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Oral history interview with Medora Clark, 1956 April 21 and 1957 March 10

This interview received support from the Smithsonian American Women's History Initiative Pool.

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Medora Clark (Atta Medora McMullin Clark) on April 21, 1956 and March 10, 1957. The interview took place in Pasadena, California, and was conducted by Margaret Truax Hunter for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

This transcript contains a reading of the biography of Alson Skinner Clark, read by the author, his widow, Medora Clark. Part one of the recording was transcribed that in 1956. In 2024, part two was transcribed, and part one was retranscribed and reconciled against the original transcript in an attempt to create a verbatim transcript of the full recording. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. Additional information from the original transcript has been added in brackets and given an –Ed. attribution.

Interview

[00:00:06.44]

MARGARET HUNTER: This interview is taking place on Saturday, April 21, 1956, in a house just old enough to be romantic on Wotkyns Drive in Pasadena, California. Although the place overlooks the Arroyo Seco near the Rose Bowl, famous for its New Year's football games, there's very much a feeling of Barbizon about it. And soon the reason for this atmosphere of a French village near the Forest of Fontainebleau will be made apparent.

From the Huntington Library and Art Gallery in San Marino, I wrote to Mrs. Custer, Librarian at the Detroit Institute of Arts, to tell her of an exciting person whose recollections would enrich the Archives of American Art if they could possibly be captured. Mrs. Custer quickly agreed. And when our gracious hostess today had consented, it only remained to find a tape recorder. This was provided generously by Mr. and Mrs. Norman Patten.

Now, let me introduce you to Mrs. Alson Skinner Clark, who will tell us all about her husband, the painter and lithographer, always to be remembered here by his murals in the First National Bank of Pasadena, and the mighty galleon that rides across the curtain on the stage of the Pasadena Playhouse. Mrs. Clark.

[00:01:34.68]

MEDORA CLARK: Thank you, Mrs. Hunter. I am grateful to you and to the Huntington Library and Art Gallery for making this opportunity possible. This is Medora Clark, widow of Alson Skinner Clark speaking.

[00:01:52.65]

When my husband died seven years ago, a friend writing to me said Alson belonged to the

group of "happy painters." That phrase has always remained with me, for the early part of my husband's career was a felicitous time for painters. Wars were few and small. France had had the 1870 siege with Germany, but that was well past, though not forgotten. United States had a brush with Spain, and England had its rebellion in South Africa. But war clouds were slight, and nations were not concentrating on bigger and better weapons.

[00:02:41.19]

The time from 1900 to the First World War was actually a peaceful period. So I feel that records of it and what it produced are important. One never knows just where to begin a biography. Of course, the date of birth, 1876, and the place—Chicago—are mandatory.

I think the desire to draw was always extant with Alson Skinner Clark. When he was nine or ten years old, it made itself manifest, and obnoxious, as well, to his church-going parents. For during the long Sunday sermons, he surreptitiously recorded the bonnets and bald pates in front of him in the only place available at the time—the frontispieces and blank rear pages of the family hymnals. After service in the long drive home in the Surrey, he was called to task for his scandalizing behavior.

[00:03:56.68]

He was outwardly abject, but never sincerely penitent, I fear. For the next Sunday the program was repeated, not with as much freedom, for the blank spaces had been exhausted, and he was forced to begin on marginal vignettes. Finally, as the Sundays progressed, and the printed page did not disturb him, he swung across the Rock of Ages with groups confronting him—the minister, the choir, the organ, and so forth. I wish I had just one of those six hymnals now.

[00:04:39.49]

In the grammar schools at that time, freehand drawing was just beginning to be a part of the curriculum. And Alson, of course, advanced into this part of his education with verve. His drawings always had first place. A smart young classmate with no drawing ability, but apparently a good deal of persuasion, one day asked Alson to pinch hit for him with a freehand drawing. Alson couldn't resist such an opportunity, and complied.

[00:05:17.73]

Soon, other boys began to beg him to make their freehand. By this time, he was behind in all his other studies. He never did catch up with arithmetic, nor spelling. So to stabilize his market, he suddenly conceived the idea of charging for his services. He established a flat rate of fifty cents per drawing. A still life of an inkwell with an authentic pen nearby was both pleasure and fortune. The end to this flourishing enterprise came suddenly. A first award for an apple and ruler still life in which Alson had poured his full free soul, went to another boy. He didn't like competing with himself and coming out second, so professional art was terminated.

[00:06:17.79]

MARGARET HUNTER: How old was your husband when he was doing his ghost painting?

[00:06:23.73]

MEDORA CLARK: This business adventure was when Alson was about twelve years old. Soon after that, his parents came to a momentous decision for those times. My father-in-law, with Vermont perspicacity, had accumulated a fairly substantial amount of money, which with wise investment, looked as though it would take him through his life. It did.

[00:06:50.73]

Thus, he wasn't interested in pursuing commerce further. So they decided to take the entire family—three boys and a nursemaid—for a two-year trip around the world. The freedom of shipboard and the absence of classes gave Alson a whole new world to draw. No one had considered supplying him with paint, nor had he thought of such a plunge himself. But the red oil lantern at the end of each corridor on the old ship made him suddenly want to try his hand at color. And onshore once again, he invested in artists materials and swung into oils.

[00:07:40.55]

The Clark family made a leisurely tour of the continent—England, Ireland, Scotland, Scandinavia, a winter in Paris, a winter in Munich, side trips to Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, finally to Italy and across to Algiers. It was an intrepid expedition. In those days, ready-made clothing had not come on the market. And my mother-in-law once confided to me that sometimes she saw little of the town they were visiting, for as soon as they were established, she and the maid took needles in hand and set about patching and mending during the daylight hours so that their wardrobes would be intact for the next port of call.

[00:08:34.39]

Germany, of course, gave them opera in the fullest sense. Alson, although he enjoyed it, said his greatest happiness came from sitting quietly in the opera box, an undisturbed a moment for thinking about the pictures he had seen in the museums during the day. It was there, unceremoniously and at no particular moment, he made his decision to be a painter. And at last, he announced his desire and his decision to his parents. The Clark boys were day scholars at a German school where there was no freehand drawing. So after a period, an instructor in art was engaged for Alson.

[00:09:24.75]

MARGARET HUNTER: Have you ever seen any productions of his boyhood?

[00:09:29.04]

MEDORA CLARK: Yes, Mrs. Hunter. I have his first painting, still. Surrounded by the picturesque and the paintable, the instructor gave him the assignment of copying in watercolor a small, woodland scene of his own. But it was color, and it was something tangible to show his parents, who were still bewildered, though loving.

[00:09:58.29]

Back in America again, Alson and his brother were enrolled in the Chicago English High and Manual Training School. I mention this, because I think manual training is one of the most valuable things a painter can have. It is the easing of his whole future. No matter how profuse tools of the trade are in artist's supply shop, there are always hundreds of personal adjustments to be made for individual instances. This wonderful training in the manual arts aided Alson all his life.

Using his hands and pursuing his studies was in the first place, pleasing, and the second, obligatory. But neither was fully satisfied, though my husband tolerated them because on Saturday he was allowed to go to Chicago Art Institute where he enrolled in one of the classes. After he graduated from high school, another decision had to be made. His brother went off to preparatory school, but he decided to remain at home and become a full-time student in the Chicago Art Institute School.

[00:11:23.97]

MARGARET HUNTER: So at last, he was dedicated to art.

[00:11:28.19]

MEDORA CLARK: Yes. He worked hard. He worked seriously. He worked conscientiously, for he had still to convince his parents, and the only way was with what he produced. At that time, there was a fully prescribed course, which led one through a long period of drawing from casts. And casts, after a year or more, began to be very dull work for Alson, who was always primarily a colorist. He was irked by the preoccupation with black and white. And one day, he finally picked up courage and asked if he mightn't be advanced to life. The instructor, a purely academic mind, was shocked that Alson would ask to desert casts before the end of his period. They argued, for my husband had grown bold in his eagerness.

[00:12:29.21]

The instructor adamantly maintained that Alson should remain in casts, and in pique, followed up his ultimatum by announcing that he considered Alson Clark completely without talent, and his wisest counsel would be to abandon art. Alson gathered up his belongings

and left. On the long walk home, he made another decision. He would ask his parents to let him go to New York City to study. He was only 18, and his health was none too solid. But his parents, though still bewildered, were lenient, and acquiesced.

[00:13:12.86]

In New York, he found a lodging in a bedroom over an antique shop. It was a sympathetic room and gave him an established feeling. Though, an odd thing occurred and was continuously repeated during his tenancy. When he returned to his room at night, he would find a favorite piece of furniture, which he'd become especially attached missing. Soon, his landlord proprietor would tiptoe in to explain that it had been sold during the day, but would be replaced tomorrow with something equally pleasing. It always was. After a bit, this constant shifting lent a note of excitement to his return in the evening, and gave him at the same time an extended education in good antiques.

[00:14:14.86]

He enrolled at the Art Students League. But there, too, a rebellion was brewing. There were rumors that William Merritt Chase then, the foremost painter in the East, was contemplating establishing a school of his own. This was soon a fait accompli. And Alson, along with a group of talented students, seceded and became the nucleus of the new school.

[00:14:46.29]

Alson, so recently released from casts, was not caliber for the Chase life class. He was game and strung along. It was William Chase's custom to ask each student at the end of the week to bring in a composition of his own. Alson, conscientious but inexperienced, and still influenced by his own choices in museums, worked feverishly during the week, and turned in as his composition a lugubrious conception, which he felt was satisfyingly masterful.

[00:15:32.37]

He had for the first time some misgivings when it was placed alongside others. But it was too late to retreat. "And whose is this?" Chase asked, peering incredulously Alson's picture. "Mine, Mr. Chase," Alson confessed. "And just what is it, may I ask?" "Death Going Over the Battlefield," Alson explained a little lamely. "Ah, I see. And which is death? Which is the battlefield?"

[00:16:16.49]

But William Chase was too kindly to let a bon mot be his finale. He had merely tossed it into the other students to relieve tension. So he added, "Possibly this is a little too ambitious for your first composition." Alson always regretted that "Death Going over the Battlefield" was lost to art forever. It was his cornerstone. But unfortunately, he destroyed it on his way home.

[00:16:52.18]

MARGARET HUNTER: What a pity. But what happened next, Mrs. Clark?

[00:16:58.20]

MEDORA CLARK: And that was a wonderful winter for my husband. He lived down "Death Going Over the Battlefield," was soon accepted by the group, expanded with such association, and with the always-inspiring guidance of Chase. He told me he never knew William Chase to mete out utter discouragement, and laughingly recalled an instance when the master, moving through the class with his weekly criticism, paused beside a student whose work was so bad, it seemed that nothing good could be said about it—cleared his throat, looked at the student, and remarked, "You hold your brushes very well." And the student was delighted.

[00:17:55.66]

That year, Chase was to have a summer school in Shinnecock, [Long Island –Ed.]. And Alson along with three other students took a house there for the season. It was a bleak farm on the shore with an inhabited chicken coop, and they took it over in its entirety. Fortunately for the quartet, one member was actually a destined housekeeper. And he devoted his summer

to keeping the place neat. It was in pre-electric gadget days, and Alson's recollection of him was of a man with a broom, continuously grumbling and condemning. He could never join the trio going off to classes, for the arduous household tasks always engulfed him.

[00:18:56.34]

That fall, he dropped out of art completely. But his contribution was actually irreplaceable, for he kept four men alive a full season. There were no little restaurants anywhere about, nor were there markets. So they lived principally on fowl in various forms, going through the chicken coop completely during the summer.

[00:19:28.76]

This was before the days of the automobile, and Alson laughingly recalled rigging up a contrivance for carrying his paintbox and his easel on his bicycle, and suspending his canvas around his neck like a necklace where he felt its safety was assured. It was on the first trip out. But on the trip back, a brisk sea breeze sprang up. The canvas caught it like a sail, and like a sail, reversed its position so that Alson arrived home with the replica of his seascape on his sweater.

[00:20:13.97]

Out of that summer came a few good canvases for Alson. Long stretches of sea and beach with the simplicity of composition, and a harmony of color that looked professional in quality, and brought approbation from Chase. There was another winter in New York and another summer in Shinnecock, this time boarding at a farmer's house. It was still a quartet, but with a new member. And then, for the four, the decision to go to Paris. It was talked about all summer, of course, for it was an event in those days.

[00:21:05.64]

MARGARET HUNTER: What year was that, Mrs. Clark?

[00:21:08.88]

MEDORA CLARK: That was in 1899. Chase had become deeply interested and had advocated it. And Alson's parents had acquiesced. Lawton Parker, who had been massier at the Chase school for two years, had gone on to Paris and become established. It required three weeks for an answer to a letter to France. And all summer long, there was voluminous correspondence, principally concerning the merits of the various steamship lines. I have some of those letters still. It's incredible to think that so much could have been written on one subject. But at last, the decision was reached, and they set forth in November on the *S.S. Minnetonka*, a British liner cattle ship, which took one class of passengers, a predecessor to the luxurious freighter of today.

[00:22:15.70]

Later, when Alson and I were married, we set sail on the same ship. And I realized then only what an odd tie-up with the land it had. Some days, brisk winds made it an adventure cruise. But calm days brought strong—such a strong aroma of the cargo that it seemed as though we weren't at sea at all, but on some New England farm.

[00:22:51.40]

William Chase was a duenna for the quartet in America; Lawton Parker in Paris. But there was an interval unchaperoned, for the ship docked at London. This had been selected so they might profit by a squint at the London gallery. And they were fortified with many addresses of respectable English boarding houses. London was bleak, dark, cold, and raw. So after cleaning up the art museums, they decided to press on to Paris and get themselves established. The little channel boats were defenseless against weather. And the quartet was hardly aboard their ship before it began tossing and pitching.

[00:23:44.34]

Individually, they hurriedly sought shelter in the salon. Alson said that he remembered finding a free spot on a long bench lying down gratefully, semiconsciously wriggling his feet in and around an obstruction. And four hours later, as the ship touched calm waters then

land, bewilderingly coming to and finding that he tucked his scupper-soaked feet each side of his prone companions' neck where they had rested firmly the entire voyage. For days afterward in Paris, the stiff-necked companion was a silent but constant reproach.

Paris looked lovely to Alson. And as a locale, it was a fulfillment all his desires. Lawton Parker had met them at the train and taken them to see an apartment he had found for them in the Court du Dragon.

[00:24:58.45]

MARGARET HUNTER: Was that on the Left Bank?

[00:25:01.23]

MEDORA CLARK: Deep in the heart of the Left Bank, Mrs. Hunter. It was very small, with little room for four. But without any systematic appraisal, they enthusiastically leased it at once. It was primitive, though it did have a cold water tap in the tiny kitchen. But four was definitely a crowd, so two of them soon dropped off to other quarters, leaving Eugene Paul Ullman and Alson as sole tenants.

[00:25:38.00]

They discovered it was cold. There was no heat, and damp. Their first and last major extravagance was to put a wall-to-wall carpeting over its tile floors, naively believing it would solve their problems. The court possesses that unique amazing exterior winding staircase familiar to all students of Paris architecture. And Alson painted it, a successful canvas. I think he began here to have that extraordinary feeling for and appreciation of mellow buildings and walls, which later was to dominate his work. They abandoned the apartment in the spring and went down to the tiny village of Le Pouldu in Brittany. It's built on a high cliff above the tidal River Laita, which runs into the sea.

[00:26:47.51]

By this time, Alson was continuously producing successful canvases, one of which never lived to reach exhibition stage. He had his easel set up at the very edge of the cliff working on a big picture of the inlet. He laid down his palette and brushes and strolled down the steep, steep path to the water. When he looked back at the cliff, he said he was impressed by the vastness of the place, and the tiny spot his canvas made. He was kicking around among the stones, and for no reason at all, he picked one up, and hurled it with all his might in the direction of his picture. To his amazement, the stone swept directly through it. On his scramble back up the cliff, he was torn between a definite pride in his aim and utter desolation at what he'd done. No day ever came again with just the same light and just the same clouds. And after many years, I found he'd never forgotten that disastrous fling, and I think pride of aim lost out over regret for a ruined picture.

[00:28:20.36]

There were many established art schools in Paris, and during that first winter Alson studied in several. There are no fixed courses. You selected the school for the instructor currently criticizing at the time, enroll for a week or a month, tuition paid in advance, rose early, and hurried to stake out a good spot for all the schools were crowded, and there was no system of priority.

[00:28:55.37]

Alson studied under Merson, Lucien Simon, Cottet, and the Czech designer, Mucha, whose vogue was paramount at the time. He also during that first winter began painting in the Paris streets. To do this, you had to obtain a permit from the city, which was a formidable start. He soon, however, accustomed himself to the street audiences, became immune to their remarks, and so absorbing with his work, completely lacking in self-consciousness.

[00:29:41.46]

He told me once of an episode, which he felt was the most flattering in all his long career of working on the spot. He was seated on a stool, his box on his lap, painting a doorway in one of the narrow little streets of the Left Bank. It happened to be opposite one of the municipal

free soup kitchens. And while he was well along with his subject, a down-at-the-heels man with a cane and a dog on a leash emerged from the kitchen, wiping his mouth on his sleeve. A pair of dark glasses were suspended around his neck and a sign "Avegule," reposed on his coat.

[00:30:35.59]

He spotted Alson and came over, looked with much appreciation at the paintings up for a bit, finally adjusted his glasses, and set off, his dog leading. He histrionically tapping the cobbles with his cane. There was no apology for his faking. No discussion. He had simply welcomed Alson as another worker in the streets, who some way tricked the public. And so it was a part of that vast fraternity.

[00:31:15.51]

During the summer in Le Pouldu, Alson had decided that on his return to Paris, he would strike out for himself. So eventually, he found a studio on the Le Quai Voltaire. The winter proved disheartening, for he was ill a great deal of the time. However, he did enroll in what is now known as the famous Whistler class of fourteen. And although, Whistler as an instructor had little to contribute, preferring the role of the phraser of the bon mot. It brought a new and stimulating appreciation of color, and a whole new art form and composition, and for the first time, an interest in Japanese prints, which were suddenly was suddenly being noticed.

[00:32:14.35]

MARGARET HUNTER: Did your husband ever buy any Japanese prints?

[00:32:21.58]

MEDORA CLARK: Oh, yes, Mrs. Hunter. Alson started his own collection. And strolling along the quais in this neighborhood had ample opportunity to enlarge it readily for a few sues of print. Whistler, perhaps inwardly conscious of his lack of success in stimulating his students, and desirous in some way to make amends, magnanimously invited them to his studio on New Year's Eve.

[00:32:57.99]

A little terrified by a master who remained so aloof, they met in a group, and advanced together. A butler opened the door which enhanced their apprehension. He took away their coats and hats. And after a period of good timing, Whistler appeared elegantly clad, lacking only a fanfare or spotlight. However, the butler happily soon reappeared, this time bearing a tray with glasses and bottles of champagne.

[00:33:42.23]

The evening began to warm up, as did Whistler. And when it was finally terminated in the early morning hours, Whistler had shown them every canvas in his studio, regardless of its degree of completion, and had established a rapport never achieved by any other master. It was an evening to savor all the rest of Alson's life.

[00:34:17.56]

By the spring of 1900, after suffering from recurring attacks of what was diagnosed as chronic appendicitis, Alson cabled his family of his illness, adding that he would return to America for an operation. His parents were troubled by his illness, but horrified at the suggestion of an operation. There had been few such expediencies at the time. Alson was firm, and eventually in Chicago, he had his appendix removed, and made the front page of the leading Chicago newspaper, with so rare an event. His health restored, Alson returned to Paris in the fall. Shunning the picturesque but clammy buildings on the Seine, he chose a studio in the interior.

[00:35:23.10]

That spring, he sent a picture to the Salon des Beaux Arts for the first time, a small canvas of a violinist in somber harmonizing tones, presumably inspired by Whistler. It was accepted and hung on the line. So he had the pleasure of cabling his parents this glowing news to offset the cable gram of the preceding spring.

[00:35:57.61]

That year, Alson came back to America and spent the summer with his family at their island in the Saint Lawrence River. They lingered on into the fall, and the autumn brilliance began to whet his appetite for American landscapes. When the first gentle snowfall added a tantalizing touch, he decided to stay in America. Watertown, New York was the nearest city. There, he purchased—found and purchased a stable, and remodeled it into a studio, to the bewilderment of the townfolk, and established himself for the winter. Snow had always had a great lure for Alson, as it has for most landscapists. And during the winter, he painted many successful canvases, one of which, a snow scene of the square in Watertown, later received a medal at the St. Louis Exposition.

[00:37:11.55]

I met Alson that fall. There many days when working outside was difficult. And one of those days shortly after I had met him, he asked me if I would pose for him. The painter was a rara avis in those parts, neither understood nor exactly welcomed. And posing was completely new to me. But I dressed in a costume he had selected, and accompanied by my mother, descended to the studio. He painted a small full-length portrait, and it took a very long time to complete. Toward the end of the sittings, my mother gave up accompanying me. And by the time it was terminated, Alson had asked me to marry him, and I'd said I would.

[00:38:09.81]

This suddenly gave him a completely new status, a man about to take on a household sometime. So we decided at his first venture to hold an exhibition in his studio, a one day affair in Watertown. He framed all the charming little panels of Paris he had brought back, and a few of the larger canvases, and hung them, and we invited our friends to a viewing.

[00:38:43.63]

MARGARET HUNTER: The preparation for a show is always thrilling, isn't it?

[00:38:49.34]

MEDORA CLARK: Yes, the material has to be kept fluid, where you can never tell until the last minute how things are going to look. But in this instance, we could know well in advance, for it was to be held right there in the studio, and we could hang, and then impetuously rehang, and re-rehang ad infinitum, which we did. There is nothing so exciting, so tremulous, so breathtaking as the preparations for the first show. And I've always been grateful that I was in on it, though at the time, I hardly understood what it was all about.

[00:39:36.16]

But with the arrival of the public, the aspect of the painter—earnest, tense, hopeful, with an endeavored air of aplomb, told me it was momentous. The hour which we had set, two o'clock on account of the light, bewildered the Watertown viewers a little. But the subject matter of the pictures bewildered them still more. They were used to a form of isolated native art with floral pieces predominant, and Paris street scenes were practically unknown in their world.

[00:40:20.02]

However, one woman expressed admiration for little panel of the Luxembourg Gardens, "Shadows and Sunlight," asked the price, and promptly bought it. This event was so new in Alson's career that he was uncertain how to proceed. But he finally rose to the new height and said he would deliver it the next day. By this time, Alson's confidence in a show was established. So he packed his wares and went on to Chicago to try his luck.

[00:41:06.73]

The Anderson Galleries agreed to give him an exhibition without rental fees, and asking a modest percent. Pictures were hung. The critics lauded his show. He sold several pictures, and was suddenly launched as a professional artist, sloughing the skins of a student. This was in the winter of 1902, when he was just about to celebrate his 25th birthday. In Chicago, a new high school was under construction to be named in honor of his great uncle, Mancel

Talcott. And Alson was given the commission for a mural in the building.

[00:41:55.21]

MARGARET HUNTER: Mrs. Clark, could you tell us a little about Mancel Talcott?

[00:42:03.09]

MEDORA CLARK: Alson's great uncle Mancel Talcott was a picturesque figure in the early days of Chicago. He been a 49er, crossing the isthmus at Panama and working his way as a waiter on one of the ships up to San Francisco and the California goldfield. He was successful in diggings, came back to Chicago after two years, and with his stake, began being part of the financial world of Chicago. He was, among his other activities, one of the founders of the First National Bank of Chicago and remained on the board of directors until his death. So it was fitting that a school should be named in his honor, and that a great nephew should be chosen to help its decoration.

[00:43:03.13]

Alson came back to Watertown and spent the summer working on his first mural, "The Pied Piper of Hamelin." That fall, 1902, we were married and went to Paris to live. In this day of streamlined travel, I shudder at the remembrance of our vast amount of luggage. We deposited it in the little Hotel du Quai Voltaire, and set out in search of a home. We finally found an apartment in the Rue Victor Considérant, a one-block street running into the Boulevard Raspail just below the Place Denfert-Rochereau The rental, 100 francs a month, about $20, was more than we could afford. But it was a charming apartment with two fireplaces each topped with mirrors, and a stone balcony running all across the front. It was the balcony that sold us to it. And in a way, it proved a sound investment, for it was used in many motifs with figures afterwards.

[00:44:23.00]

Frederick Frieseke was a great friend of Alson's. And later that year, he returned from America, came to see us, fell in love with the balcony, and promptly came to live with us until he could find equally pleasing quarters. He did a beautiful canvas of a figure against the light on the balcony, for which I posed and which he gave us as a belated wedding present. The kitchen in our apartment, like all French kitchens at that time, had a tile floor, tiles halfway up the walls, a stone sink, and a coal-burning stove with a little copper tank with a spigot for a modicum of hot water on one side known as a "bain Marie," and a charcoal grill above. Alson did a beautiful little interior of the kitchen.

