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Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Chuck and Jan Rosenak, 1998 December 10

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Transcript

Preface

Note: This interview was conducted in preparation for the exhibition In Sight: Portraits of Folk Artists by Chuck Rosenak at the Archives of American Art, 1285 Avenue of the Americas, New York City, January 22, 1999 - April 30, 1999.

Interview

LK: Liza Kirwin
CR: Chuck Rosenak
JR: Jan Rosenak

LK: This is Liza Kirwin for the Archives of American Art interviewing Chuck and Jan Rosenak in Tesuque, New Mexico. It's December 10, 1998 and I wanted to just begin with a couple of broad questions about how you became involved in the folk art world to begin with.

CR: Alright. When we became involved in the folk art world there was no such thing. The only people who seemed interested in it were Bob Bishop, Bert Hemphill before us and a few others. We collected what we considered twentieth-century American art, artists of our generation. In the 60s, the price of that material rose at an enormous rate and by 1970 was beyond our means. In 1973, I believe, there was a small exhibition in New York City at a cooperative gallery which included the work of Mike Carpenter and George López and other luminaries. Prior to that we'd seen a case at the Smithsonian National Museum.

JR: It was the Smithsonian's History Museum at 12th and Constitution.

CR: The History Museum contained work, unpainted carvings by artists José Mononagon, George López, and Edgar Tolson. We used to meet for lunch in the cafeteria there from time to time and we always went to that case.

JR: In fact I remember saying that we should call a gallery in Córdova [New Mexico]. Little did we know how small it is. Even today when it's less isolated, there's still no gallery up there.

CR: In 1973 Edgar Tolson was exhibited in the Whitney Biennial.

JR: The date's in our book. It's ‘73.

CR: It was ‘73 also. We thought it was the best piece in the exhibition and we determined to find Edgar Tolson. Jan eventually located, Mike Hall, and he warned us that to visit Edgar Tolson was extremely dangerous because they made boot- leg whiskey in Campton, Kentucky, where he lived and someone might shoot at us.

JR: Let me interrupt one minute. It was hard to find Mike because the piece was listed as belonging to the Pied Serpent Gallery in Detroit and I couldn't find it. Eventually. However, it turned out to be Mike Hall.

CR: We learned through [Tom] Armstrong that Hall had brought the piece in to the Whitney.

JR: Mike Hall was in that show himself.

CR: Mike Hall's work was in that show, so we found him, despite being warned not to go to Kentucky, we went. It wasn't much of a drive from Washington, DC. We visited Edgar Tolson and that started us off.

LK: And that was in 1973?

JR: No we visited later. It was probably the next year that we visited Tolson in Kentucky.

CR: Instead of going to New York to look for modern art we visited Edgar Tolson and that was the start of the whole thing. We didn't know that there was such a thing as a folk art world.

JR: We just liked the piece.

CR: We were going our own way.

JR: And then the next time we bought something we were up in New York in 1975 for a show of a California artist

we owned showing at Nancy Hoffman Gallery. We had heard about some show at this non-profit gallery, Fairtree, on Madison Avenue. It no longer exists, but we did go over there. They had some of the pieces in the basement, including Miles Carpenter and George López among others. They gave us Jeff Camp's name. He was then in Richmond, which wasn't far from Washington. So we bought some pieces from the Fairtree gallery and we then went to see Jeff Camp. After that, we began to visit artists and that's how it really all started in the mid-1970s.

LK: Were you collecting other kinds of art before you came to this?

CR: Oh, yes.

JR: Contemporary.

LK: American?

CR: No, also European.

JR: We had a good sized collection of Spanish art.

CR: After receiving several fees in the law practice we took a couple trips to France and Spain, and we bought Spanish art. We did then what we do now -- we also visited artists in France. We visited them in Spain when we could find them. We bought the work of Saura and Milloros and Feito.

JR: All the well known Spaniards of that generation. In the 60s when we were collecting contemporary art, you could buy internationally- known artists for very little money. We had a Tinguely for instance.

CR: Also Takis.

JR: We still have some of these works , but we don't have all of it. We've given others to museums and sold a few. So we had a fairly large collection of contemporary art.

LK: When you first saw that Tolson in the Biennial and picked it out as your favorite, what were the qualities of that art that appealed to you?

CR: Well, it's hard to answer, but we have never looked for artists who worked in schools or who copied or whose art did not originate from their own heart and soul. We were looking for a personal expression and an personal vision..

JR: The Tolson was unlike anything else in the show.

CR: That piece was unlike anything else in the show.

JR: It was a strong piece. It was...

CR: We had already collected the work of some of the Chicago artists who were in that show. I believe [Roger] Brown was in the show and [Karl] Wirsum.

JR: We practiced law initially in Milwaukee. That's how we became familiar with some of the Chicago contemporary artists and of course they were always interested in folk art, but I don't that think that we were really aware of that until later on.

CR: So then we thought why should we buy the work of the Chicago artists who were influenced by Yoakum and Godie and other folk artists when we could buy the work that created the vision that the Chicago artists were working with. Over the period of a few years it evolved that's what we should do.

JR: And we later were reinforced in this when we saw the show in LA some years ago, Parallel Visions, the exhibition had some of the folk art and some other art. It wasn't only our opinion, many other people thought that some of contemporary folk art and outsider art was stronger than the contemporary works by trained art.

CR: That's what I thought we should do with our limited funds. We worked for the government for many years. While we had an adequate income, we had no real capital assets -- we were not wealthy enough to continue even if we had wanted to buy Warhols and Lichtensteins.

LK: What agencies did you work for?

JR: I worked for the Interstate Commerce Commission in various positions and I was on Capitol Hill for a couple of years. Then I came back to the ICC as Legislative Counsel. I was also an administrative law judge.

CR: I worked for the Small Business Administration in Washington.

JR: Chuck was a litigator. We both traveled some. Chuck in various jurisdictions. We often gave speeches and afterwards we would get out and meet some of the Southern artists.

CR: I was in and out of the federal courts. Given six months time and a rental car, I could visit almost anywhere in the United States.

JR: At our agency, the commissioners got first choice on speeches and if they didn't want to go, the top staff got to go. The commissioners preferred to go to Hawaii and California, so I went to Georgia and Alabama and met Howard Finster and folks like that.

LK: What was Jeff Camp's operation like in the mid-1970s when you first met him?

CR: Jeff at first worked out of a very small gallery in Richmond. The art spilled out onto the sidewalk.

JR: It was chock full of objects. We bought our first Ashby from Jeff Camp.

CR: Yes we did.

JR: It's sweeter than most of his. Later we found some of his tougher works.

CR: Then he lived in a row house and his wife at the time was a legal secretary in Richmond -- they divorced, the shop closed soon after, and he moved to Tappahannock [Virginia].

JR: Before that, for a short time, he had a plantation house.

CR: He bought a plantation house on the Eastern Shore of Maryland which would have cost a half a million dollars just to trim the big oak trees.

JR: They had an allee of oak trees. It was gorgeous. We had a lunch with them once on packing boxes there.

CR: We all went out and got some hard-shell crabs.

JR: I think that's one of the first times we had seen a Lanier Meaders face jug. I don't think we had visited Meaders yet. He [Jeff] had some face jugs around.

CR: Then he bought and restored a house in Tappahannock.

JR: And now I guess he's back in Richmond, isn't he?

LK: Yes he is.

CR: We haven't seen him for many years.

LK: Did he introduce you to many new people in the South, the artists that he was representing?

CR: Well Jeff Camp and Bert Hemphill and Mike Hall called themselves the folk art mafia. They were always very secretive. We would see the work, but they often would not disclose the location of the artists.

JR: Jeff was a dealer, so it wasn't to his advantage to be too forthcoming.

CR: Jeff used to come to our house from time to time and sell us things.

JR: And we'd visit him --

CR: And we'd visit him. Bob Bishop who they considered to be part of the group, was entirely the opposite. He was very open and every time we went to New York we would visit him. We would bring objects for the museum. He would accept them and he would say, "Come on in the office," and he would show us pictures that people had sent him and writings that he had collected.

JR: He liked to keep in touch with artists and collectors.

CR: He would always disclose the location of artists.

JR: Amazingly it was at Bob's house that we first saw Ike Morgan, a Texas artist who is now very important. We were surprised a couple of years ago when the museum of American Folk Art in New York was doing an inventory. It turned out that we had given that museum about 60 pieces. We would bring them up from

Washington.

CR: It was informal. Or Bob would come -- Bob generally would drop in on us every six months or so wherever we were. Usually we were here. He visited us when we were in Washington. We would also see him in New York.

JR: The museum was smaller too in those days. They didn't have as many committees that had to rule on gifts.

CR: It was Bishop who influenced us and became our mentor, much more than Hall or Hemphill.

JR: Hall was of course from Detroit, so we didn't see him as often.

CR: We did visit Hall at his home.

JR: Yes, once at least. And Bert we visited once. Camp we saw more often.

CR: Then he [Camp] drew into himself and after a while he went his own way. It was Jan and I who told him about Howard Finster.

JR: Yes, that isn't well known.

LK: Oh, no he didn't tell me that.

CR: Who?

LK: Jeff never told me that.

JR: No he never told anyone that. He saw Finster first at our house.

CR: There were two ways that we learned about Howard Finster we had a copy of Missing Pieces the catalog for the exhibition in Georgia that was done by, what was her name? She's disappeared from sight. But she did Missing Pieces.

LK: I know the catalog.

CR: It was ‘77 or ‘78

JR: We've probably given it to you.

CR: I had seen it and I think there was one Finster in it.

JR: It seems like part of that show did come to the Library of Congress. Part of that show.

CR: Yes it did. Remember we were asked to be advisors for -- and the Carter visit. That's a story in itself.

JR: The Carters were there -- not Jimmy -- but his wife and daughter.

CR: The FBI called me once when it came to Washington to ask if we would be experts to explain to Amy and Rosalind about folk art and we got cleared and we went down to the Library of Congress. Finster came -- he got confused and took a cab from Baltimore. No one wanted to pay the cab fare and there was a big --

JR: I think you paid it.

CR: Eventually the Library of Congress reimbursed me.

JR: It may have been EOM [Eddie Martin] who was with him -- there were a couple of artists who flew in together and somehow they got separated in Baltimore.

CR: They were told to follow the mink coat of the governor's's wife -- she was in first class. Finster and EOM were told just follow the fur coat. They got lost and they got in a cab and they said take us to the museum and they went to Baltimore and they said that's the wrong museum and they sent them in a cab to the Library of Congress. Anyway --

JR: They did get there.

CR: The Carters arrived several hours late and were rushed into a private room where they had a reception. We weren't there. Then the experts, so called, were lined up in the hallway to answer questions if they had any. Mrs. Carter and Amy were marched through the gallery and when Amy came to the work of what's his name?

JR: Who?

CR: It's one of the -- she said he was slave to my grandfather and Mrs. Carter grabbed her and carried her past the experts and --

JR: Could it have been Ulysses Davis?

