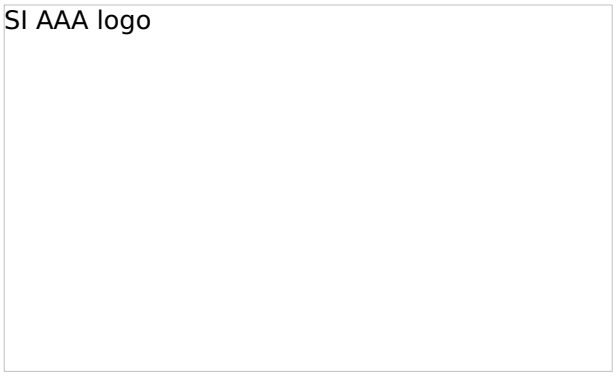

Oral history interview with Lou Stovall, 2021 July 27 and August 10

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Transcript

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Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Lou Stovall on July 27 and August 10, 2021. The interview took place at Stovall's home and studio in Washington, DC, and was conducted by Victoria Valentine for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Lou Stovall and Victoria Valentine have reviewed the transcript. Their corrections and emendations appear below in brackets with initials. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Today is July 27, 2021, and this is Victoria Valentine Griffin talking with artist and printmaker Lou Stovall. We're at his home in Washington, DC, where he also keeps his studio. Thank you for the conversation, Lou. So, I wanted to get started by starting at the beginning and talking about where you were born, your family background, your childhood, and where you grew up. So, um, what—what's your birthdate?

LOU STOVALL: One, one, thirty-seven.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: January 1, 1937? Okay, and where were you born?

LOU STOVALL: Athens, Georgia.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And tell me about your parents.

LOU STOVALL: About—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: What were their names?

LOU STOVALL: —my parents?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yes, your parents, what were their names?

LOU STOVALL: My father's name was William and my mother's name was Irene.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Can you give me their full names?

LOU STOVALL: Uh, I can't think of my father's—I don't know their middle names.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and what was your mother's maiden name?

LOU STOVALL: Brightwell.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And how did they meet?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, I couldn't begin to answer that.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. [Laughs.] Well, tell me about—how many siblings did you have?

LOU STOVALL: Two brothers and one sister.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And where did you fall in that line?

LOU STOVALL: I was the oldest boy born directly after my sister.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and what did your parents do for a living?

LOU STOVALL: My father was a factory worker. He worked with Westinghouse Corporation in

Springfield, Massachusetts. And my mother was essentially a homemaker, but she also worked for a while at the Springfield Armory making rifle parts.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Oh, that's interesting, and I want to talk about that. So, you grew up in Springfield, when did your family move to Springfield from Athens?

LOU STOVALL: In 1941.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, so you were about four years old?

LOU STOVALL: I was exactly four years old.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Do you remember anything about living in Athens?

LOU STOVALL: I remember living across the street from my grandmother and going there frequently and that she had kitchen cabinets that you could—that I could crawl in one end and out the other, and that was kind of an adventure to go, sort of, exploring through my grandmother's kitchen cabinets.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: That's wonderful, and was this your father's mother or your mother's mother?

LOU STOVALL: My—uh, my mother's mother, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So do you know why you guys moved to Springfield?

LOU STOVALL: Oh well, my father wanted to. It was 1941 and he wanted to have a better source of income, so he moved first to—we moved first to New Haven where my father had heard they were hiring, and before that, he was a cook for the University of Georgia. And once we moved to—from Georgia, from Athens, Georgia, he—uh, I have to put this all together. We ended up in New Haven, Connecticut, where my father discovered that the job that he had heard about, they were no longer hiring, but that there was a job in Springfield, Massachusetts, and so we moved from New Haven immediately to Springfield, Mass.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, do you know if you had—were you all just moving on your own, or do you know if you had family in New Haven or in Springfield?

LOU STOVALL: No family in New Haven and no family in Springfield until we arrived there, but we had lots of relatives who came over the years through Springfield looking for work and opportunity and so on.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so this was during the Great Migration, this move in 1941?

LOU STOVALL: Exactly.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So with the Great Migration, people were offered—moving north for better jobs but also fleeing, sort of, some of the things going on in the South. Was there racism, or what was the nature of the community where you guys lived in—?

[00:05:12]

LOU STOVALL: I was four years old, so I wouldn't know.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, okay, and you weren't—you don't—you haven't heard any of those stories from your family about the atmosphere there before you moved?

LOU STOVALL: Well, I'm sure I've heard some of the stories, but you'd have to ask me specifically.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Well, do you know if your father—he worked at the University of Georgia, that seems like it might have been a good job then, do you know why he was seeking a different job? Was there something wrong with the job or was there some—?

LOU STOVALL: He was a cook, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so was there any racism or anything that your family

experienced in—or any danger that you ever experienced in Athens?

LOU STOVALL: I never experienced any.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Not you, maybe your parents, some of the adults in the family.

LOU STOVALL: No.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so tell me about growing up in Springfield. So you grew up there from age four, how was—I assume that you were first introduced to art in Springfield, so how did you first get introduced to art?

LOU STOVALL: There was a man who lived on the same street in Springfield, and my mother had heard about him and so she arranged for me to have some art lessons with him. That was it.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so was he an artist?

LOU STOVALL: I guess he was, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Do you know about how old you were when you first had those lessons?

LOU STOVALL: Well, it started early on, yeah, I guess I was five or six, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so you must have really enjoyed it because you continued?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So, um, so tell me about your, sort of, family dynamic. You were the second oldest, um, was—did you enjoy school, like, how did the family dynamic work? Did your other siblings take art classes?

LOU STOVALL: No, just me.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And was that because you were interested, or why do you think your mother identified you to take the classes?

LOU STOVALL: Well, because I was interested, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And how did you know you were interested?

LOU STOVALL: I just knew.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. [Laughs.] So, let's talk about your school, how did you—what kind of school did you go to in—while you were growing up? You were five or six when you took the art lessons, so that was in elementary school, were you taking art classes formally in school also?

LOU STOVALL: I don't know if I can answer that the way that you asked it. I was just a kid growing up, and there were some basic things that I knew and realized that my mother who was very attentive to my thoughts thought it would be a good idea for me to learn to properly draw.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So she was attentive to your thoughts and so it sounds like you were a pretty introspective child or you had a bond with your mother?

LOU STOVALL: Exactly.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Can you talk a bit about that?

LOU STOVALL: Um, not unless you ask your—the right questions.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: [Laughs.] So, I know that you like poetry and writing, was that something—in addition to visual art, did you also have those interests early on?

LOU STOVALL: I did, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so was that something that you shared with your mother, was your mother interested in art or how did that—her, sort of, realization, like the connection

happen?

LOU STOVALL: Hmm. Well, it was my mother and the—the brother of my father who had come to Springfield, and I guess early on, they encouraged me to draw, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so you must have been pretty good, so, and then I understand in high school you had a—you took formal art lessons, is that right?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah. Yes.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Can you talk a bit about those classes?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, well, you jumped from four or five years old to high school.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LOU STOVALL: Did you intend to?

[00:10:00]

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: [Laughs.] Well, do you want to tell me what happened in between?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, if you want to—if you want to ask me.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, so what happened as you were growing up? You first learned—you first started taking art lessons at age six and then was that something that you continued through the years or advanced in or—?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah. Well, I wrote—I had written a story about growing up, and there was one thing that I remember specifically was living on a street, the name that I can't recall, and there was a dog in that neighborhood that belonged to a family like a half dozen houses away. And everyone was, kind of, afraid of that dog, and I never really cared for animals. So, I was sent to the store to buy a loaf of bread, which I did, and on the way back, this dog encountered me and rushed at me, and I ran. But while running, the packaging for the bread, sort of, disassembled, and I had this vision of growing up with the bread going up in the air and then coming down, and the dog stopped to eat the bread, which is what saved me from the dog.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: That's amazing, and you wrote a story about that?

LOU STOVALL: I've written it somewhere, yeah, but I don't know where.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And that really happened?

LOU STOVALL: That really did happen yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So once the dog was eating the bread, you were able to get away?

LOU STOVALL: Oh yeah, yes, yes.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: [Laughs.] How old were you then?

LOU STOVALL: I don't remember my age then but I couldn't have been—it was between elementary school and high school, yeah. And I remember several teachers being you know, really kind to me when I was growing up and so I liked that idea of—I liked that whole idea of being liked and—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Oh, I thought you were going to continue. You liked the idea of being liked?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so what age were—what grade were you when this happened where your teachers liked you?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, I don't remember any specific dates. But my family was—my mother was well liked, and even though it was having to do with the war years and she was working at the

Springfield Armory, my father's brother, my uncle, uh, he, sort of, took care of us during the day because they—my parents were home in the evening, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so this is during the day, during the summers or—?

LOU STOVALL: This is year-round, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so can you talk a bit about where you lived in Springfield? Like, did you live in the same—you know, they have multiple family houses, did you and father's brother live in the same house, your families?

LOU STOVALL: No, but he lived nearby, my father's brother near—lived nearby. It was a neighborhood, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And what kind of neighborhood was it? Was it like a residential, a suburban neighborhood, or near downtown?

LOU STOVALL: It was residential. I mean we had a house with a door and so on. [Laughs.] Yeah, it was.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And did you do your art at home when you were growing up?

LOU STOVALL: I did, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Did you have a place that you did it, in your room or—?

LOU STOVALL: My mother had always established some area of the house where I could draw and do my artwork. I don't remember what artwork I was doing except that I know that I was—

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LOU STOVALL: —was drawing, but my mother always made sure that I had materials with which to work.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative], okay, and so when she was working, you said she worked at a factory doing rifle parts?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And was that during—

LOU STOVALL: Yes.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: —the war or how was that—were there other women in the neighborhood who worked, how common was that?

LOU STOVALL: Well, it was 1940—19—let's say it was between 1942 or ['4]3, and she worked for two or three years or more. It's hard to recall because I remember things specifically but not so much generally.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yes, okay. And so would you say that you-all grew up in a comfortable household, you had all that you needed, things—

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: —were going well? Okay. And so then—so you were—continued to do your art and then what about in high school?

LOU STOVALL: In high school, I met a teacher whose name was Helen Norgard, and—you want to write it down?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yes.

LOU STOVALL: N-O-R-G-A-R-D.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. Helen Norgard?

LOU STOVALL: Helen Norgard. It might have been N-E-R-R—no, N-O-R-R-G-A-R-D.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay.

LOU STOVALL: Yeah. Next question? Sorry.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So what about—no, it's okay. What about—so what about Helen Norrgard? She taught you art.

LOU STOVALL: She did, she was unusually kind. I say in my own words and my own understanding, she was specifically and unusually kind to me. And I remember having—just before I was in high school—no, I was in high school, I had just entered high school and there was this thing going on around. It was common to the flu, and it was called a whooping cough, and I caught that and had to stay home for a while. And I don't think we were quarantined because I didn't know that word then, but I was home long enough that she, the teacher, going out of her way to get to me, would come and bring me class assignments and books and so on.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Interesting.

LOU STOVALL: And so I grew up with again having people in the neighborhood who like me, then I transfer from my neighborhood to this teacher who also liked me. And learning from her and having whatever materials that I needed brought to me and also having a sense of—I think I must have had a sense of literature growing up because I was writing my little stories, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so you've talked a bit about wanting to be liked in your neighborhood and by this teacher, was that just a natural thing in your personality, was it that you were not liked by other people? Can you talk a bit about that, that need, that, sort of, very expressed need?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, I don't remember anyone who didn't like me, so. I'm sorry, I got confused by your question.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Well, you—you've talked a bit about wanting to be liked a couple of times and so was that just a nature—?

LOU STOVALL: Not so much wanting to be liked, but I was being liked, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. So then Ms. Norrgard was your art teacher?

LOU STOVALL: Right.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so what kind of art were you taking at that time?

LOU STOVALL: I was just drawing and doing whatever class assignments. I later became the poster maker in my high school because my high school was very much involved with sports and so I remember that I became the poster maker for the sports team, yeah.

[00:05:18]

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: That's interesting and so what—would you make posters about the upcoming games and things or what were the posters about?

LOU STOVALL: Just whatever, you know. There would be a play or something like that that had to be advertised or it's a game that was going to be staged at some place and so that's what I did.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So you made posters for sports and for other things happening at the school?

LOU STOVALL: Right, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And was that—where did you first learn to do screen printing? Were those screen-printing posters?

LOU STOVALL: That was some years later. The—I guess I had graduated from elementary school, and it's hard putting all this together because, you know, I've simply forgotten a lot. But I do remember being asked to make posters for a school play, and there is a—there's a catalogue

some place around that shows my art teacher sitting at a desk or worktable and this piece of art that I was working on, so yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so were those posters that you were making for your high school, were they painted posters or screen printed, how did you make them?

LOU STOVALL: Well, the screen printing came along after, significantly after. Because the screen printing happened at the age of fifteen and a half.. I had this job in the—in a neighborhood grocery store where I had been hired to, I guess, be a stock clerk. And, um, I was sent downstairs to the—to the basement of this grocery store where there were—stock was stacked, and I remember being sent downstairs to get some bags or something. And while there, I discovered that there was this chemical odor coming from a corner, and I went to see what it was, and it turned out to be—that's where the sign painter who made posters and signs, the grocery signs, that's where he produced them. And I remember distinctly standing there watching intently and or intensely, and he said, "Don't just stand there, grab this" and so I grabbed it, and he said, "Put it over there," and I turned around and there was another one ready. And I remember being sent all over the basement with these wet signs that he was printing and depositing them around the store because the groceries stock, the boxes were all downstairs, and it was room to store them, you know, and so that's—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So you're storing in all these places so they could dry?

LOU STOVALL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so that was your first experience with screen printing?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so obviously that, the first experiences led to a lifetime career of screen printing and so can you talk a bit about what that experience of screen printing, how that appealed to you?

LOU STOVALL: I don't know. There was—there's something about it, and it was after I was—I had gotten past this illness that I had or whatever it was.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: The whooping cough?

LOU STOVALL: Hmm?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: The whooping cough?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah. And back to regular school, and it was show-and-tell day, so I had to show and tell what I had done for the summer. So I guess I went through the summer not being ill, so, but I—the—my silk-screen experience, which started when I was roughly fifteen and a half, uh, I think that I had learned enough about silk-screen printmaking then or silk screen to make the signs and posters and also had made a few class posters for the high school. And I've lost my train of thought.

[00:10:59]

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Well, I was just asking about that initial experience of doing the screen printing in the store, that that obviously was the beginning of what has become a career. So what about that process of art—screen printing really appealed to you?

LOU STOVALL: I guess it had to do with doing something that people needed, you know; that's what I was doing.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And so then let's just talk a bit about what you sort—so you had art classes and then you were doing art on your own. How did the screen printing—did you do any screen printing beyond the store when you were still in Springfield?

LOU STOVALL: Not that I recall. But I continued doing the screen printing throughout high school and graduated from high school. And I guess I must have continued because, oh, the—my art teacher Helen Norrgard had given me a silk-screen kit that I could make, you know—that I could do silk screen someplace else aside from in school, yeah. So that was it.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So you're able to do that on your own like at home?

LOU STOVALL: Exactly.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so then you—did you make screen printing just for yourself or did you do screen printing for other people?

LOU STOVALL: No, I had—there was a couple of churches that I did some posters for, you know.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. So then—so after high school, what did you imagine that you would do next? Did you plan to go to college?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, mm-hmm [affirmative], yes.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so were you thinking at that point that you might be an artist for a career?

LOU STOVALL: Probably.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so how did you go about figuring out what you wanted to do next after high school?

LOU STOVALL: Well, after high school, instead of going directly to college, uh—boy, these thoughts are just coming back and confusing me. There was a teacher who was similar to my art teacher who paid attention to what I was doing and thinking and so on. And he arranged for me to, uh, have a—have an examination or a test that was then sent to the Rhode Island School of Design so that by the time I graduated from high school, I was already accepted at the Rhode Island School of Design. And I worked there at the Rhode Island School of Design for a semester or so and then my father passed away, so I must have been seventeen and a half or 18 by that time, and I had to go back home, and Providence, Rhode Island, is not that far from Springfield. So I went back to Springfield and got the job at the same—

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LOU STOVALL: —grocery store and continued working in that grocery store and making little community posters, and I did that for a number of years. It was all kind of a blur because it—because it took me five years between graduating from high school and going to—yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Five years between high school and what?

LOU STOVALL: Between high school and college.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Uh, between high school and college at Howard?

LOU STOVALL: No.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: High school and college at Rhode Island School of Design?

LOU STOVALL: No, the—oh, boy. That was included. The graduation from high school sort of melded into this other job also working in a grocery store and then acceptance to Howard University. So I only spent probably less than a year at the Rhode Island School of Design and then I was encouraged to, uh, come to Howard University to learn more about making art and so on. And—yeah, so it was working at the—at the grocery store where I had learned all kinds of things especially learning to be resourceful and friendly. But I also was supporting or helping to support my family because my father had become very ill and he died, and it was at that point that he—after he died that I came home to help and eventually went back to—went to college, went to Howard University.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, well you said a lot there. So you had a teacher who knew about RISD, the Rhode Island School of Design, and he arranged or you to take a test, and you must have done well because you were admitted to Rhode Island School of Design, correct?

LOU STOVALL: Right.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so did you attend on scholarship, did you—?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, because there was no money exchanged.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so did you apply to other schools, had you heard of the Rhode Island School of Design?

LOU STOVALL: Well, yes, because this man, this teacher had told me—told me and also Helen Norrgard, my teacher, about the Rhode Island School of Design. And it was from the neighborhood growing up because you hear all kinds of things that I'd heard about Howard University, and it was then that I applied to Howard University and was accepted. And there was no money exchanged, I don't believe—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: For Howard?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, yeah, although it was—oh, it was—there was something, it was like less than $700 a year so that might have been my first year of payment for college, but after that, I was on scholarship, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so let's talk a bit about—so with the Rhode Island School of Design, that's a—you know, a nice school for people to get into now. When you got into it then, was that an exciting thing? Were you looking forward to that opportunity?

LOU STOVALL: Oh yeah, yes.

[00:05:01]

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so what was your experience like during the short time that you were there?

LOU STOVALL: What was it like?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: What was your experience like the short time that you were there?

LOU STOVALL: Well, I just hard time at—in Providence, Rhode Island, because Rhode Island School of Design was in the residential section of Providence, and there was no immediate housing that would—that would've—that admitted a young Black student. And I do remember making friends with students at the Rhode Island School of Design and going to their place to live and work and to do my schoolwork. And one day, the person who I was living said that I couldn't come there all the time anymore and that I should have my own place to live. And so I had this place that was a good distance away from the school, not on the bus line, so I walked from wherever I was living to the Rhode Island School of Design on a daily basis a couple of times a day. And it was there that I learned that my father had—would—had become very, very ill and had had a heart attack. And so living in Rhode Island, in Providence, I was back to Springfield to live, and I had this job that they had hired me back immediately in this grocery store and so I had money to contribute, you know, at home where I was for three or four, five years and then learned about the Rhode Island School—I mean about Howard University. And this man James Porter who is the head of the art department and was accepted to Howard, and I started attending a class at Howard University having never completed a single year at—well, it was more than a year. I guess it was maybe a year plus at the Rhode Island School of Design and then back to—back to Springfield, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So you were talking about housing problems at the Rhode Island School of Design, so were you saying that—were the neighborhoods segregated? Like what was —

LOU STOVALL: Oh, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: —the issue with the housing?

LOU STOVALL: Well, it was hugely segregated and I didn't see—I never saw Black people in Providence. There was I think one student at the Rhode Island School of Design who was a Black student who I had been introduced to but never really knew, and wherever she lived, I never knew that; I just know that I didn't have a place to live all of a sudden. And then my father died, and I went back to Springfield and started working and giving the money, whatever I earned to my mother and then it was five years I know too—I do remember that. My mother said, "You've long—you've done this long enough, why don't you go to school now at Howard University full time?" Which I did. And my brother who was two years younger had then taken over to help the family.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And so how did—well quickly just going back to Rhode Island School of Design during that short period, what kinds of classes were you taking, what did you learn there?

LOU STOVALL: I was taking design classes, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And did you know when you went to Rhode Island School of Design and to Providence that the experience would be like that? Were you aware that there weren't many Black people there?

[00:10:09]

LOU STOVALL: It, sort of, came to me as a surprise, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And so up to the point when obviously—was your father sick for a while or was it a—was he all of a sudden—did he die suddenly?

LOU STOVALL: He was sick for a short while and then he passed away.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative], and so how did his death affect your family economically in terms of just the dynamics of the family?

LOU STOVALL: Well, since I had left the Rhode Island School of Design, I do remember sitting beside my father's bed and understanding that it was me, that I was supposed to take over and provide some sense of income for my family. And that was—I guess that was at the age of 18 or so and then for five years, I worked to help support the family and then moved to Washington, DC, in order to attend Howard University.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so during the five years or so that you were home after Rhode Island School of Design, besides working at the grocery store, what did you do?

LOU STOVALL: Ask me that again.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: When you were back in Springfield before you went to Howard, besides working at the grocery store, what did you do? When you were off of work, what did you do, did you have friends, did you socialize?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, I had a bunch of friends. There was a group of young men, myself included, and I remember hanging out on State Street, which was where—it was away from Rhode Island, and State Street was where all the libraries and museums were. And I remember hanging out there with friends and so on and having a really great time as a young man, as a young student without having classes to go to. I just worked, and during the day, well then I worked and some evenings and then—uh, back—none of these memories are clear now. I do remember having experiences with various institutions like the George Walter Vincent Smith Museum and the Springfield Library and learning essentially that I wanted to pursue art as—you know, as a living.

And then I had learned about Howard University and becoming an art student at Howard University directly after coming to Washington, and there was a family of—a family who lived near me who also told me about Howard University. So I attended Howard University or started to attend Howard University, and after that, everything is more clear.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay.

LOU STOVALL: It was unclear up to that point because I was so involved with growing up and becoming a student and then a high school graduate. But I do recall being interested in art as a career—

[00:15:00]

[END OF TRACK stoval21_1of2_sd_track07_m.]

LOU STOVALL: —before coming to Springfield, I mean before coming to Howard University.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. So even though you had to unfortunately leave the Rhode Island School of Design abruptly when your father passed away, you still did know that you wanted to figure out how to get back to school and get back to building a career as an artist?

LOU STOVALL: Right, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so while you were home during those years, you mentioned the George Walter Smith Museum, did you take classes there?

LOU STOVALL: I did, yeah. I remember that I had—my job was always in a grocery store and at—in the evening, there were some people there who were interested, and I became one of the people who just, sort of, was there and taking classes. It was—I didn't pay for it, but I was taking classes at the George Walter Vincent Smith Museum and being knowledgeable about other people who were doing things while I was learning about the possibilities of going to another school. I guess I wanted to be away from New England and so coming to Howard University at an early age, well, it wasn't that early because I was—had to be like 20—23, 24 something like that.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Was it about '62, 1962?

LOU STOVALL: Nineteen sixty-two, yeah, and so, yeah, it had to be '62, '63. And enrolling at Howard University and taking the classes that I was told I needed to take, which was English and social sciences and so on and not—and doing some other course and being introduced to Mr. Wells who was the printmaking teacher at that particular time and Mr. Porter who was the head of the art department but considered the—like the resident associate for art in general but for—certainly for intellectual art. So I learned a great deal from Mr. Porter about life and art in general and specifically about printmaking from Mr. Wells, yeah, which is like a transfer from my high school experience with Helen Norrgard to Mr. Wells, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So you said you learned about—a lot of about life and art from James Porter, what did you learn?

LOU STOVALL: Well, I became aware of what the possibilities were of living as a Black person in a community, which was Howard University. And I met many, many students at that particular time, and we were all, kind of, becoming aware of what was possible. And Stokely Carmichael just happened to be a student at that particular time at Howard University as well as Mary Lovelace and Sylvia Snowden, so, and then, of course, David Driskell was there. So I became like an activist-type student doing the art, making community posters because at that particular time, if you were a minister involved in a church in Washington and you wanted a sign made or something like that, then you would go to Howard University and find a student, [laughs] namely me, who would make whatever it was that you wanted at no charge and so I made.

