



Smithsonian
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Oral history interview with William A.
Gaw, 1964 Mar. 6

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with William A. Gaw on March 6, 1964. The interview took place in Berkeley, California, and was conducted by Lewis Ferbraché for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Archives of American Art's New Deal and the Arts project.

The original transcript was edited. In 2022 the Archives created a more verbatim transcript. Additional information from the original transcript that seemed relevant was added in brackets and given an -Ed. attribution. The narrator's voice is low throughout leading to a significant amount of dialogue that are marked inaudible. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Lewis Ferbraché interviewing Mr. William Gaw, G-A-W, at his home 1409 Edith Street, Berkeley, California. March 6, 1964.

WILLIAM GAW: That's better.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Fine. Now, Mr. Gaw, would you begin again with your birth date, and birthplace, and your early art education?

WILLIAM GAW: I was born in San Francisco, November 26, 1891. And my early training was under James Martin Griffin, an Irish artist, from Clark, Ireland, who studied at the Slade School of Fine Arts and other important schools of that day. I studied with Mr. Griffin—with James Martin Griffin, for about six years. After that, I studied figure drawing and painting during the evening at the—at that time the California School of Fine Arts, or the Mark Hopkins—Mark Hopkins Institute. And that went on for a number of—for about five or six years.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Do you remember the dates that you studied under Griffin and then under the Mark Hopkins Institute?

WILLIAM GAW: Well, about five years under Griffin, that would be about 1906, right after the earthquake and fire. The buildings were rebuilt, and I went to the Mark Hopkins.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Were you living in San Francisco at this time?

WILLIAM GAW: No, we were living in Berkeley.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: And because I had a job that gave me enough to go to school.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Griffin was always known as an Oakland artist.

WILLIAM GAW: Yes.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Did he have his studio in Oakland?

WILLIAM GAW: Yes. His studio was originally located in Alameda when I first attended his classes. And I used to go over there in the little Telegraph Avenue. I call them today the bob cars, four-wheel cars [inaudible] transfer to the 12th Street line and all the way up to—oh, I've forgotten just how far on 38th Avenue, 48th Avenue, some place around in there.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Could you speak a little louder, Mr. Gaw?

WILLIAM GAW: Around about 38th—to about 38th Avenue. And that usually was on a—on a —on a Tuesday afternoon, after my regular school, and again on Saturday morning.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Can you describe Mr. Griffin? We have some of his works in the Oakland Art Museum. I've long been interested in him. Can you tell us something about him?

WILLIAM GAW: Yes, he was a very fine gentleman. High class person. He had a daughter as I recall. And she married a man by the name of Fitzsimmons [ph] who was a mining engineer. And I think they were located in—finally located in Jackson, California.

[00:05:12]

And I understood, through Carlton Ball, who was in the Art Department in Mills College at one period, that he was of the same age as Carlton Ball, that is his son. Did I mention his son before? [Inaudible] is all off again, too.

[Audio break.]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: If you please continue, Mr. Gaw.

WILLIAM GAW: Hold it for a second while I get this thing figured out.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Was Griffin a bearded man in the old style?

WILLIAM GAW: No, he wore a mustache. And I notice—I recall it was rather grey. I really don't know how old a man he was when he landed in this community. But my father knew him through E. A. Wright, who was a businessman in Oakland. And he was the owner and the promoter of the E. A. Wright Jam Company, which is a well-known—at that time, a well-known organization.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: And you were studying landscape under Mr. Griffin?

WILLIAM GAW: I studied, first—my first drawing was dated June 1901. And it was a still life in charcoal, which I remember distinctly. After I went through about a year's training in drawing, I then turned to the handling of watercolors with a very strict training. And the handling of washes, painting up to a line, and development, and understanding of hard edges, of soft edges, all that sort of thing. I was finally given a real project of a—of a real project which consisted of eggplants, and the leaves, and so forth which I had to paint according to rules and regulations, which I don't think did me any harm.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Was Griffin a strict teacher?

WILLIAM GAW: He was—yes, he was rather strict, but he was very understanding.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Patient?

WILLIAM GAW: Patient. Extremely patient.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Did he have many students?

WILLIAM GAW: No. I was a private student. He may have had other students at other times, which I didn't know anything about. Occasionally, there would be a new student appear, but they didn't last very long. Now—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: And then, you studied for him under—about five years.

WILLIAM GAW: I studied under Griffin for a period of about five years.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Did you have any exhibitions during this period?

WILLIAM GAW: No, I didn't. Um—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Some oils?

WILLIAM GAW: After that time—yes, I painted a great deal in oils until I got lead poisoning, or traces of lead poisoning, and I had to give the oil painting up and went to watercolors entirely. And I did watercolors for several years. And finally, back into the oil painting again. But after the training under Griffin, I attended the Mark—then known as the Mark Hopkins Institute [inaudible].

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: This was after the fire and earthquake?

WILLIAM GAW: After the earthquake and fire in San Francisco, for a period of about six years.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: They had a temporary building on the same site that they—

WILLIAM GAW: Well, it was more than a temporary building. It was a very well-built temporary building. It's very solid little building at the time.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: It was on the site of the old—

WILLIAM GAW: Site of the old Mark Hopkins Institute. And—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Who were the teachers then, do you remember?

WILLIAM GAW: Well, we had—I studied with Chapel Judson, drawing and some painting. Although he didn't give much information as far as painting was concerned, it was supposed to be a drawing class. But, however, I did my painting because that's what I went there for. Using the models, their live models, and such as that.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Was Captain Fletcher [ph] still director then?

WILLIAM GAW: Yes, Captain Fletcher [ph] was director of the school. And we'd only see him occasionally as I attended night classes.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Was Alice Brown Chittenden still there at the time?

WILLIAM GAW: Yes, she was teaching some, I believe, children's classes during the day sessions.

[00:10:09]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: And Will Sparks, was he—

WILLIAM GAW: No, Will Sparks was not there.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: John Stanton?

WILLIAM GAW: John Stanton was there. Yeah, Stanton was teaching. But I didn't study under Stanton. The only one I studied under was under Judson and that was about it. I was really using the model more than anything else.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Was this day classes or evening classes?

WILLIAM GAW: No, these were evening classes.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Were you working during the day?

WILLIAM GAW: I was working at the time. I was working for my father that particular time. Because after the earthquake and fire the—our losses were pretty heavy and—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: How was—

WILLIAM GAW: —we had to get—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: —business was—

WILLIAM GAW: —business, he was in the grocery business.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: And it took quite some time to recover. What else?

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: And the—did you exhibit while you were at the—did you exhibit at Mark Hopkins—

WILLIAM GAW: Well, I exhibit among the student shows. And I first—I first exhibited in the—among the so-called professional artists in 1912. I exhibited from that day on until about 10 or 12 years ago when I started dropping the thing.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Were your early things landscapes mainly?

WILLIAM GAW: Mostly landscapes at that time, yes.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Did you win some awards in your early career?

WILLIAM GAW: Oh, I won normal school awards such as scholarships and things like that for a long period.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And what was the year that you finished at Mark Hopkins, do you remember?

WILLIAM GAW: Oh, about—oh, I should judge around about 1914, someplace around in there. I'm not quite sure.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: Before the 1915 Exposition.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: I submitted work to the 1915 Exposition to the fine arts department but it was rejected, naturally.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. In 1915 and 1916, there was an organization called the Society of California Artists exhibitions at the de Young Museum. Were—did you enter in that?

WILLIAM GAW: No.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: It was mostly the people who were not in the 1915 Fair.

WILLIAM GAW: No, I didn't enter into it. In fact, I do not recall that particular group. But I was made a member of the Sketch Club in San Francisco, which was a pretty lively affair and it had some pretty good people in it of that day. A little later on, the Sketch Club—there's quite a division between a sketch club and the San Francisco—what was it? The San Francisco Association at the time. Yes, the San Francisco Artist Association. And they finally got together, and the Sketch Club went in with the Art Association after a good deal of controversy, and so on and so on.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Did you travel much in—during this time to field trips and [inaudible]?

WILLIAM GAW: No—field trips, yes. A good many field trips. I've painted all over this community. Landscapes, a great many landscapes, in Marin County and along the ocean. A great deal in the Berkeley hills, behind Oakland, and as far away as Hayward. Although we didn't have an automobile, we'd take streetcars and all that sort of thing. It was quite a chore all the way from Berkeley. It took up most of the time. [Laughs.]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: The Mark Hopkins Institute was affiliated with the University of California.

WILLIAM GAW: That's right.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Did you win some sort of diploma at the end of your period?

