, or scene painters, or as writers, that was again, same—well, not so intense of course, but a feeling that this is not—this is not exactly the way to do it. And so, when Senator Robert Reynolds talked to me later—I guess about 1940, wasn't it, that it was killed off?

RICHARD K. DOUD: '39.

PAUL GREEN: '39 or '40. He talked later about he was going to end the Federal Theatre. And his reasons were kind of an amplification of that small feeling I had of [laughs] this thing not being quite healthy.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Did you encourage him in his efforts or—

PAUL GREEN: Oh, no! I did everything I could. I pleaded with Senator Reynolds. I remember I was at Manteo, Roanoke Island, where we were doing this *Lost Colony*, which was a Federal Theatre—real Federal Theatre project, because the main actors all were sent to us by Hallie Flanagan, or came from her treasure bag, I guess. And so, we had been getting good talent to tell this story on the stage there. Story of American idealism, or of English idealism, which

was, you know, looking towards American heritage and idealism. And—but he said, You don't understand. It was same old crap and nonsense about Communism. The same ceaseless, pathetic war cry that's in the air today, you know: the Communists are going to do this. And we have here in North Carolina now, thanks to thinking such as Bob Reynolds'—although he's dead and had nothing to do with it—we have what's called a gag law, which forbids any person who was taken—pleaded the fifth amendment, or who has been a known Communist, or any shady character like that is—he's prohibited from speaking on the campus of any state-supported institution in North Carolina. And the once wonderful idea of open forum, open discussion, ideas challenged back and forth, freedom of speech, had been trampled and spat upon here in North Carolina now. But—so Bob Reynolds represents the ancient enemy of prejudice and ignorance. And that weakness in—human weakness, that all of us are prey to, that is the two extremes that we illustrated. It seems human nature—we have to have a complete symbol of adoration on the one hand and a symbol of hate or darkness on the other. That is on the one hand say the Messiah and on the other hand Beelzebub [laughs].

RICHARD K. DOUD: Yes.

[00:50:12]

PAUL GREEN: So, this pathos of Communism—this obsession with Communism represents human—just a human nature thing. Mr. Roosevelt, I remember, down there at Manteo in the Lost Colony Theater, he made a speech the first year. He came there on Virginia Dare's birthday, and we tore down the palisade a bit and rolled his car in because he was crippled and it made quite a grand entrance, almost like Cesar. [Richard K. Doud laughs.]

So, he speaks, and he lets loose this stuff about economic royalists who are out to get his blood. And often through his speeches was this ancient and vague enemy. The fellow, you know, in the background is going to do—well, Hitler, of course, used it to the extreme.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL GREEN: Built up this hate of the Jew and thus energized the Nazi fervor, so Brother Reynolds—and to kill off this great and creative thing of the Federal Theatre—but it had weaknesses, the kind we were mentioning—to kill it off he does it through this appealing to the fear of Communism. He said, Paul, the thing is rotten with Communists. Communists everywhere. They're taking over. And they're using the theater. Look what they're doing. They take some of the things. He didn't know the name of any of the plays, but he knew some of the subject matter, like the one on power, you know, or something that—he said, The whole thing is socialism of the worst sort, and more and more. And he said, 11:00 o'clock tomorrow, we're going to kill it. And then I pleaded—I said, Well, don't carpenters get hungry? "Oh yes, sir." Don't so and so? "Yes, sir." Don't actors get hungry? Don't they need to eat? Don't playwrights need to eat? "Not Communists," [laughs] he said.

And so—well, at that time I had been seeing quite a bit of Hallie Flanagan and getting interested in—more and more in what was happening, even though there still remained this faint displeasure that we had so many deadbeats, but not any worse and not nearly so bad as it is today on the welfare rolls. We still got it. But—and at the time, Hallie came down to Chapel Hill, I remember, and Kurt Weill, the musician that Hitler had run out of Germany, who wrote the *Die Dreigroschenoper* music, or *The Threepenny Opera*, and he wrote a number of very big hits in this country and got rich. Hallie Flanagan had got the idea to get him and me—get me to write the play and he write the music to do a kind of a big interpretation of the American Dream, you know. Of American—well, idealism, whatever it is. Of course, there wouldn't have been any Communism in that. And we were busy at work on that. And I had already named it, I called it *The Common Glory*, that—the struggle of—you know, people. And Kurt came down and we worked. And we were making some progress. And the plan was we'd get it done and the Federal Theatre would open it in about 70 cities simultaneously. And so, I went to Washington a lot and Hallie would come here, and Kurt Weill, W-E-I-double L.

And so, we were working. And so, my pleading with Bob Reynolds had a special ad hoc quality, but didn't do any good. So, when it was killed, we—that was dropped too. And that was another propulsion to put me into the outdoor theater in another way. So, when the Federal Theatre fell out, we'd already established this *Lost Colony* play, which was a success. And which was in an outdoor theater built especially for it, and with money subscribed by

local people, and by the WPA labor materials setup, and then the Federal Theatre with personnel to act and design and so on.

[00:55:18]

That had established itself in such a way that it wasn't hard then to find other centers and places interested in the same kind of thing all over the Federal Theatre, so actually, when you speak about my—the possibility of my having introduced the—a new concept and a new way of energizing and, well, almost coagulating the sprawled pageant form into a dramatic form, actually I guess you'd have to say the Federal Theatre and me together started it. So, in a way, that is one result of the government subsidy and help is that, until now, we got these outdoor dramas spread everywhere around. And later the people in Virginia, led by Governor Darden, got up money and built a fine and beautiful theater at Williamsburg, and I did the play called, *The Common Glory*. And it's running there tonight, at 18 years. So, *The Common Glory* idea started with Hallie Flanagan and the Federal Theatre.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL GREEN: So—but Bob Reynolds, if he could speak from yonder world—but he can't on account of the fumes and the heat, I guess—he would say, Yeah, but what a price you pay for such a little thing as that. That is true. It was expensive, but very small indeed compared to the armaments and so on, the no—well, take a—well, you know all that's going into foreign aid in the shape of armament. I'd guess enough to run the WPA and the Federal Theatre 100 years.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Sure.