CR: It was something like that. No, it was the scene painter. And the experts were told to go home.

JR: Anyway you were going to tell her about Finster.

CR: I had a copy of Missing Pieces. In 1978, I had a case in federal court in New Orleans so I had a stop over in Atlanta, I rented a car and visited Nellie Mae Rowe and Howard Finster. Hemphill had already visited Finster, but I told Jeff Camp about the artist.

JR: I think we were the third person to visit him. I think the several from the Library of Congress had been there.

CR: [Ralph] Rinzler.

JR: Rinzler and Hemphill. So we were about the third to visit Howard. It was many years ago.

CR: When Jeff came out to the house, I said Jeff, "If you want to get rich, sign him up." We had some work of his; we showed it to Jeff. Jeff didn't say anything then. Then we were in Chicago and we saw Phyllis Kind. She denies this because she says I tell her I've known her for thirty years and she says she's only forty years old.

JR: She says she's not that old.

CR: She's denies that she's known us for that long, but she's known us since 1959. And I said to her -- and we had some small Finster's with us -- "Phyllis, you want to get rich, take his work." And she said, "Finster Winster, who likes Finster Winster."

JR: At that time, we were buying art from her; she wasn't dying to turn that relationship around.

CR: Her artists wanted to buy the work of folk artists --

JR: and so she did get some Finsters and later became a major dealer.

CR: Then she talked to Camp and Camp went down there with a truck, a pickup truck and bought all those Finsters and took them to Phyllis Kind.

JR: Some of them. He kept some.

CR: He kept some. He sold some to us, but that's how the early Finsters got distributed.

JR: There was one piece that was writing on tin. It's in the Smithsonian now. You had left behind and you asked Jeff to picked it up for you.

CR: That's right.

JR: But later on, Jeff thought that we shouldn't be allowed to visit Howard. That's were we sort of came to a parting of the ways with Jeff.

CR: Anyway that's how we got into collecting Finster's work.

JR: Chuck was alone at the time of the first visit. Later, I had a speech in Atlanta and we went back to see him. On the way Chuck said, "Now, Jan, we don't need anymore Finsters, we have enough." I agreed with him, but of course, we ended up filling the car with Finster pieces. We must have bought twenty on that trip. It was fun. Paradise Garden was in better shape then.

CR: Why you collect and what kind of insanity it is to do it. That's for someone else.

JR: It's just been fun for us.

CR: For us it's been fun.

JR: We still go and see Finster when we are in Georgia. He doesn't meet the public anymore except on Sundays. However, we've known him for so long that he always invited us to we him at his house.

CR: He's now the wealthiest man in Summerville. He lives in a great big white brick house with a swimming pool.

LK: He has his own Graceland.

JR: Yeah, his swimming pool, which a horse apparently belonging to a former owner kicked a hole in it. The last time we were there his grandson was going to repair it.

JR: I don't know if he did.

LK: How did you come to these publishing ventures. Like the first one, the Encyclopedia [the Museum of American Folk Art Encyclopedia of Twentieth-Century Folk Art and Artists (New York: Abbeville, 1990)] how did that come about?

CR: Well that wasn't the first thing I wrote.

LK: No.

JR: He'd written articles.

CR: Bob Bishop had discussed with me doing a column in Folk Art [the magazine of the Museum of American Folk Art] and I wrote an article on [Steve] Ashby and another one... I had the bug.

JR: He started to write articles.

CR: Because I had written that article. Then I wrote an article on S.L. Jones, which was published in ....

JR: Golden Seal a West Virginia publication.

CR: I realized, (Bob and I would talk about this at great length), that if twentieth- century folk art was to become important there needed to be writers and books and something had to happen in New York. But in the end, it wasn't New York that did it. New York is sort of an isolated community in the folk art world. Bob had written about thirty-one or thirty-two books. He said I should and then after the Black Folk Art show [at the Corcoran], Bill Ferris came out to our house in 1982 and approached me, said he'd like me to write a book to follow up the Black Folk Art book for the University of Mississippi.

JR: From a collector's viewpoint.

CR: From a collector's viewpoint. And I wrote a draft of a book then and submitted it to the University of Mississippi.

JR: There were some funding problems. They wanted us to contribute if we wanted color.

CR: Then it ended up if I ever wanted to get that book published, I would have to pay for it and I refused. So what happened was that after we moved here to Santa Fe, I knew that the artists had to be documented --

JR: We were doing that all along--

CR: And that there had to be writing. After I moved to Santa Fe in 1985, early in ‘85 I made two phone calls on the same morning. One was to Lynda Hartigan and the other was to Bob Bishop and I said to both of them now we have some time we could do a book and an exhibition on twentieth century American folk art. I never received a reply from Lynda, but Bob Bishop appeared here.

JR: He used to come out for the opening of the opera and we'd have some of the trustees for dinner and so on. It was about 1988.

CR: Or perhaps earlier.

JR: He came out here several times. Chuck wanted to write about was artists he knew -- that's what we were talking about, twenty artists or thirty, said that he felt there was a great need for an encyclopedia of folk art.

CR: Twentieth century, much broader than anything I had envisioned.

JR: We had never envisioned anything that broad. But Bob Bishop said he felt it was essential. He said that he didn't have any staff who had time to do it and would we do it? We really wanted to write -- we agreed we'd do fifty, we didn't want to do an encyclopedia. We lost that battle. I think there are 255 artists in the Encyclopedia. Bob asked us to write it and he got a publisher and that's how all this started.

CR: Bob Bishop if he had something in his mind he never gave up on it. It might take him a year or so longer than he envisioned but he always did what he said.

JR: He had a collector-friend who was a publisher he thought would do it, but the Encyclopedia turned out to be quite expensive.

CR: Nelson was on his board.

JR: He wanted to do mostly paperbacks.

CR: The way it came about was that Bob called us one day and said we should go to breakfast in New York with an editor he thought might do it. We flew to New York. The publisher's ideas and our ideas were similar but they were more expansive than we had envisioned. Susan Costello, of Abbeville Press, really taught me how to write

JR: She was a wonderful editor.

CR: She was the editor. They had submissions from other people including the word outsider. I pointed out to them that there was no definition in the English language dictionary of an artist who was an outsider. They decided not to use that term.

JR: It may be in a dictionary now.

CR: It's not in any dictionary I've ever seen.

JR: Well this was ten years ago.

CR: In 1989.

JR: We had basically one year to write the Encyclopedia.

CR: They gave us one year.

JR: I was doing legal work at the same time. I don't know now how we ever did it, but we got it done.

CR: We traveled the entire country --

JR: Revisited a lot of the artists --

CR: By plane and by car.

JR: We finished on schedule and then the Museum had the show at the same time in New York "Cutting Edge" selections from our collection in 1990. It opened in December 1990.

CR: December 1990. It ran for several months then toured the country.

JR: That's lead to everything that happened since. So that's why we dedicated one of the books to Bob Bishop -- we felt he was really very important.

CR: By that time Bob Bishop was very ill. He opened his house to us, but --

JR: And to the collectors --

CR: A lot of collectors came. He was quite ill and so we didn't spend much time with him after that.

JR: But he was very important. When you were talking about our conversations with Bob -- many collectors the Arients [Jim and Beth], the Lowes, ourselves came to folk art from contemporary art and that's the way it's going in New York today. The reason Bishop championed artists like Kathy Jakobsen and Mattie Lou O'Kelley --

CR: [Emily] Lunde --

JR: is that he thought he could bring his collectors, along with this interim step. He himself liked 19th century tougher artists like Doyle, Ike Morgan and so on. It just didn't really work. It turns out that those people are still collecting carrousels.

CR: We were never interested in the decorative arts.

JR: Unless you consider grotesque face jugs, probably not.

CR: No they're not decorative.

JR: No.

CR: We were never interested in the antiquey antique. We came from an art background -- we never studied art in school, if we had it probably would have ruined us. But we did come from a collecting background and so we were looking for artists and art. We were not looking for anonymous work or cute objects. We felt that if an artist did something, he had a right to have a name and he had a right to be known. What were his desires? Where did he come from? Why did he create something? And so we were looking for something different than most museums at the time.

JR: The reason we felt we had to document the art was that there were almost no sources in those days. Chuck was also photographing the artists. We gave up on tapes because it just was too difficult.

CR: Too expensive to transcribe them.

JR: Yes. They're really no good unless you can transcribe them. We transcribed a few and there were numerous errors and so we quit.

LK: Did you fold your earlier idea that you had presented to the Center for Southern Culture that Bill Ferris was heading up, was that information then folded into the Encyclopedia?

CR: Yes. We did biographies of, I believe, twenty or twenty-five artists.

JR: It was a very small number, about twenty artists.

LK: Because I have run across in your papers typescripts, more extensive typescripts for individual artists.

CR: What happened is the publications of museums and universities are not trade publications done for profit necessarily. In order for a publisher to make money we had to develop a tight format. The original format was developed over exchanging documents with Susan Costello and Bob Bishop over a period of about six months. I don't know if you have those early drafts or not. We may have thrown them out.

JR: I'm surprised that you have earlier drafts written for the University of Mississippi. It could be, you know he's written articles. It could that they are drafts for articles.

LK: It could be for articles.

JR: Anyway Chuck's original idea was just to tell a tale about some people we had visited. When we were slated to do the Encyclopedia, obviously it had to be a much tighter format.

LK: So the parameters for the Encyclopedia were something that you worked out with the editor and with Bob Bishop?

CR: With Susan Costello and Bob Bishop.

JR: Because their names were on it. It is the Museum of American Folk Art Encyclopedia.

CR: Costello realized if you get rid of " he was born at" and a discussion of where he lives, and you just indicate the date of birth, residence, and education you have skipped about two pages of typing ☺

JR: And it's very boring to read. Our later book, the Collector's Guide, no longer has this information, in the first paragraph, instead it's in the margin. The same thing with the Santo book and it really helps because if read biographies it gets very boring to read John Doe was born in Mississippi on such and such a date --

CR: And they had five siblings --

JR: but that information is necessary.

CR: You don't need the siblings. So it was a matter of developing a style. The early manuscript with Mississippi was probably formatted according to Ferris's style and a couple of books that he wrote --

JR: Or your desire to tell some stories.

CR: It's very similar writing for law.

JR: That's one reason why we've been able to meet deadlines. Sometimes we've surprised editors because a lot of times artists especially, or writers, are very late in getting things in. We always had deadlines and met them.

CR: I used to write a lot of briefs. When you are talking about the kind of writing we did and do, 2,000 words a day is a minimum. If someone's going to pay you $200 an hour, you've got to turn out more than five pages a day.

JR: But Chuck still likes to tell stories; he does that in his introduction.

CR: And I do it by quotes, which we worked out, and I do it by snappy sentences, so over a period of time, with the help of Susan Costello and other editors --

JR: At Northland Publishing we've had good editors also --

CR: With the help of editors, a style evolved which was commercially acceptable to a trade publication. It might not be acceptable to a university and it's been criticized from that standpoint.

