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Oral history interview with Henry Halem, 2005 May 14

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Henry Halem on May 14, 2005. The interview took place at the artist's home in Kent, Ohio, and was conducted by William Warmus for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Nanette L. Laitman Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America.

Henry Halem and William Warmus have reviewed the transcript and have made corrections and emendations. The reader should bear in mind that he or she is reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

WILLIAM WARMUS: This is William Warmus interviewing Henry Halem at the artist's home in Kent, Ohio.

HENRY HALEM: Kent, Ohio.

MR. WARMUS: And the street address here?

MR. HALEM: Four twenty-nine Carthage Avenue, Kent, Ohio.

MR. WARMUS: And this is for the Archives of American Art at the Smithsonian Institution. This disc is number one.

Good morning, Henry.

MR. HALEM: [Laughs] Good morning, Bill.

MR. WARMUS: We're sitting around the table in the kitchen, and I'm going to start the interview with the suggested questions, and I'm sure we'll loosen up as we go along. Henry is putting his eyeglasses back on. I have water on the table and we have copies of *Glass Notes: A Reference for the Glass Artist*, by Henry Halem [Kent, OH: Franklin Mills Press, 1996]. Tell me when and where you were born.

MR. HALEM: I was born in New York City in 1938-May 5, 1938. And I grew up in the Bronx and lived there until I was 18, until I went to college. And I only came back to visit my parents, until they moved out of the Bronx.

MR. WARMUS: Can you describe your childhood and the family background, and what it was like growing up?

MR. HALEM: Yeah, just briefly, my parents were the children of immigrants that had come over from Russia. And my father grew up in the Lower East Side, and my mother, I guess she had a similar background. And they-when my father started working, he moved to the Bronx in the early '30s, and my grandparents-basically, I never knew my grandparents on my father's side. They died before I was born, and my mother's parents died right after I was born, so I never really had grandparents. And the family itself was-although there were a lot of uncles and aunts, they never really spoke that much to each other. It wasn't a very close-knit family. I never really had that type of family that other friends of mine had with aunts and uncles that came over all the time.

So my father worked in Harlem, and I remember I used to go down and visiting with him in Harlem. He had eventually an office near the Apollo Theater, and I remember that. And one of the guys that worked for my father-I never forgot-was a guy named Ben E. King who became-you know, "Save The Last Dance For Me"-became a very famous soul singer.

MR. WARMUS: What was your father's business?

MR. HALEM: My father never went to school when he was younger, and he developed for real estate people dispossessed proceedings. He used to dispossess-for the courts-he used to write up these papers so that these landlords could kick people out of their houses. And before that, my father used to collect rents, and I remember he carried a gun. And he used to show me his pearl-handle, nickel-plated Smith & Wesson Special he had. And I used to play with it in his office. He used to take the shells out and I used to go bang, bang, bang, bang with it.

I really enjoyed the childhood in the Bronx with my friends. I had a lot of friends in the Bronx. We used to play stickball and punchball and stoopball, and all of those things you read about now. We played all of those games in the street-pitching-in, we'd call it, ring-a-leavey-oh, and all those games that kids played. And the favorite time was after dinner, going out when it was still light out in the springtime and playing. And when it used to rain, there used to be rivers that ran along the curb, and we would take Popsicle sticks and weave these rafts with Popsicle sticks, and go up a couple of houses and put it in the raging stream and see it go down the sewer-

stuff like that. So we had a really fun childhood. It was really great.

And friends for life, who I've never seen, except one who moved to Cleveland recently. And so-we kind of-every time we get together, we relive our childhood, talk about-

MR. WARMUS: What was his name?

MR. HALEM: Jerry Fisch. And he, for some odd reason, about 10 years ago, moved to Cleveland, and so we reacquainted ourselves, and we have a great time when we get together. And he always has Passover at his house, and we get together and sit around and talk about our dead parents and so on and about-but in a really honest way; it's interesting how we talk about our parents in a very honest way, and about all of their problems that they had and the problems we had with them growing up. And so the things that we used to think were so great, we look back on and they really weren't all that great.

MR. WARMUS: What about your mother?

MR. HALEM: My mother was probably the guiding influence in my life. We were never really close as mother and son throughout our lives. And my mother lived to be-my father died young, and my mother lived to be 80, 81 years old-died a few years ago. We were never close. I know she loved me a great deal, but I really struggled to try and find a real love for her. She became a professional woman and I never really felt she was a mother. She was always kind of analyzing me and finding problems that I had with this, that, or the other thing. She was very competitive. When I became an artist, she decided to take up painting.

But growing up, she knew I needed an education, and my father, who wasn't the most sophisticated guy in the world-but I loved him dearly-my mother knew that the public school situation really wasn't going to happen for me-that going to DeWitt Clinton High School, like my brother did, wasn't going to happen. I was not troubled, but I was a very delinquent kind of kid. My brother was very bright. I always followed him in school and I was always compared to him and-you know, hope-you're-as-smart-as-your-brother kind of thing and I knew I never could be. So I just took the opposite way and was very delinquent in school and did very poorly academically.

So my mom-when it came to high school-got me into this private school called Walden School in New York, which was a very-maybe not a calming influence on me-but a very important influence in relationship to small classes, very bright students, and teachers that actually took an interest in me: very bright teachers, very interested teachers. I didn't do well academically there, but I discovered my ability to be creative as an artist. There was a woman by the name of Sylvia Weill, who was-

MR. WARMUS: Spell that?

MR. HALEM: W-E-I-L-L, Sylvia Weill. And I got turned on to making jewelry, and she was very encouraging and told me how good I was. Now, I didn't do well academically, but I was always in the art room making jewelry. And I wouldn't say she was a mother to me, but she had things and encouragements and accepted me for who and what I was, and never tried to do more than I was capable of doing, and drew out of me this creative spirit. And then the director of the school, Sam Nash, said I probably should apply to art school.

Oh, before that-I'm sorry-there's another very important thing-the combination of that. My mother found a camp, this very socialist camp called Shaker Village Work Camp that this guy Jerry and Cybil Count-C-O-U-N-T-ran. And I went there-there weren't counselors. This was a teenage camp, kind of like a Buck's Rock Camp, that is still in existence, but it was real socialist. Pete Seeger used to come and play there, and I think Woody Guthrie, maybe, came there and so on.

But there was-we went to Sturbridge Village [Old Sturbridge Village, Sturbridge, MA] on an outing once, and there was a guy throwing pots. I remember this so clearly-this was the seminal influence in my life to be an artist, before Sylvia, before high school. I was like 13, and I saw this guy had thrown all of these pitchers, ceramic pitchers, and they were all lined up and it was-and I watched him throw on the potter's wheel.

And I had never seen anything like this; it was just this whole experience. I never knew this existed in any way, shape, or form. And I saw this, and there was a moment, this epiphany. I said, I'm going to do that. And I remember just staring there. All the other kids at the camp went on to other things, and I just stood there, and they had to grab me and pull me away.

Went back to the camp, and the guy-there was a potter's wheel in the ceramic place-and I was always short-and it was this stand-up wheel made out of the half-shaft of a Ford automobile,I believe, and he had poured concrete into it-and I remember teaching myself how to throw pots-standing up, kicking this wheel. And the guy there said I was terrific. And I taught myself how to throw pots.

And I remember, morning till night, I was stuck-not stuck-but stayed in the ceramic shop, stuck at this wheel,

just throwing pots. And I remember coming home, and my mother looked at me and said, "You're pale as a ghost; didn't you go outside and do anything?" And I played baseball now and then, but it was this potter's wheel. And I said, "I want to make pottery." So my mom got me enrolled in the Greenwich House in New York.

MR. WARMUS: What was it you think that attracted you to it?

MR. HALEM: It's a good question. What did-I never thought of what it was that attracted me. I think it was the process-watching this guy throw pots. I remember years and years later, I researched who the guy was, and the guy's name was O'Leary. I never knew his first name.

MR. WARMUS: O-L-E-

MR. HALEM: I guess, O-L-E-A-R-Y. His name was O'Leary, and I guess it was the process of watching him throw pots. I really don't know what touched me deep down inside, but I-the Greenwich House then-I ran into people that became very famous in the pottery. And I'd go-

MR. WARMUS: Where was Greenwich House?

MR. HALEM: On Jane Street, I believe, in the Village.

MR. WARMUS: So G-R-E-E-N-W-I-C-H?

MR. HALEM: Yeah, Greenwich House, it's still in existence. It was a very famous place. I think it was part of the Henry Street Settlement.

MR. WARMUS: Okay, I know that.

MR. HALEM: And Jane Hartsook was the director and she was there a hundred years.

MR. WARMUS: Last name spelled-

MR. HALEM: Hartsook-H-A-R-T-S-O-O-K, I believe. I'd have to check that though; she was very well-known. And I went down there, and there were people-like Marge Israel was down there, and other people, whose names I've forgot, who became very important in the ceramic field. There was a group, I think-[laughs]-called the Argylists or something like that-can't quite remember.

MR. WARMUS: How old were you at this time?

MR. HALEM: Fourteen-13, 14. And I got a little job down there making clay for some of the people that were in residence there.

MR. WARMUS: What do you mean when you say making clay?

MR. HALEM: Well, I would make their clay for them to throw on the potter's wheel. You had to make clay. We made it from dry clay, and I learned how to make clay; I learned how to mix glazes for them, learned how to fire pots. And I was consumed by this, and they took an interest in me. Again, it was a place that I was well liked and part of a team, which in my house, I really wasn't. I wasn't part of a team at home because my parents didn't get along with each other. So there was conflict in my home, but when I was at Greenwich House, there was no conflict.

So I made pots. I still think I have some of the pots downstairs that I made there. But I learned how to throw on a kick-wheel, which was this sit-down wheel, and it was a wheel that was designed by Bernard Leach; it was called a Leach wheel. And it was a big bench you sat at and you kicked-and I was great at kicking on the wheel and throwing. And I became a good potter.

And when I went back to school, to high school, they didn't have pottery there, but I was going to be a potter. And I could throw really well, and I remember applying to Alfred University [Alfred, NY] and Rhode Island School of Design [Providence, RI]. I interviewed at Alfred, and I had a portfolio of pots I had thrown. And this was-people didn't really have pots that they had thrown at that time to apply to school.

MR. WARMUS: Approximately what year are we in now?

MR. HALEM: We're in 1955 or '56. I graduated from high school in-I guess-June of '56 and I started RISD in-I guess-fall of '56.

MR. WARMUS: So you were-were you accepted at both places?

MR. HALEM: No, that's what I was just getting into. Alfred interviewed me and I showed them the pots and they said, "Oh, that's terrific and everything." And they rejected me, because my high school academic record was really poor.

I interviewed at RISD and brought my pots with me, and I had to take an exam, and it was to draw a chair-they used to have a drawing exam and so on. And I guess I did okay at that, because they accepted me, and I remember it was the happiest day of my life, because my father never thought I was ever going to go to college, I was so poor academically.

And just as a little aside, he thought, I'm going to have to do something for this kid, because he's not going to go to college, he's not going to have any skills. So he was going to buy-what was coming into existence then was Laundromats-and he was going to buy me a Laundromat. And he was going to set me up-[laughs]-in the Laundromat business.

Now, if he had, I probably would be the Laundromat magnate now. I'd probably have a gazillion dollars, and own all the Laundromats in the country. But that wasn't meant to be. I went to RISD, and that was the defining-that was the defining moment of my life, was going to the Rhode Island School of Design.

MR. WARMUS: Before we go onto that part, did you have any other childhood experiences, like trips you took, or any other people that you should touch on?

MR. HALEM: Yeah, it was the high school experiences. It was the neighborhood, growing up with kids; I mean, it was like being in a little community. No one moved out. You were born and raised with those kids till the age of 18. You played with them. On rainy days, you'd go up to their apartment. It was an apartment building; it wasn't a house. It was a big six-floor apartment building, and we all lived in the same building or the building next door. We were all of the same ethnic background. We all shared common experiences in growing up.

MR. WARMUS: And what about religious?

MR. HALEM: Religious-we used to go to temple; we were all bar mitzvahed. Everyone went to each other's bar mitzvah. Those bar mitzvah parties were-the memories of those, I mean, we would have food fights at them-throwing olives. I remember they were insane. We were insane kids. Normal kids, you know. I mean today, the things that we did were what we thought was crazy then, now doesn't exist anymore. Kids don't do that anymore.

And those bar mitzvahs, going to temple on the holy days, and so on. And it was rather conservative. I remember clearly, the women had to sit in one part of the temple and the men-we sat downstairs, and the women sat upstairs. And we shared all of that.

And I think that was very important that we shared all of those experiences together, religiously, and so on. And so there was never any conflict with any of that. And the parents, they all knew each other, and they used to come down and watch us play stickball, and they would actually get involved sometimes.

And one of the things that they used to do was-one of the coming-of-age things was throwing a ball over the roof. And if you could throw a tennis ball over the six-story roof, then you had come of age. That was our-besides being bar mitzvahed-throwing a ball over the roof was the rite of passage.

And I remember there was a guy named Moe Fuchs, a friend of my father's, and he once threw a football over the roof. And that, I remember that-we were all, it was, like, dead in our tracks. There was this guy and he threw a football over the roof. And then we'd run upstairs, six stories up, and you'd go up to the roof and get it, and you'd lean over and throw the ball back down. So we would do that.

And then during the summer, they'd go up-we had what was called "tar beach"-and all the people would go up and bring blankets and chairs, and they'd go up and sun themselves to get sunburns on tar beach, on the roof. And then television had come in, and then all of the antennas were up and it was a sea of antennas-television antennas.

And so my father-I remember we put our antenna up and I had to drop the television antenna lines down. And everyone faced somewhere-so I would be leaning over with my brother and we dropped the line down and he'd pull it in the house and attach it to the back of the TV. And so we had that.

MR. WARMUS: Were you aware of any differences between growing up in such an urban environment and people living in a country environment? Do you have some sense of that?

MR. HALEM: Well, that's a good question. Things are-when we moved here, I'd have to relate that to my daughter and her growing up, and her childhood with her friends. And I think in a sense, most of her friends

really stayed here through junior high school and high school. I think it was similar. I mean, she would visit her friends and sleep over and do all of that-what we did. It wasn't as close.

We didn't have the religious aspect of it here, at all, because I kind of really-Sandy and I really dropped the whole religious thing later on; it just really didn't exist outside of-outside of nothing. It just didn't exist. I mean, we didn't go to temple or anything here. I was caught up with my teaching. Sandy, you know, was a writer. She stayed home, although she was teaching high school at the time.

But what Jess did was-after school she would go to the home of an adult person that we found-this Italian woman, Mrs. Scarpitti-and Jess learned all the Italian ways. They were old-school Italian. And I remember once coming in and Jess was cleaning squid-just learned how to clean squid, and I remember all of this stuff.

So she had Mrs. Scarpitti, who was like a grandma, was like the grandparents she didn't have. And so she had her friends, and I remember Jess would come home and she'd say-she'd relate an experience at a friend's house. For instance-she said, "You know, before we went to sleep, we had to pray at the foot of this girl's bed." And I said, "Well you know, they're Christians and they're very religious, that's what they do."

She said, "No, it wasn't the prayer; it was a waterbed." And she found that just really strange, praying at the foot of a waterbed-and that image. And my daughter always had that different spin on things, and I never would have thought of-it wasn't the prayer that threw her, it was the idea that it was at the foot of a waterbed that got her. [Laughs.] And we never forgot that.

And things in high school, my daughter always saw really funny things that went on, or not so funny. And it became part of her psyche, and she later on-when she grew up and moved out, she took up stand-up comedy. And all of these things growing up in a small town-she couldn't get out of this town fast enough. She found out later she really disliked Kent. It was like her parents were from New York and Philadelphia and New Jersey, and she was filled with Philadelphia, New York City, the Bronx, and the big city. And she couldn't get out of here fast enough. And so she went to college in New York City, and really became a New Yorker.

MR. WARMUS: Where did she go to college?

MR. HALEM: She went to Sarah Lawrence [Bronxville, NY]. And it was really great-it was small; she met incredible people. Franklin Roosevelt's grandson taught economics or whatever he taught there, and famous artists taught art, and all of these incredible people taught English and so on. And so she was imbued with that really intellectual spirit of Sarah Lawrence, and went on from there, and she made great friends. And then when she left college, she got a job with Bella Abzug as her assistant and traveled all over the world with Bella as her personal assistant and got to know all of the women in the women's movement-got very active politically, and then just had had it up to her eyeballs, and got out of that. So she really became her own person. She really became very independent, and I think it was more from the home than it was the influence.

MR. WARMUS: Excuse me, and that's your daughter, Jessica.

MR. HALEM: Jessica, our only child. Yeah, just one child, Jessica.

MR. WARMUS: We'll have to come back to her. But I thought it was really nice, actually, the way you segued from your upbringing in an urban environment to her upbringing and being saturated by what you had received. So I thought that was a nice way to go through it.

MR. HALEM: Yeah, yeah sure. Yeah.

MR. WARMUS: Let's go back to-where you were applying-you're accepted at RISD.

MR. HALEM: Right. I remember when my acceptance to RISD came, I was screaming and yelling and jumping all over the school on being accepted, because I never thought I was going to be accepted anywhere. My rejection from Alfred had come first, and it was my first choice because it was the ceramics school and I wanted to be a potter more than anything in the world.

And the encouragement from my parents to be able to want to do that, and encouraging me to go and do that, was very important in my life. They didn't say, no, you can't do that; you've got to do something that you're going to make a living at. And so I got accepted and my father knew nothing about colleges, even though my brother actually went to Alfred as an engineer. He's five years older than me, so he was already at Alfred, I believe. I don't quite remember that.

But anyway, the day before, or a day or two before, school started, my father drove-we drove up to Providence to look for an apartment. There were no dorms at RISD at the time. And we couldn't find an apartment, because everyone knew about colleges and art schools or whatever, and they were all there already in their apartments.

So we finally found this little apartment, and it was my first time away from home really-I mean, besides going to camp. But when you go to camp, you're still really at home because you had-you know, you were coming back. But I remember knowing that this was it; this was the beginning of another part of my life-and being in this room alone in this rooming house, with a couple of other students around, and going to class.

Oh, I remember, I thought I was going to enroll and just be a potter. I didn't know what art school was. I really didn't know what art school was. I didn't know you had to take drawing, sculpting, or two-dimensional design, three-dimensional design. Now, remember this is 1956 and RISD's program was you had freshman foundation; you couldn't major in anything. And I was very upset at that-freshman foundation, what is this? I had to take all these other classes. I had to learn to draw. I had to learn two-dimensional design.

And the teachers there-it was imbued-I didn't know what it was-was a Bauhaus program, their freshman foundation. And so I remember one of the lecturers there was Sybil Maholy-Nagy-it was [Laszlo] Maholy-Nagy's wife-would come in and lecture. And so she would lecture there. A guy by the name of LaFarge taught three-dimensional design. He had a very heavy accent and I remember him and I think he was-I don't know where he was from. I think he was from Germany.

So I took all of these courses, and made friends, and we lived what we did at school. And we lived on the street-we all lived on Benefit Street. There were no dorms for us to live in, but the girls had dorms. It was very interesting how that worked. And when we dated, we had to have the girls back to the dorms by-there was a curfew, like 11:00-you had to have the girls back at the dorms by 11:00, and we never questioned it; you know, it was something that was just part of living.

But during the day, we'd go to class, and the friendships went very deep at the time. And then the next year, you were able to choose your major, and the reason they had that freshman foundation was so that you-even though you may have come with the idea of having a major, if you learned how to do all of these other things, you then had the options of really choosing whatever it is-you were exposed to all of the other things.

So then you might find something that was out of the realm of what you had in your mind to be at that time. And so if you learned how to draw, you learned how to really visualize on paper, and not in your mind, different things, and drawing became the language of vision. And so even though I really never was able to draw very well, I was able to realize things that I was thinking on paper, or sculpt, or whatever it was we responded to with whatever side of the brain, [an idea] which didn't exist at that time.

And then it was the second year, and then I went in to major as a potter. But in the second year, we weren't allowed to use the potter's wheel. And it was like, that's all I wanted to do. So now this was the second year, so we learned all these mold-making techniques, working with plaster, learning how to mix glazes. Lyle Perkins was the teacher, and Dorothy Perkins-she taught also.

And so we learned all of this-they were the last, really, of the old-fashioned teachers. It wasn't the time of [Peter] Voulkos; it was the transition time. But I knew these other people that were now coming into focus in pottery. Perkins didn't know these people. So we had a ceramic club, and I remember I was part of the ceramic club, and they asked who do we want to come here-they would have people come in-so I said-and my friend Keith Hollingworth-his name was Kappy, he had a nickname.

MR. WARMUS: Spell that.

MR. HALEM: Keith, K-E-I-T-H, H-O-L-L-I-N-G-W-O-R-T-H. Kappy Hollingworth, or Keith was his real name. We used to call him Kappy. And we knew this woman who had had an article in *Craft Horizons*-her name was Marge Israel-and we said, this is the person we want. So Kappy and I traveled to New York and we went down to the Greenwich House and we found Marge, and we said, we want you to come to RISD and do a workshop. She said sure, she'd love to. And I had a car. It was my mother's car I had borrowed, and we had driven to New York.

And I remember she said, oh, there's a Picasso show-a Picasso ceramics show at-it was at-I can't remember the name of where the heck it was. And she said, "Would you take me to the show?" And we were so excited; there she was sitting on the front seat next to me, who I thought this was-she was the beginning and end-all of ceramics in this group of potters-David Weinrib, Karen Karnes, there were a couple of others in it that were these exciting people. And, of course, you know, Pete Voulkos out on the West Coast and all of the other guys.

MR. WARMUS: And how were you aware of, say, Voulkos's work-was it from a magazine? Or were you able to see any of his work?

MR. HALEM: I had-well, in 1956, I had hitchhiked-it was the summer of '56, I believe, or maybe '57, it probably was-we hitchhiked across the United States. And we ended up in L.A., and I ended up visiting all of the potters whose names are gone now. It was a husband and wife team. And then we ended up going to the Los Angeles County Art Institute, was it? Voulkos had a show there. It was this major-either his first major exhibition of work-

and I remember walking into this show and seeing pots and sculptures that weighed hundreds of pounds. It was like being hit by a giant wave. I remember seeing this.

But this was after-no, this was at the same time. Time gets a little confused here; it's a number of years ago. But seeing this show and then going to the studios of these other potters that threw these gigantic pots-I mean they were huge things-things I had never really seen. When you see pictures of things, you really don't get a sense of scale. Seeing the real thing and the real color gave me a sense of really what I wanted to be and do. And I came home, having seen this Voulkos stuff, and I knew, I just knew, I wanted to be Pete Voulkos. And I had met him there and he was bigger than life-all through his life he was bigger than life.

But I remember-to go back a bit now-we were getting this very, very traditional slip-casting background on work and throwing pots: that everything was on-center and everything was very traditional in our education with Lyle. You didn't really deviate much. A lot of hand building-we did a lot of hand building and paddling stuff around and so on-that was part of it, but it really was not, kind of, encouraged to be an iconoclast.

And I remember we brought Marge in, and I even have black-and-white photographs I had taken of that. And I had those-I mean, she was very important. And I remember her sitting down at a wheel and she started to throw. She never really centered the clay; she just stuck her hand in it and just threw this stuff that was all off-center, wobbly, and funky, and Kappy and I thought this was the greatest thing in the world. And if the pot collapsed, she just pushed all of the clay together, didn't wedge it or anything, and would just try and do something again.

Now, I don't know whether she was doing it because that's the way she did it, or she just sized up what was going on there and was just trying to break set and just throw that monkey wrench in that system. And I remember Lyle making excuses, and he kept saying, "Well, I'm sure she does know how to wedge clay, and, you know, throw-I guess-the correct way or whatever it was." But Kappy and I would have nothing to do with that.

MR. WARMUS: Explain what wedging is.

MR. HALEM: Well, wedging is when you take the clay and you get all the air and lumps and stuff out of it and you manipulate the clay-it's like kneading bread. And you prepare the potter's wheel.

MR. WARMUS: Did you like that part of it? It sounds like your early attraction to clay was very visceral and-

MR. HALEM: Yes, I really did like that and I was very good at it-wedging clay. And because of that, you really built a really strong upper body. And the wheels that we had were not electric wheels now; you've got to remember they were combination electric wheels. They were the Randall wheel, I believe we had. And the Randall wheel was developed by Ted Randall at Alfred University, which was a combination kick and electric; there was a motor with a little wheel on it. As a matter of fact, I have one out in the studio. I still have my wheel here.