PAUL GREEN: And then what—the marvelous creative feeling that was everywhere in the theater at that time. Of course, there were people who took advantage of it and stayed on the payroll. I was telling you about—the other day when you were here, I think I mentioned a play they were doing of mine in New York, and they started rehearsing [laughs] in the summer, going to open in the fall. And I was up there in October. They hadn't opened, still rehearsing.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Yeah.

PAUL GREEN: In February I was back again and they're going to open soon. And they were still rehearsing that play when the thing ended.

RICHARD K. DOUD: They never did put it on?

PAUL GREEN: Never did put it on. And every actor was on the payroll. And—but they were busy working. And there did come some new techniques, I think. I think, for one thing, for the first time, there was a real conscious—almost a conscious philosophy of technological using. Using of all kinds of devices in drama, the *Living Newspaper* technique, all kinds of mass action, choral speech, mental depiction. Many of those things helped free the American theater to what it is today. It's so free now, you can do most anything.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Well, do you think that the reason for this was not that at this time people were thinking of these as new ideas, but because they did have the money and they didn't have to worry about the idea of failing? They could go ahead and try it, and there—I mean, there was a certain percentage of success in new ideas—

PAUL GREEN: That's right.

RICHARD K. DOUD: —but they didn't have to worry about the financial failure of the thing and—

PAUL GREEN: That's right. They—and that's one reason you used to get such wonderful theater, I'm sure, in some of the European countries, and you still do. Take Yugoslavia. I was talking to a Yugoslav recently, and as I remember, he told me there were 13 professional opera companies in his little country, and of course state subsidized. And I was in Greece, last summer I think it was. I went down to see some—I went to Epidaurus, and golly, they're putting on great ancient Greek dramas. And, of course, they want to have a crowd. But they can rehearse a long time and get thoroughly impregnated with the play and in the play. And —because the government feels this is important—

RICHARD K. DOUD: Sure.

PAUL GREEN: —and it backs it.

[01:00:10]

And we're coming to it. We've got to, because we—it'll be better—be better organized and economically better arranged when it does come. But ultimately, we've got to have it in this country. We've got to have federal subsidy for the arts. And we've got to have somebody in the cabinet representing them. We've got everything—I don't know, it might be in—could be a commissioner or something, but it ought to have cabinet status.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL GREEN: Arts and science. A cabinet man. And the government behind it. And a lot of the states are doing that separately. Talking about states' rights. North Carolina, for instance, has put quite a lot of money into these outdoor dramas, into symphony orchestra, into art galleries, as part of this southern awakening and also part of the economic drive of tourism, you know.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Sure.

PAUL GREEN: And so, in the—in the total picture the Federal Theatre, for all of it's a pseudo-stability as an economic project or an economic process, still did splurge into being a lot of creative power, which still affects our—affects our theater, certainly in these two great amateur arms, the community theater and the educational theater. And of course, Broadway is—it's shrinking, but still, it is freer in that shrinking than it's ever been, free to do anything almost. And the Federal Theatre did what I like so much, it wasn't afraid of what you call propaganda. It didn't mind just going after it, and write about venereal disease. I mean, get in there and let's see what. And it wasn't afraid of that charge of being—and—

RICHARD K. DOUD: Do you suppose it was this very freedom that brought about its early downfall?

PAUL GREEN: Well—

RICHARD K. DOUD: They weren't afraid to take on anything—

PAUL GREEN: That's right.

RICHARD K. DOUD: —including the government.

PAUL GREEN: Well, so they can come at it from another point of view, that the Federal Theatre, in its freedom and in its creative fecundity, I suppose that you could say, so overflowed that it rushed over the certain narrow limits of orthodox political thinking. It naturally would. Of course, you follow the thing out, it followed that power thing and go right back—or we ought to had one on an American tobacco company, showing how these big guys, you know, just take and strangle. And it went—it went right on down. Well, Bob Reynolds and—[laughs] Oh lord, that won't do. That's attacking the American way.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Sure. Sure.

PAUL GREEN: And in—it still—I have a very dear friend that sacrificed here this year in North Carolina on that—he did a film. He had a big stage out here and he did a film—decided to—let's see—get the Negros off the street, and let's let them come in the studio and talk in the television. What they want? What is it troubling them? So, he did. He got a number of the leaders of the Negro dissident groups and he made a film, a 30-minute film. And he let 'em speak. [Laughs.] And they'd look right at you and tell what—and accuse the white man of this or that, and he's out.

Well, a conservative governor in—sort of in line with the Bob Reynolds type of thinking is in office now, so this young man who was lent to us by the Canadian Broadcasting Company to set up this North Carolina film board, he goes back to Canada. A wiser fellow, but I'm certain no happier. But that's always true. Where the creative—the creative artist at work, he doesn't have a sense of these boundaries. As Goethe said—the greater German writer—said about the artist, He is much like the hawk or eagle chasing a hare. He never thinks whether the hare is east Saxony or Prussia. [Laughs.] He doesn't give a hoot. He's after that hare.

[Richard K. Doud laughs.]

[01:05:12]

So, the artist is like that, and he bumps into these prejudices. And the prejudiced one that has power can deny him his existence.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL GREEN: And that's what they did. But this denial is going to be less and less effective, because it's so obvious that the new technical world of automation is going to make man get busy, going to make him—and make governments get busy in channeling the leisure of the people, and the restlessness of the people, into creative ways because that's the only kind of way that will ease this restlessness or this hunger. You take the kids in these outdoor dramas, they'll paint scenery all night long. They will work until they drop. And there they are, you see, because it's something coming out from inside that they like. And so, that's the way to handle a lot of our juvenile stuff is to get these—suppose we had something like a great Federal Theatre going, and were able to take all these hoodlums off the streets of New York and get them to doing these beautiful and wonderful things, dancing, singing, chorus groups.

RICHARD K. DOUD: They'd love it.

PAUL GREEN: Oh, of course. And they'd work their heart out. And—because you see what happens; every time there's a war on and you get devotion, the suicide rate drops, hoodlumism drops because they're devoted to some idea.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL GREEN: And this other is even much better.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Let me turn this over.

[END OF TRACK AAA_green65_8604_m.]