[00:05:42]

And so Dave—between David Driskell and Mr. Porter, Mr. Wells, and—yeah, and the other teachers who were there, I became, kind of, a civic, you know, artist who was willing to do things for the community. And I had one friend who really—this was Lloyd McNeill who really did not want to make—he didn't want to just do things free, he wanted to be paid for whatever it was. So I decided that someone needed to be available to do the things that people couldn't afford to pay for and so that was me.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And so—

LOU STOVALL: Am I—?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Oh.

LOU STOVALL: Oh, I fidget, I'm sorry.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Well, let me—uh, I think it should've—would it be okay if we put those glasses here?

LOU STOVALL: I'm sorry?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Can we put these glasses here?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, sure.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. Excuse me, okay. I think—I don't know if I should—

LOU STOVALL: Did you lose something?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: I don't—oh.

[END OF TRACK stoval21_1of2_sd_track08_m.]

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, so I'm sorry, continue. So I guess you were talking about—we were talking about James Porter, and you talked about the experience at Howard, how you became, sort of, the civic poster maker helping churches and working with Lloyd McNeill, and that he wanted to be paid for projects and you maybe had a different idea about that.

LOU STOVALL: Right. Uh—yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So how did that come to be? I imagine there were a number of students doing screen printing, how did that become sort of—you were the go-to person for that?

LOU STOVALL: People would just show up in the—in this—in the art department and, I guess, would somehow find me, and they would say what they needed, and I would say, "Sure, I can do that."

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And so can you talk a bit about what some of those projects were? You mentioned the churches, were these events having to do with civil rights or what kinds of events were they?

LOU STOVALL: Eventually it led to civil rights, yeah, but at first, it was like a church supper or it's an afternoon something that was going on.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative] and so you were able to use the materials and the equipment at school to make those posters?

LOU STOVALL: Well, I think I brought my own material, and no one ever had any money during that time, so whatever I was doing was, sort of, done without money being involved, you know. I'm not sure what we—how we provided the materials, you know?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LOU STOVALL: I do know that there was uh—there seemed always enough something to make the images, and paper came along after, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So, can you talk a bit about, sort of, the environment at Howard? I know it was quite a community environment, there was obviously a lot going on with the civil rights movement at the time. What kind of a community did Howard provide for you?

LOU STOVALL: I don't know if I would say that it was a—well, it was a community, you know, but—and some of these ideas and some of these situations, one thing would, sort of, meld into another, you know?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LOU STOVALL: And I guess a lot of the materials that we—that I used came from working on the back of someone else's poster or art or whatever when we needed materials to work on. I'm not sure how all that happened, and I think that I had written some of that in other places and like—so I don't like to repeat myself unless I'm really sure, you know. I do know that Mr. Wells provided a lot of the materials that was needed to making—you know. And I think that somehow, the—this guy, McNeill who came along, we were great friends, but he was a user, you know. And so he would bring people to me wherever I was, usually in the art department at Howard University, and he would introduce such and such a person and say that this poster or that person was doing such and such and needed to have a flyer or a poster or whatever and then I would get it done, you know. And the person would come back and later on and pick it up, and no money was exchanged because no one had any money, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. Well, so what kinds of classes did you take at Howard?

LOU STOVALL: What classes?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yes.

[00:05:00]

LOU STOVALL: Oh, I took a lot of English, of—and a lot of history. I was the person in charge of the seminar and the room that was—where all the slides were kept and lots of books and so I became familiar with all the books that were at Howard University in the art department during that time. And in this seminar, there was a huge slide collection where the images of art and whatever went along with the information identifying that art was there. And also, I forgot to mention some of the other teachers like Lois Jones you know, for instance. She was one of the ones who claimed that I was one of her best students, but I was hardly that because first of all, I could hardly stand her, and the people that I really associated with as having a great influence on me was Porter, Driskell, and Wells. And Mr. Porter really did appeal to me because his broad intellect and knowledge of art and what had been going before and so I became familiar with European art because of Mr. Porter with Black art because of Mr. Driskell and poster art because of Mr. Wells. Those were like my basic influences. And there's a woman who I can't think of her name offhand, but she really appealed to a lot of the intellectual but spirited intellectually people. I cannot think of her name, but she would come to find me and tell me certain things that she knew, and I would respond to that by making some artwork that related to it.

But Lois Mailou Jones, that was not her. You know, she became after—I recall her—after I had left, graduated from Howard University but was still there somehow doing something where I was there all the time or maybe I was—I guess I didn't have a real paying job. Well, yes, I did because Howard University was paying me something to be there, and I was building racks and so on to store some of the university art of which there was a lot. And I remember Lois Jones showing up at some point and pointing to me and saying, "There's my favorite art student," and naming me and saying what I had done and how it had affected the university. All of that is kind of a blur.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative], and what was she saying that you had done, do you remember?

LOU STOVALL: Oh well, it's just pointing out various people that I had made art for, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And you said that you weren't particularly fond of her, why was that?

LOU STOVALL: Well, she was given to paying attention to the women students and the design students of which I was a painter, you know. So she—and having grown up liking people who like me. So I didn't respond very well to Mrs. Jones because she didn't—she didn't appear to like me very much, but she was also a person who was a user. You know, she could use you**.**

[00:10:48]

So there was—and I think that Lloyd McNeill had learned a lot from her about how to use someone who had resources. And my chief resource was that I had people who like me, who help me to get things done, you know.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so what class did you take with Lois Mailou Jones?

LOU STOVALL: I didn't take any classes with her, yeah, but I was there, and she was just in my life so to speak.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Got you, and so at that time at Howard, obviously now Mr. Porter is considered this vaunted figure in African American art. At the time, what was your experience with him, was he someone that was a mentor to you, was he sort of—

LOU STOVALL: He was a mentor.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: —was he regarded that way at the time?

LOU STOVALL: Oh yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: What was that experience like?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah. As a matter of fact, he would interrupt his class or a class and tell me to come and get in his car with the other students who were there, and we would be taken on a drive through Washington, and he would point out various buildings and of—and so on and associate that with the names of those buildings. And so I learned a lot of community art because of James Porter on those rides through Washington with him and learned a lot about

architecture because he would identify those buildings, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Interesting. And then with David Driskell at the time, he was a professor and you had classes with him?

LOU STOVALL: I did have classes with David Driskell, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And you learned about African American art from him?

LOU STOVALL: I learned of what was then the presence of Black American art in this country from David Driskell, and I learned about European art from Professor Porter and in general about poster and community art from James Wells. But James Wells also never really focused on the racial identity of the artist that we were working with, but it was there, and I was doing it. Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And were you taking art history classes with these three very prominent figures? It's—you had a great, sort of, triumvirate of, you know, people who are now these historic figures teaching you these various aspects of art history so that's wonderful. And so were these art history classes or were they practical classes where you're actually hands-on doing art?

LOU STOVALL: Hmm, they were art history classes, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay.

LOU STOVALL: You lost me on some of that.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Well, I was just wondering if they were art history classes or were they studio classes? Were any of these studio classes that you were taking with one of the three of them?

LOU STOVALL: These—some of the studio classes were mixed in with the art history classes, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so then obviously—can we talk about James Wells? You focus on printmaking now, and that must have been a critical time for you to, sort of, hone your printmaking skills. Can you talk a bit about your experience working with him and what you learned from him?

LOU STOVALL: What I learned from Mr. Wells was a sense of—

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LOU STOVALL: —community and consequently, what was important to do and what was important to leave, to make space and time in my life for. And also, Mr. Wells, sort of, liked the idea of the community of artists, you know. Mr. Wells lived on—I think it was T Street Northwest, and there were several artists who lived around there and so I came to know about some of those artists because of Mr. Wells, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Well, who were those artists?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, the one that I can think of, his name was Sebree, Charles Sebree.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Oh, yes. And so can you talk a bit about—so when you went to Howard, where did you live?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, I lived on 12th Street, 12th and W Street above a dental laboratory. That's where I lived.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative], so that sounds like it's, kind of, near where the U Street Corridor is now, is that right?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so coming here to Washington, DC, to go to Howard from Springfield, what was your experience of just living in Washington beyond attending

Howard?

LOU STOVALL: That was too much for me.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Can you tell me about your experience of living in Washington, DC?

LOU STOVALL: I had a job of working with—well, there was a—I can go back to the beginning. There was a—Howard University Art Department was up Georgia Avenue, but it wasn't Georgia Avenue specifically. It was—well east of Georgia Avenue, there was a street, I can't think of the name of the street, but it was Seventh Street, yeah. And so I would go from where I lived at 12th and U—I think I said that. Where it was, I would have to go from 12th Street down to Georgia Avenue, which was essentially Seventh Street and then up three or four blocks past the—past the law school, past the school of architecture and on to Howard's campus and past the—the Frederick Douglass building, which is where the so-called intellectual center for ideas, and that's where I encountered Stokely Carmichael and Rap Brown and all of the other people who were interested in civil rights. And so passing by and hanging out with those people and then going on to Howard University Art Department classes and sometimes going—on my way home stopping there and visiting. And there was the—oh, I can't think of the name of the street now, but it was—it was several blocks. You had to go from Howard University west several blocks toward 14th Street in order to get to this place where Stokely Carmichael lived and hung out with his girlfriend Mary Lovelace who later on became a painter who's also—still a painter.

[00:05:04]

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yes.

LOU STOVALL: And so transfer—the transfer between Howard University going through that community in order to get to the place where I lived, I encountered a lot of what was going on in Washington and in the—ideally the world of—because I was interested in what was going on. You know, I looked at magazines and read newspapers and that kind of thing and had a—had kind of a life of a young artist interested in the world around him, and that was me. And having an experience with Lois Jones who became friendly after I graduated, and she could see that I was someone that she could use. It was interesting that she would call and have me come to meet her or whatever. She had a vehicle, so I don't remember her coming to pick me up, but I do remember her calling me to come and pick her up. And one of the things that was interesting is that she would have some art need that I was to fulfill, but on the way to that art need or from that art need, she would somehow have me in the grocery store shopping with her and then taken to the counter to pay for it. I would end up several times paying for whatever she was buying. She lived up 16th or 17th Street.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Uh-huh [affirmative]. How did that happen that you would end up paying sometimes?

LOU STOVALL: Because she wouldn't have the money or she just never came up with it, you know?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So you would go with her under the—with the understanding that you were doing something art related and then it would end up being some errands and other things during that trip?

LOU STOVALL: Exactly.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And were you able to go pick her up?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, but I never drove and never had a vehicle until after I had succeeded somehow in my poster making so that, uh, the company that I worked for, this little sign shop called Botkin's Art and Display. And going from Howard to whatever, in whatever vehicle was—that someone was driving that I was also in, we would end up going to Lois Jones and picking her up and taking her to wherever she wanted to go, which always included a store on the way, and a lot of this I just phased out, you know?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative], yeah.

LOU STOVALL: Because I never really liked her, you know. But I would—because she was old. And because I knew that she had contributed something important where art was concerned, I,

sort of, just allowed it to happen, you know?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay.

LOU STOVALL: But I had lots of—I had—I guess I had had lots of good fortune of—from the time that I was a baby so that sharing was always something that I could manage, yeah.

[00:10:10]

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: When you grew up with siblings, you always have to share?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, so you talked a bit about going from where you lived on W Street to Howard and what happened in between and the house where Stokely Carmichael lived and so was that just—?

LOU STOVALL: The apartment building.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: The apartment building?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so was that just his personal hangout, or was there civil rights and SNCC activities going on there, what was happening there?

LOU STOVALL: It was there that there was a meeting, and I came into the meeting after it had started, and I remember Stokely being confronted with the other students who said, "We need to have this upped as a Black organization." We're talking about SNCC, you know. And having all these white people involved was diluting what we were there for and so we needed to get them out of there, you know. And some of the people who were—I'll bet you some of them are still around. I can't think of the names of this one white fellow who was always there and always in those meetings, and he was always saying what should be done in order to effect what we were trying to do. And I of course being—I mean I later on figured out that I didn't care to be contained, incarcerated, or whatever. So when they would go on those marches and so on, I would've made the posters or whatever, but I never went to protest, but I did provide the—you know, the signage or whatever, yeah. And I can't think of this fellow's name, but it might come to me at some point, but I do remember he was—and he's in the history. I mean if I go through the —through some photographs, I could point to him, and he was one of the ones who wanted to make sure that civil rights were attended or attended to, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: It sounds like maybe him being so vocal that that prompted the other Black students to say maybe there shouldn't be as many white people participating?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, yeah. And a lot of the appeal of the male and female were because some of the young guys were there because—well like Lloyd for instance—because there were so many white girls involved, you know. So he would entertain—but not only him but other people would entertain the idea of having these guys as their—or the girls as being their girlfriends and some of the women as the white guys being their boyfriends or just friends, you know. Howard University was a very interesting place at that particular time, so I'm talking about 1960. Through the early '60s, there was a lot of that going on and—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: A lot of that, you mean interracial dating?

LOU STOVALL: I'm sorry?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: You said there's a lot of that going on, do you mean interracial dating?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay.

LOU STOVALL: Yeah. But look, I don't know if we'd call it dating.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Oh—

LOU STOVALL: But it was interaction.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Got you.

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, yeah. So you better write down interacting—

[00:15:00]

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LOU STOVALL: —as opposed to dating because it was important that all of this was going on, but it was less important than getting the idea across, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so there were Black women who were active also in the SNCC, in the meetings, in the protests?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so did you consider yourself to be an active part of SNCC?

LOU STOVALL: I was never an active part of SNCC with the exception of doing the work.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: The posters?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah. And Stokely was such a charismatic figure. He would come even after I had graduated from Howard University and had moved away from—somewhat away from Howard University, and I was living someplace else. And even though I was already married to Di, you know, Stokely would come by and get me to go someplace with him, and that some place was always where there was, uh, some movement or the beginning of a movement going on. And it was all part of that community action, you know? I know I have to go back to the period where I was married, but I can't remember—I do remember going or being married while I was still in Springfield before I came to Howard, I think.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yeah, so that—so after you left RISD [Rhode Island School of Design], you were in Springfield for about five years before you went to Howard, and during that time, you got married?

LOU STOVALL: I don't remember exactly, yeah. Let me see if I can put it together.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Did you have a girlfriend when you were there?

LOU STOVALL: I'm thinking of the other people who were in my life who were involved. I do remember—it's all kind of a blur now, you know. I do remember leaving Springfield to go to New Jersey, which is where this girl was from that I married. Her name was Elizabeth [Wilson -LS], yeah. There was no pregnancy involved, yeah. And then back to Springfield, she was a nursing student at that particular time.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Elizabeth or someone else?

LOU STOVALL: Elizabeth.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And so is Elizabeth the person that you married?

LOU STOVALL: She's the one I married, yeah. And I've forgotten exactly what years that were that I was married to her, although that's easy to find out.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yes.

LOU STOVALL: I don't know, ask me something else.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And so then—and you have a daughter?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And when was she born?

LOU STOVALL: She was born in 1960.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, so that was two years before you went to Howard and so—is that right? Because you went to Howard in1962.

LOU STOVALL: I was in Howard from '60. That is a—kind of a puzzle, I don't remember that. Okay. I don't—yes, because of I remember the women at Howard, Sylvia and Mary Lovelace, Doris when—Doris Colbert, she passed away—all helping me to take care of my daughter whose name is Calea, C-A-L-E-A. So I guess I did have her when I was a student, you know, at Howard.

[00:05:38]

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, so you brought her to Howard with you. She wasn't back in Springfield with her mother?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, no, her mother was with me—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, so you—

LOU STOVALL: —at—in Springfield.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: —so you and the mother came, you came as a family to Howard?

LOU STOVALL: Right. Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. All right, and so, and her name is Calea?

LOU STOVALL: C-A-L-E-A, Calea.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And so let's go talk a bit about when you—so you—it's interesting because with the civil rights movement, obviously there were some leaders, there were people who were active in protest marches and then artists always played a big role whether it was, you know, making signs or doing other creative things that were really critical to the movement's success and certainly documenting it in terms of photographers. And so you mentioned that you were making these signs for some of the SNCC activities, did you participate in any other way whether it was SNCC or other civil rights activities or would—did you basically stick and stay with having, sort of, an artist's role?

LOU STOVALL: I pretty much had an artist role, but there were meetings and marches and that kind of thing, which I never took a great part in because I distinctly remember one, discussion where I said, "I don't want to go South [laughs] because first of all, I don't want to be locked up because if I'm locked up, who's going to be here to make these signs and these posters?" So I never went South to make posters, but I did go to some of the marches, and I was always on the outskirts of these marches because I always needed to be back to make the posters or the signs. And I think part of it was just that I just didn't care to be contained, you know?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Right.

LOU STOVALL: And I'm thinking of some of the people, my friend Mona for instance whose name I can't—whose last name I can't remember, and her—and Mona was married to a white fellow whose name I can't remember, and I remember her—oh, and I have to mention Ray, you know. Ray Snow was—he came back—he came down to Washington from Springfield with me, so I was involved in protesting and poster making even back in Springfield for civil rights, yeah. And Ray insisted upon driving me to—from Springfield to Washington. When I first was admitted to Howard University, Ray is the one who drove me because he wanted to—yeah, because he wanted to. And we ended up at Mona's house with her, I guess, husband or then. And there was one incident that I recall where Ray and I had stopped to have dinner, and this man came out of his restaurant and said that he would serve us but we couldn't eat in the restaurant, you know. But he recommended a restaurant that was a few blocks away where he also went periodically for food that he really liked. And so he directed us to go there, and we went there, and we were able to eat there, and Ray was white also. We could—we felt comfortable there and then we were back in the car having eaten dinner and on our way back to Washington, you know.

[00:10:49]

I have never been to Washington before, and I do remember going from Springfield to this place to eat and then to Mona's house, which is only a few blocks from Howard University and staying overnight with her until this place was cleared for me to live for a few blocks away from Howard University. And then that's when I found the dental lab where I had lived over the lab until we

moved, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So when you—so Ray drove you from Springfield to Howard when you started going to school at Howard, right?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so did you know Mona before you got to DC?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and you knew her from Springfield?

LOU STOVALL: I knew her from Springfield.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Got you. Was she attending Howard?

LOU STOVALL: No, but she was somehow involved with Howard, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so did you get your apartment in advance, or you just started looking for it once you got to DC?

LOU STOVALL: I started looking for it once I arrived here.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, I got you. And so I know that you had some issues—so had experienced segregation with some of the housing issues in Providence. When you came to Howard and experienced the issue with not being able to eat in the restaurant, was that something that—how did you feel about that? Was that something that you weren't really used to encountering?

LOU STOVALL: I was not—yeah, yeah. I think somehow I had—I had blanked out because I do remember saying to someone in some interview or some former interview that I had never actually been deliberately refused anything based upon the fact that I was a Black, you know. I do remember—I don't remember being ideally segregated against for some reason. I somehow had avoided all of that, and I think it was mostly because I was busy doing posters and drawing and not to mention my regular schoolwork at—when I was at Howard. Because I was a—I think I was a fair student or more than fair because I was intensely involved in amounting—an amount of intelligence that I would be, you know, considered smart, yeah. So that was—yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So then even though maybe you, kind of, avoided it because you, kind of, stayed close to your work and close to Howard, you did experience it though obviously in Providence and then when you first moved to Howard—when you first moved to DC?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, my only direct influence was at Rhode Island School of Design of being told that I could not live—that I couldn't be there, there meaning in that house where the other students lived. And where I had left the Rhode Island School of Design, gone to this place, stayed overnight, and was working the next day doing some artwork or whatever and—

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LOU STOVALL: —being told that I could not frequent that location because the other neighbors were going to be—you know, protest, you know? That was the one occasion and then jumped over a few years until I was in Springfield, married, looking for a place to live, and being told that there was no availability, and that was just outside of Springfield. It was on some road that was not in Springfield, but it was a suburban area, but they couldn't rent to me because there was a segregation, yeah. That was the only segregation that I can remember in Springfield, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: When you—where you lived with your mother, was that—what kind of neighborhood was that, was it all Black, was it mixed?

LOU STOVALL: That was a mixed neighborhood, yeah. There were, you know, all kinds of people there, yeah. It was mostly Black and white, but everyone seemed to be poor, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so then when you made the decision to come down to Howard University, you applied and you got accepted and then you had a scholarship?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, I paid the first year, yeah, and then I had a scholarship thereafter.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so then you initially came down with Calea? Is that how—am I pronouncing it correctly?

LOU STOVALL: Calea.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Calea and her mother?

LOU STOVALL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And is her mother Elizabeth?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so then how did that go?

LOU STOVALL: How do you mean?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Well, like what did Elizabeth do while she was here and then how did the marriage evolve while you were at Howard?

LOU STOVALL: I'd have to go back a little bit to tell you that Elizabeth had a friend whose name was Meredith, and they had been students in New Jersey—Newark, New Jersey —and had been accepted as nursing students to a school in New Hampshire. And in New Hampshire, which didn't have, whatever, the surgical nursing program—that school in New Hampshire, they had to come to Springfield to do surgical nursing, and that's how they ended up in Springfield. And that's when I had met Elizabeth and her friend Meredith because they were nursing students, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. So then you met—and you and Elizabeth met and then you dated and then you eventually got married?

LOU STOVALL: Eventually got married, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and then you had your daughter in 1960 and then you came to Howard together and then how did that evolve? How was it being a family man while you were a student at Howard?

LOU STOVALL: I had my—this job and the name of the place was Botkin Signs & Display [Harvey Botkin's Sign Shop or Botkin Sign and Display Service -Ed.] , B-O-T-K-I-N, so—I've lost your question.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Well, I was just asking how it was the balance maybe that you found—you had to find being a student at Howard and having a family.

LOU STOVALL: I can't relate to that.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: How did you—you eventually weren't married anymore, so I'm wondering how the experience was for you being a student and also trying to have a family and a child at Howard.

LOU STOVALL: Somehow, [laughs] somehow it didn't—it doesn't connect.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Uh, what was—how—you—so mentioned that some of the women who were also art students helped to take care of your child and so was Elizabeth working while she was here?

[00:05:21]

LOU STOVALL: She was, yeah. She worked at the children's hospital, and somehow, during the day when I was supposed to take care of Calea and Elizabeth was working, some of the students, the women students at Howard would help to take care of Calea while I was in class, and that's how that happened, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so was it a challenge for you to balance trying to take care of your responsibilities as a father and a husband with trying to focus on your studies?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, there wasn't much—yeah, there was—there was a lot of studying done, but I did that. I think I must have done it in the evenings or at nights, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yeah. And so then eventually, the marriage was over?

LOU STOVALL: The marriage was over years later because I wasn't married when I finally graduated from Howard University, and Elizabeth was back living in New Jersey with her mother. Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. So you-all just didn't get along; it didn't work out?

LOU STOVALL: Well, she didn't like—I want to say that she liked me, but she didn't like my friends. And she was very an interesting, private person, and I do remember coming home one day and she had—because I lived over this dental laboratory, which produced a lot of dust during the day, and she was cleaning, and there was dust everywhere because of her leaning or cleaning, and I do remember saying, "We can't be married anymore if you're going to clean because you're getting dust all over my paintings and my drawings." We weren't get along—getting along all that well anyway, and she didn't care for any of my friends, you know. I think she especially disliked Lloyd, you know. And she never went to this place where I worked, although she went enough that they got to know her a little bit and my daughter. And then they were out of Washington living in New Jersey—Newark, New Jersey—and then I was on my own living over at the dental laboratory and going to school. Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, all right, so let's talk—we mentioned James Wells a bit, but I guess I want to talk a bit about him more because I think you considered him a mentor. So can you tell me a bit about you and Mr. Wells?

LOU STOVALL: Well, Mr. Wells was just—you know, he was, like, the nicest human being that you could ever encounter. And, oh, he was just really a wonderful, wonderful, nice man who was very fatherly without ever presenting himself as fatherly, but the care and the concern was there, you know.