And you would start kicking, and then you'd get the motor going so you could get-you didn't expend all your energy-and you'd get good speed up and you could center really quickly. And then everything else, you didn't use the electric part; you would kick it and so-and that's how I had learned. And then I remember as a sophomore potter, all of the sophomore potters-none of them knew how to throw. But I knew how to throw, and I could throw as well as the seniors could throw, in my sophomore year. So I was doing that and making pots, and remember there were only, like, four majors in the whole program, so there were only, like, four or five of us at the most. It was really small classes.

And so, it went on this way, and then I got very friendly with the painters, and I joined the painting club. And guys like Jack Tworkov would come in, and we'd sit around, like you and I are sitting around now, in a little room with just a few painting majors and, like, talking to guys like Jack Tworkov. And I remember at that time, they were in transition, and they were transitioning between the Cezanne school of painting and the Franz Kline school of painting. That was that transition.

And I remember those guys had their own-we had our own cliques, but we were all friendly with each other. There wasn't this art/craft demarcation kind of thing; it was all just part of one big melting pot of making things with your hands and your mind and your brush or your fingers, or whatever it was. And at night, we would get out on the street and we would just talk about art. When we partied, it was about art. And everything morning, noon, and night was about art.

Graphic designers were great friends with us; we never had value judgments on a higher arcing of things, as I recall. Now, look, it may have been there, but I was never conscious of it. We all had great respect for the institution and for who and what we were learning. And for four years-it was a four years that there's no way to recreate in the rest of my life-that four years. And it's something when we get together, we all look back on it. And I go back to Providence; I have friends-you know, my friend José lives there, and I just walk around my old haunts. Turn it off.

[Audio break.]

MR. WARMUS: Okay, we're on track three now; we're starting again. Tell me about the end of your education at RISD and what came next.

MR. HALEM: Okay, yeah, after RISD, remember it's at a time when they had a draft. The draft was still in existence, and so one had to think about two years in the army.

MR. WARMUS: What year are we talking about?

MR. HALEM: Nineteen sixty. And after I got out, I wanted to make pots. I didn't know what the heck I was going to do, and I ended up in New London, Connecticut, at a studio of-a guy by the name of John Enders had a studio there.

MR. WARMUS: Spell it.

MR. HALEM: E-N-D-E-R-S. John Enders. He was the son of the guy that had the Nobel Prize who was the head of the Harvard Medical School. His father, who I met and didn't hang out with, but walked with, for-his father was John Enders, who was the guy that had the Nobel Prize for the development that led to the Salk polio vaccine. And I met this guy.

But I had a ceramics studio there. This guy John Enders-and I made pots there for a while, and John Enders used to do some painting and so on. He was a strange kind of guy, but a nice guy. And I remember I came-after that I came back to New York and I had a really strong body of pots. And I applied for a Fulbright, and it was at the time that guys like Dan Rhodes were coming into prominence, and these guys also applied for Fulbrights at the same time I did, as I recall. Could have it wrong, but that's the impression that I had, and I had heard that he had a Fulbright.

And I got rejected for the Fulbright, but I got a strange letter that said, your work is very strong, but the Fulbright, it's full. I wanted to go to Japan; I should have added that. And they said, it's full to Japan because the Japanese potters were-you know, [Shoji] Hamada and those guys were-everyone wanted to go there.

They said, if you would reconsider and reapply to go to Korea, we would reconsider your application for a Fulbright. And all I knew about Korea, at that time, was the Korean War. Now this is 1960; the Korean War had not been over that long. And I thought, I don't want to go to Korea, a war-torn country, or whatever. I didn't know anything about Korean pottery. If I had known what I know now, I would have gone. I was a fool.

So I considered-I considered going, and at that time you needed permission to leave the country because I was of draft age. So I went to my draft board in the Bronx, and I remember the woman saying, "We can't find your records." And I said, "You can't find my records?" And I thought, I've really blown it. They lost my records and I never would have been drafted. She said, "Wait a second," and she came back and she said, "Oh, you're in the to-be-drafted pile." And I remember I ran home and I said, "I'm going to get drafted." And my mother had a connection with the National Guard-a doctor she knew in the National Guard-and-

MR. WARMUS: Can we stop one second?

MR. HALEM: Yeah.

MR. WARMUS: I don't think you actually explained what your mother did when she was-

MR. HALEM: Oh, okay. My mother had-although she never finished school, when I was in junior high school, she went back to school. My parents never got along, and I think my mother knew she was going to have to make a living, because she was going to leave my father at some point in time, which she eventually did. They never divorced, but she left him. And she became a clinical psychologist and got a degree. My brother was graduating high school, I was graduating junior high school, and my mother was graduating with a degree in clinical psychology from-

MR. WARMUS: From?

MR. HALEM: Out on Long Island somewhere. Can't remember the name of the school.

MR. WARMUS: Like Stony Brook?

MR. HALEM: No, that didn't exist then, I don't think. It was-ah, whatever.

MR. WARMUS: So that explains what you meant earlier when you said, my mother was always analyzing me.

MR. HALEM: Yes.

MR. WARMUS: You actually meant analyzing-

MR. HALEM: Oh, yeah, she took me to an analyst when I was a kid, I remember. Dr.-I used to stand there and watch-my mother was in analysis very early on, and I remember I was a little tyke looking through this glass at my mother, in this room sitting with this old German woman. I had no idea what was going on. It was a very strange kind of thing, and then she took me to this psychologist or psychiatrist-I don't know what he was-Dr. Bernard Zuger was his-I never forget his name. Zuger-Z-U-G-E-R.

[Audio break.]

So I went to him and so on. I never knew why I was really there. I guess my mother figured I was screwed up, and I guess I was. But I didn't care. So my mother became actually very sophisticated, in relationship to basically what I needed intellectually, but not emotionally. And so I remember coming back and telling my mom, "I'm going to be drafted." And she said-my brother had been in the army for two years and he said I really didn't want to go into the army. I mean, Vietnam didn't exist; we didn't know anything about it.

And so she got me into the national guard, which was basically six months active duty, but it precluded your going into the army for two years. So they told me at the draft board they would give me a dispensation to go to Korea for the year, but when I came out, I'd be automatically drafted for two years. That's how the whole national guard thing came about. And I didn't want to go in for two years, so I didn't really care about going to Korea, so I sort of gave up the Fulbright. But it was something I was giving up that I didn't think I really wanted to do, to go to Korea.

So I went in and I went to Fort Dix, New Jersey, for basic training. And I had been a trumpet player.

MR. WARMUS: You went into the national guard or the army?

MR. HALEM: Well, the national guard. You do six months active duty with the regular army to become qualified to be-you know, protect all the people.

MR. WARMUS: Jersey.

MR. HALEM: To protect New Jersey and New York and so on from the hordes of people that wanted to take over. But in any event, so you did this, and I played the trumpet in the basic training marching band for Q Company, and we got out of a lot of basic training, like crawling on our bellies with machine gun bullets flying over our heads. The guy that ran the band-we had such a good band, the commanding officer-it was a point of pride. We'd rehearse while the other guys were getting shot at, although we did throw hand grenades and stuff like that.

And then that ended, and my training was to be in the medical corps, because I was going to back to the national guard as a medic. So I went down to Fort Sam Houston, Texas, which was the Brooke Army Medical Center. And I remember getting off the plane there, and it was a huge army base, and basically we got medical training. And it was at the time that the polio vaccine came in, and I was one of-I guess it was-a dozen guys.

We learned to give injections, and they had polio vaccine in these things called syrettes. They weren't regular-it was a syringe, but it was like a miniature toothpaste tube that had the vaccine in it. And I remember it was a huge base, and all of these guys lined up, and I was one of the guys that had given one injection before I was to give out now-probably if I gave one injection, I gave 2,000 injections or 1,000 injections. It went on morning till night. These guys would line up and it was in the inter-muscular shot. And you'd just go boom, squeeze it, and you would give a guy a polio vaccine shot.

So we did that, and then we used to-I drove an ambulance because I knew how to drive a shift, so they put me in an ambulance. And we used to go out to the range where they had-the airborne rangers would come for their training, for whatever it is they were training for. And I would sit in an ambulance with a buddy of mine, and we'd just sit and read magazines while these guys would fire weapons. And if anyone got hurt-and once in a while a kid would get his hand hurt, and I remember you'd treat it. And then you'd go for training and classes, and, you know, you'd watch a surgery or whatever, and you'd learn how to treat a sucking chest wound and you'd learn what triage is. It was like a MASH-unit-type thing, would be the only thing you could equate it to.

So if a war had broken out, we would have been called. We would have gone into the regular army. But once you got out, you went back to your guard unit and you'd go once a week for a meeting, which was a big joke. You'd just kind of march around the armory in the Bronx, and whatever. It was the Rainbow Division I was in, which was started by Douglas MacArthur in World War I. So we did that.

MR. WARMUS: Did you make any friends there that extended beyond your time?

MR. HALEM: Yes, a guy named Jack Block, who I'm still friendly with.

MR. WARMUS: B-L-O-C-K?

MR. HALEM: B-L-O-C-K. He was a saxophone player, and I wanted to be-I wanted to be a trumpet player. And we roomed together down in the Lower East Side. And it was before the Lower East Side became the in place to be. It was still, like, a Polish neighborhood, and I wasn't doing art at all. I was just going to play the trumpet, and I worked in bookstores. I managed bookstores. I managed in the MetLife building, I think it was, or New York Life building in New York. There was a little bookstore. And at night, I would play the trumpet in this-I practiced and I took lessons with a well-known trumpet player. I was not a very good trumpet player.

But we'd go to the jazz clubs. I mean, jazz was a real important part of my life. And we would hear Thelonious Monk play. We'd go and hear John Coltrane. We'd go and hear Zoot Sims and Al Cohn. We would go almost every night to hear Al and Zoot, and we got to know them. And we would hear James Moody. We got to know James Moody. The Half-Note, the Five Spot, the Jazz Gallery. And we were really-jazz was really big-time for us. And he was a pretty good alto player. I was a lousy trumpet player, but I would play and do my stuff.

And that's where we learned how to smoke grass. I remember I would-the first grass we got was from the girlfriend of a very famous saxophone player. She would come into the bookstore; I got to know her. And she would give us these-she gave us this Kodak film-would come in these canisters. And that's where you-everyone kind of stored their dope in the Kodak canisters. And I remember the first time we smoked dope or smoked grass, the first time we got high. It was, like-it was incredible, the feeling.

We never really got that involved with it that it interfered with our life in any way. It was always after-and I stress this-it was never-you never woke up in the morning and lit a joint. You would do your job, you'd rehearse, you'd play, and then after, to relax, you'd smoke a joint here and there. It never was something that was that important. It was just really enjoyable. And it was never that much of it.

And so we lived the life of hipsters in New York for two years. It was really great, you know. And doing all that and just meeting these people. And down the Lower East Side, we used to go-and then the art house films, we used to go see all the time, and then going to the museums and the shows. It was a time when things weren't crowded. There was space. There was real space in New York. It wasn't crowded. You didn't do things just to be hip; you did the right things, and you really were hip.

MR. WARMUS: So it hadn't been commercialized. It wasn't taken over by marketing.

MR. HALEM: No, it may have been there, but we weren't really conscious of it. I don't think the big bucks had really taken over. I think it was really fame and not fortune that was important. And prior to that, when I hitchhiked across the United States, we went to North Beach [in San Francisco]. I remember in '57, we went to North Beach to hear Gregory Corso and those guys in the Lighthouse. From RISD, we went there. This is before-prior to my going to New York and doing this.

So I knew about this stuff. I knew about the Beats. And being one of the-we wanted to be Beat. That was important. And the Beat thing was an intellectual thing. It was about poetry. It was about Allen Ginsberg. It was about, I think, things that really mattered. And it was the things that were the '60s-what the '60s was about. It was breaking with that tradition. And growing up in the '50s and '60s was like nothing that has ever come after. I mean, everybody has their own time and place, and that's my reflection on that.

MR. WARMUS: How did you react to the change, the takeover of music by popular rock stars, ranging from Elvis to the Beatles?

MR. HALEM: Well, you know, the Beatles came soon after. I didn't understand it, and I remember telling someone-I lived in Richmond, Virginia, at the time, which is when I got out of New York-becoming a potter in Richmond. And the Beatles' "I Wanna Hold Your Hand," came out, and I remember the daughter of a friend of mine down there thought it was the greatest song she ever heard, and I thought it was, ah, they'll be gone in a week or two. I never really paid that much attention to it.

But I did pay attention to pop music. I did like pop music. And I did get to like the Beatles some years later, and that stuff. But it was all mixed in with jazz. I think it was-and [Bob] Dylan-and living in Richmond, Dylan came on the scene. And I thought that was real stuff. I thought what Dylan was doing was real stuff. It was still his acoustic stuff. And I was playing guitar at the time, too, and I tried to be a Dylan and that kind of thing. But I also had grown-

MR. WARMUS: Excuse me, what do you mean you tried to be Dylan?

MR. HALEM: Well, play his music, you know. And it really raised the political-I mean, the political aspects of life became apparent to us. And prior to that, in New York, as a real young person, I was imbued with the folk spirit from camp, the hootenannies, and hearing Pete Seeger. I used to go to hear Pete Seeger all the time. And I'd go to all the hoots and I was playing guitar at that time also. And I'd go out to Long Island to a guy named Roger Sprung's house.

MR. WARMUS: S-P-R-

MR. HALEM: S-P-R-U-N-G. He's still around, from what I understand. And so there was that folk thing in high school, which was really big. And so all of that was there; it was all mixed in. I mean music was music. Again, it still wasn't separate. You could still like folk music and be a hip jazz person, too. Things weren't black and white. And so all of that was always mixed in in my life. And I mean, if you look at my record collection of CDs and vinyls, you can see it's really-it's still all there, and I really still listen to it.

MR. WARMUS: We'll want to talk about the relationship of that to your work later.

MR. HALEM: Yeah.

MR. WARMUS: And let's not forget.

MR. HALEM: Yeah. Yeah, after New York and managing bookstores and playing jazz and going to the museums and all the jazz stuff and so on, I had this urge to get back to my pots, to being an artist. I woke up one day and said, this is going nowhere. I'm not going to be a musician. I'm not that dedicated to it. I don't have the mind for it. I don't practice enough. It's really about the life of a jazz musician, not being the musician. And I said, I got to get back.

And I remember this job opened in Richmond, Virginia-the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts-to be the first resident craftsman. And I applied for that and got a letter from Lyle Perkins, who wrote a letter for me, and I got that job. And picked up, moved to Richmond, Virginia, and became the first resident craftsman of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

MR. WARMUS: What did that involve?

MR. HALEM: It involved my-well, actually learning to be a teacher in many ways. But my job was to take a truck with a potter's wheel-the first portable potter's wheel had come out. Some guy on the Cape had made this electric potter's wheel. I can't remember the guy's name. And I bought one-the museum bought one for me-and my job was to go to every little burg and ville in the state of Virginia, set up the potter's wheel in front of some group that they would arrange-some women's group, some social organization, some school-set up a potter's wheel and throw pots, and show them what throwing pots was, and then lecture on the history. And that's where I learned to articulate ideas and get a sense of order in relationship to being able to talk to groups of people, and learn how to be poised.

MR. WARMUS: It was like-it's almost like being a platform speaker. You did your stint going to all these groups.

MR. HALEM: Yeah, exactly.

MR. WARMUS: But how did you do the feedback? In other words, some people, they start talking and they do it and they're just not very good and they never change. And other people seem able to do that. Do you think you were naturally articulate, or do you think this experience made you more articulate?

MR. HALEM: I think it's a combination of the two. I always had a very big voice. I always got in trouble with my voice. From five years old, I was always pulled out of class for cracking jokes. I was always the school clown, which has continued through my whole life. I always felt comfortable in front of groups of people. I never got anxious in front of groups of people. I was always able to think on my feet and articulate what I was thinking. I never really had to write things down. There was a natural flow and there was a continuity of thinking that I basically think I always had.

MR. WARMUS: Does that come from your mother or your father or-

MR. HALEM: That's a good question. I don't think it comes from either of them. I think it comes from-I don't know where that comes from. Usually things pop into my mind-and I can say, oh, this event or that experience. But I can't really say there was anything that prepared me for that. I just think it was probably always needing to hold my own in groups of people, if anything; to be heard and known in some way, to speak up. I always had a big voice. People used to always have to say, talk lower, talk lower. And I'd talk lower maybe for a second-and-a-half, and then my voice would climb again, and so on. And I think in no small way that had an effect on also with the Glass Art Society early on-things I did with them. It was all part and parcel to that.

MR. WARMUS: Talk a little bit about traveling around Virginia and meeting all these people and-

MR. HALEM: Oh yeah.

MR. WARMUS: -the culture and how they perceived what you were doing.

MR. HALEM: Well now, this is 1963, I believe. And Richmond, Virginia, is still just at the ends of segregation. They still had colored and white bathrooms. They still had colored and white drinking fountains. This was-it was just changing-and this was a shock. I wanted to leave immediately, but I had no place to go.

And I remember they had classes there, and the classes at the museum were always all-white classes. And there was a woman who was the wife of a very famous newspaper columnist whose name-I had dinner at their house. She went by her name and he went by his name, and he was a very famous columnist that wrote for the Richmond paper, and he was in all newspapers around the United States. And I remember we sat around dinner and she was appalled that they let colored people-in her words-colored people in her class. And I remember her husband saying, "Get used to it." And I sat there with the person that had brought me to dinner, and I just kind of sat there at this conversation and I was, like, appalled. And that was that experience, which was my first time in the South.

Richmond was a very beautiful, beautiful city. And my traveling around with this potter's wheel-I would like-let's say, go to Blacksburg, Virginia, and there's an all-girls school there. So I would set up and I'd have to give a lecture in front of a sea of all these gorgeous women, and talk about pottery or whatever it was I was talking about. But generally-I remember one in particular I went to, and it was this private club. And we sat at this very exclusive club having lunch, and once again, this woman started in on this conversation.

I mean, these people did not know who was sitting with them. They never paid-we were invisible-and she started in about being at school, and it was something about a roommate who was Jewish, and she started to make these kinds of denigrating anti-Semitic comments. And I remember her husband-he was a lawyer-a Yale graduate, was there. And I remember clearly him kicking her under the table. He knew-[laughs]-what was going on. He knew she had just blown it.

And I was kind of sitting there-I remember I was like, I didn't know what to do. I didn't say anything, but I remember she stopped after he kicked her a couple of times. I'm sure she's probably still black and blue, if she's still alive. And I remember that. And these were the kind of people that would have me as their honored guest. And I remember her saying something about-when she said-oh, I remember what it was that she said after the college thing-and she said, "And you know we don't let Jews into the club here." And so and that's when he really started kicking her and so on. So I guess my name wasn't a giveaway in any event.

MR. WARMUS: So was this an unusual program? Were you, like, one of the few people doing something like this?

MR. HALEM: Yeah, I was the only one. This was the first of its kind.

MR. WARMUS: Do you have any idea who came up with this idea?

MR. HALEM: The guy who was the-Leslie Cheeks [Cheek].

MR. WARMUS: Spell that. Is it like it sounds?

MR. HALEM: C-H-E-E-K-S. He's a very famous person. He brought exhibitions in of people that were just becoming famous. I mean, you could read-his name is in the literature. He was the director of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

MR. WARMUS: So, but did you ever find out why he came up with this program?

MR. HALEM: No, no, never knew that. I was the first, and it continued for a while. I don't think they have it anymore. And then there was-they had it in weaving, also. Pat Angerella-boy, I remember her name. Pat Angerella.

MR. WARMUS: Spell it?

MR. HALEM: Oh, God, I can't. It's an Italian name. I guess it would be A-N-G-E-R-E-L-L-A, I guess. Pat Angerella, she was the weaving woman that came in, and she did weaving and I did pottery. And they gave me a little studio there, and I made pots and built a kiln.

MR. WARMUS: Did you sell anything?

MR. HALEM: Rarely, through the gift shop.

MR. WARMUS: What was your first piece-when did you sell your first work?

MR. HALEM: That's a good question. I guess it was through the gift shop there. You mean to a perfect stranger, someone other than an aunt.

MR. WARMUS: Than your mother.

MR. HALEM: Yeah, exactly. [Laughs.]

MR. WARMUS: That doesn't count.

MR. HALEM: I mean that-yeah-[laughs]-of course that didn't count. I guess it was through the gift shop, but I never really paid that much attention to it. I'm not even sure they paid me for it. I'm not ever sure that-I'm not sure that they didn't own the work.

MR. WARMUS: It was more they just paid you the contract-

MR. HALEM: They paid me a salary to live in this house. And when I lived there, they brought in-they had a show of an artist-I have a piece of his. Turn it off for a second and I'll tell you his name.

[Audio break.]

MR. WARMUS: We're starting again on track four of CD one. Go ahead.

MR. HALEM: Okay. Down at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, people would come through. And I remember the painter Will Barnet came, he was a-he's still alive. He's 90-some-odd years old. He just recently had a show. And I used to meet these people when they-I'd pick them up at the bus. And he didn't want to stay in a motel, so he stayed at my house.

And I remember I had a stained-glass lampshade, which he liked very much, so he traded me this woodcut he had done back in the '30s for this lampshade. And it was my first piece of art that I had collected, and I was so excited. And I still got it; it's hanging in my bedroom here. And I remember this big book came out on Barnet, this big coffee table book, and I opened the book, and there right at the beginning is the print that I have. And it was like, whoa, that's mine.

Anyway, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts was a very important part of my life because it got me back, basically, on track. It got me back on track to being an artist and to making art. I never-one thing I recall, though, is I never thought, how the hell am I going to make a living at this? And how I was going to make a living at it was, was to be a teacher, because when we were students, that's what I always had the impression we were being trained for. I was not really familiar with the private ceramic studio. I think the teacher that we had, Perkins, was really kind of really out of the loop that way. I respected him as a teacher in many ways, but I think he was really out of the loop in so many ways, in relationship to the potential of what we could do with being a potter.

So I sort of finished there and I didn't have a graduate degree, and I thought, if I'm going to teach, I'm going to need a master's degree. So I was in my middle-20s; I applied to grad school. No, I'm out of sequence here. No, I'm not. I applied to grad school to Mills College [Oakland, CA], which was an all-girls, but the graduate school was co-ed and-

MR. WARMUS: Where was that?

MR. HALEM: This is out in California, and the person that was teaching there was-you know who it is-he makes the clay machines and he was a great potter. He's a great potter still. His name will come to me. And I was accepted there, but I needed money. I didn't have any money to go to school. My parents really couldn't afford to send me there without a scholarship. And so they accepted me, and my academic record again raised its ugly head and they rejected me for an assistantship. And so I couldn't go to Mills.

So I applied to George Washington University [Washington, DC], which had its graduate program at the Corcoran [now Corcoran College of Art & Design, Washington, DC], which was very fortunate, because there was a Japanese-Teruo Hara, H-A-R-A. Teruo Hara, T-E-R-U-E [sic], I think. Teruo Hara was teaching there, and he was-I think-the first wave of Japanese potters, in Japan, that had broken with the rich tradition of Japanese pottery. And he was a member of a group-I don't remember the name of the group, but he was a member of a group that was-they were the real iconoclasts of Japanese pottery.

And he knew he wasn't going to get anywhere in Japan, so he left and came over through the West Coast. And I remember Pete Voulkos telling us stories of when Teruo Hara came through and they'd taken him out to eat. He didn't speak any English and it was a very complex thing-all these funny stories about Teruo. And Teruo found himself in Washington and got this job as the teacher at the Corcoran school teaching pottery. And there were

about four or five of us that enrolled in the graduate school there through George Washington University.

And so I moved up to Washington. I was living in D.C. and started working with Teruo at the Corcoran. In the basement of the Corcoran museum [Corcoran Gallery of Art] was the school, and they had a big ceramics department. And I learned-this is where I really learned to be a potter. I learned to throw in traditional Japanese style, off the hump. I learned really about glazes. I learned all about reduction glazes, the reduction red glazes. And I still have some of the pots here that I made at that point, and they were pretty good pots, and I learned to be a pretty damn good potter.