RICHARD K. DOUD: Now as I understand it, you were not actually a part of Federal Theatre at any time, is that correct?

PAUL GREEN: Yeah, you asked me whether I was a part of Federal Theatre at any time, no, not officially. But except to be an actual and a would-be writer for the Federal Theatre. I was telling you about this commission to do this drama interpreting America to be produced in many cities simultaneously. There was no money passed or anything like that. I wasn't on any payroll, but I would be—would have been paid royalty, you know, a regular—in terms of a regular contract. And some of my plays were done and royalty was paid as usual. I think maybe there might have been some package deal, whereas maybe—I know one play that was produced in several cities, I don't remember the royalty dealings, but I imagine there was some sort of arrangement with the agent for it. You may know, maybe there was a special royalty arrangement with the Federal Theatre. I don't remember.

RICHARD K. DOUD: I don't know that there was, no. The point, though, that I was trying to get at was that you were never on Federal Theatre payroll—

PAUL GREEN: No. Never.

RICHARD K. DOUD: —or any Federal Theatre—[Cross talk.]

PAUL GREEN: Nor had any title.

RICHARD K. DOUD: —nor [inaudible] organization of any kind.

PAUL GREEN: No. So far as I know, I was not on any payroll. I'd remember if I'd have gotten a check. [Laughs.]

RICHARD K. DOUD: I think—

PAUL GREEN: And I don't think I had any—now Hallie Flanagan, in her book *Arena*—I haven't read it thoroughly, so I don't remember, but I know that she does tell about some of our get-

togethers. And if she gave me any title, I don't remember it. But all I was hoping for was a chance to write some plays for the Federal Theatre.

RICHARD K. DOUD: The royalty system, I believe, for Federal Theatre would have been the same as for any commercial enterprise.

PAUL GREEN: I imagine.

RICHARD K. DOUD: And if I'm not mistaken, I think that in most cases Federal Theatre in a sense paid its own way, in spite of all the [Paul Green laughs] long rehearsals and this sort of thing.

PAUL GREEN: Well, that would—now, that would be something, if the—that will be something your report will no doubt work at.

RICHARD K. DOUD: I hope so.

PAUL GREEN: What did it cost? Now, that was one of Bob Reynold's—not only—two things he said, one was Communism, and the other was the terrific waste in federal funds. And as I think I mentioned when I saw you before, I did look into that a little bit, and I seem to remember that the cost per play was pretty terrific, even in the short plays. But it might be that some of the long run pieces helped make up the deficit on the others. But even if it paid a 10th, that would be better than a lot of the doles that are going out now.

RICHARD K. DOUD: I think if I recall that the total cost of all the cultural projects of the WPA amounted to something less than one percent total WPA expenditures. So, we're giving one percent to culture and 99 percent to building roads and this sort of thing. Really not a very strong arguing point for bringing it to a close, I'm sure.

PAUL GREEN: That's right. Except that the fellows would have still shrieked out or mumbled out that you don't find Communists working on the roads, you find them in all these long-haired, homosexual projects. You know, that was another whispered thing around. Of course, that's part of our confusion today in art circles, is that—for instance, I was in a project just recently, and we had a very fine man who was fired out of our play for misdemeanor, we call it. Not a felony. But the Greeks in their great and brilliant civilization sort of smiled at and looked on with understanding.

[00:04:56]

I remember once, in Pausanias or some of the Greek writers, Socrates said [laughs]—I guess it was apocryphal, but anyway—he said that Socrates and Sophocles were walking along and beautiful a boy about 12 years old passed, and Sophocles turned around and started following him [laughs]. Socrates got him by the arm, jerked him back, and said, A man must not only be clean in his hearts, but be clean in his eyes. [They laugh.] And he led Sophocles on, but Sophocles was about 90 at that time. [Richard K. Doud laughs.] That was some story I read.

But the theater seems prone to certain breakages of orthodox behavior. But part of it is, the theater's so bothered with that particular—say, call it a problem, is that it's so unstable. A fellow, say, going into acting in the American theater today, he can't—maybe get into movies now and then or in some television but normally, abnormality is required. In that he doesn't get any steady salary, enough to support a family or take on responsibility of a wife. When you think of the Actors Equity in New York some—oh I don't know, I'll just guess 15,000 members— maybe that many, 80 percent of them stay unemployed. But they hang around the bright lights the way moths do around a flame because there's a place their brilliance, if it ever occurs, can be illuminated.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Certainly.

PAUL GREEN: And so these wayward—so-called wayward behaviors occur. And—

RICHARD K. DOUD: Your play *The Lost Colony* was produced pretty much under WPA with federal actors. Could you sight any other examples in the Carolinas, or Georgia, in the South, where the WPA did something active in the theater? Were there any schools established for the teaching of acting or any really active playwrights working in the South at that time? What was going on?

PAUL GREEN: Well, I should have read up on this or gone back to my correspondence. I just don't know. I know that this idea that Mrs. Flanagan had of creating, here at Chapel Hill, a regional theater center was the kind of thing that she visualized and envisioned in different parts of the country. When she tells about it in her book *Arena*, her plan was to sponsor and somewhat mother, or have the Federal Theatre mother and sponsor, a theater center here, a professional and semi-professional acting, of playwriting, of the whole of theater training. And in the middle of that, or as part of that, I know that Professor Koch and I went to the Rockefeller Foundation, and there was a man in charge of the humanities division of the Rockefeller Foundation that the Federal Theatre, the American Theater, the World Theater owes an enormous debt to, and that's David H. Stevens.

Dr. Stevens had a special interest in the theater. And he, through his recommendation, the Rockefeller people—the foundation, through the '30s, dispensed a lot of money for playwrights, fellowships, scholarships. And as part of this idea here at Chapel Hill that Mrs. Flanagan had in mind, Dr. Stevens recommended to the foundation that they set up a fund, and it was finally decided on of $150,000, to equip the theater, the building. The University of North Carolina offered to give the land, and then certain wealthy people were to be approached. So, it was quite a big project and it was very much alive.