[00:10:08]

The person who existed in my life as kind of fatherly without ever presenting himself as fatherly was David Driskell. And David would say to whoever was left in the art rooms, "Well, I'm going home now, and you know, Thelma will have cooked by the time I get home, so whoever is hungry should come with me now." And so whoever was there, and that's how we ended up [laughs] that Thelma provided dinner for me many, many times—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: That's wonderful.

LOU STOVALL: —and other students, you know.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: That's nice, and so that's great and so he—that's nice. So you considered David Driskell as, kind of, like a father figure because of some of those kinds of things?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, but he never presented himself as a father figure. What he was, was he was Mr. Driskell who was our friend and teacher, but Thelma is the one who cooked and provided meals for lots of us, you know.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: That must have been wonderful to get a good homecooked meal.

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. So let's talk about some of your other friends at Howard. Did—Roberta Flack, was she a student there when you were there?

LOU STOVALL: She was around, and I didn't have a whole lot of interaction with Roberta until after I graduated. And because Lloyd liked Roberta or liked the idea of Roberta and wanted to make posters and so on for Roberta and wanted to be involved with her, but he never really liked Roberta anyway. He didn't think that she was musically up to his level. Consequently, he never invited her to play with other musicians that he was playing with, but he used her and conscious of it that—of her own, so, and used her presence in Washington to put on concerts and to make money to, to raise—you know. I mean talking about money, no one was ever charged very much for Roberta, that happened years and years after, and he—I remember one

significant concert where I think we charged five dollars at the door for whoever could pay, and this was for a little concert that was done to raise money, you know, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. So just to—so in terms of students that you were with at Howard, is there anyone else that you recall or that you continue to have a friendship with or a working relationship while you were at Howard that we haven't discussed?

LOU STOVALL: Well there was Leo [Robinson -LS] who later left Washington before we ever graduated, and he moved some place out West. And then there was David Stevens who came to Howard after, and he was also a user. And he stayed in Washington because I had—by that time had a connection with the Corcoran Gallery and had done quite a lot of work in Washington because I was also working for a lot of the artists who were—

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LOU STOVALL: —in Washington like Gene Davis and Paul Reed and others like that. So David Stevens, at one point, we had a meeting, and everybody was invited to the Dupont Center. This was after Walter Hopps had established that I was to be director of the Dupont Center workshop or gallery, whatever. And so we had a sculpture in the basement level for anyone who wanted to do something having to do with wood and metal or—there was no plastic available during that particular time.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: A sculpture studio?

LOU STOVALL: It was a sculpture studio, yeah, but it was really metal or wood that was being made. And then on the first floor, that's where I had the woodshop with all kinds of materials. That's where the table saw was first installed where I made a lot of wood furniture during that particular time, and that was on the first floor. And on the second floor, which was where the largest room was, that's where my studio was, complete with this huge drawing board that was attached to the—a side wall. And then outside there was this little anteroom, not a little, but it was a nice size, where the students who came to work with me were being taught because we had this arrangement that anyone who wanted to learn to do silk screening with me would have to learn and then teach someone else, so that was part of it, you know. That was definitely '67, '68, you know. And then on the third floor, I had two or three artists who had already learned or had earned a position of being in that 1503 21st Street space because they had already exhibited that they were interested in teaching some young people who came along. And so that took care of the third floor. The fourth floor was, kind of, that—little offices on half of it and the other half was used as studios for four different photographers who worked there. So that's what filled that building. It was a—we had art activity going on, on five floors.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And that was the Dupont Center Gallery?

LOU STOVALL: That was the Dupont Center, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And you served as director of that?

LOU STOVALL: And I was director.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: For how long?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, it was probably two or three years, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so as director, did that mean that you, um, sort of, ran it in terms of like the business operations as well as the art-making operations? What did that mean?

[00:05:05]

LOU STOVALL: You couldn't call it a business as such except that people came to learn about silk-screen printmaking, but at the same time, again, there was no money exchanged. And Di was—by that time, Di [Bagley Stovall] and I had gotten married and—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: What year was that that you got married?

LOU STOVALL: I don't remember.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Was it '71?

LOU STOVALL: It might have been '71, it might have been '72, but it was probably '71. My—oh, Elizabeth had long gone by then, you know?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. [Laughs.]

LOU STOVALL: But Calea was—you know, was a frequent visitor, and how she got there, I don't know. Maybe Di drove to get her and bring her back to Washington or whatever, but I do know that we had a nice relationship between Calea, Di, and myself.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: That's nice.

LOU STOVALL: And Elizabeth was someplace else, generally in Newark, New Jersey, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so I just want to backtrack a little bit from Howard to the Dupont Center Galleries, the time in between there. So when you graduated from Howard, what did you do next, what was your plan?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, when I graduated from Howard, I went to work full time for the Botkin Signs & Display shop making—running his shop for him and making community posters of which again there was virtually money exchanged for them, but whatever could be earned was turned over to the man who owned the shop. And so the posters were made including some community posters where there was a few dollars paid for them. I remember one significant commitment that we had, and I think it was for the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party that we made posters, and they paid for them, and that gave Botkin some money for the use of his studio and shop. Um, but he also had a running business making real estate and grocery signs.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Was Mr. Botkin Black?

LOU STOVALL: No, he was Jewish.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: He was Jewish, and were you the only one who worked there?

LOU STOVALL: No, there were several other sign people.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, so he did a decent business in addition to—you were working on that business in addition to doing community posters on the side?

LOU STOVALL: Right, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so for how long did you work at Botkin? I know you worked there during Howard, but then, you were working there full time once you graduated?

LOU STOVALL: I was working full time. Even after I graduated from Howard, I was still working for Botkin, and I remembered having to travel from—the shop was in Silver Spring.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Botkin?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, just across the district line, yeah, so that was it.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And so how long did you work there before you went to the Dupont Center Gallery?

LOU STOVALL: It must have been—well, I had made this arrangement with Botkin that I could use his shop to build whatever I needed to equip my studio, which I had been given a grant from Philip Stern, Philip and Leni Stern to establish what was then a community workshop and—oh, boy.

[00:10:14]

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So what was the arrangement?

LOU STOVALL: Uh, we might need Di for part of this, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Well, so you got a grant from Stern to establish what became the workshop, right?

LOU STOVALL: Exactly, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And was that in 1968?

LOU STOVALL: That must have been 1968.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, how did you connect with Stern, and how did this idea that they would support what you wanted to do come about?

LOU STOVALL: This is where McNeill came in as a really active part of my life. He was—I had become involved with what was then the Washington Gallery of Modern Art, and whatever I was doing, Lloyd McNeill was also somehow involved, and as I said, he was a user, you know. So his, uh—you're going to have to piece all of this together later because flashes of it come back in terms of significant things. Lloyd had been involved in just being out there and had met the people at the so-called Washington Gallery of Art and had introduced me or brought me in because he had been offered an exhibition time. And part of this was to just have an exhibition in Washington that involved not just himself but other artists who had not had a format, you know. And so he had been essentially given the whole building not including the basement and not including the fourth floor, but the first, second, and third floor as exhibition space.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And this is at the Washington Gallery of Modern Art?

LOU STOVALL: This is the Washington Gallery of Modern Art, yeah. So on the first floor, it was just exhibition space as it was on the second space and the third, and the first floor was then closed off and used as, kind of, an alternative space for exhibition. The second floor, which had the most wide-open space and the largest galleries, and that's where we had some music concerts there, and the third floor was the same thing.

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LOU STOVALL: And I'm trying to piece this together, so it makes sense. The space that Lloyd had been given, which he really had access to the whole building, but without having any idea of what he wanted to do with it except to be in charge of who would come and who would do things. And as I said, you know, he was just this user and so he brought in a bunch of artists who we knew from the community and also from Howard University of—but who were mostly just from the community because at that particular time, he spent most of his time hanging out at Dupont Circle. And so he had been invited to have an exhibition there called *Intercourse,* and the reason for the name was the interplay of art from a community basis.

And Philip and Leni Stern were the action behind this exhibition that Lloyd was going to have, and he was told that he couldn't use the name Intercourse because at that particular time, intercourse was a no-no word. But somehow, they managed to because of his insistence that the name be used, and he was going to explain the use of the name with this particular conflagration of artists to produce an exhibition that people would want to attend. And the Washington Gallery of Modern Art by that time was on its last leg, was trying to close up, but they wanted to have this final show.

And so Lloyd invited me and several other artists to come and do their thing, and my part was to entertain the idea of a different way to enter an art museum. And so I had changed the way that you would enter the museum through side doors and not the outside, but once you were inside, you had to not go directly to any specific studio or space but that you could manage the—to get into the first-floor gallery by going through a crawl space and then beside the elevator, which took you from the first floor to the fourth floor, by going beyond the elevator toward kind of a back corridor. And then around a little sort of roundabout that you could enter the side door of this gallery where I had also inside the gallery made ramps. And these ramps were, like, divided because there were high ceilings—divided the space halfway between the first—between the basement—I'm sorry between the floor the first floor and the ceiling halfway around—built these ramps. So you could come in from the first floor through this little crawl space, which you would have to do on your hands and knees or going around to the side way and going through the regular standup part of the gallery and into a doorway, which led you into the gallery and so could enter either way. And on the first floor through the crawl space, we had this, sort of, ramp built around the entire first floor and—

[00:05:40]

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Interesting.

LOU STOVALL: —under it, under this ramp was every musical instrument that you could think of. That we were—invited schools to come, and once the kids were in there and discovered all these musical instruments. And the rest of it was just plain walls where we had hung paper and so on with markers and so on. And you could make an artwork or make a drawing or whatever, or you could go down a slide to the first level where all the instruments were, yeah. It was kind of fanciful.

And on the second floor, we had built pedestals, which were in every corner there being like eight corners because there were two rooms. There was the interior space and then there was this ante space, and Lloyd had arranged for various musicians to come and play. And there were pedestals that were large enough that people could stand on and play music or could sit, and we had—must have had some sort of ramp or something that there was a piano under it where someone could sit and play piano. And on the third floor there was, like, this big open space where we had just music, you know. And on the fourth floor, and that's where Di came in, you could enter from the elevator. And as soon as you were off the elevator, there was a space where you could walk toward this open space. And the open space was more gallery space, but we had established a fence that you'd have to walk through this fence on the gravel. And we had a popcorn machine that anyone who cared to or wanted to have a bag of popcorn could make a bag of popcorn and eat this popcorn while walking on gravel through this exhibition space.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Wow.

LOU STOVALL: And—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So it's sort of a multisensory—

LOU STOVALL: It was—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: —experience?

LOU STOVALL: Exactly, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Interesting, and so was the original idea, like how did it come about that you wanted to have these innovative ways of entering and experiencing the spaces? Was that your contribution as an artist, or was that the concept for the overall show?

LOU STOVALL: The concept for the overall show came from a combination of all of this thinking with all of these creative people. Some just kids from the street, some just young people who were—you know, I guess they were either art students or activists of some sort with no place else to go and they were attracted to our building, 1503 21st Street from Dupont Circle, which was just—the—you know, Dupont Circle?

[00:10:11]

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LOU STOVALL: Yeah. There were just a ton of people who hung out from early in the morning until late at night. And that's where Lloyd mostly played his flute like the piper and invited people to come with him back to 1503 21st Street, which is where we who were actually making things were doing that. And so you had all this going on, all this creative thought and activity going on because nothing else was happening in that section of Washington that wasn't dedicated to some sort of creative expression, and that was Lloyd and that was myself. And Lloyd had asked me to—as I said before, to come and construct how the space would be done, and Philip and Leni Stern had given us money in order to make these platforms and pedestals and that kind of thing.

And we had had an exhibition in that space that was pretty much closed as an exhibition because there was—Ed Kienholz had the exhibition just before and had established these rooms that were involved with all kinds of itinerant art. And you could walk through and experience what was going in there, but you could also not participate with this—with all this itinerant art, and you could just experience what we had done. We meaning Lloyd and associated people like he was, musicians and so on, not to mention the students who came. And as I said, there was paper attached to the walls so that you could draw. I don't know if any liquid materials were used. I'm sure there was paint used, but it was things that could be cleaned up and cleaned off,

yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: All right. So that was an interesting exhibition, and it ended up being called *Intercourse*?

LOU STOVALL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so from there, you met Philip and Leni Stern, and they supported what you wanted to do with the workshop?

LOU STOVALL: We met them before because their—it was their money that gave us the access to the materials and so on because none of us had any money. But Philip and Leni Stern, the money that they gave, we bought the materials, the wood, the paper, and so on.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative], for this exhibition?

LOU STOVALL: Pardon?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: For the exhibition?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: But what about setting up your workshop in 1968?

LOU STOVALL: That came after. So I had been introduced to Philip and Leni Stern through Walter Hopps who was running the gallery that we had been given. And I was in the process of building all of this material, you know, the alternate ways of getting into this space, the pedestals, and so on. And there were the artists who just came to hang out, and everyone was so fascinated by the creative ideas that we had come up with on how to enter the gallery and how to use the space and so on that they talked Walter who was the real director of the gallery—

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LOU STOVALL: —to come and experience what we had been doing not only before that but also what we might have done, you know. And so meeting Walter, the first thing I ever said to him was—and by this way, I had learned enough about art that I knew what an art gallery and museum was and what it was supposed to be. But this first thing I said to Walter was, "You're wearing cowboy boots," you know?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LOU STOVALL: And he remarked on the fact that he—yes, he liked cowboy boots and that he—but he wanted to hear my ideas about what I was doing and so on. And so that was about the time that Di came with me of course, and I've forgotten where my daughter was, you know. I guess she was hanging out with Di. And we had this little, tiny kitchen up on the fourth floor that was just big enough for a small refrigerator and an oven or cooktop or something, but that's where Di had made several lunches or dinners or whatever and so we could feed people. Because I—again, I say this again that no one had any money so whatever we could get from people with their small contributions or whatever, we could buy some food, you know, and establish that as a basis for having some form of food, you know. And I do remember Di making this pot of food and at some point, running out of whatever it was that she was making. She would remember. And the—when she ran out of the food, going across the street to this little store and buying canned shrimp or something like that and adding that to whatever it was that she was making, so there would be enough food. And a lot of people Walter had sent who were just in town to experience whatever had been going—that was going on and had been told "If you're hungry at a certain point, they might make some food, which they would then share with you," so we did that, you know? And since Di had—was essentially the mother, she cooked whatever she could and then we all shared it.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: It sounds nice, it sounds like you then had taken on what David Driskell used to do in taking his students home to have his wife's home cooking?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, except that it was different because David had a home and money and could bring us to his house, and Thelma would cook. And it does sound similar what—you know, to what had been done because we had to learn these lessons from something.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yes. So we've done two hours; do you want to pause now?

LOU STOVALL: That's a good idea.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Are you hungry? Okay.

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VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. Okay, so we were talking earlier about the Stern family and your work at the gallery, the Washington Gallery of Modern Art, and so was there a particular interaction that you had with Phil Stern that affected the next stage of what you were doing with your workshop? What's the one question that he asked you that changed your life?

LOU STOVALL: [Laughs.] What would you do if you had enough money? That was it.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: If I had enough money to do what?

LOU STOVALL: It was an open-ended question.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so what did you respond?

LOU STOVALL: I respond that I would have a workshop or a studio where anyone who wanted to learn silk-screen printmaking could come, and I would teach them, that's it.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And how did he respond to your idea?

LOU STOVALL: He said, "How much?" And so, "I don't know," and his next question was "Can you write a proposal?" And I said, "Yes, I can." He said, "Then why don't you do that?"

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so you did?

LOU STOVALL: I did.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And what was your proposal? I know you've just said what you wanted to do, but tell me about the proposal. Like how long did you go—you—had you written a proposal before, did you know what to do?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, I knew what to do, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so how long before you got back to him?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, that's a question you should ask Di. Yeah, she would remember specifically because I can't remember, but it was a reasonable amount of time, but it was brief.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So like maybe a week or so?

LOU STOVALL: I guess, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. All right, and so what was your proposal, and how did he respond?

LOU STOVALL: How did he respond?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LOU STOVALL: He says, "Well, I'll write a check and I'll call you when it's ready." That was it.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So when you said—when you gave your proposal, did you expect that to be the response that no matter what the amount was, that he would be responsive and be able to provide that for you?

LOU STOVALL: That's too complicated, you know. So it’s probably better that we not try to answer that unless you want to ask me that a different way, you know?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. Well, how much did you ask for?

LOU STOVALL: Uh, 10,000.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And he was willing to give it to you?

LOU STOVALL: He was, and he did.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And that was more—much more money then than now?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, absolutely, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so obviously, this, sort of, changed the trajectory of what you were doing and so then between the time that you made this proposal and were able to get the money, what did you do next in terms of beginning to set up your workshop?

LOU STOVALL: Too complicated.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: What did you do after you got the money?

LOU STOVALL: I started buying the things that I needed for the studio.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And what—where did you find the space?

LOU STOVALL: Well, I've—rented a space on—in the 2200 block of M Street Northwest. And when I learned how much it would cost to rent this small space, I said, "Okay, I'll rent it."

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And so you rented the space and began to put the workshop together, about how long before you opened up do you think?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, I don't know, a few days.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Oh, that's pretty quick.

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So you opened up the workshop and really from day one, it was really a place where it was, sort of, a community-centered place where you were producing prints but also, sort of, teaching people how to produce prints?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so can you talk a bit about how those first—that first year was?

LOU STOVALL: Uh, not unless you wanted to ask me something specific.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So what kind of projects did you work on?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, I was doing a poster for—well, one of the things was I did a poster for Roberta Flack to raise money for the—what was then called the Alley Library. You know about that already?

[00:05:17]

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: No.

LOU STOVALL: Okay. You're shaking your head as if you didn't.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: I've seen the poster.

LOU STOVALL: What?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: I've seen the poster.

LOU STOVALL: Oh, okay. And essentially, it was to buy books that we then gave to some of the children who came to the Alley Library. That was it; it was very simple, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so were you able to support the workshop with your projects, or was it the $10,000 that kept you going?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, the only money that I had was the—that was given to me as a grant—well, I

had some savings and money that I had earned working for Harvey Botkin, okay. And what else?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so I was just wondering about the projects, were you able to support the studio with the projects that you were making? I know you had your savings and the grant.

LOU STOVALL: You lost me on that one.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. So who did you found—was it just you running the workshop or who—was it—or did you have—?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so, you know, printmaking is a community process. On a daily basis, were there other people with you, was Lloyd there?

LOU STOVALL: Lloyd was—would drop in and ask if there was anything that he could do, and I would either say yes or no. And if someone had to ask me for a poster, I—I will say, "When do you want it?" You know, and so on.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so let's talk about just running this workshop, how long did you run the workshop in that space on M Street?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, I can't remember; you have to ask Di.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. As far as the community posters, at this point, you know, you had moved to Washington, DC, you were a student at Howard, very active in what was going on at Howard on the campus and within the city with the civil rights movement and those kinds of issues and then you start your workshop. Would you say that most of the work that you did in that location of the workshop was it community posters and things that involved working with community issues?

LOU STOVALL: Too many words, you have to—I'm sorry.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: That's okay. [They laugh.] So let's talk about—so I guess obviously, the—this workshop became a success, so can you talk a bit about the kinds of projects you worked on in addition to the Roberta Flack poster?

LOU STOVALL: Well, Roberta's poster was just one poster, but I had other people asking me to do things during that time. So I did the Roberta Flack poster, and I did a few other posters. There was probably some—there might have been some wedding invitations that I'd do for people or there was a bunch of—it was a community workshop, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: But you really began to make these posters during that time period that were really more than just, sort of, advertising, they really were works of art?

LOU STOVALL: Right.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so can you talk a bit about how that evolved that you were able to make these what have really become beautiful posters that really were artistically driven?

LOU STOVALL: Ah. You know, I hate to run you off but—[laughs]

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: It's okay.

LOU STOVALL: You have to use fewer—fewer words and more direct.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yes.

LOU STOVALL: Otherwise, my mind just goes—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay.

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Well, let's—maybe we'll come back to the community posters in your first workshop. You—how long were—so you had this workshop initially and then eventually,

you got married and bought a home, correct?

LOU STOVALL: It was separate. I got married and rented an apartment, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And then how long after you got married did you buy a home?

[00:10:02]

LOU STOVALL: Well, years later. We didn't buy this home until 1973.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, so that's about two years after you got married?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, but there was a great, long period of time of—well, oh. I've got to get you to answer—ask me just—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, well I guess I'm just trying to—I want to talk about how you made a transition from having a commercial space where you had your workshop to transferring it to be at your home, so—

LOU STOVALL: Okay, so stop there.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay.

LOU STOVALL: Okay. I had the apartment where I lived and where Di lived, and that was for just a few years, or it might have been concurrently when I had the—this—the living space was never—oh, well, should never be considered as an important space because I was simply renting a space but—so the living was one thing, but the working was something totally different, but at the same time, it was all one unit. Okay. So when Philip Stern asked me what would I do if I had enough money, and I said I would start a studio or start a workshop and then teach people, whoever came and wanted to learn silk-screen printmaking. And Phil said that he wanted to be one of the people who could come, and I said, "In that case, you can be first because I haven't started yet," and that was it, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And so then it became a pretty successful community space. Do you—it's interesting because you've made posters about so many things and worked with so many different organizations. You worked with Howard, you worked with the Corcoran Gallery of Art, the National Gallery of Art, a lot of community organizations.

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: You did some—like a bike poster, which was—was that the District of Columbia or who was that with?

LOU STOVALL: That was District of Columbia, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So, and that was all occurring in your M Street space, correct?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, I got lost again.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. Well, so let's talk about your—the workshop where you spent most of your career, which actually was your work—a working community workshop, but it actually was behind your home. When you found this house, were you looking for a workshop that was, sort of, separate from your home or that just happened to be that way? Like how did you envision what the next stage of the workshop was?

LOU STOVALL: Unfortunately, [laughs] that's too many words.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay.

LOU STOVALL: Of—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: I guess I'm just curious about whether when you sought to buy a home, were you looking for a home that came with a workshop or—

LOU STOVALL: Yes.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: —a garage space that could be a workshop?

LOU STOVALL: No, no, this—oh. When I was looking to buy a—to have a home to live in, was—that was in 1972, and I had already rented a space to work in, but it wasn't a livable space because I—we couldn't live there.

[00:15:00]

[END OF TRACK stoval21_1of2_sd_track16_m.]

LOU STOVALL: It was just a space that I could work in, that's what I was looking for, and—you have to start again.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And that was the M Street space?

LOU STOVALL: That was the M Street space, right.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so I guess I'm just curious when you guys decided it was time to buy a home, was buying a home that actually had some space where you could create a studio or a workshop, was that part of what you were looking for?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And so just because you have this workshop that is this working workshop that became a big part of the community in your backyard for all of these years. And so I'm just wondering if that was something that you planned or that's just something that came about that it became the successful studio that's here at your home?

LOU STOVALL: See, I never separated myself, my living and being and my marriage to Di, we never separated that. You know, what was—what happened was it was understood that I would always work, and the work that I was doing was always going to be something that was in the community, of the community, needed by the community. Consequently, when we bought this house because we're talking about not some other object space, but we're just talking about having a space to live and work in where I could also work. And they were two separate things except that they were always combined because I never thought of myself as anything but a working artist. Okay.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And so then you moved to this house and you had a—was that a garage in the back?

LOU STOVALL: It was a garage, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And so then you built it out into the studio, which is now the workshop?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. So let's talk about when you first moved into that space, that's really the space where you've done all these wonderful artist collaborations. And so do you remember what was the first collaboration or first screen-printing workshop—screen-printing job you did with another artist here?

LOU STOVALL: No.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Do you want to talk about working with Sam Gilliam?

LOU STOVALL: That's the one.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Oh, that was your first job?

LOU STOVALL: That was one of the first, yeah, mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And do you remember what specifically work that was?