WILLIAM GAW: No, I didn't. I was not interested in diplomas. I was interested in doing painting. I stayed, of course, long, long over the time that other people would stay on the job because I wanted to learn more by just working on my own, taking advantage of the models they had.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: Such as that, in that particular period. And, of course, some of my classmates were very interesting young fellows, and they had good ideas, and we all worked together pretty closely. In fact, there was a group of us that got together and we—we'd paint on—hire a model and paint with daylight, which was pretty hard for us at times, on Sunday mornings. Both in Berkeley and in San Francisco, at somebody's home or studio.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Was life sort of bohemian among the artists—

WILLIAM GAW: No, it was not.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: —in San Francisco in these days?

WILLIAM GAW: No. No. It may have been among some of the artists. But among the younger generation it was not. They were all hardworking people.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, I mean they did enjoy themselves when they weren't working.

[00:15:00]

WILLIAM GAW: Oh, yes. They enjoyed themselves.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Parties?

WILLIAM GAW: Nothing really bohemian about it at all. It's—they were wrapped up in their business of painting, although they almost always had jobs, and we'd tend to our business. And after we turned the key in our—on our job, we'd become artists.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Did you have a studio at that time?

WILLIAM GAW: In my home in Berkeley in those days—I was in my parent's home. And I had—one of the homes, the earlier home, I had a room. It was my room and I used that as a studio. And—because most of my work was done outside. Outdoor painting. A little later on, I—we moved to another location, and I had a big sleeping porch, which I turned into a large studio—a bedroom, a sleeping porch, and an adjoining room. And it made an ideal studio where I did some figure painting and that sort of thing.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: At this time, did you have any things at the commercial galleries?

WILLIAM GAW: Yes, I did, come to think of it. I had some paintings in—located in the exhibit at Rapjohn-Morgan [ph] in San Francisco, on Sutter Street, at that time next to Gump's. I think Gump's finally took over some of that property. And the property is still occupied by Gump's, possibly the only [inaudible].

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Did you have enough sales then to begin to support yourself from your art?

WILLIAM GAW: No. There was never enough sales to support myself directly [inaudible]. Outside the little advertising art I did later on; that didn't come until a little later.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Are there other things you'd like to mention about this period?

WILLIAM GAW: Oh, I suppose there are many things, very interesting things, that took place. Interesting contacts I'd made. And, of course, during a 1915 Exhibition we had a good many guest painters and guest sculptors here in San Francisco. I met a great many of them. I believe Archipenko was here at that time, or maybe it was the last exposition, I'm not sure now. I guess it was the last exposition. And oh, I forgot the name of many of those people [inaudible] in those days. I'd have to see the catalog to recall [laughs] the names now.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Did you know Arthur Mathews, for example?

WILLIAM GAW: Slightly. He was a rather arrogant character, and I didn't want to get too much—too close to him because, personally, I'm a little bit fiery myself. And it's—I don't think we would have gotten along very well [inaudible].

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: I understand he had some very strong feelings about what should be done and—

WILLIAM GAW: Oh, yes.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: —quarreled with Xavier Martinez' methods of painting.

WILLIAM GAW: Yeah. Yeah. Well, Martinez, of course, he had a—he was influenced greatly by Whistler and so was Piazzoni. He's the same age and the same period. Piazzoni died not too long ago. He's a very fine man. A very nice, likable character. He—and Martinez was a

rather nice person too, but sort of a radical in some respects as far as—we would call him radical today.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Did you know Theodore Wores?

WILLIAM GAW: Slightly. He's a very nice man of his period. A perfect gentleman. And I never thought very much of his painting, but that's just one of those things—we shouldn't say that on this thing. [Laughs.]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Not, it's quite all right. [William Gaw laughs.] I mean [laughs], he's passed on anyway and—

WILLIAM GAW: With Mathews—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Everyone—

WILLIAM GAW: But Mathews—Mathews, he was a pretty good draftsman. And I used to admire his skill in drawing, as I recall, and his handling of large masses for some of the murals that he did. There's one mural which I think still remains in the Mechanics Library in San Francisco on Post Street. Then he did another one, which I rather liked, and that was in the [inaudible] I think it was the Columbia Theater in San Francisco when I went to see a show there just to see the—paid to see the show [laughs] just to see the mural. Which is just really a big circular affair over the stage.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: Which is rather nice in its color content and such as that.

[00:20:02]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. His work was rather allegorical figures.

WILLIAM GAW: Oh, yes.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: Allegorical figures. And he could draw the figure without any trouble at all, without worrying about models, which was pretty good.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: Sort of like George Bridgman of New York could do that sort of thing in those—made many drawings for the—did the drawing for a good many mural painters, to save time.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Did you know Will Sparks and Maynard Dixon?

WILLIAM GAW: Maynard Dixon fairly well, but not Will Sparks. I know Dixon fairly well. And Dixon was a very friendly person, pretty positive ideas. What else?

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Clayton Price, you mentioned him being here in—

WILLIAM GAW: Oh, yeah.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: —California.

WILLIAM GAW: Was it George—I thought it was—no, Charles Price.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: It was C. S. Price.

WILLIAM GAW: Oh, C. S., yeah.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: [Inaudible.]

WILLIAM GAW: He was probably called Charles Price. But yes, I know him pretty well. Some years after this business, of course, I was on the road following mechanics and sales engineer. And did a good deal of business on various parts of the coast. And I used to drop in a little off my beaten track into Monterey or Carmel to see some of the old timers down there

as far as art was concerned, forgetting about business. And I'd see Price quite often, and Gus Gay. And also, at that particular period Bill Gaskin was living down there. He had something to do with theater, I think—a little theater.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. That's right.

WILLIAM GAW: Now that I think [inaudible] didn't know the details of it. [Audio break.] Now what have you done?

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Would you continue, Mr. Gaw, with—you were telling about traveling to Monterey and your occupation at that time? And seeing artists there, visiting with them. Did you—we might go onto when you went into the professional—did you go into full time professional teaching and painting soon after?

WILLIAM GAW: No, I didn't. I did a good deal of designing of—for—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Commercial work?

WILLIAM GAW: Commercial work, such as, I gilded a—engineered and gilded a—the milk processing plant for Marin-Dell Company in San Francisco, their first plant. I did a great deal of work at the University of California through a subcontractor in the Life Science Building. It had to do with low temperature freezing. And it had to do with low temperatures, you might say, [inaudible] freezing. And we got pretty low.

And I did a good deal of work with Dr. Randall [ph] at the University of California in the Chemistry Department, in relation to the development of liquid air and such things as that. And some of those things are used to a high degree today in various things. And, of course, the chemical side of the thing as far as liquid air is concerned, such as that is something that I know a little about. But it had to do with bringing some of the temperatures way below zero, as little as 50 below. And, finally, from there on we brought it down to a very, very low temperature, until it was—that's—I better not go into the mechanics of that [inaudible] because I could get into a controversy over it. [Laughs.] And—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Go ahead. Did you mean to—during this time, you also continued to paint though and—

WILLIAM GAW: Oh, yes.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: —enter exhibitions, did you, and—

WILLIAM GAW: I painted and—oh, yes, I painted—I continued to paint, I painted continuously in all my spare time. But I had to make a living knowing I couldn't make a living out of the fine arts.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:25:00]

WILLIAM GAW: And I built several plants, industrial plants, along the various lines, which had to do with cooling at very low temperatures.

And commercial ice making plants, and such as that.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: And not the small things we have around today. The little units which are mostly nowadays sulfur dioxide and CO₂, various things. Not CO₂ but sulfur dioxide [inaudible]. And the CO₂, of course, is a very high-pressure kind of equipment, which we worked with a great deal for ships, battleships, such things as that.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: But on your spare time you painted and—

WILLIAM GAW: Oh, yes. Painting—we kept working along with the painting. Yeah. I did. I kept working with painting and studying, and working, of course, entirely on my own. I'd passed all the training that was necessary outside of a certain period. I did go just to draw the figure at the—at the old Mark Hopkins around about 1916, '17, '18, around in there. The reason I did that was because of a very close friend of mine who was an electrical engineer

and he wanted to do some drawings, so I attended the school at that time with him.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Worth Ryder was director about that time.

WILLIAM GAW: Worth Ryder was not director at the school. He was on the board of directors, that is, the trustees you might say. I also was on that board about the same time Worth Ryder was on. And continued that until the period that I started teaching in the school. And, of course, when I started teaching I had to get off the board.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: You started teaching about what year at the—

WILLIAM GAW: About 1937 I started to teach the California School of Fine Arts.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: And I taught there for several years.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Let's go back a bit and pick it from about the 1920s. Were you doing any teaching then or—

WILLIAM GAW: No. No teaching at all.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Were you entering in exhibitions? And was your work—

WILLIAM GAW: Oh, yes.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: —shown in the local galleries and—

WILLIAM GAW: Yes. I entered into local exhibitions. And some things were shown in local galleries but not too much.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: I took shots of the eastern galleries, which I was fairly successful in passing some of the juries back there.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. New York, Chicago that—

WILLIAM GAW: New York, Chicago, Chicago Art Institute, Corcoran Biennials. And, of course, a little later at the Metropolitan Museum, the national shows they've held there. Like *American Artists for the Victory*, of course, that was during the war period. And then, again, at the Museum of Modern Art, I've exhibited there. In fact, I think they do own one of my paintings.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Were these oils and watercolors?