[00:45:30.05]

MARGARET HUNTER: Could it be that one with a lovely fat stove now hanging in your kitchen right here in California?

[00:45:37.52]

MEDORA CLARK: Yes, Mrs. Hunter, that is the very same panel. And it gives that corner incredible cheer, and helps my uncertainty as a cook. We had a big flat English tub, which we kept under the bed and in which we bathed each morning. Once a week, we each took a little case filled with clean clothes and drove to a public bathhouse, where we had a very wonderful and very prolonged hot bath. The ladies' section in the bathhouse was very much smaller than the men's, I suppose because French women were too occupied to give up an afternoon to such frivolity. But I look back on those moments as some of the most pleasing of the year.

[00:46:34.29]

You paid for your bath in advance at the desk, one franc. And if you wished—we always wished—five sous more for a little cake of very pink soap, and 50 centimes more for what was known as a "bain garni," which meant that before the bath was drawn, the tub was lined with a huge linen sheet. An attendant drew your bath, and when you were ready to emerge, you rang for her and she brought you warm linen peignoir and a towel.

[00:47:19.57]

Alson was the first among his group of bachelor friends to be married, so they formed the habit of gathering at our house. Some of them liked to sing. Alson had a keen ear, a fairly good singing voice, and the talent of playing his accompaniment. Fred Frieseke had a fine true tenor. So one day, we impulsively rented a piano for 15 francs, three dollars a month. Our monthly stipend arrived on the first of the month, and we had thoughtlessly rented the piano on the 30th, when our finances were at their lowest point. It was always a wild scramble to meet the rental due. But miraculously, we kept it to the end.

[00:48:16.92]

In the afternoon, when the light failed, which it did very early in the Paris winter, the men would meet in one of the cafes and play billiards. I would tag along and sit at one of the marble-top tables and look at the French magazines with their stiff oilcloth covers. But in the evening, the gathering was almost always at our place.

[00:48:45.55]

The burning question that year concerned Velázquez. There were two schools of thought—one which claimed he glazed and one which claimed he didn't. The earnest arguments around our fire would pro and con consume an entire evening. I would sit there by the warm glow, having had with my dinner, red wine, which I had not yet become accustomed, and listen. I knew nothing about the techniques of painting, so I couldn't contribute to either side. I simply remained mute and very sleepy. Soon, I discovered that my presence was of no importance. So after a bit, I would withdraw silently and unobserved.

[00:49:47.49]

MARGARET HUNTER: Did they ever decide whether or not Velázquez glazed?

[00:49:52.74]

MEDORA CLARK: I spent the winter surreptitiously withdrawing. And at the end of it, I learned that the decision about Velázquez had been deadlocked. Most of our friends were Americans. Some were English and Scotch, some Russians, Australians, many Czechs, a Pole, a Portuguese, some Spaniards, and a few French. All of them were living on little money, but there were few financial tragedies, though the Australians were sometimes hard-pressed. They were far from home, and their allowances came from parents dealing in sheep. In dry years, their income dwindled, so we would make a precarious little pool to tide them over.

[00:50:49.24]

Once in a while, we played a game, which required a good deal of cutting. There was often a majority of non-Anglo-Saxons, so we talked in French. And I remember some of the odd forms of the language which emerged, and also the fact that no matter how proficient you are in a foreign language, you invariably count aloud in your native tongue.

[00:51:22.78]

Sundays, we always went to the Louvre, later to the Luxembourg Gallery, or the Petit Palais, or to some current important exhibition. Afterward, we often went to a service, so as to see the beautiful interiors of some of the churches. We went to bed early, for daylight time was precious, and we wanted to feel fit to use it. Alson painted a large canvas of the Pont Neuf that winter in the early dawn. William Chase bought it later.

Being on the quais at that hour, Alson said, brought a strange revelation of how a part of Paris lived. From various nooks under the bridges, tramps would emerge in the early morning having slept on ledges or abutments. Each would carefully fold papers which had been under or over him, tie them meticulously with string, and place them carefully on a staked-out property. In the evening, I suppose they would return home, for all of the good spots were continuously occupied.

[00:52:51.08]

Our friends back in Paris thought of us as leading a gay life in Paris, accenting particularly the nights. But actually, we rarely went out. Very occasionally, we went to the opera, usually

at the invitation of visiting friends, and quite rarely on our own where we sat in the topmost gallery, the cheapest seats, and peered around the big central chandelier at the performance.

[00:53:25.27]

Once, though, when the Russian Ballet came to Paris for the first time, we bought ground floor seats. It was a justified expenditure. I know there have been many improvements in theater lighting and presentations since that performance, but nothing has ever been so convincing and so breathtaking as Nijinsky's finale in his leap from the window in *Spectre de la Rose*.

[00:54:01.79]

The salons, of course, were the event of the spring. Alson and most of his friends sent to the Salon des Beaux Arts for the Salon des Artistes Français had come to be regarded as dated by the younger men. Planning for this was a serious task the entire winter. The thing which impressed me deeply was the honest camaraderie it involved. Alson would say, "David is coming over this afternoon, and giving me a crit."

[00:54:38.76]

This was an important rendezvous, first, because David was deserting his work in good daylight time to come and give his honest opinion of the picture, going deeply into all the details, and, secondly, because Alson sometime soon pay a reciprocal visit. This exchange went on among all the intimates, and was always by invitation. There were even sometimes last-minute corrections so that the canvas would be rushed off wet on receiving day.

[00:55:20.64]

Some of the men rented little two-wheeled carts and took their work over themselves, either for purposes of economy, or because of a reluctance to let any outsider handle such precious freight. Alson sent his via his color merchant, whose men took it in one of the little carts. He sent that spring of 1903, a canvas of me in a white dress, standing, my back to the painter, by our white marble mantel, a study of subtle values in white, the train of the dress dropping in intriguing folds.

[00:56:09.65]

MARGARET HUNTER: Do you know what happened to that portrait?

[00:56:13.19]

MEDORA CLARK: Yes, Mrs. Hunter. Later, it was sent to the Exposition in Liege, Belgium, and received a medal in 1904, and was eventually sold to a private collector in New York. During the receiving days, you saw these little carts all over the city, two men to each, for it was a long haul and they relayed each other.

[00:56:45.60]

The first vernissage was held one afternoon, and the second the succeeding afternoon. The real opening was formal in the fullest French sense. The men wore frock coats and shiny top hats. The women, big picture hats and "taillerurs" consisting at the time of ground-length skirts with a good width of train. Many painters didn't possess the required outfit, so there'd be a hurried return to some base, a quick exchange, and the frock coat and hat would make a second trip to the salon on a smaller but happy man.

[00:57:40.24]

In late spring of 1903, when we were all discussing plans for the summer, and we personally were trying to decide on a schedule, a bachelor friend of Alson's, a portrait painter who lived nearby with his mother, came to us with a plan that sounded interesting. He had wandered around in Brittany the previous summer and had seen in the little town of Rochefort-en-Terre in Morbihan, an old chateau, very feudal in nature, which had whetted his imagination. Part of it was ruins and part of it was inhabited by gentle, impoverished old Breton demoiselle.

[00:58:29.69]

He had approached her with a hope of renting it for the next summer. She had demurred. He, although gentle, was persuasive. And the talk ended with a possible affirmative. Now, he wished to renew negotiations, but the rental price named—100 francs a month with three servants and breakfast—was now more than he could meet, so he'd would like us to join him and share the expense.

[00:59:06.50]

We would have luncheon and dinner at the little inn in the town, he explained. And the village was five miles from a railroad station, but there was courier service that brought both mail and passengers twice a day. He had added that it was so isolated a spot that it had remained pure Breton. And he threw in for good measure the alluring fact that there was an underground passage, now closed, leading from the chateau to the church down in the town probably used in medieval times as a means of escape from sieges. We leapt at it, our only problem being the continuing expense of our apartment. But luck sent us a writer client who wanted to remain in Paris during the summer, so we subleased our home and set out for Rochefort-en-Terre.

[01:00:13.76]

It was a long day's trip with a change of trains at Rennes, and again at Redon, a disembarking at Malansac, and the final five-mile trip in the horse-drawn coach to Rochefort-en-Terre. The chateau, which was the way the natives referred to it, was feudal, as our friend had said—a big simple stone fortress on the hill, its roomed high ceiling, few and enormous, its furnishings sparse. Our room had a huge bed, hand-hewed, but with no extraneous carving, a washstand of the same distant era, two chairs, and a magnificent rattan armoire. It was in effect the Breton equivalent of streamed-line. And Mademoiselle Juhel and her three maids lived in a wing on one side, and there was another wing opposite, which was in complete disuse.

[01:01:30.65]

MARGARET HUNTER: Was the chateau very old?

[01:01:33.96]

MEDORA CLARK: It dated, we learned later, from the 14th century. [The town itself was incredibly unspoiled, picturesque, ancient, and so sympathetic and friendly that we became a part of it at once. Each inhabitant, young and old, still wore the costume; the men, velvet-mount straw Breton sailors, with velvet streamers hanging down to their wasits, long, loose, blue linen smocks, sometimes embroidered; the women, double-coiffed, black, long, loose-sleeved bodices, full skirts, ground-length, small, folded woolen shawls, and woolen or silk for fetes— aprons with bibs.

The whole town wore heavy, hand-knit woolen socks, and wooden sabots, the click-click making primitive rhythms on the cobbles. The sabots were discarded for soft little felt slippers indoors, so the wearers, once iside, were as silent as they had been noisy in the streets. The men often carried stout wooden sticks with a leather-bound top, and a leather thong around the wrist. The women always carried their knitting, and worked wherever they were, even walking along the streets or in the fields.

The big events during the week in each town were the markets, and the days were so arranged as not to interfere with the dates in nearby towns. Tuesdays and Fridays were market days in Rochefort. Two-wheeled carts arrived in the village square very early in the morning, and began the noisy matutinal business of setting up booths and arranging merchandise.

The livestock section was on a plain above the church, and we were always torn in our loyalty to the two spots, for both were irresistible. Cider was the drink of the country, and so many bargains were sealed by glasses of it, that legs were unpleasantly wobbly at the close of the day.

Brittany is the land of Pardonsl each section has its own in honor of its individual saint sometime during the summer. When we heard of one nearby, we would rent one of the high two-wheeled carts, drawn by a sturdy Breton horse, and manned by a sturdy Breton driver, pile in our equipment, and go forth.

In the woods about the towns there are many dolmen and menhirs, relics of a very distant other occupation. Usually, the religious procession would form in the town and march out into the woods to a menhir, where an altar, once part of Druid rites, had been transformed with linen clothes, and flowers and a crucifix into a Catholic shrine.

Vannes, the nearest city, was 50 kilometers away, so we often took a train to Vannes, third-class, for it was bound to be full of peasants en route to our destination, rented a cart in Vannes and drove to the Pardon in its vicinity.

On our return to Rochefort at the end of the long day, we were always welcomed back heartily by Anastasie and Marie-Francoise, the two spinsters who ran the inn. Marie-Francoise did the cooking—mostly on a spit in the fireplace, and Anastasie served, sided by a rosy-cheeked apprentice. Our meals were delicious and elaborate, and never less than six courses, which seemed a prodigious achievement, remembering that all water had to be hauled from the village well.

For these sumptuous repasts we paid two francs fifty a day—room and complete board totaled four francs a day; if there were extras, such as coffee after dinner, three sous, or a glass of cognac, four sous. They were added to our bill in Marie Francoise's fine French script. Cider was always on the table, and on the house –Ed.]

We made many friends during the summer, among them the village tailor, who turned a frayed suit of Alson's inside-out, and set it up like new for 10 francs, and who copied a suit of mine in beige village corduroy for the same ridiculous sum. Monsieur Le Cure, the priest of the extraordinary 14th century church, constantly wandering about the streets, his soutane and biretta a wonderful, slim black note against the gray buildings, was another friend. He took on the role of our confidant and advisor, and briefed us on the history of the old houses and their occupants.

[01:02:37.18]

In the town was a convent whose care was the orphans of the vicinity. Through Monsieur Le Cure's instigation, we made friends with the Mother Superior and her nuns, and persuaded her to accept me as a pupil in the morning, in the three hours and in the afternoons out in the garden, in the intricacies of French sewing and embroidery.

[01:03:09.24]

We were saddened to have the summer show signs of drawing to a close, although Alson had painted an amazing amount of good canvases. So when we received a letter from our Paris tenant in September of that momentous year of 1903, saying she would like to stay in the apartment another month if we cared to linger on in the country, we telegraphed her to stay. Alson wanted me to see Le Pouldu where he had been as a bachelor and show me Quimper and Quimperle.

[01:03:47.02]

So we packed up went over into Finistère, but not before we had made arrangements for Mathurine, one of the little maids at the inn, to come to Paris and be a part of our household. She had approached us with the desire, and we had talked it over with Anastasia and Marie Francoise. The local top wage was 25 francs a month. Whereas in Paris, she would earn 40. And they couldn't stand in the way of such an advance. For the good of Mathurine, incidentally the good of us, it was decided that she should come. She was with us for several years.

[END OF TRACK AAA_clark56_55_m]

[00:00:05.45]

MARGARET HUNTER: It must have been a wonderful summer for you.

[00:00:09.61]

MEDORA CLARK: Yes, it was an amazing summer for us—a dip back into another era. And although I was immature, I was awed by the privilege it had been, and found it difficult to believe that the previous summer had been one of tennis courts, horseback riding, and

tandem driving.

We spent the winter again in Paris and shipped an exhibition back to Chicago. The show was such a success that Alson's parents were both convinced and elated, and topped their joy by sending us a generous check. This staked in the spring of 1904 a trip to Italy the chance to see the galleries and to amass pictures for another exhibition. In October 1904, the Chicago Art Institute held a group of fourteen of Alson's Italian panels. Alson regretted not being in America to see them. But William French, director of the Art Institute at that time, kindly sent to Paris details of the showing with a diagram of the hanging.

[00:01:30.22]

Alson's parents came over in the late fall and spent the rest of the year with us. Paris was still a completely horse-drawn city. Horsecars ran down the Boulevard Raspail every half hour, so that if I saw one in the distance as I emerged from our building, I picked up my skirts—our street dresses still had trains—and ran to catch it. Often, too, I was balancing an umbrella, for the rains are fairly continuous in Paris in the winter. The benevolent driver would slacken his animal's pace, though he would never stop, look back until he was assured you had made the leap onto the rear platform, and then speed up.

[00:02:22.24]

The omnibuses had what was known as an "imperial," an uncovered second story with seats back-to-back along the ridge. To achieve these, you had to stagger up a little circular staircase. The lurches were always exciting and sometimes perilous, but for the camaraderie of a helping passenger hand. Down some of the very narrow streets such as the Rue Saint-Jacques, the camaraderie continued, passengers good-naturedly calling out dangerous spots and warning you to duck your head for an overhanging sign.

[00:03:08.10]

After Alson's parents came, these plebeian joys were often denied us, for they fell in love with the gay little horse drawn cab. And sometimes, ashamedly, we reveled in this new luxury. In the summer, we all came back to America, and that winter Alson leased a studio in the old Tree Studio Building in Chicago. He did some portraits. But most of the time he worked in the Chicago streets, the somber tones of the buildings with their crisp touches of snow, subdued but beautiful motifs.

[00:03:50.31]

Alson's ability, so developed by this time, of making friends with the people in the streets was of equal value in America as France. He became a pal of one of the bridge tenders on the Chicago River, who let him paint in the little lookout of the Clark Street Bridge a canvas of the river and the buildings in the snow. The bridge tender watched the proceedings with deep interest, lauded, and encouraged. And when the picture was complete, announced loudly in a proud, challenging voice, that it was worth five dollars of any man's money. That picture, to which Alson gave the title "The Coffee House," won the Martin Cahn prize in Chicago in October of 1906, and is now in the possession of the Chicago Art Institute.

[00:04:53.00]

MARGARET HUNTER: Why did he name it "The Coffee House?"

[00:04:56.47]

MEDORA CLARK: Because there were many coffee warehouses in the foreground, and an omnipresent aroma of roasting coffee beans. Alson's mother gave a big tea for us that fall, a formal American debut. She sent out engraved invitations weeks in advance. And she and my two sisters-in-law and I, white-gloved and pompadoured in delicate, elegant, floor-length gowns with sweeping trains, stood in line and received the guests, equally elegant and white-gloved, of course.

[00:05:40.68]

It was a three [o'clock] to six [o'clock] affair, and all the shades were drawn and candles lighted everywhere, although it was a brilliant beautiful sunny day, many of the Clark

windows looked out on Lake Michigan. But the era of bringing the outdoors into the home had not yet been established. Although it was called a tea, the menu included many varieties of heavy foods—chicken and lobster salads, and ices and cakes, besides coffee and tea as beverages, chocolate with a ceiling of whipped cream on each cup. Hours were heeded in those days. The invitations had read "from three to six." And at six o'clock, the house, save for the family, was completely empty.

[00:06:39.94]

People gave many dinners for us that winter. We dined out almost every night. The men were always in tails and white ties, and the women in elegant decollete gowns and long white gloves, only the fingers of which were removed and tucked in at the wrist after the assemblage was seated at the table.

[00:07:06.76]

White kid gloves are a dominating remembrance of the winter, for to me, it was such an oddly persistent custom with Chicago, at that time a grimy city. When my mother-in-law and I went out to pay around of formal visits in a barouche, we were both white-gloved at the start, and we also had two pairs tucked in a pocket as spares, both of which we used before the formal afternoon ended.

[00:07:41.26]

The big event of the year was in January 1906, when Alson had an exhibition of his work at the Chicago Art Institute, a big room with fifty canvases, an evening opening in a fierce winter blizzard. But it was his first one-man museum show, and so it was gala. The many critics were unanimous in their praise, and I think Alson, for the first time, felt established.

[00:08:16.98]

Alson had much financial success with his work that winter. He was still influenced by Japanese color schemes, and he used them to create beauty out of the somber Chicago streets. He spent the summer on the St. Lawrence and mulled over our plans, and finally decided to risk part of our newly acquired backlog on a trip to Japan, sailing from Quebec farther down the St. Lawrence.

[00:08:51.96]

We bought a guidebook of Japan pored over it during the summer. We arrived in Quebec in October 1906, just as the first snow had fallen. We were completely unprepared for the beauty of the town, and snow was always irresistible to Alson. So I knew some way on that first afternoon that we would never leave it.

[00:09:22.45]

The guidebook to Japan had warned that the traveler must not expect European cuisine, and that there was an absence of salt in almost all foods, the varieties of a small raw fish with rice one of the principal articles of diet. Alson liked good food. And I think that paragraph, plus the snow-clad city combined to stem any further advance. Anyway, we spent the winter in Quebec, and remembering the warning about the unappetizing raw fish, came back to United States in the spring.

[00:10:06.30]

We had a few addresses with us when we arrived in Quebec that first afternoon, and we started looking them up. We always had a great deal of baggage—two wardrobe trunks, hand luggage, a typewriter, paintboxes, big ribbed wooden cases for canvases, easels for which I'd make cloth covers and which were always a source of mystery to Pullman porters. So we needed a big room.

[00:10:37.50]

MARGARET HUNTER: Did you find anything sufficiently commodious?

[00:10:42.24]

MEDORA CLARK: Luckily, Mrs. Hunter, we found a room which met all our needs in a lodging house, with an unpretentious hotel right across the narrow street. And by nightfall we were established. The snow had fallen all night. And the next morning, it was much cooler. So our first concern after wandering shiveringly around the town, was to procure warmer clothing for ourselves. We began with woolen stockings and woolen underwear, and worked on out.

All winter, as the thermometer continuously descended, we were in constant quest of warmer clothing. Fearing that a long coat would be too cumbersome for painting, Alson's bought a short fur-lined coat with a big fur collar. He soon found, however, that he was warm only from the waist up, so he had a tailor make him a pair of trousers out of heavy overcoating. Then he found his feet, like Achilles' heel, were vulnerable. He added a second pair of woolen socks and bought a pair of the Native warm felt boots, and finally a fur cap which could be drawn down over his ears. We found that standard Quebec equipment was a wide sash, wound around the waist to hold the garment to the body, and to prevent the cold air from going up, so we added bright red sashes to our wardrobes, and fur-lined gloves.

[00:12:27.00]

When Alson was at last warmly outfitted, he found his paints were not. They froze in his box. Or if he was able to squeeze them on his palette, they were soon impenetrable hard mounds. He went to a tinsmith and explained his troubles. The tinsmith forged a long tin double palette, with a place for a charcoal burner inside and little chimney at one end. Alson carried tubes of paint in his too-big pockets with a little charcoal stove in each. This proved ideal subzero equipment.

[00:13:13.16]

He learned to snowshoe, for many good motives had to be reached in this way. He would start off for work in one of the caleches, the low-slung sleighs where the passengers are installed in comfort in a deep rear seat, and the driver half-stands, half-sits on a narrow little perch up in front. When he reached his spot, he would remove his equipment from the caleche, pay the driver with an admonition to return at sunset, don his snowshoes, set up his easel and canvas, and start to work.

[00:13:54.93]

He always paced back and forth when he painted. It was a neat trick while watching his canvas to back up on snowshoes. He had a few spills in the beginning, but he soon became proficient in what was a unique technique. It was a prolific winter, for we were strangers and there were few demands. But a painter and his cumbersome, odd paraphernalia are conspicuous, and several people called on us and asked us into their homes.

[00:14:31.76]

Among them was Mrs. Hayter Reed, who had charge of decorating the chain of Canadian Pacific Railroad hotels across the country. She was entranced with Alson's work, and after several conferences, persuaded him to do some murals in the Canadian rooms she was installing at the time in the top floor of the Chateau Frontenac. They were successful and distinctive, for by this time Alson had a real understanding of Quebec and the landscape. And I've never ceased to regret their loss some years later in a fire in that part of the hotel.

[00:15:16.81]

MARGARET HUNTER: Have you any photographs of those Chateau Frontenac murals?

[00:15:21.18]

MEDORA CLARK: No, though I still possess a model of the room. During the winter, we heard a great deal about the winter logging camps up in the Laurentian Mountains. It piqued our curiosity. And one day, when an opportunity came our way to visit the bush, as it was called, we decided to go.

[00:15:45.03]

We went by train, disembarked at the tiny little village of Saint-Pacôme, a group of small houses with one larger one where the Scot bookkeeper for the company lived. Women were

not allowed in the bush, so I stayed in the village with the bookkeeper's wife. But Alson, in two fur coats, with his equipment, was driven forty miles on the snow over the mountains to the camp. It was consistently forty [degrees] below zero. Alson was valiant, but he brought out only a few small panels after remaining a fortnight. But the rest of the winter, he reverted to his stay as one of the most incredible experiences of his life. A painter is fortunate, for often his way leads to primitive places, where he has an opportunity to be a part of another era, and this had been one of them.

[00:16:54.10]

Later, in exhibitions, Alson sold many of that winter's canvases, one of which William Chase bought. In my scrapbook, I came across a gracious note of acknowledgment and praise concerning it from William Chase. But of the season's work, Alson felt that his most successful canvas was one of a group of snow-colored Quebec roofs with the frozen bay and ships and masts in the distance. He called this picture "Hope Hill." It was shown in museums all over the country and had superb notices. But he was so fond of it himself that he refused to sell it, and it now hangs in the living room here in California.

[00:17:49.45]

The breaking up a winter in Quebec was a damp, mushy, and prolonged process. The friends in Paris who had subleased our apartment had written saying they had found cheaper, but equally good, quarters on the broad Boulevard Saint-Jacques and would like to lease them and shift our possessions there. Alson already had a studio on the Boulevard Saint-Jacques so we cabled our friends a succinct message—"Move." Looking at the rivers of melting snow in the streets of Quebec, we suddenly decided we'd like to see our new home. So we engaged passage and sailed from Quebec for France.

In the interval of our absence, Paris had started to become mechanized. And we were astonished in the spring of 1907 to find so many changes. The Boulevard Raspail had acquired trams, and the Rue Denfert-Rochereau, clumsy, two-storied trolley, cars, and the Rue Saint-Jacques, motor-driven buses. Looking about us and reflecting, we began to wonder if we, too, couldn't become mechanized. We took to scanning advertisements in *Le Matin* with breakfast, and finally clipped out one which offered a tri-car at the price we could afford.

[00:19:22.41]

MARGARET HUNTER: A tri-car? That must be a motorcycle with a passenger accommodation.

[00:19:28.11]

MEDORA CLARK: Oh, yes, Mrs. Hunter. A tri-car was the lowest form of automobile life. It was, as you suggest, a combination of motorcycle and passenger car: two wheels in front with a wide passenger seat between, and one wheel in the rear with a saddle and handlebars for the driver. Tri-cars had just become popular in Paris for light deliveries, replacing the two-wheeled man-drawn car. Alson set forth the next morning to investigate the address in Passy.