[00:10:01]

When that native son—that nice—I won't extend that phrase, I'll just say that native son—killed off the—took the lead in killing off the Federal Theatre it didn't make any difference that he was killing a wonderful project in North Carolina, his native state, because he didn't think it counted anyway. That the theater wasn't important. Not at all. He, by the way, married the McLean heiress with the diamond—the hope diamond family.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Oh, yes.

PAUL GREEN: Well, God—well, bless him, wherever he is. But we've done a little better in our representation now, I think, in Washington. Some better. Not too much.

RICHARD K. DOUD: You were talking, the last time I was here, about Dock Street Theater, I think, in Charleston. Can you say something about what was going on in Charleston under the WPA?

PAUL GREEN: Well, I'm not sure of my facts, but I know that Harry Hopkins, you know, was—of course, he was Mrs. Flanagan's boss, but he—well, pretty much boss. He was keenly interested in the Federal Theatre, and pushed it, and often defended it when it was attacked for its left-wing points of view and so on. And the Dock Street Theater was the sort of project that interested him tremendously. And I remember that, during the Federal Theatre regime—that the WPA had put up funds and rebuilt, and rehabilitated— rebuilt the old Dock Street, a beautiful—just a beautiful thing. And so, the Federal Theatre saw possibilities of doing great things down there, and did do some things. And so they asked me to go down and meet with him and so I did. And the place was jammed with people, and this beautiful theater—and we talked about repeating the thing that the Federal Theatre had helped start on Roanoke Island, that we would do a great outdoor drama down t there, and the Dock Street Theater itself would sponsor and train actors, you know, and do that sort of thing.

So, we went—drove around through South Carolina picking up sites and looking at places, and that was the sort of thing that had tremendous enthusiasm. And of course, that perished when the Federal Theatre was killed. And Dr. Stevens, in the meantime as part of this Federal Theatre surge and urge, had got the Rockefeller people to set up a lecture series for the Dock Street people and to encourage this outdoor drama thing. And so—but in the meantime the Federal Theatre was killed. But in the meantime, they had invited me to come again and talk in the theater about this thing—this project. And they're paying—the foundation had set up a lecture fee of $150 for each visiting speaker. And I needed the $150 bad, and so I went down. Although the Federal Theatre had perished, still there was this invitation, and I went. And the host—maybe I'm talking too much here, but anyhow this is part of the picture showing when the Federal Theatre had perished what the result was, compared to the first meeting. So, I went to the host's house, the fellow that had arranged for me to come, and he had a sign on the door: "Mr. Green, I've been called to some other place, but I'll be back at a certain time, and you get your room. I think you can find a room at a certain hotel, and I'll call you when I come back."

[00:15:03]

Well, he called me, and he said, I'll meet you at the theater. No dinner, nothing. And I had a pint of liquor, I think, as I remember or I went out and bought a pint or got a pint, and I said, Doggone it, this calls for a drink. So, I took a drink and Elizabeth and I went out for supper. I think I told you this.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Yes, but go ahead.

PAUL GREEN: All right, we'll record it. Well—but I didn't tell you about the first meeting. In fact, I didn't—had forgot about that first enthusiastic meeting during the Federal Theatre days and was showing the difference. And even if they—if it were even all phony kind of charity, the first meeting was real. The place was packed. And it wasn't the fact that they were tired of me as a speaker that the second one showed up to be what it was. But anyhow, I go to the theater and I've got my speech all set up, you know, ready to go, and wait and wait. And 12 people in this beautiful theater that David Stevens, Rockefeller Foundation, Hallie Flanagan, and Harry Hopkins, and all worked so hard to bring back to existence. 12 people. Well, finally the host gets up, and he said, I don't think anybody else is coming, we might as well go ahead. So, there I am, and I try to make my speech, and in the middle of it, some guy stands up and he says, That's not true. What you're saying about this city is either casting aspersions or maligning a fair capital. Well, that may be [inaudible]—

Well, I got through with the darn thing and went back, and I couldn't stay in the city that night. And I told Elizabeth, I'm going back to Chapel Hill. So, I took another big drink and [laughs] we got in the car and tore out of there and got down the main street somewhere and the whistle began to blow, and I thought, Oh lord God, I'm sunk now. And the cop came over and I had to lower the window, and I hated to [Richard K. Doud laughs] because I knew he'd smell my breath and he said Where are you going? And I said, Chapel Hill. I didn't even think to name the state or anything. He said, Well, you go up here and you turn to the right and you go over the bridge. I gulped again, and then he said, By the way, while you're driving down the main street in a night like this, you better turn your lights on. [Richard K. Doud laughs.] And I turned the lights on and that was all there was to it. But I think that's my last—no, recently—two weeks ago, I came through Charleston coming back from St. Augustine, but I didn't stop.

And now there's where you had a crowded house, enthusiasm, on the one hand, because it was in the air. Theater was in the air. Creativity was in the air. Then you pull away the federal help, you pull away the consensus, and leave it as more or less on its own, even though it's subsidized by the Rockefeller people, the lethargy that Sherman left when he burnt the darn place in 1865 resumes.

RICHARD K. DOUD: That's certainly just—

PAUL GREEN: And I don't know what they do. You don't hear of anything. There's a beautiful theater—was beautiful. And the people are dead. Sherman burnt the heart out of them. But for a while, Uncle Sam had reinvigorated them with some sort of heart, even artificial. But it would have been real if we could have continued. So, the killing of the Federal Theatre was a great tragedy. But I'm sure that ultimately, when the federal support comes back again, as it will come, the Federal Theatre will then again be used to substantiate, and to support, and buttress the new endeavor. It's just bound—federal support of the arts, especially the theater, is bound to come.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Are you familiar with a woman in South Carolina named Helen McCormick [ph]?

PAUL GREEN: No. The name sounds faintly familiar. Helen McCormick. I wonder if John McGee is alive. He could tell you everything.

[00:20:05]

RICHARD K. DOUD: That I don't know. I've not come across his name in any of our records.

PAUL GREEN: Is that right?

RICHARD K. DOUD: That is, as being alive today.

PAUL GREEN: Well, last year, he sent me an outdoor drama recording that he had written. I think it was last year. I may have it in my records. I can go look in a minute. And I think he wrote me a letter. I don't know whether it's up in the library. But I think he was alive about a year ago.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Where was he then, do you remember?