LK: Well it has a broader audience.

JR: Fortunately.

CR: We did win an award by the American Societies of Libraries for the reference book of the year for the Encyclopedia.

LK: I didn't know that.

JR: It wasn't only our book. I think they chose about ten books.

CR: Reference book of the year in their magazine.

JR: Well maybe for one category. Our second book came because there wasn't much going on out here among santeros. The ones we had collected had mostly died, and we didn't find much going on. Then we discovered Navajo folk art and we suggested to Susan that Abbeville do a book on Navajo folk art and the publisher said -- we may have told you this story -- that it was too narrow. She wanted us to do a book on American Indians. We said we wouldn't live long enough. We went to Northland Publishing and they liked the idea. We did a book for them. Then, Susan wanted an update of the Encyclopedia and we did the Collector's Guide [Contemporary American Folk Art: A Collector's Guide (New York: Abbeville, 1996)]. After that, Dave Jenney, a Northland publisher, was here in Santa Fe. He suggested we do a book on santeros and we said we'd think about it. We went to market, Spanish market, which is held every summer. We found that in the few years that we had not been paying attention, a lot was going on and so we did that book. Originally the book was going to be about twenty artists; it turned out to be forty -- so our books always grow somehow.

CR: Now, with the photography, starting with the early articles, I believe the Ashby article was the first about 1979, 78 or 79. With that, I realized that articles should have photographs of the artists included so that people have some idea about them. I could not afford to take a photographer with me on my travels. In those days, the Small Business Administration had an office on L Street right off the corner of 15th. The Washington Post was across the street. Down the block on the left side of 15th Street was the Ritz Camera store. The Post photographers, when they took pictures for their own use, would go there to have them printed and also to buy their own equipment. Of course, pictures that were taken for the Washington Post were processed in the Washington Post darkroom. However, photographers would often visit the camera store. At the noon hour, I would hang out at Ritz Camera, and, when the photographers came in, not every day, but occasionally, if I had to solve a problem -- what equipment to buy, what film to use, how to handle shadows around eyes, how to handle shadows when a man's wearing a hat and so forth -- instead of going to a course at school I would show my work to the photographers who came in there, and they all chatted with me. They were some of the best photographers in the world. They came from all over the world. When I would ask them a question, how did you get this picture in natural light with this grade of contrast between light and shadow, they would tell me.

JR: You might say that you had done some photography in your youth.

CR: As a kid I had a darkroom --

JR: He just hadn't done it in a while --

CR: I started with a Brownie camera in about 3rd or 4th grade. You know you learn tricks if you have a Brownie camera and you are taking pictures of the grade school football game and everything comes out blurred. Then you find out that, if you run in the same direction as the action and as fast as the action, you can get a picture of a guy running down the field even with a Brownie camera of a guy running down the field. So you learn tricks like that. It can't be done by accident.

JR: It takes a lot of work. You have some of Chuck's pictures of the Navajo and you've probably noticed that

most Navajo men wear cowboy hats. Then, if they wear glasses too, you've got a real problem.

CR: How not to get a reflection on eyeglasses -- very difficult. All of these things. We couldn't set up like a studio because the artists we photographed wouldn't sit still, and Jan was usually in a hurry.

JR: We were always in a rush. It was a little easier with the santeros because they're close by and we could go back and revisit. But on our trips across the country for the Encyclopedia and the Collector's Guide, time was a factor.

LK: It's a one-day shot.

CR: One hour.

JR: The same thing is true of the art. That's what we tell collectors -- try and collect in your area, so that you can go back and get the best. You're going across the country, you have one visit with an artist, you know that's it.

LK: What kind of equipment were you using when you first started photographing these artists?

CR: I used a Cannon A-1, at first.

LK: And you were shooting color.

CR: I was shooting color negatives because I learned that a color negative could be turned into a black and white print, a slide, or a color print, and I never knew what anybody would want.

JR: If you took color, they wanted black and white, if your took black and white, they wanted color. But now we do mostly black and white.

CR: Then I bought a second A-1, which I gave to Jan. She seldom uses it. So I use one with black and white, the other with color slides. And I used a series of lenses from 28 mm to 200 mm. I found that, to take a picture that's interesting, you never can use the standard lens which is 44-55 mm, because then you are looking at the same perspective as a point-and-shoot camera and people just think it's a snapshot. So I always try to get a perspective that worked for me at a different range. Also I can not put a camera in the face of a folk artist, so I have to back away from them or they feel threatened. I use a long range lens, a 200 mm lens blurs the background so that it's not distracting, and I just get a white or gray background. In that way, I can stand fifteen feet away from the artist. All of this evolved over a period of years. Now I use a Nikkon F-4 and I use a variety of lenses. The flash equipment today is much better than the flash equipment was when I started. I can use a slave flash and I carry two bodies, one with color one with black and white. I use relatively slow film because fast is not necessary for mt purposes. I can shoot most things at 125th to 250th of a second. For a portrait, I do not need great depth, but if I have to, I can slow the camera to get depth.

LK: So you learned a lot of these technical things in the Ritz Camera stores.

CR: In the Ritz Camera store in Washington. They have a whole string of store.

LK: I know Ritz Camera.

CR: Do you?

LK: Oh, sure.

JR: I don't know if that store's still there. Probably not. The Post took over a number of buildings.

CR: The Post took the whole block and tore down the hotel that was there.

LK: When you photograph artists what are you trying to bring out? It's probably different for every encounter, but --

CR: No it's the same.

LK: The same, alright.

CR: I want to show enough detail of an artist's face and body, so somebody can learn a little about him. Some background is also helpful. Editors like having art included in the picture and Jan likes it also.

JR: I like it for slide shows because, if Chuck is doing a slide show, you may have some people in the audience who do not know that artists' work. Unless you show the work, or combine a photo of the artist and the work -- like you're going to do it with Nick Herrera. If people can know what the work looks like, it's very helpful.

CR: What I want is to catch something in an artist's expression, his or her eyes and face, that tell something about the artist. I find that I can do this in a close up and that's what I want for my own personal preference.

JR: Chuck really likes to do portraits of the artists.

CR: Yes.

JR: They are often in their studios.

CR: I want to show them in a flattering way. So many times magazines and books show an artist with an unflattering expression or pose. I don't want to show them looking like freaks -- I can't stand pictures of myself that look that way. If they are a little heavy. I don't want to show them looking fat. So I don't want a paunch.

JR: We want to show them as they are, but we don't want them to be insulted.

CR: I want them to look good.

JR: Remember Eulogia Ontega and his wife were very upset when somebody published a very unflattering photo of them. We don't want the artist to look at this and say, "What has he done to me?"

LK: A sympathetic portrait.

CR: I don't want any red eye or anything like that.

JR: We got a Christmas card where the dog had red eye. Chuck really got a kick out of that --

CR: The artist's photo has to look like a human being.

LK: Do you find that most artists are happy to be photographed or reluctant?

JR: Dan Hot --

CR: Oh Dan Hot didn't want to be. He's a Navajo and the Navajo sometimes feel that you are taking part of their spirit if you photograph them.

JR: The older Navajos. That isn't true of the younger ones.

CR: That isn't true of the young ones. The photo of Hot was a very difficult situation. We were in an outside brush arbor, where the Navajo's move in the summer. It's open on all sides but it has a roof. END OF TAPE 1 SIDE 1 BEGINNING OF TAPE 1 SIDE 2

CR: He was wearing a hat and the shadows are very deep. Hot has a very rough-and-tumble granite-like outdoor face and he holds up his finger after a time -- one only.

JR: He spoke no English --

CR: And I did it, I took one photo and it worked. Usually I take more than one, a number.

JR: Most people have not minded being photographed -- Lee Godie was an exception; she didn't want to be photographed.

CR: Lee Godie never wanted to be photographed -- I had to trick her. The first photographs, maybe the only one I took of her, were on the Michigan Avenue bridge across the Chicago River on the south side of the bridge.

JR: And it was cold and windy.

CR: Lee used to stand there with what she called her " right mural" case, which was a portfolio of drawings. And she said no photographs. So I said OK and I walked across Michigan Avenue with a long lens and Jan persuaded her that she should --

JR: No, you took one from a distance but then we finally persuaded her you could take one of Lee and I together, and there was a life raft what do you call it?

CR: A life preserver behind glass.

JR: She thought that we should fix our hair; we used it as a mirror.. She always told us about how great her diet was and she'd be eating these cheesy things.

CR: So then I walked down the sidewalk with a long lens and Jan does not appear in the picture. But Lee Godie is a special case. Most people do not object to photos.

LK: Could you talk a little bit about the difference between the Encyclopedia and the Collector's Guide, because there is very little overlap between the two publications in terms of who was included.

CR: We could not include everything that was in the Encyclopedia -- we wanted it to be an update. The Encyclopedia cost a great deal of money to publish. Abbeville thought that collectors would like a smaller book to take with them divided by regions. That was the editor's idea, not ours. We want primarily new artists so we met with them. Jan generally picks the list.

JR: Well it was supposed to be an update so it was mainly new artists. However, for people who didn't have the Encyclopedia we had to include some of the great masters and that was a tough choice, whom to choose to include again. Also we wanted to stress the --

CR: regions --

JR: And the later part of the century. That is explained in the Collector's Guide, that we left out most people who worked primarily before 1950. [Looking in the book for the photo of Lee Godie] Yes that's the one. She had just sort of fixed her hair in front of the life preserver. I suppose you don't have that? The museum has that?

LK: I think we have that.

CR: Yes. You may not have the negative. You can tell by this picture that I am using a long lens because the background has mostly gone out of focus. If I had been seven or eight feet from her with a modern lens, the depth of focus would be much greater.

JR: So those are the two main differences: there were a lot of new artists included and more recent artists.

LK: When you got the contract to do that book then you again went on the road?

CR: Yes. Absolutely.

JR: From here all the way across the South to Florida.

CR: First we went and photographed the artist in Oregon that was not included in the Encyclopedia.

LK: Rodney Rosebrook.

CR: Rosebrook because he was 93 or 94.

JR: He was the oldest artist in the book. He died shortly there after.

CR: We thought we'd better get there. Thereafter, we went everywhere where we thought there might be artists.

JR: We did several different trips. The longest trip was across the country ending up in Florida. We did a separate trip to California. We flew. We also visited the Midwest. Our kids are there, so that was a plus.

CR: And Columbus, Ohio, New York City.

JR: Yes, we made separate trips to regions like Ohio and West Virginia, where there were a number of folk artists.

CR: It is highly unlikely that somebody could do this travel at a university or museum level without financial help.

JR: It's very expensive. We financed all our travel, ourselves.

CR: We got advances, but they never covered all costs. We never did it for money, although the publishers did it to make a profit.

JR: We didn't. We did it because we were interested.

CR: We had the opportunity. We could do it. Most people could not do it. It looks easy when you see it, but it isn't.

LK: Oh, no it doesn't look easy.