LOU STOVALL: It was one called *Dance*. It was—uh, it was to be a benefit—a benefit for working with, uh—oh, I've forgotten the name of the dance group now.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Dance Theatre of Harlem?

LOU STOVALL: Hmm.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Alvin Ailey?

LOU STOVALL: No, it wasn't Alvin Ailey. It might have been the Dance Studio of Harlem or something like that, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, well so, can we talk about, I guess, how you work in the studio, how you worked over the years. When you're working with other artists, how does that work? With Sam Gilliam, he was a local artist and so how did you—? He would come to you, and how would you begin to work with him?

LOU STOVALL: Sam was like Lloyd, he was just always around, except that Sam had a studio that he was working in. And the activity then was: What are you doing, Lou, and what can I do to—to be involved or to help? And so Sam had a studio on Johnson Avenue during that particular time, and all of the artists were rapidly exchanging activity all at the same time.

[00:05:08]

And none of it was, like, combined into like a whole and full sentence; it was, "What are you doing and how can I help or how can I be involved?" And I would say what I was doing, and if they wanted to come by and see what I was doing, then they should come and—when they should come or if the artists were, like, friends enough like Sam was or like Lloyd was, you just drop in and see what I'm doing. And if I'm doing something that could involve you, then you were involved. Otherwise, you just, sort of, see what I'm doing, stay as long as you wanted, have a cup of coffee, and leave. Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And how did you first—how did you and Sam first meet?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, that's like all the other artists that I worked with; Sam just happened to come to the studio or maybe he planned to come to the studio. I never asked, "What—what are you doing here and why are you here," you know?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LOU STOVALL: He would just come in and stand around and see what I was doing and that—it was like that.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. Well, Sam works—does abstraction and works with a lot of color; he's associated with the color school. Can you talk a bit about in detail about how you actually do your screen printing, and what you do is so much more sophisticated than standard screen printing. So can you talk a bit about, like, the actual method of translating an original artwork into a screen-limited edition?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, boy. Can you break that into smaller sentences?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Sure, just—I guess I'm just asking about your actual process of screen printing.

LOU STOVALL: Yeah. If I was doing something that was interesting to Sam or whoever, I would say, "Okay, here's a stack of paper, make a mark on it, and if that mark was engaging enough to be involved in the making of a whole statement, then we might have an idea for a poster," okay. And if we did that poster, what would we do with it, who would we sell it to, what colors would it be, or would we just give it some organization and say, "Okay, you decide what you want to do with it." So that was—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, but I'm actually interested in also talking about how you would create screen prints from original works of art with artists?

LOU STOVALL: That came after. Either the artist would make a piece of art that he wanted or she wanted to be a silk-screen print or if you—like from some of the younger students that I had, I would say, "Okay, just start doing something, make a mark on the piece of paper, and we'll print that, and then we'll ask something else to it and something else to it." I mean that's the way that art was made, you know, on a very individual basis with each artist coming up with an idea based upon a first mark that had been made, okay.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, well so for example working with Jacob Lawrence, you did a number of things with him. One in particular is the *Toussaint L'Overture* series. He had original paintings in that series, and he selected 15 to make prints for?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so with that, can you talk a bit about the process of, you know, replicating what were paintings to make your screen prints and what—and into—what a delicate process and detailed process that was and how you really were able to, sort of, match colors and all the things involved in that process and all the difference stages of doing each color and making that screen print?

[00:10:18]

LOU STOVALL: That was it, we just did it.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. [They laugh.]

LOU STOVALL: I don't know how to get you to just ask me—

[END OF TRACK stoval21_1of2_sd_track17_m.]

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so how did you first connect with Jacob Lawrence?

LOU STOVALL: Because Mr. Porter had invited Jacob to come and speak to some of the students, and I was among those students, and one thing led to another, and David Driskell was also a part of that. And when it became a fact that Jacob wanted to do something that was going to be paid for by the state of Connecticut, that could then be sold to other museums, galleries, and collectors, then Jake said that he was going to make an image of the struggle on the boat—on the ship, and that was just what I did, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And that was the *Amistad*?

LOU STOVALL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and then you also eventually became friends with Jacob Lawrence?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, we became friends by my honoring what he had done as a major artist and also Jacob being interested in me as a printmaker. And even though he had had prints made of his work, he was interested in what I would do had I been the printmaker who had made his first original work. But the *Revolt on the Amistad* was the first print that I had made with Jacob, and Jacob liked it so much that he thought that he would like to have other prints made larger and more colorful even than his first edition series of prints that was made. In other words, he wanted someone that he could build kind of a printmaking career and so that's what I did. I made—first of all, I think the first print that I had made was the—I can't remember, which was the first print, but whatever it was became, kind of, an example of what I would do with the whole idea. Because altogether, there were 40-some-odd prints that were made, and of that 40-some-odd prints, at least half of them were specifically concerned with illustrating the idea of what the burning of the homes were, which—one of the themes that Jacob addressed after. So Jacob made a drawing of those houses or those huts burning and then I made the print, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. So you—and this is—which series was that that you're talking about?

LOU STOVALL: I'm talking about his *Toussaint L'Overture*.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yes, okay, and so that series was made—actually, it was 15 different prints, but it was made over quite a number of years, right?

LOU STOVALL: But the 15 prints that I made came after the whole series of 40-some-odd prints were made, you know, early on, yeah. And this was made on very terrible paper, cheap paper.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: The 40?

LOU STOVALL: That's the 40—no. The 40-some-odd, yeah, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Why was it made on cheap paper?

LOU STOVALL: Because Jake was just—he was young at that particular time, he didn't have money, and it was a case of what he could afford and the color that he could afford to use. And

so that first 40-some-odd since, you know, series of prints, that was the idea of the Jacob Lawrence *Toussaint L'Overture* series, yeah. But at the same time, he also made the John Brown series, and also there was two others that he made around the same time.

[00:05:36]

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Right, and that you printed?

LOU STOVALL: I only printed the—I only printed two of them, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so when you did—he lived in Seattle when you were making the prints and so how did that work, you being in the studio making these prints and him living in Seattle in terms of making the decisions along the way? How did that process work?

LOU STOVALL: We exchanged ideas by mail and also by discussion on the telephone, so Jake would call me, or I would call him. We talked frequently, and you can't forget that Jake and I had established, you know, a level of communication from the time that I was a student at Howard University and Jake was just a visiting artist, okay, so. Go ahead, ask me another one.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So I was just trying to understand how you worked on making the prints because he wasn't there in the studio able to see the colors and things.

LOU STOVALL: Okay, yeah. He—Jake would have an idea of something that he wanted to do, and he would explain to me on the telephone what he wanted, you know. So he said, "You've seen the print *The Burning Village*, you know, and I said, "Yeah." He says, "Well, I want to show that—I want to do that print, but I want to show the flames licking at the top of the straw"—what do you call it—"thatches, that—which made the house," and I said, "Oh, I can do that." So that's what I did.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, so then as opposed to him being in the studio and being able to see each color as you laid it down, you would—what would you mail him? Would you mail him like early proofs with just some of the colors done, or what were you mailing him?

LOU STOVALL: Well, he would first send to me what he wanted to achieve, which was a drawing of the flames attached to the thatch, you know. And then I would proof it, meaning running simple colors, and then he would add whatever he wanted in order to make it seem like a real burning house, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And did you spend—you also printed some—made some prints with Gwendolyn, his wife.

LOU STOVALL: I came—that came after, way after.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yeah, and so you and Di were good friends with them, the couple?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, mm-hmm [affirmative], yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Any particular stories of interest?

LOU STOVALL: You'd have to ask me a specific—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Are there any—can you recall any interesting stories or experiences that you had with them, funny times or significant times?

LOU STOVALL: Well, Jake would come to Washington, and of course, he would come with Gwen, and they would come to visit the studio, or we would meet and go out to dinner, and we would start talking. And over the course of an evening, Jake would—you know, while Di and Gwen were having their visit or they're shopping, you know, talking about shopping and stuff like that, Jake and I would discuss what I would have an idea about to explain what it was like to have a sense of struggle or the—just whatever. Whatever the idea was, Jake and I would have a discussion about it and then he would eventually go back to Seattle, make a drawing or a sketch or whatever and then send it back to me, and then I would make the print but always with just specifically the colors he wanted and then he would add more color in order to complete the idea.

[00:10:33]

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative], and you're talking about S*truggle*, his series?

LOU STOVALL: No, I was talking about the—because that—the first prints were made like in 1937, '38, but the *Struggle*, that series of work didn't come until 1954, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, but when you said that you-all would talk about struggle, are you talking about like struggle in life?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Ah, okay, okay. And so anything in particular that you were talking about in terms of struggle?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, sometimes, it was the struggle to find bright enough color that was available now as opposed to 30 or 40 years ago, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. So you've talked a lot about—you know, you're a master printmaker and the idea of screen printing, the importance of that being available to artists and as—to communities as a medium. Can you talk a bit about your philosophy around screen printing?

LOU STOVALL: I didn't really have a philosophy about screen printing except that all color is beautiful, and so regardless of what the color is and all of its variations and manifestations, then making those colors presentable, bright enough, translucent enough, opaque enough to extend the idea of a complexity of what it was to make the art. That's what I was doing.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Right. And then it's—fine art, original art is so expensive. When you're making fine art prints, that creates an affordability for a wider audience to be able to enjoy the art?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, you lost me on that one.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: I just heard you speak before about the afford—of how doing prints make art—makes art affordable.

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so you can say more about the importance of that?

LOU STOVALL: Well, it didn't work color by color. It had to do with the whole print being made so that the whole print could be made available to whoever could have the interest to purchase it. That was pretty much it.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. Well, let's talk about your own artistic practice; we haven't talked much about that. You, I think, have two key areas of work—bodies of work that you've been working on. You have your series that's sort of, is inspired by nature and then you also have some works that you do, they're, sort of, abstractions that are kind of assembled screen prints. Can you talk a bit about aside from work you're printing and your screen printing that you started doing when you were 15, what kinds of art—when did you start doing your own work and what did that look like?

LOU STOVALL: Well, I was, first of all, making small circular drawings with—using colored ink, and I had a range of, I don't know, maybe 15 or so pens with different colors of ink in it, and I would format or formulate a scene using that, yeah?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And how old were you when you first started doing that?

LOU STOVALL: How old was I?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LOU STOVALL: Oh—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: I mean was this when you were a young person or—?

LOU STOVALL: No, I was in my twenties.

[00:15:00]

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VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay.

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so how—tell me about the inspirations for your work. You do a lot of flowers and a lot of natural scenes; can you talk about your inspirations?

LOU STOVALL: Well, I don't particularly like making portraits of people or even their—what I call their physical aspects of a human—of humanity. I prefer always to do—to make art that's—has an idea of longevity. And consequently, flowers would be probably the—my most usual subject because I was already making figurative art based upon what other artists wanted who wanted me to make prints. So for my own work, I decided that I would do the most beautiful flowers that I could, you know, or the most wonderful landscapes or whatever. So that's what—that was my choice of making art was to do something that hadn't been done before in quite the way that I was doing it.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And when you do this work, is this something that you are creating from real life? Are you looking at actual flowers; you're creating them from your imagination?

LOU STOVALL: I'm actually looking at the flower and doing a portrait of a flower or—and sometimes an abstract version of a flower.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative], and how has that work evolved over the years?

LOU STOVALL: And don't ever come in here again. [Laughs.]

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: [Inaudible.]

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Oh. [Laughs.] Over here.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Okay.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, go ahead, I'm sorry.

LOU STOVALL: Okay.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So we were talking about your work evolving over the years.

LOU STOVALL: Okay, you have to start again.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Sorry.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: We were talking about your flower portraits and I was asking about—you said that they're actually—you use real flowers, make portraits of real flowers and, sort of, do abstracted versions of them. So has that—has your work evolved over the years?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: In what ways?

LOU STOVALL: Uh, well, these two prints, the magnolia and the—goodness, and that flower there, the orchid.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay.

LOU STOVALL: It had to do with—well, I had wanted to do because I was fascinated with the way magnolia blossom bloomed and what their relationship was to the actual tree. And so I talked Di into taking me a few blocks away where there was a magnificent magnolia tree and I took one of my—one of the blossoms along with the leaves that went with it and the branches and made that print, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Interesting. And so most of your work, you do in a circular frame,

can you talk a bit about that—the significance of that?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, it's only because I like that subject, you know, the—I like the circle. And everyone was doing rectangular or square or whatever, and there was not so much work done in a circular format so that appealed to me. I liked the idea of doing something that hadn't been so overdone, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. So when you picked these flowers, is it purely based on an aesthetic appeal in terms of the flowers you choose, or do they have particular symbolism in terms of where they're native to or—?

LOU STOVALL: No, no.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: It's just purely based on how they look, how they appear?

[00:05:03]

LOU STOVALL: Exactly, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And do you use actual color palettes that exist in nature, or do you create your own?

LOU STOVALL: Both.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and talk—what about the—? You do flowers and you do landscapes, are these landscapes imagined landscapes or were they actually landscapes that you've seen?

LOU STOVALL: Some landscapes were strictly out of my head, and it was an idea of something that I wanted to see happen where color was concerned, where nature hadn't been, you know, and others were directly related to nature, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so it seems quite a contrast that you have spent so much time—you spend so much time in the studio and your own work is this natural beauty, these things that are happening outdoors. Does one have anything to do with the other, sort of, you contrasting your day spent inside in the studio and, sort of, wanting to express yourself with these natural images?

LOU STOVALL: That again is too much, too complicated.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Well, I guess, do you spend a lot of time out in nature?

LOU STOVALL: No, no because I don't really like being outside. I prefer being inside under the cover of, you know—I mean not uncovered. I don't like bugs, I don't like things moving against my body, you know, like the wind. Just—I just wanted to have a natural—maybe it's the idea of the perfect environment in order to make the art, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And so what about some of your more color-driven work that's, sort of, abstract and now you're, sort of, building these assembled pieces, when did you start beginning working in that format?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, sometime ago, yeah. You don't want specific dates, do you?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: No, I just was curious if you've been doing it for decades, just in the past 10 years?

LOU STOVALL: No, probably—oh, I don't really know. I mean I just—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, well, can you talk a bit about the inspiration for that work?

LOU STOVALL: No, I'm just doing whatever occurred to me at that particular time.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And what is the actual method for you to be creating those pieces?

LOU STOVALL: There, I'm really saying the expression of all these colors together. You know, for instance, this one right here, this is my most recent—I just love that combination of colors.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Various greens.

LOU STOVALL: Hmm?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Various greens.

LOU STOVALL: Very green?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: You have different colors of greens in this piece interacting with some blues and some violets.

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so to—so to work that sort of a piece that's built up and so to make those individual pieces, do you screen print something and then cut something? What is the process?

LOU STOVALL: No, the prints are—have already been made years before or sometimes very recently, but cutting them up and then reassembling them as verticals to me is pretty much the same as looking at a flower and making a drawing of that flower and then printing it. So it's the essence of putting the colors together to form an idea; that's what I'm doing.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And what do you call these, like what form of medium do you call this?

LOU STOVALL: I call them collage.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, interesting, okay, and so let's talk a bit about just your I guess, kind of, temperament and way of working in the studio. Do you work like on it—like when you were working full time in your studio, would you work eight hours or what kinds of routines would you keep in the studio?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, I wake up with—I—then, not anymore because I don't have a studio to work in because it was crushed by that tree. But I would wake up with an idea of a color or a form or whatever and then I would just keep working on it until the idea was complete or until I was too tired to do anymore and then I would stop and started again the next day.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And did that end up—so that was—sometimes it might be 4 hours, sometimes it might be 12?

[00:10:21]

LOU STOVALL: Well, more likely 40 or 50.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: No, I mean in one day.

LOU STOVALL: Well, no, in—day by day, it could be 12 to 18 hours.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And so you mentioned something that happened very recently, which is the—you said your studio was crushed. And so we are in 2021, the year after COVID. During 2020 everyone was, sort of, inside because of the pandemic and quarantined, and so in May of 2020, there was a windstorm, and it damaged your studio. Can you talk about what happened?

LOU STOVALL: Well, just there was a tree that was in the neighboring yard from the back and that was—that tree was 250 years old according to the arborist. And when it came down, roots and all, it just crushed my entire studio down to the ground.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yeah, and so then what did you do?

LOU STOVALL: What did I do?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LOU STOVALL: [Laughs.] First of all, I got really upset about it and then decided that, well, I don't have to have the studio in order to make art. I can make art on the dining room table drawing, I don't have to print, I don't have to color, you know, I don't have to do anything except

draw and try to recreate the idea of making the art again.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yeah. And so how much—how—what did you do though to—? At the time, you weren't really working in the studio on a daily basis anymore, and so I think your son had become—your son and your wife had begun, sort of, archiving some of your materials in there and so what did you have to do to, sort of, preserve what was existing in the studio when this damage happened?

LOU STOVALL: Di was doing it.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so you were able to get the art out of like—was there damage to the art and the things you were storing there?

LOU STOVALL: Well, we had a huge store of art that I had made before, both art of my own and other artists. And Will brought friends in to sort of rescue everything, and that's what we did.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And so you were able to—do you think you were able to recover most everything or what percentage do you think ended up being lost?

LOU STOVALL: No, most of it.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Most of it was okay?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so what are you doing now, now I think in November, did you eventually have to, sort of, destroy the studio in order to build it back up?

LOU STOVALL: Ask me that again.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Well you're rebuilding your studio, so when did that start?

LOU STOVALL: It started earlier this—last year.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. So do you think it started in maybe November?

LOU STOVALL: I don't know; you have to ask Di that.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so now you're rebuilding the studio and you're no longer working in the studio on a daily basis, so are you rebuilding it the same or is it going to be different—serving a different function?

LOU STOVALL: It's pretty much the same, yeah. It's just the shape, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so can you talk about the process of rebuilding the studio? Because originally you, sort of, designed the inside yourself and literally built I think with your own hands, right, the inside?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so now, what's happening in terms of how it's going to be designed and how it will—?

LOU STOVALL: I'm not doing it anymore, Di is doing it.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and she—

LOU STOVALL: —and Will.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And are they doing it like it was exactly before or different?

LOU STOVALL: Pretty much the same.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and you're working with an architect and having that redone?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, don't mention the architect; I hate the architect.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: [Laughs.] Why?

LOU STOVALL: Well, we don't want to get into that, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, so when is it supposed to be done?

LOU STOVALL: This month.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, so that would be in July 2021?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Do you think—

LOU STOVALL: But it's going to—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: —it's going to be able to be done?

LOU STOVALL: It's going to go into August, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. So one of the things you talked about when you got the Stern support—excuse me—

[00:15:00]

[END OF TRACK stoval21_1of2_sd_track19_m.]

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: —is that you wanted to open a studio where you would be doing your printing, but you would also be training and having apprentices work, which is something that you've done throughout your career.

LOU STOVALL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Can you talk a bit about that desire to do that and how—what's that looked like over the years working with—training people and working with apprentices?

LOU STOVALL: Can you break that down?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Sure. Why is it important to you to make sure that you're able to train other people and transfer your skills to the younger generation?

LOU STOVALL: Well, first of all, I don't really train; I teach, yeah, because that's the way I grew up. You know, my whole life has been the exchange of information from something that someone knew that was—then influenced me to something that I could do or vice versa, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so you experienced that yourself and wanted to do that for other people?

LOU STOVALL: Exactly.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so you experienced that with Helen Norrgard and with others like Mr. Wells and Driskell?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, mm-hmm [affirmative], exactly.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And is that something that you—when you were being taught by them, was that something that they imbued in you, like vocally said the importance of?

LOU STOVALL: I don't know what their—they were teachers.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay and so then so then talk to me about how the workshop worked in terms of you working with apprentices and teaching people.

LOU STOVALL: How it did work or how—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yeah—

LOU STOVALL: —it does work?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: —where did the students or the apprentices come from?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, I don't know, they're just out there, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: How did they find you?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, they were attracted by the colors that I used or sometimes by the activity, usually by people talking about what they observed.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So did you ever have a formal teaching program, or was it just more people came as they had interests?

LOU STOVALL: Exactly, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay and over the years, how many people do you think you worked with in that way?

LOU STOVALL: You'd have to ask Di that for sure.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And so and then—so it's interesting because you know, obviously, you can't do screen printing on your own, and so as much as you were teaching—

LOU STOVALL: But I can, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: You can?

LOU STOVALL: Oh yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, in terms of moving the squeegee and holding it and doing all that, that can be done on your own?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, but it's a matter of size and so on, you know, and accessibility.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yes.

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so I guess over the years when you were teaching, did you—what kinds of things did the people help you with?

LOU STOVALL: I don't know the answer to that.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: When you were working in your workshop, you've had a number of different people and some have stayed and worked with you for years, correct?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so people actually, kind of, helped you keep the workshop going?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so can you talk a bit about when someone is apprenticing with you, what it is that they do?

LOU STOVALL: They do what I do.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay.

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay.

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Let's see.

[END OF TRACK stoval21_1of2_sd_track20_m.]

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: This is Victoria Valentine Griffin interviewing artist Lou Stovall in Washington, DC, at his home. It's August 10, 2021. So, Lou, let's—this is our second session. Lou, let's start by talking about, sort of, a memoir essay that you wrote about your life and your work called "My Story" that will actually be published in a book that you're doing about your landscape drawings for Georgetown University Press coming up and so this essay is called "My Story." Can you tell me a bit about when you first wrote it and the kinds of things that you're discussing in the essay?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, you know, maybe you should sit a little bit closer because my hearing keeps—is diminished.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. Well so, I wanted to talk about your essay, the "My Story" essay. Talk about what you're discussing in the essay.

LOU STOVALL: Oh boy, that's a hard question. Ask me that in a—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Well, when did you first start writing the essay, what year, do you remember?

LOU STOVALL: No, I don't.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: About how long ago, like recently, five years ago?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, maybe 10 years ago.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, so 10 years, and do you think you've been working on it, kind of, in bits and pieces along the way and refining it?

LOU STOVALL: Probably.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so now it's going to be published in a book and so you've, kind of, finalized it, right?

LOU STOVALL: I don't know if I finalized it.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Do you think you'll keep working on it even after it's published?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, yeah, for sure.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so actually early in the essay, you say, "At 13, I had already begun to read the great philosophers. By this early age, I already imagined myself to be a child of destiny." And you also talk about—can you say a bit about what that—what you meant by that, being a child of destiny?

LOU STOVALL: Well, in most ways, when I'm thinking and writing at the same time, it's—always has to do with prose and poetry. So being a child of destiny would have to be kind of a dangling thought from whatever I was doing before that, you know?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yeah.

LOU STOVALL: In this case, that dangling thought has to do with my review of this little thing that I wrote called "My Story." But there's lots more to it, and I think in so many different dimensions of thought that I often think that I must be writing continual thoughts. And one doesn't have to connect necessarily to another, but they're all somehow related and always, it's about my desire to be understood, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative], and do you feel like this essay helps you be understood?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, absolutely.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so what kinds of things in the essay do you talk about that people maybe don't know, people who maybe worked with you on a regular basis or who know you that you, sort of, have in this essay that people wouldn't ordinarily know about you?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, I promised myself that I wouldn't ask you this—to say something in a simpler way?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So you said you wanted to make sure that people know who you are, know about you, right?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So what have you—

LOU STOVALL: Yes.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: —conveyed in the essay that does that?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, it's just my story, yeah

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And so you talk a bit about some of your early years. Well first, you talk about actually—you talked about your poetry and "On the Greening of the Artist," and so that's actually another piece that you've written. So "On the Greening of the Artist," you talk a bit about some of your early, sort of, experiences, you talk about the magic room?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And was that—tell me about the magic room.

LOU STOVALL: Well, I call it the magic room because in that wonderful house that I grew up in in Springfield, which my mother and my—and her brother—my father had passed away—were buying together, they're purchasing together.