WILLIAM GAW: These were oils and watercolors I exhibited at the Metropolitan the last time, it was contemporary American watercolors and drawings. And I had a still life in that show, which I've forgotten all about the show. My wife and I were in New York for some other purpose, and we bumped into this exhibition [inaudible] my painting, which I had forgotten about. At the same time, I run across some of my old friends like Henry Poor in the gallery at the time.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Henry Varnum Poor?

WILLIAM GAW: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: He was formerly at Stanford.

WILLIAM GAW: Yeah, he was at Stanford, and he taught at a school in San Francisco too. And I recall distinctly the day before he left for the East to go there to live. And he didn't know what was coming or what was going to happen, but he made it all right.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: He's doing mostly pottery now, I believe, in Maine—

WILLIAM GAW: Well, I was on a jury with him in New York some few years ago. And the jury selection==jury for awards, [inaudible] a jury of awards. And I said, Henry, I said, How in the world is it you've gone into pottery? He says, Well, he says, When I first came to New York,

he says, I couldn't make a living. So, I decided to do some pottery. So, he did pottery in New York. And now, he does—he told me at that time he did pottery for about three months of the year. And murals another three months something else, another three months—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: —and such as that. But it's a good approach.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:30:09]

WILLIAM GAW: Well, anyhow—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: In the early '30s, what were you doing?

WILLIAM GAW: The early '30s?

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: Well, I still had a job and was getting along pretty good. And business started to slacking off—I guess you're sneaking into the—in Depression period now.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative] [laughs].

WILLIAM GAW: And business started slacking off. And I was with a company in San Francisco, and I did all their engineering. And they were a pretty solid organization with headquarters in Chicago. And they started losing money and they kept going, kept our salaries up until they got down—they had a big surplus—until they got down to about \$600,000, then they started cutting wages.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: Cut us very slowly. All companies were cut long before then. They cut us first 10 percent, and finally 20 percent, and such as that. In the meantime, there was another opportunity came up for me, which I took advantage of. And it was just building a plant. And I remember building this plant. And these young fellows who put this forward—I didn't make much money out of it, but I had the fun of doing it, and all that sort of thing. So, in the meantime, the Federal Arts Project started in—it was in operation. In fact, that job I had it was the only construction job in San Francisco at the time.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Was that the PWA that you—Treasury Department, first or—

WILLIAM GAW: It had nothing to do with the Treasury Department. This had to do with—this had to do with—it was a private organization. And then, the Federal Arts Project—of course, it was underway at that time.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: And we were pretty well in the Depression. And then, of course, as far as I was concerned—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Do you remember what year that was?

WILLIAM GAW: Gosh, I don't recall the details.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: 1935, '36?

WILLIAM GAW: No, it was earlier than that.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: '34?

WILLIAM GAW: About around in there, someplace around in there.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: That would be the Public Works—

WILLIAM GAW: Public Works—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: —Administration.

WILLIAM GAW: —Administration. But I had nothing to do with the Public Works Administration at that time at all. [Note: Mr. Gaw was an advisor on the Coit Tower mural project in 1934 - he has forgotten about that. LF -Ed.]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: And finally, the Federal Arts thing, as I mentioned, was underway. Of course, I knew some people that were mixed up in it and getting by—it was helping them out a great deal. People like Dong Kingman.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: And—which, no doubt you've heard about him in this interview business.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Was he a young student of watercolor then?

WILLIAM GAW: Yes, he studied under Cora Boone. Cora Boone discovered that boy when he was going to the—to school in Oakland. And Cora Boone was a very good painter. And she belonged to the old Sketch Club in San Francisco. And she taught art in the Oakland Public School, a good European background. And anytime that—as long as she lived, any time that Dong would come out here he'd go and visit her.

And she discovered this boy and she pushed him along, and the first thing you know, the Federal Arts—when he got on the Federal Arts job where the—he—people like Joe Allen and Bill Gaskin, there again, encouraged him. And they used to—I wasn't connected at all this time, understand. And they—I'd see some of those fellows, they'd show me—invite me up there to see some of his work. [Inaudible.] And I thought it was pretty damn good stuff.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: So, they kept encouraging him. I guess they wanted someone to back them up, and they kept encouraging him. And finally, Dong got a good foothold and that's [inaudible] operated. Some years after that, I hired Dong to give a summer session in Mills College. And he got a pretty good fee for it, for those days.

And he told me afterwards, it was the most money he ever earned in his life for teaching painting for a six-week period. It was the same thing applied to Reginald Marsh. He said, Bill, that's the most money I ever earned for teaching in a short period. Of course, we had the money then and we could do it, you know. Of course, that was after the Depression period. But anyhow, I got these fellows—I got out of this job. I was all through with it. I certainly was not making very much. We were practically starving at times.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. What was your position on the Federal Arts Project?

WILLIAM GAW: Well, my position was just a painter.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: That's all.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Did you work in San Francisco or Oakland?

WILLIAM GAW: I worked here.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Berkeley?

WILLIAM GAW: In my studio. I have my studio then. I built a studio during fatter days. And —[inaudible] today.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: But anyhow, we had—to come back to this company again. I—we had to take a vacation for a period—a month's vacation without pay.

And that's the time after that I decided to get out of it and got into this other thing.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:35:11]

WILLIAM GAW: But anyhow, I did a—not very much. I did some work for those people. It wasn't very long. Because then, another job came up and I took advantage of it.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: And—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Do you remember who your supervisor was? Did you have to submit your work to him, or—

WILLIAM GAW: No, they come around to see me. I think it was Joe Allen had come around or [inaudible]. [Inaudible] he really needed some solid painting in their organization, he told me at the time, and so that was it. Where those paintings are, I don't know.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. There were some exhibitions at the time.

WILLIAM GAW: Yeah.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: The de Young, and Western Women's Club, I think, was another one.

WILLIAM GAW: I didn't see them. I didn't see any of those. I might have known about them and figured what's the use of going to look at them? Because things got pretty rough with us, believe me. We had a pretty rough [inaudible] for quite a while.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: Quite a long time. There was no work, no jobs. And anything that I could do, I couldn't get anything. So, that was [inaudible]. And, of course, a period before that time which I didn't mention, I did go to New York and lived there for a while and did some advertising work. I figured I'd do pretty good in that. I did fairly well for a while. But I guess that was the beginning of the Depression and things started slacking up, it was hard to get a job of any kind.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Were you on the Federal Arts about a year, do you think?

WILLIAM GAW: Well, I don't think that long. And I told these fellows I wanted to leave it and give the work to somebody else. They didn't want me to leave. And I says, I can't do that. So, I finally pulled out of it.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: You didn't give any instruction while you were on the Federal Arts.

WILLIAM GAW: No. And then, of course, when I did start to paint—to teach, my background was really, as far as teaching was concerned—I knew nothing about teaching. I remember Lee Randolph tried two or three times to get me to teach in summer sessions. I turned him down because I said I didn't know anything about teaching. I tried to explain to him simple enough, and such as that. And finally, I accepted one summer and tried it. And the schoolteachers—of course I had a pretty good reputation as a painter—but, at that time, I guess that's one of the reasons. And they—schoolteachers and other types of people in that class. It was a large class and, boy, I was sure nervous. [Laughs] And I didn't know what it was all about. [Lewis Ferbraché laughs.] So, I just started in.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Uh-huh [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: And it clicked.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Now, that was at—

WILLIAM GAW: [Inaudible.] I started right in and the next fall I—they wanted me to know if I'd teach a class and I did. I taught a couple of afternoons a week of [inaudible].

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: This was at the San Francisco Art Institute?

WILLIAM GAW: Yeah.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: About 1937?

WILLIAM GAW: About '37.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: And that's where it started. I happened to get going along for a while and, of course, my paintings were shown at many places. I had good size exhibits in Los Angeles and all around. And the museum was shipping them around. I had nothing to do with it, they did it.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: And [inaudible] took place.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: And then, you went to Mills College?

WILLIAM GAW: And then, while I was there—I was going to say, I know—I remember some of the Mills people, some of the people in the art department, brought some students over to visit and we had a packed classrooms. It was packed so solid I could hardly turn around. I had people watercolor painting [inaudible]. The main floor of a little—I don't know whether you're acquainted with the school or not—there was a room over there with a balcony in it. And they had them in the balcony, they had them all over the place. It was a hell of a job to get [inaudible]. A tough job getting around [inaudible]. [Lewis Ferbraché laughs.] A tough job getting around the place.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Yeah.