And at that time, I met a woman and we got married. I got married-

MR. WARMUS: And her name-

MR. HALEM: Was-her name was at that time was Judy Sibulkin. She had been married before and that was her previous husband's name.

MR. WARMUS: Spell it?

MR. HALEM: S-I-B-U-L-K-I-N, I believe. Her name was Judy Sibulkin. Her maiden name was Judy Myers, M-Y-E-R-S, and we got married. She was also a potter.

MR. WARMUS: [Inaudible, cross talk.]

MR. HALEM: Yeah, she was in the program. And we were pretty damn good potters. She was a really good potter-very different than me. She didn't make pot pots, she made these sculptural things with press molds and so on that were really interesting. And there was a contest-a big contest-that first prize was a one-person show at the Smithsonian Institution. This was prior to them building the crafts part of it. What is that called-

MR. WARMUS: The Renwick.

MR. HALEM: The Renwick. This was prior to the Renwick. You would get a show at the Smithsonian Institution itself. And this is where I got to know Paul Gardner, so remember that name.

I entered it, I won first prize, I won third prize, and I won three prizes out of that, my pots were so good. And Judy also won first prize, so we co-won the first prize, which was a one-person show at the Smithsonian Institution. And so this is 19-this is after the assassination of Kennedy. This is after I left Richmond.

And Judy and I had this show, and we put together all of this work, and a lot of her work-and I was doing the sculptural work-was very political. A lot of antiwar-Vietnam had really come on strong now. I had all of these-I did all of these body pressings of these twisted bodies and these faces and so-and all this very political stuff. And we submitted it along with all my pottery and stuff and other sculptural pieces, and we had over a hundred pieces at work. We had a huge body of work. We really worked hard.

We had our own studio that we made work at. And we painted a lot of our work. We broke with doing glazing, and I did a lot of acrylic-painted stuff-these sculptures. And we submitted the work, and I had a lot-not a lot, but a few pieces-that were very political, about Kennedy and the assassination. And they told us-and some stuff that had some sexual context to it-and they said, we can't put any of that stuff in the show because Congress gives us our money and Congressmen come through here all the time. And they're just going to go berserk. So we said fine.

So we found another gallery in Georgetown, the Hinckley-Brohel Gallery.

MR. WARMUS: Can you spell that?

MR. HALEM: H-I-N-C-K-L-E-Y B-R-O-H-E-L. The Hinckley-Brohel Gallery, they said, "Oh, we'll show that work." So the show at the Smithsonian-I got to know a guy named-I think his name was Jeff Miller. He was the curator-he was the assistant curator under Paul, Paul Gardner. And that's where I got to know Paul. And they put together this show, and we were the first and only living artists that ever had a show at the Smithsonian Institution. And I had this one pot that was painted-a big painted pot-that they bought and put in their permanent collection. It's in their vault somewhere. It's never-I don't think-ever been displayed.

MR. WARMUS: Would Paul Gardner have been the one to choose that?

MR. HALEM: Yeah, I believe so. And we became friendly. And their working with a live artist was new to them. They had never worked with anyone living. And so they had to build all of these things-these pots I had made-actually a lot of the show was my graduate work, my thesis work. And they had to build all of these special holders to hang them on the wall with museum quality. I had just hung them on the wall with whatever I could

for my show, which really wasn't museum quality.

MR. WARMUS: Do you think that Paul Gardner came up with the idea of this show, or who-how did this-

MR. HALEM: I don't-boy, that's a good question. I just think they may have-I don't think the Smithsonian knew what it was getting into when they said that they would agree to this, because this was a big show. I've got slides of it somewhere, the whole show. And I had my thrown work and a lot of sculptural work. It was an-that opening, it was just-I mean, talk about being on top of the world at that opening.

And then after that opening, we had a later opening. We ran over in Georgetown the same night at the Hinckley-Brohel of all of the controversial stuff that we had there. So that night with Judy and I-that opening-was just phenomenal.

MR. WARMUS: Were you married by that time?

MR. HALEM: Yeah, yeah, we were married when we had that. Yeah, I'm sure we were married. The marriage was short-lived. We were very competitive; we were very young. It took two to get married and it took two to get divorced. I mean, it's easy for me to blame-you can play the name-game from now till the cows come home. But I was a jerk and she was a jerk, and we were both just two jerks that got married. Maybe she doesn't see herself that way, but we tortured each other in so many ways. I was very insensitive in many ways, and, you know, it was getting even. So we got divorced, you know. It was very difficult; it was very painful.

MR. WARMUS: About how long was this?

MR. HALEM: About four years, approximately four years. And it was mutual, the divorce. Actually, earlier on, we worked at it. We went to a therapist to try and bring it back together. And I remember halfway through the therapy, the doctor said, "You know, I'm trying to bring you people together, but I now have to find a way to-with the least amount of pain-separate you two." We were very angry with each other and we came by it legitimately; we tortured each other. So the anger-she came by her anger at me very legitimately, and I came by mine, you know, legitimately. And so we got on with our lives.

MR. WARMUS: So the political art that you showed, was that-but you also showed more formal art at the Smithsonian, so it sounds like you had two different sort of styles that you could work in, and it seems interesting that you were so, kind of, savvy in a way to-rather than sort of withdraw from the Smithsonian show, it sounds like you diplomatically put some work in that fit that show, and, at the same time, you were able to have the other show.

MR. HALEM: Well, I really-yeah.

MR. WARMUS: So it sounds like you were actually sophisticated, as a student, in terms of how you would negotiate your way through these worlds.

MR. HALEM: Well, I really liked my work. All the work I did at the Corcoran was really terrific. My pots were really good. They were different kinds of pots. I was doing two types of work side by side. The influences of Voulkos were very strongly in my work-that I conceptualized in my own way. And the influences of Voulkos were there, but also the influences of Hara were there, as a potter. I really did enjoy and loved making containers and using the pieces that I made. And it had nothing to do with sales; actually, we had a gallery in-we were living in-not Washington, but we were living outside of Washington-Alexandria. And we had a shop on King Street in Alexandria and a little gallery where we sold prints. We sold pots, and we gave pottery lessons to kids.

MR. WARMUS: So you were running this gallery?

MR. HALEM: We were running it.

MR. WARMUS: And this was after graduate school?

MR. HALEM: This was probably during graduate school.

MR. WARMUS: So now we're in the sort of mid-'60s, like, maybe '65 or something?

MR. HALEM: Yeah, yeah, somewhere in there. And she had a child from a previous marriage, who I had adopted, Jody.

And after that, we had gotten a loan from the Small Business Administration to start this gallery and so on and-let's see, am I out of sequence here? I'm out of sequence. Let's see-we went-I didn't have my degree. We met at the Corcoran. I didn't have my degree. Boy, I, the sequence, it may come to me.

But anyway, I got a job at Mary Washington College [Fredericksburg, VA], and I did not have my degree yet. I was still in the process of getting my degree. I was working on my thesis-that's it.

And we moved down, I got a job, and I said, "I don't have a master's degree." And they said, "That doesn't matter. You went to the Rhode Island School of Design. That's a great place. We're going to give you a part-time"-I got a part-time job teaching ceramics at Mary Washington College, which was just fantastic, while we were still doing our degrees. Yeah, the sequence is correct.

And we moved down to Fredericksburg, and we had a studio down there because it's a school. And I built a big gas-fired kiln and I taught there for a year part-time. And then something happened that put my job in jeopardy, and they said, "You're going to have to leave." So they very politely said, "We'll allow you to resign," which I did, and we moved back up to-that's when we moved up to Alexandria, after that, and that's when we had-

MR. WARMUS: The gallery?

MR. HALEM: The gallery and that space, and so on.

MR WARMUS: You managed the space, the two of you?

MR. HALEM: Yes. We managed it and we'd go to work and we'd do it. It was actually a lot of fun. And we got to know actually some of the Color Field painters that were out of Washington. We got to know them, whose names slip my mind now. Peripherally, not good friends-you know, we didn't party with them, but we got to know them a little bit. And let's see-this is getting now close to where the glass thing is going to come in, because it's at the point of getting our degree from GW. They refused us our degrees, and this was at a point where I'm starting to get-separate myself from Judy to get divorced. And so there's a lot of tension in the home.

GW says we can't-and this is a number of us-you can't get your master's degree because you can't pass the language exam. They had a language-through arts and sciences-and they had a language exam you had to pass in order to get your master's. We had all of our other credits. We had our show. We did a written thesis. We did the whole nine yards.

And so I'm in the process of trying to get divorced, and I had promised Judy and her daughter-I said, "I'll move you wherever you need to go." And we applied to the University of Wisconsin. And they said, "You can come here for a year." Don Reitz said, "We can't just give you your degree; you'll have to study here for a year and do another thesis before we'll give you a degree, but we'll give you credit for all your other credits. All you got to do is ceramics." So we said okay.

MR. WARMUS: Stop-go back a second to this English. So basically, there was a test you took.

MR. HALEM: Yeah, we took a language exam, which we flunked. I mean, I don't even think I knew how to say yes in French. Tried it in Spanish-you know, it was just ridiculous.

MR. WARMUS: So it's not an English-language exam.

MR. HALEM: No, it was foreign language.

MR. WARMUS: So you had to know a foreign language.

MR. HALEM: Foreign language.

MR. WARMUS: And it could be Spanish or French.

MR. HALEM: Spanish, French, German, anything-any language you wanted it. Now, I had taken a little French and a little Spanish. And we took classes and tried to learn it. We didn't have a head for it.

MR. WARMUS: What was the thinking of having a language requirement for a graduate degree in art? Do you understand?

MR. HALEM: Well, I'm getting to that. It was part of arts and sciences. So we enrolled at the University of Wisconsin, and the week we were leaving, they realized-George Washington University did exactly that-they said, what are we thinking here? Why do they need a language requirement to get their degree? So they wrote us a letter and said, "We're waiving the language requirement. You have your degree."

So all of these problems of the graduate thing-we now had our master's degree. And so I told Judy, I said, "Okay, I'll move you out there. I'll find an apartment for you and Jody," and we had this caravan. She had her car and I had my car-piled all the crap in the car.

MR. WARMUS: Why? Let's go back for a second-why the University of Wisconsin, out of all the possible choices?

MR. HALEM: Don Reitz. Don Reitz was hot. He was real hot. Nothing to do with glass; I didn't even know there was a glass program out there. But Don Reitz was the head of the ceramic program. And obviously Harvey [Littleton] had this glass program that I didn't know about.

MR. WARMUS: Spell Don Reitz for us.

MR. HALEM: R-E-I-T-Z.

And so we went out there to do whatever the hell we wanted to do. We were more or less enrolled. We drove out there, found an apartment-Eagle Heights Apartments-I remember that. Eagle Heights. And so she got an apartment, and I had turned 30; I had just turned 30 years old. And so I helped her-

MR. WARMUS: What year are we in then? I guess it's pretty easy for us to figure-

MR. HALEM: Nineteen sixty-eight, 1968.

So I moved her and her daughter into the apartment, and I stayed there for a few nights until I could find a place to live. And I remember, it was really funny. I went, and there was a place where you could-the university had an apartment-finding place you could go to, and they had things listed on the wall-apartments. So I went and I looked, and I found this-there were a bunch of people milling around and I-there were these two guys standing there and they said, "We're looking for a third roommate." And so I said, "Okay."

So the three of us, we went to the place and went to the landlady and she sort of interviewed us. It was a basement apartment; it was one giant room, and I remember she said, "How old are you?" And the guy wrote 22, 21, whatever, and another guy wrote 21, 22. Now this was at a time that you didn't trust anybody over 30, and she came to me and said, "How old are you?" and I said, 30. And I remember these two guys-their heads just snapped around, looked at me like, 30? And they were shocked.

But anyway, we moved into this apartment, and we divided the apartment up with curtains between the beds; I remember it was this one big-and we had some pretty wild parties. And I introduced them to drinking wine, I remember. They had smoked a lot of dope, these kids. I had really stopped sort of smoking dope then; I really wasn't doing it anymore. And I went in and I needed money; I had no money. So I had an apartment and I went to see Harvey. Now, why I went to see Harvey-

MR. WARMUS: Harvey Littleton.

MR. HALEM: Harvey Littleton-I went to see Harvey Littleton; he was the head of the art department. And I asked him, "Are there any assistantships?" Don already had his assistant picked, and that is when Harvey said, "I am looking for an assistant."

Now, remember, I am sort of one of the "Young Turks" in ceramics; I am sort of known in ceramics. I had these shows-the American Craft Museum [now the Museum of Art & Design, New York, NY] had shown my work-or whatever the museum was called then-and my work had been published in *Craft Horizons*, so I sort of had this reputation, peripherally.

And I knew Harvey as a potter, and he knew me as a potter. And he asked me, would I be interested in being his assistant in glass. And I said, "I don't know anything about glass." He may have said, "I don't either," but I don't think he really said that, you know. He, of course, didn't say that. And I said, "Sure, I'll be your assistant," and it paid X number of dollars a month, which was perfect. I would be able to pay the rent and put some food on the table. Also, he had his own gasoline tank out at the farm and I was able to gas up my car, so I didn't have to pay for gas. He was out in Verona, Wisconsin, outside of Madison.

And I became Harvey's assistant. I went into the glass studio and there were people there that-they were 10 of us: Audrey Handler was one of the students; she had already been there a year-Dan Schwoerer, who owns Bullseye Glass, was one of the students, and there were other people there. There was a lampworker there whose name I don't remember either, who is fairly well-known today in lampworking-he and his father. And this was the class of 10 of us.

Now, I didn't have to go to any other classes, and I was in charge of keeping the shop clean and working out at Harvey's farm-working on his pieces-grinding them, polishing them. But at school, I was there basically seven days a week. I had the key. I opened it up in the morning and made sure the cullet was charged. We used marbles at the time-475. You know, we ought to probably break it here.

WARMUS: Okay, this sounds like a good point.

MR. HALEM: Yeah, because there is a lot of little detail needing-

[Audio break.]

MR. WARMUS: This is William Warmus interviewing Henry Halem at his home in Kent, Ohio, and we are on disc two, session two, after lunch on Saturday, May 14, 2005. It is 1:15 p.m., and we're continuing from where stopped at the previous session, talking about Henry's time at the University of Wisconsin.

MR. HALEM: Okay-1968, the classes I had said was 10 students. They were there to get degrees. I already had my degree. Glass was relatively young at that time, and the classroom situation was very loose. It wasn't very sophisticated. Our furnaces were small-they were small day tanks. The glass we used, as I said, was these 475 marbles. These marbles had been-were developed by Nick Labino-Dominick Labino at Libby, and they were basically used for fiberglass, to spin fiberglass, but they were adaptable for glassblowing. They were very stiff, but we managed to use them. The furnaces really weren't all that hot, and we just actually taught each other.

Harvey was the teacher, but Harvey really-Littleton really never came into class. He would come-one day a week we would have a breakfast class at the-there was a hotel or motel-hotel-type structure down the street from the Monroe Street studio, and we would gather there for breakfast and Harvey would more or less hold court, so to speak. One day he might bring in-he had a collection of obsidian arrowheads and he would talk about obsidian, or he would talk about Tiffany or these kinds of things.

So they were very informal. We would sit around. They were actually a lot of fun, but he never ever really came in the classroom to show us anything about glassblowing. He really wasn't very accomplished as a glassblowing teacher or as a teacher in general. I'm not sure-I don't know what he did in his ceramic days, but I know, as a teacher, we more or less, in glass, taught ourselves. But that was okay. Harvey-I have a tremendous amount of respect for what Harvey did, even though in some of the situations they were-not adversarial but-he wasn't encouraging in some respects, but in other respects, his idea that we could do it by ourselves was actually very liberating. It was very different than any of the other classroom situations that we had, where the teacher really was always there.

And in looking back on it, I think there is something to say for letting 10 motivated people just knock themselves out and try and figure these things out for themselves. I'm not sure that in a school situation the idea of having to make art or teaching-I don't think you can really teach art. I mean, they call it art school. I am not sure really anymore why they call it art school (after all of my life in art), or whether this kind of-the way these schools are formalized-whether they can't be reinvented to mobilize them in another way, where the students are more in charge of their own education than acquiescing to a traditional structure of demonstration and then the student carrying out the orders of the teacher, whatever that is.

I think there is another way to do it, and I think by accident, Harvey found that way. And even though you might look at the works that we did and so on, I think there is a vitality to those crude things that we made that has gone out of what exists now. And I think that camaraderie and that vitality was present then-the need for larger classes, the enrollments are huge. I think success in no small way has been the undoing of glass education, in many ways.

Not that I want to go back to the way things were, but at that time and place, I'm not sure there was any other way that it could be done, because nobody knew anything. The only people that knew anything were in Europe in factories, in some ways. Erwin was very important-Erwin Eisch was very important, and some of the Europeans that came over were very important. Willem Heesen came over, as did [Sybren] Valkema, and they came over and did their demonstrations and worked with us.

And through those other people coming in and through people that had graduated, like Fritz Dreisbach, who would come back, it was a real give and take among us. And I remember one incident, it was kind of funny. I was the oldest of the group, and I came in one evening and all of the students-all nine students-Bob Barber was one of the students there, too-they were all gathered together in this knot of students, and they were all very upset that Harvey never came in to teach them anything.

Now, I was Harvey's assistant out on the farm, and I knew Harvey-I think-better than they did in relationship to the fact that they really didn't want Harvey to come in and teach them. And so after they got through all of their screaming and yelling, I went in there-I was a little bit more mature than them-and I just asked the question-I said, think about it, you guys know Harvey; do you really want him to come in and teach? And it was kind of a dead silence, and they all looked at each other and they realized they really didn't want him to come in and teach, and they just broke up and went their own ways. And it's funny, to this day, Danny remembers that story like it was yesterday. When I speak to Schwoerer when I'm out at Bullseye visiting him, he remembers that. And he said, "Boy, I'm glad you showed up."

Because I remember, I was out at the farm with Harvey and I wanted to learn how to make goblets. And I said,

"Harvey, can you show me how to make a goblet?" Well, Harvey never said he couldn't do anything; Harvey could do everything; so Harvey said, "Oh, sure, I can show you how to make a goblet." So he started to try and make a goblet, and I think if I didn't stop him, he'd still be there trying to make-[laughs]-this goblet. He just really couldn't-and there is no reason why he could; he never had a teacher. He just kind of did this stuff on his own.

But, you know, we were used to teachers that were trained and Harvey was totally untrained, so he was kind of an anomaly in this world of trained teachers. He could teach ceramics because he had studied with Maija Grotel at Cranbrook [Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, MI], and so on. So he knew the formality of it. But Harvey was inventing this as he went along. We were basically reinventing the wheel, and Harvey was the hub and we were the spokes.

And I think that is in itself an amazing accomplishment. And the fact that we became disciples-not of glass, but we became disciples of Harvey-it was Harvey's philosophy-he was wrong about a few things, but they were inconsequential things. We figured out he was wrong, and we had no problems with figuring out that there was some things that were wrong.

For instance-like the potters, he wanted us to do it alone. He didn't want us to work in teams like they did in factories. He wanted to separate everything from the factory. He wanted a totally different image and he wanted us to work alone. He didn't want anyone bringing punties or bits and stuff like that. And we figured out pretty quick, you can't do it, you know. You can do it alone, but it is counterproductive.

And so time went on and people would come through, and Fritz showed up all of the time with his yellow Suburban and he would-he was always one step ahead of us. He figured things out-he was really good with his hands. And we invented glassblowing in the way that we did it. I mean, if you think of what was going on at the time with the incredible Italian stuff that was going on in Murano [Venice, Italy] and Sweden and Germany and-there was some incredible glass being blown. But we were blowing early American glass. We were blowing, as we eventually called them-I mean, these were just these misshapen things, but the thrill of being able to drink something out of what you made.

We used to go to Jingle's Tap, which was right next door. You would go out the back door and Jingle's had this bar. And we would bring our mugs, and he would take them and fill them beer and charge us for the beer, and we get like probably three ounces of beer in the mug, but it was exciting.

I was only there a year. The other guys were there a few years, but that one year as Harvey's assistant out on the farm was very interesting. I ground and polished a lot of Harvey's work, and Harvey was very serious about what he was doing. I wasn't a great fan of his aesthetic, but I don't know really what aesthetic I was comparing it to. I didn't know really what I was looking at.

What I did know that moved me to stay in glass, though, was when I saw the work of Erwin Eisch. And I was pretty familiar with art forms-different periods of time and art movements. And when I saw Erwin's work and I saw this German Expressionism in glass and the plasticity of the material that he was able to elicit from it, I thought, wow, there is some potential to this.

The work that Harvey did never moved me; it was very cold. I found it very cold, and it was a method. He found something that, I think, was fairly easy to make, in that respect, and I think he mined that. Harvey was and is a very bright guy, and I think he knew what he was doing. He knew how to get the shows. He was very consumed with money-sales were very important and so on and so was his success, and our success was his success. But the work of Erwin showed the real potential-at least to me-for what glass was. And that is one of the reasons I stayed with glass and didn't go back into ceramics.

And as the year went on and Fritz would come, we would learn different things and, being a little bit older, I had really learned how to learn, so I picked this up pretty quick, or the crudity of what we were doing, pretty quick. If I was asked to do thin stuff, which you couldn't do with 475 marbles-we knew nothing about batch or anything like that, so we struggled along with these 475. And one day I was standing in the studio and the phone rang, and a woman at the other end said, "We're looking for a teacher-someone who can teach ceramics and glass. Would you post on the bulletin board that there is a job available?" And I said, "Sure." So I hung the phone up, and the next day I picked the phone up, and I called and I said, "I noticed on the bulletin board there is this job available at Kent State University for ceramics and glass. I would like to apply for that job." They said, "Sure."

So I came for the interview and I got the job, and after I got the job, the woman said how come no one else called. And I said, go figure. I have no-well, obviously I never posted the job on the board. [Laughs.] You know, I was no fool; my father didn't raise no dumb son. So I got the job here at Kent State after that year at the University of Wisconsin working for Harvey.

We had an incident-Harvey got a metal lathe-Danny Schwoerer was one of his students there and he was a very

bright guy; he knew how to do a lot of things with tools. And Harvey started to need things-bases made on this lathe out of aluminum and stainless steel and so on. And he asked me, "Do you know how to run a lathe?" And I said, "No, I don't." And he found out that Danny did, so he fired me. He just up and fired me. And I called the university and I said, "Can Harvey fire me?" And they said, "No, he really can't, but there is nothing we can do." So I had to turn my check over to Danny. I get paid every month and I had to give Danny my check. So I was really scuffling for money at that point.

So Danny got the job as his assistant-in-residence running the lathe, and so that was that. And I was-I was very angry at Harvey-that Harvey just, with the wave of his hand could just-for really his own personal reasons just-his insensitivity was really-Sandy was living with me at the time and she was writing Harvey's book, and he would give her this sheaf of notes and she would put the book together.

MR. WARMUS: And Sandy's last name?

MR. HALEM: Sandy Perlman. We weren't married yet. P-E-R-L-M-A-N.

MR. WARMUS: And what was she and what program?

MR. HALEM: She wasn't in any program; she was just my girlfriend and she came out there to live with me. And we hadn't plans to marry, but we were having a great time living out in Verona, not far from where Harvey was living in Verona. And, you know, Harvey had his editor and so on, and then Sandy really was very instrumental in getting this book off of the ground, and then when the book was published, Sandy's name was never even mentioned, not even a thank you, which is typical Harvey, because it's really all about Harvey in that sense. But it was basically a love-hate relationship.

Anyway, that year went on. I mean, there a lot of Littleton stories. I could go on for hours with Littleton stories and Labino stories and those kinds of things, but I think that is a whole book, probably. But anyway, that year ended, which was a-it was a fabulous year in so many ways. I mean, even though it was a divorce and so on, I didn't have a care in the world basically. I didn't have any money either, but it didn't seem to matter. All I had was records and my clothes.

And I came east and took the job at Kent State University in 1969. I did a workshop that summer. The guy that hired me-his name was Miska-M-I-S-K-A-Miska Petersham-P-E-T-E-R-S-H-A-M-Miska Petersham. And I knew him from my pottery days-he was a potter. But he had the idea-he saw glass also and he wanted to start glass, and he actually built the first furnace here. It was in the basement of one of the old buildings on campus. And he didn't know much about glassblowing. He knew Nick Labino though, and he brought me in to do this workshop when they were moving the studio over to where the studio eventually moved to, downtown-the first move. And I did this workshop-Jack Ink was one of my students, and, as a matter of fact, he was my first graduate student. And I think probably Jack knew more than I did, but I was the teacher.