PAUL GREEN: I don't know.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Do you know of any people in the Carolinas or Georgia who would have been connected with this thing that might be of some help?

PAUL GREEN: Oh, there must be a great many, and I ought to know them, and I'm sure that in my letter files, all kinds of names [laughs] but—

RICHARD K. DOUD: That's probably our best place, then, to work because we really haven't turned up too much from this area.

PAUL GREEN: No. The—

RICHARD K. DOUD: Do you know anything about a man named Robert Schnitzer [ph]? Does that ring any bells?

PAUL GREEN: Yeah.

RICHARD K. DOUD: I don't think—[Cross talk.]

PAUL GREEN: Now where's—

RICHARD K. DOUD: —he was in the South.

PAUL GREEN: No, no, but where's Schnitzer [ph] now?

RICHARD K. DOUD: Well, the last I heard from him he was Chicago area, I believe.

PAUL GREEN: Yeah, that's right. I don't know where he is.

RICHARD K. DOUD: He was around Delaware, I think, for a while in the 30s but he sort of dropped out and then I heard he was somewhere in the Chicago area. I've tried to find him—

PAUL GREEN: But I know in music there's a lot done around here. We started the North Carolina symphony in those days and the—but music would be in something else, wouldn't it? What—

RICHARD K. DOUD: They had a Music Project.

PAUL GREEN: Yeah. Well, I should have got—maybe I could have a chance to look up on that and send you a list of a—but it must have been a lot of it the—I'm sure. For instance, down in Manteo, a little teeny town, prior to *The Lost Colony* they had a little Federal Theatre group there that were doing plays. And I know in Raleigh, they created the Raleigh Little Theater, which is still going strong. And I reckon tonight, they've got a play on over there. That was part of the Federal Theatre. And now let's see, I don't know of any other theater that got started that actually is still going. Of course, you always have to have a local spark plug, too.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Sure.

PAUL GREEN: And in Raleigh they had a Mrs. Louis Sutton, and that's the only one I know that is still going. But I'm sure there must have been something in Greensboro, and nearly all the places, Ashville. I could get a student on that for you, and there might be some MA thesis in the university library written on this—the Federal Theatre in North Carolina. See, I'm unprepared [laughs].

RICHARD K. DOUD: Well, I take it that, in spite of this feeling you had for things you've said later, this sort of uneasiness about this whole business because it was sort of a disguised dole in a way— you feel in general that the Federal Theatre, at that time at least, was a good thing for theater? Is this—

PAUL GREEN: Oh, I think—

RICHARD K. DOUD: —a correct assumption?

PAUL GREEN: I think so. Absolutely. The effects still—it's almost like as if there's a big tidal wave and it washes up a lot of living things and then the wave recedes and it sucks back a lot, but here and there, some of the living things catch and start growing and that happened in the Federal Theatre. And then when the next wave comes, maybe five years, 10 years, 20 years, it will—these that are growing will be reinvigorated and the wave will push way on, and establish others inland, and maybe you might say from sea to sea, until you hear America singing.

[00:25:17]

RICHARD K. DOUD: A couple theater people I talked with sort of felt at odds with—I think, with Hallie Flanagan, on some points of this. As I recall, the feeling was, on their part, that this thing was basically designed to sort of give people a chance, or put people to work, or give people a means of income, an honorable means of income. And they felt that, to do this, it was necessary to encourage, say, the new talent and this sort of thing, and that Mrs. Davis, or Hallie Flanagan, was more concerned with reproducing established works, works that had been proven in the past, rather than perhaps worrying about local playwrights or local talent and this sort of thing. Did you get that feeling from your discussions with her? Did you agree with her approach to this thing?

PAUL GREEN: I don't think—I didn't find that that was true. And I think in her writings—by virtue of her position and her own, I guess, personality and individual outlook, she was interested in the theater. Interested in the theater as such, and I would say that she was a—well, her predilection was more for experiment than for the established, because she could afford to experiment.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Mm-hmm [affirmative.]

PAUL GREEN: And so, there's another point of view that we haven't talked about. In a society which is institutionalized, like the educational theater or the community theater—and by institutionalized, I mean just that, the requirements are such that freedom is not quite there. So that in that kind of theater, I'm sure that the requirement would be more for safety, well-tried out things, Broadway successes and all that, than in a theater like the Federal Theatre where the—in a way, the command was: Go forward and see what you can do.

And as we mentioned a while ago, Uncle Sam was paying the bill, and that being true, naturally the human spirit of the people involved would want to unloose its wings, just like a butterfly breaking out. He wants to, and that's human. So that Hallie Flanagan would certainly represent that. Would be that. And so, she was looking for new things—like when she talked to Kurt Weill and me several times about this this project, the sky was the limit in imagination. Try anything, you know, new scenes, new ways, and see what you come up with. And I've got in my notes pages and pages of plans for this drama, things that we might do with being free, and she encouraged that. So that I don't think anybody could accuse her of wanting to play safe and do—no, it's just it's not true. I remember talking with her about one of the sorriest plays I ever saw by Sinclair Lewis, called it—and somebody else helped him, I don't remember—called *It Can't Happen Here*. I don't know whether you ever saw that.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yes. Sort of anti-Fascist—

PAUL GREEN: Well, I—what?

RICHARD K. DOUD: It's sort of anti-Fascist.

PAUL GREEN: Yeah, that's right. It was very preachy and all. And I think maybe Hallie and I saw it together in New York and I said, Good gosh, this is a dull thing. But she said, Still it—there's something here, you know, that's different. And it's a real attack on the cruelty in the world, you know, and so, let's see it.

[00:30:12]

And so, I think she was for creative endeavor. And that means just what it says, creative.

And it didn't mean a recall.

RICHARD DOUD. Yes.