[00:20:08.40]

In the late afternoon, I heard a series of explosions and, looking down into the courtyard to ascertain their source, was amazed to see a tri-car come to a halt, a man on the saddle seat in the rear swing out his leg and alight, and Alson dismount from the passenger seat in front. I hurried down the four flights and broke through the crowd to inquire tremulously about ownership. "It's ours," Alson explained, introducing me to the ex-owner, who had been in the saddle.

[00:20:47.86]

It was exciting suddenly to possess automation and to know that French roads were now ours. But at the moment, the vehicle looked frail and limited. Alson, ecstatic, showed me the deep box in which the former owner had delivered siphon bottles, explaining how it would hold notebooks, paint boxes, panels, a folding easel, and our clothing, and I was appeased. The next day, Alson dissected the tri-car completely, laying all its parts out on the cobbles of

the courtyard. Then, with the fat concierges proudly keeping watch, he reassembled it, a satisfied master.

[00:21:38.81]

We settled to the task of planning for our comfort and our summer. Alson wore a waterproof leather suit, such as cab drivers wore, and a chauffeur's cap with a visor. There was no windshield on the tri-car, so we both bought goggles. There was no top, and we had to face the possibility of foul weather. So we ordered a big oil trough apron, which covered the whole front and portions of me. France is thoroughly wooded, and later on, we learned that the best way to keep dry was to stop under a big tree.

[00:22:23.38]

Alson made some solo trial trips, for there was no bumper—just a little slab where my feet reposed. So he thought it wise to get the feel of the machine without a passenger. Then he went over to the Place de la Concorde, took his test, and became a licensed driver. French officials, still feeling that horses had the right-of-way, were lax about it all, and the examination was sealed by all parties retiring to a nearby cafe indulging in a "petit verre."

[00:23:05.76]

Alson motored out to Versailles several times and did a big canvas at the Salon d'oeil de Boeuf, a picture now in the collection of Mrs. John McCone of San Marino, and to Fontainebleau where he painted some of the intimate little rooms. He suddenly became intensely interested in the elaborate French interiors. Snow and Quebec melted into a remote past, and he decided to tour the chateau country.

[00:23:41.74]

With the independence that the tri-car gave us, we were able to go easily to the well-known places such as Chenonceau, Blois, Chinon, Azay-le-Rideau, and Amboise. We were also able to seek out for ourselves and enjoy places even the architectural student knew little about—the formidable Josselin, with the duke still in residence, Trecesson, with its moat still intact, Plessis, reduced to a farm with the peasants living in the big stone kitchen, the 11th century tower of Elven, and the bleak ruined fortress of Sucinio.

[00:24:30.11]

The vicissitudes of the summer in the tri-car were limitless. In retrospect, the most humiliating experiences were our entrances into the towns. We would have enjoyed swinging up to a hotel with a flourish. But all French towns seem to be located on hills, and grades were the tri-car's poorest performance. We were both forced mostly to dismount and push and limp ignominiously, exhausted up to the door of the inn. But the tri-car brought us safely back to Paris in the late fall.

[00:25:16.95]

During these years, Alson had been sending canvases back to the various exhibitions in museums in America, across to London, down to Rome and the other cities of Europe, and to the galleries in Paris. Macbeth, one of the outstanding dealers in New York, had asked for his work. And he'd begun to show on request at other dealers across the country.

[00:25:43.59]

MARGARET HUNTER: You must've been getting eager to return home to see some of the exhibitions, and to talk to the museum people and dealers.

[00:25:52.10]

MEDORA CLARK: We were, Mrs. Hunter. So in that fall of 1907, Alson decided to take his chateau pictures as a group back to America. We put a "for sale" advertisement for the tri-car in *Le Matin* in the same column in which we had found it in the spring. We sold it for the exact amount we had paid for it, which, knowing the French shrewdness in bargaining pleased us as much as the trip.

[00:26:28.01]

Alson showed the chateau pictures at the Moulton & Ricketts gallery in Chicago in February 1908. They were an immediate success, and museums began asking for the show intact. In March, they were shown at Toledo Museum of Art, 1908, then in the following November at the Worcester Museum of Art, in December at the Cincinnati Art Museum, in January 1909 at the Detroit Museum of Art, in March at the Albright Gallery in Buffalo, and in April at the St. Louis Museum of Fine Arts. Many of the pictures have been sold, but lending permission was obtained from the owners, and the group was kept intact.

[00:27:28.61]

We ran into a painter friend of ours that spring of 1909 in America who'd been to Spain the year before. He was contemplating returning there, and he suggested that we join him, have a look at the Prado, spend Holy Week in Seville, and proceed on up to Paris. We were delighted with the idea, and the three of us sailed for Spain, disembarking at Algeciras. There, we went over to Malaga, because it was still cold farther north.

It was marvelous country, everything Alson and love to paint. And he worked feverishly, producing beautiful canvases. Our friend had heard the year before of a town, Casarabonela, up in the mountains, completely unexplored. The possibility of a trip there with companions was, I think, what had lured him back to Spain. We found that it was so far up in the mountains that there was not only no railroad to it, but no roads—simply a mule trail, and that it was so remote it was the last Moorish town to cede in the conquest.

[00:28:51.97]

While Alson was vigorously at work, our friend set about methodically arranging for an expedition to Casarabonela. The process was slow. But at last, details were completed, and we boarded the train at Malaga and disembarked at the tiny station of Velez-Malaga. There, three muleteers with three mules and three pack mules were awaiting us. They surveyed our luggage, kept to a minimum, then slowly began loading the mules, lashing and binding and leveling until they were satisfied. We set off over the trail on the long climb.

The valleys were full of wild oleanders in bloom. They undulated for miles in the distance. We would come to streams often. And our muleteers would clamber up behind us, clinging to the animal's flanks as we forded. In the late afternoon, we entered the town, single file, and the people came timidly out to watch us. The buildings were centered around an oblong placeta. There were no signs—no necessity for them, we realized, and the villagers knew each shop, and there were no new ones. There were no wheels, and as the villagers wore soft rope-soled alpargatas, there were almost no sounds. Save for the occasional clip of the mules' hooves on the cobblestone or the trickle of water in the ditches, it was a silent town.

[00:30:51.13]

MARGARET HUNTER: Could you find a decent place to stay in such a remote village?

[00:30:56.74]

MEDORA CLARK: Well, there was no inn. But the village baker had two rooms over his shop, and we were lodged there. He dined out in his patio, mostly on mint soup and goat meat, and watched the rivulets dropping down into the little canals to water the trees, for the irrigation methods of the Moors still survived. No American had ever penetrated Casarabonela, so we never moved without an interested, curious, but polite cortege.

[00:31:38.77]

The painters, of course, were top billing, with semicircles of absorbed onlookers. But my clothing was a drawing card, even being fingered to settle arguments. And my fountain pen flying across pages was a source of vociferous delight. We could have lingered in Casarabonela forever, but we had come to Spain to spend Holy Week in Seville. The date was pending, so we rode away from the mountains down to the railroad and boarded a train.

[00:32:21.09]

In Seville, we found lodgings in a place called La Casa de los Abbades, which to our surprise, was exactly that—a house run by monks. It was a fortuitous choice, for the monks were

friendly, tolerant, and interested, with a disarming informality along with their hospitality. One of them, Don Bernardo, we learned to our surprise, was the chief organist at the Seville Cathedral. And he would often knock on our door on his way over to the church to practice and ask if we would like to accompany him. We would sit up near him, listen to his wonderful music, lifted to strange heights by it, and by the privilege of hearing it.

[00:33:17.52]

Holy Week with its processions was a remarkable spectacle. The roof life of Seville was delightful, the Feria unbelievably picturesque. So we lingered on, Alson painting continuously. But finally, as the season progressed, the heat in the narrow streets began to be oppressive. So we decided to move on to Madrid and the Prado, our primary reason for coming to Spain.

[00:33:54.39]

Oddly enough, we had planned to bypass Granada. We figured that Washington Irving had exploited the place a good while ago, though we still loved his tales, and that in the interim, it would have become hopelessly tourist. At the last minute, we suddenly changed our plans and decided to have a peek at the place, if only to stave off later questions about evading it. We were astonished and pleased as we descended from the train to find that we were the only passengers, except Spaniards, alighting.

[00:34:38.32]

Granada is in high mountainous country, and it was cool and green and welcome after the heat of Seville. The square was surrounded by cafes with open-air tables in deep shade. The place was unspoiled, and so welcoming that we settled at a table and succumbed at once. After a cooling drink, we separated to look for quarters, agreeing on an hour to reconvene with progress reports.

[00:35:10.11]

Our friend always looked for lodging with the thoroughness and avidity of a research scholar. And this time, he came up with a prize. He had found a caretaker's cottage in the midst of the gardens of the Generalife, the summer quarters of the Moorish rulers. It sat in among orange trees. It was two stories, the caretaker living below, and two bedrooms, a balcony with an outside stairway, our quarters above. Around it were box-bordered flowerbeds, gravel-filled paths, and innumerable trickling fountains. We'd never been a part of such a background. We ran back and forth along our newly acquired balcony, and shouted ourselves hoarse, with admonitions to each other to look at this or that.

[00:36:09.15]

MARGARET HUNTER: Mr. Clark painted a great deal there, didn't he?

[00:36:12.96]

MEDORA CLARK: Yes, Granada proved perhaps the best painting ground of all, the Alhambra unspoiled, as yet practically unrestored, and with colorfully dressed Gypsies still living in many parts of it had unlimited motifs. The place was a continuous surprise, and a reproof to our preconceived ideas. The pleasing climate aided, and life in our cottage was remote and idyllic. We forgot everything, and stayed on.

[00:36:49.93]

We came-to dramatically when our landlord, lease in hand, appeared asking future plans. It was difficult to believe that we, who had condescendingly alighted in Granada for a day or two, had been there a month. We made a quick survey of time, and decided if our primary reason for coming to Spain—namely to see the Prado, was to be carried out, we must move. So with infinite regret, we handed the lease back to the landlord, packed up our things, and boarded a train for Madrid.

[00:37:32.49]

In Madrid, our friend, with his usual patience and persistence, tracked down a little Spanish hotel on La Puerta del Sol, the big square which is the heart of the city. We unpacked our

belongings, bathed in the hotel baths which could be reached only by traversing the hotel dining room with towels over our shoulders, and retired, so as to be fully refreshed for the onslaught on the Prado the next morning. We had learned that the Prado opened at eight in the morning, closed from one to three o'clock, opened again at three, and closed at six.

[00:38:16.50]

We were at the Prado at eight next morning. Following our custom in galleries, we separated and went our individual ways. We met at the first closing time, one o'clock, and emerged groggy, almost speechless at what we had seen. We staggered across to one of the empty cafes, lunched and sipped, and feebly tried to put into words just some of the emotions about a collection which had swept us completely off our feet.

[00:38:54.28]

We returned again breathlessly to the Prado at three and emerged at six. We went again to one of the now lively cafes, talked until our dining room opened at nine, dined, went to our room, and settled to a resumé of our first day at the Prado. We sat up until dawn, talking it over, too stimulated to find the power or desire to relax. We were at the Prado at eight the next morning again, repeating our schedule. We did this daily. We really never could get enough of the Prado.

[00:39:41.98]

Madrid is a broad, open, and compared with the rest of Spain, a modern city. So happily, it held little painting allure for Alson. He did, however, during the first set of the Prado's closing hours in the early afternoon, paint a big Canvas of the Puerta del Sol. He painted some small panels of the bullfights, which, of course, were the colorful events of the week, and to which we went every Sunday. But the most successful material from the Madrid sojourn, I think, are Alson's sketchbooks. We were always sitting around in cafes waiting for something to open. Alson was always busy with his pencil or his small watercolor kit, drawing interesting and absorbing Spanish types.

[00:40:36.93]

MARGARET HUNTER: Did your husband ever copy in the Prado galleries?

[00:40:42.55]

MEDORA CLARK: Alson admired so many of the Prado canvases that any special choice was difficult to make. But he finally obtained permission to work in the gallery, and to my amazement, remembering the Velasquez winter in Paris, copied the portrait of Marie de' Medici by Rubens. We made a quick sortie from Madrid up to Toledo to see the El Greco paintings in the Duke of Alba's house.

[00:41:14.58]

In Toledo, as in all of Spain, there was a long midday siesta interval with everything closed. So Alson used that period to roam about the town, and painted several small panels, facades of houses with a complete absence of figures, for we were actually the only people at large at that hour. Toledo was barren and bleak. And the winds, which stirred up the dust in its streets, had a touch of autumn in them.

[00:41:50.03]

We returned to Madrid, and realizing that fall was imminent, we decided to move on north. We packed up and left for Segovia, principally because we had with us a letter of introduction—now somewhat battered and worn, as we had carried it since February, to the distinguished Spanish painter Zuloaga. Segovia was distinctive and paintable, and Alson did some very beautiful little panels. But now that we were headed towards home, we were restless and impatient. So we presented our letter, had a delightful afternoon in Zuloaga's studio, and took the night express for Paris.

[00:42:38.97]

Alson had two objectives in Paris: first, of course, to get the Spanish canvases lined up, sorted, and mulled over, preparatory to an exhibition, and secondly to track down a

lithographic press. Alson had always been interested in the process of lithography. And in America that year, in January 1909, he had gone at the invitation of William Fox, the director, to Indianapolis for the opening of his chateau pictures at the John Herron Art Institute.

[00:43:20.95]

He had a dual purpose in the trip, for there was a well-known school of lithography also in Indianapolis, and he wanted to visit it as well. At William Fox's instigation and with his aid, Alson enrolled in the school as a student, and to his amazement completed a six-month course in two weeks, receiving, to his great amusement, a diploma. Having learned the fundamentals and the intricacies of the process, he was now eager to put some of his own ideas into execution.

[00:44:04.77]

In Paris, he shopped for presses, found one, purchased it, and had it set up in his big, rickety studio in the Boulevard Saint-Jacques. A lithographic press is a cumbersome affair and a great space stealer. But Alson's studio was so big that it seemed modestly inconspicuous. There was little time for him to enjoy it, as we were saving some for America. But it was there for him to return to, and it opened for him a whole new world.

[00:44:44.95]

We went back to America in December. We were always crossing back and forth in the winter months to take advantage of the cheaper rates. The trips were rugged and frigid, and ocean liners, still after all these years, mean to me ice-covered bows. That crossing was particularly rough. We'd planned to arrive in Chicago for Christmas, but fierce gales and headwinds brought us into New York three days late. We spent the holiday there in a dreary little unadorned hotel, almost the only guest. The Spanish pictures, as they came in one by one in Spain, had seemed beautiful. In his Paris studio, they had corroborated first impressions. And in Chicago, mounted and framed and ready for showing, they seemed to reach a new height.

[00:45:49.71]

MARGARET HUNTER: Very few Americans had visited Spain before you went there.

[00:45:54.42]

MEDORA CLARK: Yes, Mrs. Hunter. A friend in the embassy at Madrid had told us that only 55 [Americans] had registered during the entire summer. So, there was speculation as to how the public would react to an unknown country. Intelligent buyers, we assured ourselves, didn't purchase souvenirs, but works of art. Nevertheless, although Alson professed confidence, he was nervous. His show opened at the O'Brien Gallery on Michigan Avenue in Chicago on March 2, 1910, with 38 canvases. It was an instantaneous success. Critics praised it unsparingly and called it a great advance, were grateful for a new country, and romantically reveled in Spanish legend.

[00:46:55.90]

House Beautiful reproduced "A Sevillian Doorway" on its cover. And at the end of the month, it was, to quote a dealer's phrase, "a sellout." Museums wanted it, but there was little left to ship about the country. And the end of April found Alson with his painting cases practically empty. The lithograph press beckoned back in Paris. So we sailed once again for France. We spent a part of that summer with painter friends in a house in the little village of Urville on the coast of Normandy.

[00:47:39.18]

After the brilliance of Spain, the Norman landscape seen subdued, although subtle, and faintly reminiscent of Shinnecock days. It had an appeal in its vast sweeps of beach, sea, and sky, the kelp-gatherers, carts, and horses, giving scale to its magnitude. It had great freedom in space, a poignant contrast to the narrow calles of Spain. And the gray stone Norman houses, detached and aloof, were a challenge. Alson liked them, and keying his palette to this new scheme, he finally began painting them with understanding.

[00:48:30.28]

The port city of Cherbourg was a few miles down the coast. And sometimes, we hired a two-wheeled cart and driver, and slowly ambled over the hills to it, not because it held any attractions, but because the drive was through beautiful country, and Alson saw many motifs this way. He painted the fields, lush with willowing grain, and the hilltops against the water, and the pale pink sun setting into the sea, and the lone, watchful, gray stone houses.

[00:49:11.00]

We went to the village of Greville in Millet's country, and Alson painted the weathered church Millet had so often used in his works. We roamed about the Millet graveyard and met the few villagers, and listened to tales of Millet's simplicity and kindness. When the canvases were set up in review back in the studio in Paris in that fall of 1910, they revealed a complete change of mood. They were not as exciting as the Spanish canvases had been, but they were a harmonious group. Alson had already arranged to have another show at the O'Brien Gallery, so he decided to take them back to Chicago.

[00:50:04.43]

Once again, we sailed with winter gales and winter rates. Chicago is a gray city in the winter months, and the Spanish pictures the year before had given it gaiety and warmth. William O'Brien had been waiting with eagerness for Alson's new show. When the Normandy pictures were set up in his gallery for a preview, his instant disappointment was evident. Obviously for him, it was a frightful let-down.

[00:50:41.01]

He was polite, but very restrained. He didn't cancel the show, for he was tied to the dates and he was personally fond of Alson. But he quickly reverted to silence. In the silence, we set about trying pictures here and there, and hopefully rearranging. But the undercurrent of gloom held, and even Alson was downcast. Looking about, he realized pictures must be appreciated individually and separately, and could not as a group be taken immediately to heart, like the Spanish pictures. But he failed to become articulate. We all became evasive, and the oppressive silence continued. Nevertheless, he hung the sixteen canvases, eventually to his satisfaction. Invitations were mailed, and the exhibition opened on February 10, 1911. One of the canvases, "The Shell House," had already been purchased by Mr. Daniel Burnham, the Chicago architect.

[00:51:58.33]

MARGARET HUNTER: What sort of a picture was "The Shell House?"

[00:52:02.74]

MEDORA CLARK: "The Shell House" itself was unique, Mrs. Hunter, although a description of it will sound unconvincing, for into the outer walls, millions of shells had been inserted flatly into the plaster. But the shells had been selected with infinite care, and arranged in such a way as to be completely harmonious. And the fact that Daniel Burnham wanted the canvas proved that although the house's construction followed no tradition, it was not a freak, but a work of art.

[00:52:40.79]

Alson painted it with great feeling in subtle grays, and the reproduction of it was used on the cover of the catalog. With the poor methods at that time, the reproduction came out an obscure black mass, all its beauty lost. There had been no time for corrections, so it had gone forth gloomily into the mails, and the critics too felt the change in mood. They did not condemn, for there were no grounds for condemnation. But they praised guardedly, and only a few asked for the privileges of reproduction.

[00:53:25.32]

One or two broke through and lauded, and even claimed a great advance in Alson's work. But it was far from the fortissimo of applause of the preceding year. The public came back often to bask in the show's tranquility, and those with full appreciation enjoy Alson's

technique and harmony color. But it was a failure financially. Painters are used to fallow periods. And Alson, still believing in his work, was undisturbed. But William O'Brien was crestfallen.

[00:54:14.24]

Alson had some distant cousins whom he had never seen who owned a plantation in Mound, Louisiana. So to shake off the aftermath of gloom from the Normandy show, he decided it would be interesting to go and visit there. The trip seemed complicated for two, so he set off alone. The plantation with its isolation and hospitality was an interesting and restoring experience, but it had few possibilities, so he moved on down to New Orleans. New Orleans, of course, had great charm for him. And he did some panels, which the Macbeth gallery in New York City showed later. An excellent reproduction of one of them was published in *The Bookman*, along with a comprehensive and understanding article.

[00:55:09.50]

MARGARET HUNTER: Could you tell which issue of *The Bookman* carried the New Orleans picture and the article about it?

[00:55:17.10]

MEDORA CLARK: No, Mrs. Hunter. I'm sorry, I can't. Alson felt that New Orleans lent itself particularly to black and white, and he made several drawings which he later used as lithograph. We spent the early part of the summer on the St. Lawrence. But motifs, were sparse, and Alson was eager to get back to his lithographs. So we sailed for France. Alson felt that nothing helped an artist more in his work than occasionally drawing or painting from the nude. So he would often join a life class for a reviewer course. And that winter, he became interested in putting nudes on his lithographic stones, and produced some very lovely prints.

[00:56:06.65]

That year, he met Francois Simon, the Czech color etcher, who lived near us in a little house with a garden. They became great friends. Francois was the foremost color etcher in Europe at that time, but he was modest and generous, and in admiring Alson's talent, showed him the process of color etching. Alson in turn revealed the intricacies of lithography to him, and they were together in one studio or the other a great part of the winter. Alson became so interested in color etching that he bought a press and set it up in his studio.

[00:56:50.87]

Later, during the war, the press, which unfortunately stood under a skylight, was destroyed by shrapnel. Alson made a few very beautiful color etchings, but never reverted to it again. I still own two color etching prints of his. The state library at Sacramento has a very fine proof which they purchased. Others are in private collections.

[00:57:20.80]

Simon was going back to Prague for a visit in February 1912, and he invited Alson to accompany him. Alson was fascinated by Prague. Once again, it was snow country, but with very old and distinctive buildings, wonderful bridges, opalescent frozen rivers beneath them. He did several panels of the houses and markets and old squares, and made drawings for some large lithographs.

[00:57:55.90]

With Simon as his host, life in the Prague cafes was stimulating, and he met the foremost artists in various fields. The city was appreciative, and continuously and sincerely courteous. And the mayor, learning of Alson's fondness for doorways and gates, ordered a photograph volume of Prague's finest made up, and graciously presented it to him. In the early spring, Alson decided to go to Dalmatia.

[00:58:33.05]

MARGARET HUNTER: How did that exciting idea come to him?

[00:58:36.47]

MEDORA CLARK: I am uncertain how he happened to select Dalmatia. None of his friends had been there, so it had never been quoted, and most of our circle were astonished when he announced his choice. We bought a guidebook and set off in early March 1912. Alson never liked having a route planned for him, nor reservations made. But as this was unknown land, he broke down and did some enquiring. And we finally took a train to Fiume.

[00:59:13.52]

We kept our personal luggage to the minimum, not even deigning to take along great coats, though Alson did toss a raincoat over his arm, for we had pinned our faith to the guidebook's statement that spring in Dalmatia was balmy and mild, a beautiful climate in the strip of sea coves along the Adriatic. We were to take a ship to it from Fiume. On our arrival in Fiume, we found there were no ships sailing for a few days, which gave us a chance to book a cabin and to see the city.

[00:59:55.08]

Our first morning in the lobby of our little hotel, a young man approached us politely and a little timidly, and asked in Hungarian English if we were Americans. When we admitted that we were, he was so delighted at his perspicacity in placing us, that he promptly offered us his services as guide. We supposed this is a professional proposition and started to refuse. But it developed he was lonely. He was on a vacation, which was empty. And he was eager to practice the English he had learned in school in his native Budapest. To have a guide gratis was a break for us, and we accepted. He was tireless, knew the city well, so we saw Fiume with an incredible thoroughness.

[01:00:55.20]

We were on a very limited budget after the Normandy exhibition and we had not planned on a third mouth to feed. But it seemed only courteous to invite him to be our guest at meals. We had a secret fear that he might have mistaken us for the conventional wealthy American. But we misjudged him, for he accepted our invitations only occasionally, paying his way most of the time, and insisting on reciprocating with aperitifs at the cafés. We realized he actually was lonely, for in the few days of stalking the city, he never met an acquaintance. And he was actually sad when we embarked for Dalmatia, heartily urging us to come and visit him in Budapest, promising us both excellent cigars should we do so.

[01:02:02.36]

Our ship was small, and as we gazed out at the tossing waters, it looked inadequate for the voyage ahead. As we were shown to our cabin, we caught glimpses of Dalmatian peasants in full and very colorful costumes, and Alson's was alert at once. Our cabin, to our amazement, proved to be the only cabin on the ship. It was deep down in the slight hull with no outside ventilation. We both liked fresh air, and we grinned at each other a little forlornly as we crawled into our bunks for the night's trip. The water was rough, and the little ship, unable to plunge through, mounted and dipped. And we wondered if the other passengers, scattered in the salon or strewn in the passageways, weren't better off than we, hermetically sealed in our stateroom.

[01:03:12.93]

MR. PATTEN: Sorry, Mrs. Clark. But we have reached the end of the tape. And we'll have to continue on the next day.

[01:03:18.76]

MEDORA CLARK: Thank you, Mr. Patten.

[END OF TRACK AAA_clark56_56_m]

[00:00:09.60]

MARGARET HUNTER: Go. Ready.