[00:05:01]

And that on the second floor between—it was suspended, suspended somehow between the second floor and the third floor, but you could only reach it from the stairs on the third floor going down or from the kitchen going up. And that—I call it the magic room because there was only two ways of going there, and in order to reach for—reach it from the third floor, you had to be on the third floor, which I seldom was. But from the first floor going up through the kitchen, it always was magically at the top of the stairs, and that's what I thought of as being kind of a magic room because it was suspended between those two points of entry.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: That's really interesting. So this wasn't the house that you grew up in with your—but after your father died, your mother and her brother purchased this house?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so—and was that your bedroom or was that your studio?

LOU STOVALL: That was my combination studio, bedroom, hangout, everything, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative], yeah, and did you—how did you outfit it to, sort of, suit you?

LOU STOVALL: Well, I was initially involved in any level of craft that I could manage or imagine and so it was outfitted with—first of all, I did the walls and the ceiling, and I had hung, uh, these album covers on the ceiling, jazz music that I was influenced by and some classical music, it was mostly jazz music. And some of the notions of jazz were left over from my having gone to concerts at the Music Barn in Lenox, Massachusetts, which is just up the road from where Springfield was. Those were, kind of, special times in my life because jazz music was such an important element of my life. My really great friend up there who was there for most of the summer when I had time to go was Percy Heath who was the bassist for the Modern Jazz Quartet. And Percy and I would have, kind of, short to medium walks on the hills around the Berkshire Hills, and Percy would tell me about his life and times and imagining music, and I would, of course, sort of, put those into my own thoughts as a way to go, as a way to pursue my life as an artist. And he was—Percy was an amazing person, and I continued my friendship with him throughout my time in Springfield and then continuing in Washington after I moved here. Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And was Percy your same age about?

LOU STOVALL: No, he was older.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Oh, okay, and so how did you meet Percy?

LOU STOVALL: Because I was there at the Music Barn when the music was being played, and Percy was of course—he was just this amazing person who was interested in what was going on. And once he found out that I was interested in art and making art, then that appealed to him because he imagined making music always with a song in his mind, in his heart as I did. And we both had this sense of poetry being kind of a guiding hand through our lives, you know?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so did you—I'm interested in how—you've talked a lot about your, sort of, affinity for jazz, how did you first get exposed to jazz music?

[00:10:08]

LOU STOVALL: By listening to it.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: But I mean did you—did your parents listen to music or—

LOU STOVALL: No, no—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: —just—?

LOU STOVALL: —I was—it was an interest that I had. And I began to collect jazz records, jazz music of—at about that time, you know? I think I must have been—well, I was in my mid-20s, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: All right, and so then when you went to the Music Barn, would you go with friends or who did you go to the Music Barn with?

LOU STOVALL: I had a friend who was in high school with me who, at that particular time, had access to an automobile. And so he used to love to take drives on the weekend, and we would somehow end up driving around Massachusetts especially northwest Massachusetts up into the Berkshire Hills. And he was German, and he was getting to know the landscape, and he was interested always in stopping because I would say, "Wow, look at that, now that is something that would be wonderful to draw" or whatever, you know? And that was his—I can't for some life—for some reason, I can't think of his name, which bothers me a little bit not to be able to think of his name. But he was so interested in what I was thinking about at the time that we were—I mean I couldn't drive, I didn't—I never learned to drive, but he would drive, and I would talk, and that was another way that he was learning English because he was not a natural speaker in terms of American English, but he was interested in everything that was going on. So some place in my writing, his name will appear of and—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Maybe we can look it up.

LOU STOVALL: Hmm?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Maybe we can look it up and figure it out.

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so where did you meet him?

LOU STOVALL: Because of high school.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Oh, okay, he went to your high school?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. So it's interesting, we've talked about your writing and your poetry and jazz music, when you were listening to jazz music in your bedroom—magic room, did you—was that like a gathering place, was that a place where you listened to music on your own?

LOU STOVALL: It was both. It was a gathering place for myself and certain friends who hung out. My mother was always very welcoming. My father had passed away, but my mother was very welcoming to my friends, and they would come over, and she would say, "Well, he's upstairs," you know, and they would join me in whatever I was doing, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And so you listened to music and your jazz records and things?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. So let's fast-forward, I want to talk about—you've, sort of, talked about growing up and the influence of your mother. Were there any particular, sort of, values and lessons that you learned from your mother?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, I can't think offhand, but, uh, if you could phrase that another way, just—?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Sure, I'm just curious about, you know, just growing up, sort of, your formative years, your experience living with your family, your mother's influence on you. It seems like you, sort of, really on your own almost had an interest in art and were able to pursue it because of some of the assistance from your mother, so I'm just curious about how her support or the way she lived her life influenced how you proceeded in your own life?

[00:15:00]

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VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Well, I guess how would you describe your relationship with your mother?

LOU STOVALL: Totally loving and wonderful, and she was always there to make sure that I was okay and that I was doing whatever I wanted to do, which was either writing my little scenarios of whatever and of course doing my drawing or painting or whatever, you know. So, you know, instead of giving me an idea of what I should be doing, she was always interested in what I was doing and how I wanted to do it, you know?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: I'm sure that was really inspiring for you.

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And what about your father, what was your relationship with—?

LOU STOVALL: My father had passed away—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: No I know—

LOU STOVALL: —by that time.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: —but earlier before he passed away, as you were growing up, what was your relationship like with your father?

LOU STOVALL: Well, he was only interested that I continue being serious and that my mind was working. You know, that's—that was my father, making sure that I was thinking, you know?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And did he support your desire to be an artist?

LOU STOVALL: He hadn't thought about art except that he knew that I was—that it was difficult to make a living as an artist. And so during those particular times when he had an opportunity to comment on what I was doing and what I was thinking and what I thought should happen, and he would say something to the effect that, well, law or religion would be a better way of conducting my life so that I could have a paid job whenever I was finished with school, you know? Whereas my mother always had this hope that whatever would reveal itself would come, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so did his concern about your ability to make a living and perhaps interest in you doing something else like religion or something, did that ever dissuade you or make you second-guess becoming an artist?

LOU STOVALL: Well, I second-guessed everything.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Oh really?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Can you say more about that?

LOU STOVALL: Hmm, well, you'd have to ask me. [Laughs.]

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Well you said you second-guessed everything, so you second-guessed being an artist?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, absolutely, yeah. You know, like how do you make a living as an artist, you know? Who's going to buy this, who's going to buy this thing that I'm making, you know, or how do I go about making certain things that were—? I was always interested in making things, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Well, so one thing that you did get from your father that I think is that in addition to being an artist and a printer, you make furniture and you did framing and so did you learn to, sort of, make things and work with tools from your—? Where did you learn that?

LOU STOVALL: From my father and his brother.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative], and what did they teach you, and how did that come to be?

LOU STOVALL: Just how to work with tools, that's—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Is that something that they did?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, uh-huh [affirmative], how to work with tools is something that they did, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so growing up, what did you do with tools?

LOU STOVALL: I learned how to make things.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so I guess what I'm asking is growing up, were you-all making things that were, sort of, practical, functional things that needed to be done for the house or—?

LOU STOVALL: Oh yeah, yeah, mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Can you give an example?

LOU STOVALL: Well, things that were needed around the house, that's—that's what I was making, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay and—

LOU STOVALL: That was pretty much it.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, so I want to talk about leaving home, so was it always, sort of, assumed that you would go to school?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, absolutely.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And was that something that your parents wanted and you knew you wanted for yourself or—?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, absolutely, that was definitely something. I mean I always knew that I wanted to continue my education of—and my mother also knew the same things. As a matter of fact, I had dropped out of the Rhode Island School of Design in order to go back home and help support my family. So my mother always assumed that at some point, I would be on my own earning a living, doing whatever I was doing that would support myself as an artist, yeah.

[00:05:18]

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so I'm curious about when you first left home to go the Rhode Island School of Design, was that—like how much traveling had you done up to that point?

LOU STOVALL: Not much, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And had you been, sort of, on your own ever?

LOU STOVALL: Never actually on my own, you know, never actually on my own.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So because we talked a bit about your experience just, sort of,

going to the Rhode Island School of Design and living there and some of the things that happened there, but how was it for you in terms of, sort of, leaving the house and being on your own?

LOU STOVALL: How was it—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: I mean was it—

LOU STOVALL: —to—?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: —an experience you were excited about, were you nervous about being on your own? How did you feel about the experience of I'm going to move to another place and, sort of, be operating on my own outside of my family?

LOU STOVALL: Well, my family was, kind of, a loving resource that was a home, but outside of the home, that was the adventure of learning and growing and becoming, so that was it.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so that was something that you were really looking forward to?

LOU STOVALL: It was just part of my makeup, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, growing and becoming?

LOU STOVALL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so then you go back home for several years and we've talked a bit about that period, and then when you went to Howard, you know, were you familiar with Washington, DC, was this also going to be moving to a city you really had no experience with?

LOU STOVALL: I didn't know anything about Washington, DC, except what I had read and what I was being told from various people who were either at Washington or for instance, I had a very special friend who was a young professor who taught English essentially, and his name was Bill Gardner, G-A-R-D-N-E-R. And we talked about Washington, DC, and that community of intellectuals, so I was aware of—not so much actively involved in but I was aware of the pursuit of intellectual thinking and people who were involved in that. And so without remembering because it's been too long, without remembering any of the names, I certainly knew the way of thinking creatively. That's—yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, well when you thought of where you would go back to school after the Rhode Island School of Design, you've talked about how a few people mentioned Howard. Was Bill Gardner one of the people?

LOU STOVALL: Absolutely, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And so he recommended that that might be a good place for you to go?

LOU STOVALL: Absolutely.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so did he—he was aware of it, but did he have experience with Howard?

LOU STOVALL: He was teaching at Howard—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Oh, okay—

LOU STOVALL: —during that time.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: But he lived in Massachusetts?

LOU STOVALL: Well he—it was during the summer.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. Oh, so he came back to Massachusetts, he just spent summers there?

LOU STOVALL: Right.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Got you, okay. And so then let's talk about going to Washington, DC. So what was your experience like when you first arrived? What were your expectations from the school, from the city?

LOU STOVALL: What were my expectations?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yes.

LOU STOVALL: Well, I expected—I had already been accepted to Howard University and so I expected to go to Howard and be enrolled in the art program and to continue doing what I was doing, which was drawing or making art. And so that was the substance of my expectation in which I then pursued by doing it, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so while you were there, you had a number of, sort of, large figures who had great influence on you, one of which was James Porter?

[00:10:08]

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Do you want to talk about James Porter?

LOU STOVALL: Well, Mr. Porter was probably a giant of an intellect. He—his lectures—well, his lectures were ongoing because he never stopped teaching from one hour of the day to the next to the last thought that he might have had. It was always about the possibility of looking and knowing and seeing, and that was a big thing with him, looking, knowing, and seeing, yeah. So it's hard to say much more about it because I was living that life, and in living that life in such a natural way, that it became a part of my being, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so, I guess, coming to Howard and always knowing that you wanted to be an artist, I guess at what point did it feel like you, sort of, had sort of arrived at the place where this was going to be how you were able to, sort of, pursue this lifelong dream? Or talk to me about how Howard affected your outlook in terms of being an artist?

LOU STOVALL: It was an acknowledgement of access because of being interested in the arts as I was and on that level of—and having access to the art seminar where there was all these books and art material especially the slide library. I was able to become familiar with what had been done before in terms of the making of art and what people were doing. And it's hard to remember because it's been so old—I mean it's been so long and I'm so old that—[laughs] but I do remember being totally attracted to all of the art in the art seminar. And I think I probably had memorized most of the styles and techniques, the styles and techniques of the various artists, and it was a load of slide material based upon what artists who had done, you know, early on. I think that's probably where I first learned about Jacob Lawrence's materials but also other people.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: What other artists were you exposed to looking at the slides and the books and materials in the library?

LOU STOVALL: Every artist that you can think of especially the French artists because that was easily accessible through this art seminar at Howard University at that particular time. So it was pretty much the French and the German artists who were on record through the slides and so on. There was very little of the English—yeah, very little of the English artists because it just wasn't collected during that particular time.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: American or—?

LOU STOVALL: So, American yes, of course, but it was mostly the French and the German artists.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Oh no, British you mean?

LOU STOVALL: No British.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, got you.

LOU STOVALL: Right, right.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Interesting and so you were—did you say you were in charge of this library?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah. I was the person who was attached to the seminar where I had access to all of the slides and visual material, and I was Professor Porter's—pretty much his primary student for research and so on and so I had access to all that material. And he could say that he was looking for certain and I would go and find that—

[00:15:00]

[END OF TRACK stoval21_2of2_sd_track08_m.]

LOU STOVALL: —you know—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Oh interesting.

LOU STOVALL: —that slide or that, you know, statement or whatever, you know? And I had forgotten about that, and I'm glad you reminded me that that was probably what must have been the discovery of the history of making art.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative], and so how did you come to be the person in charge of this library?

LOU STOVALL: Mr. Porter assigned me to do it, you know. I was, kind of, his student for that, you know, I had a good memory and I had the interest, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so when you say that you would do research for him, was this research for his classes, research for writing he was doing?

LOU STOVALL: Right, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: For all of those things?

LOU STOVALL: Mm-hmm [affirmative], yeah, all of those things.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so you having spent three years with him, how long do you think that you were with him?

LOU STOVALL: Well, for the four years that I was there.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so having worked with him so closely, what are the kinds of things about Mr. Porter that you remember that maybe we haven't heard from other people?

LOU STOVALL: He had this unbelievable attention to detail and so I think that I learned to use that attention to detail in terms of research and resource and also the acknowledgement of the—oh, I'm not sure exactly how to say it. But all the art that was in the art seminar, there was something written about that, which could be used as research or so on, you know. So apparently that is how I came to be familiar with Jacob Lawrence's work but also David Driskell had—you know, he had ideas about art and study and history. And, of course, Mr. Wells had incredible memory and thoughts about the Bible, and the Bible was something that was very important to him. It wasn't so much important to me, but it was something that I knew and something that I acknowledged in my, you know, sort of, ongoing search for art.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative], and so how did Mr. Wells talk about the Bible with relation to art?

LOU STOVALL: He would tell the stories of the various Biblical scenarios of what Adam was doing, you know, and it's interesting that it was pretty much the European approach to art appreciation because it was—it had to always do with the search for the something having to do with existence of mankind. And so I don't remember the presence of any figures with the exception of Mary and, of course, Moses. Their pursuit because those were pictures that were—that encom—it, sort of, became the part—well the presence of Mary in the life of Jesus and the presence of Moses in the life of the Hebrews, those were the important things that I learned to appreciate and also without remembering specifically, but I came to know those things, Samson for instance. So the names come back to me from time to time when I think of all the things that I have experienced and remembered, but it was those historical figures that were important,

yeah.

[00:05:05]

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so I'm just trying to understand though in the art—so this was an art history class where Mr. Wells would discuss this?

LOU STOVALL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so was he showing visual images or—I guess I'm trying to understand how he was—what he wanted the class to take away from what he was discussing?

LOU STOVALL: Well, it wasn't the class so much as my discussions with him, you know, of what—he would say, "Well, you know, Moses and the ark, tell me about Moses and the ark," and then I would tell him what I remembered. And whatever I couldn't remember I would then research and then get back to him and tell him, you know, more then. So there was always a reference to not specific images that I remembered or specific stories that I remembered, but it had to do with the whole presence of the history of art as it existed in and around Howard University.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay.

LOU STOVALL: And it wasn't so much about American art, but it was what was in his—in the seminar, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And so then Mr. Wells is who—you took classes in screen printing and poster making with Mr. Wells, yes?

LOU STOVALL: I had—I was already more or less accomplished in terms of printmaking, but it was through the knowledge of what had been passed before. So it was—oh, I'm not exactly sure how to say it because it's—the memories grow dim after a while, but it had to do with the knowledge and the existence of historic material that could be resourced and found again. That's—that was the important thing is that I learned where the material was and how to use it.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so in terms of your art, your visual art and your screen printing, what did you learn from Mr. Wells?

LOU STOVALL: Just those stories, you know, the stories of Mr. Wells, uh, just his story of his pursuit of incidents throughout history that he was interested in and then my own establishment to those stories, you know. Because I didn't have his interest as a finite thing, but I had his interest as part of an encouragement of what to do, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and then what about David Driskell?

LOU STOVALL: Well, David Driskell was a student of Mr. Wells, so whatever Mr. Wells was teaching, David became an extension of that. And after Mr. Wells had, kind of, passed away, Mr. Wells stopped teaching after a while and just worked at home in his studio. And David was at Howard, and he became my principal instructor, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so what was your experience as a student working with David Driskell as your instructor?

LOU STOVALL: Well, again, it was discovery of resource material. That's what Howard was all about; it was the discovery of what had gone—what had gone before and how to use it, you know, in your current life, that's what it was.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so you said before that David Driskell exposed you to the African American artists?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Can you talk a bit about that? So who were some of the artists?

LOU STOVALL: Well, all the artists that you can think of. Jacob Lawrence, Romare Bearden, yeah, Crite, C-R-I-T-E?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yes, Rohan Crite?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah. And there were so many others that all the names would've just—just go through my consciousness. Because I knew them all by my association with their slides and materials the same as I knew the European artists, you know, yeah?

[00:10:13]

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so when David Driskell would teach you about the African American artists, was this both visually looking at their art and also learning about their, sort of, lives and experiences?

LOU STOVALL: Right, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so let's talk about after you graduated, what did you have in mind that you would do next?

LOU STOVALL: Well, by that time—by the time I graduated, I had this interest in just making images that I thought of and drawing, of course. And also I had this friend from Howard whose name was Lloyd McNeill who was so fascinated with silk screen that that became one of my major pursuits, which was to have silk screening as a point of departure or entry to making art all—you know, altogether, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so you were working at the Botkin's Sign Shop.

LOU STOVALL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So do you remember the formal name of that? Because I've seen several different things, I've seen Botkin, is it Botkin or Botkin's?

LOU STOVALL: B-O-T-K-I-N.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, Botkin Signs & Display shop, I've seen that in an essay I think by Keith Morrison and then—so do you think that's the full name of it or do you think it's just Botkin Sign shop?

LOU STOVALL: It was Botkin Signs & Display.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, sign and display, okay. So you were working there while you were in school and then you continued working there after school?

LOU STOVALL: Right.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so there, you, kind of, began doing some of your early both fine art printing and some of your community posters?

LOU STOVALL: Right, yes.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Did you do a print with Josef Albers there?

LOU STOVALL: It came soon after or around about—around the same time.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so that was at Botkin?

LOU STOVALL: That was at Botkin.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Can you talk about how that project came about and what it was?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, yeah, it was the knowledge of what was possible during that particular time. And someone had approached—I don't think it was me directly or—although it might have been, but anyway, I came to understand that the Washington Gallery of Art wanted an image of Josef Albers's work for a certain project which was to be sold as a fundraiser and so that's—and that was when and how I came to make that first print of Josef Albers's work.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And did you—when you say the first print, the first print in terms of what, your first print doing fine art or—?

LOU STOVALL: It was my first print of a major American artist.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and did you work directly with him to make that print?

LOU STOVALL: More or less, yeah, because I knew him and talked to him about the art and so on, but I was really working for the gallery. It was a gallery commission.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Got you, okay, and so how was that experience doing your first fine art project with a major artist?

LOU STOVALL: Well, it was a major discovery of working with someone who was already acknowledged as a master modern artist and how I would, you know, achieve the effects that he wanted, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so did he give you any feedback on the project when it was done?

LOU STOVALL: Oh yeah, he liked what I was doing.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: That's great, okay. And so you also started doing some of your community posters and some of your projects with Lloyd McNeill, and you guys did a number of posters for *The New Thing*?

LOU STOVALL: Right.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Can you talk about some of those?

LOU STOVALL: Well—

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LOU STOVALL: —it's difficult to put it all together in terms of how we went about it, but Lloyd McNeil had this great interest in what was happening outside of Howard University. But he would bring—he would meet people and bring them to the university ostensibly to meet me because he was so entranced with making silk-screen prints that he kept bringing people for me to meet. And subsequently, I would make a print for this person or that person or whatever or for that idea or whatever, and that was how the whole, sort of, interest in poster making revealed itself through his desire to connect with people in his community. I, of course, being not all that readily available to get out and discover what was happening in the world, but I was perfectly willing to be influenced by the ideas of what was possible. And so consequently, people would bring ideas to me, which I would then, you know, complete or make prints or posters of, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So some of these collaborations with McNeill began at Howard, and they continued after you graduated—

LOU STOVALL: Exactly.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: —when you were working at Botkin? And so you-all did a number of posters for *The New Thing*, which was a concert series, right?

LOU STOVALL: Right.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so one of which was—*Turning Point* I think was one of the earliest ones?

LOU STOVALL: Mm-hmm [affirmative], yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Can you talk about that poster?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, it was a really nice drawing that Lloyd had made of—and it had this figure suspended that was kind of, yeah, sort of suspended at the top of this poster with the information around on what it was and where it was going to be. And the name of, *The Turning Point* turned out to be the name of—I guess it had to do with the—no, not so much the name of the group that was producing the music but Andrew White was the—the image was him, you know?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Oh, that's supposed to be Andrew White?

LOU STOVALL: More or less, yeah, abstracted.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And who is Andrew White?

LOU STOVALL: Andrew White was a jazz musician who was attached to Howard University and had graduated already, and he was a friend of Roberta Flack's also, so that was pretty much the way that that association went. Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And was *Turning Point* the name of that particular concert that week, or was that, sort of, in reference to what was going on in the city?

LOU STOVALL: I think the name of the Turned—*Turning Point* became the name of that event, that particular concert, you know?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LOU STOVALL: Although it might have been that the name of the music that was produced there, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. So you are working at Botkin and then at some point, you started working at what was the National Gallery of Modern Art when it, sort of, was under—it had transitioned to be under the direction of Walter Hopps at some point?

LOU STOVALL: Right.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Can you talk a bit about how that came about and how you came to be associated with it?

LOU STOVALL: Lloyd had been invited to have an exhibition at the end of the—sort of the range of the activity for what was then the museum of—it was the Museum of Modern Art.

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And Lloyd had this idea that he wanted to do a series of concerts in that space and they had—and the museum was just about to close down itself anyway, so Lloyd having this idea of having this series of concerts there made sense. And he talked me into getting involved with him; although it didn't take a lot of talking me into because that was what was going on. What our lives were all about was what are we going to do next, and someone would say, "Well, let's do such and such" and then we would do it. So the whole thing of the *Turning Point*, which was a good—it was a good vehicle for us to pursue an idea of making a jazz concert—making the poster being something that would advertise that particular evening, but we also had other images that we were doing at the same time.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative], okay, well, you told me about—you talked a bit about, sort of, this special exhibition that you-all did and that you built out all the, sort of, framing inside but when the Washington Gallery of Art was closing. The exhibition I think was called *Intercourse*?

LOU STOVALL: That was too complicated, simpler.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. Do you—so you were—started off talking about the exhibition that Lloyd was planning in the Washington Gallery of Modern Art space.

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And you spoke before about how you built out some of the space and created platforms and different ways of entering the gallery?

LOU STOVALL: Right, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, so then after that exhibition, then did that space transform into the Dupont workshop I think or the Dupont Gallery under Walter Hopps?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, yes.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, so I just wanted to talk about the transition and then you beginning to work in that capacity.

LOU STOVALL: Time.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Let's stop.

LOU STOVALL: Okay.

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VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. So let's talk a bit about after you graduated from Howard, you were working full time at Botkin and then over a period of years, you did your printmaking in a number of different spaces, so. So when you were at Botkin, what happened after that, where did you go next?

LOU STOVALL: To my own studio.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative], and that was on M Street?

LOU STOVALL: That was on M Street.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And how did you end up there?

LOU STOVALL: I rented a space on M Street.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And how were you able to finance it?

LOU STOVALL: How was I able to finance it or find it?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Find it—finance it.

LOU STOVALL: Because I was earning a little bit of money printing for people and I saved money, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative], and then at what point did you get a grant from Stern, from Phil and Leni Stern?