In any event, we built the furnace, built the-we had to build all of the equipment ourselves. I knew how to build equipment. I was good at equipment building. I knew that from my ceramic days. I knew how to build annealing ovens and all of that stuff. I knew how to get element wires. So I was very lucky that way. And also, there was some funding to do all of this. So I built-I mean, the studio was about the size of a large living room actually. And the students-we crammed ourselves in there. As a matter of fact, I had to finance half of the studio myself out of my own pocket because there wasn't enough budget. Down the street there was an old glass place that did window glass, and I found an old grinder in there-an old Somaca Grinder-and I bought it out of my own pocket.

MR. WARMUS: How do you spell that?

MR. HALEM: Somaca. S-O-M-A-C-A-and they were manufacturers of that kind of stuff. So I bought that, and I bought a polisher for polishing glass out of my own pocket and we put that in a little back room. And we made art, if you want to call it that. But basically, we concentrated more on glassblowing. And even when we were students with Harvey, as much as he wanted us to make art, we still reverted back to making containers. We really-that was really our tradition. But when we had crits with Harvey, he really demanded to see-he demanded to see art.

[Audio break.]

MR. WARMUS: Okay, this is track two, and we're going to go backtracking a little bit and talk about four pieces that were made during this time period.

MR. HALEM: Yeah, you know, the aesthetic at the time-we all had our own personal aesthetic, and I don't know what each of us in the class was trying to master. I tend to think, in what I do remember, it was technique-and I'm not going to get into the analysis of that word. It was extremely important to us. And in my own aesthetic-from ceramics, my aesthetic was very well developed. I was very familiar with form; I was very familiar in

philosophical terms, in romantic terms of what beauty was about, and what constituted art, in the way that I saw art.

In glass, it was a different story; it was starting over again. I didn't have-I only had the sophistication of an aesthetic; I didn't have the ability to express myself with glass in any way, shape, or form other than the container, which I was primarily interested in. I think that comes from my pottery, where I was a pretty good container maker. Even with sculptures I was-I don't know-I guess, pretty good. But anyway, the idea of mastering the technique was very important to me. For instance, to try and make a bottle shape-a seemingly simple form, but when you're teaching yourself, when you have no one to show you, you go through the machinations of doing it-it's not like clay, where it happens really quickly-with glass, it's a very slow emergence of the bubble and the form, and then you have to transfer the glass to a punty rod, and then you get to the point of really forming the final shape, and before you know it, it's on the floor.

MR. WARMUS: Explain why the transfers of the punty to the audience.

MR. HALEM: Well, when you're making a piece of glass, you're making it backwards. You're starting with the bottom-when you're making a container-you're starting with the bottom first, so you're making it basically backwards. So if you're making a bottle, you're making the bottom, and then the top of it isn't formed, so you form a good part of the body of the piece, and then you have what is called a punty rod, which is just basically a solid rod that has a hot piece of glass on the end of it-almost molten but just a little bit sticky. You stick it to the bottom of the piece and you basically crack it off of the blow pipe-I'm not going to get into the details of that; it's not that important.

And so then you-you no longer can breathe into the glass; you can no longer give it the breath of life the way you did when it was upside down or backwards or whatever. And so you now have this piece that is now facing forward, and you have a device called the glory hole. And the glory hole reheats the top of the piece, so then with different types of tools you then start forming the top of the piece to finish it off. So you have to make the neck, and then you have to make the top of the piece.

Now, all of these are-at least at that time and I still think today-is fairly complex in making it all work aesthetically. I mean, forming it is one thing, but making it aesthetically pleasing-the right size, the right shape, the neck, the transition from the body to the neck, the transition from the neck to the top-those are all very difficult things to accomplish with glass. Now, remember, you can only touch the glass with tools-with steel tools; you can't use your hands. It's hot; it's not like clay, where you can stop the wheel and push it here or push it there and wait around a little bit. You're constantly having to reheat it to make it malleable, because as the glass cools, it hardens. And so you have a very, very brief period of time that you can work the glass. So you're just walking back and forth to the glory hole.

So all of this technique problem-all of the problems of forming-conspire to really get in your road, to really reach an aesthetic that is easier with clay than it is with glass, and then also you have to keep the punty hot enough, because if the punty rod that is holding this together cools too much, the piece falls off. If you didn't put the bottom on when it was hot enough and it just cooled a little bit, it would fall off when you broke it off of the neck. So when you're learning, all of these things are happening. It's constantly falling on the floor; you're constantly starting over again and over again and over again. And so, you know, there were many called, but very few were chosen. You really had to have patience and a real love of really wanting to do this. And those of us that stayed with it, once we started, we were like a dog on a bone; we wouldn't let go.

And I'll tell you, when you got a piece, we would-[laughs]-you would make these pieces and you designed them at the bench. You really rarely, if ever, made a drawing of what you were going to make. You always just start-I'm going to make a bottle, so you would make a bottle. Oh, I'm going to use some silver nitrate decoration here-twist it around it and put it here and God knows where it is going to end up. And so you're doing all of these things, and you're designing it as you go, and you finish the piece. And then you have to put it in the annealing oven, so you have to cool it a certain way so that it doesn't break, because there are certain physical properties that the glass has. When it's hot, it's expanded and when it cools down, it shrinks, and if it shrinks too quickly, the exterior of the glass shrinks at a different rate than the interior of the glass and it just falls apart and breaks.

So we put these pieces away and we had some idea the next day, when we would come back-we would fill the annealing oven up-it wasn't one person to an annealing oven; the whole class were kind of filling the annealing oven up early on. And we all felt we knew what our work looked like, and we thought it was-you would put it away and you would think it was like 12 inches high or at nine inches high, and you were really excited about it. The next day you would come in afterwards-and you kneel, when you opened the door-and there were all of these little turds just kind of sitting in the fiberfrax-all the same size, all looking exactly the same, all about an inch thick-trying to figure out whose piece was what and remembering, "My piece was bigger than that," but it never-the pieces never were. And so that was the early-on aesthetic.

The second semester, things got better for many of us, and for myself, I started mastering some of the techniques, because I could spend a lot more time there than a lot of the other people did. But we all had our idea of what we wanted to make. So I started to make these things-these baggies that I made-which I have another one over there which-I always wanted to make something different; I didn't want to make what everyone else was making.

So I made these pieces that hung on the wall instead of stood on bases. So I made these things called baggies which I-instead of round, I would flatten them out and pull the edges out or pull the bottom out, punty it up, put two handles on it.

I figured out how to set my own handles, which was no easy task. I learned how to bring my-hold the piece in the left hand, and then with the right hand make it gather with one hand, and put the handle on; hold the piece with my left hand, cut with my right, take the rod that-put it down, and then with the tweezers grab it and pull a handle. And I became a master at this; it was incredible.

But to think-I think the only thing I ever taught Fritz how to do was set your own handle. He thought that was the greatest thing since sliced white bread, when he saw that trick I figured out.

Then Erwin came and showed us how Tiffany did feathering. Well, I got to tell you, that trick that Erwin showed us on how feathering was accomplished-it was like an explosion had gone off in the studio.

MR. WARMUS: Explain for us feathering.

MR. HALEM: The feathering-Tiffany's major body of work that Tiffany did was an Art Nouveau-type piece, and the feathering harked back to Egyptian core-form pieces where different color wraps of glass were put around the piece and then, when it was very hot, you would take a hooked tool and drag it through the wrappings, and you basically would just pull this thin edge of the wrappings through the next wrapping, and then that would pull it through the next wrapping so you got this feather effect, not unlike what you would see in the feathers of a-what's that with the big tail-anyway-

MR. WARMUS: A tropical bird.

MR. HALEM: Yeah, tropical bird-sounds like-sounds like a jeopardy here. What has a big tail? Anyway, so this-we learned to do this feathering that Tiffany had mastered, and everything that started to come out of the studio-well, not everything, but a lot of the stuff-started to have this Tiffany feathering.

And we were doing fuming at the time-iridizing with tin chloride. You would put a hot bit in tin chloride, and the fumes from the tin would envelope the piece, and you get this iridized surface, which was very popular in Tiffany's day. Ours was very crude looking, and it didn't look very good like that.

MR. WARMUS: To stop for one second and go back to when Eisch visited. So Eisch was invited by Harvey, and he was a teacher?

MR. HALEM: Yes.

MR. WARMUS: And how was he as a teacher?

MR. HALEM: He was terrific. He brought an assistant with him, and the assistant did a lot of blowing for him in molds and so on, and then they would take this stuff out of molds, and then they would re-manipulate the mold piece. So they could very quickly get a basic shape, and then, with that basic shape, manipulate that into all different kinds of things. That was another extraordinary thing to see.

And then the feathering-there was some people at schools that would come and visit-there were some schools around-and then we would show them how to feather. And they were, like, blown away by that, and they would go back to their school, and then this whole Tiffany thing started. It got to the point where you would see Tiffany ad nauseum. Everything was Art Nouveau, and at the early GAS [Glass Art Society] meetings, I mean, people would get up and scream-"Let Tiffany die" was one of the phrases that was bandied about-"Let Tiffany die."

MR. WARMUS: And that was a group of people like Orient & Flume?

MR. HALEM: Yeah, that came later. I mean, a lot of the studios that had grown up at that time after-you know, in the early '70s-the studio movement started, and that stuff sold like crazy. That was the stuff you could sell. People were just nuts about it.

One of the earliest galleries in on it was Lillian Nassau in New York. She bought-as I recall, she bought the whole body of Charley Lotton's work. Charley really mined that field of Art Nouveau glass with the floral decorations and so on. He figured out pretty early on how to do it, and Lillian Nassau found him. And I remember going into

Lillian Nassau's and saying I knew this guy, and they showed me all of his work.

MR. WARMUS: I knew Lillian well, and there's actually-there is a long interview with her also-I don't think for this project but the Columbia oral history project [Columbia University, New York, NY], and she was a big fan of Lotton.

MR. HALEM: Yeah, and I remember they were early, and she took me into the back room and showed me all of Charley's work, and she was buying it all. She knew the market. She was really bright on that score. And so that-all of this Art Nouveau stuff came about, but I hadn't really-I did my share of it and my share of demonstrating it when I was teaching. Harvey didn't want any part of it, of course. That was just really anathema to what Harvey was about.

And Harvey respected our struggles. He really did, and I think he left us alone in that respect. And I felt very comfortable in mastering technique. And there was-the next thing I wanted to learn after the bottle shape which I thought I had mastered in so many ways-was the goblet. Now I got to tell you, the goblet is like dope. The first one may be free, but after that you are hooked. And the goblet is one of those shapes that, for me, it was like a magnet. I was just drawn to that goblet shape-pulling stems, setting feet, yeah.

And I would make sets of goblets. And it was very funny because when you would start the day, you wanted them all to be the same size. I remember from my production pottery days making these rice bowls; you wanted them all the same size. So I would start out making one goblet, and then, as the day wore on, you make the second goblet with theoretically the same gather of glass, but suddenly the goblet gets a little bit bigger, and then the third goblet gets bigger than that. And what is happening is you're learning your technique from the previous piece that you made, and your technique gets a little bit better; you can make it a little bit thinner; you can stretch it a little bit more; you can work it a little bit better. And so without knowing it, you're your own teacher, and I think that may be missing a bit now in some way. I would love to really talk to the students now and get their thinking about what they are doing when they are doing it.

But anyway, you would do that, and then so what the next day you would say-you know, you would take eight hours and you may have six goblets, and the next day, they came out of the annealer. If they came out in one piece, you would look at them and it would be like a set of pipe organs. You would have the small one, and they would just go up in size to the last one, and the stems would be crooked because generally you would be afraid they were going to blow up on the end of your punty rod. So you put them away too hot and the stems were still moving.

We didn't have blown feet; they would just drop pads on a marver, which is the big steel plate that you work the glass on for some different processes, and we would just squash them down and stick this ball into the pad and punty the piece up; you would manipulate it, and then you would punty it up, and then you would work the top like you did the bottle.

And then as you got better at it, you would start to decorate it. And there were some people that were better at it than others. I remember having in '68-making this beautiful set of goblets that had these wonky, wonky stems, but the tops were flat; they came out-I mean, they were even and it was, like, weird, and like a fool, I sold this set of goblets. And some years later I saw them-the person, who is a friend of Sandy's-a doctor-and I saw them, and I kicked myself for selling them. They were so beautiful.

The innocence that our work had early on-there was that sense of awe over the material; there was a sense of what we saw as the mastery of the material. There was this sense of reinventing something that was two thousand, three thousand years old. There was a sense that we were important, that we-although we didn't know we were part of history, although we didn't know we were making history, we felt we were making our own personal history, and we wanted to spread the word.

I don't think we really saw ourselves-at least in my respect-going into my own studio. I wanted to show others-

[Audio break.]

-how to do this. I was so thrilled with what I was doing. It was getting back to my early days of ceramics when I was a young teenager throwing pots, but this was even more exciting than that. The immediacy of the material was captivating; I didn't have to wait for the magic of the glaze to come out of the final kiln; it was all done in one shot; it was there.

And trying to-we used to go to the library and get books and look at the ancient pieces and try and figure out how they were made. We had no idea how things were made. And you would look at things, and we had no idea. You would look at Roman glass, and we would try and reinvent how the Roman glass was made with the little that we knew.

MR. WARMUS: There is a kind of tradition in some forms of glassmaking of the secrecy of glass, for example, in Murano. So this is an interesting contrast, because yours was almost like an evangelical approach; it was the opposite of secrecy. How did that come about?

MR. HALEM: That is a good question. I don't think we ever knew there was anything like secrets; it wasn't in our vocabulary that there was an alternative to not showing. It was an automatic; it was a given. Why wouldn't you show somebody how to make it? We weren't selling anything; we didn't have studios; it wasn't our livelihood. Why shouldn't we show someone the magic and share it? I don't think it was a matter of, "Well, if I show him this, he's going to do that," or whatever; as I said, not showing somebody was never in the vocabulary.

MR. WARMUS: It seems like that became a hallmark, do you think, of American studio glass-that willingness to show and to go out and spread the word.

MR. HALEM: I think so. I definitely think so. The person-it's interesting you say that. Nick Labino is interesting in that, my getting to know Nick-Nick was never a teacher; Nick never alluded to being a teacher.

Nick never really wanted to be part of us; he was very competitive with Harvey. He never saw himself as an artist; he had the opposite-he was the kind of inner-city glassblower; he didn't have an art background.

MR. WARMUS: He was a scientist.

MR. HALEM: He was a scientist. He was an engineer-scientist kind of person that liked to blow glass.

MR. WARMUS: When did you get to know him?

MR. HALEM: Well, when I was with Harvey, he would come out and visit. That is when I got to know him. There is funny story with that. He came out and he left-I think in no small way he was jealous of all of the-of what Harvey was getting from it, and he wasn't getting what Harvey was getting. I mean, that is my spin on it. And when I came to Kent State to teach is when I got to know Nick. And I liked Nick.

Nick wasn't unlike Harvey in how he acted, in many ways. And in some ways, he was worse. Nick treated people sometimes very shabbily-very shabbily.

I remember what-once what he did to Jack Schmidt. Jack Schmidt had some students out with him, and Jack was making a piece and the piece fell on the floor, and he just ridiculed Jack and said he wasn't much of a glassblower and so on. And he would do-when Marvin [Lipofsky] brought Dick Marquis to meet Nick, Nick gave him a pot of glass that no one could blow, and Dick was a good glassblower-couldn't even blow it. And there was some ridicule there.

So Nick didn't think of us as artists. We didn't melt our own glass; we melted cullet, and if you were melting cullet, he really wanted nothing to do with you for that much. He just thought that that-you had to melt it from scratch.

MR. WARMUS: He melted very interesting colors, I think.

MR. HALEM: Oh, yeah. He was the magician. That was his field; he knew that, and he made some really interesting colors. And you can see them in the castings that he did. He made all of those compatible colors, and he did those hot castings. They are not so great aesthetically, but technically he had mastered a lot of things. He mastered annealing. He-[laughs]-I'll give you a story.

I came here to teach 1970. I'm not even here a year, and they shoot four students. Now, I had done a lot of these body casts in ceramics, so I was very emotionally involved in the shootings that had gone here at Kent State.

MR. WARMUS: These were the national guard-

MR. HALEM: Through the national guard shootings of the four students at Kent State over protesting the Vietnam War-actually the bombing of Cambodia was the overriding issue. I decided I needed to do something, and I thought, well, I had done these press molds in ceramics of these faces I had done in clay. I had done one-I did a life mask of Pete Voulkos, and I have that casting-I have two life casts of Pete Voulkos's face downstairs as a matter of fact, taken when he was alive from Mount Snow. I don't have the mold, but I have the pieces-the clay pieces that I pressed out of it.

Anyway, I revived-I had no idea no one was doing glass castings. I didn't know the history of what was going on in this country, really, with glass. I mean, there was, you know-Robert Fritz was on the West Coast and Marvin was out there, and I think even Dale was out there. I think Dale was already at RISD.

MR. WARMUS: Marvin Lipofsky.

MR. HALEM: Yeah, Marvin Lipofsky and Dale Chihuly.

And I sculpted these pieces out of clay, and then I made a mold from the bronze casting molds that I had made when I was casting bronze as a student, which was one-third plaster, one-third kaolin, and one-third silica. And I think there was some-no, yeah, that was it, and that was the face coat. And so I would put that over the clay-wet clay-and then I would back that with another coat of another thing that had vermiculite in it-this was straight out of bronze casting.

And then I would pull the clay out and clean the mold, and then I put the mold in the oven, heated it up, and then poured the glass into it, and of course the mold just boiled like crazy, because I didn't know what was going on really-the moisture and everything in it-it was like, oh, God, this isn't going to work. So then I thought, oh, the water-the moisture is-so I dried them out, and then I would heat them up to very hot so the glass would flow. They still boiled a bit, but a lot less, and it was only kind of around the edges, and I thought, oh, I got it now.

And we didn't have computers then. There were no controllers. This is the early '70s-this is like '71, '72. And so we had-what were stove controllers, which was on stoves that-one through 10. There was high, low, and then one through 10 to regulate an electric stove, and that is what we had on our annealing ovens. So I would sleep in the studio, and I would by hand turn these-the knob down, and these pieces always cracked; I never could get them right.

MR. WARMUS: Because in an annealer-if you'll explain that to the audience.

MR. HALEM: The annealing-the thicker the piece gets, the slower-the longer it has to be annealed, which is-annealing is the process where the glass is relieved of stress. That is, when you put the glass in the oven, it has hot and cold spots in it. And so if it cools down at a constant rate from when you first put it in the oven, the hot spots will cool at one rate and the cold spots will cool in another and they will crack. So what you have got to do is even the temperature off so that all of the glass is at the exact same temperature, which is the annealing temperature of that glass, which is-for most glasses that we use-is around 950-960 degrees Fahrenheit.

Then after it is annealed correctly, where you even the temperature, you then have to cool it at a constant rate so that it cools evenly, which means the glass is going to shrink at a constant rate. And then you can take it out of the oven, and you have got a piece of glass that is not going to fall apart. That is it in a nutshell. There is a little bit more complexity to that, but that is basically it.

Now, when the glass gets thicker, these time frames really extend themselves out over a long period of time. All of my pieces were breaking, so I called Nick up-here is the story about Nick-and I said, "Nick, I need you to help me with annealing. I'm doing these castings and they are all breaking." And he said, "I'm not interested in helping you out," you know. So I wasn't going to take no for an answer. He said more to me at the time, but I don't remember, but he basically said no, he wasn't going to help me, at least over the phone.

So I drove out to the farm, which was just-which was around Toledo-near Toledo. I drove out there and I brought my castings with me-a couple of broken castings, which were these sculpted-clay sculpted heads-they were very realistic. These-good scale, thick-and I showed him these castings. And I remember, his eyes got big and he looked at them and he looked at me and he said, "You have been doing your homework." I remember that-he has just said that. He said, "Come into my office."

And we went into the office and he explained to me the theory of annealing, because I had been working at it in a way that he could recognize on his terms. Now, there was no reason why he should have told me anything; he is not a teacher; he never set out to be a teacher; why should he tell us anything? I came to understand that years later-you know, I understood where he was coming from years later. At that point I didn't; I was pissed off that someone wouldn't tell me what I wanted to know. So he told me the theories of annealing, and he showed me how to build a controller that he had shown-Bob Barber had built a controller that we didn't really know about.

But he showed us this thing-what was called the variable auto transformer, or a variac, where you would set a cam up-it's a very complicated-it's simple but complicated to explain. It had a string attached to it, and you had a chicken timer that you got from Grainger, and the chicken timer would turn and it would pull the string and it would take the variable auto transformer and automatically vary the electricity, so the elements got cooler and cooler in the oven automatically without you having to do it. More often than not, the chicken timer would get hung up and it would break the string, and nothing-it wouldn't work, but it was better than what we had.

So I went back and I started my castings again, only this time I knew how to anneal; I didn't know about annealing-we only knew how to anneal thin things; we didn't know how to anneal thick things. And when you anneal thin things, it's a lot easier; they kind of almost anneal themselves after a while. You kind of figure it out,

but thick things were a whole different thing.

So I did these political pieces of these heads that were based upon the Kent State shootings-the grand jury.

MR. WARMUS: They have one of those in the Corning Museum [Corning Museum of Glass, Corning, NY].

MR. HALEM: Yes-yeah, I'm getting to that. And so I made the first two of these, and one of those first two was the piece that Corning bought. But there was-and it was made out of this white milk glass that we had gotten from Fenton-Fenton Glass-this milk glass. We had gotten rid of the marbles and we had gotten this glass from Fenton.

And I remember, I made-I finally figured out how to make the mold-the original molds I had made of the one-third, one-third, one-third, with the clay in it-the clay would stick to the glass because silica has-the clay had silica; in the glass, in the molten glass was like your glazing clay. So the glass, when you pour it in the mold, it would just fire the clay and it would stick to the surface. So I had these castings that had all of this skin-this ceramic clay skin-this ugly clay skin on it. So I quickly got rid of the clay and I started 50 plaster and 50 silica, again, still not knowing no one is doing any castings. The last person to ever do castings in this country was Frederick Carder [1863-1963]. So I started doing these castings and they started to work.

Most of them checked-as a matter of fact, the piece at Corning has a big check in the back, but it didn't go all the way through it; it is still in one piece. There was a show that came up that the museum in Toledo [Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, OH]-the Toledo museum had a big glass show, and I put that piece, the piece that Corning has from the shootings at Kent State-I put that piece in it; I put a white piece in it that was very highly influenced by Erwin Eisch; and a third piece, a black piece. I had gotten away from working with clear glass. I couldn't relate to things you could see through, from my ceramics-I mean, I needed surface.

And all three pieces were accepted for the Toledo show, and the casting was in the show. And I was in New York doing a job for the New York State Council on Crafts-the New York State Crafts Council or something like that-and I had taken a portable furnace to New York-to the Coliseum, and I was blowing glass in the Coliseum-I had this portable glassblowing furnace. And I was blowing glass in the Coliseum-right in the middle of the Coliseum at this huge expo of crafts booths, the forerunner of SOFA [Sculptural Objects and Functional Art Expo].

MR. WARMUS: How did you fuel the-

MR. HALEM: There was a big pillar in the middle of this place that had a gas line in it.

MR. WARMUS: Which would not be legal today.

MR. HALEM: We paid the fire people off. The fire inspector came and he was paid off-a hundred-dollar bill, I remember. The guy is still around. He ran a magazine. I don't remember his name.

MR. WARMUS: Harry Dennis.

MR. HALEM: Harry Dennis, very good. Harry Dennis. Yeah, we were good friends. So he-and this was done through the Fairtree Gallery, which was one of the first galleries.

MR. WARMUS: Spells like it sounds.

MR. HALEM: Yes. Fairtree Gallery. So, there I am blowing glass, and I get a visit from the curator of glass at Corning.

MR. WARMUS: David Donaldson.

MR. HALEM: No. Before him.

MR. WARMUS: Tom Buechner.

MR. HALEM: Before him. The guy that-

MR. WARMUS: Johnson.

MR. HALEM: No, the guy that-

MR. WARMUS: Steward Johnson.

MR. HALEM: No, no. The guy that had the big glass button collection.

MR. WARMUS: Ken Wilson?