JR: But to some people it may because the entries are short.

LK: Yeah but the amount of work, just in the distance you traveled.

CR: I would spend as long as three or four hours on the first paragraph of some of these entries. The rest would come pretty easily, once I had that paragraph. We discovered computers in the middle of the Encyclopedia. I used to write like a lawyer in longhand on a yellow legal pad. But later, I would throw up ideas of sentences on a computer and then pick from them and work them around.

JR: There is one additional thing we should say. This is a collector's guide so Abbeville felt that we should not include many artists whose work could not be collected. Abbeville did let us include the Watts Tower. But a couple of other people were eliminated because they were primarily environmentalists. We included very few environments. Only a few. Except, for instance, Robert Howell because he sells smaller pieces from his environment. But generally, environments are not included. In the section, How to Use the Guide, we pointed out that we were leaving out most of the artists who worked in the first half of the century.. The Encyclopedia did include a number of earlier artists but the Collector's Guide did not.

LK: Did you have more control, controls not the right word, but the Encyclopedia is really broad reach --

CR: In the beginning, a committee was set up at the Museum of American Folk Art to select artists for the Encyclopedia.

JR: It fell through somehow.

CR: Lee Kogan and the Museum of American Folk Art were going to have students work on this --

JR: And they did help us with some entries.

LK: They made recommendations.

CR: No

JR: They did some research.

CR: What happened is, under the museum approach and the scholastic approach, in interviewing a folk artist, you needed first a form to fill in the information you were looking for --

JR: So it took them some time to develop the form.

CR: It took them quite a while to devise the form. By that time we were well into the project.

JR: You might have some of those forms.

LK: I do. I've seen those in the files.

CR: We were given only a year to do the book so we couldn't wait for the form.

JR: We went ahead --

CR: And they did help.

JR: They had some good students who've become folk art collectors.

CR: There was assistance, but mainly we had to do it. There was very little disagreement except the Museum wanted to include more -- they wanted to include more of Arnett's artists and --

JR: more Dials --

CR: more Dials. I wrote the publishers a memo saying we can't fill this book with happy little Dials working in their father's backyard.

JR: In fact, Arnett has really dropped the other Dials now, because it turned out over time that it actually hurt Thornton Dial's reputation to have all his kids making art.

CR: There were minor disagreements, but Bob Bishop always backed us 100%.

JR: And we were very grateful for the assistance that we did have from the museum and I think that it's important their name is on it too. I think that helped --

CR: Their name is on it, but they didn't put any money in it.

JR: One thing that did lead to the Collector's Guide was that we received a lot of calls after the Encyclopedia by people who were traveling about artists to visit in the region. The Collector's Guide was intended to fill that need.

LK: And I would image that this book coming on the heels of the Encyclopedia, it was such a gorgeous publication that there were a lot of people who wanted to be included in this book [the Collector's Guide].

JR: Yes. People like this book because you can take it with you. We had some complaints about the size of the Encyclopedia -- In fact, we've heard stories someone was driving down the road to visit a folk artist and they saw this book on the back ledge of the window of a car in front of them. They overtook the car and met.

LK: That's funny, oh, gosh. Well this serves a very different purpose.

JR: The Collector's Guide was primarily for collectors. This [the Encyclopedia] is a broader reference book.

CR: Lawyers write briefs and their language is criticized and all that, but they must be concise -- to be a good brief -- and it must state fact because judges don't want to read -- it must state facts succinctly and it must put them in a form where anyone can pick it up and find it. And so our training in doing that was helpful. Also, lawyers can not spend unlimited time on a matter. You have to do it fast.

JR: You had asked a question earlier -- we did have broader latitude in this [the Collector's Guide] because the museum wasn't involved. This is pretty much our personal choice.

CR: Bob Bishop was dead by the time of the Collector's Guide. Gerry Wertkin said that the museum should not be associated with a project which was purely commercial.

JR: Initially the museum did want to be involved in the book, but later, when Abbeville wanted to add a price list (approximate) Wertkin felt he might be criticized so he decided not to get involved. We didn't really want the price guide either. Prices are constantly changing--

CR: but the editor did --

JR: Abbeville felt that, as a general guide, it would be helpful.

LK: Well it's interesting as a historical document of the time and what the prices are.

CR: As a commercial venture, you see this was a commercial venture. The Encyclopedia was a commercial venture. Only one complaint on facts have I ever received. A woman called and said, "You said my father threw my grandmother out of the house." She said, "That is a simplification. They were both fighting and it was a mutual withdrawal. He never actually threw her out. That was the only dispute of fact we ever had. We did our research as carefully as we could.

LK: I noticed in the files that you tried to obtain birth and death certificates --

CR: When we could. State laws make this very difficult. Privacy issues. Sometimes states require a signature by the family.

JR: If we were writing about one artist or even twenty, I think we would in every case get that sort of information but because of time limits we weren't able to do it. Where there was a dispute, we tried to get this material.

CR: People sometimes forget this information. For instance, Jan was talking to one artist and our format said that we had to have the maiden name of the wife. We wanted women to feel included. He said that he couldn't remember and then he said, "Hey honey, what was your maiden name?" [laughs]

JR: I think that was Jimmy Lee Sudduth.

CR: No, was it?

JR: I think so. I don't know if you told that story in the book.

CR: I don't think I did.

JR: No, probably not.

CR: But the information is otherwise lost. The times change. In the Santero book, women are now copying and signing their own work. In the past this was not rue -- there are sociological and economical reasons to change

formats.

JR: I don't know if you are aware that out here, mostly the men signed their names to the pieces.

CR: Even though the women did a lot of the work.

JR: The women helped with it. And that is all changed now. Maria Romero Cash is on the cover of our book. She is trying hard to gain recognition for Santeras. Cash is very upset. She says there's quite a bit of information about Native American women back 100 years ago, none about Hispanic women.

LK: Helen [Lucero] did a show of women santeras at the International Folk art Museum.

JR: Yes, that's right.

LK: She gave a talk about it.

JR: She probably mentioned that problem.

LK: Yeah, I'm more aware of that now. Well I wanted to talk to you about some specific photographs and since there are quite a few perhaps we can turn to those. These are in no particular order. Some of these are exactly the one reproduced in the Collector's Guide.

CR: Yes this was.

JR: These are the ones that are going to be in the show?

LK: Yeah.

JR: Oh, you've got one of Nick [Herrera] that's great.

CR: This is Elizabeth Willeto Ignacio. Before we visited the Willeto family, she told us that no white person had ever been there.

JR: We were the first Anglos she told us.

CR: The tradition of the Navajo was that they went into the trading post the traders did not go to visit the Navajo. We went into the trading post at Nageezi and the trader there, Don Batchelor, was the son of the trader that had dealt with Charlie Willeto. In fact his father had rejected Charlie Willeto's work. The trader drew a map on a piece of brown paper for us as to where Willeto lived. No, I don't think he knew. He was the postman and it was a Navajo working in the post office who drew the map.

JR: I have that map somewhere, if I find it I'll give it to you --

CR: The map shows where the hogan was. Do you have that map?

JR: I couldn't find it.

CR: Do you have a map?

LK: That is not in the files.

CR: The Navajo drew it on a brown bag.

JR: On the scrap of a brown bag.

CR: At that time, there was no graded road in there. There now is. But the map indicated water, wash and barbed wire fences and arroyos to cross on the way up the canyon into [interrupted by a phone call]--

JR: Anyway, Chuck said, "Can't you give me any better directions?" and I said, "Here, take a look at this. I've got that scrap somewhere.

CR: Elizabeth Willeto Ignacio. Elizabeth was sitting on a bench in the sun with her back against the hogan when we finally arrived. She didn't speak a word of English but her son Harold was there and Harold told her that we'd like to photograph her. She went inside the hogan and put on all this jewelry. Most Navajo women do not feel dressed, unless they are wearing their jewelry. She came out and sat again next to the hogan and I took pictures of her. This piece that's next to her, we bought. I don't know wether it's in the Smithsonian.

LK: That piece? I don't know.

CR: I believe that the Smithsonian has acquired the piece.

LK: I'll find that out. If not, it's still in your collection?

CR: If not, we have it.

JR: I think the Smithsonian took it because Lynda Hartigan wanted an example of Elizabeth's work.

LK: Now when you went to visit her it was for the Navajo book [The People Speak: Navajo Folk Art (Flagstaff, Arizona: Northland, 1994)].

CR: Yes. But I think we visited her before we wrote the Navajo book.

JR: Remember, we had pieces by her husband, Charlie, who was deceased, and his sons, Robin and Harold, and we wanted to meet her --

CR: And we wanted to meet her --

JR: So we may have been writing the book then, or we may have gone earlier.

CR: Since that time, they have graded a road that goes by her house. We started something. Other collectors have visited her and traders have visited her, but we have never been secretive. We have always told people where artists lived. We do not believe that you can fence in an artist, and even though their work may change with the interchange of culture and with the notion that it's collectable, we feel that this is part of life, and so we encourage it. The next picture is of Nicholas Herrera. The piece in the photo is posed with is now in the Autry Museum [of Western Heritage] in Los Angeles. It was in the process of being worked on at the time the photo was taken at El Rito. In my mind, this illustrates the difficulty of photographing something where there is great contrast, because the Eastman film allows only a certain amount of contrast for the exposure and getting detail under a hat has to be done with a flash. This was taken on a wall outside his studio in El Rito, New Mexico. It was one of our first trips up there. Was it not Jan?

JR: Yes, I think it was an early trip.

CR: It would be about 1987, was it that late?

JR: Has Chuck dated any of his photographs?

LK: When we went through them we got circa dates for a lot of these. Most that were in the Collector's Guide are dated ca. 1992.

CR: Yes. That's when we worked on it. The Navajo book was later. The Hispanic book -- at the time I visited him, I did write an article for Folk Art Messenger and I was thinking of it, but I wasn't thinking in specific terms of the Hispanic book. I wanted a record of Nicholas Herrera. He changes all the time. He grows more hair and less hair and a longer beard.

LK: You didn't buy that piece then?

CR: That piece had already been sold. What was the name of the woman who wrote the thing for the Autry Museum?

JR: Liza might know her.

CR: They did an exhibition of New Mexican santeros and she came out here.

JR: She borrowed your picture of Enrique Rendon for the museum.

CR: She did a doctoral or masters thesis here and worked as an intern for Charlene Cerny and she has been working for the -- what was the name of her book?

JR: I'll look in the barn. You might know her. I can't think of her name.

CR: I'll bet she does know her. She is now working from some museum on the East Coast.

JR: Yes, she's moved to Maine I think. Her name is Laurie Kalb.

CR: She had purchased this --

JR: for that show --

CR: This picture of Jan and myself which I consider not very flattering [by Gregory Warmack ("Mr. Imagination")].

LK: We are not using that for the announcement card.

CR: Good.

LK: It's a little out of focus.

CR: It was taken by Gregory Warmack.

JR: We have better pictures. Do you need one?