LOU STOVALL: Di, don't go away. Ask Di to be sure.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, so you are working at Botkin and then you and Lloyd McNeill put on the show, which was called *Intercourse* at the space that was the Washington Gallery of the Arts—Washington Gallery of Modern Art, excuse me, and from there you met Walter Hopps, correct?

LOU STOVALL: That's right.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay and so then is he—how did you meet the Sterns?

LOU STOVALL: Walter introduced—well to begin, after getting started with McNeill at the Washington Gallery of Modern Art, and Walt and Lloyd being given the show there, Lloyd then asked me if I would help him mount this particular show, and I said sure. And so I started working at night making various things that would change your way of perceiving a museum space, you know? And it was after that that Philip's that the—uh, Philip—that Walter Hopps wanted to know, "How does all this stuff get done. Yesterday there was nothing here and now there's this?" And the answer was Lou Stovall and his friends did this last night, you know. We worked like demons doing all kinds of stuff, and that's when Phil said, "What would you do if you had enough money to do whatever you wanted to do?" And I said, "I would have a studio, and anyone who wanted to learn how to do the things that I'm doing could come and I would be happy to work with them and teach them. And Phil said, "Then let's do that. Do you know how to write a proposal?" And I said, "Yes, I do," and so I wrote a proposal of what it would cost to have a workshop, and that was my first $10,000 grant.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay.

LOU STOVALL: Hmm?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay.

LOU STOVALL: From Philip and Leni Stern, okay, so—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so you used that grant to open your M Street space?

LOU STOVALL: Right.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, so can you tell us about the M Street space, can you talk about that?

LOU STOVALL: Ask me a question.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: What did you do there?

LOU STOVALL: I—at that space, I made the first *Summer in the Parks* posters, and I also did a state—what do you call that, that—insignia. It was a huge thing that was the presidential seal; that's what it was. The first thing I did was as an employee working for Botkin, I did the presidential seal for which Botkin received money and so did I, but I did them in my own space.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, so it was Botkin's project, but you produced it at M Street?

LOU STOVALL: It became my project, which I produced at my space, but with the help or the assistance of Botkin.

[00:05:09]

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so by your space, you mean on M Street?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so what was the presidential seal? Was that you were doing it on stationary, what was that? It was for the White House, correct?

LOU STOVALL: It was for the White House, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And who was president then? That was in 1960—

LOU STOVALL: I've forgotten—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: —'? Okay. We'll have to insert that, okay, so. But what was it you were doing, was it stationary, was it invitation?

LOU STOVALL: No, it was this huge, you know, this eight-foot square thing.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Oh, you mean like a three-dimensional presidential seal like they put—

LOU STOVALL: Like a three—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: —on the podium today?

LOU STOVALL: Exactly.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Oh that's interesting, interesting, interesting. So it's interesting that you bring that up because a part of your practice obviously is your screen printing and your own artistic practice but you also build things. You build furniture, you build shelves, you build desks, you've built drying racks I think.

LOU STOVALL: No, the drying racks came—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Oh, okay. But so—so that is part of some of your skills that you kept up that you learned from your uncle and your father?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And so what did that project involve? Did you actually like, sort of, carve this seal by hand, or how did you make it?

LOU STOVALL: It was three-dimensional, and it was painted and cut out and then assembled, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Hmm. And then—and I guess he got this project from General Services Administration or something?

LOU STOVALL: I've forgotten who it came from.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. Well, that's interesting. That was a pretty big project for you to work on in your new space.

LOU STOVALL: That was—yeah, and I was young and just started with my studio.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. So you were on M Street for how many years do you think—do you know?

LOU STOVALL: I've forgotten.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, well, while you were on M Street, you—working on the *Intercourse* exhibition with—I'm sorry this was—so at—you're on M Street, and then at some point, you moved to work on 21st Street in the Dupont Gallery?

LOU STOVALL: Right.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so how did that transition happen?

LOU STOVALL: Again through Walter.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Walter Hopps?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, so he invited you to come to this space, or how did that happen?

LOU STOVALL: Exactly right. Um, Walter said that the Washington Gallery of Modern Art was totally closed and that the space was going to be available and did I want it, and I said, "Well that would be great." So I moved my drying racks and silk-screen equipment to 1503 21st Street, and that's how I got there.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so—and that was called the Dupont Gallery?

LOU STOVALL: No, it was called Dupont Circle—Dupont Center, that's what it was, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so then what did you do there?

LOU STOVALL: I did whatever work there was. I did silk-screen posters, and I did some of the flyers, one of which was the—that little thing that you showed me, it's in the book. That one, yeah, *The Turning Point*.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, so you did The New—so you did the—?

LOU STOVALL: Do you have a date there of *The Turning Point?*

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yes, it's '67 I believe, let me double-check. Yes, it's '67.

LOU STOVALL: That was '67?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yeah, so these were The New Thing posters?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so you did that at the Dupont Center?

LOU STOVALL: Yes.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. All right, and so while you were there you, you know, had your own screen-printing projects that I think came your way sometimes through Lloyd McNeil but you also did some training—some teaching with students and people who would come in. Can you talk a bit about the training and the teaching that you did there?

[00:10:00]

LOU STOVALL: Can you simplify that and ask me one thing at a time?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yes. So you did screen printing at Dupont.

LOU STOVALL: Right.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so those were actual poster projects, but also I think while you're making these posters, you taught children?

LOU STOVALL: Right.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, can you talk about that?

LOU STOVALL: Well, yeah. I guess what I had done was I said anyone who wanted to learn silk screen, I would be happy to teach them, but they would have to stay on and teach other people, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so like what age students were these about? Were these elementary, middle school—

LOU STOVALL: These were anyone—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: —high school?

LOU STOVALL: —who showed up, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so you had the range?

LOU STOVALL: Right.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so I imagined some of the older kids maybe stayed around and taught people?

LOU STOVALL: Right, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so this seems to be something that, kind of, repeats throughout your narrative. You talked about Bill Gardner, you know Percy Heath, these people who, sort of, you knew early on who, sort of, taught you, were informative and talking with Howard, with your professors there and learning from them. And so this idea of, sort of, each one teach one, kind of, seems to be a running theme in your narrative. Can you talk a bit about that? Is that just something that happened, or is that something that was ingrained in you by a particular person?

LOU STOVALL: Well, you ran a whole bunch of stuff together. [Laughs.] I'm sorry.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: It's okay [laughs].

LOU STOVALL: But you have to remember that I'm 84 years old, and I can't remember all of the stuff that you remember.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yes. I'm just talking about this idea that it's very important to you and this has come up a couple of times throughout your narrative. It's important to you that when people have—learn things and have information that they then pass it on.

LOU STOVALL: Right. That they pass it on; uh, that's an important thing.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yes. And so that's a good thing and so did that come from any particular place for you, that lesson?

LOU STOVALL: Well, it was learned from Howard University, Mr. Porter, Mr. Wells, David Driskell, you know, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. So then you're at Dupont Center and then you moved—you decided to leave there, and you go to another space, and where is the space that you go to, to do your work after that?

LOU STOVALL: You can't run them all together because I can't remember.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. Well, actually, let me ask you about something that I believe occurred at Dupont Center. So did you build, sort of—a sort of large printer that was maybe multiple people could print and put it outside at some point?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Can you talk—

LOU STOVALL: —uh-huh, [affirmative], I did.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: —about that?

LOU STOVALL: I built a multiple—actually I built two multiple silk-screen stations and would put them outside and invite kids to come. There's a photograph of it in there someplace. And it was like this eight-foot thing, and each person had, like, a space that they could work, you know, the kids and so on. So that's where—yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Interesting and so what—why did you decide to build that, like why was it important to bring the printing outside?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, because printing could be messy, and ink could be spilled and so on, and we didn't want to mess up the floors where we were working. So where the students were, especially the kids, the young kids were coming to learn, it was important that it be outside, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so was that—I mean what kind of space was it outside? Was it out in the front of the building on the sidewalk—

LOU STOVALL: In the front of the building—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: —or—? Okay, and was that on the sidewalk or was there like a plaza in front of the building?

LOU STOVALL: No, it was like on the sidewalk.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And so I imagine that must have attracted attention from just people in the city walking by?

LOU STOVALL: Right, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So how was—what was the response to that?

LOU STOVALL: People were just amazed by everything.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Did you find maybe that more children and parents found out about what you were doing and that brought even more people in?

LOU STOVALL: Right.

[00:15:00]

[END OF TRACK stoval21_2of2_sd_track11_m.]

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, all right, so, and so then you were—so after—were there any other major projects that you did at Dupont Center or any other, sort of, new things you started doing in your screen-printing practice that you want to talk about that happened at21st Street?

LOU STOVALL: Not that I can directly recall.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so then after that, you went to a private residence to do your work?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, do you want to talk about that?

LOU STOVALL: Well, that's when we moved to 15—I'm sorry—2301 S Street Northwest. And Philip and Leni Stern were moving out of that house, their mansion, and there was enough space there. There were—it's this huge—it was a huge space and so I had—the workshop was there. On one end was a silk screen and the other end was the framing, yeah. And then upstairs., we had two rooms that we lived in, Di and myself, and Leni Stern also decided that she would move back. She had already moved out once, but she wanted to move back and work with other artists were working so that's what's—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And she was an artist?

LOU STOVALL: She was an artist, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And so you took in projects, paid commissions while you were in that building?

LOU STOVALL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And so you mentioned Di and so Di began working with you in what—at what point did she begin working with you, which space were you in?

LOU STOVALL: Well, Di started working with me soon after she came to Washington. She arrived in Washington in order to attend the Corcoran. And we were living and working there and then Di was coming out to help me do whatever I was doing whenever I was doing it. And that's when Philip Stern said, "What would you do if you had enough money?" And I said, "I would have a workshop and studio combined so that anyone who wanted to learn silk screening could come and learn with me." And so Di was part of that.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, so she started off at M Street?

LOU STOVALL: She started off at M Street, right.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. All right, so then you worked for a year and a half in the S Street space, and then you moved on to your current residence and studio, which is in Cleveland Park, and so—

LOU STOVALL: Well, we were a number of years before we moved here.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: On S Street?

LOU STOVALL: We're—yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Did you—so you moved from Dupont to S Street, and did you do anything in between S Street and moving here?

LOU STOVALL: No.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so do you think you were on S Street for how long?

LOU STOVALL: I'm going to say it was a couple of years.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and then you decided—and you had gotten married?

LOU STOVALL: We got married—uh, I was at 21st—22nd and—we were at 22nd and N when we got married.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: When you say you were there, you mean that's where you actually got married?

LOU STOVALL: Well, we got married in someone's townhouse who were a friend of ours.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, they lived at 22nd and N?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Got you, okay and that was in 1971?

LOU STOVALL: Well, let me straighten that out. That 22nd and N, we were there. We had the workshop at the 21st—oh, at the 1503 21st Street, that was the first—that was really the first

workshop, 1503 21st Street and then we moved to 22nd and N. Okay.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: You moved there and had a workshop?

LOU STOVALL: No, that's—that was just a residence, that's where we lived.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Oh, okay, so you—?

LOU STOVALL: It was an apartment building, you know, a new high rise, and we moved there and worked—lived at—lived there for what it must have been a year, a year and a half while still going to—while still running the workshop at 1503 21st Street.

[00:05:22]

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And so you lived at 22nd and N?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and was that after you got married?

LOU STOVALL: We got married at—during that period of time.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. So you were living there, got married and continued living there?

LOU STOVALL: Right.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and then where did you get married?

LOU STOVALL: We got married—let's say we were married at 2301 S Street.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, that—

LOU STOVALL: That's what I—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: —was at the Sterns.

LOU STOVALL: —that's where our reception was.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: At the Sterns?

LOU STOVALL: At the Stern house, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And where was the actual ceremony?

LOU STOVALL: That I can't remember.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so did you—

LOU STOVALL: But it was near the arena stage over in Northeast.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative], and so you had built up quite a community of—an art community at that point. Was this—all of your friends and everyone from the art community came to the wedding, or was it small, or how would you describe—

LOU STOVALL: Oh, no, it was huge—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: —it? It was huge?

LOU STOVALL: Well, the wedding itself was like 35—30 people. It might have been less than that, it might have been—let's say that the wedding itself was like two dozen people.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay.

LOU STOVALL: Okay. But we had a reception the day after of more than 300 people.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Wow, that's exciting.

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so that was at the Sterns?

LOU STOVALL: That was at the Stern's house

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Oh, that's interesting and so that seems like it was quite an event, and it was basically the art community was there?

LOU STOVALL: Exactly.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And some of your Howard community?

LOU STOVALL: I'm sorry?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And your Howard community?

LOU STOVALL: No, no, it was all the people that I had met in and around Dupont Circle. Those were the people who came to the wedding, people who had come to 1503 21st Street to have their—to buy a poster or to have their wedding done or to have a flyer done, you know, of—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. A wedding invitation done?

LOU STOVALL: A wedding invitation.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so did you print up wedding invitations for your wedding? Did you design them?

LOU STOVALL: Some of them, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Did you design them and print them?

LOU STOVALL: Some of them.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so did your family attend the wedding?

LOU STOVALL: No, but it was only—well, the family was back in Springfield, but the wedding was—oh boy. I had married and divorced before then, and I was single during my early years at Dupont Circle. And when I decided to marry Di, I didn't know what my mother was going to say, you know. So I invited my mother on the day of the wedding knowing that she—there's no way she could get there in time. But my mother being the stalwart mom that she was came a couple of days later, and she was thrilled, you know, with our—with the marriage and so on.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Oh, good.

LOU STOVALL: And she knew that the first marriage was a mistake.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative], okay. And so at that time, was having an interracial marriage an issue?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, that was one of the reasons that we had the wedding ceremony after, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Had the wedding ceremony—oh, the reception after?

LOU STOVALL: The reception after, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, so I don't understand.

LOU STOVALL: You—well this—you have to ask me one little question at a time.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So you were saying that the interracial marriage was an issue and so you—that's why you had the reception the next day? How does—I don't understand how that—like how one addresses the other.

LOU STOVALL: I have to go back. When Di and I were living together at 22nd and N and we were—had—we had a trip to make, and it was going to be to Seattle, Washington, to visit Di's sister. Excuse me. [Sneezes.]

[00:10:22]

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Bless you.

LOU STOVALL: Thank you.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Do you need a tissue?

LOU STOVALL: No.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay.

LOU STOVALL: And I had said to—oh, thank you.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LOU STOVALL: I had said to Di we were getting packed up to go someplace because we had been to Athens—Columbus, Georgia, to do a demonstration of silk-screen printmaking, and we had done something in North Carolina. We had done something in several states. And I said to Di whose mother was always—Di's mother was always on our side, "Would your mother feel better about our relationship and traveling and so on if we were married?" And Di says, "Yes, she would," and I said, "Well then, let's get married." And so like maybe a week or two months or something like that later, Di and I got married in the home of Peter and Rosie Shiras, S-H-I-R-A-S. So we got married in their home, which was near the arena stage in Northeast Washington.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, that's a good story. Okay, so what were these printing demonstrations that you were doing on the road in Athens, Georgia and North Carolina, what was that?

LOU STOVALL: I was showing people how to silk screen and at Columbus College was one place and—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Was Columbus College in Georgia or Ohio?

LOU STOVALL: In Georgia.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. Oh, in Di's hometown?

LOU STOVALL: Di's hometown, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so, but how did that come about and how was it kind of a tour? Was that something that you generated on your own or how did doing this—

LOU STOVALL: No, that was something—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: —on the road happen?

LOU STOVALL: —that was—people were inviting me because silk screen was just catching on, and it seemed that the whole world was excited about silk screen. And I was right, you know, towards—I'd like to say I was one of the principal people making silk-screen prints during that particular time. And so being married to Di and being invited to these various colleges to give a demonstration on—you know, we also demonstrated in Washington, DC, at several places. And so that's when Di and decided that we would be married, you know? So what was your next question?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: No, I was just asking about the demonstrations, and so for instance when you did the Columbus College demonstration, was that to art students at the college?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, mm-hmm [affirmative], yes.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: All right, okay, so we talked about the marriage and then I think we were at moving here and so you first moved to this house in 1973, and did you say that you rented to own?

LOU STOVALL: We had an option to buy, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so what made you choose this neighborhood?

LOU STOVALL: Because Leni and Phil Stern had a house that was on this very same street just a

few blocks away. And because we were there so often, I got to know this neighborhood a little bit, and we decided this would be a great neighborhood to live in.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so at the time, was this an integrated neighborhood or what kind of neighborhood was it at the time?

LOU STOVALL: It was a very quiet, a very quiet neighborhood, and by going back and forth, up and down the street, never having had any problems, I decided that this would be a great place for us to live.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: What do you mean by not—no—

[00:15:00]

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VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: —problems, what kind of problems?

LOU STOVALL: Well, because Washington was segregated at that particular time, and at Dupont Circle, it was—like a free and open community for everyone, and there was very few—very little exchange between races throughout Washington, but we made a difference by moving to this street.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And so then you moved here and you had a space where you could then set up your workshop. So I just wanted to just back up a bit so when you were on 21st Street, is that the first time you started calling what you were doing the Workshop?

LOU STOVALL: No, we always—oh yes, it is, it is, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And—

LOU STOVALL: —because before that it was called Fabrication Stovall.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And so tell me about that name, the Workshop?

LOU STOVALL: I decided that this is where we would work and that we would call it Workshop.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so, and it's interesting because it is very much a workshop because it hasn't always—it hasn't only been your screen printing, you've done the furniture making and you've done the framing too.

LOU STOVALL: Right.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And did you—when did you start doing the framing?

LOU STOVALL: Soon after moving here.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, so you did start the framing here?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And was that—I'm interested to—when you, sort of, graduated from Howard and wanted to do screen printing, did you imagine yourself as a working artist or did you imagine yourself as an artist who was going to have a business?

LOU STOVALL: Working artist, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so the whole—

LOU STOVALL: With a business.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Oh, with a business?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: I mean, well, I guess, you know, sometimes artists have a practice that is able to sustain them but then you actually have a practice and, sort of, a working business and so did you imagine that part, the working business?

LOU STOVALL: You made it complicated.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Well, I'm just wondering about—obviously, you've sustained this well-known the Workshop business and practice, and so I guess I'm just wondering at the outset, was this what you envisioned or this just what happened?

LOU STOVALL: It's like everything else, it all, sort of, just, you know, one thing went—led to another, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so was—I'm wondering in terms of you doing the framing and continue to do some of the furniture making with different, sort of, corporate clients. Was that a part of having different streams of revenue, or was that a part of just what your interest and skills were?

LOU STOVALL: The answer to all of that is yes.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay.

LOU STOVALL: Because again you ran too many things together for me to separate.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, but do you want me to say it differently, or do you think that's the answer?

LOU STOVALL: Either way.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. [Laughs.] I guess what I was asking is that, you know, it's quite an accomplishment for an artist to have a successful business for as many years as you have. And so I was wondering if it was a strategic thing to be doing framing and furniture making in addition to screen printing in order to bring in more revenue, or was that just the scope of your skills, and you were, sort of, doing various projects?

LOU STOVALL: That was the scope of my skills, that I was doing what I was doing.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. So—

LOU STOVALL: Oh excuse me. Di, look at—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: —out—oh, I need to turn it back on. Okay, so let's talk about—we're here, you're at the Workshop at your house in Cleveland Park, and this is where you stayed for the rest of the time. After working in a number of spaces, you came here and stayed and really built a practice in terms of screen printing, in terms of your own artistic practice, and in terms of a community workshop where you were teaching other people screen printing and working with a number of assistants over the years. So can you talk about some of the key prints that you did while you were here? Hold on, I'm sorry. Okay. Okay, so I want to talk about, obviously, the screen-printing practice you had here, but one thing we haven't talked about in depth is some of your—the community posters you were making. We talked about The New Thing posters and all the mini posters that you did for various organizations and groups. And a key part of, you know, obviously besides you doing the screen printing is you contributed the lettering. So I wanted to talk a bit about your hand-cut lettering and these, sort of, special typefaces that you were developing by hand over the years. Can you talk a bit about that? Is there a particular maybe poster or two where you had some specific lettering that was—what? How did you come to be doing lettering like that?

[00:05:28]

LOU STOVALL: Is it possible for you to simplify?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yes, talk to me about your hand-cut lettering you did in the—for the screen printing.

LOU STOVALL: Let me say that the first print that I made in this house was for Sam Gilliam, and it was called *Dance*. That was the first print that was made in this—at—in this location.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, do you want to talk about that print?

LOU STOVALL: Well, it was for the—I've forgotten the New York group that had come to Washington to perform, but part of that performance was to have the poster available if anyone

wanted to buy one. And so the *Dance* poster, I've forgotten the date for it, it had to be maybe 1972 or something like that.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LOU STOVALL: Well, we didn't move here until '73.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yeah.

LOU STOVALL: So it might have been '71.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay.

LOU STOVALL: No, no, I don't have those dates down.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Um, okay, well we can confirm the date, but—so do you want to talk—? So that was one of your first collaborations with Sam, and you've done more than 20 with Sam.

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, yes.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Can you talk about working with him?

LOU STOVALL: If you ask me specific questions.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So we've talked a bit about you working with Jacob Lawrence and how you worked with an artist remotely, and so Sam was here in town.

LOU STOVALL: Right.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And you-all were pretty close friends, socialize beyond the printmaking and so how was it working in the studio with Sam and producing his prints?

LOU STOVALL: Again I'm lost with all the words.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. Well, so how about this? In your—in the story that you wrote, "My Story," you talked a bit about working with Sam.

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And you said that your many collaborations with Sam “are important to me, I took many lessons, he is one of the few artists who could work quickly and surely enough to invent an interesting format on the spot and then come up with ideas for subsequent colors on demand.”

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so it sounds like you had a pretty dynamic interaction in the studio.

LOU STOVALL: We did.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so how did that end up—I guess how did that affect the work? So, you know, with *Dance,* how did you guys create that print?

LOU STOVALL: There were—it's a—there was a range of time between making that very first print with Sam for the dance theater, and what happened after, which is what you were referring to in your writing. So, again, as the questions are too—you can't combine them, and they're too complex.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, well, that was your writing that I was reading from and so it just sounds like—I guess maybe—I think one of the things that has, sort of, made you successful over the years is the number of artists talk about the, sort of, way you're able to be so expansive with screen printing. You have different methods and techniques and tools that you use. So maybe we could talk about that, some of the, sort of, inventive things that you've been able to do over the years and how that's then been able to, sort of, be shown in the various projects you've done. So talk about your different techniques and tools that you—

LOU STOVALL: Well, let me say, first of all, that Sam was as fascinated with silk-screen printmaking as Lloyd McNeill had been. And I was accustomed to people being absolutely in love with silk-screen printmaking because of the bright color and because it was so accessible to everyone and because that's what I was doing. And so I became like an attraction that—um, uh, that appealed to artists who wanted to have prints made.

[00:10:44]

And Sam wasn't the only one because there were a number of artists who were attracted to silk-screen printmaking because of the facility and the color and so on and the accessibility of it. And also because I had my own press right here at this location, you know?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so you were going to mention some specifics about some of the techniques and tools?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So what are they?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, boy.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: It will just be impromptu. So, I guess, I'm just trying to get some of the details about how you worked and how you were able to produce the things that you produced. And so there are different techniques and alternative tools that you used or experimented with to create some of the prints you did. And so you have something called the scumble technique?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: What's that?

LOU STOVALL: That was how you'd use color. Well, you need to think of silk-screen ink as kind of a thick paste that could in fact be thinned. And so scumble is to pass one heavier ink over a lighter ink and usually by patting it with a brush to make the texture and so on. So that's the way that it's done.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so when you use the scumble technique, what does that—what is the result, what does that look like in the print?

LOU STOVALL: It looks like—oh, I see—there, see the red, that?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LOU STOVALL: It's a way of patterning color to assimilate texture.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, so the color looks like it has texture to it?