MR. HALEM: Ken Wilson.

MR. WARMUS: Sorry, we have gone through a million names.

MR. HALEM: Yes, Ken Wilson came to see me at the Coliseum, and I remember the meeting; he said, "Corning wants to buy this piece-this casting. We saw it in Toledo; we want to buy the piece." I had never-

MR. WARMUS: What year is this?

MR. HALEM: This was 1973, '74. The only other contemporary American piece you had at the time-I was told at least-was Harvey's piece, the *Torso*. This, I was led to believe, was the first contemporary American piece of glass that they started on the collection. I was led to believe that. Whether it's true or not, I'm not sure.

But anyway, he said, "I had put in the catalogue $500 insurance value on it." I said, "Oh, I'll let you have it [for] $400," I was so excited. I mean, he was ready to pay $500. I said, "I'll give you a discount-$400." I mean, $400 was all of the money in the world, and the Corning Museum buying a piece of my glass.

Well, I have got to tell you, it was-it put me on top of the world. It was one of the most exciting experiences of my life. It was just great.

MR. WARMUS: You know, Ken Wilson just died a few weeks ago.

MR. HALEM: Yes, I read that in the *Times*.

MR. WARMUS: His obituary-it was very nice obituary. He was a nice man.

MR. HALEM: Yes. Very nice. Exactly.

And, you know, it's funny; you go back-in the museum now they have that cabinet of just that early stuff that Corning bought and it's right there, up there in the middle. And eventually Corning bought another piece-not a very good piece. Suzanne Frantz bought one of my panel pieces, which I don't think was all that good. But anyway-

MR. WARMUS: I remembered that piece when I came to Corning in '78, '79. It just seemed very special to me, too. I used to show it a lot.

MR. HALEM: Which piece?

MR. WARMUS: Actually, it was your piece.

MR. HALEM: Which one.

MR. WARMUS: The one that had the-

MR. HALEM: The panel or the face? Yeah.

MR. WARMUS: That Ken Wilson bought.

MR. HALEM: Yeah.

MR. WARMUS: That was to me-how would you say it? Sort of an avant-garde.

MR. HALEM: Yeah, I think it would-I think it still. When I look at it, I'm very separate from that piece, and it's like, did I really make that? Well, I made almost a dozen pieces. I made one in fiberglass; I made four in glass; I made two in clay with lustered surfaces. I did a whole series based upon the shootings. And then I did a whole body of work-not a whole body, but three pieces in fiberglass, painted fiberglass, of the shootings as well.

MR. WARMUS: Well, it was interesting to me because there were so few pieces of glass from any era that were political, in many ways.

MR. HALEM: Yeah, you had mentioned that once-the politics of it. And that was-the politics of that piece was a hangover from my ceramic days, from the Vietnam era.

MR. WARMUS: That's real interesting about what you said in the earlier tape about this Smithsonian show, the alternate show.

MR. HALEM: Yeah, exactly. I always had that political nature. And the shootings at Kent State to me was one of the most horrific events. It was civil war to me. I gave a speech to the students in exile at Oberlin [Oberlin

College, Oberlin, OH] there; I went down-a very fiery speech.

MR. WARMUS: Tell us a little bit now about where you were when the shootings took place.

MR. HALEM: I was outside of the area where the shooting was. I was on the-not the other side of the campus, but I was away from the hill-on the other side of the hill-away from that when the shots were fired, and had no idea what was really going on when I heard the shots. Now, I had been in the army and never imagined that it was real-live bullets. I mean, that never entered anyone's mind. I had been in the national guard. We were never, ever-well, first of all, we were never called out for anything, but there was never, ever a thought that we would ever be issued ammunition outside of a total insurrection-I think if we were being attacked.

So, I never imagined that the national guard had ammunition, because actually, the demonstrations that were going on-whatever people want to say-were really nonthreatening to anybody; they really were not. There was no threat, in my eyes at least, to life or limb. Now, the national guard may have seen it differently. I think there were other forces at work here and don't really care to get into that whole aspect of things.

But it was a very emotional experience, and the only way I could express it was through my artwork. So I went back to doing some ceramics. I did fiberglass; I did one in bronze-did a bronze piece. So I really pulled out all of the stops. I made rubber molds of the piece, so I did one in glass and one in bronze.

MR. WARMUS: Were other members of the art department also making work related to this?

MR. HALEM: Not as directly as I was.

MR. WARMUS: So you were the most involved.

MR. HALEM: I was the most involved in the making of work-did the largest body of work in that respect. And I considered leaving Kent State and going for another job at that point in time.

MR. WARMUS: What changed your mind?

MR. HALEM: I think the fact, A, that I probably couldn't get another job. I interviewed at-a friend of mine, Bill Wyman, was teaching in Boston, and I thought I would go to Boston. And I remember, after the shootings-this is my first year in teaching here. So I interviewed there and I had a Kent State sticker on, and I remember all of the students gathered around my little car at a little-like I think the first Toyota ever brought over into this country. I had this little Toyota, I think it was. And I had a Kent State sticker on it, and we came out from the interview-being with my friend Bill, and there were all of these students-all of these hippie students crowded around the car; they had spotted the Kent State sticker-it was either in the window or on the fender or something. And they were asking me all about the shootings at Kent State and so on. And all I remember was them going, "Oh, wow. Oh, wow." And that greeted me wherever I went where people saw the Kent State sticker. It was interesting.

MR. WARMUS: Now, this was also around the time of the beginning of the Glass Art Society, right?

MR. HALEM: Yes.

MR. WARMUS: Maybe it's a good time to talk-

MR. HALEM: Segue into the Glass Art-

MR. WARMUS: Segue into that a bit. If you could kind of tell me how that-how your involvement began.

MR. HALEM: Nineteen seventy, '71-I wasn't at the beginning, which basically really happened out on the West Coast, from what I am told or know. Joel and Mark, and Marvin, and Fritz-Joel Myers, Marvin Lipofsky, Fritz Dreisbach, and Mark Peiser-apparently were out on the West Coast, from what I understand. And I think Mark says that he was aware of the other ceramic organization and they just talked about-well, we should have our own organization.

MR. WARMUS: This was NCECA [National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts] at that time, do you think?

MR. HALEM: I think it was NCECA, because I was part of NCECA before it was NCECA, when it was clay, and I remember Joel was actually designing for Blenko [Glass Company, Hurricane, WV] at the time, and he was-and his wife made pots. And so he was part of NCECA, as a glass person maybe. I don't quite remember, but I remember knowing him at those meetings.

Anyway, so they came back, and I was friendly with Fritz. I think Fritz was already in Toledo. And Fritz told me about this organization, and they were going to have a meeting in Penland [Penland School of Crafts, Penland, NC] that summer or at some time that I couldn't go to GAS 1. I sent one of my students, who was not really

welcomed because they only wanted people who were teaching.

Well, my student went down; he was there; he took a few pictures, which I have-early pictures with Bill Brown in them, who was the director at Penland at the time and very interested in glass-and that is another whole chapter in my life with Bill Brown in Penland.

But that meeting started and it was basically very successful; it was just these guys and gals-I think Audrey [Handler] was there-just trading-everybody traded what they knew at the meeting, and then they decided this is so great; let's do it next year. And they picked the date and I think there were what, 10 of us? You know Corning has those movies I made-you know; there is a video.

MR. WARMUS: Is there?

MR. HALEM: Yeah. I can't find the original Super 8 films either. They are somewhere in the house and haven't been able to locate them. I find everything else except those. I think someone stole them. I want to digitize them. But anyway, I took movies at that GAS 2.

MR. WARMUS: And GAS 2 was again-

MR. HALEM: Again at Penland.

MR. WARMUS: And what year was that?

MR. HALEM: Nineteen seventy-two, I believe-1971. It was '71, I think-was GAS 2, was '72.

MR. WARMUS: Well, just say '71 to two and I'll have to research your-

MR. HALEM: Yeah, something like that. I mean, you could figure it out. If you find the first Fenton meeting, which is documented, then you go back one year and you know.

So, anyway, I went down there, and I wasn't going to miss that one. So I went down there and besides blowing glass, we sat around in the dining room and we swapped what we knew. We had a presentation of using silver nitrate. So we were shown how to make-we knew about silver nitrate, but we didn't know about the other forms of converting the silver nitrate to other silver salts, and you could use them all different ways. One was very fluid; it would just melt all over the piece. The other you could write your name with. And the other was in between the three.

And so we were shown that. All of the good blowers-like Fritz would show us different mold techniques, or he started-he was really making his objects-you know, the palm trees or whatever he was making-like that. That was terrific. He was making those objects.

Peiser was melting color. He had figured out how to put color into the marbles. And so all of these things were happening. Besides-yeah, we drank beer, but boy, there was a hell of a lot going on. It was not a good-old-boy's thing here; it was-we had gone the next step beyond Harvey; we were now our own-we were masters of our own future, and we wanted it to be rich with what each of us knew, because in our own way, we were all teaching. We were all teachers, even if we weren't set up in an institution; we were still spreading the gospel-fundamentalists.

And so we needed to know everything we could know. So if Fritz reinvented something, he taught us that. Mark figured out something with color and batch, or how to build a pot furnace-he showed us that. Mark was a master at equipment and he basically invented the pot furnace, which was based on-I think it was a design that Bill Boysen had done-had a crude version of. Fritz knows more of that history.

But Mark was originally an industrial designer; he was a real engineer type. So when Mark built it, it was built right: with the lid rolled correctly, the crucibles were correct. And he learned how to batch. So he started mixing his own batch; he built his own batch mixer to mix the batch in. He was very sophisticated.

And I'll tell you, if you go back in time now and you reinvent that studio and put it together, it's still in many ways probably state of the art. We found new refractories to build furnaces out of, but basically he understood equipment like nobody, and he really was the master of that and spread that with us, along with the batch making, along with living down there.

And Bill Brown, who had worked at Corning as a youth and had taken over running Penland, saw glass as-this is going to be important. He was a visionary-Bill-so he built the first glass studio there in, I guess, 1969, '70-something like that. It was a dirt floor.

MR. WARMUS: Talk a minute-stop and sidetrack slightly-talk about color in studio glass, because we know that it

was something of a torturous process to get color into the glass, and that then, as you said, Mark made his own batches. But after a certain time, it came to pass that the colors were standardized, and people started using things like Kugler colors, and the idea of batching your own color fell away. Can you just, like, in maybe five minutes talk about that and how you-

MR. HALEM: Yeah, the idea of batching never really caught on. We batched our own glass here at Kent State, and we learned how to melt glass to match different expansions. Where our knowledge of expansion and what to do with expansion came about, I'm not sure. I think Bob Barber was also instrumental in that. He is living out in the West Coast somewhere, but he is not in glass anymore.

You know, I'm really not all that tuned into where the color bars came. And that question came up recently from somebody, and no one really knows-from what I have gotten from what has been posted on the Internet-no one really knows where it first came about. Some people claim Joel Myers brought the first bars back from Europe with him, because he was going to Europe before most of us went because of his wife. And you couldn't buy them anywhere-they were used in Europe a lot. Kugler was the, you know, the only game in town-high-lead color bars. And they fit all-[laughs]-of the glasses that were being used.

So Joel introduced me to the color bars when he came here. We used to have workshops very early on. He introduced me and he told me how to get them. Now, you couldn't buy them anywhere; you had to go to Kugler, and then you would have to import them through customs, and depending upon the customs person there that day-whether you paid 7 percent duty on them or not. So ours came through-actually, ours came through Akron, and one time we would get them and they would say, "Oh, just take them"; another time the guy figured out-"Calculate how much they cost in dollars," and then charge us seven percent duty. And then we would bring them back and we had these color bars.

I think you would have to speak to each of those people. I don't think anybody really knows. Joel can tell you where he got them, but I know he got them in the early '70s. Color in glass-Joel-the 475 marbles were very counterproductive.

Now, I was here in Ohio-and this is another way we got to color, and I introduced this brand of color that isn't that well-known. It was the Tiffin Glass Factory in Tiffin, Ohio, and I thought, well, we have got these marbles; why not just melt another kind of glass? I drove to Tiffin, Ohio, and I had some barrels with me. I think I had called them and I asked them if they had scrap glass, and they said they did, and I brought these barrels with me, and they gave me this scrap glass. Now, I remember this because this was like 1971; this was 1971-early in '71. And we brought this glass back. I never asked what kind of glass it was; it was just-it was clear glass. I didn't know it was four-percent lead glass.

Now, the density of lead glass is much greater than the density of soda-lime glass. So we had these furnaces that were made out of these alumina refractory brick, and they would have what-they would slough off stones-these little bits of the refractory liner would get into the glass. But the density of the stone was usually greater than the density of the glass, so they would more or less sink to the bottom-the big ones. Some of the little ones would float and you would gather them out.

So we would scoop the tank out, and I remember we poured this Tiffin Glass in and all of the stones that were in the bottom of the furnace floated up to the top, and it was just covered in these stones because of the four-percent lead. So we eventually cleaned the tank out and we started blowing from 475, which is a kind of borosilicate glass, which is a very stiff glass, to this four-percent lead glass-it was, like, running like water and we were used to running very quickly from the glory hole to the bench. Well, now we had to just, like, figure out how to blow glass again.

So I told other people about this Tiffin Glass. And there was a few schools around-Ohio started getting some schools. So they would get glass now and then, and suddenly one day-I don't know what school it was-the guy that was teaching there said, "Well, I'm going to-I can't make this trip all of the time," and he went and got a dump truck and filled a dump truck with the color. And then Tiffin suddenly-Tiffin was giving it for free; it was free; it was their scrap throw-away.

Tiffin started realizing, wow, they want that much glass, and then they started charging us two cents a pound, and they started making money. And then I said, I don't know-our budget was like 500 bucks. And then I found Fenton Art Glass. So I went down to Fenton Art Glass, and they had not only clear glass, they had white glass, they had red glass, they had green glass, they had orange-I mean, they had all of these colors.

I got barrels of all of this different stuff through the Gabbert Cullet Company [Williamstown, WV] I discovered down there. Actually, Joel told me about Gabbert. And I went down there and we had-we built a little pot furnace á la Peiser with color-with these different colors, and damned if they didn't fit. And so we were blowing glass with all of these different colors. There was a blue opal they had; they had a peach blow opal that would strike red. Dale made those cylinders out of that peach blow after he discovered the peach blow.

MR. WARMUS: So the peach blow-the early '70s peach blows were made from Fenton?

MR. HALEM: Oh, yeah. They were all Fenton. Actually it was Fenton Cullet. Fenton Cullet was really hot at that time because these were compatible colors, which was pretty exciting. And then I discovered the white glass-that soft white glass-I had discovered that and I built a special furnace just for that-for the castings-and then I started blowing it and it was like blowing taffy. It was an amazing-little did I know coming off of the surface of that glass was hydrofluoric-fluorine fumes that, when it got in your lungs, it was hydrofluoric acid.

MR. WARMUS: Really?

MR. HALEM: Yeah.

MR. WARMUS: Did it affect you?

MR. HALEM: No, we didn't do enough of it, and we had a hood; as crude as our hood was, it still probably pulled it off. But when you sat at the bench, you would gather it and you would sit at the bench and this waft of smoke would come off the glass; you could see it and you could-once in a while you would smell it, and it was a sickly sweet smell.

And I remember Peiser saying once-he was melting all of these fluorine opals, which they are very dense opals-you know, you can't-it's not like phosphate opal, which has a kind of a transparency to it; these were-and Mark thought all of his glassware in his windows were full of dust in his studio. And one day he decided to clean them, and it was all etched. The hydrofluoric acid-the fluorine fumes and the moistures had etched all of the shoulders of all his glassware; it was pretty funny.

So that was the color; we did that for a few years, and then the color bars became very ubiquitous, and then companies started growing up-like C & R Loo started carrying color bars, and we were able-it was great because one half of the Loo family was German; the other half was Hawaiian. So the German half went to Germany and started being the importer. And so there were the color bars. I don't remember-Harvey never had color bars, that I ever recall.

MR. WARMUS: Let's see where we are at. Now, we're still back-we were going to go into the Glass Arts Society meeting.

MR. HALEM: Yes, yes, yes.

MR. WARMUS: So perhaps we should spend some time-you talked about the first couple. But maybe the way to structure this, rather than your-don't feel like you have to go through each one in order, but try to give a sense of the evolution from your point of view.

MR. HALEM: I can-my point of view is important because I am-I mean, this is my chance to tell it like it was. I am very instrumental in bringing the Glass Arts Society into the modern world, in the creation of what it eventually became, because I had become friendly with Frank Fenton from dealing with color.

And after GAS 2 at Penland, there were a lot of other people that wanted to get in on the meetings, and Penland to me was not my favorite spot. I enjoyed going there, but it was a 13-hour drive and I sure as hell didn't want to drive 13 hours again. And I thought, we have got too many-too many people want part of this meeting; we need to expand it.

So at that time, our glass had gotten a lot more sophisticated. Peiser's glass was pretty sophisticated, Fritz's glass-we were batching, there were colors, there was feathering. There was some pretty sophisticated containers being made. I had all of the guys send me slides. I put together a carousel of the best work that was being done up to that point.

I called Frank Fenton, and I said, I would like to come down and discuss with you the possibility of having a meeting of glassblowers at Fenton Art Glass. He said, fine, come on down. Frank is still alive; he is in his 90s, still lives down there. Anyway, I went down there and he gave me some time. We went into a room; I brought my projector with me; I brought the carousel. I projected the slides-oh, I told him what I wanted, and he was kind of a little bit dismissive when I said we want to blow glass; we're glassblowers; we're designers; we're making pretty good glass. He didn't know what I was talking about. He had no idea what was going on in this country.

So I said, let me show you slides, after I had described what we wanted. So we went in the room and I slowed him the slides, and after it was over, I remember him sitting there, and he turned to me and he said, "I had no idea." Now, Frank is a very bright guy. He was thinking of Fenton Art Glass and not about so much the Glass Art Society, but about what we could do for him.

MR. WARMUS: Yeah, sure.

MR. HALEM: Okay. He saw us as some objects-you know, designers possibly developing lines for him and so on, which he did eventually get into, which didn't work. But anyway, he said, we are going to have trouble with the union because they won't let you blow on the floor-he said, "But I can take care of them."

So he got back and forth with each other and he made the arrangements. He said, "You guys can come down." He said, "How many of you are going to come?" I said, "I have no idea." So I wrote a letter to the group-it was Marvin and Fritz, and myself, and I think Audrey and Silvia [Levenson], I think Tom Kekic was part of it. And I wrote to them and they said, yeah, go ahead, make the arrangements.

I went down to Marietta; I got a hotel down in Marietta; I arranged for the days that the meeting was going to be; I got the addresses of everyone that was a member of the Glass Art Society. I wrote to everyone. My wife had an-IBM's Selectric typewriter, I remember at that time-the ball typewriter-and I typed up this letter with all of the misspellings in it and so on, and sent the letter with a postcard, and said, yes, I will attend; yes, I want-or I will not attend. Who do you want to room with? It's two to a room, and I got the arrangements-everybody in the room. I arranged for the restaurant after everyone had sent their cards back and everything. I got everyone's roommate together. I did all of that arranging.

[Audio break.]

I went down there. I arranged for the glassblowing. And I arranged the meeting, and I think Bill was there; you would have to ask him. I got the glass chemist from Fenton to give a lecture on chemistry. I got, I think, Robert Penberthy from Penberthy Electromelt to come in from Seattle for this. And I arranged the whole nine yards of people coming in. The meeting came off. We met in the auditorium-I don't even remember where that auditorium was.

MR. WARMUS: About how many people?

MR. HALEM: Let's see. There were probably at least 50 people at this meeting-about 50. And after the meeting was over, at the end of the meeting, it was so exciting this meeting-I mean, having a lecturer that was this-Gupta was the name of the glass chemist from Fenton. We had gotten together all of these questions we were asking about opal glasses. I remember Mark was really into opals. And we got 20 questions to ask him. We got this Electromelt guy or whatever. And all of these people gave these talks to us, and we did our own things, and we had a panel of some kind on building a furnace, and who knows what-I don't remember what it was all about then.

At the end of the meeting-I don't remember who it was-it could have been Bill Boysen-but one of the guys got up and said, "Let's make Henry the president of the Glass Art Society." And they carried me out of that auditorium on their shoulders, and that is how I became the first president of the Glass Art Society.

So we had a business meeting or something after it, and they said, "We want to go back." Now, you have got to remember, we blew glass down there; we made all of these crazy things with all of this glass that fit, but we couldn't anneal because they wouldn't slow the ovens down. So everything came out. In three hours, it was in one end and out the other, so everything broke.

Fenton was blown away by it, and all of the blowers from the Fenton Art Glass blowers were watching us from a distance; all of these guys that worked at Fenton were watching us, and they were blown away because we were doing punties. They didn't do punties; they did grippers-you know, the grippers. They designed everything to go on a gripper so they could heat it in. The only thing they did by hand was set handles; everything else was some kind of mold like this or a steel mold, you know, that they blew into. It was all high production.

So I asked Fenton if we could come back the next year. He said, "Oh, yeah, you can come back." We came back the second year and we had over a hundred; I mean, it was a huge-we were-by this time, word had gotten out and our membership started to grow. We went back, and when we blew glass again, some of the Fenton blowers were so blown away by what we were doing, on their off hours, they taught themselves how to blow glass on their own with doing stickup, and they joined us at it.

And so it was a real coming together of their factory-some of their factory people with us and it was-the second meeting was as good as the first. It was just really great stuff. You know, it was reliving the previous year but-not that it topped it or anything, but it still had that same excitement. We brought different people in from all over the country and we had a guy-I brought a guy in from-that did a thing on recuperators-I remember-on recuperation. I mean, these are things that are now, just now becoming really important to everybody, but we actually had people talking about it then.

MR. WARMUS: And you were doing lead-level analysis, too, at some point. Was that later?

MR. HALEM: That was Wisconsin for heavy metals, yeah. They froze all our urine in Wisconsin. And I remember

Audrey asked, "Well, what are you going to do with it?" And I yelled out from the audience or from wherever I was-I said, "They put a stick in it; they are making Popsicles." And I remember-[laughs]-Audrey just fell on the floor laughing. Anyway, they never did anything with it. The froze it and they-they were going to test us like 10 years later or something to do a study, but they never did. They did lung capacity studies with us also.

MR. WARMUS: And you also-since you were skipping around a little bit inside the Glass Art Society, I remember, when I came on board and got involved, you were also doing-you were sort of the stand-up comic for the Glass Art Society-

MR. HALEM: Yeah, Corning.

MR. WARMUS: You were doing auction benefits, weren't you?

MR. HALEM: No, what it was-we had all of the business people-that is when we finally brought in people to hawk their wares-blow-you know, Steinart had his blow pipes and Loo had color bars, and different people had different things that they were selling. And they would all give us something.

No one ever came to the business meeting, so in order to get people to the business meeting, we had a raffle and I would pick a number, and you had a ticket, but you had to come to the business meeting on Sunday in order to be part of it.

And so at that time, I was still-my brain was still agile and I was still quick on my feet, and I was-fancied myself a come-lately stand-up comic. And so I was the one that would kick off the business meeting. And they would be sitting at their tables through the business meeting, and I would have a hat and I would do a couple or three minutes of shtick, and then I would reach in and pull a number out, and I would say something to the effect of, and the winner of color bars that fit, all of the dark-colored color bars that fit absolutely nothing, is Steuben Glass Company. [Laughs.]

MR. WARMUS: I remember that one, actually.

MR. HALEM: I remember doing that-[laughs]-you know, because Steuben Glass is nothing but clear glass. I faked it of course; they didn't win it; someone else won it and so on. Then there was someone-he was in the bathroom when his number was pulled and so on. I mean, it was a lot of fun, and you know, diamond scribes we were auctioning off. But, boy, we got a huge crowd for the business meeting, I'll tell you, and I did that for a few years. Every year at the meetings now Marvin still wants me to do the business meeting, and the board of GAS wants nothing to do with Henry Halem; they want-you know, they just think I'm a pain in the ass-[laughs]-which I am.

MR. WARMUS: So I guess just talk kind of philosophically about GAS from where it was to where it is now.

MR. HALEM: Boy, that is-there is a lot of different opinions on it. You speak to the people now that are members of the board and you speak to guys like us that started it and we're accused when-you know, when we are critical, we are accused of attacking them-if it is attacking. I don't think it is. It is healthy criticism of wanting to go back to bring it back the way it was, like when we were good old boys sitting around a campfire drinking beer.