LK: It was the only photograph that we had of the both of you together.

JR: Wait a second.

CR: Well, Jan will get you a picture. Is it too late?

LK: Well it is framed, but if you're not happy with it we could take it out and put another one in.

CR: Gregory Warmack, Mr. Imagination. We did not include Mr. Imagination in the Encyclopedia because Carl Hammer would not tell us his name. Since the Encyclopedia was a book about known artists, I would not use the name Mr. Imagination and so we argued with Carl Hammer.

JR: This was taken for Pasatiempo. We have it in color and black and white [showing me a photo of herself and Chuck]. I like that.

LK: That's nice.

CR: I had an argument with Carl Hammer in Chicago, and he said we definitely could not use Mr. Imagination's name. After the Encyclopedia was published Carl, the first thing, said to me was "Why didn't you include Mr. Imagination?" And I told him why. He was obviously very upset that the artist had been overlooked.

JR: Then Warmack started to hand out cards with his name on it.

CR: Warmack was telling people his name, his phone number, and his studio address. But this picture was taken before it was really known who he was.

JR: Who took the picture of us?

CR: He did.

JR: Oh he did.

LK: What about this one? Who took this one?

CR: That one was taken by Lynn Lown, who took --

LK: He took some of the Navajo pictures?

CR: He took the folk art. I can not take pictures of art objects. I don't have the equipment. I don't have the studio. Publishers have suggested that I expand and do that but I've refused.

JR: Northland asked Chuck if he wanted to take the pictures of the art, but he didn't want to set up a studio.

CR: I suppose it would save money.

JR: It's a lot of work.

LK: Well it's a different kind of photography.

CR: Yes, and I didn't do it. This is Bruce Hathale. Bruce Hathale is the son of a medicine man that we've also photographed. This was photographed at the hogan of his father. In order to find the hogan of his father, we stopped at a number of trading posts and nobody knew where he lived, but Jan went into a Laundromat and there was --

JR: I guess I talked to someone at the post, and they said that a woman was in the Laundromat who might know.

CR: It was something like that. Jan came out with a Navajo school teacher who had a summer sheep camp, her

parents did, near where they lived and she drove to the hogan with us. She left her child with a relative at the Laundromat.

JR: Her mother finished the laundry for her.

CR: She led us to the foot of a mesa. There was no road up the mesa, but there were car tracks. Tire tracks from a pick-up truck. We had a 4-wheel drive car and we ascended the mesa. At the top of the mesa, the medicine man had a couple of hogans and Hathale, what was his name?

JR: The father was Roger.

CR: Roger Hathale. And we photographed him and his wife and his son who made this muslin painting. The background is the adobe mud wall of the father's hogan.

JR: This shows why it's good to have archives. It is easy to forget some of this material.

CR: Since our book, Bruce became an alcoholic, and I believe he's in jail. So is his brother Dennis, I believe. Alcohol is a big problem among the Navajo.

JR: One of the reasons is a high unemployment rate.

CR: The Navajo are virtually unemployed. However it's changing very rapidly. They've given up on the boarding schools. The state of Arizona, in particular, has built a system of schools throughout the reservation. The younger people, especially the girls, can find employment in the growing tourism business.

JR: Canyon de Chelly Holiday Inn has opened, and they hire almost all Navajos and Navajo guides.

CR: Any older people, people of Roger Hathale's generation, there is no ability to speak English. So he was copying these drawings from -- the Navajo medicine men keep a record of their sand paintings which they use for ceremonial purpose. It's what they call memory aids. They are sometimes on paper, sometimes on muslin. Sometimes they are kept in little books, similar to ledger drawings but with religious importance. Bruce Hathale was copying them in a larger form, with the approval of his father, on bed sheets with they call muslin. They get the bed sheets at flea fairs, or whatever, ripped bed sheets. This illustrates, I think, my idea of a portrait because I'm in close and I've captured the face of the artist, the expression of the artist, his character plus there is an example of his art. Also, the mud wall of the hogan places the photo on the Navajo reservation. Is there anything else you want to know?

LK: That's great.

CR: What's her name?

LK: Bertha Halozan.

JR: Bertha Halozan. She's wonderful.

CR: Bertha Halozan. The powers that be in folk art, think that Bertha Halozan is not a good artist, but Jim Linderman who is a dealer in New York, directed us to her apartment. She lives in some kind of rent-assisted apartment. We first saw her work in the possession of Ambrosio from Cooperstown Museum. We met him in Charleston and had lunch with him. He had examples of Halozan's work which he had collected for Cooperstown, so we knew she existed. He said that he bought them from Jim Linderman. Jim Linderman gave us Bertha's address; Bertha Halozan is a character beyond belief. She once rented Carnegie Hall. She thought she was a singer and sang such great classics as "Who is that Doggie in the Window."

JR: That should be in the file.

LK: Some of her song lyrics are.

JR: She gave us the bad review too.

CR: On the back of one of her paintings is a terrible review.

LK: I was going to put her lyrics for, there was one called "I Love New York" and I was going to put that in the case.

CR: That's fine.

JR: That's great.

CR: I think maybe that's one reason why Lee Kogan did not like the work because Lee Kogan thought that Carnegie Hall should be reserved for something --

JR: Kogan's family is very musical.

CR: We took these pictures in her small apartment in New York.

LK: Did she sing for you?

CR: No she did not sing for us, but she corresponds with us from time to time. She hasn't lately. She is an immigrant and she does love New York and she mixes the Statue of Liberty in with the New York Mets in her paintings.

JR: And with her homeland ?

CR: And with her homeland in Yugoslavia. She mixes it altogether with New York. Every artists cannot be a Jackson Pollock or a Michelangelo, but she epitomizes in my mind a genre of folk art and we like her work.

LK: Is that a piece that you brought, that Statue of Liberty that she is holding?

CR: We have several of her works. I don't think that Lynda Hartigan was enamored with it.

JR: Well you know she's not in a category with [Sam] Doyle but she's --

CR: We never showed Lynda it --

JR: She's fun and she's inexpensive.

CR: She's the sort of artist that it really gives you a wonderful feeling to collect. [lunch break]

CR: A couple philosophies about taking photographs of artists -- for instance a young woman who was getting a Ph.D. at Ohio State University was doing a thesis on photographing folk artists and she asked me if I would be one of her sponsors and they approved it and I was.

LK: Do you know her name?

CR: I've got it somewhere. She's now teaching at Ohio State. She's teaching photography at Ohio State. She was photographing artists primarily in the Columbus, Ohio, area. Artists like [William] Hawkins and [Elijah] Pierce were dead, but she photographed Ricky Barnes, Levent Isik, Russell "Smokey" Brown. Because she came from a photography studio perspective, she has studied photography and commercial photography and studio photography, she was posing the artists, putting them into a studio setting. She could carry with her white screens and lights, and so it would take her a half an hour or an hour to set up her strobe lights and things like that and photograph the artist. I raved about her work because there is no reason not to do so but that kind of photography of the folk artists we visited simply would not have worked. So I think I had an advantage in not formally studying photography. [tape turned off again]

CR: I've always said that Jan and I, particularly me, were the outsiders because we came into the communities where the artists lived from a different kind of environment and most of the artists we photographed, not all, were very well accepted in their communities and their environments and they were a part of the American scene. We were the ones who came from the outside and intruded on their lives and we were the ones who made judgements at least initially that their work was art. Most of the artists were not aware of that. The Navajo did not know that they were creating art. Bertha Halozan had some idea that she was. She too in her apartment building in her world was a very accepted commodity. We were the ones who were coming from the outside. [turned off tape again for lunch]

CR: Where was Minnie's farm?

JR: Minnie Adkins?

CR: Yes.

JR: Peaceful Valley [Wood Shop] in Kentucky. It's near Morehead [State University].

LK: Isonville.

CR: Isonville is correct. Jan and I went to the little town of Isonville Kentucky to visit Minnie and Garland Adkins at their studio. The Barkers live next door, nearby -- Linvel and Lillian Barker. Minnie Adkins became aware of the

fact that folk art was a saleable commodity, and she and Garland were turning out folk art at a pretty good rate. Garland even had this briefcase in which he used to carry samples of the art to sell it in places like Morehead State University and other places and this was around the Fourth of July, so they had decked their porch out -- the whole community was very very, patriotic and the whole community was decked out for the 4th. Garland posed for me carrying his brief case on which he said folk art is fun art. This is a picture of [Gerald] "Creative" DePrie. Creative DePrie claimed to be a savant, whether he was or not I don't know, but he claimed that he could play any piece that he had ever heard on the piano without the aid of music. He didn't demonstrate for us, however. He was either divorced or his wife had left him. In any event, he was living alone in one room. He had been discovered by Eason Eige who was at that time the director of the museum in Huntington West Virginia. Eason Eige had collected a considerable body of Creative DePrie's work for himself and for the museum, and he suggested that we visit DePrie. He painted nudes and cowboys and other subjects from paper which he rolled and unrolled. He used crayons and colored paper. Eige thought they were interesting and so did we. We bought a few drawings and I photographed him. He's in the Collector's Guide.

LK: That work that's pictured there is that something that you purchased, or do you know the title of it.

CR: No I don't think he titled them. We titled them. Yes, I believe we bought that work.

LK: In the Collector's Guide that photograph is flipped [discussion comparing the photographs determining that it was not flipped, rather is was a different photo from another angle]. END of TAPE 1 SIDE 2 BEGINNING TAPE 2 SIDE 1

CR: On the picture of Nick, can I add something? I wrote an article for the Folk Art Messenger on Nick Herrera; I called him the El Rito Santero.

JR: And it stuck.

CR: And it stuck. Now he's known in his community as the El Rito Santero. He drives around with a car with his name on it, the "El Rito" Santero. When I see him he says, "You christened me." He acknowledges it. The sun is out. When the sun comes out, it's nice here. Yesterday it didn't come out. That's a picture of David Strickland, who lives in Red Oak, Texas, south of Waxahachie. It is south of Dallas by about 90 miles. For a while it was thought they were going to build a big reactor there, a super-collider and they tore up many hundreds of acres. Ross Perot was trying to get the project for the state. There were going to be condos there and hotels and shopping centers because of the reactor. The whole thing fell through. David had been working as a welder and he lost his job. He lives on a small amount of acreage out in the country. As a retired welder, he began making fantastic animals and figures and pretty soon collectors from Dallas and the Webbs who have a gallery in Waxahachie were buying and selling them. David sold us a few pieces. He came here in a pickup truck and installed them himself. The sculptures are large and heavy; they are composed of old tractor parts.

JR: You see that one out there [gesturing to a piece outside]. We really loved it, but we didn't know how we were going to get it home, so he drove it to Santa Fe.

CR: He brought it in his pickup truck. David raises goats that are quite ferocious. You should have pictures of the goats chasing him across a pasture; he plays games with them. I took those with a long lens. Jan and I weren't going near the goats. David, however, is a very peaceful and quiet man and is now a somewhat successful artist. He was included in the exhibition at the University of Texas at Austin which traveled throughout Texas. It was viewed by members of the Folk Art Society of America at the recent meeting in Houston. Is there anything else you want to know about this picture?