[00:00:13.53]

MEDORA CLARK: From evening to morning was a long time. But at last, in the distance, we saw the Port of Zara. We had booked our passage to Sebenico, further down the coast, so we left our belongings in our cabin and disembarked to spend the day strolling about Zara. It was a propitious arrival, for it was Sunday. And the Zara inhabitants, in their colorful vests, were everywhere, en route to masses and churches. Alson was enchanted. He had no forewarning that the costumes would still be traditional, and we were dizzy in our effort to follow and appreciate them. The fresh air was delicious after the night in our stuffy cabin, though cooler than the guidebook had led us to anticipate. Finally, when our teeth began to chatter, either from the sudden lower temperature or the wild excitement of the place, we went into a cafe for shelter.

[00:01:28.78]

MARGARET HUNTER: Could you make yourselves understood in that remote country?

[00:01:33.01]

MEDORA CLARK: Dalmatia, Mrs. Hunter, was a three-language country. It was under Austrian domain. So the official language was German; the street language, Italian, a hangover from a former dependency; and the peasant tongue, Croatian. We were always uncertain which to select. In the cafe, we tried out our German and our scanty Italian without result. The place was obviously a native spot, so Alson drew out our little Croatian dictionary, and we slowly made headway.

[00:02:20.17]

Dalmatia was famous for its maraschino cherries and for a liqueur distilled from them. The waiter, we thought, corroborated this. So we ordered two liqueurs, hoping it would warm us. It was a fiery drink, which left a burning path. And we made our way back to our ship in the respite of its temporary glow. Most of Dalmatia is on the quays. And our hotel in Sebenico was only a stone's throw from the little ship.

We were grateful, for the balmy air had succumbed to a wind that was glacial. And we scurried across the quay to the inn and warmth. The room we were given was heated by one of those square enamel stoves, which have the proportions of a small cabin and create a most delightful temperature. The dining room had two stoves of the same type. And although you saw no glow, you felt it, and were warm.

[00:03:38.95]

The soups of Dalmatia are famous, but we were ignorant of the fact that night, though they did instantly assume an importance. The waiter didn't bring us just bowls of it. He brought a tureen, placed it on our table, served us, and left. We replenished our servings from time to time, leisurely enjoying them, lingering over them as one does elsewhere over cocktails or aperitifs. And nothing could have been more welcome, for it soothed the path our drink in Zara had made.

[00:04:23.11]

Our room was warm when we returned to it. And we crept into the linen sheets and the steady bed with relief. The morning dawned gray and very cold. We smiled wanly, realizing we were unequipped for such weather. Alson pulled a bell cord. A valet arrived, stoked our stove, turned up dampers, talking glibly in Croatian, and came over to our bed. By his inflection, we knew he had posed a question. So we nodded. And he returned with breakfast, and after a reasonable time, came and gathered up our trays. We looked at each other and laughed. We were still tired, though relaxed, but completely bewildered by our scanty wardrobes.

[00:05:26.60]

Alson reached out for the guidebook. And leafing through it, he unearthed for the first time a statement in fine print that sometimes, in spring in Dalmatia, you might encounter the Bora, a fiercely chilling wind from the north-northeast. He got up and peered out at the gray sea. He came back with a sketchbook and began remembering some of the types he had seen in Zara. He kept postponing rising, and finally, it was lunchtime. He reached for the bell cord again. The waiter brought us lunch, and we ate it in bed.

We repeated the process for dinner. I had never seen Alson spend a day in bed without illness. Now, such an act in a new and interesting place was a record. It was brighter the next day, and Alson did a panel from the window of a slightly bluer sea with some tile roofs in the foreground. But it was still so cold that we remained indoors.

[00:06:48.90]

The third day, it was milder. The sea was an intense blue. The Bora had slackened, and the temperature had begun to rise. But it was still too cold to work in the streets, so we decided to move on. We took a boat down to Spalato. Even in the distance, Spalato was beautiful. In the foreground, there was a deep harbor, filled with boats of all types, with gaily painted hulls, and myriads of masts, and in the background, wonderful, very old buildings, lined along the quays like a stage set.

[00:07:40.79]

Down on one of the quays, we found a room in a hotel. The place had been converted from an old palace, and it had a long, high stone colonnade, with a loggia as its dining room. What happened when the Bora breezed in, we never learned, for we had at last escaped it and never met up with it again. Besides the hundred motifs along the quays, Spalato was full of winding streets, for it is a very old city, and there were peasants in costume everywhere. And there was continuous life and movement.

[00:08:26.42]

MARGARET HUNTER: He must have found much that was paintable there.

[00:08:31.79]

MEDORA CLARK: Alson was delighted with it all, and set to work with vigor. He eased into this new interpretation with panels, then set up an easel, and began painting big canvases on the spot. The people, as usual, were curious. But Spalato was a patrolled city, and important little white-gloved policemen whipped the crowds into two orderly rows, stoutly maintaining discipline, and gallantly escorting Alson back to the hotel when he had finished.

[00:09:16.56]

As Spalato was a center, there were big markets almost every day, peasants bringing their produce and wares in on burros from all the surrounding districts. Alson had once again acquired a free guide, a young Croat whose brother, he confided proudly, drove a streetcar in America, and thus made him kin to us. He would be waiting outside the hotel when we emerged in the morning, join us, and tour the markets with us, obtaining answers to all our questions, and translating in Croatian-Brooklynese. We were deeply interested in all the different costumes, and he explained that each one designated the town from which the wearer came. We found that the costume which charmed us most always, on inquiry, came from Sinj. So we decided to see Sinj.

[00:10:30.90]

MARGARET HUNTER: How did you ever get around in Dalmatia?

[00:10:36.11]

MEDORA CLARK: Travel in Dalmatia was always by boat, by burro back, or on foot. But there was one railroad, we learned, running from Spalato, 40 miles up into the mountains, to Sinj. That is S-I-N-J, Mrs. Hunter, on the Bosnian border. Our guide looked up the hour, led us to the station, gave us a friendly farewell, and we boarded the train for Sinj.

[00:11:11.88]

The train had several third-class cars, so minuscule they looked like toys, and one first-class carriage. The third-class cars were already completely filled with peasants, sitting about on their big torba bags or on the floors. And the air was very blue from the smoke from the men's little white pipes. We boarded a first-class coach, as there was ample room, our only fellow passenger an Austrian Army officer.

[00:11:50.45]

By the time we reached Sinj, it was already dark, and there was a steady, thick downpour of rain. Our fellow passenger turned and asked us if we knew the town or had accommodations. And when we denied both, he volunteered to lead us to an in. We stalked along single-file in the darkness, the white gloves of the officer the only visible break in total obscurity. He walked at a terrifyingly brisk pace, but once in a while, he would pause and let me catch up with him. Sometimes he would call out messages, difficult to understand, but a clue to his whereabouts. Finally, we came to the single narrow doorway of the inn. He explained our needs to the proprietor. We thanked him, and he left.

[00:12:58.61]

A peasant boy led us up to our room, an enormous rectangular affair with a huge bed in each of its four corners. Two of the beds were already occupied. The peasant waved us to a third, handed us our candle, and left. We were uncertain how to proceed when suddenly, the boy appeared again with a single guest in tow, waved him to the fourth bed, and withdrew. The new guest unconsciously revealed the customary procedure. He removed his hat, his shoes, his coat, his trousers, slipped into bed, and blew out his candle. Alson advanced on the same basis. But I blew out my candle before sloughing my wet clothes.

[00:13:58.38]

MARGARET HUNTER: Oh, that is really a lovely picture.

[00:14:02.58]

MEDORA CLARK: It was raining again the next morning, but we were up very early, for it was the big monthly market day in Sinj, the sight for which we had come. We hurried out to the town gates, where the peasants were forced to halt and pay toll before entering the town. So it was a magnificent vantage point. We spent the day absorbing the costumes, and the people, and the various episodes with the livestock they were endeavoring to lead or guide. The mud was deep, and we slithered in it against peasants, and oxen, and goats, and burros, and pigs. Finally, in the late afternoon, we wallowed down to the station and boarded a train for Spalato, replete with the wonders of Sinj.

[00:15:02.58]

There were seven castle towns in the immediate vicinity of Spalato. In some of the castles, groups of peasants lived. The rest of the castles were in two advanced states of ruin for even their habitation. We knew that the town at the bases would be rewarding, and we found we could make a semicircular trip to them, ending at the ancient seaport of Trau. So one morning, very early, we set off on foot, knapsacks on our backs, and our slight paperbound Croatian dictionary in hand. Dalmatia was an informal country. There were no thieves, hence no locks nor jails. And you were welcomed anywhere. The peasants were up all along the route, and they gave us friendly nods and greetings.

[00:16:07.78]

Most of the houses had grapevines growing on them, with grape arbors in front, forming protection for the tables. And peasants were sitting about, eating under them, the play of sunlight and shadow on the brilliant costumes a continuous delight. We were very hungry by noon, and we came into another little town. So Alson opened the door of a house and called inquiringly, "kruh," the Croatian word for bread, which we had memorized. A peasant woman answered our call, smilingly nodded, and disappeared. She returned bearing a tray laden with wine, bread, and cheese, and placed it on a table in her arbor. When we were rested and replete, we pressed on. It was a wonderful trek. Our eyes ached, and our necks were sore from watching and turning.

[00:17:16.06]

We were spent when we reached Trau, with little energy left to explore a fascinating, very ancient seaport city. After a refreshing drink, we pulled ourselves together and wandered about, and finally embarked on the little boat which brought us back, completely saturated with history and beauty, to Spalato. Alson had worked continuously in Spalato, enjoying the markets, and the boats, and the endless varieties of the old Diocletian Palace, which, only partly in ruins, had vistas of gateways and doorways with the sea and sky beyond. The motifs were unlimited, and he had never tired of it. But it was beginning to be warm. We

were on the brink of summer. And Alson began agitating departure.

[00:18:21.52]

MARGARET HUNTER: And where did you go next?

[00:18:26.05]

MEDORA CLARK: Alson decided before leaving, we must visit some of the islands. And we took out our worn map of the coast. We fixed on Lošinj and boarded one of the little local steamers the next day. The coast boats always had freight for various ports, and the consignees were always waiting at the piers to receive their wares.

[00:18:55.60]

We touched first at Lissa. The unloading was languid and leisurely and gave us ample time to tour the town. Then we moved on to our selected destination, Lošinj, arriving just before sunset, the steep streets leading up the hills, spectacular in the slanting light. Our hotel was at the top of one of the hills, and there were two unbroken lines of women in costume mounting to it or descending from it. Those mounting carried huge buckets of water on their heads; those descending, empty buckets in their hands.

We were entranced by the dignity and beauty of the pageant, but puzzled by its purpose, until the captain of our steamer explained that all the hotel's fresh water was transported thus from the only well at the hill's base. From our American standpoint, it was appalling to reflect on energy put to such a purpose. And although the place was paintable and the women superb types, we couldn't shake off a desperate pity for them. And after the next day of wandering, we decided to leave.

[00:20:37.74]

We learned that one of the Austrian Lloyd liners would drop anchor in the harbor that night to pick up passengers, so we decided to be among them. It would, we thought, be pleasant once again to be on a big, comfortable ship, shorn by weight from pitching. The night was very black, and the primitive little tender in which we were the only passengers felt its way cautiously until picked up by the liner's searchlight. The ship looked vast and steady, and we were delighted. But as we approached, we were distressed to see that there was no rope ladder. Instead, low in the ship, a bullet was opened, and a sailor stood at either side, our little tender very far below. We realized simultaneously that we were to leap when a wave lifted us, and we grinned feebly.

[00:21:43.51]

Our peasant pilot tried to bring the tender alongside. But after repeated attempts, he abandoned the plan, changed his course, swung out, and headed for the ship bow on. He spoke to us, making a definite gesture, and Alson climbed out and stood poised on the bough. The tender dipped and came up far from the goal twice. But at the third rise, there were shouts, which he interpreted as a command to jump. And Alson leapt from the tender on to the ship and into the strong arms of the two sailors. He turned and waved, and the pilot nodded to me.

I climbed out and stood up on the bow. And then, completely frozen like a figurehead, I let two commands to leap go by, unable to achieve the slightest movement. The sailors grinned. And then, ashamed, I responded to the third call, and Alson and I were both aboard the Lloyd liner. We had our little sacks of personal belongings strapped on us. But Alson's precious paintbox was still aboard the tender. The peasant pilot picked it up, waited for a mammoth wave to lift his little boat, and then, with a mighty gesture, hurled it across the water into the arms of a sailor. No discus thrower of early times ever achieved a greater feat.

[00:23:39.34]

We packed up in Spalato the next day, took a boat this time across to Venice, and after a few days, a train to Paris. We spent much of the summer of 1912 in Paris. Alson wanted to plan for the Dalmatian canvases, and also, he was eager to go on with his lithography. He wanted to try out color lithography, which involves many plates. And many of the Dalmatian

motifs lent themselves to it. He had been sending to various shows in Europe, had been made a member of the Senefelder Club in London, and was receiving recognition in many ways.

[00:24:28.18]

MARGARET HUNTER: Please tell us about the Senefelder Club.

[00:24:32.20]

MEDORA CLARK: I am uncertain, Mrs. Hunter, whether the Senefelder Club exists now or not. It was founded in London and was made up of recognized artists all over the world who did their own printing, either of lithographs, or etchings, or such allied arts, produced from plates or stones. Its purpose was to maintain methods used by Senefelder, the discoverer of lithography, and membership was by invitation.

[00:25:09.58]

However, an architect friend of ours, John Holabird, later of the Chicago firm of Holabird and Root, had gone across to England, cabled us that he'd just purchased a second-hand Hupmobile, complete with maps, and to come across and join him on a three weeks' tour of the country. The thought of traveling about England with a delightful companion in a car that would make hills was irresistible. So of course, we went.

[00:25:41.02]

On such a trip, there was little time for painting. And the countryside, though calm and verdant, and beautiful, was an anticlimax after Dalmatia. Architecturally, we did England thoroughly and speedily, with a few spare days for the London galleries. Then we drove down to Calais, embarked with the car on one of the channel boats, disembarked, and drove up to Paris, and back to lithography and preparations for the show.

[00:26:20.74]

We came back to America with the Dalmatian pictures in the early winter. And in January of 1913, Alson had an exhibition of them at O'Brien's. The pictures made an unusual and colorful group. And this time, on the opening night, William O'Brien was radiant. And the critics each gave many columns to it.

Harriet Monroe in the *Chicago Tribune* wrote, "He has painted with manifest enthusiasm everything he saw. He has an appreciation of the feeling of old walls, their beautiful weather-beaten roughness, their soft subtleties of color, their more-than-human knowledge of history. It would be hard to find another painter who could express so much as he has in these canvases."

[00:27:26.03]

And Maude Oliver in the *Chicago Record-Herald* wrote, "Of all the 24 works in the exhibit, it is plain to note that the two which gave the painter the most pleasure in producing were 'Doorway,' 'Lošinj.' We can readily see that he found his greatest fun in producing 'Lošinj.'" Yes, it was rollicking fun to paint. Ethel Webster in *The Examiner*, Lena Macauley in the *Chicago Evening Post*, on and on, it was all praise. And Alson had regained with the critics the lost ground of the Normandy show.

[00:28:10.14]

There was always the gamble in staging a show of the big expense of frames. So at the first purchase in an exhibition, there is among painters the accompanying remark of relief that that will care for the frames, at least. Alson, at the end of the first day, which had included several sales, grinned, but faithfully made the familiar comment, for the viewing public had been delighted, and the purchasing public had bought.

[00:28:45.62]

MARGARET HUNTER: Do you know where any of those pictures are today, Mrs. Clark?

[00:28:51.41]

MEDORA CLARK: I know the location of several, Mrs. Hunter. And a big canvas of a market in Spalato is, I am happy to tell you, in the Hill Street Branch of the public library right here in Pasadena. Among the people who came in often that January to the exhibition was a great friend of Alson's, Henry Kitchell Webster, the writer. He had just returned from doing a series of articles in Panama, where the canal was then under construction.

[00:29:31.61]

The last day of the show, he suddenly turned to Alson and said, "Why don't you go to Panama? You could paint it so well. It's absorbing and fascinating. It's the most wonderful job in the world. And we are doing it in a really big way. Hurry. Go before it is finished." We were so stirred by his enthusiasm that we went directly from the gallery to a steamship office and booked passage on one of the United Fruit boats to Colón.

[00:30:09.51]

Preparation for the trip was hasty and simple. It consisted in purchasing extra canvases and more paints for Alson, khaki outfits for ourselves, and leaving all else behind. We embarked from New York for Panama on a cold, raw winter day in 1913. We slowly moved down to warmer waters, and finally into the pleasant summer heat of the Caribbean.

[00:30:41.88]

It was our initial entrance into the tropics. And our first stop was at Kingston on the island of Jamaica. We had on board our steamer a Britisher with his entourage, en route to the island to take up his new post as Governor of Jamaica. Although the rest of the world was clothed in the lightest of fabrics, the welcoming guard which greeted him on the ship's arrival at Kingston was buttoned stiffly into thick cloth uniforms with bright red jackets. And the governor, though he had earlier been lolling in pajamas on deck, appeared at the top of the gangway in full regimentals of equal warmth and bulk.

[00:31:33.93]

The ceremony of welcome, even in the heat of the piercing tropical sun, was in no way curtailed. So we had ample time, after the strains of "God Save the King" had died, to sneak ashore, and look about the town, and begin to absorb a new type of Native, the Jamaican Black. In the city, there was no lack of color. But costumes had dwindled, for the most part, into well-washed rags. And heads were protected by an infinite variety of wide straw hats or gay bandannas. We encompassed a fair portion of Kingston before the steamer's warning blasts made us forsake our planter's punches and hurry back to welcoming decks.

[00:32:30.19]

Disembarkation at Colón was in a totally new form for us. Dozens of little one-horse open Victorias were clustered, expectant, about the ship. And we hastened to engage one and deposit our belongings. Settled in it, we were confronted with an indefinable feeling of familiarity. The little orange-colored wool rug at our feet gave us the first clue.

[00:32:59.84]

As our gaze moved about and upward, everything was familiar except the Black driver. Suddenly, we realized that these cabs were the discarded vehicles of Paris. And we felt curiously at home, even in a new landscape. The sky was very blue, the earth was very red, the verdure very green. The palm trees rattled in the breeze as we rolled pleasantly and lazily over to the railroad station.

[00:33:35.33]

But when we paid our driver, we left tropical languor behind, for the freedom with which a pleasant United States brakeman opened the door to the straw-seated coach was pure American. So too was the clocklike accuracy with which the train pulled out and the ease and efficiency with which it bumped along the route, swinging wide its doors at the many stations.

[00:34:08.37]

MARGARET HUNTER: Was the trip across the isthmus interesting?

[00:34:12.26]

MEDORA CLARK: The rail journey across the isthmus was often over waters and often through jungle. Sometimes it was like a boat trip, sometimes like a trek, sometimes brilliant sunshine and clumps of bananas or papayas, sometimes deep shade with myriads of orchids. Construction was everywhere, Blacks in blue cotton, bosses in khaki, dirt trains, work trains, dynamite gangs, surveying crews, and at each station as we stopped, brisk Americans mounting our train or leaving it, pushing past vendors, or stopping to buy.

[00:34:58.64]

It was America at its busiest, activities so bewildering that we were dizzy when we finally alighted at Ancón. In the Ancón station, crowds were everywhere. Alson, indulging in his distaste for prearranged accommodations, had made no plans. But we at length secured a cab and drove to the Tivoli, a big, roomy, airy hotel run by our government. The lobby of the Tivoli was equally full of anxious humanity, and Alson, for the first time, was apprehensive. He left me in charge of our mound of belongings and elbowed his way to the desk in time to hear the man ahead of him being assigned to a cot in the billiard room. Obviously, the hotel was strained beyond capacity.

[00:36:03.21]

But as Alson at last lifted his pen hopefully to register, it was knocked from his hand by a vigorous slap on the back, with an accompanying cry of cheer. He turned and looked into the smiling face of Peter Goyer, a chief steward on boats of the Red Star Line, with whom we had crossed the Atlantic many times. The room clerk, on the point of announcing no vacancy, halted. And Peter moved in, assured and important, and took over.

[00:36:44.50]

There were murmured exchanges, and "Ground floor 46 with bath" emerged from the huddle. Peter, summoning a page, but escorting us himself, led us to it, heartily vociferating his joy at seeing us again. When he'd surveyed our quarters and checked all our needs in good continental form, he reiterated his delight, with the admonition to call on him at any time.

[00:37:21.58]

Alson turned to the boy arranging our luggage to ask about Peter. And the boy, with an intake of deference and admiration, informed him that Peter was the general manager of the Hotel Tivoli. Peter appeared again for an instant, remembering Alson's fondness for the dawn, to warn him that it was fleeting in the tropics—first night, then so soon day. And the surest way to see it, he advised, was to leave a call at the office. So we left a daily dawn call at the office. American efficiency never failed us. And each early morning, our telephone bell rang us into approaching day. The room Peter had given us was very big, high, and airy, facing as all the rooms did on the wide, screened veranda. The transom had shutters, not glass, so there was always a satisfying circulation of air.

[00:38:35.18]

Alson, jubilant that first morning, donned his khaki, looking at once a part of the place, got out his canvases and equipment, and set them up studio fashion. We were a little uneasy at the luxury of our quarters. But safe food and sanitary surroundings were a justified expense in the tropics, Alson argued. And Peter had given us weekly rates, which, as time stretched on, became monthly. And we were still flush from the Dalmatia show.

[00:39:15.56]

MARGARET HUNTER: How did Mr. Clark ever manage to get near enough the canal project to paint? Wasn't it pretty much wrapped up in red tape?

[00:39:25.61]

MEDORA CLARK: The triumvirate in charge of the canal construction was Colonel Gaillard, Admiral Rousseau, and Colonel Goethals, the latter in supreme command. We had known Colonel Goethals' daughter-in-law in the States, so Alson called her on the telephone. It was

odd in a foreign country to have efficient American telephone service, so her prompt reply was a little startling. But she was delighted at our arrival and set about at once to make things easy for Alson. Colonel Goethals, delighted that Alson was there to paint, was limitless in his cordiality and permissions.

[00:40:16.64]

He made all refuges, camps, and commissary hotels accessible to him—the locks, the construction houses, the signal booths, even the dredges. He saw that Alson had aid and transportation of materials. And he stretched regulation to fit Alson's needs. He sent us passes for the passenger and observation trains, and for Alson, permits to board the labor trains and the dirt trains, with the privilege of mounting anything that came along and going anywhere, the one restriction being to board only what was halted.

[00:41:01.28]

Joseph Pennell had been down to make drawings for his superb set of etchings and had perhaps paved the way, for when Alson set forth with his big canvases and equipment, he trod a magic path. The first passenger train out from Ancón left at 6:45. And it was a scramble to line up breakfast, easel, canvas, paint box, stool, and a cab to the station. Sometimes Alson stayed all day, and sometimes he came home at noon.

[00:41:39.32]

The second train left at 1:30, giving him an hour in which to bathe, lunch, reset his palate, get a fresh canvas and fresh brushes, and return to the station. Once afield, it was vigorous work, climbing aboard a work train, descending when he saw a motif, scrambling down a steep bank, or climbing up loose cliffs to a vantage point. So he went alone. I had an essential daily task at home, for with a thermometer registering 90 each day, no laundry could keep pace with Alson and his energy. So I turned to our wonderful big white enameled tub for the solution and dried my efforts in our commodious bathroom.

[00:42:36.38]

Panama City, close by Ancón, was unfortunately equally as alluring as a painting field. And Alson was torn between his desire to paint there and his zeal to work on the canal. He would often go down into the city and paint the sunlit facades with their balconies, architecture new to him, or the open doorways with the deep contrasts of shadow within, or the old cathedral in the palm-bordered plaza.

[00:43:13.98]

Sometimes, in the early evening, he would take a cab across the savannas and do a small panel of the ruins of old Panama City. Every nationality was at work on the job, among them, many Hindus, who had constructed a little village of their own. And Alson did a canvas of a group of their picturesque huts.

[00:43:42.84]

The predominant workers were the Jamaican Blacks, who had fled their island when the big tremor had devastated it, and who, terrified, ceased all labor in each of the many gentle earthquakes which continuously shook the isthmus. Among the tasks allotted them was the transportation of tins of dynamite on their heads. Alson was often painting a little aside from their paths, and spying him, they would detour and pause to examine his work. He would pursue his painting with nervous caution until they moved on, fearing any strange stroke might cause calamitous results.

[00:44:33.81]

MARGARET HUNTER: It must have been thrilling, but a bit strenuous.

[00:44:39.69]

MEDORA CLARK: Sunday, work ceased on the isthmus, and the day was given to recreation, mostly baseball games with fierce competition between rival teams. We formed the habit of attending the games, singled out our favorite team, and followed it, often across the entire isthmus. Ancón, where we were settled, was a residential area. And there, the government

had constructed pleasant, adequate houses for workers and bosses, even up to the triumvirate.

[00:45:17.92]

Many officials were gracious in asking us to their homes, professing joy at fresh ears for old stories. And Alson was delighted after the vigor of the day to dine in such [pleasing atmosphere and congenial company.