WILLIAM GAW: So—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: How long was it that you taught there, do you remember? A couple years, or—

WILLIAM GAW: Oh, no. I taught there at that school for about 18 years. Day class and night classes.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: Quite a long time.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: From about 1937 on?

WILLIAM GAW: '37 on, yeah.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: It was quite a while.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: And, of course, Mills College—while I was—of course, it was just a pittance as far as we were concerned, as far as salary was concerned. We had kids going to college and such as that, and to school—grammar school, [inaudible] college [inaudible]. It was sure tougher than a son of a gun. But anyhow, my wife did some teaching herself. She's a—she's a trained accountant. And she did some teaching at public schools and—to keep things going, night classes for a while, some substitute day classes, and such as that. And she—it was pretty tough on us at that time. And, of course, there was no automobile. We had to use streetcars and all that kind of thing. And when you get down you get down [ph].

[00:40:05]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I've always heard of you in connection with Mills College. Weren't you director of—

WILLIAM GAW: Yeah.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: —fine arts and—

WILLIAM GAW: Mills College—after I was in school in San Francisco for a while, they came after me. That is, they—I got a call from Albert Bender. And he says, Bill, he says, How would you like to teach in an institution around the Bay here? And I said, [Inaudible] school in the city. I said, Well, I don't know what you mean by an institution. In San Quentin, or Folsom, or someplace [Lewis Ferbraché laughs.] like that? [Laughs.] Finally he told me what it was. And I heard the story afterwards from him. But, anyhow, he made an appointment for me to see Dr. Reinhardt. Sometime after that, he told me Dr. Reinhardt was sitting right there when he was talking to me. And he—I—he asked her if it was San Quentin or [inaudible] nice institutions like that and I wanted to know [inaudible]. [They laugh.] So, anyhow, we made arrangements with Dr. Reinhardt and I taught there part time.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: This was about what year that you began?

WILLIAM GAW: It's about 1940, I guess, '39 or '40, someplace around in there. I guess it was '40. Yeah, about that, 1939, '40, I guess [inaudible].

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: You're getting a little low on the—

WILLIAM GAW: I guess about 1940.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Fine.

WILLIAM GAW: And because my hearing is kind of slipping. I hear all what I'm saying.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Yeah. And then, you became director, didn't you, of the—

WILLIAM GAW: Well—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: —fine arts department or something?

WILLIAM GAW: I became the—after I was there a couple of years, or so, I became the head of the art—the art department—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: —at Mills College. And having been a—you might say, a kind of a student all my life, studying all kinds of techniques and everything under the sun, I guess I was of some value to them.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: So, I stayed there until retirement, which was in 19—I carried through the summer session, which was in the fall of 19—or was it '57? Yeah, I was over the retirement age at that time, as you may gather by [inaudible]. 65 was the age. That was it.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: And you taught classes as—

WILLIAM GAW: I taught painting classes, basic design classes. I was finally at Mills full time. And I taught, of course, many classes and various techniques, and methods, and of the use of various materials, and chemistry materials, and such as that.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Are you still teaching at the Art Institute at the same time?

WILLIAM GAW: Yes, I was teaching there at the same time. At one period, I taught at the Art Institute, and I was also director of that school. And taught at—taught at Mills College, and run the art department at Mills College. It was during the war period, and that was a pretty rough period. It was a period of about five years. And then, of course, I got away from all that. And I had no right being in—I didn't want to go—I was only acting director. I didn't want to be [inaudible]. But I—who else could do it, [inaudible] I guess. I was always good to handle business end of the thing, but—I had business experience, I guess they thought I'd be [inaudible].

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: So, here I am free to do what I please.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Well, Mills College is famous for its summer visiting instructors.

WILLIAM GAW: Oh, yeah. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: It was Kuniyoshi and, I believe, Leon Kroll.

WILLIAM GAW: Well, you see—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: And Fernand Léger —

WILLIAM GAW: Well, Kroll came before my period there. And Léger, just about the beginning of my period. Léger got there through Madam Neal [ph]. She's some kind of a relation, I understand, of his—some sort of [inaudible], I'm not sure of all the details. But she was possibly responsible for Léger.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: I remember talking to the—one of the officials of the college, and they figured, oh, there's only 13 students registered in this class. Gee, we're going to lose money on this deal.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: Well, I guess they did. There wasn't too many in this class because I visited. And I got acquainted with Léger, and I found him to be a very fine fellow, and I liked what he did very, very much. I knew very little about him before. I'd seen one or two of his paintings and I always thought they—like others, I classified—I classified him as a plumber painter.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: White lines on these square things, and such as that, you know?

[00:45:00]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Yeah.

WILLIAM GAW: [Inaudible.]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Paul Klee sort of thing?

WILLIAM GAW: No, no not. They're hard. They're hard-edge abstractions and they're beautiful design. You put them in simple shapes and designs such as the—and some of his backgrounds, to me, looked like pretzels. His designs—I saw many of those things—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Yeah.

WILLIAM GAW: —[inaudible] working on.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Yeah.

WILLIAM GAW: All that sort of thing. In different colors, without any figures. The famous *Plunge*, which is well known—I think it belongs to the Museum of Modern Art in New York—was—the idea came from the pool at Mills College. And that painting you can turn on any side and it works any way you turn it. Any one of the four sides for a canvas.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Then these visiting instructors would do painting here in—while they were here?

WILLIAM GAW: Some of them. Then—from then on, it was—from then on I had a great deal to say who came. And—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: For example, Léger would not only teach but he did some paintings.

WILLIAM GAW: He didn't do much.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Uh-huh [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: But he worked on some design to occupy himself. And he taught—he taught—as far as teaching was concerned, he taught in the—as I understand, the basic method that the French use anyhow. He'd come in once in a while and criticize. They had a very difficult time keeping him on campus, he always wanted to go to San Francisco. [Inaudible] reason for that, which I guess I better not dictate right now [inaudible]. [Laughs.]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: What'd he have a girlfriend there, or something?

WILLIAM GAW: Oh, yeah. [They laugh.] Yeah, she was quite a nice person. I met her—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Yeah.

WILLIAM GAW: —and she [inaudible].

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Is she still living?

WILLIAM GAW: That I don't know. We all spent a day together, I remember, in San Francisco one time.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Yeah.

WILLIAM GAW: All around.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Did he speak English well, or—

WILLIAM GAW: Not very well. Just a few words of English, and he was trying to pick up English. And, of course, he loved some of the nightclubs. He was crazy about them. Some of those Negro nightclubs up around the Fillmore district.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: He thought they were great. Club Alabam, he said. Wanted to know if there was any more Club Alabams around. [They laugh.] He carried [ph] a big fellow like a—he reminded me of a—of a San Francisco stevedore. He wore a white cap, and he was just a big man, big husky. And, frankly, I don't think people generally got very much out of it as a student because I don't think they were advanced enough to know what he was or who he was. They didn't know anything about him

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Most of them were young girls, were they? Or were—

WILLIAM GAW: Oh, no. No, there was—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Summer session was open to—[Cross talk.]

WILLIAM GAW: All people anyone [inaudible].

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Both sexes?

WILLIAM GAW: Didn't have to be a graduate of college or anything else like that.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: Which—you know, for college credit they have to have their backgrounds, of course.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Yeah.

WILLIAM GAW: But the average person could go into it. One man, who might be of interest to you too, acted as an interpreter for Léger. He's an architect. Do you know anything about him? Have you heard anything about him? I don't—his name will have to come to me. But he's a little fellow. I'll think about it. I passed him up here a while back on this street, when he was driving. He'd be a good man to interview as far as Léger is concerned. I don't suppose it would be any good to you.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: No, I would just be interested in what Léger was doing here. [Cross talk.]

WILLIAM GAW: Well, he didn't do too much painting outside of a few of these little sketches. And then, of course, we had—I started handling the thing I got—I had Kuniyoshi, I—of course, I had Dong Kingman. That was one of the first dealings with him.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: And then, of course, Tom [ph] thought I—I guess, I was fooling or kidding or something like that, and he was flabbergasted when I offered the money—it wasn't too much. But it was pretty good I guess. [Audio break.] And—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Kuniyoshi did some work?

WILLIAM GAW: Oh, yeah. He did some work. Kuniyoshi—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: I'm interested in visiting artists who actually did work [inaudible].

WILLIAM GAW: Well, I had a studio for those people.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Yeah.

WILLIAM GAW: They could work there if they wanted to.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Uh-huh [affirmative]. [Inaudible.]

WILLIAM GAW: Kuniyoshi did some drawing and he did—made a little small painting about that size, a little figurehead kind of a masked man holding a mask, something to that effect, which he sent to the opening show for the downtown gallery in New York after that summer.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Do you remember what year that Léger was here, and Kuniyoshi was here, for the record?