LK: That particular piece, was that one that you got?

CR: No I believe it belongs to Sally Griffith in Dallas [looking through a catalog to see it the piece is reproduced there]. Sally delights in upsetting her neighbors by putting things like this in her front yard.

JR: Yes, Sally Griffith.

CR: So it was exhibited in Spirited Journeys at the University of Texas at Austin and traveled extensively. [Jan looking through the catalog for another reference in the bibliography.] There are two pictures here. The one on the left is of Alice Cling's mother, Rose Williams, we own the piece in the picture. Rose Williams is a Navajo and she is the matriarch of a very large clan that lives near the Shanto corner.

JR: Her name is Laurie Kalb [the person at the Autry Museum] . The show was Crafting Devotions. Does that ring a bell with you, Laurie Kalb?

LK: Yeah.

CR: She interned here. We first met her when she came to New Mexico in about 1979 and Charlene Cerny had her compile a list of Santeros that we might visit.

JR: And one of them was Enrique Rendon.

CR: One of them was Enrique Rendon. She wrote her doctoral thesis on the santeros, which became the catalog, Crafting Devotions. She visited Nick Herrera before we did, I imagine. Nick's pieces in the exhibition were purchased by the Cowboy Museum-- the Gene Autry Museum (now called the Autry Museum of Western Heritage) in Los Angeles. Rose Williams started out making pots which were used for cooking. They were part of the material culture and the Navajos used the pots up until the end of the Second World War. Some Navajo were still using them when we first visited the Navajo reservation.

JR: We bought a few at swap meets.

CR: On the reservation in 1985, they traded the spots them among themselves at Shonto and at Tuba City. They had no commercial value the traders weren't interested in them. Rose taught her daughters how to pot. Alice Cling is her daughter. What's the name of the other daughters?

JR: Susie and Susan.

CR: Susie and Susan Williams, Susie Crank.

JR: That's the same person.

CR: That's right. When she married, she became Crank and Rose's son-in-law Spencer. Well, they've broken up, but he was her son-in-law. She taught them how to pot in the traditional Navajo manner the coils are built up and smoothed with a popsicle stick or a river stone and coated with pinon pitch. The Navajo pot almost always had a biyo, or with a break similar to the biyo. It's a necklace around the top of the pot similar to the break in the Navajo ceremonial baskets to let the spirit out the pots. Then they were covered with warm pinon pitch. Her pots have a sort of a classic style and beauty to them. They are more artistic now than they were when she was a young woman although they are no longer used for utilitarian purposes, they could be. She is aware that there is interest in Navajo pottery among collectors, but she has done very little innovation compared to her daughters, daughter-in-law, son-in-law. So her pots are not in as much demand as some others. But if you are going to collect the history of what has happened in the Navajo potting tradition (which now rivals the Hopi) you really have to include her. She speaks almost no English.

JR: Well, she dos know a few words.

CR: Maybe hello.

JR: She lives in an area near Shonto where there are a lot of potters who have learned from her. Silas and Bertha Claw live nearby, and there are several other potters in that area. So she has been very influential. She's doing a little bit of innovation now.

CR: A little bit. The man on the right is The Rhinestone Cowboy [Loy A. Bowlin]. He has rhinestones everywhere. He's dead now. He has rhinestones in his teeth. We visited his house. Which is decorated as he is.

JR: Do you need to know if any of these people have died? [discussion about finding death dates.]

CR: Jan and I always thought that everything would go on as it has but

JR: Both Ann [Oppenhimer] and Lee [Kogan] have asked us to write obituaries. Chuck wrote one because he really liked the artist, but usually we just don't want to do that. Somebody else can.

CR: The house is decorated on the inside with panels full of glitter. Panels on paper about 16 x 12 inches, some of which has been collected. The panels were stuck onto the walls and even the floors when we visited him. Bowlin said, "Wait a minute, let me put on my suit," and he did. He went into the house and put on his suit. Also, he said that he used to wear this suit to go downtown -- what was the name of that town -- Mary Smith lived in that town too --

JR: Mary Smith lived in Hazelhurst [Mississippi].

CR: He was near by.

LK: I didn't know there was anything near Hazelhurst. McComb?

JR: Yes, that is right.

LK: McComb, Mississippi.

JR: They are within an hour of each other.

CR: He said that he could dance in this outfit, and that it attracted the local women. By the time we visited him, I don't know how many local women he was still interested in although he professed to have a following. There was a group from McComb who tried to save that house and move it into an abandoned railroad round house but I don't believe that was successful.

JR: They set up some kind of a trust.

CR: I think that the house is gone. A few of us own drawings by him that were in the house. There are not many in existence. This was an example of an exuberant art form that while not great art is certainly interesting to study and should be studied. We thought that some of his panels were very good.

LK: These are all in color.

CR: This is an environmentalist, Q. J. Stevenson, who built a small museum of things he found and assembled. What was the name of the town?

LK: He called it Earth Museum.

JR: That's what he called it.

LK: Really? A lot of people called it Trappers Lodge.

JR: He gave us a card. I may still have it. It should be in his file. Let's see North Carolina -- it's Garysburg. It's a very small town. They had no motels. We stayed near there in a different town.

CR: How can I say this? It's hard to photograph this to show the environment and capture the personality of the artist all at one time. This picture may be a little contrived, but that dragon or monster was there and I put him next to it and photographed him again like Bowlin. In this case, we are probably not talking about great art but it's part of the general art history of his day and it's memorable. I felt it was of interest and should be preserved. The other pictures a great artist, Horacio Valdez. By 1940 - 1950, the art of the santero had almost died out. He lived in Dixon [New Mexico]; he helped preserve the art form for the current generation. He in effect was an innovator. Horacio lived in a small house in a valley overlooking the hills of northern New Mexico, south of Taos. We call it the back road to Taos. It was a dirt road when we first went there in the 1970s, but now it's been paved. Horacio, because of his innovation, was not always liked by the Spanish Colonial Arts Society. Horacio used acrylics he and did not make his own pigments. Because of this, and his disagreement with the Spanish Colonial Art Society, another fact that he could save everything he made Valdez withdrew from Spanish Market in the late 70s. I was so proud of him. His work now appears in many of the Northern New Mexican churches. It's in the collection of Regis University and it's in the collection of Colorado Springs. It's in the collection of the Museum of International Folk Art here in Santa Fe and in the collection of SCAS the Spanish Colonial Arts Society Collection. We used to visit Horacio from time to time and photograph him and buy his work. In regard to this particular piece, Jan went to Taos for something.

JR: There was a show of a self-taught artist that somebody told me about in Taos, and I went up to see the show. On the way, I sopped to see Valdez. He had about three pieces. The work was quite expensive by then and I didn't think Chuck would buy it. It's now in the Smithsonian's National Museum of American Art.

CR: The history of this piece, as Andrew Connors explained it to me, is that the Smithsonian had commissioned it. Andrew Connors really wanted it but didn't have the money to pay for it. The work is a very major late Santo by Valdez. When Jan went to Taos, he wanted the amount of money that the Smithsonian was going to pay for it and there was no bargaining. I bought it. When Lynda Hartigan came to our house and spotted the piece, she said that the Smithsonian had to have it. The museum ended up paying more money for it, that way, I believe, than if they had bought it originally. The piece will be in their forthcoming Latino exhibition. Horacio was not a Latino. He is Hispanic, but that is what the show will be titled.

LK: That's a great photograph of Horacio.

CR: That's a good photograph of Horacio. This top one is Reverend [John "J. L."] Hunter. Now Reverend Hunter is again representative of a generation that will be no more. He is a preacher on the south side of Dallas in a black neighborhood and a folk artist. He sells these items like these two versions of the Statue of Liberty that he is pictured with. We bought both of them. He has been influence by collectors in the Dallas area. We are intrigued by the Reverend Hunter partly for the fact that a whole generation of Blacks primarily, but not only, in the south were bypassed by lack of education. They are not by any means outsiders. They are representatives and leaders

in their communities but, because of their lack of formal education, they are not the lawyers and doctors and oil men that made Dallas famous. We are interested because it's a generation that's passed, and yet he's still working. He has a great sense of humor; he's still carving his figurative sculptures and he has a following. Sally Griffith and others like the African American Museum in Dallas, and its director, Harry Robinson, are trying to preserve the art. We also encourage its preservation.

LK: Did you ever attend any of his services?

CR: No, we have attended the services of several preachers, but not his. Hunter lives right behind his little church. Mark Casey Milestone lives in North Carolina; he is an example of a younger hipper generation who set out(he dropped out of school somewhere along the line) deliberately to make folk art. His drawings are not our favorite works. He also plays a guitar, which he made himself -- he played it for us. But in his backyard he had a group of whirligigs, Picassoesque figures. In response to questions, Milestone said that he was communicating with bodies beyond Earth through the use of this material. When it moves (you can see that there is a horn-like object there) he was transmitting signals to extra-terrestrial beings and planets. We questioned his seriousness, but he appeared to be sincere. His paintings -- he was well aware of the Encyclopedia and of Finster and other folk artists and he was attempting to make "folk art". These whirligigs in his backyard, which we thought were interesting, were made for his own purposes and that's why I photographed him with one.

LK: Raymond Coins and the Glassman [Powell Darmafall]. [Talking about the photo of Coins] this might be the only one in the show that we don't have the artists with a piece.

CR: He's against a wood barn. Raymond Coins lived in North Carolina near Highpoint. Mt. something. Where was Raymond Coins?

LK: Pilot Mountain.

CR: Pilot Mountain, that's right. He started carving river stone and wood.

LK: Westfield, North Carolina, near Pilot Mountain [reading from the Encyclopedia].

CR: Pilot Mountain, that's it. By the time we visited him, he was along in years. We did buy some work from him which in now in the Smithsonian. We also have a wood piece. Bob Bishop always thought that the wood pieces would be in the end more valuable than the stone pieces because they were more unique and because there were fewer of them. In later years, he made stone pieces at the demand of dealers in quite some quantity. He did an angel that looks like himself. In fact, all of his figures resemble him. I photographed him near an old wooden barn on the place because I thought that the texture of the wood went well with the texture of his skin. I was successful in avoiding glare on his glasses I see. This is an example of something that looks easy, but when a man is wearing a hat and eyeglasses, it creates technical problems for the photographer.

LK: This is Glassman.

CR: Powell Darmafall was very hard to locate because dealers wouldn't reveal where he lived. Americans usually can be found. He lives in Baltimore and rode a bicycle decorated with glass throughout the city looking for old bottles, especially the blue bottles from the semi-medicinal thing manufactured in Baltimore?

LK: Bromo Seltzer?

CR: Bromo Seltzer. Rebecca Hoffberger plans to have a mural made of it, the blue glass because it's well known. He's patriotic --

LK: Oh, it's Bromo Seltzer. Pepto Bismal is pink. Bromo Seltzer is the Baltimore thing.