That is their argument to us when they are criticizing-they are very defensive when we talk about the meetings as being, let's say, disjointed in some way, not very well organized, information-bad technical information being handed out, speakers that really don't have a great interest to a good segment of the organization, an organization that has become so diverse that it loses its focus on itself as an organization and its ability to reinvent itself, a board that is very top-heavy with people who are seemingly to me-or a great-a good number of them-there to further their careers and not the best interests of the Glass Art Society, the choosing of higher-up presidents and so on for political reasons and not of the reasons that they are in the best interests of being the president of the Glass Art Society, and just basically how things are done and how they spend money-the willy-nilly method, that they spend money on things that don't have that great an importance to the organization.

It has become so diverse in being so all-inclusive and so large that we are so limited to where we can go. One of the reasons it is different-and it should be different; I'm not saying that it shouldn't be different-is some of the places that gave it flavor, you can't go to any more because the organization is too big; there is no place for people to be. And there is just too many people that want to get around the campfire; the campfire isn't big enough to be inclusive of all of the people that want to get around that campfire.

And there are so many people that want to know so much, because now you have beginners; you have intermediate; you have beginning-intermediate; you have intermediate; you have upper-intermediate; you have experienced-you have upper-you have such a diverse need within the organization that if you don't service the need of some of those people, they are very critical. So I understand the problem that they have.

So I think they need to reinvent themselves in learning how and what they are going to address at the meeting. Do they want to address every need that everybody has? Do they want to take a little for this group, a little for that group, a little-or do they want to say, this meeting is going to be about nothing but technical issues, for argument's sake, and we are going to deal with people who are experts in making batch and building furnaces, you know what I'm saying? The next meeting would be about education and have three or four days of nothing but issues that deal with education and how educators can further-you know, help themselves in each other and network and so on. Or combine two of them: education and technical, or philosophical and educational; speakers that talk to aesthetic issues; artists-half of it artist presentations.

But the organization itself doesn't supervise; they just appoint somebody and say, okay, you're going to take care of education; find someone to do education. They find someone to do education and they leave it at that, and they leave it up to the person that they have chosen; they never get back to them; they never say, "I need to know what you have done up to this point, I need to know who you have chosen for your committee, I need to know how it is going to be presented."

MR. WARMUS: As I recall, when we were on the board, we were much more involved in the programming-you know, there were people who worked with each speaker to sort of understand what was going to happen.

MR. HALEM: Exactly. And if you didn't, you were kicked off the board; if you didn't, you were out, and I know people that were kicked out because they didn't. And not that everything that was presented was so great, but we sure gave it our best shot and we worked on it all year round. Now you get-you now-you go to a meeting and you hear people from the board saying-[sighs]-"I am so burned out," and they want these-they want their back stroked and to be told how great they are and what a great meeting they did. Hey, you signed on; it's part of the-you know, don't ask to get patted on the back, you know. Go to the party and get drunk or do whatever you do.

MR. WARMUS: I am interested in the campfire analogy, but going back to-we haven't really talked about studio glass. In a sense, that is all we have been talking about, but do you think that the parallel you drew about the campfire starting out small and a small number of people around it, and now the Glass Art Society-it is still a campfire, but there are so many people crowding around it, it loses its identity. Talk a little bit about that in terms of studio glass. Most art movements-well, first of all, most people don't even know that studio glass is an art movement or not. And then the other issue is if it is an art movement, it has been going on now for at least 45 years.

MR. HALEM: Well, American-you really have got to put it in the context of the whole world.

MR. WARMUS: But the one issue I want to address first, and then you can take off from there, is do you think that it, again, is suffering from the same success that the Glass Art Society is-that it has become so big and diverse that it is no longer-

MR. HALEM: You mean studio glass?

MR. WARMUS: Yeah, that it is no longer studio glass.

MR. HALEM: Well, you know, I think it cuts two ways. One of the things I really like about studio glass from the traditional sense is that they have revived the art of the container-the independent, the individual container. And when I go to different cities, there are these gift shops-and they are no more than gift shops-and in all honesty, some of them have some pretty extraordinary, beautiful containers that are coming out of studios. I have never heard of them-people I had never heard of; there is so many, and some of them are quite beautiful.

Now, they are certainly influenced by all of the other things that they have seen in the container forms, but the skill of them and the surface beauty of them is really there that really never existed, at least in the giftware market, before studio glass came into existence, and for that, I have to really thank the studio.

And the studio is also so successful that it is almost impossible to get any quality person to teach within the universities. They don't want to do it because there is so much more to be made in the studio. So when jobs open up, my experience is the people that apply for those jobs-it is like a round-robin-it is someone that is teaching here wants to move up the academic scale-applies for a job at another school, and gets the job, and then some other flunky comes in that they can hire a lot cheaper and they get that person, and that person has to spend 10 years figuring out how to teach, like we did.

So I think-I don't think the studio-I wouldn't parallel studio glass with the Glass Art Society in that way. I am not sure I really see them that way. I see it as cottage industries, and those that are good at it make a living at it, and those that aren't, don't make a living at it; they keep another day job.

I kind of think that a lot of the developments that we have seen-if you want to take it from a technical standpoint

now-from the equipment and equipment building-to develop these sophisticated glasses, these men and women that are building these studios have really figured the equipment out on their own, in no small way. So their contributions-there are technical contributions that they all make also. The Internet was a big contribution. They were all-they are all connected with each other through the Internet.

Now, the interesting thing is, though, with that, they have gone back to those days of secrecy; they have all of their different techniques that they use to make their pieces, that they won't share with anybody-how they use the powders, what color powder they use on this color powder; you know, what color they have under and over that, and so on and so forth. So they have gone back to that whole secret European idea that you don't share anything, because it is their bread and butter, and I don't blame them; it's what they make their living at. Why should they share?

MR. WARMUS: So that has come full circle.

MR. HALEM: That has come full circle in that respect. And the Glass Art Society, I think, has atrophied. My analogy would be I don't think studio glass has atrophied; I think the Glass Art Society has atrophied, and I think studio glass-I think all of these people are learning from each other. Now, that doesn't mean I really like everything that I see, you know. There are so many Chihuly rip-offs. You have got a-you can't figure out who is doing what. You can tell the difference between the two; it's a marked difference, but you can see-it goes beyond just influence. I mean, there are just imitations and so on, which is bound to happen. You know, we did it with Tiffany, so why is it so different that they do it with Chihuly? Who are we to criticize them? You know, we did it in a small scale, too.

MR. WARMUS: I think we should-putting everything in the time we have, I think now we should go back-we stopped talking about your own development in teaching. I think we were in sort of like the early Kent State era, and we decided to go off and look at the Glass Art Society, which we did. Why don't we go back and continue your development from, like, '72 and on-talk about teaching.

MR. HALEM: That really doesn't take too long. I mean, not the specifics, but my development in teaching is I had the ability to be a professor insofar as I was able to present information that people could understand, in a way they could understand. I didn't know much more than they did when I started, and it wasn't unlike the Glass Art Society. We were all part of a group, only I was the leader and I said get those bricks, and they got those bricks, and I said this is how we're going to build it, and this is what we are going to do, and then I would explain technically what was going on, what a brick was, what an insulating brick was.

And so the teaching thing grew-I had experience for years prior to this, having done part-time teaching. So I knew I had the poise in front of class; I could lecture. But my greatest strength was my ability to be critical, to look at the work that these students were making and offer them criticism, and hard criticism, not-I wasn't always trying to make them comfortable and I wasn't confrontational-but I was argumentative; I was trying right from the beginning to draw them out. If I saw a student imitating-not working stylistically within a style but imitating-I would call them on it and really not allow them to do it. They had to plumb the depths of their own soul and psyche, and come up with who they were as artists.

And I always encouraged them to think that they were artists, and I always encouraged them to look at painting and sculpture, and not to look at glass. I encouraged them if they wanted to be blowers of containers to really look at form in a traditional sense, to learn from the ground up. I was teaching a craft, and I always felt it was craft with a capital C, and it was nothing-it wasn't a dirty word.

MR. WARMUS: Did you find resistance among your students, or did you-and also, did you find that the resistance changed over the years in your teaching? I know, for example, now that lots of students are more willing to complain about grades, for example, so it has gotten harder on some teachers-

MR. HALEM: Oh, grades.

MR. WARMUS: You know, some teachers-it's harder for them to be critical now in all fields because the students are so much more aggressive and challenging.

MR. HALEM: Grades are inflated all over art schools. Grades are totally inflated. And the argument is-and we all feel guilty of it-grading was very difficult-everything is so subjective, and I always held myself responsible; for who am I to judge, with an A, B, C, or D, someone's work that has worked hard at it? And so I always-I can't say I didn't inflate my grades. I was tough in the classroom, but I always felt the student was always going to be responsible for his own or her own life. And in the undergraduate, I didn't want to be the one to flunk them out of grad school if they wanted to get into grad school-that there was some place that could take them. And I found grades could be encouraging; I never used it as a weapon.

And so, yeah, I probably inflated my grades. There were students in some years that probably deserved a C.

See, they never had half grades here; they only had whole grades. They still only have whole grades, and I was-the difference between a C and a B is very serious business, but between C+, B-? So they never had that, so I felt guilty if I gave someone a C, which meant average, and I never thought anybody was ever really average, because I'm average and I never thought I was average, but I knew deep down inside I was average. And if I could have done this as an average person, that guy and that gal can do that, too, you know. So grades never had great import to me, because the person getting the grades is responsible for his or her own life.

It's not like a mathematics course; it's not like you're being a doctor, and if you get an A and you're during brain surgery and you don't know the frontal lobe from the whatever-the hippocampus, you know, and you're getting an A and you don't know the difference between it and you're going out and you're operating on the wrong part of the brain. So grades at that point-I mean, you deserve to flunk out of school, but I didn't think I deserved to flunk anybody out of school unless they never came to class; that was a defining aspect of it: you had to show up.

MR. WARMUS: So what would get a person a D [for], for example?

MR. HALEM: A D? Not showing up.

MR. WARMUS: What earned a person a C?

MR. HALEM: Not really working to a potential.

MR. WARMUS: What would earn a B?

MR. HALEM: Working to their potential and working a little bit beyond their potential as the semester progressed-building on what they did.

MR. WARMUS: And an A?

MR. HALEM: An A-an A is-I used to-I gave As out easier earlier on than I did later. An A was if they really hit the ground running and they lived in that shop; if they lived in the studio; if they could talk about things; if they went to museums; if they really-it was their life and I suspected that it was, they would get an A.

MR. WARMUS: I like that. If I-if someone is reading this and starting out as a teacher, can you give them a few clues and tricks that would make their life easier now?

MR. HALEM: Yeah, I would give them one. I would say, take all of your students who are majors, one at a time, and sit with them at different points in time alone and listen to them, and come out of yourself and listen to them and try and find out who they are. Don't compete with your students. It's not about you; it's about who they are. Find out about their loves, find out about all aspects of their lives. And in learning how to read a student, you will at some point in time know whether they are worth your time, effort, and energy that it would take to make them into who you, as a teacher, think they can be.

And if you feel you're not the right teacher for them, and you can't offer them what they eventually feel they are there for, encourage them and help them find another place to go to. And let them-you know-they are going-let them fail, let them fail and encourage them through their failure. There really is no sense of failure.

But I think also a teacher has to know about aesthetics, and how to read not only the human being, the person, but the work that they are doing and be able to be-get those insights that lifts that student up to have insights into their own work, so that they can free themselves from you and go on and be their own teachers-to go outside of themselves and look at their own work objectively, and not get so attached to what they are doing-when they are done with it, to be able to say, this is a piece of crap, or whatever it is.

You know, having said that, there is work that I have done in my own that I thought really missed the mark when I made it, and I put it away-[laughs]-and I would come back a couple of years later and I had looked at it and it was like, wow, did I really do that? And I didn't really get an understanding.

It is a very difficult thing being a teacher. I don't think it's really possible-you can't be all things to all people and you are going to fail in certain instances. People that go on to have great careers, you may have failed with, and I have had those students-that I have had my own problems in my own head with my own work, with my own family, that spilled over into the classroom that affected how I addressed those students during that period of time, and I feel bad about that. But, hey, what can I do?

MR. WARMUS: As you went along teaching-I know we're going to get back to tracing your development, but glass became more and more popular, and the number of students applying to programs increased. I'm sure you saw that in your program. That must have been gratifying.

MR. HALEM: Yeah, it was gratifying. The one thing-we were competing for a base of graduate students. There weren't that many graduate programs and our undergraduate programs were not what we really put our heart and soul into; it was our graduate programs. We were fighting for the pool of graduate students that were out there, that were applying to graduate school. And one of the problems I always had here is I never had scholarship money to attract students, and the students went where the money was-not always what was in their interest. I would get students to come here and interview with me that I felt they would really be well served by studying with me, and they went someplace else because they got the money. And it wasn't who was teaching but whether they got money or not, and I always thought that was sad.

MR. WARMUS: How many graduates-most glass programs only have a couple of graduate students typically. Isn't that right?

MR. HALEM: No, some of them have a lot; they have got big graduate spaces.

MR. HALEM: So how many did you have usually?

MR. HALEM: Well, early on in the halcyon days, when we were in the old studio, in the smaller studio, I would have five crowded into a table, like this big. And I have got to tell you, the work that came out from those earlier students, in that small studio with practically no equipment and crude equipment, was extraordinary stuff. It really had little to do with the quality of equipment and material than it did with their thinking and their creative-it didn't have to do with the bubbles in the glass-you know, whether it was perfectly polished or perfectly flat, or all of that; they were students, you know.

[Audio break.]

MR. WARMUS: This is William Warmus interviewing Henry Halem at his home in Kent, Ohio, on May 14, 2005, in his kitchen at the kitchen table at 3:30 p.m. This will count as session three on disc three, track one.

And we are at the point where we were discussing Henry's teaching activities at Kent in the 1970s, and also the development of his work.

MR. HALEM: You know, along with the teaching, which I didn't bring up, when you're studying with someone in, I would assume, any area, you would, as a student, have an expectation that that person practices what they teach in some way, shape, or form. I mean, if I'm studying painting with a painting teacher, I would have an expectation that that person paints. And so I always felt it very important if I was going to teach that I not only teach all of the technical aspects of the craft, but that if we're talking about aesthetics, that I develop my own aesthetic that they can look at, that I can talk to. I mean, they really-students want to know who their teachers are and what they do and have that respect for them.

I also-at a good part of my life-when I was teaching, it was also very competitive with the other people that were making glass and exhibiting, and I wanted to be part of that world, as well. So I was wearing the hat as a husband and father, the hat of a teacher, and the hat of an artist. And so I had my own studio at home, and I also did work at school, so the students could see me working and how my process developed. I thought that was important. Not that it was necessary; I know some teachers probably can't work within a classroom situation, but I think in my instance, I was capable of doing pieces and parts for objects that I would make.

And so my work developed from the craft. It was probably 1970-prior to 1978-what I had done of any import, and which actually had made a bit of fame for me, were the castings that I had done. Without knowing it, I had done something that hadn't been done in this country before, and-in the contemporary glass movement at least-and I became known for that and I traveled all over the country doing castings. Not that I ever really exhibited these castings much, but that Corning purchase of castings was very important. People got to see it there-so I became known for that, and I was the one that spread the word on how to make molds and how to do castings, how to anneal castings.

I didn't do that for that long, and I was-I did a few things-blown things-that were pretty interesting with the white glass. They were kind of expressionistic in their look. And there were always these influences on me that pushed me to be my own person. I never wanted my work to look like anybody else's work. And I don't know really how it came about-I think I saw maybe a demo-or Paul Marioni came here, I think, or gave a demo somewhere, or maybe it was here, on how to make these sheets of glass that were-how you made sheet glass-mouth-blown sheet glass-by blowing cylinders.

And he showed that technique on how to do it, and I thought, wow, that is how I could make glass paintings. He had done it a little bit. He never really carried to any great extreme, but I saw that, and I had been looking at a lot of paintings in museums in color field and so on, and I thought, boy, I'm going to make these cylinders and open them up, and I'll be able to use the wall instead of the table.

So I saw him blow cylinders and I learned how to blow cylinders. I wasn't that bad a blower; I was never that good a blower, but I wasn't bad. I could do what needed to be done to get to what I needed to make. And I would draw on a piece of paper on the size that I wanted, more or less, a pattern, a decoration and color it in, and then I would fold it up as a cylinder. And so when I was making the cylinder, I would add-I would be able to read the drawing in this paper cylinder and put those marks where I thought they should go, so that when I opened it up, it would approximate the drawing. And I did that in 1978. I made three of those pieces. And what I did was-I made-the first two I made just kind of went on a wall. They were kind of misshapen, these flat sheets.

But I thought, hmm, that is interesting. If that was a vase, it would have no import. But now it is on a wall. It doesn't hold flowers. So the viewer addressing it-it is a totally different psychology to what they are addressing because it's on a wall. And the next step was put it in a frame, but then it's even more important. I mean, you can make marks on a wall; they are only marks on a wall, but if you put a frame around those marks on a wall, then it's a picture. And I did that and then I thought-I was looking at what stained glass was doing at the time, and they were really exploding. Robert Kehlmann was doing some really important work in flat glass and I thought his work was terrific. He had broken out of the lead line in so many ways, and I thought, boy that is really neat stuff.

So all of this stuff was happening and I thought, well, how can I take that now-all of that explosion and put it into another voice. The guy down the street here made tombstones, and he saw me trying to sandblast this glass deeply, and he came in and he looked, and he says, "What the hell are you doing?" And I knew this guy; he is right down the street here, still around-and he gave me this pressure-pot sandblaster. He said, "Try this." I put it in the booth and I blasted holes in the glass in like two minutes. I had a-it was like nothing I had ever seen.

So I took commercially available plate glass. I put this buttercut on it-this sandblast resist-put the flat sheet that I had blown on there, traced it, cut it so that there was a thin edge of the exact diameter-the exact diameter of the piece-and sandblasted that out of the plate glass so that it all fit together. And I took copper foil and copper foiled the sheet into this piece of commercially available plate glass and did some other sandblasting on it, and lo and behold, in 1979, it ended up in "New Glass."

MR. WARMUS: The "New Glass" exhibition at Corning.

MR. HALEM: The exhibition at Corning, and that was the second recognition that has-again Corning steps in and recognizes this. Not only that, *Craft Horizons* picked it up and put it in their magazine, along with Jamie Carpenter, and said these were two of the most important pieces in the exhibition, or words to that effect.

MR. WARMUS: And then that exhibition went on to the Metropolitan Museum [Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York].

MR. HALEM: It went on-it went all over the world, until finally it got to Paris and they dropped it, and it broke.

MR. WARMUS: Oh, it broke in Paris?

MR. HALEM: It broke in Paris.

MR. WARMUS: What was the title of that piece?

MR. HALEM: I don't remember the title of the piece. It was probably called *Color Field*. I think it was called *Color Field*.

And I think they sent me back the middle piece-I don't even know where that middle piece is, or maybe that broke, too. But there was an inherent problem with the pieces to begin with, because when you sandblast a piece of glass-just briefly, it's not of any import-and you'd sandblast a hard edge out of the center of the piece of glass, it's going to crack easily. And all of those pieces I did, eventually, they all broke. I have only one piece left that isn't, because it has been leaning against the wall for 25, 30 years. [Laughs.] I haven't touched it.

But that recognition-and then from there, I developed that style, and then I discovered this glass called Vitrolite. So to get to your original question of making art and being an artist, I then never thought my foundation training for the Rhode Island School of Design would have any great import for me, because I was never going to be a designer. But when I discovered this Vitrolite, this opaque structural glass that was made by the Libby Company-I found all of these sheets of this gorgeous opaque-colored glass, and I started making basically-

MR. WARMUS: You should mention-as I recall, it was no longer being made, right?

MR. HALEM: It was no longer being made. I discovered it in Akron. Some guy had some. I saw it and I said, what's that? And he said, it's Vitrolite. I said, do you have any more, and he said, yeah, if you want it, take it; we're trying to clean out; we're getting rid of it.

So I got these two different colors of Vitrolite. I got this white Vitrolite and I got this gray Vitrolite and-or tan Vitrolite, but I also had-I had discovered this other opaque glass from Czechoslovakia that I brought in a case, which was white and black, and I had that stuff.

And I started putting things together as a designer without any hot glass at all. I wanted to liberate myself-I hadn't thought of this in a while-I wanted to liberate myself from the furnace. There was something about the furnace-being tied to the furnace-that I found prevented me from realizing myself as an artist, that there was a tyranny to the furnace and to the process of the glass that came out of the furnace, in the way I saw it of course. Others, of course, see it differently.

So I made a piece-the first piece I made-and I have got to tell you, I like my work and I was doing this at home here after I would teach. I would come here and then go to the studio and make this work. So I would be cutting and sandblasting this work and fitting it all together. Everything-I wanted to get rid of using any lead also. I had used copper foil in these early pieces and I wanted to get away from that, because that was stained glass, and to me stained glass didn't have the reputation that I wanted to, or didn't have the aesthetic. If you used the lead or copper foil, then it immediately became stained glass, no matter what you did, in my eyes. It had-that language was in there. So I wanted to free myself of that and get rid of all of that.

So I took this Vitrolite and I started making these drawings, and I have every drawing I ever made for all of my Vitrolite pieces-full-scale. I made a drawing, and then I would trace that drawing very meticulously, cut that out, and then cut these pieces out, and very-for hours on end-grind them so that they all fit together on [a] black field. Usually I worked a lot on this black glass.

I discovered through [Piet] Mondrian the importance of black fields, when I read about Mondrian and that he was actually-instead of painting on a white ground-if you thought about him painting on a black ground-the psychology of a black ground versus a white ground was different. Color saturates differently-and this is stuff I had learned in RISD and forgotten about. And I suddenly looked at Mondrian's paintings-the later paintings, the black-ground paintings-and suddenly all of those colors in those paintings were floating three-dimensionally out from the ground, and it was another epiphany. And so I discovered the black ground and what that did to color. It made an endless space, whereas white really interfered-white took over the color, but black didn't, and it didn't absorb the color; it punched the color.

And so I started making these things with sandblast-they were very complex, these things. And I started having shows with them. And I started selling. This was my halcyon days of sales. I would have a show at Snyderman Gallery [Philadelphia, PA]-

MR. WARMUS: So give us some dates here so we can-approximately?

MR. HALEM: We are talking the '80s-we are talking the mid-'80s, right?

MR. WARMUS: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] That sounds about right to me, because after the "New Glass"-

MR. HALEM: Yes, oh yeah, it was-

MR. WARMUS: It took you a little while to ramp up.

MR. HALEM: Absolutely.

[Audio break.]

And I had liberated myself from the hot furnace. And he gave me a couple of shows and we practically sold those shows out.

MR. WARMUS: At which gallery again?

MR. HALEM: Snyderman Gallery in Philadelphia.

MR. WARMUS: Is there a reason how you ended up with Snyderman?

MR. HALEM: I had known him for many years-I don't remember how or where-but Sandy knew him also. She was from Philadelphia. And he was a friend, and he liked the work, and he gave me these two shows, which were just wildly successful. And then I started showing at Habatat [Galleries, Royal Oaks, MI]-excuse me, with Ferdinand and Heller. And so I was right in the thick of it; and I would take my students with me when I had a show at Heller, to other places where, if I was hanging the work, they would come with me and help me hang the work. And it was terrific. I loved it.

MR. WARMUS: Back up a minute. At Habatat Gallery-you were showing at the one in Michigan?

MR. HALEM: The one in Michigan.

MR. WARMUS: And Heller Gallery in New York City?

MR. HALEM: Yeah, the Michigan one was the only one that existed at that time. Florida and Chicago didn't exist.

MR. WARMUS: And Heller in New York?

MR. HALEM: And Heller in New York, yeah. The one on-what was it-Spring Street? Not Spring Street, on Green Street. And then the work-and I think it was good, because my work-my students, I've seen students that emulate what their teachers do and so on. And I've seen it and I don't really need to name names, but it's pretty close to home, which I find unfortunate. I mean, if I saw students trying to do what I was doing, I would have just said there's no way, shape, or form. It doesn't come from anything you're about. It only comes from your imitation. You have to really dwell and get in touch with things stylistically-you know-stylistically, it's one thing to work one way, but you've got to get in touch with what it is that has meaning to you. You could probably make good imitations, but that's all it would be. It wouldn't be your work.