LOU STOVALL: Exactly.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And that's the scumble technique and then you've done some things with castor oil, is that right?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, that's in a whole different other way, but castor oil—using castor oil was to slow down the drying time of the stencil. So you have to make the stencil first and then you have to print it on paper. So the scumble technique had to do with having these—the stencil on the silk screen made with—with the texture on the silk screen itself and then pull the ink through to make the print.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative], okay, and then lacquer-based silk-screen filler?

LOU STOVALL: That was part of it. The lacquer-based silk-screen filler was the—that's what I would add the castor oil to in order to slow it down so that I could work it into the stencil.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And are these techniques that you developed on your own, or are these common techniques in screen printing?

LOU STOVALL: Yes.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so is there a particular project like with the castor oil that you used that method on that—?

LOU STOVALL: Well, you can't mix up those two things. The castor oil was used to slow down the drying while I was making the stencil on the silk screen, okay, and—oh boy, that's going to be difficult to explain, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, but is there a project that you worked on that you used that technique on, a particular print?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, all of them.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: All of them?

[00:15:00]

[END OF TRACK stoval21_2of2_sd_track13_m.]

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, many, many prints.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so when you developed, say, the scumble technique, did you develop that just, you know, one day in the studio just as a manner of working or were—did you have a problem you were trying to solve and therefore you created the technique?

LOU STOVALL: I was trying to solve a problem, and I used that. I was experimenting in order to figure out how to make interesting patterns for silk screen on paper, and the scumble technique was one of the ways of doing it. I don't know how to say it much more than that.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, well, that's no problem. So you've mentioned, you know, going around to other places in Georgia and North Carolina and doing screen printing demonstrations. Did you have any interaction with other, sort of, well-known screen printers, printers at the time like Robert Blackburn in New York or the Brandywine Workshop with—in Philadelphia?

LOU STOVALL: No, I was aware—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Allan Edmunds?

LOU STOVALL: —I was aware of what they were doing, but I always thought that what I was doing was far and away different than what they were doing. And I also thought that I was—what was doing more advanced than they had done, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And so a lot of what you do has to do with color and how you're working with color and mixing color. So can you talk a bit about how you worked with color and how you, kind of—you know, with Jacob Lawrence and the others, how you, you know, you did a lot of mixing with colors. So how did you do your paint coloring? Let's talk about the print you did with Peter Blume; it was called *Autumn*?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Did that have a lot of colors on it?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, a lot.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: How many?

LOU STOVALL: [Laughs.] I don't know.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: I've read 123, is that right?

LOU STOVALL: It might be, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so is that—was that in '88?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, so at that point, do you think that was the most colors you had ever done in a screen print?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, no, no, but that was one of the most.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Oh, okay, well what was the most? That's a lot of colors.

LOU STOVALL: I don't know how many were the most.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so when you—so let's stick with the Peter Blume. So that was called *Autumn;* what did that image look like?

LOU STOVALL: It was very—quite realistic because it had to do with foliage and wood and people, you know. It was everything that you can imagine having to do with people, places, and things. That's what it was.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so up to that point, had you ever done that many colors?

LOU STOVALL: I had, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And so, but when you're doing something like that, when you're doing a 123-color print, that means that you're doing 123 rounds times however many the edition is, correct?

LOU STOVALL: Right, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so then that means you're also mixing colors to come up with all those different shades?

LOU STOVALL: Right.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so can you talk a bit about that process, what the original looked like and then, sort of, your process for producing something that looks like it with 123 colors in terms of the paint?

LOU STOVALL: No, that's—the way that you phrased it—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So you have an original that you were making a print of, correct?

LOU STOVALL: Mm-hmm [affirmative], yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so then how did you approach that project knowing that you would have to match colors and—you know?

LOU STOVALL: That's exactly the point I was doing was matching the color that I was going to print with the color that the artist had made in his oil or watercolor painting.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative], and so how did you—? Is there anything particular to your technique? You've talked about how you felt like you were far advanced than some other well-known printers in terms of colors and color mixing, was there anything unique you—

LOU STOVALL: Observation—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: —you were doing?

LOU STOVALL: —just looking at the color, the way that it was presented to me by the artist and then replicating that as close as I could with silk screen in the silk-screen medium. And so when it looked like a watercolor wash, then I would be printing very, very thin ink with a lot of solvent and so on, in order to make it look like a watercolor wash. Or when it was opaque, printing several layers of color, one on top of the other, in order to make it look as thick and as opaque as possible. Yeah.

[00:05:28]

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. So we've talked a bit about you working with Josef Albers, you've worked with some of the other color schools—some color school artists, Gene Davis, and others. Do you want to speak a bit about working with those artists, and obviously you're known

for your color and, sort of, how those things combined? What attracted them to working with you?

LOU STOVALL: Well, the brightness and the accuracy of the silk-screen color on paper, which is what made the work that I was doing attractive to other artists, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, uh, okay. I want to talk about several other artists you've worked with. I think in 1966, you worked with Sylvia Snowden?

LOU STOVALL: Well, let's not use Sylvia.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. How about Elizabeth Catlett?

LOU STOVALL: With Elizabeth Catlett, it was one color on top of another with the abstract techniques to assimilate their texture and use of color. Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so did you work in the studio with her to create the print?

LOU STOVALL: I'm sorry?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Did you work in the studio with her, collaborate with her in the studio to make the print?

LOU STOVALL: Yes, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so how was that—how did your—how did you-all engage, how was that experience? Did you know her as a friend or as a colleague beforehand?

LOU STOVALL: No, I was familiar with her work and so what it was, was putting what we call proofing the color. So I would make an example of a color, of a particular color that she wanted to use and show it to her, and she would say yes or no, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so one of the prints you did with her was *Madonna II*?

LOU STOVALL: What, *Madonna II?*

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: *Madonna II?*

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: All right. I want to back up a bit and talk about one of your screen prints, the *Peace Corps* screen print that you did with Paul Reed.

LOU STOVALL: I didn't do it with him.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Well, he was commissioned—he commissioned you to do it, correct?

LOU STOVALL: Right, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So can you talk a bit about that project, how it came about? He worked at the Peace Corps and commissioned you to do this.

LOU STOVALL: Well, he was art director at the Peace Corps, and I was making posters, and he wanted me to make something that would be reminiscent of the Peace Corps and so that was what I did, you know.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And you've said that this is one of your favorite posters?

LOU STOVALL: Absolutely.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Why?

LOU STOVALL: Let's call it the look and feel of it, and it was because that quote by—what's his name—by Albert Schweizer, that quote really, sort of, summed up what I was doing and what I was trying to do in my efforts for making silk-screen prints for the world, sort of, you know?

[00:10:01]

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LOU STOVALL: So my sense of what I was doing or let's say my sense of purpose was to use the silk-screen medium to make the most attractive, collectible, wonderful pieces possible. Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Okay. And the lettering on this poster is really, sort of, central to the design.

LOU STOVALL: Well, the lettering, it was something I invented as, kind of, a way of expressing those ideas.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative], and so the quote is, "I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I know, the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to—" what's the last word here?

LOU STOVALL: —how to serve.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: How to serve. [Laughs.] Okay. Yeah, it's really amazing lettering, and you've, kind of, laid it over, sort of, solid with half of the lettering being against the red background and half against the white background.

LOU STOVALL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And then you have—it's incorporated with a, sort of, green frame and a blue, sort of, high horizon line across the top of the Peace Corps, so okay.

LOU STOVALL: Well, the whole idea was to make something as attractive as possible, you know?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LOU STOVALL: That's—that's the—that was the whole intention of making something that was so wholly, totally attractive that you couldn't deny the existence of it.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Right, okay. We talked a bit about Jacob Lawrence, and you mentioned when you were working with the slides and in the library, that was when you're first introduced to his work, but you also met him at Howard. He came to speak or how—?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: —did you meet him at Howard? Can you talk a bit about first meeting Jacob Lawrence?

LOU STOVALL: Well, because Professor Porter invited various artists to come to Howard University to meet and speak to his students, and Jacob was one of those.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And what was your impression of him when you first met him?

LOU STOVALL: Oh well, Jacob was always considered a giant among artists, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so then how was that to, years later, work on a print with him, well the first of many?

LOU STOVALL: It was simply awesome working with Jacob. His ideas were—while Jacob was one of the most gentle people that I had ever met, but the power of his work was totally opposite from who he was, you know. Who he was, was just a gentle man with deep, deep thoughts and incredible reserve, but he never came across that way physically, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Right. He was gentle but he—his images were so powerful?

LOU STOVALL: Exactly, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so he's an example of you working with and printing with someone who you, sort of, really looked up with and, sort of, learned about as a student and then you did prints with David Driskell and with Mr. Wells, also people who were your—who were your teachers and people you, sort of, looked up with. And so how was it working on projects with these people who were your instructors and now they've entrusted you to work on their

prints?

LOU STOVALL: How was it?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yeah, I mean how was it working with your teachers, you now, sort of, being the person in charge and driving the project?

LOU STOVALL: I was actually in the service of making that art as wonderfully creative and colorful and accurate as the artist had done, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so did it—in terms of your trajectory, did working with people who were your former instructors give you a sense of accomplishment or satisfaction, or how did you feel about working with them?

LOU STOVALL: Well, it gave me this—the whole idea of making a print in silk-screen ink, which was totally—

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LOU STOVALL: —and also to make the print in an edition of however many that were needed was totally different than what the artist had done as a singular piece. And so there was a huge responsibility to make that print that I was making as accurate as possible according to what the artist had made originally as a single piece.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So when you say what you made was totally different form the original, what do you mean?

LOU STOVALL: Well, the whole approach to it, you know, because of printing—because of printing one color at a time. Whereas most of the artist worked on at the—at the very least several items in a particular composition because one thing would influence the other, one color would influence the other, and so on. And so doing it as a silk-screen print having to separate all that activity and all that energy so that when it all came together, it would come together as a complete image, you know. So that was it.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yeah, and so obviously, it's a lot of work for you to replicate an original, you know, doing all the passes with the different colors to create the printed version. Did you ever, in creating the print, create something that was actually, sort of, more colorful or more dynamic than the original based on your idea or the artist's preferences?

LOU STOVALL: I was—it was—again, you, uh—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Do you know what I mean?

LOU STOVALL: Not exactly.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Well, what I'm asking is that in general, you were, sort of, working with an original and creating a replication of it, correct?

LOU STOVALL: Right, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so in creating a print of an original, did you ever work with an artist who maybe wanted to go further than the original in the print? Do you know what I mean?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, of course, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, okay, so that—yeah. So can you talk about one of such project? That's interesting.

LOU STOVALL: Well, that's—then we were into the range of invention and so invention with Sam not necessarily with Jacob. Later on in Jacob's work, I did invention. But Louis Delsarte, Sam Gilliam, David Driskell, we were inventing, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Anything in particular that comes to mind in terms of the invention?

LOU STOVALL: Well, if we think it's separated out to make Sam—print to Sam Gilliam, ideally, almost every print that I did with Sam had to do with levels of invention, you know, even when I was just replicating one idea after another, all of which would come together in the end as a concise, unique item or work of art, you know. But that invention was something that was important to make sure that I—that the idea that were expressed in the artist's original was translated or transported to the print, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Okay, interesting. One of your—this is another early print. In 19—was it—60 or '67? Hold on. So I just want to talk about an early poster that you did that was significant, and that was the *Excellence in Education*. Can you talk about that poster?

LOU STOVALL: Well, ask me questions about it.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So this was a poster that you did for someone who was running for the DC school board, and it was, sort of, the first—I think it was the first election in the 20th century in Washington, DC, in terms of, you know, home rule or degree of home rule. So can you talk about making this print and what it was for and what you decided to make the design?

LOU STOVALL: Well, again, you've lost me with too many words. [Laughs.]

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So, you knew—so Mr. Cassel was running for the DC school board.

[00:05:02]

LOU STOVALL: Exactly.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And you made a print, a poster for this election?

LOU STOVALL: Right, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So what is the concept? What is the design that you made?

LOU STOVALL: To show something that was moving—that was moving up and positively. That's what I was trying to do.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And that was based on your concept for his campaign and what he was trying to do in terms of participating in the school board?

LOU STOVALL: Right, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And in terms of the—where you were with your poster making at the time, was—what was the significance of this poster?

LOU STOVALL: The significance of it was to make it something that would—that was attractive and that people would want to see and that people would pay heed to and so we were making something that was as attractive as possible that would be memorable.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and lettering was also a big part of this one?

LOU STOVALL: Right.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And this was a collaboration with Lloyd McNeill?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And actually, this is an example of some of what you've done on a number of these posters, which is, sort of, the layering of color.

LOU STOVALL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so using—can you talk a bit about that, you know, using individual colors and then layering them and creating a different, third color?

LOU STOVALL: Well, the reason for using translucent colors one printed over another was to give it a sense of richness and a sense of substance because it was a number of ideas to express an idea. Let me say that another way. To use those colors as a translation of the overlay

of ideas and motifs.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay.

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, motif.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yes, okay. So when you were working in the workshop and creating—doing artist collaborations, creating limited edition prints with various artists, you worked with assistants over the years.

LOU STOVALL: Right.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so can you talk a bit about that, where did your find your assistants?

LOU STOVALL: They were generally either artists or art students who were interested in learning about silk-screen printmaking and who came to me for a job in order to either earn a living or to express their own ideas.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so was—so did you work with some assistants for years at a time?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And, I guess, was there any particular student that you worked with for a longer length of time or who was—sort of, stood out above some of the others?

LOU STOVALL: Why, do you want to mention them?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: I'm just asking if you do have any.

LOU STOVALL: Well, oh, I don't know. I don't know how to answer that because see, I worked with so many artists and for so many different aesthetic reasons, you know?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LOU STOVALL: Mostly having to do with whether or not—in that little booklet there, those were things that were pretty much set as examples of how to attract people that would remember what the images were and what the essence of making the art was all about.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: This book?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, this is the *What's Going Around: Lou Stovall & The Community Poster* book with a foreword by David Driskell from 2021 showing his posters from 1967 to [19]'76. Okay, well so when you would hire an assistant, did you hire people who had screen-printing skills or did you hire people—

LOU STOVALL: No, no.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: —who were coming to learn and then—?

LOU STOVALL: Exactly.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And so then once they learned, they would stay on and be a contributing part of the workshop?

LOU STOVALL: Not necessarily a contributing part, except contributing their labor in terms of getting their prints made because most of the artists who came to work with me didn't know anything at all about silk-screen printmaking. But they were artists—they were art students and artists who knew about color and who knew about making images and who knew about form and technique and that kind of thing, you know? In other words, it was a real artist effort like a collaboration, you know? And the collaboration was not just about what we were making, but about we were making but about the ideas of the artist themselves. Yeah.

[00:10:43]

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so over the years, you had assistants that not only worked with you in the studio but also helped you as you, sort of, were out and about in the city doing other parts of your work, which is installing art in offices and homes, delivering things.

LOU STOVALL: Right.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so—and you have never driven?

LOU STOVALL: Right.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So can you talk about that? Why don't you drive?

LOU STOVALL: [They laugh.] I just never happened to learn.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Did you ever want to when you were a teenager—

LOU STOVALL: Oh, sure—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: —at 15, 16?

LOU STOVALL: —yeah, but it wasn't a principal interest on my part, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so then it just never happened?

LOU STOVALL: It never happened, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: But then you've had to be mobile all your life though, so talk a bit about that because I know that in a lot of your stories, you talk about your friends driving you and you have assistants that were driving you. So can you talk a bit about how that worked and some of the adventures that you had?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, that's just part of being an artist who was interested in so many things. Getting there and being there was one of the important things of—and being a part of what was happening, was that was another part of it, yeah, so yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. So let's talk about your own work. How would you describe your own artistic practice?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, my own artistic practice, pretty much one of conception, visualization, and then presentation, yeah. The whole idea was to come up with an idea that was unique and creative and wonderful but also an idea that could be completed in an attractive and wonderful way because I was essentially making silk-screen prints because I was in love with the color that silk-screen prints—you know?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And so when did you really begin to, sort of, be able to spend some time with your own art in terms of the years, what—like around what year?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, I don't know.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Or in what space?

LOU STOVALL: You know, this has been a long period, yeah, so I don't know how to answer that without looking at a—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Do you feel like you were able to spend quality time with your own work before you moved to this house?

LOU STOVALL: Oh yeah, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: All right, well so, it's been a—so maybe since you've been in Washington, you seriously were pursuing your art individually?

LOU STOVALL: I've always pursued my art, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so can you talk a bit about—describe what it is that you do now, the different kinds of drawings and screen-print collage that you do?

LOU STOVALL: Well, it's just—again, it's the persistence of making something that was attractive and intelligent.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative], and so you've said before that you worked from live—you do watercolor—you do drawings that are flowers?

LOU STOVALL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so you draw originals and then do you do prints of those?

LOU STOVALL: Right.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so do you do your drawings from live flowers, real flowers?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, absolutely.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so each drawing you do is from a live flower?

LOU STOVALL: I would say so, yes.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so where do you get these flowers from?

LOU STOVALL: From either the garden or from a florist.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Oh, so you actually go to a florist sometimes to get them?

LOU STOVALL: Sometimes, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Do you go to other places in Washington, DC, like the Arboretum or when you're at a—maybe you're at someone's house and you see they have—interesting flowers?

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LOU STOVALL: Sometimes, yeah, mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so what attracts you to certain flowers?

LOU STOVALL: The color and the form.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so—

LOU STOVALL: I'm especially attracted to orchids.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yeah, I've noticed that and so is that—? So on your wall, you have an orchid that's sort of a—almost like a salmon color and gold. Is that a real color combination that appears in nature?

LOU STOVALL: Absolutely.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: That's amazing.

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so you also do peonies I think and jonquils?

LOU STOVALL: I've never done a jonquil.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Oh, okay, I think I read that somewhere. Peonies though?

LOU STOVALL: Peonies, yes.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so—and what are these? Are these—? They’re like African violets, what are those?

LOU STOVALL: African violets, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. Any others?

LOU STOVALL: There's a rose there, yeah, and another orchid, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Right, and so we've talked a bit about you doing flowers and so why—like what is—what—do these particular flowers draw any particular meaning for you or anything that you're trying to convey in working on them and giving, you know, so much detail?

LOU STOVALL: Just to make them as realistic as possible, yeah. For instance, the—look at the magnolia over there, and that's—you know, it appears to be—even though it's a two-dimensional print, it looks three-dimensional, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And how did you achieve that?

LOU STOVALL: By the angle of the petals and the leaves and so on, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And some of the color?

LOU STOVALL: And the color of course, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yeah, okay. So what has been your experience working with galleries over your career?

LOU STOVALL: What has been my experience?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LOU STOVALL: Oh, well, there—the experience of working with a gallery is that it's a business in order to sell the work of art that you've produced in order to have something available for collectors to collect that they're willing to pay for.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Right, and so you've done that over the years.

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Do you—I mean has it been a positive experience or—?

LOU STOVALL: For the most part.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And when did you first start working with a gallery?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, I don't know. I mean it's been years, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so, uh, so when you are working on your art, are you—is this sort of a very solitary exercise? Are there, sort of, other artists whose work you find inspiring or you're drawn to or who have influenced what you're currently doing?

LOU STOVALL: No, I'm mostly inspired only by my own work and ideas.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And in terms of your—I know that you obviously collaborate with other—have collaborated with other artists on their work, and you've done collaborations, say, with McNeill on the posters and things, but when you—do you engage with other artists in terms of feedback about your own art?

LOU STOVALL: Ask me that again.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Do you engage with other artists or anyone really, curators or anybody about feedback about your art?

LOU STOVALL: No, no.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, in terms of when you're working in the studio or when you're working now here in the house?

LOU STOVALL: Well, when I'm working on my own art, I'm working almost strictly for my own sense of idea, originality, perspective, color, you name it. You know, in other words, when I'm working on my own art, I'm essentially working just for myself, you know, with no sense of collaboration or whatever except occasionally with Di, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so Di—when you say except for Di, is that in terms of feedback or collaboration or—?

LOU STOVALL: No, in terms of mutual interest.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: What do you mean mutual interests?

LOU STOVALL: Well, that's just what it means. Just, you know, Di is a colorist who was in—who likes color, likes putting things together, and so on and so working somehow with Di gives me an opportunity to experiment with an idea and say, "Okay, Di, look at this, and what do you think?"

[00:05:15]

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, well that—I understand that now. So you do get some feedback from Di?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And do you listen?

LOU STOVALL: Do I listen? [Laughs.]

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yes.

LOU STOVALL: Of course not. [Laughs.]

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: No?

LOU STOVALL: No, I mean the whole idea of collaborating is to—is an exchange of ideas.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. So you do or don't listen?

LOU STOVALL: I do listen, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Oh, okay, all right. Let's talk a bit about your exhibitions. Do you —you've had a number of exhibitions over the years, do you want to talk about any one in particular that was important to you?

LOU STOVALL: Ah, all—they're all important to me.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: You've had an exhibition at the Anacostia Museum in 1983.

LOU STOVALL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Do you recall that exhibition?

LOU STOVALL: Do I what?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Do you recall that exhibition?

LOU STOVALL: I do, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: You want to talk about that one?

LOU STOVALL: Well, I've shown what I've done as honestly and as directly as possible hoping that people would find it interesting.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, well, that exhibition was called *Through Their Eyes: The Art Of Lou And Di Stovall.* So that was a combination show.

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so any thoughts on that?

LOU STOVALL: No.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. What about your Howard University exhibition in 2001?

LOU STOVALL: That was—I was trying to show new advances that I had made in silk-screen

printmaking both of my own work and of other artists.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Hmm, that's interesting and so how did that exhibition come together? Was that something that you helped organize, or did they reach out to you? Like how did that exhibition come about and you being able to show your advances?

LOU STOVALL: Well, those are impossible questions to answer because it means that I have to second-guess the person who invited me to have that show.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Oh well, no, I was asking how it came about. So someone invited you to have the show?

LOU STOVALL: Yes.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, so the Howard University gallery invited you?

LOU STOVALL: Yes.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay and then did they have an—concept of the show already or did you contribute? How did the concept of you showing your advancements come about?

LOU STOVALL: Well, the one thing leads to another, and once I've been invited to have a show, I generally always show what I think is maybe my newest work or a good selection of work that I have already—you know, that I've already made.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Right. Okay. It's interesting in the *Washington Post* review of that show, the reviewer said that you have inserted more art into Washington than almost anyone in town.

LOU STOVALL: Yeah?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Because you had your collaborative posters and your own work in that show? And so is that—what do you think about that sentiment, do you agree with that?

LOU STOVALL: Pretty much.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: That's something.

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: That's an amazing feat.

LOU STOVALL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yeah, so, and then more recently in 2012 you had, *Lou Stovall: Vertical Views* at the American University Gallery?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so do you want to talk a bit about that show, that was more recent?

LOU STOVALL: Well, those were new ideas of presenting color and form, that was it.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And those were your screen-printed collages?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so how was that received?

LOU STOVALL: It was very well received, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And how do you feel about presenting your work in a museum versus in a gallery?

LOU STOVALL: Well, it's nice that, you know, you look at a museum show and it's what was done, what had been done, you know. And work in galleries is generally what's going on now. But all exhibitions of art come after the performance of the art or the presentation of the art,

yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And is that more important to you, the actual performance and the making of the art?

LOU STOVALL: No, that's—those two are two worldly differently—oh. What's important to me is the substance of what I'm doing at particular time—at any particular time. And so it's always important to me what I've done and also the possibility of what I will do, yeah.

[00:10:25]

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And how have you over the years been able to balance or how did you balance working on your own work versus working on projects with other people?

LOU STOVALL: Again, it's almost—that's almost a philosophical thing. The philosophy of presenting something that you've already made and already done and the consequence of it as opposed to, sort of, creating what you might do and what could be done. Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. So—oh, hold on. So, talking about your—so we've talked about, sort of, the poster making and your screen-printing collaborations with other artists and your own artistic practice, and your own—in making your own art, you also do screen printing of your own art, correct?