WILLIAM GAW: I could check them up. I'll ask my wife, you know, she acts as a secretary for me but—

[Audio break.]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: You were telling me, Mr. Gaw, about when Léger and Kuniyoshi were at Mills College in Oakland as visiting instructors in the summer. What year was that?

[00:50:00]

WILLIAM GAW: Kuniyoshi, I believe, was here in the summer of '39.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: And Léger about 1940?

WILLIAM GAW: Léger 1940.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: And Max Beckmann was here in 1950.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: And Dong Kingman?

WILLIAM GAW: I recall—well, Dong Kingman—why don't you hold that section. I—then I check that again.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: We can go on and pick that—

WILLIAM GAW: Yeah, okay.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: —up again.

WILLIAM GAW: Pick it up later.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: And these classes were open to anyone in the summer.

WILLIAM GAW: Yeah.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: One thinks of Mills College as a—as a girls' school but—

WILLIAM GAW: It is—it is a girls' school for undergraduates.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: And, of course, around about when we started taking them in—well, in the music department and the—and the drama—music department and I believe the drama department they did take men in earlier. But in the art department, we had a very—occasionally, we'd have a man. And it got to the point where we needed more physical labor than anything else. So, you know, ceramics sort of demanded that we should have a man to handle some of the heavy sacks of clay, and some of the heavier materials. And they'd come in as graduate students, and they'd all do some teaching, as well as some of these heavier chores, which the faculty would also do. [Laughs.] And we gradually worked it up until it become a very—a very important part of the department—I mean the male members. Now, the male—the male graduate students.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Were men allowed, also, to take art courses in the regular fall and spring?

WILLIAM GAW: I was referring to the—to—I was referring, in this case, to the—to the regular session. The summer session we have always had men.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: Only one [inaudible] [Cross talk.]—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Any adult could take it—

WILLIAM GAW: —wide open to any adult.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. [Cross talk.] I wanted to get that on the record.

WILLIAM GAW: They needed a certain amount of training. They should have some training.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: Otherwise, they'd be wasting the time of a real professional to try to train a person from scratch. We watched out for that to a high degree.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: And as I was advised of that for the summer session—director of the summer sessions and advisor, I was very cautious of the kind of people that we had—picked up for the—for the sort of backgrounds they had [inaudible].

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Did you also have visiting instructors at the Art Institute in San Francisco?

WILLIAM GAW: Well, they started to have a few visiting instructors at the Art Institute in San Francisco after my period of directorship. I suppose they were following Mills to a certain degree. They had a—I suppose about two or three instructors that I know of—visiting instructors as I recall.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: None at all up to that time.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Do you remember some of the other instructors who were with you at the Art Institute and at Mills at this time, that you were there?

WILLIAM GAW: Yes. We had Carlton Ball. Of course, he was a ceramist and [inaudible] is a big field, ceramics.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: That was Carlton Ball?

WILLIAM GAW: Carlton Ball. And—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: B-A-double L?

WILLIAM GAW: B-A-double L. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Carlton, I believe, was born in Jackson, California. And, to me, he was one of the finest instructors I've ever known, as far as instructor would be concerned, in the field of the ceramics and such as that. Very systematic and everything well under control. There are many, many students there learned a great deal from him and have done quite well since, in his field. And we had at that time—golly, we had lots of instructors.

[00:55:03]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Was Worth Ryder still there at the time?

WILLIAM GAW: You're speaking about the Institute?

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: Well, [inaudible] mention Mills here again [inaudible]. Carlton Ball did teach at the Institute for a while, too.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: That wa—it was the California School of Fine Arts was, was known as [inaudible]—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Yes.

WILLIAM GAW: —at all.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Right.

WILLIAM GAW: When I got him—put him in there because that's when I was directing the school, because Mr. Smith, who was teaching ceramics—that was at the beginning of the war period, was given a position making—he was really a ceramic engineer with a very solid background designing and making insulators for a very high frequency electricity, cyclotrons, these things as that. And, of course, that's quite a research project. And Smith was an excellent ceramic engineer. [I put Carlton Ball in teaching ceramics when Mr. Smith took the other positions. -Ed.]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: How were the war years at the Art Institute and Mills? Did you have much of attendance?

WILLIAM GAW: The Art Institute we didn't have a very—the attendance was not very—the regular attendance was not very big, but the night class was fairly good. And because we were getting—we gave tuition free to many of the service people, doing our share of the war work.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: And we had that underway and we had some very good painters in the group. And later on, after the war was over, many of those painters came back and worked at the California School of Fine Arts.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: David Park, for example?

WILLIAM GAW: Well, David Park was—he was here earlier, as earlier day. And, of course, David was—I recall some of his works when he was quite young. And they were mostly bible illustrations, and such things as that. I understand his father was a minister or something to do with religion.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Were they somewhat like Chagall's?

WILLIAM GAW: No.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Different from that sort of thing. [Cross talk.]

WILLIAM GAW: They were more representational drawings—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: —[inaudible] in those particular days. And he was a nice, likable young fellow, and he married very, very young. And he made many friends. His wife was connected to the library at the University of California. Because he used to say once in a while he was working on a—his name was—wife's name was Letta [ph], I think, Lita [ph], Letta [ph] something like that. [Lydia Newell] But anyhow, he says he's working on Letta's [ph] scholarship, a Letta [ph] grant. [Laughs.]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: He was on the WPA for a while. He did some work at Piedmont High School.

WILLIAM GAW: Yeah, he may have been on for a while, but then he left here and went east. I think—his home, I think, was around Boston. He stayed there quite a long time. He returned here and I was running the school at the time, and he wanted a job at the school. I told him I couldn't give him a job. We didn't have any money. In the first place—in the first place, we didn't have enough students. We just had enough students to take care of the people we had.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: And then—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: This was after the war?

WILLIAM GAW: This was a little bit after the war, that's right. [Inaudible] about the war. I've forgotten the details. But when the first opening he came along we put him on. The very first opportunity. And, of course, he had it against me and went around saying I wouldn't hire him. Which, of course, was all wrong. I never complained to him about it, but I certainly didn't like it, because I—we couldn't do anything else. And if he wanted the facts of the case, I taught in that school for two years for nothing—at night—in night classes—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Now—

WILLIAM GAW: —to keep the damn place alive, To keep it going.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: The School of Fine Arts?

WILLIAM GAW: The School of Fine Arts.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: Didn't get a nickel for it, nothing. I finally said, You'd better give me at least my \$10 a month to pay for some of my dinners, which I have to buy on the road because I was at Mills College and I had to—I come over—leave here and go to Mills [inaudible], go to San Francisco in the morning, go back to Mills College at noon time, and then back from Mills College to San Francisco again, and back home. I was never home. It was a regular triangle.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: I traveled an average of 60 miles a week—60 miles a day, about three days a week. And that sort of thing went on for quite some time.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: But, anyhow—so you see the condition we were in. He didn't know that. I didn't say that at the time. I haven't—very few people that mention that to. Of course, the board of trustees knew that.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: And the directors—if they didn't they should.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: Some of those people are not alive today. And there's a lot of little things like that which we contributed, and it's come out of our hides, come out of my family's hide, it come out of all of us. We certainly couldn't afford to give up. And I've also given up some of my time so certain instructors could still stay at that school when things were rough.

[01:00:05]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. These were during the war years?

WILLIAM GAW: During the war years.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Yeah.

WILLIAM GAW: [Inaudible] war jobs. In fact, I was offered jobs with some of these big companies like Westinghouse and people like that, who work in certain fields. So, I didn't take them. I thought I was doing just as much there, just as much good, working with service people and all that sort of thing. And, you know, it was a pretty touchy business some of these guys going overseas and was planted here for a week or 10 days, some longer, of course.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: Just kept them occupied, kept them busy.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: And with the end of the war, the two schools came out of the veterans bills and—

WILLIAM GAW: Oh, yeah.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: —a great influx of students I—

WILLIAM GAW: Oh, yeah.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: —imagine.

WILLIAM GAW: A tremendous influx of students.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Yeah.

WILLIAM GAW: And I was not running it then. I wish I were. It was only one year after, I guess, but I wish I were running it then. I'd like to see some of the fat days, as well as the real lean days.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: At the Art Institute—

WILLIAM GAW: [Inaudible.]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: —you mean?

WILLIAM GAW: They were mighty lean at the Art Institute, mighty lean for us, and mighty lean at Mills too. However, Mills seemed to hold a pretty good crowd of students. It was mostly girls, and a lot of their families were—fathers were in service [inaudible].

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: You mean separated, and traveling around on account of their servicemen father?