CR: He's very patriotic. He does flags and angels. The problem you have with his work, and we've collected some, is that the glass tends to fall off or he holds it on with Elmer's glue. We store ours flat in the hope that it will not fall off . If it falls off , there's thousands of little pieces of glass. It can be very difficult to find where it goes, and so collecting and preserving the art is a little difficult. We haven't collected much of his work, but the Glassman is certainly an interesting character.

LK: You photographed him in his work place?

CR: He works in his house in southeastern Baltimore. He's turned the garage into a workshop, and that's where he works. The top photograph here is Bessie Harvey in Alcoa, Tennessee. The house is up on a hill. Her root monsters are very spiritual so I thought I should photograph her with a few. She has been a very successful artist. She is only the second folk artist who has been exhibited at the Whitney Biennial which I think is now annual. She is not too easy to get along with. You know she's psychic. Harvey died in 1994.

LK: Did she pick that piece to pose with?

CR: No I think I picked it. She had four or five sculptures there, and I said, would you mind standing here or there. I thought that it caught her spirituality.

LK: It's a very spooky photograph the way you have the figure behind her. It's very powerful.

CR: Good, I used flash off to the upper left and the natural sunlight highlighted her cheek and her fingernails. This is Herbert Singleton. That's one of his large panels photographed in the courtyard of Barrister's Gallery [in New Orleans]. Herbert Singleton lives in Algiers, across the river from New Orleans. It's a very tough and difficult area to go into, and he's a tough and difficult man. Singleton has been in jail several times. The last time I know of was for beating his landlord with a shotgun. I believe he's smoking in this picture. I wanted to try and capture that because there are still people who smoke. Sometimes I like to capture this, it's difficult to catch smoke in an exposure.

LK: It was sort of an allusion to other vices?

CR: Well, he had other vices indeed, but that wasn't on my mind. Herbert Singleton was carrying a gun when I photographed him. Several artists I photographed had guns but they in no way threatened me, however, I really do get nervous when I am in the presence of people who are armed. Singleton is a practitioner of voodoo and in the Voodoo Museum in New Orleans there are more than one of his carvings. His orientation is very much of his community. He is not an outsider. If I were to go to Algiers, I would be an outsider. We went to a Chinese restaurant in Algiers with Kurt and Alice Gitter. (Kurt and Alice and Jan and I) Kurt was driving a BMW. After dinner, he pulled out of there at a speed that my rental car couldn't keep up with. We were briefly lost and frightened. America is a very broad and diverse country. That goes without saying. We set out in the 60s, I guess we were very middle class people. We believed we should go to college, and we went to college. We believed that we should send our children to college and we sent them. We lived in a very suburban, I guess upper-middle class area in Washington, DC, mostly government employees. We wanted to find out what American was like. That's why we set out on this voyage of discovery, and Singleton was part of it. We never could exist in his community, nor could he exist in our community. When we collected his work, it was as an outsider looking in rather than the other way around. I don't know what Singleton thought of me, but I do know he sold us a piece which is now in the Smithsonian titled The Way We Was and that piece was in an exhibition in Lausanne, Switzerland, along with a photograph that I took (also now in the Archives of Singleton standing next to the piece). When he saw the catalog and realized it was exhibited in Switzerland, Singleton was so grateful that he carved and gave to me a depiction of the large door that's in the Smithsonian, a carving of the large door with him standing next to it which would be a copy of the picture. We still have that piece. So I think he understood that we were trying to help him, and he was grateful for it.

LK: What about that piece [in the photograph].

CR: I don't know about that piece that was last seen in the Barrister's gallery in New Orleans.

LK: Was that up for a show?

CR: That was for sale in the courtyard of the gallery. I never went to his home. He came to the gallery; we had an appointment, and I photographed him there. The next one is Louise Nez and Florence Riggs. Louise Nez is the mother of Florence Riggs. Louise Nez started weaving when she was a very young girl. She did traditional Navajo rugs and then she did Navajo scenes which were the earlier pictorials (1960s and 1970s) before we came along. She taught her daughter, Florence Riggs, how to weave and her daughter did extremely innovative pictorials, dinosaur scenes, Navajo sweat house scenes, scenes that had never been done before, one of them a trading post scene is in the Smithsonian collection. We wouldn't let the Smithsonian have a couple of hers.

LK: Is it the trading post that's pictured in your Navajo book? Is that what she is working on?

CR: No I don't think so.

LK: I was trying to match it up.

CR: Maybe it is.

LK: It looks like it could be.

CR: It could be. She was working when this picture was taken in a mobile home that she and her husband owned in Farmington. Her mother was visiting, and her brother had made this double loom. I had never seen a two-person loom before. It was hard to take the picture because it took up most of the living area. So I used quite a wide angle lens. It illustrated comradeship between the mother and daughter, the unusual loom, and the

generations working together. You notice again that the mother had bedecked herself in the Navajo skirt and jewelry, while the daughter is wearing blue jeans and hasn't bothered with jewelry. The older women never allowed us to photograph them without their jewelry. The younger women are more like younger women everywhere today. The Navajo do use the upright loom and sit before it because they can roll the weaving up as they go along. Traditionally they sit on the floor, but these two women were using stools.

LK: Leroy.

CR: The elephant that Leroy [Archuleta] is making is sitting right out there. The Archuletas are our neighbors in Tesuque, New Mexico. They've lived here a long time. Felipe Archuleta. His father was dead when this was taken. When I talk about Nicholas Herrera I talk about the church of Santa Cruz which is in Ojo Coliente which was rebuilt by Nicholas and a few others, we attended the mass for Felipe -- colobodos were sung those are Hispanic songs that originated in Spain and they are never set to music. They are sung by the [Brotherhood of the] Penitentes on Good Fridays and other occasions. Leroy works very hard. He recently had an exhibition called Leroy's Zoo at the Albuquerque Museum (a traveling exhibition that came to Albuquerque). Leroy decorated the balcony of our gallery [at their home]. We have known him since the late 70s and would buy sculptures from him. This particular piece was made for our grandson, but our daughter never felt that she had room for it so it's sitting at our house until such time that she wants it transported to her. We are great believers in the work of Leroy, and he is our friend and neighbor. This is Mamie Deschillie. What's this?

LK: Well I was going to ask you wether it's a mud toy or a cut out.

CR: It is a cut out. Again, Mamie Deschillie, she's put on her jewelry. When she wears her jewelry, she has a lot of it and it si very beautiful.

LK: It's fantastic stuff.

CR: Yes, and that's how she became known to the art world. She went into Jack Beasley's pawn shop in Farmington and she would pawn things. That's how the Navajo can borrow money. They don't own real estate. They can pawn their jewelry they pay a high interest rate, limited by New Mexican law but that's how they can get ready cash. In a way, we have hurt the Native Americans by not allowing them to own real estate on the reservation. It's owned by the federal government for them. So Mamie goes into Jack Beasley's gallery. She's in her late 60s then or early 70s. She pawned something and Jack says to her, "Have you got something you remember from when you were a little girl? I'd like to buy it." He thought that she would bring him jewelry or rugs or pottery or maybe religious items, but she came into the store instead with mud toys. He bought them and exhibited them at the Wheelwright Museum in 1983-84. END OF TAPE 2 SIDE 1 BEGINNING OF TAPE 2 SIDE 2 Later she used cardboard and other peoples' cast -offs. She'd find it at flea fairs or elsewhere in Farmington. [Speaking to Jan] I can't tell, Jan, what this is, but it has to be a cut out it can't be a mud toy it's too big.

JR: Isn't that strange?

CR: Unless that's a dog.

JR: No, that looks like an owl cutout, doesn't it.

CR: Yes, it does from here. Anyway she started making these cutouts on her own and she brought them to Jack Beasley again; they were an instant and popular success. Mamie Deschillie that's a cutout of a personage with a cap on. So anyway, Mamie surprises you sometimes. She can be a deep thinker in the year of the woman -- 90 or 92 --

JR: Excuse me, you've got the Navajo book. In there, a whole page of her cutouts are illustrated.

CR: She set out on foot from Farmington or Fruitland, which is right across the river from Farmington. She wanted to tell Clinton about Navajo women and they walked. Jan and I can't walk with her. She herded sheep in her youth and she more or just floats over the landscape.

JR: She has the big strides of a sheepherder.

CR: She walked with these women all the way to Washington, D.C.

JR: They got rides from time to time.

CR: When she started to cross the 14th Street bridge into the District of Columbia, she was arrested because she didn't have a permit for marching, or hiking or parading. Some of the White House heard about it and, instead of putting her in jail, they gave her a tour of the White House and bus ticket home so she was lucky.

CR: This is Rodney Rosebrook.

LK: This is the picture we are using on the announcement.

CR: Jan they are using the picture of Rodney Rosebrook on the announcement. I think that's a nice one.

JR: Oh, that's great.

LK: It gives a broader picture of his environment.

CR: He was about 90 years old when we photographed him. He's dead now. Rodney Rosebrook started out in about 1975 or 78 when he retired from farming in the little town of Redmond, Oregon. They bought a little house there. Across the street was a barn and a farm, maybe ten acres. He remembered that, when they were young, they used to forge tools by hand, but later they could buy tools. He discovered on the scrap heap in Redmond that people were just throwing away these old tools, some of them handmade, some of them manufactured. At the same time he was collecting the tools and putting them on the wall inside this barn which he called a museum. People would come and walk across the grass to see the inside of the museum, so he thought he needed a fence. He got these wagon wheels, some of them he forged, some of them were real wagon wheels. Rosebrook welded rims, and he made a fence. Bob Bishop and a dealer in New York [illegible]

LK: Roger Ricco

CR: -- Roger Ricco found themselves there and bought the fence. Rico then sold them for 3,000 to 5, 000 for each wheel. I don't know what he paid for the fence. The early ones that have a tag on them and say Rosebrook, 1978 or 79, are part of the original fence. The fence was gone and, of course, he made another fence and then he made these wheels for the garage. But he didn't sell the second fence. After he died it was all auctioned off by his wife. He was a wonderful wonderful man, and I tried to capture him both at this work bench and out here in this environment. The Smithsonian owns three. One they got f rom Hemphill and two from us of this work. Now this is an example, of the fact that, when you travel, sometimes you can't tell whether something is art, you just know it's interesting and you photograph -- Bowlin you photograph the artist and his artwork.

JR: His [Rosebrook's] work holds up very well. Did you see all of it out on the terrace?

CR: While we were out there, Jan won't just stand for buying one piece, so we bought several --

JR: Seven or eight.

CR: Yes. To get them home, we went to a pack and mail and got them wrapped in cardboard. We didn't have room in the car for them. A couple broke but you can repair them. Now this shows you, you take this picture -- this is why you've got to have more lenses. This is a very wide- angle lens. You can tell because I have nothing in the foreground; it's cropped at the feet. I have an expansive wall but I still have detail on the face. If people are interested in photographing artists, they really should invest in some equipment. The equipment that is available now is amazingly intricate, particularly Japanese.