PAUL GREEN: Just recall of something done. It means—and some of those things were recall—I've got a lot of the scripts here, the *Living Newspaper* technique stuff. And of course, on the first surge where social and political points of view demand so much, you rarely get a touch of literature, rarely. But when this new wave comes that I'm talking about, you will get it. You'll get real—the scripts of the *Living Newspaper* technique were controlled and mannered and maneuvered by the technique. But the next time, you'll get some soaring poetry out of it, same kind of free production.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Well now, this impetus, so to speak, that Federal Theatre led to the South, you feel as—at least at certain areas has carried on, and has gone forward, or at least is there waiting for something. How do you feel that the future for theater in this area compares to maybe the Midwest, or other non-urban areas in the country? I think it's not fair to compare it to metropolitan centers, but does the Southeast compare favorably to other suburban or rural parts of the country?

PAUL GREEN: Well, I don't know. I lived in a lot of different sections of the—

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: How about you all come in up for air? And [inaudible]—

PAUL GREEN: Just a minute, yeah. We'll be there.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: [Inaudible.]

PAUL GREEN: Yeah, okay.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Shall we turn this off, and let you—

PAUL GREEN: Well, I'll finish this little bit. In 1924—maybe I've told you this, but I haven't told this recorder this—I was in Samuel French's office in New York City. It's the biggest play publishing firm in the world. And at that time was a real monopoly. Since then, the Dramatists Guild in this country has got started and that's dividing some of the trade. But Mr. Edwards, the managing editor and director, he told me that they had never got enough return of royalty from North Carolina to pay the postage on their catalogs. And I—it was in 1924, I had written some one-act play and went in there thought that maybe I would some—get them interested in publishing it. And he looked at me. I was from the darkest state in the union, I guess [laughs], he said. [They laugh.] Well, I—not long ago, I was in New York in the same place, and I was telling this story to the present president, who was the grandson of Mr. Edwards of the former time, and he told me that North Carolina was one of the biggest paying royalty states in the union.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Oh really?

PAUL GREEN: And North Carolina's part of the Southeast, and that's right. And we have, now in North Carolina, a number of resident professional theater companies, Flat Rock, and Triangle Theater in Durham, Eastern Carolina. Then we have these outdoor dramas. And so I imagine North Carolina is a little bit in the lead in this sort of thing.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL GREEN: But I'm sure that in the other states, there must be some partly—because for instance Georgia, the University of Georgia—the different universities, nearly every one of them, University of Virginia, William and Mary, all have created these tremendous theater plants.

[00:35:15]

Modern theaters with every kind of gadget you can think of, and they're producing plays, but it's true that they're not doing what Hallie Flanagan would have liked, they're not experimenting enough.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Sure.

PAUL GREEN: Because they institutionalized. Here at Chapel Hill since Mr. Koch went away—

or died, they produce Broadway successes, or they produce some of the classics, but as I say, they never produce a *Native Son*, or *In Abraham's Bosom*, or any of these. And they don't encourage the students to write about burning issues. And they're afraid as heck of propaganda. That is, taking a stand. Well, the Federal Theatre taught them how to take a stand, and that they weren't afraid, and Hallie Flanagan encouraged that. So, in that way, she was a real—and the Federal Theatre itself, they both were real pioneers, and we ought to remember that. We ought to do better by that memory.

RICHARD K. DOUD: I hope we will.

PAUL GREEN: [Laughs.] Yeah. All right.

[Audio break.]

PAUL GREEN: Go ahead, we can talk a little more—

RICHARD K. DOUD: A couple of interesting points came up during our break that I wanted to get you to mention a little further. One was this business of lighting fixtures, or something along that nature, your wife mentioned, that seemed to be a case in point with the Federal Theatre.

PAUL GREEN: Well, after the demise of the Federal Theatre, I was talking to Dr. David Stevens, whom I mentioned earlier, of the Rockefeller Foundation, about this theater project and the pity of its having been curtailed. And I asked him, did he know what had happened to the enormous equipment that had been accumulated, and purchased? Lighting, all kinds of technical devices and materials that could be used, and were used, and now that the theater had perished, what had happened to these? So, he said he would look into it, and one day, I got a letter from him—or telephone call, I don't remember which—and he said that he had located a great deal of it in a certain warehouse in New York City.

And I asked him, Well, what's to become of that? And he said he didn't know. And I told him of the numbers of places I knew in the South where they had poor lighting equipment and poor all sorts of things, sound equipment and so on. And it would be wonderful if this could be distributed in some way among these different groups. And there must be enormous amount of it spread all over the United States from New York to San Francisco, Los Angeles, Dallas, back to New Orleans, and Miami, Florida and up. Well, anyway, I went to New York and, through the Rockefeller people, got the address of this warehouse. And I went to this warehouse and there was a keeper there and he said, Oh yes, we've got acres of this stuff stored in there. And I asked him what would happen to it, and he said, I guess we'll do what we did with a lot of it; we'll take it out to the East River and push it off of a barge.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Oh, for pity sakes.

PAUL GREEN: I said, You don't mean you've destroyed materials like that? And he said, You're telling me, brother, where you from? [They laugh.] Well anyway, I got very anxious about that and set out to see if I could get—salvage some of this for different theater centers in the South that I knew about and that needed equipment. We needed some at Chapel Hill; Wilmington, North Carolina; Charlotte, and so on. Well, you'd be surprised the amount of wire pulling—I made several trips to Washington trying to find the responsible person.

[00:39:56]

Well, to make a long story short, finally one day, a lot of big vans drew up in front of this warehouse and loaded this material on them and set out—on them and set out for Chapel Hill, North Carolina. They arrived there and we stored the stuff on the campus there in the different buildings and then sent out the word to different theater centers in North Carolina and the South that we had this material. All kinds of spotlights, all kinds of lenses, everything. Switch boards, and so on.

One of the first places to get equipment was the little Thalian or Thaylian [ph] Theater in Wilmington, North Carolina that was reactivated. It was built I think, in 1840, and the people decided they would start production there again. And so, they sent up a truck and we loaded a lighting switchboard on and equipment. And in no time, it was installed in Wilmington. And we were getting out a catalog of all these materials, and so on, for the different theater centers. Then one day, there came an order from Washington—I don't remember who signed it, but anyway—it ordered us to stop this, and several great vans arrived in a day or

two, and the drivers were armed with these orders, and they loaded all the stuff back and drove it north. And whatever happened to it, I don't know.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Oh, for pity sakes.