Alson startled me one morning by announcing that he had taken stock and was almost completely out of matierals. He was perturbed, for it was before the day of airplanes, and any sort of order would mean a long delay. After mulling over various possibilities, he decided that a return to France to procure materials would be the most expeditious solution. Reinforced, he added, we could return to Panama and painting, and be present on October 10, 1913, at the big event, the blowing up of the dike.

So we all set sail from Colón on an old British liner for Havre. It was a wandering voyage for the ship, carrying freight as well as passengers, had many ports of call. We went first to the old Spanish city of Cartagena, in the tip of Colombia, and lay off to discharge cargo. We moved slowly on, touched at Trinidad, Barbados, Curacao, all topic islands new to us, immensely paintable, and Alson had only a few panels. –Ed.]

[00:47:07.62]

We lay off Barranquilla in incredible heat for five days while our hold was stoked with bananas and while Black women with baskets of coal on their heads laboriously filled the ship's bins. And finally, we moved out and settled to the long haul to Havre. In the Paris studio once more, Alson set up his work and carefully scrutinized it, and was pleased. Then he set about procuring a massive amount of materials. We replenished our tropical wardrobes with Parisian clothes and embarked on a radioless German passenger freighter from Antwerp for Colón.

[00:47:59.50]

MARGARET HUNTER: How long did it take for this sortie from Panama to Europe and back?

[00:48:04.87]

MEDORA CLARK: It was a three-week voyage from Colón to France, and an equally long one from Antwerp back to Colón. In Colón, we treated ourselves to a night in the new Hotel Washington, which our government had built and opened, before we crossed the isthmus. Ancón was like a homecoming for us. So many people welcomed us.

[00:48:33.49]

Alson set to work immediately and painted furiously until the magic date, October 10, 1913, the blowing up of the dike. We were glad we had returned for it. We were included in all the ceremonies with as much courtesy and consideration, as though we, too, had been a part of the work. It was exciting to be present at the culmination of the vast project, and to witness the actual final dividing of the north and south continents by a waterway, which our government had built.

[00:49:18.84]

Knowing that after it, there would be a tremendous exodus, Alson had surprisingly taken caution to book passage on a United Fruit boat. We set sail immediately for New York and took a train to Chicago. Alson took some of the pictures down to the O'Brien Gallery. William O'Brien was delighted, and scheduled a show at once. With a scurrying interval for framing, an exhibition of 31 Panama canvases opened at the O'Brien Gallery on November 22, 1913, just ten months after the Dalmatian exhibition. It was the first time Alson had had two different shows in the same year.

[00:50:16.75]

During the time in Panama, word concerning Alson's work had reached John E.D. Trask, who had been made chief of the Department of Fine Arts for the impending Panama Pacific Exposition, which was to be held in San Francisco from February to December 1915. There

had been several letters between Alson and Mr. Trask, with the final decision that Alson's Panama canvases, although as yet unseen by Trask, were to be given a room in the Fine Art Gallery at the exposition.

[00:51:00.91]

MARGARET HUNTER: Oh, yes, indeed. The official catalog of the exposition lists eighteen paintings by Alson Skinner Clark. And it mentions among his honors the bronze medal presented to him at this time.

[00:51:17.29]

MEDORA CLARK: With this in view, Alson had selected smaller works for the exhibition in the O'Brien Gallery. But it was a distinguished show. The themes were sympathetic to an American public, and equally to the critics, who liked it and gave it long laudatory notices. Some of the pictures had already been sold in Panama. But there were also a satisfying amount of sales in Chicago.

[00:51:53.34]

Alson was eager to get back to his studio, spread out his things, and plan for the San Francisco room. So we returned to France. Alson worked continuously on his canvases, eager to have them complete and ready by early spring so that he might take a trip to have an interval away from them, and return for a final view before shipping them. Our architect friend, John Holabird, was returning to America. And he suddenly suggested that we might like to buy his Hupmobile, since we were familiar with its vagaries through the tour in England with him. My sister had just arrived from America to spend the summer with us, so the offer came at a propitious moment. Alson bought the car at once.

[00:52:52.24]

He was eager to see a more colorful part of France. And although we planned eventually to go to Rochefort-en-Terre and had shipped materials and clothing there, we stocked the Hupmobile and set off to see the Charente, vineyard country and landscape new to us. It had infinite charm and appealing intimacy absent in the coast towns. And we toured about, stopping where we pleased, Alson painting many canvases as a start to amassing material for a new show.

[00:53:32.08]

Finally, in need of fresh clothing and fresh materials, we drove back to Rochefort-en-Terre and were welcomed as family by Marie Francoise and Anastasie at the inn. We had an idyllic week, renewing old friendships and reviewing old motifs. Occasionally, we glanced through the tiny newspaper that finally made its way into the village, but we were too absorbed in the beauty of the town to think much about the outside world.

[00:54:11.29]

Then, suddenly, with shock, we learned that war had come. We looked at each other incredulously, arguing that it couldn't be true in our enlightened time. War was a thing of the past, of history. But on August 2, 1914, mobilization was announced. The village drummer made his rounds, the bell tolled sadly from the strange old village church. And the first group of recruits, clutching their tiny paper-wrapped bundles of rations, came to the village square, and with no fanfare, and in silence, save for the quiet weeping of their women, walked off in the sunset toward the Malansac station.

[00:55:18.80]

There was no pattern of conduct for us in a country at war. Some way, watching young men we knew go off, made war a thing declared on our own friends, and we wanted to help, but we were bewildered. Trains were taken over by the government for troops. Mail service ceased, and even newspapers failed to reach our little village. Each evening before sunset, the town crier with his drum made his rounds, summoning inhabitants to the square. Assembled, we listened to his report of the day as in tense silence, he read it aloud. Always, the Germans were advancing. We possessed the only automobile, not just in the town, but in the entire surrounding country. And Alson went to the mayor of Rochefort and offered it to

him.

[00:56:34.71]

The mayor, thanking him, said he would soon avail himself of the car, and as Alson alone knew its mechanism, the chauffeur. Anastasie, the innkeeper, sensing our concern, called us into the estaminet, and with Breton directness, announced that we were family and must stay. To be sure, she added, there were no markets, but she had in her cellar an ample supply of potatoes for the entire winter. And so, she admonished us, would we please cease to worry about finances?

[00:57:17.97]

An offer of food and shelter without reward to foreigners in such a crisis left us groping for replies. But staving off any sentiment, she added briskly, "that's all," and went about her business. Alson, with the mayor, in the Hupmobile, made varying trips about the countryside on military errands, sometimes by day, but more often by night.

[00:57:51.40]

The mayor would suddenly appear at midnight below our window. Alson would hurry down. And soon, the Hupmobile, its lights the only break in the darkness, would vanish down the village street. After about a fortnight, passenger service on the trains was resumed, and mails began to come through. And in them, to our relief, came a check from our bankers.

[00:58:22.53]

Official aid had at last come to the mayor. And save for the socks for soldiers my sister and I were slowly evolving, we were contributing little. So Alson thought it wisest for us return to Paris. Motor car travel, he had learned, would be uncertain for civilians, so he decided we would go by train. We propped the Hupmobile up on blocks in Anastasie's stable and once again reverted to the courier service over to Malansac and boarded a train.

[00:59:05.28]

It was a long trip, for often we were left on a siding so that trains of wounded might pass. But the fleeting glimpses of men, and bandages, and helplessness, and nurses suddenly made war not just news read aloud by the town crier, but a reality. In Paris, we found a cablegram from John Trask, stating that the San Francisco exposition would carry on as planned, that he was assured of a good show, though there might be some foreign exhibits absent, and that he was counting on Alson's canvases. As the pictures had been ready and lined up before we had left Paris, we had thought little about them in the interim. Now in Paris, we felt as futile as we had in Rochefort. So it was consoling, suddenly, to have a goal.

[01:00:13.59]

MARGARET HUNTER: How did you ever get the canvases across the Atlantic? It must have seemed almost impossible.

[01:00:24.81]

MEDORA CLARK: Alson went over to the embassy to investigate the possibility of shipping the pictures, and returned with the news that no freight would be moved and that most ship voyages had been canceled. He remained in the embassy, mulling over our status, and had finally determined that the sole solution was for us to return to America ourselves, bearing the pictures with us. The embassy, of course, was as eager to evacuate Americans as France was to have them depart, for tourists were deadwood.

[01:01:05.76]

But unfortunately, the few ships scheduled to sail had full passenger lists. But they took his name, advised him to stand by, and assured him that a way of departure would soon be found. So Alson settled down to making daily trips to the embassy in whatever form of transportation he could board. And at last, one day, he came back with word that our government had taken over a French liner lying at port at Havre to transport Americans only and were sending us down to it by special boat train the next morning. There were, of course, no porters, so luggage was our own problem. Alson had decided that the only way to

transport the pictures was to remove them from the stretchers. So we set to work feverishly on the grim but welcome task of unmounting canvases, happily dry, and made them into a large, long, very heavy roll.

[01:02:22.00]

We made up personal bundles of necessities and a little clothing. We filled a small trunk with essentials, not valuables, realizing we might be forced to abandon it. In our frenzied preparation, we bumped it down the four flights to the court that night. We filled all our various pockets with rations. The embassy had promised us a cab, a rarity in those busy times. But to our delight, at the appointed early hour the next morning, a cab turned into our court. We loaded it, giving precedence, as always, to the canvases, and set off for the station. Alson reconnoitered at the station and returned pushing a porter's luggage cart. The old French cab driver remained on his box, unperturbed, and watched us unload, giving an occasional grunt of approbation as we reassembled our possessions on the luggage cart.

[01:03:32.53]

When we had finished, we trundled it down to our train, Alson hauling, my sister and I flanking either side, pushing, and alert for possible slips in our amateur mound. We were prepared to accept any form of transportation, so we were completely surprised by our train, for it was first class throughout, a luxury we saw rarely in peacetime. There was even a dining car and a staff. As we rolled along through France toward Havre, we saw from the car windows streams of Belgian refugees, pathetically carrying or dragging or pushing possessions, making their uncertain way up toward Paris. We had desperate pity for them. And in our deluxe train, we felt uncomfortable, apologetic, and humble.

[01:04:40.65]

There were plenty of cabs in the station at Havre, and we made the last lap of our journey on French soil with ease and boarded our vessel. My sister and I had been given a very tiny stateroom. And in it, we installed our trunk, upended, and beside it, the precious roll of canvases. Alson had brought along a coil of rope and lashed it into place. Alson had been assigned to steerage, which had been hastily converted into a male dormitory, with an overpowering odor of disinfectant still dominating it. Steerage, like a golf club locker room, proved to be the spot for assimilating news. And Alson came back with two items. First, there was no date for departure, owing to the difficulty in amassing a crew. And secondly, there was as yet no culinary. So we were on our own.

[01:05:48.99]

On foot, we set out for the town and purchased various items of food, returning to the ship to eat it as we lolled in deckchairs. We followed this routine for three days, while the ship's captain struggled to collect the crew. Then steerage, always first with news, announced that we were at last manned, and we left the shores of France. We were a shipload of Americans only. And that first morning, with true American ingenuity, a clothing bank was set up so that those who had arrived without luggage were wrapped in warmth almost before we left the harbor. The crew, a motley lot of aging men, was ineffective and incompetent. And discipline was practically nonexistent.

[01:06:48.91]

We soon abandoned any attempt to sleep in our quarters, and frankly, spent the night in our deckchairs. The bath steward, a middle-aged farmer, after the first day, indiscriminately handed us towels which had already seen service, so we also abandoned bathing. Fervent gratitude for being on board bound us together as passengers. And conversation, after centering on the war, became an exchange of personal experiences in reaching the ship, and of glowing praise for the wonderful French food. Alson and I had always loved to see the Statue of Liberty come into view. And this time, after the long, solitary ten-day crossing, it was hard to refrain from weeping as her slow emergence from the mist took on a new significance.

[01:08:03.26]

MARGARET HUNTER: Thank you very much, Mrs. Clark, for taking us through all those lovely years with you. This recording has been most enjoyable— [Audio fades out.] [—here in your

husband's studio, surrounded by so many examples of his beautiful work. Now we hope you will, in the near future, tell us about your husband's war service and the subsequent period which brought you to California. –Ed.]

[01:08:18.76]

MEDORA CLARK: [Audio fades in.] —ship, which finally proved to be British, had challenged us and fired across our bows. Our journey from France had been tranquil, though long and slow. But American newspapers must have made it front-page stuff. Even the customs men, rather than stirring up our possessions, patted them briefly, and chalked them without any actual inspection, asking us questions only about our trip. And the role of canvases, of course, continued to perplex people and had to be explained.

[01:08:59.93]

We took a night train from New York to the St. Lawrence. A nation as yet untroubled, and the river sparkling and blue in the brilliant sunshine the next morning, were restoring. And it was invigorating to have an essential place in the world once more. Alson wrote John E.D. Trask at once, telling him of our arrival with the Panama canvases. And Trask, on his way to New York, telegraphed his congratulations, adding that he was forwarding plans and instructions. His letters were always considerate, and with a meticulous care for future detail.

[01:09:45.88]

Following his telegram in late September, he wrote, "The jury meeting in New York takes place November 25 and 26; and in Chicago, December 3 and 4. I wish I could have the opportunity to see you and run over the pictures with you with a gallery plan in hand so that we may arrange for their placing. Also, I would like to talk to you about the color for the background for your room, because I want to have it just as you desire."

[01:10:22.10]

Alson wrote him that after a breather on the St. Lawrence, we would go on to Chicago with the canvases, for he was eager to mount them and go into the matter of frames. Fortunately, Alson's mother's house in Chicago had a third-story billiard room from which the table had been removed. It was well-lighted and empty, so it served as an ideal trial run for the canvases. In late November, Trask wrote from New York, "I will see you in Chicago on December 3. And immediately after that, Newcomb Macklin Company will collect your pictures. I would be glad if they were, so I could see them when I arrived, and we can talk out the matter of background."

[01:11:13.70]

MARGARET HUNTER: That seems pretty short notice.

[01:11:17.25]

MEDORA CLARK: Well, Alson was used to meeting deadlines, Mrs. Hunter, but he never had so little leeway, for on December 2, he knocked the last canvas into its frame. There was no ensuing sigh of relief, for he had yet to meet Trask personally and have him pass judgment. We hurried up to the third story the next morning to look at the pictures impersonally after a night away from them. The room was stark, and minus any decor, unrelenting. Happily, the wall surface was plain, though the color disconcerting. Alson was distressed. But if they could pass this test on their own, he felt they would look well anywhere.

[01:12:06.21]

Trask came that afternoon. His instant cordiality and informality were relieving. And we climbed bravely to the third story. Trask took his time. He looked at everything thoroughly, without comment, merely asking questions. And then he turned to Alson and said, "I can say sincerely that I am delighted. They will make a wonderful showing and exceed my fondest expectations. I congratulate you, and I congratulate America that they were saved."

[01:12:42.70]

At last, the tension was broken, and so hilariously that when he left, we promised to meet him for dinner that night as a celebration. We never donned evening clothes with more joy

nor more care. And when Trask joined us in the lobby of his hotel, he had in his hand three tickets for the Ballet Russe, then playing in Chicago. So we prolonged the celebration until long after midnight. Our one and only meeting with John E.D. Trask was a highlight.

[01:13:19.93]

We had anticipated going on to San Francisco. So our farewell to Trask was presumably temporary. But shortly after the exposition opened, Alson's mother died, and we suddenly were faced with breaking up a big city house. Alson had given up his studio in Watertown the previous fall, and had installed his possessions in a large room over one of the boathouses at our island home in the St. Lawrence. Now we decided to make that our headquarters and to ship on many things Alson wanted to retain from the Chicago house. The entire spring was consumed in distributing, sorting, and crating. In the early summer, we ourselves went down to the St. Lawrence. And San Francisco began to fade from our program. Trask was always anticipating our arrival, so he had never sent on any press notices, nor even a catalog.

[01:14:22.95]

Oddly enough, this spring, it was the Huntington Library which graciously produced the catalog of Alson's room and allowed me to ascertain the actual number of canvases shown. There were eighteen. Alson painted a few large canvases during the summer, mostly figures against blue water, colorful and encompassing, with a new note. And the boathouse studio, with the waters lapping beneath it, was inspiring. So we lingered on.

[01:14:59.12]

Fall and then late fall were suddenly upon us. Our island home was inaccessible after November. And already, the river had begun to show signs of freezing. Then one morning, we woke to a white landscape with snow-covered pines. And Alson, always susceptible to snow, suddenly abandoned all idea of journeying to San Francisco and decided he wanted to stay in the east. To the intense relief of our caretaker, we collected our vast amount of luggage, for like snails, we were now carrying our houses on our backs, weighed down our little boats to waterline, sailed up to Clayton, New York, and boarded a train for Boston. There, we bought an automobile, and motored out to the lovely stately old home of Charles and Edith Bittinger in Duxbury.

[01:15:57.13]

Snow in the country was once again a tremendous privilege. Alson loved the frozen cranberry bogs, the drifted snow on the fine old gatepost, the varied patterns of white on the evergreens, and he painted continuously. And we stayed on through early winter with San Francisco completely forgotten. At length, we felt it wrong to strain Bittinger's hospitality. He had heard of a hotel, Gray's Inn, in Jackson, New Hampshire, that remained open with a skeleton crew all winter. So we went by train to Jackson, taking with us all the painting equipment and the warm clothes and snowshoes which had served us so well many years before in Quebec.

[01:16:49.54]

A low-slung sleigh with a team of horses met us at the station. Alson was delighted as we drove the few miles to Gray's Inn. It had a perfect setting in the wood, and the interior was warm and cozy, with a big fire burning in the grate. Our room was large, with a big bay window letting in floods of winter sunlight. And we had a commodious bath. Both were warm and pleasant, a novelty for us in snow country. And Alson was impatient for the morning. His joy the next day, when he set forth on snowshoes into the woods with canvas and easel, was unlimited. And when he returned, his pride was equally divided between his picture and the fact that he still retained a nimble technique on snowshoes.

[01:17:44.14]

There was one cloud on the horizon. Alson discovered it when he saw the big dining room open and men on ladders cleaning. They were, we found, preparing for Washington's birthday weekend, when the inn was to be open to accommodate a train load of winter sports fans from Boston. We consoled ourselves with the thought that we just [inaudible] the weekend, after which our precious tranquility would be restored. During the interval, Alson had been painting steadily. And the afternoon of the holiday, I looked out and saw him

working on a big canvas near the hotel, completely immune to the influx.

[01:18:33.22]

As the snow wasn't deep in that spot, he was pacing back and forth in his moccasins, fully absorbed. It was always fun to go exploring on snowshoes on a clear day. So to escape the bewildering crowds, I set off in the woods by myself. It was a glorious afternoon, and I went far, entranced by all the strange little things that turn up under the snow in a forest. I watched the sun carefully and turned back reluctantly when I recognized my time limit. There had been fires burning in all the big fireplaces in the inn when I left. But as I began retracing my tracks, I was puzzled by the smell of smoke at so great a distance. The smoke grew denser, and I heard faintly the sound of distant crackling.

[01:19:29.38]

It's impossible to speed on snowshoes in the woods, but I tried frantically to step up my pace. When I finally reached the open, I saw Gray's Inn burning briskly. The roof was gone. And as I paused to look, the fire reached our wing. I leaned against the trunk of a big pine and watched the flames consume our room. It was terrifying. I finally pulled myself together and join the distracted crowd, wondering where Alson was, and almost afraid to ask. After a long search, I found him on the outskirts of the crowd. He was safe. And with his usual alertness, he had in tow a toboggan, on which were a stack of our possessions. His face was grimy. He was still in his linesman's coat, his beaver cap, and his moccasins.

[01:20:29.38]

We embraced. There was nothing furtive about it. People were suddenly embracing all over the place. Then I looked, amazed, at our steamer trunks reposing on the toboggan. Alson was in the building, he explained, and heard the first cry of alarm from the floor above. At once conscious of the danger, he tossed our trunks out of our window, following them with easel and paint boxes and all the quickly tangible things. Then he deserted the room and raced down stairs that were already burning.

"And your picture?" I asked. He chuckled. "I showed a real far panicked loss of head for that one. It was wet, of course. And my first act of precaution was to move it carefully to a safe place by the wall, where it wouldn't be harmed." "It burned?" "Of course, but not without the best attention." "Is everybody safe?" I asked. He nodded. "Most of the people are still out at their various sports."

[01:21:45.79]

It was before the time of ready-made sports clothes, and I had gone forth to snowshoe in a pair of Alson's knee-length golf trousers. Now, having checked on major details of the catastrophe and been reassured, I suddenly became conscious of my absurd attire. Alson caught my thought, for he laughed again as he announced, "And I saved you a skirt." And there, reposing on our toboggan, was the dark blue skirt of my tailored suit. By this time, the inn was completely reduced to ashes, with one lone chimney soaring futilely into the sky.

[01:22:33.27]

MARGARET HUNTER: How did you ever manage to find a place to sleep that night?

[01:22:38.42]

MEDORA CLARK: It was difficult to know what to do, Mrs. Hunter. And we realized how completely a desk and a desk clerk hold a hotel crowd together, for with the absence of both, we were at a stalemate. Then word began to spread that one of the other summer hotels would be open to houses. The rumor was confirmed in no time. And the pageant, with the bellboy blazing the trail, moved slowly over the snow, the few lucky ones dragging toboggans.

[01:23:13.98]

The hotel was big and frigid, but it was shelter. And there was already a desk, and it was manned. And from it, we learned that the first train for Boston would pass through Jackson the following afternoon. As Alson and I crossed the staid lobby of Young's Hotel in Boston the

next evening, my gratitude to him for saving my blue skirt was limitless.

[01:23:47.04]

The Boston papers had been full of the Gray's Inn disaster. Our friends called us on the telephone, and we went back to Duxbury and picked up where we had left off. In the early spring, we motored back to the St. Lawrence for the summer and on to Chicago in the early fall, for the Panama canvases, at the close of the San Francisco exposition, had been shipped to Chicago. They were given a room in the Chicago Art Institute from September 26 to October 15. And this time, we saw them. The local press all acclaimed the showing. Dispatches of it went across the country. Magazines took up the theme. And Alson basked in belated glory.

[01:24:39.83]

I find him quoted in the *Fine Arts Journal*. And I'm citing it because he rarely gave statements to the press, and because it is succinctly characteristic of him. It wrote, "Painting, says Mr. Clark, is like fishing. One cannot have luck every day in one's catch. Sometimes an artist finds a big picture during the day sketching, sometimes a little one, sometimes nothing worthwhile. But the uncertainty gives zest to the sport."

[01:25:16.89]

Henry Reinhardt & Sons once asked Alson for an exhibition. He had several of the late French things he was eager to show, and he brought on several canvases painted at the St. Lawrence. So he accepted their offer. The show opened at the Reinhart galleries, then on South Michigan Avenue in Chicago, January 18, 1917, billed in the catalog as "Recent American and French Landscapes."

[01:25:47.61]

A small, well-selected show was always more pleasing to Alson. And he'd chosen eighteen canvases with great care. It was a distinguished group, and following on the heels of the Panama show at the Chicago Art Institute, a complete contrast. One critic wrote concerning it, "This collection should be shown in other cities to give those who know this Chicagoan only from his largely advertised illustrational Panama views, a tour concept of the work of one of America's most promising landscapists."

[01:26:29.77]

The public did appreciate it. And despite the war in Europe, people were still buying pictures, and the sales were satisfying. Unfortunately, it was never shown as a group again. After a vast indulgence in country landscapes, Chicago snow had someway lost its allure for Alson. Friends of ours were going to Charleston, South Carolina for a few days and asked us to join them. And we did. It was a fortuitous move, for Alson was delighted with Charleston. The old houses, the ironwork, the balconies, the massive gates, the many church spires, the beautiful walls gave promise of infinite motifs. Our friends departed, but we stayed on. We found a big room in one of the very old houses of Charleston on the battery. And Alson set to work.

[01:27:31.35]

MARGARET HUNTER: Just how old was the house, Mrs. Clark?

[01:27:36.99]

MEDORA CLARK: It was one of five or six houses charted in the original map of Charleston early in the 18th century. And it was listed as the Matthews House then. It was still in Matthews' hands, and a little old lady, the owner, Miss Matthews, still lived in its somber depths and let her large front chamber. Due to its age and to neglect, the Matthews House was a fragile shell, falling apart uniformly everywhere.

[01:28:13.51]

Alson loved carpentry, and he loved problems. And the Matthews House presented profuse demands. So each Sunday, he abandoned painting and took up a project of restoration. On the south side, the house was flanked by two-story galleries, the railings of which were

painfully decrepit. With nails, and glue, and string, and infinite patience, Alson slowly revived them. A canvas of his, which now hangs in the Los Angeles Art Museum, with the title, "The Galleries," is not only a product of his brush, but also of his hammer.