LOU STOVALL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So have you—how is that? Is that a different experience for you working in screen printing on someone else's work versus your own, maybe in terms of your, sort of, experimentation or, sort of, how you're trying to push the medium, advance the medium. Can you talk a bit about, sort of, using that medium for your own work?

LOU STOVALL: Well, again, that—that's the question that's so complex because on the one hand, it has to do with what was already done and what has been done by my own initiative as opposed to what someone else has wanted me to do. You know, for instance Sam Gilliam has often come to me and asked me to make a print with him or for him, and it always has to do with completing an idea that he has started or begun to construct and then adding whatever he wanted to it and to make it a complete image at the end, you know. As opposed to thoughts that I—of my own like the *Vertical Views* of just imagining what this all would look like if it were all put together, and if I find it attractive, then I do it, and if I find it not complete, then I keep working on it until it is complete.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Interesting, okay. And so it sounds like with your collaboration with Sam Gilliam whereas with some of the artists, maybe you had an original and the goal was to create a replication of the original, you're saying that he had worked that he, sort of, was in progress with, maybe had an idea of what he thought might be the end look, and he needed your help to, sort of, collaborate him to figure out how to get there?

LOU STOVALL: Uh, he wouldn't like it to be—for it to be printed that way, you know, because his idea—whatever finite ideas Sam might have had and then taking it to another level where it's finished becomes a whole different work. So that's—there's your answer.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so he—but you were saying that he would bring you an idea that was still sort of—he was still, sort of, marinating on?

LOU STOVALL: Right, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay and then what would your role be?

LOU STOVALL: Was to take it and finish it. With him. Yeah, to finish it with him by adding whatever—you know, whatever appealed to him in a fragment of an idea that he had and then to add something else that would make it even more complete until it was finally complete.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. So we're sitting in a room with one of his beveled-edge paintings and so this is—I think he soaked color in canvas and then it was a, sort of, freestanding canvas that's now—

[00:15:00]

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VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: —wrapped around a beveled-edge frame.

LOU STOVALL: Right.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so did you make that frame?

LOU STOVALL: I did.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so how did the idea of creating a quote unquote beveled-edge finishing on these paintings that he does, how did that idea come about?

LOU STOVALL: Well, that's under discussion as to whether or not the idea of the beveled-edge frame was his idea or an idea that I've developed for him, and we still can't get that together.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, what do you recall?

LOU STOVALL: I think that I did it, but I think that Sam thinks that he might have contributed heavily toward it.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so what was the problem you-all were trying to solve?

LOU STOVALL: How to make something that looked as natural as possible. You know, whether it was his idea or my idea or something that he saw someplace else, that was it.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, to look natural as possible. So, I guess, so it was before—so it's a freestanding canvas that's been painted, and now it's wrapped around a beveled-edge frame and did you—for this piece here, you built that frame?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, mm-hmm [affirmative], yes.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so on most of his other beveled-edged paintings, did you build the frames?

LOU STOVALL: On a lot of them, yes.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And so I guess I'm wondering, when you—I guess, what you prompted you to build this frame?

LOU STOVALL: Say that again?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Because we're trying to figure out how the idea came about and so did you build a frame and you-all wrapped the first canvas around it or how did you—?

LOU STOVALL: All of that, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. Do you right member any more details about it?

LOU STOVALL: No, it was all an idea of or an act of how to present this idea to make it work. And whether it's—you know, this—the stretcher that the canvas had stretched over, that's just an idea, you know? And it's a shape, nothing more than that.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yeah and it, kind of, creates a very clean finish, but it, sort of, protrudes off the wall giving it sort of a 3D effect?

LOU STOVALL: Right, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, all right. So we've, sort of, touched on this throughout the conversation, but, you know, obviously, you're a Washingtonian now, you've been here for 60 years. And so can you talk a bit about I guess your, sort of, getting to know Washington and becoming to, sort of, feel like you are a Washingtonian and, sort of, how your relationship with the city has evolved?

LOU STOVALL: That's a very complicated question. [They laugh.]

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Uh, so particularly in your early years, you sort of—you came to Washington in a very, sort of, politically active time. So early on, and frankly over the years

because we're in a political city with different presidential administrations changing, I guess I'm just asking about, you know, when thinking about your art and all the things you were doing with your studio and all the things happening in Washington in parallel.

LOU STOVALL: Right.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: How did those things influence your life, your work, what you were doing in the studio, the people that you met? Can you talk a bit about how, sort of, your art has intersected with the, sort of, happenings with the city?

LOU STOVALL: No, because I don't feel that I'm that much affected by my surroundings, you know? What happens with me, it's whatever thoughts I've had that come to me and how I've worked them out. And sometimes when an artist or an individual comes to me with an idea, how would I work that out, and so I do, you know? In other words, I see them all as problems of living, and again, it's activity and becoming, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Well, I understand what you're saying about you just, sort of, being, sort of, laser focused on your work. At the same time, the work that you were working on actually reflected what was going on in the city and in the world at the time. And so, you did a number of, you know, jazz concert posters and I think you were going to the jazz concerts—

[00:05:20]

LOU STOVALL: Mm-hmm.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: —yes? And then, you know, you did political posters regarding elections, regarding different issues. So did you—I mean did projects just come to you or did you also, sort of, accept the kinds of things that were addressing issues you were interested in or cared about?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, I think of myself as kind of a resource of the arts. In other words, whatever problem has been presented to me, it's a way of going about solving that problem. And so whether it's—you know, it's a direction of how do you get from one point to another. And what I mean by that is—expressing my love of flowers, the flowers become the subject matter that I choose to use of what this particular idea was about in terms of the color that—of that particular flower, you know? And if it's something having to do with total abstraction, it's always like an urge to see that abstraction in terms of something that would be attractive and beautiful and useful for—in the presence of a person who is going to view it, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And when you're talking about the abstraction, are you talking about your screen-print collages?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And then you were talking about, sort of, choosing color for your flower portraits. And so are you saying that certain colors mean certain things to you?

LOU STOVALL: Absolutely.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Can you talk a bit about that?

LOU STOVALL: There's nothing to say about it except that these particular colors that appeal to me and then I chose to express them, that's what it is.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: But you're saying they appeal to you as colors or do you say that there's deeper meaning in particular colors? Like purple is meaning something to you or red is meaning something else?

LOU STOVALL: No, no. Color means color, whatever it is, yeah, yeah. And I'm sure that color means one thing to one person and something else to someone else, you know?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yes, but we want to know what it means to you.

LOU STOVALL: Well, I don't really have an artificial sense or feeling for what—for any particular color, you know? Sometimes it's the dynamics of—the dynamism of one color over another, and that these two colors go together, you know, or maybe one color comments on another in terms of its subtlety or its directness, you know?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

LOU STOVALL: So it's all—it's a matter of perception.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yeah, and it sounds like color relationships.

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. So I was asking a bit about to the degree if it exists how, sort of, the outside world has had any influence in, sort of, what you're working on in the studio. And so you were in Washington when Martin Luther King was assassinated on April 4, 1968, is that right?

LOU STOVALL: Mm-hmm [affirmative], yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So did that have any effect you, anyone in your circle, where were—do you remember where you were that day?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, yeah, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Can you talk about it?

LOU STOVALL: Well I know exactly where I was when I heard about it, yeah. But it wasn't something that I chose to make in terms of a statement of art, you know? It was just something that happened, it was political, you know, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yeah, and so you, sort of, participating in an art capacity with various civil rights protests and activists and things, did that—how did that affect people in your circle?

[00:10:04]

LOU STOVALL: That I can't answer because that has to do with presupposing that I know what those people were thinking.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Right, no, I just was wondering if in the moment, there were any conversations, there were any changes in ideas about how people were viewing the fight for civil rights, that people discussed with you or that you were aware of?

LOU STOVALL: No.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. Okay, I want to backtrack a little bit and hit on a couple things. So when you turned 18, the Vietnam War was, sort of, getting underway. Did you have to register for the draft?

LOU STOVALL: No, I was—what do you call it—I was in the reserves.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Oh, you were?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Oh, okay, can you talk about that?

LOU STOVALL: No. [They laugh.]

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Did you actually participate in the reserves?

LOU STOVALL: Well, I went to the meetings that I was supposed to.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And was that in—in—that was out in Massachusetts?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. Well, I guess when I say participate, some people who were in the reserves actually go and do, you know, periodic actual duty. But you—did you ever have to do that, or did you just sign up?

LOU STOVALL: No, I went, and I did what they told me to do, you know? The one—I don't know,

the one thing that really was important that I was—I became the company—what do you call it—artist to the show ownership of whatever people owned. You know, for instance, the captain of my squad or group or whatever they call it, you know, I lettered for him, his personal belongings, you know. I never actually did work that was beyond the personal need of the individual soldiers of whom I was associated, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so you had to go periodically and report and do some duty time?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And how many years did that go on for?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, a few years.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And it was all in Massachusetts?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Well, that's interesting that you were able to use your art skills in the military in the reserves.

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: That's interesting, that's similar to Jacob Lawrence, he did the same when he was in the military.

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Interesting, okay. So, I want to talk a bit about fatherhood. So you are—became a young father and then had a second child, Will, and so do you—I'm just interested and curious about how fatherhood affected you.

LOU STOVALL: Well, I was from a very loving family, and I think that's what I've participated in from the time of my first fatherhood, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so what year was Will born?

LOU STOVALL: Nineteen eighty-three.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so did you—how was it with him growing up? Did he—like the workshop is behind the house and so was he there on a regular basis, what was your—his interaction with your art practice as he grew up?

LOU STOVALL: Well, he was interested; that's pretty much it.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, did he hang around the workshop?

LOU STOVALL: Well some, yeah, but you can tell when he was standing here in the doorway of his sense of order and his sense of the progress of, or not—the sequence of things, is that you know, he's been involved.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yeah, well now—I mean obviously, he is an artist now, and he is helping you to, sort of, archive your workshop and do some new projects, but just as a young boy and growing up, you know, he was frequently in the studio and, sort of, seeing what you were doing?

LOU STOVALL: Sure, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And then so your daughter Calea, she went to Howard?

LOU STOVALL: She did.

[00:15:00]

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VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so was she—did she live with you during that period?

LOU STOVALL: She what?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Did she live with you while she was going to Howard?

LOU STOVALL: Some of the time.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so how was that, was she able to—? I think she would also as she was growing up would come and be here with you for periods of time, right?

LOU STOVALL: Right, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so was she able to exposed to what you were doing and terms of your art also as she was growing up?

LOU STOVALL: No, it was just something that was being done, and she was growing up, but she had other interests.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, so she wasn't necessarily in the studio as much as Will was when he came along?

LOU STOVALL: No, not that I think.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so did you know why she decided she wanted to go to Howard?

LOU STOVALL: I don't know of that.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Do you think it had anything to do with you having gone there or wanting to be in the same city as you or—?

LOU STOVALL: It was probably wanted to be in the same city I was in, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and was that a nice experience? How was that experience for you having her be in the same city with you for a long—

LOU STOVALL: It was fine—

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: —period of time?

LOU STOVALL: —yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. So, uh—oh. When you were at Howard, Barnett Aden Gallery was in operation through '69 and so that was during the period that you were at Howard and then a few years afterward. Did you have any interaction with, or did you visit the gallery?

LOU STOVALL: Well, I pretty much curated an exhibition of some of the students who were at Howard University during that time because they needed someone who could mat and frame and hang and so I did that for them.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, so that was one exhibition at Barnett Aden?

LOU STOVALL: That was one exhibition at the Barnett Aden.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: That's interesting, okay, and so these were Howard University students at the time?

LOU STOVALL: They were Howard University art students at the time, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, all right, and just in terms of your socializing during that time frame, would you go to openings and exhibitions at Barnett Aden?

LOU STOVALL: Some, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And what was your—any thoughts about that gallery, what they were doing there that was unique in the city, anything?

LOU STOVALL: No, I just thought it was interesting, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. In terms of some of your more recent screen prints, you did a fundraising print for Obama?

LOU STOVALL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Can you tell me about that print and how that project came about?

LOU STOVALL: I just voluntarily decided that he stood for some of the things that I've stood for and so I made a print that were representative, I thought, of some of his ideas because I wanted to help him be elected, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And what does the print look like?

LOU STOVALL: It's right behind you there.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: I know [laughs].

LOU STOVALL: Well, you have to—yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay so you did two prints, and so one was spelling out Obama and the other was one of your circular landscapes?

LOU STOVALL: Right.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay and they were both fundraising prints?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and I guess just given the state of things when you came to Washington, you know, that's quite an arc of, sort of, progress in terms of social justice and Black progress and the nation coming together to elect a Black president. Is that part of—how did you view his rise and your efforts to support him?

LOU STOVALL: I think that I was making a print that would—that was maybe reminiscent of ideas of progress that would make people feel, you know, some sense of acquaintanceship with him and his ideas, you know? That was pretty much it.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yeah, and both of the prints actually have bird symbols in them and so it—definitely both of the prints while they're very different, they give a sense of, sort of, optimism and, sort of, progress and hope?

LOU STOVALL: Exactly.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. So did you—again about your, sort of, relationship with Washington, when you came to school to go to Howard, did you imagine that you would stay here and live your life here?

[00:05:13]

LOU STOVALL: It never occurred to me to choose a place where I would rather be than where I was living. So Washington was a place where I was living and so I lived here, and I became familiar with the ideas of Washington. And so there was a time that I was more involved where my art was concerned politically of what was going on during the time of Marion Barry and Walter Washington and later on, other people. But, you know, just living here as a citizen, I became part of what was going on, yeah, without the politics, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so can you talk a bit about your—Marion Barry and Walter Washington and your involvement?

LOU STOVALL: Well, I knew both of them, and if you're going to ask me anything specific, I'm probably not going to be able to answer unless you have a direct question.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: You made a couple of prints that were, sort of, for some projects that Marion Barry was working on?

LOU STOVALL: Right, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Can you talk about those?

LOU STOVALL: They were prints that were used as fundraisers to help him get elected.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative], and, uh—

LOU STOVALL: I never made one for Walter Washington.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Right. And so I guess I'm just wondering about your involvement with Marion Barry, were you, sort of, helping him campaign, and your contribution was making the art?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, yes.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And then how did you meet him initially?

LOU STOVALL: All because of being out there working in the community, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative], and you believed in what he could bring to the city?

LOU STOVALL: I believe he would be—that he would bring something to the city that the city needed, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And so tell me about Walter Washington, you didn't do any prints related to his work, but what was your connection with Walter Washington?

LOU STOVALL: Well, I thought he was a fine gentleman and a good leader, and that was it.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And did you know him personally?

LOU STOVALL: I—yeah, but not really, you know, we weren't friendly, you know?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. So beyond your art practice over the years, you've, you know, been really involved in, sort of, the community of Washington, DC, and so can you talk a bit about some of your community involvement, what you've done beyond your workshop work?

LOU STOVALL: You lost me on the last part of that.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Uh—

LOU STOVALL: Just make it simple.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. I'm going to push play.

LOU STOVALL: Okay.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Just trying to get a sense of your role in the community.

LOU STOVALL: Well, I feel that I'm very much a part of Washington, but I'm not a political person, and so I've done whatever I've been invited to do and participate in whatever I could participate in in terms of the city as a wholesome, you know, entity and where to live in and so on. So I feel as if—again, I repeat that I feel that I'm very much a part of Washington and that this is my home and also the center of my activities, you know? So that's pretty much all that you can be.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. So this is, sort of, related, so you—this is going to be a long lead up and then I'll have a very short question.

LOU STOVALL: Okay.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: You participated in a panel a couple of years ago called African American Art in 20th-Century Washington, DC, and so you know, Washington is and is particularly in the mid- to late-20th century an important nexus of American art from its artists to its institutions. And so I guess just given the, sort of, history of Washington and the art community, how do you view your role or contributions to Washington's art landscape?

[00:10:16]

LOU STOVALL: Hmm.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So just how do you view your role, your contribution to Washington's art landscape?

LOU STOVALL: I'm an interested participant and observer. And when I can do something that benefits or aids the city, I've done it, and otherwise, I just work in my studio.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, um, so over the years, have you done a lot of traveling?

LOU STOVALL: No.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Have you wanted to do traveling?

LOU STOVALL: No, I'm happy where I am.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yeah, and so do you take many vacations, or did you take many vacations or down time from the studio?

LOU STOVALL: Only when I've had to.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And by had to, what do you mean?

LOU STOVALL: When someone has invited me to come, then I've gone, but usually, I'm very happy right here.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So when someone invited you to go on a vacation?

LOU STOVALL: Usually my wife does. [They laugh.]

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So someone is your wife?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Where has she invited you to go?

LOU STOVALL: Well, to Seattle, to Seattle, Washington, and New York, and a few other places like that.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so Seattle, she has a sister in Seattle?

LOU STOVALL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And Jacob Lawrence is also there?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay and then you—did you go to visit her hometown in Columbus, Georgia, much?

LOU STOVALL: I did, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And did you go back to Massachusetts much?

LOU STOVALL: No, very, very seldom, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And how long after you—so you—when did your mother pass away?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, I don't remember.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Did she—you said that she came a little while after the wedding to visit.

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, yes.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Was that the first time she had visited you in Washington?

LOU STOVALL: I think it was the second time.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And did she come back after that?

LOU STOVALL: No, traveling was difficult for my whole family.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. All right, and so I want to talk about, sort of, winding down in the studio. What was probably, like, you think the last project you worked on in the studio?

LOU STOVALL: Uh, you mean before my studio got crushed?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yes.

LOU STOVALL: I don't know if I remember. I was working on my—I working on an exhibition of things, prints that were shown at American University.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so that was—that show was in 2012?

LOU STOVALL: I guess you could say that, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, so you think around that time? And so why did you begin to—why did your time in the workshop begin to wind down?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, because I became more interested in making prints for myself about myself, meaning the *Vertical Views*, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And so did you have some health issues?

LOU STOVALL: I had some health issues, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay.

LOU STOVALL: Whatever, just ask me.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, so did the health issues cause you to stop working as much?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, yeah. Having to do with probably the solvents that I was using and the amount of time that I was working in the studio, it just wore my body down.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Hmm, so you think the solvents in the paint affected your, sort of, breathing and things?

LOU STOVALL: Breathing, yeah, mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: What kinds of paints were the—had the solvents?

LOU STOVALL: They were all oil based, yeah, and working with the various—[hiccups] excuse me—working with the various solvents that I had to use, yeah. The turpentine, the Xylol, the lacquer thinner, all of those are disastrous for your health.

[00:15:00]

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VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: I know and so that's—actually happened with other artists in previous generations. Were you aware of that, sort of, being a hazard of what you were doing?

LOU STOVALL: Oh yeah, I did it anyway, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. So how do you spend your time now in terms of your art?

LOU STOVALL: Thinking, making the small collages, and reading.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: What do you read?

LOU STOVALL: Various stories that come along, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: They come along in books, in newspapers?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah, mm-hmm [affirmative]. I was a member for years in PEN/Faulkner

organization where novels were read and discussed, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. And so I want to talk a bit about Di's role in what you've done all these years. Can you talk about how she has participated in the workshop over the years?

LOU STOVALL: It will be better for you to ask her.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: [Laughs.] Ready?

LOU STOVALL: All right.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. Over the years, what was Di's role in the workshop?

LOU STOVALL: Well, uh, it was hard for me to sum it up, but Di did pretty much the same thing that I did. We made art, we had exhibitions, we traveled around the city, and so on, and doing things, but I was pretty much involved in art and so was Di.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so on the day to day given the workshop was here in the house, she had a role in, sort of, the day-to-day operations of the workshop?

LOU STOVALL: Right, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so now, we've talked a bit about what you just said, you said your studio got crushed. We talked a bit about that in our previous session and so I'm wondering how you envisioned the future of the workshop and if that changed when it was crushed?

LOU STOVALL: Well, I don't envision this future of the workshop because I'm no longer making prints. I've—I retired from making silk-screen prints and so I'm just doing individual pieces of my own initiative without the benefit of silk-screen printmaking and without the benefit of an income derived from making those prints, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: For other people?

LOU STOVALL: For other people, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: But before the—I guess before the workshop was crushed, given that you spent your career, you know, teaching other people, once you retired, did you imagine that it might live on in another capacity?

LOU STOVALL: It's hard to say because that's—that means that I would have to guess what was possible, and I don't know how to do that.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: No, I'm not asking you to guess. I guess I'm just asking what your—if you had a plan.

LOU STOVALL: I don't have a plan.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, of what you thought might happen when you retired.

LOU STOVALL: Right.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So you just—so now that you are retired and unfortunately, the workshop was crushed, it's now being rebuilt, and so now—before when you—once us have, sort of, wind down from the studio, your son Will and Di had begun, sort of, working on an archiving project to begin to, kind of, document and preserve all of your documents and art over the years, correct?

LOU STOVALL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so—and Will is also working on some other projects. Can you talk a bit about him now stepping up and, sort of, taking a role in what you've been doing over the years?

LOU STOVALL: Well, he's done a marvelous job of, uh, arranging some upcoming exhibitions of my work. And I've been tremendously proud of him and grateful to him for what he's done. And

the results of it would be—I think it's made me feel, you know, successful as an artist just by his summing up some of what I've done or a lot of what I've done and presenting that, you know. So I'm often surprised when I read something that he's written, and I'm thrilled that he has an understanding of what it is, yeah.

[00:05:01]

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Well, that's certainly a nice capstone to a long career. Is there something that—are there things that we haven't discussed that you would want to talk about before we conclude?

LOU STOVALL: No, I can't think of anything.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay.

LOU STOVALL: Have you included everything you wanted to know?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Oh, I think so.

LOU STOVALL: Okay.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: —a little bit, okay?

LOU STOVALL: Okay.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, so also we should just make sure that we talk a bit about your relationship with some of Washington's institutions over the years. And so you've bene involved with the museums, all the key museums in the city and so let's talk about your involvement with the National Gallery of Art over the years.

LOU STOVALL: What has been my proudest membership was with the people at the National Gallery, and being a part of—well, just being an active member of their membership, I haven't worked directly with any of the institutions in terms of a professional role but being an active part of their membership has been important.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Right, and so you served on some of their boards, some of their committees?

LOU STOVALL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: In what capacity?

LOU STOVALL: Just as a member, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And you were saying something about their acquisitions, having a role in those?

LOU STOVALL: Some, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so also you've had relationships with The Philips Collection and with—you want to talk about The Philips Collection and some of the curators, some of those relationships with curators there?

LOU STOVALL: Oh, no, it's not—I haven't been an active member in terms of their acquisitions, but I've been there and I've—I think I've helped with some fundraising but mostly as a contributing member of what was going on.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so now, are you talking about the National Gallery of Art or Phillips?

LOU STOVALL: All of them.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay. Are there any particular curators at the museums that you've had relationships within various capacities?

LOU STOVALL: Well, I gave you some names: Elsa Smithgall at The Phillips, Dorothy Kosinski at the Phillips, Carol Kelley at the National Gallery, Jack Rasmussen at the—at AU.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so Jack curated your exhibition in 2012 at American University, right?

LOU STOVALL: Right, yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, and so and then beside—how was that—how—did he reach out to you to plan that exhibition?

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And then previous to that, did you have engagement with the museum?

LOU STOVALL: Well, I've always had an engagement with the—you know, with the American University, yeah, in terms of exhibiting and visiting yeah.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Yeah, they've had a number of—you know, the museum really focuses a lot on making sure that there's exposure for Washington artists and often does group shows and things over the years.

LOU STOVALL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: And so you mentioned some of the other curators, Elsa Smithgall at Phillips, are there any particular—I know you have an upcoming exhibition there but over the years anything in particular that you want to point out that was important to you that occurred with your engagement there?

LOU STOVALL: Uh, oh, no, the names just aren't coming to me, um—I don't know.

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: Okay, all right, well, I think that we've done a decent job of capturing, sort of, your overarching narrative.

[00:10:01]

LOU STOVALL: I'm sorry?

VICTORIA VALENTINE GRIFFIN: So I thank you for this time.

LOU STOVALL: Yeah.

[00:10:07]

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]