But they wouldn't touch what I was doing with a 10-foot pole. I don't think anyone could or wanted to. And so, I was-as far as my work was concerned, I never brought it into the classroom. Only I would do things in the classroom, so they could see me work. They could see my work ethic, which was very focused and concentrated. But it was difficult, because once you're there, they're asking you questions and stuff like that. But I did it and then they would be working alongside-they liked having me there and working with me and stuff like that.

So I then started working with enameling, and I don't know where the enameling came from. It had to do with my wanting to be a painter. There was nothing that anyone was doing with enameling that I saw that said, ooh, I'm going to enamel. I wanted to take these sheets of glass that I had made and paint on them in a way that I couldn't put the blown stuff on, and so I started-and they're up in the studio in a blind wall that I have-and I would fire those along with these sheets that I made, and they weren't that good. And then I was enameling on the background and painting like an expressionist, and I was really doing the enamel that way and did a very big body of enameled work.

And that's when the work started to not sell-not that I think it wasn't worthwhile. I sold a few pieces here and there. And I started having shows with other kinds-I started experimenting with other pieces around, and then the sales fell off. And I must say, it was I eventually that lost interest, for whatever reason, in showing. I had some disastrous-a couple of disastrous shows that sold nothing. Maybe it deserved to sell nothing, I don't know. Or it sold one piece-but some of the work I thought was pretty goddamn good. And then I had work at SOFA that I thought was pretty damn good, and that flopped.

MR. WARMUS: SOFA in Chicago?

MR. HALEM: Yeah, SOFA Chicago.

MR. WARMUS: So when the work slowed down, this is in the late '80s or early '90s?

MR. HALEM: Oh yeah, it's in the late '80s, early '90s, exactly. And then I slowly stopped showing. But I kept making work and just boxing it up, and once in awhile, I would put a faculty show-a few years ago, the new prof came in, wanted a few pieces from me. So I put them out there-here at Kent State. Then the guy wanted me to have a little show here at the grounds of the Cleveland Music Center-Blossom Music Center, where the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra plays during the summer [Cuyahoga Falls, OH]. There's a gallery out there. I put a nice, big show up in there. And I hadn't seen my work on strange walls in years. And I put it up and it was really-it was like a mini-retrospective.

MR. WARMUS: When was that?

MR. HALEM: Last summer.

MR. WARMUS: So, 2004. And where was it?

MR. HALEM: Yeah, at the Blossom Music Center.

MR. WARMUS: In Kent?

MR. HALEM: In-no, the Blossom Music Center is in, I think, Cuyahoga Valley. It's in a very beautiful area.

MR. WARMUS: Near Kent?

MR. HALEM: It's near Kent, yeah. It's in this region. Yeah, it's a quick drive, sure. And recently, I-you know, Sandy

sat me down and she's very disturbed that I don't attempt to show anymore or do anything like that and be competitive in that way. But I'm beginning to think that I would like-I have probably over 80 pieces. I could have a retrospective now, from beginning-almost beginning-to end of work, except-yeah, I even have a couple of Vitrolite pieces that are not really good ones, but there's relative examples.

So I've collected and you know-I've looked and I've got more work in boxes than I've got on walls. And I'm thinking-Jesus, I'm getting older here. I'm starting to make work again; I'm starting to like myself a little bit more. I'm getting back into the studio more. I'm getting some things in my life that-rid of things that I never should have done and getting back to work. I mean, retirement was easy for me, but I'm not sure it helped me aesthetically.

MR. WARMUS: What year did you retire?

MR. HALEM: Nineteen ninety-six. Nineteen-I'm sorry, not '96. Six years ago, 1998, I retired.

MR. WARMUS: What made you decide to retire?

MR. HALEM: I couldn't teach anymore. I just couldn't go in the classroom. I woke up one night. I just leaped up out of bed and I said, "I can't do it anymore." It was just-I was having-

MR. WARMUS: It's just like on the movie-*Network* [1976], is it?

MR. HALEM: Yeah. And "I'm not going to take it anymore"?

MR. WARMUS: Right.

MR. HALEM: Yeah, I just couldn't go to the meetings anymore. My students deserved more than I was giving them. It was-I had kind of lost respect for what I was doing in a sense, and I didn't think I had a voice that was being listened to. And it was frustrating and I knew I could afford to get out. And I probably went on a few years more than I should have.

MR. WARMUS: How does that retirement tie in with the start of *Glass Notes* [Kent, OH: Franklin Mills Press, 1996]-the technical book that you published?

MR. HALEM: *Glass Notes* comes in the middle of my teaching in the early '90s-about '93.

MR. WARMUS: Shall we talk about that now?

MR. HALEM: Okay, yeah that's an important part of my teaching.

MR. WARMUS: Let's give people what the-can I just say for reference here, that what we're going to talk about is this book that Henry publishes called *Glass Notes: A Reference for the Glass Artist*, which, in the edition we have here, is a third edition. And he also has a website, . And that you're Professor Emeritus at Kent State University, Honorary Life Member of the Glass Arts Society, Fellow of the American Crafts Council, first president of the Glass Art Society. The book is dedicated to all students of glass. Go ahead.

MR. HALEM: Well, the book-an event happened. I always had handouts, either hand-written or typed that-when you teach, you have these handouts. You know, you give information and students rarely take notes-at least in my classes they rarely took notes. If they did take notes, they never referenced them and they probably, half the time, get the information wrong, which is understandable because it comes fast and furious, this technical information and so on.

So I had all of these notes, and there was a guy who had an old computer-an old Apple II computer-and he asked me if I wanted the computer, and it had a hard drive-an external hard drive, I remember. I think it was a 25 megabyte hard drive. And I said, "Yeah sure, I'll take it." So I had this Apple II computer with this drive, and I had learned in junior high school to be a touch typist, so I was able to keyboard very easily.

So I took-so and I had this Impact printer, and so I took some of my notes and I typed them into this Microsoft Word, or MacWrite maybe it was, or something like that. And I didn't have to hit a carriage return; I could just type. It had a spell-check. I didn't have to spell correctly, and it was really liberating. So I put all of my notes of my handouts into the computer.

MR. WARMUS: And what year was that?

MR. HALEM: I guess it was-I don't know, when was the Apple II? No, this wouldn't say. I think it was-it must have been the '80s. Does it say at all?

MR. WARMUS: Well, the original of this was in '94.

MR. HALEM: Ninety-three. Okay, this one says '93. Second edition was '94. Third edition is '96, okay? ninety-three was the first edition. So somewhere in '91, '92 probably.

And my daughter one day said, "Why don't you put them all together and have them bound and just hand the whole thing out to the students?" So Kinko's was in existence at that time, so I went down to Kinko's. I took all of these notes and they xeroxed them and I told my students, go down to Kinko's and get the notes for the semester. And they went down there. And it started getting bigger and bigger, because I started putting more things into notes, and so Sandy said, "You ought to publish that. You know, you could sell it. There are other schools that are probably interested in that."

So there was this company that did what was called-oh no. Kinko's then had this professor publishing thing that they had at one time. And I said, "I'd like to put this into professor publishing." And then I found out they were selling it to other schools. You could go to a Kinko's in Columbus, Ohio, and look at a list of what was available. And they were selling it and I was getting diddly-squat. And I thought, well, that's bullshit. So I took it out of that. And then there was this thing called Docutech, which was printing on-demand. It's when the Digital Age started coming in.

MR. WARMUS: I remember that, yeah.

MR. HALEM: And it was one-I think it was in Columbus. And all I had to do was give them a disk, these three-and-a-half-inch disks with all of the notes on it. And they would print them on-demand digitally, and bind them. And I would say, I need 20 copies of it-and I still got a copy of it here somewhere-and they would mail it to me and it would cost me, I think, seven bucks a copy. It wasn't cheap, it was like seven bucks. It was, sort of, in their own kind of binding-and it was easy. And then I thought, hmm, this is interesting.

And by this time, I started to really learn the computer. I had my way around running programs. So I bought this program called Aldus PageMaker and I started learning how to do page stuff and designing it, and I started building this book. And so I had the first one printed-I don't remember where it was printed anymore, but it was only printed on one side of the page. It wasn't printed on two sides-hadn't figured that out yet. And the word spellings-I didn't know how to spell the difference between *there* and *their* and *theyare* and *to* and-I mean, it was, like, early Bronx spelling.

But as this book developed, I started taking pride in it and I got an editor. And the editor said, "What is-this is just terrible. I mean, your spellings are correct, but they're wrong." And I said, "Oh." Sandy had tried to teach me English, but she gave up. So we started with the editing and I learned how to write, and I learned how to spell things correctly. I learned how to use spell-check but also to check spell-check.

And then I really learned the program. I learned two sides of the page, and then there was the first really good edition. And then finally, this third edition came in 1996 and it was-for its time-the definitive edition. Not that everything in it is so correct, but it's accurate enough that you could build a studio from it, and also learn to do sandcasting, how to make a mold for casting-it was all the things I knew and all the things that a lot of other people knew that they were willing to share with me and let me publish.

MR. WARMUS: Now the beautiful illustrations?

MR. HALEM: I did. I learned how to use this program called Canvas, and I did all the illustrations in the book.

MR. WARMUS: It must have been rather time-consuming.

MR. HALEM: It took me-

MR. WARMUS: I'm looking at this crown support details on page 195. It's sort of a perspective of whatever a crown support is. This crown is-

MR. HALEM: Right, right. Took me forever.

MR. WARMUS: Yeah, looks like it.

MR. HALEM: But now the same program has gone through a lot of iterations, and I can do this drawing in half the time and really much spiffier than it is. But it worked. I mean, people could look at that and they would see exactly-and I built that oven, so I knew it worked. And that was exactly how I built it. And people have built it and said, "Thanks a lot." And I discovered different ways of doing things.

MR. WARMUS: So this is kind of a work of-well, it's not a work of art, it's a work of craft then, it looks like, and a work of love.

MR. HALEM: It was a labor of love. I really loved doing it. And I spent a full year locked in front of the computer-the Apple computer permitted me to do it. I never could have done it on a PC. The PC didn't have that graphic ability that the Apple had-the Macintosh.

MR. WARMUS: So, what was the last edition of this?

MR. HALEM: Well, the fourth edition is going to come out probably-hopefully-by the end of this summer or the beginning of the fall. I'm working on a whole new edition-redrawing the whole thing, rewriting it, getting a lot of new information, and I've run out of what I know, and I ran out of what I know a long time ago, and I have gotten certain people that are experts in certain areas to permit me to publish what they've written. And sometimes rewriting it so that it's in the style that-I know how people learn-and some people's style of writing is very obtuse. And so I have to rewrite it and they're all for that. They know that people don't understand it.

I called Frank Woollex. I called Frank up; he's living in Massachusetts. He's retired and I asked him. You know, he has that little book-the technical book that he used to give to his classes at the Corning Museum School. And I said, "Can I reprint some of the things out of your book, Frank, with attribution of course?" He was so-he knew who I was, and I was shocked that he knew who I was. This is Frank Woollex, right? And he said, "Oh your book is-I would indeed be honored to be in your next edition of your book." And I was, like, turning red. I mean, my God, this is Frank Woollllex!

I said, "I can do it all, but I want a picture of you." He refused to send me a picture. And I said, "I'm going to do a bio of you and so on, redraw what you have." He said, "You can have the whole thing." He said, "I'm sick of it. People keep calling me and writing me. I don't want anything to do with it anymore." He said, "I'm more than happy. You can have it all." So I said, "Great, but I need it in writing." So he wrote me an email, which was fine. He's a sweetheart on the phone. So I've got a whole section of Frank Woollex, with his technical explanations. So sometimes I have in the book two and three explanations of the same thing from different people, which I think is interesting.

MR. WARMUS: Yeah, sometimes there's a nuance that makes a difference.

MR. HALEM: Exactly.

MR. WARMUS: You say it's a reference for the glass artist and not for the glass-you don't say glass craftsman, glass industry. Why?

MR. HALEM: No, because I think, in their own way, everyone sees themselves as an artist. And I think that people read-I think by using any other term it makes a hierarchy. It's a ladder of importance and so that's the shoe that fits everybody. And I don't know anyone I've ever spoken to, even if they're making little shtunky beads, that they don't see themselves as an artist. Now they're going to ask me, how do you spell shtunky? [Laughs.]

And the word, tchotchke, you can look that one up. Anyone that's making tchotchkes, they see themselves not as tchotchke makers, they see themselves as an artist. Why not? So what?

MR. WARMUS: So the book has really been a great success. I know that everyone talks about it in the technical field, so it must be gratifying.

MR. HALEM: It's very gratifying. And when I wrote it, when my wife asked me to write the book and do it, I said-and this is a quote-I said to her, "Who is going to buy it? No one is going to buy it outside of-a few people will buy it and that'll be the end of it. You know, we're going to spend all of this money publishing it and no one's going to buy it." She said, "Trust me. It's the only game in town. Trust me"-you know, she looked at it, she knew the information was there.

MR. WARMUS: And now you have-it's hard to copy this. You cut out a niche that's so complete and so it would be a great difficulty-

MR. HALEM: I've sold over 18,000 copies of this book. It's helped-I feel like McDonald's hamburgers. Over 18,000 copies sold. [Laughs.] I should have the golden *Glass Notes* arches.

MR. WARMUS: Do you think-I mean, it must have also helped educators, because they can just recommend their students buy it.

MR. HALEM: I sent a copy to every teacher in the country for free, and I offer it to any teacher that buys 10 copies or more, a free desk copy. Absolutely, and any teacher that writes-any student of glass that calls and orders the book, I give them a 25-percent discount. And if a teacher writes and wants for their class, I'll give a teacher-if the teacher's going to re-sell it and they want to make some money for them, I'll give them a discount, so that they can sell it for 30 bucks to the students or whatever they want, and take that extra money and put it

in for visiting artists or pizza or whatever they want. And any teacher that wants a copy of a chapter to xerox, to do as handout, all they've got to do is call me and I'll send them a pdf file and they can reprint it. The only thing I ask is that they-

MR. WARMUS: Give you credit.

MR. HALEM: Give me credit and tell the students where it's from on the front page. Yeah, I think it's my contribution to teaching. And it introduces people to-

MR. WARMUS: I like this quote on page 132. "We're not known as the truck drivers of the art world for nothing."

MR. HALEM: That's because every glass artist I've ever known has a pickup truck. We don't drive cars, except there's a whole bunch driving Beemers [BMWs] now. [Laughs.] I can't say that anymore.

MR. WARMUS: It's their second car after their pickup.

MR. HALEM: Yeah, exactly.

MR. WARMUS: But it's also-I guess-because all glass people have all sorts of equipment everywhere, don't they?

MR. HALEM: Yeah, exactly. We're always hauling something. Some company is throwing out a bunch of brick, or a machine, and you got to get it-you got to have a pickup truck. I had a pickup truck for years. Now, my van has really served me well. I haul books in my van.

MR. WARMUS: I see on section three, page 29, something that I think we should talk about, which is you have a section on the Libensky-Brychtova casting method. Maybe it's time to talk a little bit about your relationship with [Stanislav] Libensky and [Jaroslava] Brychtova. And from where I'm sitting, I see a really nice poster of their work from one of their shows just over your shoulder right now-

MR. HALEM: Yeah.

MR. WARMUS: Which is really quite beautiful. I was looking at that this morning, as you pointed that out.

MR. HALEM: Signed also.

MR. WARMUS: And I just love the way the objects float in that space.

MR. HALEM: Yeah, that relationship I had with Stanislav and Jaroslava was very special in my life. And that poster you're looking at, Bill, was taken in a room that I am very familiar with, and I have been in that room many times in their old studio in downtown Zelezny Brod. And so, when they were here, they brought that for me, and it's signed and I have-my memories of them will go with me to my grave. He was, and she was, very important in my life.

And I was doing castings, and I had read in a book-in a little pamphlet that Tom Buechner had written on his trip to Czechoslovakia-these profiles-

MR. WARMUS: Tom and I wrote that-the *Czech Diary* [*Czechoslovakian Diary*. Corning, NY: Corning Museum of Glass, 1981]-

MR. HALEM: Yeah, that *Czech Diary*, I had seen that and it made a big impression on me when I saw the artists in that-[Dana] Zamecnikova was in it, I believe. And I think, Stanislav-

MR. WARMUS: He and I had made a tour of like 15 studios and written up the diary.

MR. HALEM: Right, and I went to Corning-and that made an impression-and I went to Corning, and in the lobby they had just installed the Libensky-Brychtova commission, and I had been struggling with castings, and I saw that, and I could not believe what I was looking at, when I saw that in clear glass with all those bubbles.

MR. WARMUS: This must have been around 1989.

MR. HALEM: Yeah, whenever it went up, I saw that. The illusion that that gave and the scale of it-and I said, I have got to meet these people. This is-this takes glass to a level, historically, in my mind, that was never achieved in this form. And there was that big huge dinner at Corning where Stanislav came with his two armed guards. You know, those guys that used to travel with him while it was still Czechoslovakia?

MR. WARMUS: Art Centrum.

MR. HALEM: Art Centrum-ostensibly the translators? [Laughs.] And I introduced myself to him and it was such-

and I saw this short, balding guy with this kind of pot belly and I thought, this is Libensky? How wonderful. And that summer-the summer of-I think it was even '90 or '91-no, I'm sorry-

MR. WARMUS: Eighty-one.

MR. HALEM: Eighty-one. The summer of '85-the summer of '85 I got to teach at Pilchuck [Pilchuck Glass School, Stanwood, WA], and the serendipity of that-it was meant to be-because that session was Dana Zamecnikova, Marian Karel, Stanislav Libensky, and Jaroslava Brychtova.

MR. WARMUS: And I was there, too, for my history course. So, there was such a vibe-

MR. HALEM: Yeah, you're in some of the slides I have. Exactly, and I think Buechner was there also. He was teaching drawing.

MR. WARMUS: Yeah.

MR. HALEM: And they didn't come there to work. There was never any-there was no studio-there was never any intention for them to work. They were just going to be there. In my class was a woman who lived in Detroit. She had been born in Czechoslovakia and spoke Czech fluently and I didn't know it. And she spoke English with a little bit of an accent.

MR. WARMUS: Do you remember her name?

MR. HALEM: Erella DeVries. E-R-E-L-L-A. She eventually became my graduate student.

MR. WARMUS: D-E-

MR. HALEM: D-E-V-R-I-E-S.

MR. WARMUS: Capital V?

MR. HALEM: Yes, capital V. Erella DeVries. And we were hanging out one day, and Erella never told me she spoke Czech. Her mother was Czech. Erella was sitting next to me. I think it was a dinner or we were standing somewhere, and the Libenskys were talking. And they were talking about what were they going to do. They are just hanging out; they would love to be able to make something. You know, she would sculpt some clay; it was going to be two weeks that they were going to be there. But there was no one there to make molds for them.

So Erella turned to me and she said, "Do you know how to make molds?" I said, "Yeah. That is what I do." So she said-Erella said, "Would you like to work with the Libenskys?" And I went, "What do you mean?" And she told me what they had been talking about. And I said, "You tell them that I will be their TA, and I'll bring the whole class and we will work with them." She turned to them, she spoke to them, and their eyes lit up, and didn't think there was any American that could make molds; they didn't know me. I mean, they had met me, but they didn't know me.

So Dale used to live there and he hung out. And you probably remember all of this, but we went to Dale, and Dale said, we are going to take the gallery. And [Thomas] Bosworth had just finished the gallery, and he-it was sacred. He wasn't going to make that into anything but a gallery, right. Dale said, no way; this is going to be the Libensky-so they spread plastic on the floor, I think. They brought clay in for them and they started to make this stuff, and I went in and made the molds for them. Flora [Mace] and Joey [Kirkpatrick] were there. We went out behind the kitchen down below where the dirt was, so that we didn't trash everything when we made the molds. And I made all of these molds. And we didn't have a glass to cast.

Bernie D'Onofrio was also one of the TAs there. He also became one of my students, or he was my student at the time. Bernie was there, and we used a-they were blowing mayonnaise jars at the time, and we cast it, but it was about that thick, and there wasn't enough time to anneal it before the session ended, so they decided to take it out anyway. And it just-it got a big, huge crack in it. But it cast in two pieces. I mean, there it was. You know, it was one of these kinds of things with two. I got photographs of that process of them working-I have got gorgeous photographs of that.

And that is when I became really very friendly and that is when they invited me to come over and stay with them, which I flew over immediately and stayed with them for a long time-for almost a month-living with them and really getting to know them and eating with them, and just sharing everything that they had to offer, and watching them work and watching them paint-going down into the studio, and I photographed everything.

I was so taken with Prague. I just fell in love with the country, and I would call home, and they would let me use the phone. I would call home, tell Sandy, you know, I was having a great time. I fell in love with the food. It was pretty crude. The Libenskys had no money-they had no money. All of the money they had made-they were

selling pieces here and there; they weren't a household word. But Art Centrum kept all of their money; they were only given a salary. She was driving a Trabant. Do you know what a Trabant is?

MR. WARMUS: No.

MR. HALEM: It is a car that had a fiberglass body. The shift was on the dashboard. It had-the smoke that came out of it-the carbon monoxide was-it was an East German car, a Trabant. You can imagine how it was built, but it was basically all they had. There was another car called a Lada, but you had to be upscale for that. I think Stanislav had a Lada and she had a Trabant, and we used to drive in that-it was really a putt-putt-it was like a lawnmower engine that you could sit on and drive to different places.

So we used to go up to the factory at Pelichov and see the casting up there.

MR. WARMUS: How do you spell Pelichov?

MR. HALEM: P-E-L-I-C-H-O-V. Pelichov. And we would go up there and that was when the factory was going full bore; it was being supported by the government. And he would take me to all of the little factories that made the casting glass. There was one little factory in a town that I don't remember. I mean, the town was just a bulge in the road, but it had this glass factory that made glass for their jewelry industry-the beads and so on-it was very big; it was tradition.

And so we would go there and they would melt-he was very special, Stanislav. He was known; he was very famous in this whole area and in Prague and so on because he had done all of these-you know, he was very famous there because he had done all of the hotel installations and done things for-up in Canada-the World's Fair. He had done this-

MR. WARMUS: Expo '67.

MR. HALEM: Expo '67 sculpture. He had done the *River of Life* in Japan. He had done sculptures. They had-I should say they had done sculptures for the embassies-the on India-the very famous red heart that they had made-that beautiful piece, which they eventually remade.

MR. WARMUS: I bought one for Corning once.

MR. HALEM: Yeah, they remade that and-beautiful. And so they did stuff for the government all over the place. And they took me to places in city halls where they would have the-they would do the Czech eagle with the big red star under it and so on-it was in glass. We would go to these towns. And later on, when I visited again after the government had fallen, we went back to a town where one of these things existed, and they called him back in to take the sculpture down and get rid of the star.

So I would go to Zelezny Brod before the communists were out, and there in the woods was this-or in this little square-was this homage to Lenin, with Lenin's picture and everything. Well, you would go back after it fell and it was just gutted. I mean, all vestiges were gone overnight. But I would go and the guy that did the castings showed me how he did the Libensky castings. But just-it wasn't so much his work that drew me in-it was them as human beings. It was Dana Zamecnikova; it was all of the other people-Alex Vasicek and the other names which escape me right now. And I would visit and go to the studios of all of these people-

MR. WARMUS: Marian Karel.

MR. HALEM: Marian Karel, of course, Dana's husband. Jiri Harcuba. And I would go and I got to know all of these people-Jiri Suhajek-and I would go to their studios. And of course, I would go to the studios, and they actually, I had known these people from the Corning meeting. I was in charge. The first Corning meeting, I brought all of these "Young Turks" in from Czechoslovakia; I was in charge. I forgot about that. I was in charge of bringing these guys in.

Do you remember when Vera Liskova and Pavel Hlava were on the program? I was in charge of bringing in the young artists from Czechoslovakia, and I worked with the-our- government, and they were given permission to leave, and then at the last minute, the government of Czechoslovakia said they couldn't leave. And they took them all off of the plane-this is the story I got-and then suddenly at the last minute they said, "Okay, you can go." They got back on the plane and they showed up. And there they were-they were, like, in work clothes.