[01:29:02.77]

A painter soon becomes welcome anywhere. The people of Charleston were cordial, first in a dignified and cautious way, and then, as they verified Alson's deep and sincere interest, melting and inviting him into their homes. Even Miss Matthews, who gave no board, would sometimes tiptoe up to our room, knock gently on our door, and with old-world, ladylike grace, offer some savory dish, direct from her kitchen.

[01:29:38.09]

MARGARET HUNTER: It must have been an enchanting place to work.

[01:29:42.02]

MEDORA CLARK: Yes, Alson painted Charleston with terrific zeal—the old Huguenot church, with its quaint graveyard foreground, the spire of St. Michael's rising from lovely greens, the sagging houses of Catfish Row, fig trees, still barren of leaf, against faded pink walls, intimate lanes, and of course, many motifs of the Matthews House.

[01:30:09.57]

Beautiful canvases began to fill our room. And then, suddenly, the United States at last declared war on Germany, and painting ceased for Alson as abruptly as war began. He was well over conscription age, but he was free, unencumbered, healthy, with a knowledge of France and its language. And he felt he must offer his services to his country.

[01:30:38.48]

We packed and went to Chicago, and Alson went out to the Great Lakes Naval Training Station, was soon accepted by the Navy, and after examinations, given a commission with the rank of Ensign. He was allotted to the Ninth Naval District, which encompassed our portion of the St. Lawrence, and we opened our island home, and made it headquarters for officers and enlisted men alike, and began an intensive recruiting campaign, which was his assignment, along with collecting funds for the Navy Relief Society.

[01:31:17.25]

Alson could give himself completely to his subject. I had never seen him cease painting before. But he was as detached as though it had never been his vocation. And the beautiful Charleston canvases, which perhaps would have been his most notable exhibition, remained stacked against the boathouse studio wall. He had always been the observer, the onlooker. But suddenly, he unleashed latent capabilities and emerged the organizer and showman, for successful recruiting demanded both.

[01:31:56.60]

The foliage on St. Lawrence turned early that year. The recruiting had gone well in the Ninth Naval District. And we had, in various ways, raised a sum for the Navy Relief Society. But winter would soon close in on us, and we began to wonder about our future. Then, suddenly, Alson's sailing orders arrived. He was to go, still with the rank of Ensign, as interpreter to France, sailing from New York City in two days. We scurried around, closing the place, and took the night train to New York. We sailed on a British liner, hastily converted to wartime use, not as a troop ship, but carrying officers on divers missions. At that time, Germany was in her most successful phase of patrolling the Atlantic, and her submarines prowled at will. But the ship reached London without mishap.

[01:33:04.32]

At his interview at Navy headquarters in Paris, Alson found that he had been miscast as interpreter. His French, though competent for the streets, was mostly aural. And the Navy's need was translators. Alson, with his urgent desire to help, and at length, happily, he thought, at the end of his long mission, was plunged into complete depression at the news. He felt not only discouraged, but utterly useless. And it took all his strength to rise to leave.

Then, suddenly, the captain, after giving him a quizzical look, asked astutely, "Do you know anything about photography, Ensign?"

[01:33:57.38]

Alson had been interested in photography all his life, from his first childhood Brownie, with reprimands for prints left soaking in a family washbowl, on through the varying stages of Kodaks and cameras. He had eventually possessed his own darkroom at St. Lawrence, and he owned many good cameras, one of which was slung over his shoulder at that moment. All his life too, he had played with kites, had experimented year after year in sending his cameras up kite strings. And he had more than layman knowledge. Many of his canvases had been painted from hills looking down on towns, for bird's-eye views had always fascinated him. So when the captain shot that relieving question, he could answer truthfully that he was not a professional, but it had been his avocation since childhood.

[01:34:56.27]

The captain touched Alson's camera and said, "Good. We need you for naval aviation photography. It hasn't even been organized." Alson's hope and interest shot up as he and the captain began working on naval aviation photography's future. He was given the amazing orders of "anywhere, at any time," one of five such during the war. He started with one assistant, hand-picked, and built up the unit to a competent staff of 55.

[01:35:35.29]

MARGARET HUNTER: Where was your husband stationed, Mrs. Clark?

[01:35:38.53]

MEDORA CLARK: His duties took him to our 20 or more bases in France, sometimes across the channel, and even to Ireland. The Navy was then using open planes. But Alson was never a pilot, always a passenger, a perilous status for each young flier, eager to outdo his predecessor, bordered on stunting, with Alson hanging over the side, using his camera.

[END OF TRACK AAA_clark56_57_m]

[00:00:19.20]

MEDORA CLARK: His headquarters were at first in Paris; then, as the war progressed in Bouliac, near Bordeaux, where he was given the additional chore of identification portraits, and finally to Croydon and London, where he and his outfit were when armistice was announced. We had still retained our apartment as well as the studio in Paris. And many times during the two years, Alson was able to use it and to put it at the disposal of many young officers for brief periods of relaxation.

[00:00:58.51]

During his stay in France, Alson wrote me each day. I have his letters on file, with the hope of someday compiling them, though it will be impossible to reproduce the marginal sketches of coifs, headdresses, and costumes, which, as censorship law forbid the naming of places, showed me always where he was in France. As Alson was an isolated officer, his return to America came early.

[00:01:32.54]

He arrived on Christmas Eve 1918. When Alson's cable came, naming a ship and the probable date of its arrival, I was in New York working with Mrs. Slade and Mrs. Winthrop Ames in the offices of the YMCA, screening young women to be sent overseas as canteen workers. I was given a pass to meet his ship. I had met several ships on various errands connected with our work, so the routine wasn't new to me. What was new to me, actually, was Alson's uniform.

[00:02:16.14]

He left America wearing the conventional blues of the service, with the tunic closed to the chin and wearing a mustache. He returned in the new olive gray with lapels, a soft collar and tie, a uniform he had instigated, worked out, and persuaded the Navy to accept. And he was

clean-shaven. What was new to Alson was my uniform. I worked in the office in Mufti, but Mrs. Slade and Mrs. Ames, for my better protection, and to stave off questions, had buttoned me into an overseas uniform complete with cape. Alson and I searched for a long time before we penetrated each other's disguises. So our first act after final recognition was not one of fond embraces, but of bursting into paroxysms of laughter.

[00:03:20.61]

Alson's sole scar from the war was one completely deaf ear. The specialists he consulted after probing Alson's recent history diagnosed the ailment as temporary, assuring him it was due to wearing a continuously damp uniform. Cheered by this news, Alson began a series of daily treatments interspersed with trips to the Naval headquarters in an endeavor to be released from the service. Finally, he came in one day with the necessary signed papers, and was once again a civilian. Alson's doctor hinted that he should forsake New York and get into a milder climate.

[00:04:09.48]

We knew nothing of warmer American country. Neither California nor Florida had ever appealed to us. But California had one lure—mountains. We packed, and with our luggage and a letter to an ear specialist in Los Angeles, boarded a train reluctantly for California. And the many times later when we returned to California with joy, we remarked on the contrast to that reluctant first advance. Alson had not spoken about painting on his return, but there had been so many demands that I'd thought little about it. But on the way out to California, he announced one night that painting was a thing completely of the past, and that he never cared to paint again.

[00:05:04.75]

MARGARET HUNTER: Do you think his war experience was still troubling him? Did he talk much about it, Mrs. Clark?

[00:05:11.08]

MEDORA CLARK: He had spoken only of amusing things, Mrs. Hunter. Had mentioned nothing of the horrors of war. I knew that he and the British colonel, on some secret mission, had been caught near the front lines unarmed in the big March offensive, and had fought their way back to safety. But beyond that one episode, I knew nothing. He was reticent and, I realized, very tired, for his one desire was to get out into the country somewhere and into peace.

[00:05:46.44]

So this sudden pronouncement was a staggering blow. Alson had never been anything but a painter. And I wondered what he planned to do with the rest of his life, or of our lives. He didn't brood crossing the continent, but he was reflective and quiet. A spark of real enthusiasm came once on the outskirts of Los Angeles, we were looking out of the car window as the little old Santa Anita station whirled by. We gasped, for it was buried in geraniums, plants of incredible bulk and bloom, reaching in spots to the sloping metal roof.

[00:06:33.78]

We saw them simultaneously. And as we met each other's incredulous gaze, recalling the tiny pots on our fourth-story balcony in Paris, the fleeting display was miraculous. We knew no one in Los Angeles, so we followed our usual custom in a strange city—left our luggage in the station and started strolling about to get the feel of the place. There was little promise of country landscape as we advanced, and we were disheartened.

[00:07:11.72]

We still clung to our mental picture of a charming little inn nestled in the foothills. But late afternoon found us in stall, at last with all our luggage in a room with no view in a hostelry named Hotel Clark in the cement and asphalt center of town. It remained our home during our months in Los Angeles. Alson sought out a specialist the next day and returned with a depressing word that he remain in the city for daily treatments. So we settled urban life.

[00:07:55.79]

Los Angeles was then staffed with tearooms and cafeterias. In the tearooms, you were privileged to dine from five to eight. In one of them, we discovered with pleasure a good collection of contemporary American art, most of it from the brushes of friends. We even found some of own property—chairs, costumes, and such—in the canvases. So we formed the habit of dining there, feeling less forlorn with such association.

[00:08:30.21]

Our curiosity concerning California was aroused, and we began reading histories, eagerly making notes of nearby places. One day, Alson returned from his daily visit to his doctor with a refreshing news. After an early appointment the following morning, he was to take a trial sortie into the country. He had alerted ourselves for such a possible event, and we promptly boarded a car for San Gabriel. What a ride through country with gardens, and groves, and eucalyptus trees, ending in a quaint little plaza with a group of adobes in a buff-colored, time-worn mission.

[00:09:18.02]

I watched Alson unfurl. He sauntered about in its peace and quiet, listened with joy to the Spanish spoken about him as he surveyed the mellow walls of the mission with a painter's appreciation. After his appointment the next morning, he went directly to an artist supply shop and returned, his eyes alight, with an easel, a stool, a paint box, paints, and some panels.

[00:09:51.94]

We hurried out to San Gabriel, and Alson painted while I sat on a wall and watched the tranquil life of the town. He did a beautiful panel of the mission portal, flanked by pepper trees, and there was no indication that he'd ever left off painting. I have the picture hanging over my bed. It is dedicated to me, under the date February 1919. And with a sort of brush parenthesis, "First painting in 1919."

[00:10:32.90]

Although the San Gabriel trek had been successful, Alson's doctor was cautious, withholding permission to go far afield. But he wandered around the old plaza in Los Angeles daily. We began poring over timetables and trolley routes and one morning set forth to nearby San Fernando. The town itself in sharp contrast to the dusty little sleepy village of San Gabriel was modern, prosperous, and commercial. But the mission a few miles away, as yet unrestored, was tremendously appealing, larger than San Gabriel with a long colonnade of arches and rich mellow walls.

[00:11:22.98]

The wind had been blowing when we left Los Angeles, and as we alighted from the trolley, we found that it had whipped into a gale. We stumbled across the patches of whirling sand to the mission, and Alson, charmed, strode about valiantly but at lengths sought shelter beside me in the colonnade. "It is a wonderful motif," he muttered as we crouched on the old tiles, my big traveler's cape covering us to our eyes, awaiting the return of the car. "But I shall do a larger canvas of it, not a panel." Later, he returned to paint it, one of the loveliest of that year's work. I have it still.

[00:12:09.42]

MARGARET HUNTER: The picture you have hanging over your desk, Mrs. Clark?

[00:12:13.56]

MEDORA CLARK: Yes, Mrs. Hunter. Alson was avid now to see other missions, and we found through our battered timetables that we could board an early-morning train for San Juan Capistrano and return to Los Angeles the same afternoon. Purely as tourists, unencumbered by painting equipment, we set out for Capistrano. Unconsciously, we had selected the missions in a mounting sequence of beauty—San Gabriel, San Fernando, and now San Juan Capistrano.

[00:12:51.74]

The trip down following along the blue sea or dipping inland between canyons, with cattle grazing on the distant hills, was a continuous surprise. We were the sole passengers alighting at Capistrano, and we were amazed at the town, for in 1919 it was still a part of old California. There was a little plaza with a few adobe houses along one side, and saddled horses tied at the long rail in front of the single store opposite.

[00:13:31.88]

Back of it were the mountains; in the distance, the sea. Circling the town on every side, orange, and olive, and walnut groves. At the end of the plaza, the mission. We were unprepared for the beauty of the mission. We stopped at the gate to absorb it. There was a gentle garden with a huge preparatory in its center. On three sides were colonnades of arches. There was a tower with bells, and beyond were the ruins of the basilica, magnificent against the blue sky, and everywhere wonderful mellow walls.

A priest in a black soutane, greening with youth, was strolling through a corridor. He stopped when he saw us and came over to welcome us, joining us as we started about the grounds. "I'm Father O'Sullivan," he announced simply, stooping to pick a dead leaf from a geranium. Alson reciprocated by saying his name was Clark, that he was a painter. He found the mission even more beautiful than he had anticipated. Father O'Sullivan looked at him searching. "Are you by any chance Alson Clark," he asked finally. As Alson nodded, Father O'Sullivan gave an unpriestly whoop of joy. "You see, I know your work," he explained. "I paint a little, and I follow American art. I always hope that someone whose work I admired come along and paint my mission."

[00:15:23.13]

Just after the armistice, you weren't surprised to meet anyone anywhere. And the next day on a street in Los Angeles, we met Guy Rose. We had known Guy and Ethel, his wife, in Paris, where as a team they made for Harper's Bazaar meticulous drawings of costumes at the Paris opening. I was a very good painter as well with a delicate color sense, and he and Alson often painted together in the summer in Giverny along with Lawton Parker and Frederick Frieseke. So he was so definitely associated with France for us that we had forgotten that he was a native Californian. He and Alson were delighted to find each other, and we were overjoyed to have a friend in Los Angeles at last.

[00:16:21.66]

Guy and Ethel called for us the next day with a car and took us into the country for a picnic lunch. We chatted about Capistrano, full of our recent trips and of the prospect of our returning there soon. "I will give you a letter to Mrs. van der Leck in Capistrano," Guy promised. "Her mother was a Sepúlveda, and her grandfather had vast ranch holdings, but there is little left now. And they live in an adobe in the town."

[00:16:55.65]

When we finally left Los Angeles for our indefinite stay in Capistrano, we carried with us the precious letter of introduction and presented it the day of our arrival. Besides an incredible aunt of another era and the senior van der Lecks, there were two charming young daughters, Chonita and Viola. They had few companions in the village, so they welcomed us not only with true Spanish hospitality but with genuine pleasure.

[00:17:30.03]

We all four jogged about continuously in an ancient borrowed car. Chonita and Viola didn't mind waiting, any time, anywhere, while Alson painted. Often, they watched. Sometimes, they talked of the place and told us tales handed down. And sometimes Chonita would take her guitar and strum as she sang to us the songs her aunt, Doña Tranquilina, had taught her. If the weather were warm, they would collect us for a trek across the mountains to a little settlement by the sea of unpretentious cabins and big eucalyptus trees called Laguna. We would bathe in the Pacific, scurrying behind rocks to shed our clothes and don makeshift bathing suits. With older ranchers, they organized barbecues on the beach at sunset, where meat buried near heated stones had baked for hours.

[00:18:39.59]

They gave us continued glimpses of old California. They even played a gentle game of tennis, so that Alson was able to gratify his desire for mild exercise. Father O'Sullivan, though occupied, was constantly our guardian. Alson was fascinated with the mission, and he painted many canvases of it and loved prowling about to absorb its beauty in the moonlight.

[00:19:11.19]

We had planned to open our island home in the St. Lawrence early that summer of 1919, and two old servants of Alson's mother were waiting in Chicago to join us. But it was July before we tore ourselves away and headed east, pausing briefly in Chicago. During our stay in Capistrano that spring, Edward B. Butler, who was spending the winter in Pasadena, had learned of Alson's presence in California and had driven down to see him.

[00:19:47.92]

Edward Butler had taken up painting late in life, avidly fitting it into his strenuous business career. He was an admirer of Alson's work and came to Paris each spring for a period of painting with Alson, and to scout for Ennis canvases, which he had begun collecting. Dedicated to his desire to paint, he had become completely absorbed. And in Paris, Alson was always amused at the end of a day of painting, when, completely un-selfconscious, Edward Butler would hurry across the lobby of the chic and elegant Hotel Meurice, a treasured wet canvas held high above his head, his chauffeur with paintbox, easel, and stool trailing him.

[00:20:41.74]

MARGARET HUNTER: Was Mr. Butler a Chicago man, Mrs. Clark?

[00:20:44.96]

MEDORA CLARK: Yes, and a man of vision. He did much for Chicago with his energy, enthusiasm, and wisdom, promoting the outer drive on the lake, securing fountains in parks, and individually tracking down and purchasing George Ennis canvases, which as a collection he at length presented to the Art Institute of Chicago, the now famous Ennis Room. He was overjoyed to find Alson that spring. And although he was leaving shortly for Chicago, they had a few days of painting together in Capistrano. He suggested that we return with him to Pasadena, for he had a project underway he wanted to show Alson. We came to Pasadena with him even that same day. He and Alson drove over to the edge of the Arroyo Seco to a little dusty lane ending in a eucalyptus grove with the elegant title of Wotkyns Drive. This land, he was buying.

[00:21:56.81]

Our first day of our short stop in Chicago, Alson lunched with Edward Butler and came back looking elated. "That property out on the Arroyo Seco," he began. "Yes?" "Well, I've just bought a little of it at the north end, the part with a shack on it. We can make it our temporary home until France is back to normal." At our island in the St. Lawrence, we spent the summer selecting things from its hoard of possessions, discovering that without crippling its supply we could comfortably outfit the California shack.

[00:22:39.55]

We stayed late, shipped our selections on to California, motored west as far as the snow would allow, stopped with friends, sold our car, and took a train to Chicago. Alson was now deeply in the mood for painting, and eager to be exhibiting again. So he made arrangements with Henry Reinhardt's and Son for a February show of his California canvases. In Chicago, too, we collected Lena, an old Norwegian cook who'd been on Alson's mother's staff for 46 years and possessed a longing to come west, and boarded a train for California, arriving Los Angeles on December 31, 1919.

[00:23:26.82]

Next morning, we took a cab for Pasadena and our property, ignorant of the fact that it was

the city's gala day of the year with its Tournament of Roses parade. Cab driver eyed us warily as he listened to the destination we gave him. We proceeded north in search of our mythical street. Alson's memory and persistence finally brought us out onto the bank of the Arroyo Seco to our shack. A huge acacia tree in full bloom towered above it, and at the side was a beautiful group of pepper trees, with, to our amazement, the consignment from St. Lawrence stacked underneath them.

[00:24:22.19]

We were perched on the edge of the very wide, deep gulch, the Arroyo Seco, the banks dropping down precipitately, almost perpendicularly to the bed of the Arroyo far below. The wide expanse of floor filled with wild growth, and boulders, eucalyptus, and sycamore trees. We could look up the wide ravine for miles with the mountains on all sides. Alson was enchanted with this native undisturbed beauty, and anxious to be at work.

[00:25:00.43]

We bought a car that day, and with its purchase became established Californians, for a car in California makes you master of the landscape. We evacuated our rooms in the Los Angeles hotel and moved into our new abode. This time, Alson had all his painting equipment with him, and he set out to work at once. He returned with a big canvas of the valley, mountains folding over one another in almost self-conscious composition. He was radiant. "You know," he began, "we shall want to stay for some time, and I think it would be wise to make ourselves comfortable." "You mean a bathtub," I asked, for after many months of American luxury, the sudden return to the primitive seemed unnecessarily noble. "Exactly," he replied, wiping paint from the handles of his brushes. "And I think we should act at once."

[00:26:12.41]

When we left for California, Alson's architect brother had had the foresight to arm him with a letter to Reginald Johnson, a well-established architect with offices in Pasadena. So Alson presented the letter to him, explaining the desire for a bathroom, and apologizing for so humble an errand. Reginald Johnson, in the midst of a large and important project, was so amused at the request that he drove out to look over the place personally.

[00:26:48.23]

Fascinated by the sight and by so small a project, in a few days, he completed plans for our inspection. It seemed like a gigantic leap to me, but Alson was delighted. And the two draftsmen staked out the foundation the next day. Then we waited expectantly for laborers to come and dig, but Reginald Johnson's prediction about their scarcity proved correct, for not one could be found.

[00:27:22.36]

The young draftsman bearing the news looked at us appraisingly and asked, "Couldn't you dig the foundations yourself? It doesn't have to be deep in California." It was a challenge, for without it our house couldn't advance. So we bought shovels and set to work, conscientiously following the architect's cord. The digging went incredibly fast, as the draftsman had promised, and after it the foundation leapt into place.

[00:27:59.49]

One morning, a mover appeared and dragged and rolled our shack over to its new and dignified base. It was undamaged by its journey, its contents undisturbed, and we slept profoundly that night on our new site. Alson had contracted for a separate studio as well, so construction soon began with vigor. And in the midst of it, Alson left for Chicago.

[00:28:32.95]

During the war, some of the Charleston canvases had been shipped about the country separately to exhibitions. But Alson's last one-man show had been the "American and French Landscapes" in January 1917, and Henry Reinhardt's and Sons in Chicago. And now again he opened at Reinhardt's with an exhibition of California landscapes from February 16 through March 1, 1920.

[00:29:02.07]

It was Alson's first showing of his California work, and there were sixteen well-chosen canvases, most of them painted in the mission at San Juan Capistrano, or in the surrounding area. It was over a year since the war had ceased, and Chicago, like the rest of the country, was ready and eager for exhibitions. The California canvases were brilliant, colorful, and romantic, bringing a new message of peace. And the critics were delighted to find Alson once again giving them mellow walls, and sunlight, and shadow.

[00:29:41.38]

The public, too, was eager to buy again, and the satisfactory sales justified our wild plunge into California real estate. Alson was eager to begin sending to exhibitions again. He had already sent a picture to the Corcoran for its show in December 1919 and had written to Carnegie Institute in January inquiring about juries west of the Rockies in connection with the Pittsburgh International. I pulled a reply from Mr. John W. Beatty, the director, for it is revealing of the status of exhibitors at that time.

[00:30:26.62]

"Your letter of January 9th," he wrote, "has been received, and I'm delighted to know that you will send a painting to Pittsburgh for consideration for the jury for our coming international exhibition. Our booklet of conditions with entry blank attached will be sent to you early in February. You should send your paintings to the Department of Fine Arts, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, without paying carriage charges, express collect. Pictures must reach the institute before April 2, 1920. There will be no western jury, it being necessary for the paintings to be considered by the jury, which will meet in Pittsburgh on April 8."

Alson sent a lovely canvas of the colonnade at Capistrano, with a big pepper tree dominating it. A letter to Alson dated July 8, 1920, from the Carnegie Institute, and signed by Robert B. Harshe, assistant director, read as follows:

[00:31:40.28]

"My dear Mr. Clark, it gives me great pleasure to enclose this New York draft in the amount of $750, payable to your order, covering the price of your painting, "San Juan Capistrano," which has been purchased by Mr. Charles W. Dowinger. May I not offer my congratulations upon this sale. It is, I need not say, a source of great satisfaction to all of us in the department that a work of this caliber is to find its permanent home in Pittsburgh."

That summer in California was educational in many ways for us. But the important fact extracted from it was that California was actually a delightful place in which to spend it.

[00:32:34.07]

MARGARET HUNTER: Yes, especially right here with the coolness provided by your thick walls, and overlooking the Arroyo, where there always seems to be a breeze.

[00:32:44.99]

MEDORA CLARK: A drive to the beaches was a simple matter then, some of it still through orange groves, the beaches themselves sparsely populated, entrance to them unrestricted. And we often had a swim and picnics in the cool of the day. Alson loved the shoreline and the figures dotting the sands. And he painted many panels and several large canvases.

[00:33:11.38]

In the late fall, Everett Warner, the painter-etcher who had often joined us in faraway places, came to stay with us a while. Alson had heard much about the high Sierras, and he and Everett were eager to see them and seek out painting grounds. Our touring car seem limited for such a trip. So Alson purchased a Dodge truck, and he and Everett set to work reconditioning it for a painting trip. Then they added bedding rolls and cooking equipment and sent off.

[00:33:46.52]

Mount Whitney was snow-capped, and Alson was delighted to find that California landscapes included snow, which he had reluctantly left behind in the East. After a brief period in Pasadena, Alson and Everett, finding the setup ideal for painting, set off for the desert, camping on the desert floor and learning for the first time its beauty in sunrise and sunset with the fragrance of desert verbena and primroses in full bloom.

[00:34:22.07]

In the early years of his painting, Alson always carried his sketching umbrella. Though cumbersome, it often proved its worth. In Spain and in Dalmatia, the narrow streets afforded shade in themselves, so he had abandoned it. In Panama, in the vigor of climbing on and off work trains, he had left it behind. But in California, out in the open with no shelter, he had been forced to add it to his equipment once again.