WILLIAM GAW: It was terrible. Some of them lose their parent, their fathers, and such as that, you know.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And then, you were still, however, at Mills after the war?

WILLIAM GAW: Oh, yeah. I was still—I stayed with Mills, of course—I—during the war period and after the war I was Mills right straight through until I retired.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And did you have more visiting instructors?

WILLIAM GAW: Oh, yes. We had visiting instructors right straight down the line. And, of course, some of our summer sessions, to my great amazement, during the war period, was very good.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: And, of course, I guess people that couldn't go overseas and—go ahead and help yourself. They couldn't go overseas and such as that, they would visit like a lot of the schoolteachers, we had them here. We had some pretty good—all my summer sessions in my department paid every time. The thing that made me so damn mad was our payment, our work, our hard work, come out of our hides to support some of these people in education who had no students at all, or had one, but they made a contract with them they had to keep them on.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: And they had a vacation and pay, and a high pay too. That's the way it goes.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Do you remember some of the students and some of the faculty that became prominent at this time?

WILLIAM GAW: At Mills?

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: Well, of course, we had—as I mentioned, we had Beckmann, Reggie Marsh and—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: That's interesting about Reginald Marsh. When was he out in—

WILLIAM GAW: Max Beckmann. Not Max Beckmann, but Felix Ruvolo. He's at Cal now.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Could you tell me something about Reginald Marsh, here?

WILLIAM GAW: No. Reginald Marsh, of course—he was a—I think he—I'll say, the president kicked [him out (ph)]. As I recall, he had some complaint about not enough students, or the instructors were not well enough known, and such as that, so I said to myself, I'll take care of that guy. I'll take care of that fellow, I thought to myself, and so I hired Reggie Marsh, who had a lot of publicity, and he filled up classes, no question about that. But I don't consider it great art. I like his draftsmanship. He was very good as a draftsman, and all that—all these experimental things, but as a painter, he doesn't [inaudible].

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Did you like his watercolor work?

WILLIAM GAW: Some of his watercolors were interesting. And he's very, very capable at handling his things all the way through. But he was really an offshoot from all the people we have had. All those other people were more along the lines of—you might say, abstract, and painting was the important thing, and, of course, Reggie's things were really more illustrations, and such as that, but he was quite popular.

And of course, that was one thing that we had in mind at certain periods, too, to keep somebody down the Valley—some teacher down the Valley would know who the painter was, and such as that, and of course, we'd get other students that way. [Inaudible] sense in that, too.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: What years was Marsh here?

[01:05:01]

WILLIAM GAW: Let me check with my wife again.

[Audio break.]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: You say that Reginald Marsh was 1946 summer session, Kuniyoshi 1948 summer session, and Felix—

WILLIAM GAW: Ruvolo.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Ruvolo.

WILLIAM GAW: 1947, some estimation.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: And others—do you have on a list, there?

WILLIAM GAW: Well, we had Dong Kingman, we had—Dong Kingman again. Salary was pretty good this time, in comparison to the first one. [Inaudible] the first one pretty well, because those were the lean days [laughs.] And—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: But this post-war period was a great influx of students, I imagine.

WILLIAM GAW: Oh, my goodness, yes.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Salaries improved and—

WILLIAM GAW: Oh, yes.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Because of all the money pouring in by the government GI Bill.

WILLIAM GAW: The GI, of course—there were some people there on the GI, also. We had graduate students there through GI, and some of them quite well. Male as well as female. And of course, a good many of the students we had at Mills, girls, many of them went into the service, too. Pretty good ranks. Some of them came back.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: [Inaudible.]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Hazel Bray, for example, was in the service—

WILLIAM GAW: Oh, yeah.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: —and she came back.

WILLIAM GAW: Hazel, yeah. When she came back, she was married and she divorced, and then she went to Mills for quite a little while. She took some of my classes, [inaudible] technique classes, I think. Let's see. I don't know what she's doing in art now. Anything at all, is she?

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: She's instructing children's groups now in the schools, and also researching.

WILLIAM GAW: Public schools?

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Researching in the history of ceramics and crafts in California.

WILLIAM GAW: Yes, she did a good deal of craft.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Were you painting—continuing to paint all these years?

WILLIAM GAW: Oh my, yes. I paint all the time. Anytime I get a chance, I paint.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Were you exhibiting during these years at all, too?

WILLIAM GAW: Some. Yes, I was. If you want to know the truth, I get kind of fed up in entertaining the public. You know what it entails? It means you have frames to frame anything decently, like those lithographs and all that sort of thing. I frame all those because I have an idea in my mind for those. And then you take a painting to a show, like in San Francisco, you can't find a place to park, [inaudible] block after block. If you have something of a decent size you can't handle it. The wind will blow you off your feet. There's all that kind of business going. You got to be a—to hell with it. What the hell? I don't have to impress anybody. These girls are going to be shocked at some of the language. I get stronger, you know.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Well, that comes out of the character.

WILLIAM GAW: Yeah. [They laugh.] Comes out of the character.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: [Laughs.] Did you exhibit in the East, as well?

WILLIAM GAW: Oh, yes. And of course, I could pack things up here and ship them east, but then it got to be—the price of shipment costs run pretty high. Usually, you ship them one

way and your pays are accepted, it will be brought—sent back to you. Now, a place like the Metropolitan—those places didn't cost me anything, either way. I was invited to some of those things. And some of them passed juries. And years ago, I have exhibited Whitney and many of these places in the past, lots of them. Dozens, dozens of them. I started to [inaudible].

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: And you retired from Mills about 1957?

WILLIAM GAW: Yeah, the fall of '57.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: As—

WILLIAM GAW: Then I went back to the Middle West, after that, on a John A. Whitney professorship. I taught for a year at Earlham College. I tried to help them out in their department.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Earlham College?

WILLIAM GAW: Earlham. That's a Quaker college, of all places, for a swearing guy like me.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: How do you spell Earl—

WILLIAM GAW: Earlham. E-A-R-L-H-A-M, Earlham. Earlham College.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Where's that, in Pennsylvania?

WILLIAM GAW: It's a [inaudible] college in Richmond, Indiana.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Richmond, Indiana.

WILLIAM GAW: It's a very famous Quaker school. It was a top rank. This Stanley, at the University of California, he's a graduate of Earlham, and he has a daughter back there now, so you see, [inaudible] called me up, here, a few nights ago. And he went through their science department there, and of course he swears by it. And of course, that was his big start, of course, he's done a great deal in research in medical science, [inaudible] biochemistry, and all that sort of thing.

[01:10:08]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: And you were teaching there from about—

WILLIAM GAW: I taught there for one year, one academic year.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: '58?

WILLIAM GAW: '58 to '59. '57, '58. That was '57 to '58. Very nice experience. I enjoyed it very, very much. In fact, they had liked me to stay there, but they couldn't give me the money I wanted. They could, of course, through the grant that came from the Whitney Foundation.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: And that, of course, made it all right, with what they put in, but I couldn't afford to spend my time around there— the climate and all that sort of thing. . We're situated out here. We've got everything we need right here, so why should I worry about someplace else, and fighting the snow? All that sort of business.

[Inaudible] was very nice [inaudible], because we had our daughter and her husband were living—and her family were living in Evanston, Illinois. He was a doctor with one of those clinics back there. Jack's a graduate of Stanford University, also of the Mayo Clinic, and they're out here now. They're now living in Santa Barbara. He has an interest in the Santa Barbara clinic, so they're doing pretty good.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: And when you—

WILLIAM GAW: And our son's the principal of a school in Marin County. [Inaudible.]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: And then you came back to Berkley and since then has been interested

in lithography.

WILLIAM GAW: A great deal. I have come back to Berkley and had—I've had a great interest in lithography, and of course I've known the process for many years. In fact, they tried to get me to do some of that sort of thing during the Federal Arts Project period.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: They did have a lithography project.

WILLIAM GAW: Oh, yeah. I'm very sorry I didn't. I remember Ray Bertrand. He tried his darndest getting to work with it, and gave me a small stone to take home and play with, and such as that, which I never did play with it because I couldn't see any reason why I should. I didn't have enough time to paint, and that was one of those things. Now I have enough time for both, so I paint—and I have to show you [inaudible], and I paint and mostly lithography, right now. [Inaudible] conquer it, and then I'll do something else. May do some bronze casting, because I'm quite interested in that, too.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Have you had any showings of your lithography work?

WILLIAM GAW: No, I haven't.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: You just sell them privately?

WILLIAM GAW: I have sold them privately. But I think I might have a showing sometime in the near future. Of course, I—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Because that's a thing that's not often shown today. It's an interesting thing for, not only art students and other people to see, but the public, I [inaudible].