JR: We have debated about video cameras and all, but we don't --

CR: Individual frames -- if you travel with a video camera, you've got to set up. To do it right, you've got to have lights, you've got to have reflectors. One person cannot -- hand holding it is just not going to work.

JR: We've noticed if you hand hold it --

CR: Then to enlarge one frame of it --

JR: Is that the Rosebrook that is going to be on the announcement? Let me see it. That's a good picture [discussion about the card and framing of the photographs, and funding.]

CR: If they [National Museum of American Art] buy a painting or acquire a painting

JR: Shouldn't they have the documents?

LK: That's why we work very closely. I work very closely with Lynda [Hartigan].

CR: A curator is supposed to be more than an exhibition designer.

LK: [Discussion about the Archives working with the Smithsonian's Office of Exhibitions Central.]

CR: I hope somebody says they are good.

JR: [Discussion of working without a designer on an exhibition.]

CR: I don't know how to pronounce his name, the photo is of Ted Ludwiczak. Ted lives near a railroad that runs along the Hudson River. I think he worked in a eyeglass factory (grinding glass). After his retirement, he took a railroad spike and an simple hammer and carved out faces he saw in the rocks along the Hudson River. This is one of my favorite pictures.

LK: There is a lot more detail in the photograph. It's not a good photocopy.

CR: I got the reflection of the water up into his face. Then I used a flash to get detail on the other side of his face to balance the light.

JR: You picked a good variety of pictures.

CR: Because, as I said before, on Eastman Kodak film, it can only take so much variance in light on the same negative and get still an exposure.

JR: This is an example of an environmentalist we could include in the Collector's Guide because he does sell individual pieces. He was discovered when his wall of faces was noticed from the river. this wall of faces but he does sell individual pieces so that's why put him in the Collector's Guide.

CR: He was discovered by Aarne Anton of the American Primitive Gallery. Aarne encouraged him to make faces that weren't part of his sea wall, so he could sell them.

JR: How Aarne found out about them, as I recall, was that people in boats going past would notice his environment.

CR: It is noticeable from out on the Hudson River in tourist boats.

LK: That photograph has a wonderful variety of textures.

CR: I like this photograph.

JR: You've chosen so the room won't be overcrowded.

LK: Well, it's going to look full.

JR: That's alright.

CR: This may be a little close on the artist because for perspective maybe his chin comes out too much --

JR: Chuck it's a good variety, some close up, some far away --

CR: You notice in most of my pictures, including these, the expression of the artist is very pleasant.

LK: These four [Sudduth, Ludwiczak, Deschillie, and Rosebrook] are all on the big wall together. And there's a variety of close up and far away and also geographical -- gender, race, geography --

JR: You don't have too many women. LK and

CR: [Lists women in the show].

CR: It might be interesting to people that we were looking for art. We did not try to break down the artists by gender, national origin or religion. Other people particularly Barbara Cate [at the Museum of American Folk Art].

JR: She called us after the Encyclopedia was out. The museum PR she wanted to know how many women, how many Hispanics, how many Native Americans, I had to go through and count.

CR: Other people have done that.

JR: We didn't make selections on that basis.

CR: We were accused by on newspaper of not having enough black American artists from the South.

JR: You proved the paper wrong.

CR: But the point is, we were covering the whole country, and so we could not include every black, Native American or Hispanic artist.

JR: It was somebody who had worked for Arnett, freelancing for the newspaper. Chuck went through and said we

have A, B, C, and D -- we have a lot of African Americans.

CR: Jan and I in our quest were really looking for art.

JR: It's the same thing, Chuck. We didn't know we were collecting black folk art until the Black Folk Art show and the curator came to our house. It turned out that about 60% of our art was black because we were living in D.C. and traveling in the South.

CR: Jane Livingston and John Beardsley did a marvelous ground-breaking exhibition, but I don't' think that they proved that there was such a thing as black folk art per se. They were not a school -- they were working separately and they certainly didn't prove that it was African in origin.

JR: Now, with the black quilts, there is a better case. Maude Waldman, you may know, has done a really good job on the quilts. Reginia Perry tell us, she can tell whether a work is by a black artist but I can't tell.

CR: Hey, you cut off the top of the giraffe!

LK: It's not that way in the photograph. We didn't crop your photographs.

CR: Jimmy Lee Sudduth is a classic --

JR: He's a star, a superstar.

CR: A classical loner, a Southern artist who discovered early that he could make paintings out of mud and then later on, when the demand for the paintings increased, he put less and less mud and more painting the works.

JR: Collectors asked him to.

CR: Yes, whatever reason, he could make more paintings. He is a real study of a Southern -- like the Reverend Hunter that you have here --

JR: We just gave him the Folk Art Society award. Did you know that?

CR: That should be in there. The Reverend Hunter just won the 1998 Folk Art Award from the Folk Art Society of America.

JR: For excellence. That was important because he is one of the older generation who is still working.

CR: The South has become industrialized. The rural one-room school for blacks is gone. The South that we knew in the 70s is not there anymore -- it just isn't -- and Jimmy Lee Sudduth was relatively isolated. He cut grass in this little town. What was the name of it?

JR: Fayette.

CR: Fayette, Alabama. He cut grass; he did yard work. We found that his paintings were really well known in the community.

JR: Yes, people wanted them in their homes.

CR: The white community knew him, but he was not part of the social white fabric of the town. He lived out back of the big houses. Somebody gave him the first house that he lived in when we first visited him -- either gave it to him or let him live there, I don't know which. He said that she gave it to him, later it burnt.

JR: He traveled some and got some awards playing the harmonica.

CR: He was brought to the Smithsonian for the Folk Life Festival -- played the harmonica and painted. He has his own vision of people and animals. He admires Henry Ford. You asked if people objected to being photographed, he loves it. He eats it up.

JR: He bought himself a video camera didn't he? The last time we were there he had some kind of elaborate camera equipment.

CR: He's been on national television. There was little chance for an education for some little Sudduth in those days. He could write his name and that's about all and maybe simple sums.

JR: You know there are several different spellings of his name?

LK: I didn't know that.

JR: Yes, he wrote it without a vowel originally. It should be Sudduth [illegible] like we mentioned in the Encyclopedia.

CR: He's got the two d's there --

JR: We explain that in the Encyclopedia. Sometimes he just signs it Jim.

LK: Is this his house now?

CR: That's his house now. I have some earlier pictures. They may be in New York [at the Museum of American Folk Art]. You cannot -- as with Traylor, I think everybody knows, it's major, major art. Certainly all of Jim Sudduth's paintings don't measure up to that, but Elizabeth Broun is fond of saying that the museum [NMAA] wants to collect the entire spectrum of American art, and he certainly fits into that picture.

JR: Well, the Smithsonian took four or five of our Sudduths.

CR: Most or many collectors --

JR: Also the ones that the Smithsonian took -- were earlier paintings when he was doing more mud before so many collectors visited. Now people sometimes come with a bunch of plywood and say paint these, like they did in regard Mary T. Smith.

CR: Somewhere, I have a recording of him playing the harmonica.

LK: It's with us.

JR: Good.

LK: I had my intern listen to all the tapes of the artists photographed and she said that that was really great [the Sudduth tape]. We may try to use of a piece of that on the website.

JR: Should we have kept up taping do you think? We had problems with it.

LK: Well sometimes it's just -- you met people at important moments in their lives and a lot of these people are now dead.

JR: That's true, but they are not all equally articulate. That was the problem we had with Doyle. That first black midwife [painting] was actually was supposed to be a relative of his. However, when we listened to the tape we couldn't figure out the exact relationship. Of course in those days southern artists had deeper accents than most do now.

CR: This is Clyde Jones.

JR: He's North Carolina.

LK: Near Chapel Hill.

JR: It's Bynum, near Chapel Hill. It's south of Chapel Hill.

CR: How can I say it -- Clyde Jones started making these critters out of some kind of a compulsion. They spilled out of his yard, out of his neighbor's yard, onto the road [illegible] into the neighboring grocery store, it was a country grocery store. The rumor grew up that he didn't sell to some ballet star [Mikhail Baryshnikov], but he did sell (not to Baryshnikov but to others).

JR: The thing that's important about him -- we were interviewed on NPR and they asked questions such as, "aren't the artists becoming too commercial?" Jones is an example of one who was relatively unaffected by fame. He has his environment -- all these animals. He loves them. School groups visit. He sells very occasionally, very seldom animals, usually just a few drawings to the store nearby. He's an example of a folk artist whom fame has not changed. A good thing because it has changed some other artists.

CR: In that photo, he posed himself. I said to him, "How about going over near the giraffe?" The next thing I knew, he was seated, riding the giraffe and raising his arms. He's a bit of a showman.

JR: Let me see it. You see, if Chuck had posed him that way, it would be contrived, but that's Clyde Jones.

CR: It is hard to explain this to New Yorkers.

JR: Let me look at the photos; I want to tell her who, if any, of te artist have died.

CR: New Yorkers take a look at a picture like this and say, "He's an outsider because, if he did this on Fifth Avenue, he'd be arrested, you know." He couldn't cut down the trees in Central Park, although there is a black man working in Central Park.

JR: We went to see him --

CR: He makes sculptures, but we did not locate him; he works up around 109th Street.

JR: Lynn Star Stevciz told us about the artist. It was August. We went up there and then way back down to SoHo. It was a really hot day, but taxicabs in New York never put on their air conditioning.

CR: You see in his community his neighbors like Clyde Jones. He's a good old boy and if some of his animals end up on their yards, they don't care. The store sells the work and he is accepted. Perhaps he wouldn't be accepted in Bethesda, Maryland or in Manhattan, but he is in North Carolina.

JR: [Discussion about which artists have died]. You might check Garland Atkins. Rhinestone Cowboy is dead. Bessie Harvey died in 1994.

CR: What I tell people who want to take a picture like this is have a wide-angle lens --

JR: Horacio Valdez is also deceased. Is this Q. J. Stevenson?

CR: Yes.

JR: He's dead. Who is this?

CR: That's the Glassman.

JR: He's still alive. [More discussion about who's dead and who's alive.]

CR: The ultimate value of a work of art depends on many things. It depends upon social acceptance, dealer acceptance, it depends upon the curatorial choices of museums and so forth. We have never been interested in the ultimate financial value of a work of art. We have always sought that which is unusual, that which is a personal vision of the creator, that which helps us understand the country and the communities that make up the country. We can at this point in time tell anyone whether the art created by the artists in this exhibition will in the long run be financially of great value. All we can do is tell the viewer that, at the moment we saw this art, it was of great interest to us and that it reflects upon the country and the people who make up the country.

JR: Many of these artists have received acceptance from museums, dealer, and the public.. This does say "Earth Museum" [looking at the entry for Q. J. Stevenson]. END OF INTERVIEW.

Return to Top
Return to List of AAA Oral History Interviews