[00:34:53.59]

Now, with the painting truck, he was able to maneuver a position so his canvas was shaded. And the umbrella was at last definitely abandoned. Despite the wonderful climate, I had not felt well that winter. When I finally consulted a doctor, he told me I was pregnant. And in July 1921, almost 20 years after our marriage, I bore Alson a son. An infant is limitless material for an artist, and Alson, enthusiastic as a father, was indefatigable as a painter and draftsman.

[00:35:40.11]

Earl Stendhal was just opening his gallery in the Ambassador that year. And in December 1921, Alson had his first one-man show in California at the Stendahl Galleries. There were 20 diversified canvases—figures, California motifs, missions, landscapes, the St. Lawrence, and snow scenes from New England. There were many laudatory notices, but several critics singled out the same picture entitled "Over the Marsh." Anthony Anderson in the *Los Angeles Times* wrote of it, "A study of nightfall made on the St. Lawrence River painted with breadth and freedom, luscious yet cool in color. Its form, simple. Its mood, perfectly caught. The canvas has genuine distinction."

[00:36:41.58]

MARGARET HUNTER: Do you know the present whereabouts of "Over the Marsh?"

[00:36:45.85]

MEDORA CLARK: Yes, Mrs. Hunter. The picture is now owned by Dr. Remsen Bird, retired President of Occidental College, and hangs in his home in Carmel. In Pasadena at that time, there was a very charming early English type of house in the triangle at the convergence of Lincoln and Fair Oaks Avenues, which had been endowed and willed a foundation for an art school by a Miss Stickney. It was known as the Stickney Memorial School of Art.

[00:37:22.50]

There was a big studio, a kitchen, and on a raised level a little dining room area on the ground floor, and two or three large bedrooms in the second story. Ethel and Guy Rose were living there as instructors and caretakers. It was the sole art school in the area. Enlistments were growing rapidly, and Guy persuaded Alson early in January 1921 to aid him by taking some of the classes. Alson was always interested in serious young students, so he took on his duties at the Stickney School, mostly night classes, with tremendous fervor.

[00:38:06.16]

Guy's health was failing, and soon he was forced to retire. So Alson assumed responsibility as head of the school. The Stickney estate yielded only the small initial income, so with rising costs there was no margin for salary to instructors. But Alson gave his time joyously to the school for many years. Now, often someone will address me, identify himself, and tell me with warmth, of his start at the Stickney School, and of Alson's kindness and genius in criticism.

[00:38:47.78]

Long ago, the building fell prey to the march of progress, and the triangle, a strategic spot, is

occupied by a deluxe filling station. But occasionally letters still come addressed to Alson at the Stickney School of Art. The variety of material in California was vast. Alson, with his tremendous energy and assurance, was able to encompass its whole scope.

[00:39:19.03]

In the winter of 1922, we'd gone to the high Sierras and again to the desert, bringing back finished canvases. An architect friend, Garrett Van Pelt, was eager to go to Mexico, and had sounded Alson out as a possible companion. Up to that time, Mexico's government had been unstable, with frequent rebel revolts, and there had been no attempt to lure tourists. But in 1922, a peaceful lull in activities had come, so Alson, Garrett Van Pelt, and a Spanish-speaking friend from Santa Barbara took a boat from Los Angeles and disembarked at Manzanillo.

[00:40:04.67]

It was to be a quick trip, for Alson was eager to get back to his new family. But even with the limited traveling conditions, they covered an enormous amount of territory, zigzagging their way across to Mexico City, on to Pueblo, and down to Oaxaca, near the Guatemalan border. "It is magnificent painting ground," Alson wrote, "even more Spanish than Spain, and I'm glad I came before it was exploited. The trip from Cuernavaca to Mexico City, which took an entire day, was wonderful in its motifs."

[00:40:46.99]

There was no time for big canvases in their hurried journeyings, but Alson painted several panels and filled sketchbooks with a continuous pageant of peon light and the myriad of laden burros. He took with him one of his good cameras, bringing back hundreds of shots of Mexico's beautiful architecture, and also a small, unobtrusive moving picture camera containing limitless films of the small town market and groups of the frank, unselfconscious, omnipresent peons.

[00:41:29.29]

We rented a house in La Jolla for the summer of 1922, and Alson had the joy of seeing his son tumble about on the sands in a major endeavor to learn to walk. There's a great variety of painting material in the area—the sea, the beaches, the San Diego Harbor with its fleet of fishing boats, the old plaza, the mission, the beautiful back-country with mountains in the distance, and acres of wild buckwheat in the foreground. And we lingered on until the end of October.

[00:42:07.32]

Alson had his second one-man show at the Stendahl Galleries in January 1923, twenty-five varied landscapes. And its reception by the public showed he was established in the south land. He'd also began showing prints and had been made a member of the International Printmakers.

[00:42:32.38]

[Aside:] About three more.

[00:42:34.25]

Alson had always referred to our place in Pasadena as our temporary abode, and I never thought he would desert Paris. But after tasting the varied beauty of California and the adjacent unlimited possibilities of Mexico, he decided our temporary home should be permanent. We still had our apartment in Alson's big studio on the Boulevard Saint-Jacques in Paris. A painter friend of ours was still living in Paris, and Alson wrote him of our desire to evacuate. He answered by volunteering to assume the responsibility of breaking up the two places. So Alson wrote him to send us the entire contents of the studio, barring the two presses, the better pieces of furniture in the apartment, plus linens, silver, china, books, and the contents of the chests of drawers and closets.

[00:43:38.44]

Then, our lives in California were so absorbing, we promptly forgot the whole affair. In the

late fall, we had noticed from the customs house that our consignment had arrived at San Pedro, having come by boat across the Atlantic, through the Panama Canal, and up the Pacific to California. One beautiful, clear, autumn day, it reached its final destination, 1149 Wotkyns Drive, and was placed out on the terrace overlooking the Arroyo.

[00:44:17.14]

It was a staggering influx, for the French packers with true French care had crated nothing, but had meticulously boxed everything, including sofas, so that our newly arrived possessions covered much more space than our house. When the contents of the bureau drawers were exhumed, we, under our magnificent expanse of sky and wearing the comfortable informal clothing California allows, laughed at the supply of various length white evening gloves, the veil, the boa, the tulle, the parasols, all the frills of Parisian life, and found it difficult to believe they'd ever been a part of ours.

[00:45:08.53]

But the French easels, the many varying sized sketch boxes, the wonderful rolls of French canvas, the sheaths of beautiful French lithograph and etching paper, the sketchbooks, the charcoal, and even the tubes have slightly hardened paint, Alson welcomed with joy. Having seen the endless painting possibilities in Mexico, having gained his balance after the first emotional trip to that country, Alson was eager to return there. So early in 1923, he and Orrin White set off directly by train to Mexico City.

[00:45:57.36]

This time, Alson had plenty of painting equipment, and plenty of time. We had taken a house again in La Jolla for the summer. And Alson joined us there in July, bringing back a magnificent group of canvases. In August of that year, he had a one-man show with Mexican themes in the San Diego Museum of Fine Arts in Balboa Park. Although San Diego lies close to the Mexican border, few painters at that time had ventured across it. So the San Diego papers featured the exhibition, printing many reproductions and stressing the importance of the show, which was, they announced, a world premiere.

[00:46:45.62]

To Alson's amazement, people in San Diego bought these Mexican canvases. And museums throughout the country began asking for a showing. In November 1923, Alson had a one-man show of his Mexican themes in Chicago, this time, once again, at the O'Brien gallery. Mexico was new to Chicago, and it welcomed Alson's treatment of a new country with delight and shared his enthusiasm in presenting it. To his surprise, it surpassed all his other shows in interest and sales. He was bewildered, but pleased with his instant success. That same month, an exhibition in the Southwest Museum in Los Angeles, a large canvas, "After the Shower, Cuernavaca," was awarded the grand museum prize. Following its debut, it toured the country in various museum exhibitions.

[00:47:54.79]

MARGARET HUNTER: Is that the picture now owned by Mrs. George Ellery Hale?

[00:47:59.51]

MEDORA CLARK: Yes, Mrs. Hunter. You may have seen it in the memorial show at the Pasadena Art Museum. Alson's multitude of activities in retrospect are dizzying. Aside from his one-man shows, he was also sending canvases about the country, and here in California contributing to selected groups. He also had taken to painting seriously in the desert, and he suddenly conceived a desire to own a place to which he could return after his day's work—bathe, relax, and judge his pictures indoors in a frame.

[00:48:42.90]

Father O'Sullivan, too, had a longing for a desert hideout. And he and Alson drove to Palm Springs, found on the outskirts a little canyon, and bought the site, made some rough plans, let the contract. Soon, a desert home for us with one for Father O'Sullivan adjacent was underway. In contrast to our Pasadena—

[Recorder stops; restarts.]

[00:49:14.07]

I'm just getting up to speed.

[00:49:16.16]

MARGARET HUNTER: [Inaudible] get the key in your pocket. [Laughs.] [Audio fades out.]

[00:49:20.29]

MEDORA CLARK: [Audio fades in.] [In progress] —rain, which—

[Audio fades out.]

[00:49:39.15]

[Recorder stops; restarts.]

[In January 1925, Alson had a one-man show in the Biltmore gallery. By this time, a yearly exhibition of Alson's was anticipated, and he had built up a satisfactory following. Pasadena Playhouse had begun construction of its new home early that year. Frank Sellers, head of the Finance Committee, came to Alson with a complicated tale of misadventure.

The original architect had suddenly bowed out, and the Playhouse was left with the foundation dangling. Sellers was an ardent admirer of Alson's work, and knew his capacity for carrying through a project. So hee asked Alson to take it on. Alson was intrigued with the idea. An architect whom he knew, Dwight Gibbs, had expressed his willingness to donate his services. So Alson acquiesced and assumed the new responsibility.

There was still much planning to be done. As there was little room in the studio, Alson had an adobe wing quickly added on the arroyo side of his building, set up a drafting table, and devoted the winter to the design for the playhouse interior and the scheme for its curtain. He was still freshly imbued with Mexican motifs. For the north side balcony railing, he had designed brick openwork. But American workmen, unconvinced, were reluctant to undertake the job. Alson, confident of his subject, added bricklaying to his career, and the railing emerged as specified. –Ed.] [Bracketed passage moved to this place in transcript in order to align with original recording. –Ed.]

[Recorder stops; restarts.]

[Audio fades in.]

The Playhouse is a snapshot of him evolving it, and, as usual, he is completely absorbed in his subjects. When the whole project was well underway, Alson took off for Mexico again in search of new material for the Playhouse, and canvases for a New Mexican show. Fred Davis, an American who had lived in Mexico for many years, had a house in Mexico City and one in Cuernavaca. The latter, he graciously placed at Alson's disposal, urging him to go there and use it.

[00:50:12.03]

Alson had a wonderful month of painting there, and among the many successful canvases was one of the fountain in the patio. It later toured the country and was reproduced many times. I still possess it. Dwight Morrow, our ambassador to Mexico, later bought the house. Alson felt that possibly some of the Lindbergh-Morrow courtship might have gone on by his fountain. When Alson returned, the Playhouse was nearing completion. He supervised the interior decoration, even doing some of it himself, and painted on the spot the Spanish galleon curtain, now famous from cartoons, he had made before he left.

[00:50:54.86]

Playhouse opened on May 16, 1925. Alson and I were sitting back in the balcony. An artist, unlike a singer or an actor, is unfamiliar with applause. When the galleon curtain was revealed, there was a thundering burst of admiration from the entire house, with cries not of author but artist, which failed to cease until Alson made his way to the balcony rail and

acknowledged their praise.

[00:51:23.58]

After his trip to Mexico and the completion of Playhouse in 1925, Alson had a brief respite. Santa Barbara had had its earthquake in June, and the regular summer rental of houses had dropped to zero. But a friend of ours that leased the house in Montecito for the summer, unable to use it early in the season, offered it to us. We welcomed a new beach on which to loll, and a new section of California to explore, so we promptly accepted. In the late summer, a friend loaned us her house in Corona Del Mar. It was perched on the edge of a cliff, the rolling hills of the big Irvine ranch behind us, and a little cove for bathing just below to which we scrambled precariously down an uncertain dusty path. So we tested two new areas of beauty, and two new beaches that summer.

[00:52:19.37]

The Grand Central galleries had been organized and established in New York City a few years before, and Alson was one of the few western members. He had sent canvases occasionally to their various exhibitions. That fall of 1925, he had his first one-man show there, and of course it was of the Mexican pictures.

[00:52:41.40]

MARGARET HUNTER: Mexican motifs must have been new to the New York public.

[00:52:45.06]

MEDORA CLARK: They certainly were. In the state of New York, critics broke loose. Reviews were extravagant, and reproductions numerous. The show was an immediate success. With all these other activities, Alson often managed to get down to the studio near Palm Springs and paint peaceful and tranquil canvases of the desert, a foil to the colorful Mexican themes. In March of 1926, Alson had a one-man show with more Mexican subjects at the O'Brien galleries in Chicago.

[00:53:16.91]

By this time, the Chicago public was trained to anticipate Alson's exhibitions. They responded enthusiastically. His reviews were consistently laudatory, and the reproductions flatteringly profuse. Alson always enjoyed being present at his exhibitions, but he did not go on for this one, because by March he was deep in an interesting new project. In 1925, Harvey McCarthy had started construction of the Carthay Circle Theatre.

[00:53:47.80]

He made a contract with Frank Tenney Johnson to do its curtain. But in the meantime, he had seen the Pasadena Playhouse and been enormously impressed with it. He persuaded Dwight Gibbs to take on the interior of the Carthay Circle Theatre. It came to Alson to ask him to do the foyer, a history of California. Alson loved delving into California history, and the commission was irresistible, so he took it on.

[00:54:15.20]

Harvey McCarthy was an ideal patron, giving out some carte blanche, but he was a native Californian with deep interest in its history, meticulous as to its accuracy, so he instigated a trip to San Francisco to show Alson points of early association, then on to Monterey, and finally to Sacramento, where he left us after introducing us to Miss Gehrig, the head librarian at the state library. We spent a week mulling through the marvelous files on the sixth floor of the library, with Miss Gehrig and her assistant smiling and competent, feeding us on early lore.

[00:54:54.34]

For the first time, Alson felt that his studio in Pasadena was small for his project. But by stripping its walls and bringing up ingeniously a series of weights and pulleys by which he could adjust his canvases, he set to work. In May 1926, the Carthay Circle Theatre opened with a world premiere, and we for the first time in our lives were among those on whom the spotlight was turned.

[00:55:21.06]

The canvases in the foyer were startlingly beautiful. The founding of Los Angeles, Jedediah Smith at San Gabriel, end of a long day, a covered wagon circle, arrival of the Oregon at San Francisco, Commodore Sloat taking Monterey, Governor Burnett leaving for San Jose, and the passing of the Pony Express were the big canvases. And in an adjacent corridor, Alson had also painted and hung a little portrait of John Augustus Sutter, one of James Marshall, and one of Lola Montez.

[00:55:57.14]

There were many reproductions in the local papers, the San Francisco papers, the Chicago papers, and in many magazines. And they still continued to appear. But the American Magazine of Art, of January 28th, 1928 published possibly the most satisfying cuts of the series. After his tour de force, Alson decided he would like to return to St. Lawrence to have his young son begin an understanding of boats. So in June 1926, we crossed the continent by train, and spent the summer at our island home, returning in October.

[00:56:33.87]

Eastern foliage was already beautiful, and I began to wonder if it wouldn't pull at Alson's heartstrings. But he was full of a new project and eager to return to the West Coast, for in the face of his expanding activities he had decided to build a big studio in Pasadena. At once on his return, he found a site nearby on Pasadena Avenue in an abandoned orange grove. And once again, the Reginald Johnson architectural firm made the plans with Gordon Kaufmann this time, the designer.

[00:57:07.35]

There was a big pepper tree at the rear of the lot, so the building was focused to create a patio behind the studio, where Alson might paint figures out of doors. This time, Alson knew exactly what he wanted in the studio, and Gordon Kaufmann evolved a magnificent structure. Its proportions were vast, the studio proper ascending to the height of a generous two stories, with a wide set of frosted glass windows running to the ceiling on both the north and the south sides, smaller windows on the facade looking out on the orange trees that Alson had saved, and several French doors opening onto the patio.

[00:57:48.34]

Beside the regular entrance, there was a slender opening running up to the ceiling on the north side, an exit for murals. Off the main studio, there was a big stack room and beyond an enormous dark room with a sink, two enlarging machines, rows of cupboards, and places for trays, and as well as the ordinary lighting, a series of red lights. In the main studio, there were omnipresent plugs so that Alson might rig up all kinds of lighting effects.

[00:58:18.40]

On the patio side, there was a mezzanine with a glazed sleeping porch, a bedroom and bath, and a closet for costumes, all the rooms looking onto the patio and the big pepper trees. In the lower part under the mezzanine, there was a sink for washing brushes, hot water as well as cold, a profusion of cupboards, and a large area where Alson installed a woodworking shop and power tools. An incredible studio, and Alson was radiant.

[00:58:50.13]

His first act after it was complete was to shop for a lithographic press, which after an exhaustive search he found, and beside it install a machine for cutting mattes. In retrospect, I think the remarkable thing about the studio that its proportions made it possible to encompass any addition without it ever seeming crowded. The lithographic press and its accompanying cumbersome paraphernalia was scarcely noticeable. Alson had been interested in bookbinding. Now he set up a bookbinding section, which remained equally unobtrusive. And he had, with his interest in ships, become deeply absorbed in ship models. We had haunted the marine section of big museums, and we'd made a trip to New Bedford and to Andover. And now Alson set up a full equipment for making ship models that was also inconspicuous.

[00:59:48.70]

All these activities were a sort of fringe in no way interfering with the main part of the studio where Alson worked, where often he had evening classes of a dozen or so people with their easels, and a model, and model stand. The building was Alson's supreme joy and the envy of every artist. And when after his death, my son and I felt we must give it up, dismantling was never a labor for it revealed the delight Alson had had in its various functions.

[01:00:22.31]

In March of that same year of 1927, Alson had another show of Mexican themes at the O'Brien galleries in Chicago. But he was too much involved in California to go on for it. Alson had a pleasing period in the new studio, striking off in his lithographic field, once again printing his own thing. In 1928, construction of the beautiful new building for the Pasadena First Trust and Savings Bank had begun. And Fitch Haskell, the architect, came to Alson with a proposition to do four murals, 10 feet wide and 16 feet high, of the major industries of California—oil, shipping, movies, and citrus—for the main room.

[01:01:09.80]

The assignment delighted Alson, and he spent a great part of the year working on it. When the murals were installed early in 1929, Alson's joy was twofold. He was satisfied with his work and delighted to see it emerge from the studio from the special exit, which had been planned and constructed for exactly such a purpose. Of course, the California papers were generous in their praise. But even the Chicago and some New York papers gave them columns.

[01:01:41.83]

The most [inaudible] comment along with excellent reproductions was in a national art publication, which read, "In these murals made by Alson Clark for the First National Bank of Pasadena, four of California's many and diversified industries have been chosen as the subject of what might be termed a painter's essay on progress. Splendidly drawn and painted with an excellent feeling for color, Mr. Clark gives us the story of oil, shipping, motion pictures, and horticulture in a fashion that will endure for decades to come. The murals are always lighted evenings, and the curtain is never drawn so that the passing public may see them."

[01:02:30.51]

MARGARET HUNTER: That phrase, "decades to come," was prophetic. Wasn't it, Mrs. Clark?

[01:02:35.92]

MEDORA CLARK: Yes, for they're as fresh, and beautiful, and timeless in their appeal today as they were at their installation. That same year in 1929, Wallace J. Hebberd was bringing out a reprint of Death Valley in '49 by William Lewis Manly. He'd been greatly impressed by the Carthay Circle things and had come to Alson and asked him to do the illustration. Though Alson was an excellent draftsman, he had never done book illustrations. But the simple tale of the true adventures of the Manly party and the Jayhawkers was gripping and definitely in Alson's domain, so he took on the assignment.

[01:03:18.68]

He had, of course, been to Death Valley, but now he set out eagerly on a new expedition to it, stimulated by the Manly text. As well as many drawings, he brought back several oils, one of which, a beautiful simple canvas of the shimmering valley, later in 1931 was awarded a prize at the annual exhibition of California artists. It was an interesting contrast to have the award to go to Alson's delicate rendering of a desert landscape, for in 1924 a canvas of his, a blue harbor with many boats in the foreground entitled "Catalina," had won first prize in an exhibition in the Los Angeles Museum of Art.

[01:04:03.69]

The Manly book came out in 1929. It was unfortunately a limited edition and soon exhausted. That same year in 1929, the new California Club was being built on Flower Street

in Los Angeles, a spacious poised building with a solidity of construction unusual in California. Robert Farquhar, the architect, came to Alson with a proposition that was to be on one of the upper floors, a woman's dining room looking out on the street and sunshine but prefaced by a large reception room. This room without daylight, he feared, might be somber, and he asked Alson to lighten its mood. Alson liked the commission without restrictions, and the room was a challenge, for in keeping with its dignity Alson felt the decoration should not be frivolous, but should be feminine and light.

[01:04:58.96]

He worked on details assiduously, discarding any idea of panel inserts, but deciding instead on eight ovals to be framed in unadorned gold with a life-sized figure in each on a flat background. In the big studio, he constructed and set up several ovals of varying width, and height, and curve, correcting and discarding until he found one he liked. "You mustn't be conscious of proportions," he explained. "They must be so satisfying that you don't notice them." He chose his models with great care and with equal care selected their costumes—not period pieces but something effortless of pleasing color and design. Much thought and time went into those eight murals before Alson started to paint. When the building was opened in 1930, they took their place as a part of the room, not dominant, but creating an inexplicable atmosphere of relaxation and unconscious pleasure.

[01:06:06.18]

In March 1930, Alson had an exhibition in the Stendahl Galleries at the Ambassador Hotel, filling three rooms with many large Californian landscapes and some Mexican canvases, the critics welcoming him, claiming he had refrained too long—three years—from a one-man show and the public appreciative in its response. We took a house in La Jolla once again for the summer, with Victor McLaglen, the actor, next door and Frank Lloyd Wright, the architect, across the road, both absorbing neighbors.

[01:06:42.60]

Although Alson loved California, after his initial trip to Mexico, I think his primary interest was always that country, for it contained everything he loved to paint—the mountains, the hill towns, the markets, the street life, beautiful buildings, mellow walls, and above all the peons and burros and ceaseless groupings. In March 1931, he went to Mexico again, spending two months there mostly in Taxco, and returned with a mass of beautiful things. He never lost his spontaneity, and each new lot of Mexican canvases were surer and more mature. Taxco was also a prolific year for lithography, and Alson did a series of prints, several good cuts appearing in touring topics.

[01:07:29.31]

That summer of 1931, he decided to desert the beaches and go east. But at the moment of embarkation, our son was stricken with whooping cough. So we canceled our reservations, leased a house once again in La Jolla. He and I reverted there, and Alson flew east for a tour of the gallery. Alson had been a member of the Salmagundi Club in New York City for many years. But his only contact with it had been to send on yearly a panel for the annual auction for the club fund. So he was delighted at last to relax in one of its comfortable rooms and make it his headquarters.

[01:08:07.64]

In November 1931, Alson had an important show with Mexican things in the O'Brien Galleries in Chicago, with the new note in openings, for it was on a Sunday evening, and the invitation which you were requested to present at the door read, "On Sunday evening, November 8, from five until eight o'clock, the O'Brien Art Galleries will hold open house for a few of their friends. An informal program has been planned, which includes a dance selection by Raoul and Saskia, followed by Mexican supper. This gathering will introduce a showing of paintings of Mexico by Alson Skinner Clark."

[01:08:48.25]

It was an imposing list of sponsors headed by Mr. Rafael Olvera, the Consul for Mexico, followed by Ms. Anne Morgan. Early in 1932, the rejuvenation of Olvera Street in the Mexican quarter of Los Angeles began. The street was made into a promenade solely for pedestrians.

A fountain was installed, cobbles laid, a center strip occupied by booths of Mexican merchandise created, and on either side, shops with native candle makers, and tinsmiths, and basket weavers at work. A group of actors took over a spacious old building to remodel into a theater, and came to Alson and asked him to take charge of the decorations. Interested at once, he plunged into the prospect with fervor, working out the color scheme for the interior, selecting materials, planning the lighting fixtures, and voluntarily painting eight sepia murals of Mexican life for the side walls of the building.

[01:09:48.66]

The theater was christened Teatro Leo Carrillo in honor of the actor Leo Carrillo, who had been born and raised in an adobe on the street. And it opened on April 22, 1932, with "A Night in Mexico with Don Ricardo and his Spanish Troubadours," and Senorita Adriana, dances staged by Jose Cansino. A program note read, "The murals representing interesting phases of primitive Mexican life are the work of Alson Clark, the internationally known painter of early California and Mexican scenes."