PAUL GREEN: And the only [laughs]—but still in Wilmington, North Carolina, they got a switch board, and they couldn't take that out. [They laugh.] And if it had been delayed much longer, we would have got the rest of it distributed. Maybe they took it out and dumped it in the ocean. I don't know.

RICHARD K. DOUD: I wouldn't be surprised.

PAUL GREEN: Because the lighting manufacturers—the manufacture of lighting equipment, the Century [ph] Company, and others, no doubt, couldn't allow this to start flooding the charitable market, you see.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. It sounds typical.

PAUL GREEN: Yeah.

RICHARD K. DOUD: You wanted to say something, too, on the Williamsburg project, I think.

PAUL GREEN: Well, I remember that back in the year after *The Lost Colony* was established in Manteo, North Carolina through the help of the Federal Theatre, the—Mr. John D. Rockefeller invited me to come to up to Williamsburg. And he invited my wife and myself to come up and be his guests for a weekend, and so we went up and were entertained. And during this weekend, he brought up the subject of an outdoor play for Williamsburg similar to *The Lost Colony*. Anyway, the subject came up and we discussed it from that point of view. And I said I thought it was a wonderful idea. Here he was creating the architecture in which these people lived, the buildings, the rooms, with their tables, and furniture, and everything. And what was lacking was a living presence.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL GREEN: P-R-E-S-E-N-C-E. So, if we could set up a theater at night and bring to life these people who have lived in these houses, Jefferson, Patrick Henry, old man Reuben Bland [ph], Peyton Randolph, many, many, others. Then maybe we'd be complimenting each other. And he said that he would be very much interested in the idea, suggesting to my eager mind that he would be putting up some money. Well, the citizens of the town had a meeting and we all got enthusiastic, and they signed a contract with me to start writing the play, and they paid me $1,200 down. And then the war came on and everything was stopped. And so I agonized over this, but I went to the bank and I drew out my $1,200, and sent it back, and it was a real tooth-pulling [Richard K. Doud laughs] action. Hoping that someday, it could be renewed.

[00:44:52]

Well, after the war was over—well, even during the war, while the Federal Theatre was underway, Mrs. Flanagan was down here, and I told her about Mr. Rockefeller's idea and the people of Williamsburg's idea. And I wanted her help and advice. So she said, Well, why don't we drive up to Williamsburg and look around, and plan things? And so, she took the long ride to Williamsburg with me, and we surveyed the town and talked in terms of production and how we could do this and that. And in fact, we picked out a site on the village green, in front of the capital. No, in front of the governor's palace. And she made some rough sketches as to how we could create kind of a bleacher outdoor theater. And anyway, she promised the help of the Federal Theatre in getting things started, and was most eager to help. Well then, as I say, the war deepened on down and the Federal Theatre was put out of business. But the idea lingered, and it was strengthened into lingering or lingered with more strength because she herself had spoken publicly for it, and actually met with the people there and talked and urged that the thing be done. So, in a way, that project, which still goes today under the name of *The Common Glory*, owes its existence somewhat to the Federal Theatre.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So there are—

PAUL GREEN: And to Hallie Flanagan.

RICHARD K. DOUD: So there are good, strong ties yet, in this part of the country?

PAUL GREEN: Yeah. And it just shows what could be done if we had the heartbeat of the nation, not only pumping blood into our great economy and other veins, but if it's pumping blood into this artistic part of man's heart.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Some people seem to think it's almost morally wrong for the United States government to subsidize the arts.

PAUL GREEN: Yeah, I understand that.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Do you find any fault with that at all?

PAUL GREEN: Yeah, I sure do. I don't think it's—I think it's just part of our still lingering provincialism, due to the challenge of our nations. See, what has happened, no doubt, is it, in this—when we started this fringe of humanity along the eastern coast, and then through the desire, and love, and the hot embrace of man and woman, night after night, we produced more and more of these children, and the influx from the old world kept coming in. And then this great tide of humanity moving slowly up, up through the woods on to the West and over the hills, you know, until finally, the whole nation is humanized in the sense of human activity and human occupation. But the—what came out of that was the engineering and building genius of the American people because there were rivers to conquer, prairies to be plowed, great forests to be felled, river—mountains to be mined. So, in the conquering of the physical world and making it habitable, fighting disease and the terrors of the dark and all that, man's ingenuity as an engineer was challenged again and again.

So, we became the greatest engineers since the Romans. So much so—and then we had to invent. We had to invent everything, to keep—we had to invent all kinds of things, nor only to dig canals, and build carriages, and railroads, but ultimately corn shellers, reaping machines, the telegraph, the telephone, finally electric light, all that stuff, until finally, we produced 75 percent of the world's inventions in the field of technology. So, with great—well, and so, during that period, since the challenge of man and man the builder was supreme, man the decorator, or the cherisher of form became neglected. He didn't count so much.

[00:50:08]

So that here and there, there were little bursts of artistic activity like the little niche or little nest around Concord, Massachusetts. And then later in the 20th century or earlier, a little group around Chicago, and so on. But they were small groups, and here and there stray artists. A fellow, well, like Walt Whitman walking up and down the earth and then there's Mark Twain. But they were the exception. And the American theater didn't exist except as a matter of entertainment to the people who were busy doing something important: building, creating railroads, and so on. So that the great heroes were the Jay Goulds, and the Vanderbilts, and the McCormicks, and the Rockefellers, and all that. But—and that's natural, that's natural enough, so that you can understand why—but—why the arts were neglected.

So that a philosophy grew out of that, represented by, well, Strom Thurmond in South Carolina, Bob Reynolds, my good friend and fellow Carolinian [laughs] Sam Ervin in the United States Senate. And all around was the idea that the thing that counted was the businessman, the builder, the banker, and so on. And that the artists, oh well, you know, so on, he sort of counts, but not too much. And so, when you talk about the United States supporting these kinda unneeded people anyhow, well, that's silly. That's something else. So, I remember getting some letters from Strom Thurmond—I was working hard and wiring and all for the bill before Congress, to do something about the arts. And I got this letter—two letters from Strom Thurmond, just typical. He said the federal government has no business being in the arts. That's something, you know, that—and then some of the artists themselves have worried about the possibility that the government would dictate if they did. Well, heck, the government can't [laughs] get a free spirit going, and he can turn up something—and take a Frank Lloyd Wright, well, how could you dictate to him?