WILLIAM GAW: Oh, yeah, yeah. Well, I—there's a lot of little things involved in these things, too, you know. Of course, to be frank about it, we get the full coverage of Social Security, and of course, our pensions. And we're not wealthy, but we're all right. But I have to be damned careful not to make too much money. And that was that way until I was 72 years old, which I was last November. Now, I can make as much as I want. I'm willing to pay any income tax if I make enough money. [Inaudible] pay an income tax and give it all back to the government, which would've been that way if I—since I was 65, seven years ago. I don't know why they do that, but it is that way. You get \$2,400—\$2,400 grace, you might say. What do they call it? Well, anyhow, \$2,400 before you start paying tax. You can earn \$2,400, and of course the Social Security money doesn't count, but all these other things do. The few little things we have, we get our incomes off, they all count. So, it cuts you down to [inaudible].

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: For the record, did you show at the Oakland Art Museum?

WILLIAM GAW: Oh, I have, yes. Many times in the past, I've shown—I've shown in their annuals, and I've been a guest painter there in the past, such as—a guest exhibitor, I should say, in showing a number of my things at one time. And I had a one-man show down there several years ago, and I have very few of those paintings now. They're all gone. What else?

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Perhaps you remember Mr. Clapp, the director.

[01:15:00]

WILLIAM GAW: Very well, exceedingly well. Yes, yes. He's a very nice person, but not very much pep. [Laughs.]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: What was the Oakland Art Museum like in the 1920s and '30s under—

WILLIAM GAW: Well, first of all, Worth Ryder was director then. The first director, the man who started the thing, though, was William [sic] Harshe [Robert Harshe], who taught at the Stanford University.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Dr. Porter had—was influenced—

WILLIAM GAW: Yeah, that's right.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: —the development.

WILLIAM GAW: But Harshe was connected with the Pacific—the Golden Gate—what do you call it? The Panama Pacific Exhibition, fine arts department, and was responsible for collecting a lot of fine things. And Harshe—I don't know much about his early background. I guess he taught art history, and such. I knew him slightly. I'd run across him, [inaudible] painting at times. He painted pretty well himself. And after that, Ryder become director, after he gave it up, and he went back to Chicago and became the head of the Chicago Art Institute.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Ryder did? [Cross talk.]

WILLIAM GAW: [Inaudible.] No, not Ryder, but—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Harshe.

WILLIAM GAW: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And he did a very good job there. He brought that out of a little old, sort of, semi-academic sort of an outfit to something worthwhile. And of course, Dan Rich took over after that. Dan Rich was an understudy of his.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: At Chicago Art Institute?

WILLIAM GAW: At Chicago Art Institute. I don't know if you knew that or not. But I knew Dan quite well, we've served on national juries together, in the past. A nice guy, but Dan gave up the Art Institute and went to Worcester. And the reason he went there, as I understand—I didn't get this from him, but I saw him before he left—the reason is that he got sick and tired of always begging for money while the other institution is a municipal outfit, has a certain amount of funds, tax money goes into the thing. A very good amount, as I understand, and so he could do a good job with it. He paints a good deal, too.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: You were mentioning that you were on national juries, which we ought to get on the tape here. Did you—can you say something about these national juries, or—

WILLIAM GAW: I don't know if I could tell you much on that line, but I served on the jury of awards for the paintings of the year for the Pepsi-Cola company. I served on the Golden Gate International Exposition—the jury of awards for the Golden Gate International Exposition with Thomas E. Gordon and Dan Rich, Henry Marcel, who's now director of Pennsylvania Museum of Fine Arts—that group. Henry Porter, too. There were two artists, two of us. You might have noticed the picture of a bunch of us there in the studio, [inaudible] cold box. And I don't know—I've served on regional juries, for national juries—national shows.

And there's another very interesting thing, too, and I think it's a pity that the artists—the stand the artists took on some of these things, and most of that was through this Artist Equity, which I belonged to at one time. I guess you know about the Artist Equity. And that was—they start complaining very much. These national shows are put on, the Pepsi-Cola company would reproduce their things and get a lot of free advertising for the reproduction, as far as Pepsi-Cola was concerned. And there was all kinds of complaints about this and that and the paintings would go on traveling shows and their paintings were away too long from them and all that sort of thing. Very, very—a lot of kicking about it.

Well, finally, there was a big meeting. I knew Harold Mack [ph], the president of the—I met him after I served on some of these juries—the president of the Pepsi-Cola company. A very nice man—of course, he isn't any longer. But anyhow, he wanted to know what I thought about this business, with all these troubles and all these ups and downs. I said, You know what I'd do if I were you? I says, To hell with these old-timers. I'd get young guys. 35 years—no older than 35 years, and put on shows for those—give them a break. Let these old sons of guns sit in their puddle if they want. And he thought it was a pretty good idea. But then, they called—La Tosca Pearls [ph], remember, they'd get some very good prizes for selling their art exhibits. Remember that?

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Which—

WILLIAM GAW: Tosca [ph]—I think it was Tosca Pearls [ph]. Pearls, you know. Some of this—imitation pearls, and their big organization, they gave big prizes for paintings. Any kind of painting, as long as it was a good painting—good juries. And several other organizations—I don't recall all of them—had a big meeting in the Middle West, and that whole business was wiped up. They all agreed not to give anymore shows. Now, what actually happened: the artist killed the goose that laid the golden egg. And no kidding. They had a wonderful

opportunity.

[01:20:01]

Kuniyoshi was one of the backers of this damn art equity, too, like a lot of people. And he was one of the backers of this whole business. I had more than one argument with him over—in fact, we got into a pretty tough battle one day, over the whole thing. [Inaudible] paintings and all this. What the hell are you kicking about? You get a lot of free advertising, yourself. They may be getting advertising, so you better share your advertising with somebody else, too.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: You've also spoken of going abroad to paint. Can you tell us—

WILLIAM GAW: Not to paint, just to look things over.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Well, you did some sketching, [cross talk] no doubt. Artists usually do.

WILLIAM GAW: [Inaudible] Some—just ideas. Mostly, I carried—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: What years was the—

WILLIAM GAW: Well, that was recently. We went to Europe in '61, the 25th of March, 1961, and we were over there about six months. And we traveled all around. We traveled on the road, and we went by plane.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: That was your first trip?

WILLIAM GAW: Our first trip to Europe. We couldn't go [inaudible], we couldn't afford it.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: You did sketching in various countries?

WILLIAM GAW: Oh, yes, [inaudible] sketches, various types of things that interested me, but I did see a great deal, and my objective was to study the older paintings and see what they actually did. I heard so much about them, read so much about them, I know so much about them through reading such as that. I almost feel like I know them. And there—at the same time, I wanted to see what the contemporaries were doing. And first we'll mention contemporaries. We visited exhibitions—a whole Northern Italy exhibit in Florence, and we had friends all through Europe. And I went to visit one of those—my wife and I went to some of the opening of that big show. It was a tremendous show. But it was just as ordinary as anything I ever set my eyes on. There's everything there. There's drip and drool, as I call it—non-objective. And there was some hard-edge abstraction, some representational things. There was a combination of all, which I thought was very good, from that standpoint, but the work—the standard of the work was nothing like what we have here at all. I'm quite—I was quite surprised, to be frank about it.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: You think that we're—here in the United States and in California, particularly, we're way ahead of the European school?

WILLIAM GAW: Well, of course, I didn't see everything. I can't say—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Just your opinion.

WILLIAM GAW: —with authority, all the way through. I'll just go along with some of these other things, first. We went to a big show in Munich—contemporary work. And there was about—I think there were 8[00] or 900 paintings in that show, which was a pretty good size, and they were well-hung, good selections of every type of thing. But the tendency there was basically a little more towards the abstract side, not quite so much representation. And there were some good watercolors, good oils, and well-done. But they were kind of weak, kind of anemic—didn't have any kick in them. And I found the same thing, of course, in Italy.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: Then I went to—we went to some private galleries, some of the openings there, through friends of ours. And we found some pretty capable things there, things we've seen here. But they are nothing out of the ordinary. I think my trouble is I'm getting to know too damn much about it. I think it's my whole trouble. [Laughs.] That is from a technical standpoint.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Have you done any writing for magazines on art?

WILLIAM GAW: Oh, I'm—very, very, very little. A little column—a paragraph or two once in a while, that's all. Not very often. I've had opportunities, and I've been asked to write a book on the various techniques, such as that which I haven't done. McGraw-Hill wanted me to, and asked me several times, but I [inaudible]. Because that's—nowadays, they just slap the paint on and forget about techniques, [inaudible] and all that sort of thing.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Can you speak some more about some of the people you've known?

[Audio break.]

WILLIAM GAW: [Inaudible] you suppose?

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I think so. Did you have any one-man shows?

WILLIAM GAW: Oh, yes. Not too many, though. I had a one-man show, I think, in—I think it was '48, I guess. The Legion of Honor.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: 1948, the Legion of Honor?