They showed up-all of these-Marian and Vasicek-they were all young guys. I'm not sure whether Dana was there or not. And I remember Marvin came, and we said, we're putting them on the program and we're going to show their work. I think they had slides with them, but we were going to put them on the program even though they weren't penciled in. Tom Buechner didn't take well to that, and I remember Tom had a fight with Marvin in the hallway that was, as you can imagine, incredible, because we wanted to put them on because we felt they were-

they spent this time getting here and they were a hell of a lot-

MR. WARMUS: Was that the '84-it was the first one-I think it was the first one. Because there were so many-there were several Corning conferences. It wouldn't have been '80, though, would it? That would have been too early.

MR. HALEM: I would have to look it up.

MR. WARMUS: Maybe '84.

MR. HALEM: Well, you could look it up. It was Liskova and Hlava. And they showed-and they didn't have slides; they showed it through a projector.

MR. WARMUS: Overhead projector.

MR. HALEM: Overhead projector. And I think we prevailed and we got them to talk through some translator. I think Hlava was very pissed off, you know, that they were here and they were upstaging him, and we were all crowded around them and so on. But that was very exciting.

But anyway, I really got to know these people very intimately, and I wrote a journal-I have a wonderful journal of my adventure in there-at their studios. And I have a whole reminisce of meeting Stanislav and Jaroslava and living with them, and my observations and feelings about them. And I photographed the interior their house-a lot of photographs, slides, the studio, and him working. He was-he really loved the camera. He really always posed.

MR. WARMUS: That is true.

MR. HALEM: Whenever he saw the camera come out, he always found himself in a position doing something with a mold or making believe he was talking to somebody or doing something important. I mean, he was really a ham.

MR. WARMUS: I haves seen pictures of him with Tom Buechner in Czechoslovakia-the two of them smoking cigars-and he is just posing, so, you know-

MR. HALEM: Exactly.

MR. WARMUS: You could tell he enjoyed-even I have some pictures from when he toured the last SOFA show in New York just before his death, like a year before, that he is like waving and smiling, and he was just a terrific, photogenic person.

MR. HALEM: Totally. I have wonderful, wonderful pictures of him-reams of pictures. And I almost have them all organized, and if I document them, I really should give them to Corning, or whoever is interested, and the videos I have of him. I have got a real-I think some of the strongest documentation of him not posing for a movie but just in his everyday life-of them both.

And he loved his little garden with the lettuce, and he had apple trees, and he would go out and pick apples. He was a real human-he was a person and an artist later. He always had time for you. He never disregarded anybody. Coming back, all of the workers that had worked on his work, he took with him to their retrospective; they were all at that show. And we came back and we stopped at this little roadside rest, and he toasted them all, and I have got it all on video of the toast, with sound and everything.

And he loved them-he knew that they were the secret to his success; without them he was nobody. But beyond that he respected them as people. He came from, I think almost-I don't know much of his youth; if I read about him I probably would know, but-and I saw all sides of him that way that nobody else ever saw. You know, the only foreigner there at a roadside rest with him-he picked me up at the airport and we would drive, I remember-I still have the coaster from it.

There was this Russian airplane many years before-propeller plane-that ran into engine trouble and had to land on a highway in Czechoslovakia. And they pushed it off of the highway so that it couldn't get in the way, and they never could get it out, because they couldn't taxi down the highway to take off. It was just-but it was there in one piece and they turned it into a restaurant.

MR. WARMUS: Oh, really? [Laughs.]

MR. HALEM: Yeah. Aero Restaurant-I have the coaster from it; I save things from different events like that. And he loved it, and you would get-it was only like hotdogs-you know, stuff like that. They didn't have any food. And so we would go there and we would have a little-maybe a schnitzel they would have-something or a knedliky-something like that we would have. And I would-I ate everything-I had an iron stomach; I didn't care. I just ate everything, drank the water-it didn't affect me.

And so these are things-I was there-there was the things we did-I was there when the police stopped us. We were driving somewhere and they only stopped us for a bribe. They had looked under his car with mirrors for drugs or something, and he would take out his wallet; I remember, he took his wallet out and he opened his wallet, like to give his license, and he would take out money, and he would give the guy some Czech crowns that was worth, you know, in our money-it had no value. It was-it wasn't a hard currency.

MR. WARMUS: But that was how the police made their living.

MR. HALEM: It is how they made their living, and he would give them-you know, he would look around like that; he would give the guy whatever it was, and we would be on our way. You know, I was there when we had to stop on the side of the road and my wife and Jaroslava had to go in the woods. You know, these little things. I mean, people only see them at openings in suits and so on, and just to see that was like to see them as a human being-you know, outside of what he made and what people used him for, especially later on when his work took on extraordinary value. I would see the collectors crowd around him and want to be photographed with, and so on. And I got a kick out of it. He used to-we would be there. Were you with us the night at Heller when we went to the boxing match?

MR. WARMUS: No.

MR. HALEM: No. My brother was there and Heller was there, and Heller came over to me and he said-it was a championship fight. He said, "Yeah, do you want to go to Madison Square Garden and see the fight?" Yeah, I went to Libensky and I went to Jaroslava and said-asked Stanislav if he wants to come with us to the boxing match. And we had lousy seats. It was like $50 each, but I think Heller paid for it.

And we went to the boxing match, and we sat there, and the HBO people were there-we saw them and so on, and we had a great time just at the boxing match. Or we would go to a bar after the thing, and we would drink, and Stanislav would buy drinks, you know-oh, he was always so gregarious. And my mother came to one. I got a slide with my mother with him and so on. I used to talk about him all the time, and my mother said, "I think you like him more than you like me." And I never answered that question. [Laughs.]

[Audio break.]

You know, and I'd come to New York to see his show, and she began to get the clue. "You don't fly to New York that often to see me." [Laughs.] Anyway, be that as it may, I brought him here to teach. I wanted my students to experience, and he agreed. He came here for two weeks, stayed at the house.

These were people-you know, Americans, when we go somewhere, we want to be at a motel. We don't want to be in someone's house. We want our own privacy. He wouldn't hear of being at a hotel or a motel. He didn't want to be alone. Well, first of all, he didn't speak English. So he came and he wanted to be here-well, I stayed at his house, he had to stay in my house. It didn't even-it wasn't even a question.

So he would stay in the house and had his own bathroom and so on. We would eat and we'd serve-at that time, they didn't have things like melon, so we'd serve him melon and the melon was ripe. And he was just-everything was luscious. Take him to the grocery store, and you know what our grocery stores are like. He would look at the grocery store and it was like his eyes would just-

And then when I was over there-I'm a good cook, so Jaroslava would ask me if I wanted to cook. I said, "Jo, I'd love to." So we'd go to the butcher, and we walked in and there was nothing. There was just some sausage hanging on the wall. It was all white tile in Zelezny Brod, and she was so embarrassed and the butcher was so embarrassed. And he'd have maybe a schnitzel-type thing put away. And he heard I was American, and so he didn't want to be embarrassed, so he would take it out. It was probably meant for someone else and he'd give it to Jaroslava.

So we'd go back and she'd ask me, "What do you need?" I never forgot this. And I wanted paprika. Now, in English, paprika is this condiment. Paprika in Czech is green pepper. They didn't have vegetables. She found a green pepper, God knows where. She found a green pepper. It was shriveled. It was something that she was-you know, you wouldn't eat-she was so proud that she'd found a green pepper. I cooked with it, of course, and made this with mushrooms. Mushrooms, they had. He loved mushrooms. He had his special mushroom places he would go to for his morels in the woods. He would come back, and they were secret places he would go to.

I brought them their first controller to run their ovens-GB-3. And that's a story-going to Erwin's [Erwin Eisch] place and mailing it to me-it was illegal. It was considered a computer. I mailed it to myself to Erwin's factory and wrote that it was a temperature controller-didn't say anything, you know, a computer. And I mailed it to Erwin's factory in Frauenau. And we were going to the conference in Novy Bor, and the day before I was to leave for the conference, it showed up, and we were-I was supposed to drive with Erwin to Novy Bor.

And then, in the last minute, Erwin tells me, "My visa never came," and I had to go alone. So he took me and my bags and this computer to the border at Eisenstadt, and he talked me through the border with these guys with these big kalishnikovs, standing there in dirty uniforms. And he kicked this computer that I had for Libensky under the table so that they wouldn't find it, and we never declared it. Picked it up, we got to the border-it was, let's say the middle of a table-we were here, the border was there, Czechoslovakia was there. There was a car over in Czechoslovakia. Everyone spoke German as well as Czech, so Erwin in German spoke to this guy and said, "Henry, you've got to ride with this guy."

So I got all my bags-and I spoke a tiny little German, I understood some words. I really couldn't speak it but I understood a little, enough. So we drove to some little town, and Erwin said he'll call Dana to meet me at the bus, because I went to this little town of-I can't remember the town-this little town-all it had was-they had good bus service. And I remember buying a ticket. I just-you know, one of these things where you hold the money out like that.

And I held the money out-I think it was my first trip-and I gave her some bill and she looked at me, and the bills were way too valuable. It was like a little 20-kroner piece, which is like a penny. And they gave me a special seat on the bus because I was an American and they'd never seen an American since World War II in this town. [Laughs.] And went to the bus station and Dana and Marian were there and picked me up at the bus station in Prague.

And that was quite an adventure in the bus station talking to this guy. He was talking to me in Czech, this old guy, and he thought I was talking to him. I would just shake my head. Pictures of Lenin on the wall. It was quite an experience getting to know them before it became-before that curtain fell-to see how they had to live. You only saw them in the United States with the great works that he did, wearing a shiny suit.

You never knew what Libensky had to go through to make the work. It was not easy. They were supported by Art Centrum, but they were responsible to make the work, to get it to Art Centrum, and that was no easy task. But for some reason, they left all of those artists alone to make what they want, because they weren't making propaganda with it, and it was something they could export, something they could advertise.

MR. WARMUS: A prominent thing that brought glory to the Socialist regime.

MR. HALEM: Yeah, exactly. Yeah, exactly.

MR. WARMUS: Shall we take a pause here for a minute? Let's see-

MR. HALEM: Yeah, sure.

[Audio break.]

MR. WARMUS: Okay, we're continuing with disc three. This is track two, and we have moved from the kitchen to Henry Halem's studio on the second floor, and we're going to try this, looking at some of the work. We're hoping the sound quality will be good for transcribing, but it will be a little bit scratchier because we'll be moving around.

Do you want to just start looking at a couple of things and talking a little bit about them?

MR. HALEM: Sure.

MR. WARMUS: You decide where to start.

MR. HALEM: Well, what I have up here in the studio is work that represents a period of time from the early '90s, basically up to a few days ago. And it represents a period of time-actually it represents from 1979 in parts of it. It's hard to describe. You know, I don't want to describe work, but I sometimes come up here when I put the work up, and I just kind of sit and reflect on the work that I've done. I look at it and I try and find, you know, things of, maybe, of import, in some of the work, or lack thereof. And some works that I've never really liked that much sometimes I take a liking to when I see it separate from the table that it was built on. And I also like looking at older pieces.

MR. WARMUS: The glass boxes are from what era?

MR. HALEM: Well, the glass boxes have been a continual aspect of my work. Every once in a while, I'll make another box. And the boxes, they are basically-not basically, but they're totally sealed, and they contain with them objects, drawings, snapshots, just little metaphorical adventures.

I don't know, they're really hard to-you know, I can talk about myself easily, but the most trouble I have is talking about my work. When the work is done, I really can't talk about it that much, because I'm really

emotionally removed from it in so many ways. What I do with the work, though, is I emotionally respond to it, as if it's not mine. And I look at it that way and I think, boy, I'd like to own that piece. That would really be nice in my house. And that's kind of how I feel about the work. But to talk about-to talk about the work and where it comes from and so on. I could talk about different parts, different things that are in the work-

MR. WARMUS: Tell me about this one that's straight opposite us with the green background and the glass frame that looks like it has sections cut out from a vessel, perhaps? There are nine of them pasted on that.

MR. HALEM: Yeah, I have a feeling you know whose vessels those are. Those are-you're leading me on with that. Many years ago, when I was working at Pilchuck, Dale was making work there. I think Billy was his gaffer and so on, and they would make a lot of work. And a good number of pieces would hit the junk pile-pieces that never made it. And one day, I saw one of the scrap barrels. They had just thrown a piece in, and there were these broken pieces laying in the scrap bucket.

And I just went over and pulled out these-well, there was probably about a dozen of them, and I brought them back-this was many years ago-and they sat in my studio for many years. And I never really knew what I would do with them, if I was ever going to do anything with them. I mean, they weren't precious in any way, but I thought they were interesting in the surface texture and the visual of them, and the fact that they were Dale's.

And so finally, one day, I got an idea of what I would do with them and just let them speak as shards of glass and take something that for one person was junk and then in relationship-and then take them and put them in a context-a frame, if you will-as one would find in a museum, and add a layer of meaning to them that was never meant to be.

MR. WARMUS: It looks like you've etched the fragments themselves in black?

MR. HALEM: Yes, what I did was, if you look at them, they're like zebra stripes. And I took enamel, fired enamel, and I framed them by making a black line around the outer edges, and put them in a kiln and actually heated them up to flatten them out, so that they are basically all flat. They're no longer round like they were in the vessel. And I put them in this context. And it actually gave-the idea came from an earlier piece that I had done, which is to the left of that, which was a piece that I had shipped to a show that arrived broken. And I asked the gallery to send them back to me, and the shards came back.

And I found a greater value in the pieces broken than if they were in one piece, because it gave rise to a whole layer of series of works that I didn't know how to get at, which was-going to museums, we see work-for instance, Roman glass is a good example of it, which I've dealt with a lot, with Roman, imitation Roman glass that I've made myself. And work in the context of the culture that it's developed in has one layer of meaning of little value in relation to it being precious and collectible, as we see things today in the West. And so, you look at Roman glass. In the context of its time, it was so ubiquitous that it had very little monetary value. It was found all over the place. People had it, they drank out of it, threw it away, or whatever. It was very common.

It's not until the culture of Rome dies away or in the context that it was-and these pieces get buried and end up becoming archaeological finds. They find their way into museums, and then when they are revisited, they have this whole other layer of meaning that was never meant-the artist never meant to put on them. And when I would look at these pieces in museums, I always tried to see them in the context of their time, but I never could. They always were very precious. You couldn't touch them. You couldn't deal with them in any way. And I felt this was always interesting. I never really-I always thought then the meaning of museum was to really house objects that no longer had cultural relevance. The culture had disappeared. And that was the real meaning of a museum, was to house those artifacts.

But the museum became not so much for artifacts, but it took the art and the artifacts of our time within our culture and the context of our culture, and housed them in this artificial environment that very few people really ever get to see. And I thought how unfortunate that was. And so the museum-the idea of "what is the meaning of the museum" has been taken up by philosophers.

But it's in the West that the museum and the gallery takes on a meaning and separates the art from the culture and the society as a whole, and becomes only meaningful to a very moneyed class of people. And I always found that-I never liked it, but I have to be really honest. If it came down to it and Leo Castelli called me for a show, I'd be there in a minute. So there's that degree of hypocrisy in me. But you know, in the realm of just being able to talk about it, I can talk in these highfalutin terms. But that's the way I see things when I go to museums.

MR. WARMUS: This one on the floor here, with the grid of 12 pieces, is a little bit more detailed than the others.

MR. HALEM: Yeah, I did a whole series of enamel pieces, and that piece is basically-not basically, it is the last enamel piece-real enamel piece-that I ever made. And I had done these pieces that were called storyboards. And that piece just basically is an exercise in shape and painting, and really has very little to do with glass. I

should-

MR. WARMUS: It feels to me like looking at maps from overhead or buildings overhead.

MR. HALEM: Yeah, well, there's another piece around the corner that's 12 pieces that is autobiographical. This is not really meant to be anything other than abstract. I should say-and it's important-I never wanted my work to be defined by material. I never really felt comfortable with being labeled a glass artist. I always thought that was a very denigrating term. And I never wanted to be with that label-oh, he's a glass artist. So I think I purposefully went about doing work that I thought had a greater content than the material itself, and transcended the material.

Now, whether it's great work, or good work even-you know, I'll let others decide. I enjoy making the work and some of it is better than others, but I have tried to be, first and foremost, an artist that is defined by the content of the work. Although the circles that I've always been in has been with glass collectors and glass galleries, and what I say and feel is somewhat different than what has actually existed with the work.

My wife keeps asking me to send my work to-pictures of my work-to art galleries. If I talk this way, I should really walk the walk, if I'm going to talk the talk. And I've never had the balls to do it. I think I'm afraid of rejection, I don't know. I can blame that on my mother. That's easy to do. Blame it on someone who is no longer able to defend herself.

MR. WARMUS: Is this one with the tall building shape in the center-is that a glass component?

MR. HALEM: It's beeswax. It's a black background-I talked earlier about black background. But actually, that piece is recent and that actually came out of 9/11-that piece. And it was originally meant to be two tower-type houses, and the work morphed into this one beeswax piece on this shelf, and I don't know what I could really say about the work. It was recently rejected from a show. So I am kind of starting to wear this rejection thing as a badge of honor in some way, shape, or form.

MR. WARMUS: Is this glass box also beeswax?

MR. HALEM: Yeah, I like beeswax. I've seen-

MR. WARMUS: It's a beautiful material.

MR. HALEM: Yeah, it's a wonderful material and I really like working with it. I like the look, the color, and the warmth of the beeswax. And there are a lot of pieces in boxes that-not a lot, but a few other pieces, beeswax pieces in boxes. But I've enjoyed doing the boxes-the boxes over there and so on. As I said, I'm just recently getting back to work. And this piece here is a piece I made-actually, I made this for Penland for their auction.

And it's funny-I guess it's like the loaves of bread. I was going to make this quick piece for their auction. I made the piece and I kind of got attached to the piece. And now I'm feeling I don't want to give it for the auction; it's too good, you know? So I may keep that and make another piece. And I know that other piece is going to be just as good, but I'm going to make it just like that piece so that I can part with one of them.

MR. WARMUS: And the wishbone shape is?

MR. HALEM: It's a piece of the wood outside. I take this-I used to look at these lacquered boxes-these Japanese lacquered boxes-and I always marveled at these 12 layers of lacquer. And they took on-the lacquer has a life of its own. So I bought these lacquer paints, and I get these branches-these kind of triangular crotch shapes-branches-and I have a few pieces with it, and I use lacquer paint and I build up three and four layers. I don't have the wherewithal to do a dozen layers. And then I mount them out from the background, and I have no idea why I'm doing them, or whether I'm really going to do any more or where they're going.

MR. WARMUS: But they're a beautiful surface, too.

MR. HALEM: Yeah, I really-

MR. WARMUS: It's sort of like the yellow on that painting with the gold house in it. It's a very beautiful color.

MR. HALEM: Yeah, that's-that's that Pilkington float.

MR. WARMUS: That we were talking about earlier?

MR. HALEM: Yeah, that's that-yeah.

MR. WARMUS: Is it sandblasted a little?

MR. HALEM: No, there's acid. It's treated with acid.

MR. WARMUS: Okay.

MR. HALEM: And then what I've done is, I have faintly rubbed in something to just-

MR. WARMUS: Cause a little bit of-

MR. HALEM: Cause a little bit of visual. And if you look close, you can see it. But if you don't look close, you won't see it.

MR. WARMUS: Just a subliminal effect.

MR. HALEM: Yeah, and then that-the house is lead, and then it's gold-leafed over that. I always like working with gold leaf. I always looked at the towers of-

MR. WARMUS: Yeah, I like the house in it. It's very nice.

MR. HALEM: Yeah, the illusion. I like working with the illusion. And this piece here, I got kind of frustrated with glass and all its preciousness, and I started working and I did a few pieces-I'll bring it over here. I did a few pieces when I was getting at the tail end of making pieces. I got, kind of, the whole idea of the preciousness of glass.

And I recall-in going around in different cities-one thing I always loved is some of these storefronts-if we want to talk about people who are artists who don't know they're making art. You would see a broken window-I would see a broken window in a storefront, and I'd see it repaired with duct tape. And-without the squirrels up here-without knowing it, they were making these, I thought, really extraordinary postmodern, or abstract, or whatever you want to call it paintings with these giant pieces of window glass in storefronts that were broken in abandoned-sometimes-stores with all of this repair, which was duct tape or whatever they used.

And I always thought they were just-the innocence of them and then beauty of them was just extraordinary. And it was just the opposite of how we ever thought of glass. I mean, it was broken glass that they just kind of stuck back together, and I was always attracted to it.

So I found this safety glass that had Mylar sheets between it, and I took it and I did some acid-treated form in there-you can't really see it here; you need to have it on a white wall to really see it-within the window frame and then just broke the glass, and it stays together because it's this safety glass. And I did a whole series of those, and the early one is that one over there, which this is similar, too. I actually really sold one of those. I don't remember who bought it, but I couldn't believe I actually sold one.

And there was another one somewhere that-it's in a box somewhere. Oh, there's another one here. And I like working-I stop on the side of the road and pick up-people throw out their old window frames. And I know a lot of artists have worked with window frames, but so what? Here's this one which is still being made. I still have to-I'm not really happy with that one, but that's another one. And that's kind of loosely based on [Kasimir] Malevich. Russian Constructivists have been a big influence in my life. I really have that-

MR. WARMUS: I like the simplicity of the way this broke. It's very-

MR. HALEM: Yeah, yeah.

MR. WARMUS: It's almost elegant.

MR. HALEM: This one I was angry. I went at it with that-

MR. WARMUS: I see that. This one, it looks like you just dinged it a little bit.

MR. HALEM: I did, and as a matter of fact, if you look close, just-I scored the square here, and when you hit it-I scored it with glass cutter, and this is two pieces of glass with Mylar between the two. So you won't feel anything, because it's basically-nothing moves because of that Mylar sheet. But it's basically broken on the other side. And it broke-where you score it, it breaks. So if you look at a certain way, the square will glint. There's little subtleties in it.

MR. WARMUS: I see that. That's nice.

MR. HALEM: So I started to work on those, and that's fairly recent. So I was going to do a whole series of different squares. What I wanted to do was get different windows and just do a show of just having those frames. I don't do anything with the frame. I leave it the way I find it. I don't go back and paint it or anything. And if that

comes off in shipping and so on, it's okay.

MR. WARMUS: So this is the most recent work you've been doing?

MR. HALEM: No, actually the branches-actually it is, because I keep coming back to it. I work concurrently in different genres, or whatever you want to call it-you know, different materials. I guess you can see in all the work-this is all early work on this wall. This is combined with blown things and a lot of enameling.

MR. WARMUS: Yeah, I like the ones with the detailing in them, like this one over here. And this one-well, the painting on them is really interesting to me.

MR. HALEM: Yeah, I mean, there's some realistic things in there. And they're all fired four and five times.

Yeah, and I really-for years I did enameling. And I still-some of the backgrounds, you know; like this background, this is enamel. That's one color. And then that's fired-that's probably three layers of enamel on there. And in the right light, I mean, that is a rich blue. I mean, glass color-enamel color-is just-

MR. WARMUS: You can see how rich it is.

MR. HALEM: Yeah, it's very rich and I really like that.

MR. WARMUS: In a way, it reflects the branches-it's quite lovely.

MR. HALEM: Yes, exactly.

MR. WARMUS: It changes the color of them, like the green branch almost goes to kind of a-what would you call it-that weird blue in the back.

MR. HALEM: Yeah, it kind of mixes with it in some way. And they're meant to reflect that way. This one here is-an enamel that I did three layers. And I accidentally did something in the kiln when I fired it, and the enamel screwed up, and I was going to sand if off with a diamond pad. And I started to sand it-

MR. WARMUS: It's nice when it's sanded. That's what makes it work.

MR. HALEM: Yeah, and it started to emerge and I went, whoa. Once again, things happen for a reason.

There's stuff behind the wall here. There's stuff behind this wall, very early panels that I did behind this wall, stuff hanging here. You know, you can't really see. This gallery broke this thing-this was an early thing; they busted it there, so I'm going to fix that.

But anyway, I mean that's-and then piles of work here. Boxes, just boxes. This is one of those sheets I was telling you about. This is an early-I gave this one to my mother. This is after I finished sandblasting all the way through. And so I would make that sheet and flatten it.

So basically, this is my career as an artist up here. This is where I am at this point in time, and downstairs is where I make stuff. And my house is where I eat and sleep, and other things. And it's been a great life. I mean, I'm 67, and I have no regrets. It's still great, you know. And I think the best is yet to come.

[END OF INTERVIEW.]

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