[01:10:30.33]

We felt that summer of 1932 that we must sever our connection with the beaches to allow our son to see other phases of American life. A few years before, Gordon Kaufmann had bought a small ranch for the few cattle and horses in a remote part of Colorado. He suggested since he was compelled to remain in Los Angeles that we spend the summer there, taking advantage of the setup. He had never moated there, he added, but with our superb equipment such a trip would be possible.

[01:11:01.17]

We accepted with delight. Respective jaunt of that type was an event in 1932. And on the eve of it, our friends gathered to wish us godspeed. We set off in the painting truck at dawn, reaching the [inaudible] Ranch in the afternoon of the third day. It was beautiful, cool country, lush and green with a trout-filled, icy Rio Blanco flowing through the ranch, a welcome contrast to the stark desert and the dry arroyos of California. We had a peaceful, idyllic summer. Our days were full, for we entered into all the duties of the ranch—fishing, and riding, and attending the native rodeo.

[01:11:46.91]

MARGARET HUNTER: Was this purely vacation, or did Mr. Clark also do some painting?

[01:11:51.67]

MEDORA CLARK: It was not Alson's type of landscape, but he made some drawings of the native sod-roofed cabins and, enticed by the bone structure of the cattle, dabbled in sculpture, and brought back a case of clay calves in various poses. Although it was for Alson a fallow period in color, he gave all three of us experiences in Western saddles and showed us the possibilities of motoring.

[01:12:18.01]

In 1933, Alson created and developed a new form of decoration. Gordon Kaufmann just completed an unusually beautiful residence for Malcolm McNaughton in Bel Air. Ray Glass, the interior decorator, came to Alson in despair, explaining he'd planned on sending wallpaper for the imposing entrance hall but had found nothing satisfactory. He was armed with the plans for the hall. He laid them out before Alson and asked him if he would care to take on the commission.

[01:12:52.10]

Alson had just returned from a short trip to Mexico and was in the midst of sorting and arranging canvases, but a new project was always stimulating. As a climax, Ray Glass drew from his portfolio some photographs of English countryside and an English estate, places of the preceding McNaughton generation. They were irresistible to Alson, and he decided he wanted to incorporate them as a theme for the decoration. He would choose pale beige at the color scheme to serve as a neutral background for the room. Ray Glass departed relieved and delighted. Alson had always been interested in the few panels of old wallpaper

preserved in museums and had studied them for their decorative value. But to create them himself was a new problem, and he had to evolve a method of working.

[01:13:47.75]

In the studio, we set up board panels, stacking them to long strips of wallpaper so that he was confronted with the entire scope of his surface, and could cover it uniformly. He used dry paint powder mixed with water, and he painted as often with sponges as with brushes. When they were completed, a paper hanger with a superb knowledge of his trade, placed the paper on the walls of the hall, and gave them an impenetrable shellac protection.

[01:14:21.51]

They became a flowing decoration with no trace of seams, a triumphant achievement of artists and artisans. And Mr. and Mrs. McNaughton, Ray Glass, and Gordon Kaufmann were all jubilant. Alson's wallpaper established the vogue, and architects and decorators came to him often with commissions during the ensuing decade.

[01:14:43.83]

He painted sepia scenes of New England for a dining room in Ms. Catherine Walker's home in Pasadena, the Hudson with its hills and harbors in a monotone of greens for the hall of the residence at Occidental College in Eagle Rock. Pale beige spots of Bermuda for the dining of Mr. and Mrs. Lee Bissell in Pasadena. Green monotones of the Isle of Cyprus, where they had vast copper holdings for the hall of Dr. and Mrs. Seeley Mudd.

[01:15:14.14]

A sepia early California dining room for Mrs. Mansel Clark, early California private dining room at the University Club of Pasadena, two dining rooms in Chicago, one of maps and one of 18th century pastorals, and a dining room with Watteau-type figures and deep sanguine motifs for Loretta Young and various costumes she had worn in Bel Air. Alson liked playing with watercolors and paper, but a commission for decorations in oil he always attacked with a serious pride.

[01:15:50.63]

In the dining room in the new home Mr. and Mrs. Paul Whittier in Bel Air, the dominant note was a chartreuse rug Alson painted in oils, an over-mantle mural, and between window strips of subdued gray landscapes, with vast sky and clouds and some towering cypresses. Most beautiful wall decorations that Alson did were for Donald Douglas and the library of the new Douglas home. The woodwork of the room was of a natural pale wood wax.

[01:16:23.42]

Alson did seven small oil panels of boats, each with a blue sea background, intermittent breaks leading around the room. Alson had a vast knowledge of boats. And inspired by Donald Douglas' deep interest in them, he produced a superb set, each panel not only a decoration, but an accurate transcript of its era. "The Whaler," "The Corsair," "The Battle Between English and French," "Overhauling a Slaver," "Clipper Ship," and to terminate, "Home Port."

[01:16:55.83]

Alson was always primarily a decorator, and he could never refuse even a limited request. He once made a three-panel screen of flowers painted on a background of gold leaves, made some sepia screens. And he painted a series over-portal lunettes for a French salon of a private home. Even decorated a panel door. In the new gymnasium of the Polytechnic elementary school in Pasadena, he did a frieze in oil of Pompeian figures a yard or so in height at the base of the walls.

[01:17:30.57]

With Pasadena Junior College, he did an inspiring curtain of the history of California for a new auditorium. In 1932 and again 1933, he designed the poster for the community chest. Large lithographs were spread about the area, two of which were brought to Alson to autograph as parts of permanent lithograph collections. That spring of 1933, after the McNaughton

wallpaper had been installed, Alson set to work on a very different project.

[01:18:03.90]

Having tasted the joy of the motoring in America, he decided to drive across the continent. He purchased a Chevrolet truck, replaced the wire screening with panels, put in a rear seat, built racks under the roof to accommodate canvases, an easel, and fishing rods, constructed a combination pantry and folding picnic table on the running board, placed a pocket for maps behind the front seat, hung a loose oilcloth sack with towels and soap beside it, had a ten-gallon emergency water tank with a spigot slung beneath the body, and, of course, installed a radio, all without encroaching on the space for luggage.

[01:18:45.28]

In an article about our trip in one of the newspapers, the caption under a cut of the truck read, "Artist and family crossed the continent in modern prairie schooner," adding, "travelling studio makes 9,000-mile trip." And as a trip, it was a success. But in adding 9,000 miles to the speedometer, there was little time for painting.

[01:19:11.66]

The summer of 1934, Alson decided that he wanted to pack into the High Sierras and make a permanent camp for a month. It would be a luxury camp, he said, even with plenty of books and, of course, the painting equipment. We loaded the truck, even including our Dalmatian [inaudible], restored to their natural function of saddlebags, and drove to a terminal lodge of 5,000 feet elevation, where, like other prospective campers, we spent the last night under sheets.

[01:19:45.16]

We engaged a young guide cook, and the next morning he brought our horses in single-file and our guide in the lead, the relay man in the rear, we began the climb. Our destination, Purple Lake—elevation, 14,000 feet. When at last we came to a flat clearing in the pines, a mountain brook flowing through it, its banks covered with strange, brilliant flowers, friendly unabashed trout swimming about in its clear water, Alson decided this would be our site. Tethering one horse nearby as a spare, the relay man left with our animals. The guide built a fire and started our meal. We had all the flourishes that first night and dined in mountain splendor.

[01:20:35.04]

The thermometer registered 30, but we had our fire and warm clothing to combat the cold and later our luxurious downfield sleeping bag. Air was clear, and fresh, and pure, and it never occurred to us that the altitude might be a handicap. But after we'd settled for the night, Alson began having difficulty breathing that pure, fresh air. At first, it was discomfort, then it was pain, and we realized the altitude was the cause. Propped up with pillows, wanly apologetic, he spent the night in an unending struggle to breathe.

[01:21:13.34]

We had a consultation with our guide, who knew of a camping party some five miles or so over the crest that might have retained their animals. At dawn, he set off on our sole mount, but after an interval he returned, triumphantly leading three horses. Leaving our son and the guide to break camp, Alson and I set off at once on the long descent retracing our route. It was an anxious journey, but with each cautious step of his horse downward Alson's breathing seemed to become easier.

[01:21:44.24]

When at last we reached the lodge, he was his normal self. Although the expedition for which we had held such high hopes proved a rapid fiasco, it had given us a glimpse of the most beautiful country imaginable, the very high Sierras. Now, there were still plenty of summer left. Alson went east for a tour of the gallery, this time taking his son with him.

[01:22:08.19]

In 1935, from May 29 to November 11, San Diego was the home of Balboa Park of Pacific

international exposition, to which Alson had already sent a large landscape entitled "Clouds." Alson decided to spend the summer in the vicinity, and we leased a house in Coronado. An Eastern admirer of Alson had shipped him several lithograph stones, and he was eager to try them. Harbors were full of ships, including two sailing ships, the Pacific Queen and the Star of India, the lone survivor of the famous star fleet. Alson had a wonderful summer working directly on the big stones with as much ease as though they were sketchbooks.

[01:22:53.08]

The following winter in March 1936, Alson had a show of his lithographs in the Stendahl Galleries on the opening evening, giving a lecture on the processes of lithography. In the gallery, a lithographic stone with a design with a typed statement by Alson beside it was placed in the vitrine so the public might understand the process.

It read, "I became interested in the lithography through the old French prints of Gavarni, Delacroix, Daumier. I had my own press in Paris on which all of the French prints that are now in the exhibition were produced. I now have my own press in Pasadena. The stone used is a natural Bavarian limestone, and the crayons, being greasy, adhere to the stone. When my drawing is finished, a solution of gum arabic is flowed over the stone, which closes the pores, making it impervious to ink, except where the crayon had been. It is then rolled with an ink roller while the stone is still damp, and printed under enormous pressure from these original stones. This particular lithograph was done in Mexico. It shows a different technique which can be employed, ink crayon stumps."

[01:24:14.95]

That same year, the International Printmakers Society selected Alson to make the patron's print. He drew a small ship tossing on waves and printed it in delicate grays, laboriously evolving the entire edition of 150 himself. That year of 1936, after finishing the murals in the Whittier House, Alson decided he would like to return to Europe for the summer and, if we chose, remain longer.

[01:24:44.63]

Alson came back with the news that he had reservations on the *SS Delftdag*, a Holland-American freighter carrying 25 passengers, which would pick us up in San Pedro and after three weeks or more deposit us in some European port. After countless difficult journeys in the past: the port of embarkation, the drive from our home in Pasadena in the car laden with our luggage to our staterooms on the *Delftdag* in a little over an hour seemed miraculous.

[01:25:18.35]

The voyage was ideal for an artist. Any sense of speed was completely absent, for everything hinged on freight—the amount to discharge, the amount to be taken off, the unhurried loading and unloading. Schedule is indefinite, the captain uncertain when he might make a port, equally uncertain when he might leave it. The *Delftdag* on our way up to Scotland was due to touch first at Liverpool. And the captain suggested that we might like to desert her there, leaving most of our luggage in our cabins, and make a little tour of England, returning to the ship when she returned to Tilbury.

[01:25:56.26]

We took a bus to Chester, wandered on up to York, visited other cathedral towns, finally reaching London with an ample week of sights before we had word that the Delftdag and made her way up the Thames to Tilbury. Alson, of course, mainly painted many postcards on the voyage. But he was now beginning to be eager to reach Paris and get out his equipment and do some solid work.

[01:26:24.12]

People had predicted we would find Paris radically changed. And although it was strange to be in the Hotel du Louvre instead of our apartment, Paris after almost 20 years seemed the same. From our dormers in the fifth floor of the hotel, we looked out on familiar scenes. And Alson and his son painted continuously from their fifth-floor vantage points. We visited our old haunts, walked for miles in the narrow streets, went through all the galleries

innumerable times, dined in familiar little restaurants, and the summer fled.

[01:26:58.70]

Suddenly, we knew we wanted to be in California for the winter much more than in Paris. We crossed the channel to Southampton, boarded the *SS Europa*, an East Indian freight liner with 300 passengers, sailed out into the Atlantic, touched at Curacao, Barbados, Puerto Rico, St. Thomas, Kingston, and home to San Pedro.

[01:27:24.38]

In July 1937, Alson had a lithograph show at the San Diego Museum of Fine Arts. And as usual, the city gave him glowing notices, and the museum purchased the print Carol for their permanent collection. Alson completed the murals for Loretta Young's dining room that year, and in April had a show of the new material he had brought from Europe at the Stendahl Galleries in their new elaborate quarters on Wilshire Boulevard. That spring, a Pasadena garden club took on a planting project at the Pasadena dispensary, an institution of free clinics and free medicine. The buildings wound around three neglected barren patios, where waiting patients looked forlornly only at an expanse of gray Bermuda grass.

[01:28:15.49]

The club wanted to transform it into a garden, asked Alson to look it over and buy them before they launched the work. Alson realized there would be a long interlude before shrubs gave much visual pleasure. And there was a tempting wall surface in the corridors of the big patio which he couldn't resist. He painted a series of harbors and boats in sepia, the story running around the patio. There have during the years been many reviews concerning the murals, one of which read, "To keep the walls subservient to the floral color of the patio and still make them decorative, he chose monotones of sepia."

[01:29:00.66]

Later, he supervised the decorating of the two adjoining patios and of the facade. And often during the years, as the place expanded, went down to give advice. His interest never ceased, and as late as 1941 he hung a big picture of a ship, lacquered to withstand exposure, on the end wall of the children's patio. All of the patients are poor, and the majority of them Mexicans, and many of them children. But the tradition of respect for art is held through the years, and none of Alson's contributions has ever been defaced. After his death, a little garden in his memory was planted in the third patio. In its center, a mounted sundial with an inscription of appreciation.

[01:29:47.14]

In June 1938, Alson had a one-man show of oils in the San Diego Museum of Fine Arts. San Diego always welcomed Alson's exhibitions. And one critic wrote, "San Diego has seen smaller groups of his pictures before, also an important exhibition of his lithographs, but this collection has a feeling and sense of joyousness through which artistic beauty that no one should miss. Gallery visitors should incidentally notice the frames in this show. They reveal craftsmanship and an understanding of what is logical in the framing of paintings."

[01:30:30.22]

It does take a real artist to frame pictures properly. People often asked at his exhibition if Alson made his own frames. Such a feat with Alson's prolific output would have been impossible, but he spent infinite care in his selections, often making one frame as a model and sometimes washing in colors to aid the canvas, or editing the framers product and always keeping the frames subservient to the picture.

[01:31:00.01]

Every painter likes to stretch his own canvas. It is a relaxation—at the same time, a thrill for its unknown future. And Alson had always taken a technical joy in doing his. As the last tack went into place, he would turn over his canvas, examine it minutely, tap it as a drummer sounds his instrument, his face aglow. In the countless rainy days of Paris winter, he always had ample time for the task. But in California, with its few inclemencies, he was, to his regret, often forced to order from a dealer. It was his sole condemnation of California.

[01:31:42.77]

In California, actual barter first came into Alson's life. He'd often traded pictures and prints with other artists, and with Scarpitta the sculptor a canvas in return for a bust of our son. But in California, trading took on a pioneer form. The first example came in Alson's initial one-man show at the Stendahl Galleries, when a writer offered a grand piano in exchange for a landscape of eucalyptus trees. Alson, surprised at first, mellowed, and guided by Stendhal, negotiated the deal.

[01:32:23.32]

Initiated into schooling of payment in-kind, and with a latent inherited Vermont shrewdness, Alson next struck out on his own. An excellent cabinet-maker longing to possess some of Alson's work, called at the studio and left beaming, a picture under his arm, with an agreement to make a specified number of frames in return. An Armenian eager for one of Alson's desert pictures went away happy, leaving in exchange for his picture, three tiled benches, and a great many big flowerpots filled with growing box, and a pile of berry-colored tiles. A tile manufacturer outfitted a room in return for a canvas. But negotiation reached a peak when Alson assured his appetites for sweets by trading a picture with Chicago's famous Mrs. Snyder for a life contract of two pounds monthly of her best chocolate.

[01:33:27.06]

Artists, continuously observant and alert, are usually good at games. And Alson would often watch a game new to him and then, to the astonishment of seasoned participants, swing into it with ease. On shipboard, he was always in demand for deck tennis and shuffleboard. He was also intensely fond of billiards. In the winter days in Paris, darkness would often set in early. Alson would join his friends at one of the cafes, Leon de Belfort, a favorite for its location and friendliness, to play billiards.

He played an excellent game, and was meticulous about his billiard cues. His personal cue was kept in the cafe rack of habitués, and he had also a cue which unscrewed and fitted neatly into a green flannel bag for traveling. At the St. Lawrence, Alson had been fond of tennis, and in Pasadena he'd became one of a foursome of older men of equal playing caliber to meet often on Sunday mornings at one of the club courts. He liked golf as a game in itself, and as an opportunity to enjoy the beauty that often surrounds golf links.

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[00:00:07.34]

MEDORA CLARK: In Malaga, when we were there in 1909, the English colony was playing badminton, usually between the tea hour and dinner. And Alson had joined the ranks, enjoying the exercise and developing a finesse that soon led him to be invited to their tournaments. He became enamored of the game, and determined sometime to have a court of his own. After World War I, in the one-level protected spot at our home in St. Lawrence, we established a badminton court. And in Paris the next year, we found, to our delight, there was ample space in our new grounds for a court.

In the early '20s, with the game little known in America, one of the first courts in the city. And we were forced to send to England for the net, rackets, and birds, all of which were treated with loving care, with a replacement so remote. It became the habit of our friends to gather at our court on Sunday afternoons and instigate tournaments with benches alongside for spectators. So frantic was our pace and so intense our interest that we even had lights installed against the failing day. World War II brought an abrupt termination to the era. Badminton had spanned the entire interval of peace.

[00:01:34.88]

Alson had become increasingly interested in watercolors after using the medium for his wallpapers, and for sketching on numerous trips east. In 1939, he sent two watercolors to the California Watercolor Society, and was, of course, made a member at once.

[00:01:52.00]

MARGARET HUNTER: That was the year of the international exposition at San Francisco,

wasn't it?

[00:01:56.50]

MEDORA CLARK: Yes, Mrs. Hunter. And Alson sent a big oil. And this time, we made a trip to San Francisco and spent some days on Treasure Island. In March of 1940, Alson had a beautiful one-man show of 20 canvases in the Los Angeles Museum. He had made careful choices, as always. The show was installed and hung with distinction, and perhaps, though small, was his most satisfying exhibition.

[00:02:24.20]

In the summer of 1940, we motored east, a trek that had now become polished and effortless, picked up our son on his graduation from Phillips Academy Andover, and reversing our course, motored back to the West Coast. A happy journey, for we were unconscious of the fact that it would be our last transcontinental trip.

[00:02:47.46]

The Crocker Gallery of Art in Sacramento had asked for Alson's Los Angeles Museum show intact. And in February 1941, it was shown there. We motored up to see it and enjoyed the rare privilege of establishing a friendship with Harry Noyes Pratt, its director at the time, who had discovered an unboxed gallery of now-famous collection of old master drawings that had been stored, unnoticed, in the basement for years.

[00:03:18.23]

Sacramento gave out many excellent notices and numerous newspaper reproductions. The pictures went from Sacramento to the Stanford University Museum of Fine Arts, with Pedro Lemos its Director at the time, and from there, to the Haggin Memorial Museum in Stockton. So through Alson's pictures, we were introduced to three California galleries completely new to us.

[00:03:45.07]

In the San Diego Gallery of Fine Arts, the National Watercolor Society had a show from June to September. Alson had sent an interior entitled "Our Dining Room." In August 1941, Alson had, in the La Jolla Gallery of Art, a one-man show of watercolors—his first and, as it transpired, his only exhibition of watercolors. The dominating picture was a view of San Diego Bay with perhaps the prophetic title, "Defense Harbor," for in December of that year came the crippling blow by the Japanese at Pearl Harbor, with our immediate entry into the war.

[00:04:28.94]

Art and architecture are first to suffer in a country at war, and most artists, realizing this, closed their studios and sought defense work. Alson, clever with his hands, found a precision job, but he was 65, and the grueling, precise hours and the difficulties of transportation forced him to abandon it. He was desperately unhappy in his inability to contribute, until he met other older artists and craftsmen in similar situations.

They banded together, organized a workshop, and for the duration, turned out many secret, necessary instruments at an efficient but more leisurely pace than the factories. In the ensuing years until peace, most of the galleries abandoned exhibitions of framed pictures, but many of them welcomed lithographs because of the ease of shipping. And Alson had shows in Tulsa, Phoenix, Dallas, and Andover.

[00:05:33.78]

Alson's heart had been giving him periods of difficulty, and when peace came in 1945, he was happy for our country and for the release of the fine arts once more, but he realized it carried limitations for him. He could no longer drive a car, no longer go forth in the painting truck, free to seek motifs.

[00:05:59.01]

A young man who studied with Alson and been forced to desert a career of art for commerce

now wanted to combine the two, devoting his mornings to painting with his secretary as a model, and his afternoons to his business. And he came to Alson and explained his idea, and asked him to join him. Alson had always enjoyed painting figures, and relieved and delighted at the turning events, he at once began looking up some of the lovely costumes he possessed. The secretary was an ideal model, not only beautiful and intelligent, but with a deep interest in the costumes, cleaning or washing or mending them with reverent appreciation, and conscientiously posing in professionally long seances. Alson had happy years working in his studio and sending once again to exhibitions, this time, lovely, high-keyed canvases of figures.

[00:07:03.62]

In March 1948, a pleasing thing happened to Alson. The Pasadena Society of Artists asked him to make the patron print, which it distributed as a bonus to its patron members. He chose Catfish Row, Charleston as a motif, inspired by his canvas of that name, and once again printed the big edition himself, achieving it slowly and discarding copies he felt unsatisfactory. It was the last printing he did.

[00:07:36.11]

In October 1948, Alson was suddenly taken ill with a diagnosis of pneumonia. But the drugs the war had produced, and Alson's fighting spirit brought him through the disease. After the crisis, he returned home for his convalescence. Our loving cook, with our household for 30 years, produced tempting, nourishing dishes, and his strength was slowly rebuilt.

[00:08:06.07]

Alson, always a collector, had, from early boyhood, been a philatelist, continuously adding to his collection until it comprised eight volumes. In these four months of convalescence, he enjoyed his stamps, daily patiently, painstakingly arranging them. At last, in March, his doctor told him he might resume painting. That first morning, as he was leaving, joyous to paint Ann once more, he paused with his hand on the door, turned back, a little uncertain of his ability after months away from brushes, and said gallantly and appealingly, "Wish me luck." When he returned, he brought a canvas of a lovely head of Ann.

[00:09:02.67]

The next morning, when I took his breakfast tray in to him, Alson was far away. The doctor, whom he loved, hurried to him. "He's had a stroke," he told me simply. "We must get him to the hospital at once." In the hospital, his consciousness returned, but with it, the realization of his illness. Unable to speak, he would, with his well left arm, raise his useless right arm that had been his life. He would turn it about, surveying it, then let it drop, and smile. A week later, when his doctor told us Alson was gone, my son and I could only rejoice that he had, in his lifetime, been denied only one small week of the use of that wonderful right arm.

[00:10:01.72]

MARGARET HUNTER: Are those your husband's sketchbooks in this chest, Mrs. Clark?

[00:10:05.59]

MEDORA CLARK: Yes, Mrs. Hunter, and they are perhaps the most interesting data of all. I rarely saw his sketchbooks, for when Alson came in from work, we concentrated on his canvas while his sketchbook remained in his pocket. I came across them one by one in dismantling the big studio, and all of them were mostly new to me. The persistence with which he drew heads, or horses, or burros in an infinite variety of poses explains how he was able, with a few strokes of his brush, to indicate figures or animals in his paintings, and the hundreds of drawings of doorways, or gates, or windows, or spars, or rooftops, or trees reveal the whole background.

[00:10:53.15]

This very little book here is most amusing. It is the oldest in the collection, obviously started his first year in Paris, for it begins with a meticulous expense account, as each expenditure is conscientiously itemized, even to, "two sous to a beggar." But after a bit, the expense account lags, and there are addresses of models with descriptions—"young Italian boy," "old

man with fine lines," "young French girl, good"—and overriding the addresses, beautiful little drawings of doorways or windows in the Cluny, or the facade of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, or men sitting at cafe tables. And after an entry, "[inaudible], five francs," three pages of beautiful drawings of ballet dancers.

[00:11:51.99]

MARGARET HUNTER: There are so many. [Paging through books.]

[00:12:02.94]

MEDORA CLARK: Yes. The chest is full of them. It would take days to go through them. But sometime, we should do just that, for they are rewarding in their revelation of the solid foundation on which the finished work was built.

[00:12:19.59]

MARGARET HUNTER: We are most grateful to you, Mrs. Clark, for taking us through all these lovely years. These recordings have been most enjoyable here in your husband's studio, surrounded by so many examples of his beautiful work.

[00:12:36.73]

MEDORA CLARK: And thanks to you, Norman Patten, for making possible this recording, started April 21, 1956, and ended today, March 10, 1957.

[END OF TRACK AAA_clark56_59_m]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]