WILLIAM GAW: I think that's what it was. I'd have to ask my wife to be sure of that date. I had a very large show, 30 years of painting, which was only a portion of what I could have given it. The Legion of Honor in 1960, and that was [inaudible] it was supposed to be [inaudible] about six weeks, and I had very good success with that. It was quite amazing. Very surprised. And—

[01:25:00]

I had a big, double rooms, main gallery, and second gallery at the San Francisco Museum of Art. The whole first gallery, you know, as you go in, and the second gallery, too, and even another small gallery adjoining that [inaudible]. And I exhibited a one-man show at Earlham College, in their new Earlham Hall, which they had just dedicated by the time we arrived there. And I had another show in—at a state college, Indiana, Pennsylvania—one-man show. Good size show. I didn't see it, but I heard about it. My nephew—he's a doctor back at the big veterans' hospital in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where he'd done some plastic surgery and such things as that, [inaudible] and he saw the show. He made a trip over to see it. He took a [inaudible] that. And, what else? I had a one-man show many years ago in Los Angeles, a museum down there. A big show down there, too.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Los Angeles County Museum?

WILLIAM GAW: Los Angeles County, right [inaudible]. And what else? Oh, I've had groups of paintings in places I couldn't tell you. [Inaudible] places—there's records of it around. I have quite a collection of catalogs and things like that, of where I've shown. Many of these things are buried in under these things in here, this little cubby hole back underneath everything in here Stuck in there, [inaudible] studio [inaudible] store things.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: We'd like to build up a file on you at the museum, to go along with the tape. If you have some duplicates of these catalogs you can give us for our records.

WILLIAM GAW: Very few duplicates. I have some. As I mentioned a while ago, the watercolor—I did show in contemporary watercolor exhibit in the Metropolitan, two or three years ago. I had two catalogs. I bought one while I was in New York, then they sent one to me, which I picked up when I got home. And then I gave one of these catalogs to a party that bought the painting from me. I gave them the catalog so they had a record of it. So, proof that the[laughs]—the thing had been in the Metropolitan.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Yes. It is quite an honor.

WILLIAM GAW: That was a funny thing. This guy—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: That's the way collectors are, you know.

WILLIAM GAW: Yeah. This girl wanted that painting in the worst way. She'd seen it quite some time before, so she got her husband to get in contact with me, and he did. And [inaudible] telephone [inaudible]. He came in here one day, all of a sudden, was in a sports

car, loaded, I guess. I guess they were loaded. And he spread all this money out on the table like nobody's business, right there. All cash. [Laughs.] That's unusual.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Out here in Berkley, in your house?

WILLIAM GAW: Right here, yeah. Right in this house. We've been in this house for 40 years.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Are they—were they local people?

WILLIAM GAW: San Francisco, [inaudible].

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Yeah, yeah.

WILLIAM GAW: This girl, she studied with me quite a long time at Mills. She's a very fine person. Exceedingly clever. Very good.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: You know, when an artist shows a painting in a museum and it's so labeled or cataloged, it adds a lot more value to a collector.

WILLIAM GAW: I suppose it does.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: It does, you know. I've found that out as a dealer.

WILLIAM GAW: So many of my things have been cataloged. And of course, I know nothing—very little about dealers, so that's—dealers—I haven't a dealer. Dealers have been after me time and time again, but I just [inaudible]—dealer said to me a while back, What the hell's the matter with you, anyhow? He says, I've been trying to get your paintings for years. I can't get a thing. [Inaudible.] [They laugh.] And I said, I don't know. I said, You know, I really—I don't know. We can make it [inaudible] not too much about making money. I'm going to have to give it all back to Uncle Sam anyhow. So it seems. Sometimes, you like to scatter it around a little more.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

WILLIAM GAW: I have another one coming up in the near future, they want a special painting which I'm going to have to do for these people. Well-to-do people that live here in Berkeley. [Inaudible] those things [inaudible] every now and then too. Even some of my small paintings, I have as sketches. They've been—I've repainted the things, in a larger size, but having lots of fun with them. And I tell these people if they don't want it, they don't have to buy it. If they don't like it, they don't have to buy it. I'll paint it anyhow, and keep it for myself.

[01:30:03]

[Inaudible.] I try to make a good painting out of it, again, you know? Because I do use sketches to build things from, many times. Sometimes I can put two, three of them together. Like some of those still lifes, you see overlapping still lifes I have out there and those abstract things—nothing more than a representational thing made here, and this thing made, and then one is superimposed on top of the other. That's the way I get my abstractions [inaudible], taking away and adding to all the time.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Did you know William Keith here in Berkeley?

WILLIAM GAW: Oh, yeah. I just knew him to see him. And some friends of my wife knew him quite well. And I used to see him once in a while. Sometimes, it would be with old Deacon [ph]. I suppose Deacon [ph] was taking him home for dinner, or something [inaudible] go up Ashby Avenue. They rode the steam trains from San Francisco, because he lived up here some place near—not very far off Bancroft Way, around the campus [inaudible].

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: On the edge of the campus, at the time. Yeah.

WILLIAM GAW: [Inaudible.] Oh, yeah. I remember seeing some of the exhibits, too. But he was a mighty guy in those days. I'll never forget that. I don't know why he should be, but he was. His paintings always hanging in the center place in the wall, you know. There was nothing around—nothing sky—those days were the double lines, you know, and they would call them sky. Anything that was over one, two, and the third up, that was sky. All those exhibits didn't have enough room, so they put them up like that.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Row on row on a wall.

WILLIAM GAW: Yeah. The guy got up to the top line, there, well, he's lucky he got in. The second row, well, he passed, and the first row, he was pretty good. Well, the fellow who stood all alone there, he was pretty important. Well, Keith got there every time. If he didn't, he would raise hell. [Lewis Ferbraché laughs.]

Thought he was a tough one. [They laugh.] But he painted better before the earthquake and the fire than he did after. My father saw many of his paintings that he did after the earthquake and fire, which were held in vaults in San Francisco, in the banks. I don't think [inaudible]. He died [inaudible—I understand he left a couple hundred thousand dollars. He did pretty good. His painting prices in those days around—I understand they were around [\$]3,000 or \$6,000. But the man that really got his—got prices in those days—imagine that—Harnett, an eastern painter.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: William Harnett, with the trompe l'oeil?

WILLIAM GAW: Yes, yes. It was very tight, beautifully done things, you know. And another man who'd visit Keith for quite some time was George Inness. I don't know whether you know that or not.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: We have record of one visit to him. Did he—more than one?

WILLIAM GAW: And he learn—I don't know about that. But he learned a great deal from Inness, in the ways of handling a tempera, undertone, and of painting—glazing his oils over. My father told me his work changed, from that time on. My father—

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Keith took him to Yosemite.

WILLIAM GAW: I think so.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: They made a trip together to Yosemite.

WILLIAM GAW: And his paintings—some of his paintings, at that time, sold around \$60,000.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Inness, you mean?

WILLIAM GAW: Think of it.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Yeah.

WILLIAM GAW: And some of them very nice for that particular romantic school, again, you know?

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Yeah.

WILLIAM GAW: Some very good. There's one or two pretty good ones in the Metropolitan I've seen. I'll never forget—I'll give you a—you better cut this radio off. This thing off. The story that was told—I heard one time—you may have heard it. But he's heard so much about Turner, William Turner.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Keith, do you mean?

WILLIAM GAW: No, no. George Inness.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Inness.

WILLIAM GAW: And he—you better kill that.

[Recorder stops, restarts.]

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: — on the tape, here.

WILLIAM GAW: Clyfford [Styll] was a kind of a person that had a—to my great amazement, I'd seen him in his studio—and very few people ever got into his studio. It's still a tough job to get in.

LEWIS FERBRACHÉ: Clyfford Still taught at the Art Institute?

WILLIAM GAW: The Art Institute in San Francisco. He had a studio over the school, temporarily. And he had reproductions of Turners around the place. And I found most [inaudible] and I talked to him about it. He said most of these non-objective guys do the same thing. He says it gives him a certain feeling about it, and such as that. But Clyfford was a pretty belligerent sort of a character. He was very difficult man to handle. I don't know why I got along so well with him. We had a couple of arguments.

We had an argument in New York, one time. A bunch of us out for dinner in Chinatown—it was really a midnight snack—one in the morning. And my wife was around, too, and I said, Call up Mark Rothko and have him come down, because I knew Mark quite well too, and his wife, Mary, was a very nice girl, and good-looking. And so he stalled around too long, and then people around there, they're all chewing the rag, and I said, What the hell's the matter with you? Afraid of Mark? He jumped out of the chair, rushed to the telephone, and he telephoned him. You could hear him around the corner, there—

[END OF TRACK AAA_gaw64_131_m.]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]