RICHARD K. DOUD: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL GREEN: And so, it's part of that old pioneer inheritance still lingering among us that the artist, somehow he's—he will come along. Last year, this very university, we had a debate—I was one of the debaters—about the question of recognition of creative work in the academic world. And I was urging, as hard as I could, that we should give the PhD here, or

something comparable, to a man who is able to write a fine play as his thesis, or write a fine novel, or a group of short stories, as his contribution in the thesis. If he's majoring in English, or literature, or something, let him do that. Well, it was just—a cry went up and so I said, Well, I was out at the University of Ohio a short while ago, and I looked up the PhD thesis in the catalog, and I came across all kinds of things. I noticed one fellow got his doctor's degree on horse manure. That's right, he did on horse manure.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL GREEN: I said, For mercy's sake if you give a doctor's degree on horse manure, couldn't you do it for a great story? Well, the answer was, That ain't the same. That's not the same thing. But some universities are doing that. The University of Iowa, Stanford, are now awarding the doctor's degree with the thesis in creative—so-called creative work. And so, it will come more and more of that. But we still—the engineer or the fellow—the practical guy—so-called practical guy, is more supreme and it was never better illustrated than in a banking house. I tried to get introduced in the bank here at Chapel Hill a hillbilly singer.

I told the president one of the things we needed was to have a fellow in there who could now and then play the guitar and sing a ballad or two so that when I came in to borrow money, it wouldn't be so damn serious. You know? [Richard K. Doud laughs.]

[00:55:09]

You go around money, it's serious business, serious. And he laughed. Well, then up and down the tellers counter a lot of them took to the idea, thought it was okay. They were the clerks.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Sure.

PAUL GREEN: And—but—well, that's very understandable because when you're dealing with a body, the things that minister to the body, clothing, housing, food, taxes, the body is so sensitive to discomfort and pain, that remains very primary and I understand that. And that's one reason that the movies are—they do what they do, they always—cheap entertainment. They cater to things that have to do with the body, like violence. You take a gun out of a Western and you haven't got much because as long as it goes and that gun's hanging by the fellows side you know at a crisis he'd pull it, and he may shoot somebody and that hurts. And so, we're very sensitive to violence or sensitive to ease, that's why, in Hollywood, they like to show you all these wonderful houses, and the stars living beautifully, and going to the opera with mink or sable coats, because that caressment [ph] of the physical organism has an immediate reaction in the audience.

So that the things of the spirit are much more elusive, but of course, there's where civilization lies. But the motion pictures, the television find that they can sell their commodities, more of them and more easily, if they have to do with something related to physical comfort or physical pain. And that's the secret of it. But that's what you have to work to get beyond. And working against these, you work more towards peace, and there's no way of rousing up the people more swiftly than to create an enemy who might do them harm, or might rob them of that ease. Or take away something. And so, the ghost and the figment—pretty much figment, of Communistic threat is preached day after day. Nonsense.

RICHARD K. DOUD: But do you recall the reaction of, say, the man on the street in this part of the country towards the WPA cultural projects? It was welcomed, I dare, say by people in the theater or associated with the arts. What about Joe Blow down on the corner, did he approve of the government spending money—

PAUL GREEN: Well, I don't know. That—the approval of the man on the streets for art activities subsidized or promoted by the WPA. Yes and no, I guess. I know a good many people who had hidden urges to be, say, a writer, or an actor, or a singer, came out of their hiding and boldly stood up [laughs] and pronounced themselves as such and such, because—well, I know one fellow was a convict guard—a friend of mine, he was a convict guard. He guarded the prisoners on the road. And he had wanted to write. So he boldly comes forward to the WPA and announces that he's a writer. And they ask him for references, so he gives me and some other people, and I don't know what happened, but the first thing I know, he's a writer. And he's drawing a salary and he's writing, and they ask him what he wants to write, so he says he'll write about being a convict guard. [Richard K. Doud laughs.] And so, he wrote [laughs] the most ungodliest mess you ever saw, but he was so proud of that. So,

he was a Joe Blow, but he was a Joe Doe kind of fellow, but moved from the category of convict guard into being a writer. And the same thing happened—a fellow called me up two days ago here, from New York, hadn't heard his voice in 20 years.

[01:00:04]

He was a school—kind of a backwoods schoolteacher, and he had an urge to be an actor. And so he comes in and gets on the roll as an actor. And he acts in several plays and he has a whale of a time, and very proud of it. Now the onlooker, the fellow in the bleachers who looks at this or down the street, if he was simply an onlooker, he had, maybe, a different point of view from a fellow who had been an onlooker but then went and took part—

RICHARD K. DOUD: Sure.

PAUL GREEN: —in it. But people were in such a miserable condition, and so uncertain of their daily bread, and this and that and the other, that they didn't have a stable critical point of view about things that, you know, at a better time they would have had. So, there was a lot of, "well maybe that's all right", kind of feeling. And I know down in my home county of Harnett, in North Carolina, there was a wonderful neighborhood spirit. This is something else, but it came out of this fact that everybody was poor, and everybody was on a hard row of stumps, and everybody was having to whatever he could to get along. And what you call Hoover Carts were ramping everywhere. And so, the attitude of the man on the street to this subsidy of the art projects by the federal government was a very lenient and understanding one, I think. Quite different from Bob Reynold's point of view or Strom Thurmond. Two fellows already encased in stability and protection.

RICHARD K. DOUD: It made a difference.

PAUL GREEN: Sure did.

RICHARD K. DOUD: Well, Professor Green, I think I have taken up enough of your time.

PAUL GREEN: [Laughs] I've talked your ears off, so—

RICHARD K. DOUD: Certainly appreciate all you've given us. I think it's—

PAUL GREEN: Well, I'll be glad to help them look up anything in the files here, but if you send Dr. Patton [ph] some definite questions, I'm sure they'll do all they can, and I'll let him know that I'll help out if I can locating any of that.

RICHARD K. DOUD: We certainly appreciate it.

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]