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Oral history interview with Jack Earl, 2007 June 19-20

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Jack Earl on June 19 and 20, 2007. The interview took place in Lakeview, Ohio, and was conducted by Jane Milosch 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.

Jack Earl has reviewed the transcript and has made corrections and emendations. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

JANE MILOSCH: Jane Milosch, [of the] Renwick Gallery [Smithsonian American Art Museum] here in Lakeview, Ohio, at Jack's home and studio, June 19, 2007 — disc one.

And Jack has already answered the big easy question of when and where he was born.

JACK EARL: Yes. Do I need to repeat it?

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, yeah, yeah. It's got to be your voice. It doesn't count if it's mine.

MR. EARL: I was born in a house — [laughs] — as opposed to a hospital.

MS. MILOSCH: That's right.

MR. EARL: Right. And the house is gone, so now I was born in a field — [laughs] — near Uniopolis, Ohio.

MS. MILOSCH: On August —

MR. EARL: August — what did I say before?

MS. MILOSCH: Second.

MR. EARL: Second, right.

MS. MILOSCH: 1934.

MR. EARL: Right.

MS. MILOSCH: And I now knew that Uniopolis is in the township Union Township.

MR. EARL: Right.

MS. MILOSCH: And the metropolis of Union Township was Uniopolis.

MR. EARL: That's right.

MS. MILOSCH: And you began to describe your childhood and family background, that your father was a welder.

MR. EARL: Father was a welder, worked in a school bus factory —

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, wow.

MR. EARL: — in Lima, Ohio.

MS. MILOSCH: In Lima, Ohio.

MR. EARL: And my mother was a housewife all her life.

MS. MILOSCH: And you had two siblings.

MR. EARL: Right — a brother and a sister — brother older, sister younger.

MS. MILOSCH: So you were in the middle?

MR. EARL: Yes, I was the neglected one.

MS. MILOSCH: [Laughs.] I was the neglected one. I was the sandwich meat. I was the meat between the two slices of bread. And did your parents have any interest in the arts?

MR. EARL: No, no.

MS. MILOSCH: But your father was a welder, so he used his hands and tools in making things, fixing things.

MR. EARL: Well, he was — yeah, he had a garage — built the garage and had a shop in the garage. So everything was there, you know, the metal tools and the woodworking tools. So if I wanted a gun, I would go to the garage and make one.

MS. MILOSCH: Really? Did you make a gun?

MR. EARL: Oh, yes. I was raised during the war.

MS. MILOSCH: Right.

MR. EARL: And so guns — was central. And I made, yeah, lots of guns.

MS. MILOSCH: Wow. I don't think I ever met anybody that made a gun.

MR. EARL: Wooden guns.

MS. MILOSCH: Wooden guns — and then would the barrel be the metal, though? I mean —

MR. EARL: No, no metal, just all wood.

MS. MILOSCH: Just all wood, okay.

MR. EARL: And I actually made the guns the same way I work now.

MS. MILOSCH: Really?

MR. EARL: Yeah. I'd see a gun photographed that I liked, and I would just make it larger and copy the gun. I haven't changed.

MS. MILOSCH: I bet your guns have gotten a lot better, though.

MR. EARL: Oh, I made some nice guns. [Laughs.] But, you know, when you're older, you know, your skills improve, so yes.

MS. MILOSCH: Well, that's good.

MR. EARL: What else? What else? Let's see —

MS. MILOSCH: Well, let's see —

MR. EARL: Oh, interest in art — yes.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah.

MR. EARL: Art was — well, our art was Sears & Roebuck art.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, I read that in the book that you said that if we could only read the book in the interview with Lee Nordness.

MR. EARL: Yeah. It was just — decoration was whatever you, you know, would buy to decorate your house with in the local stores. And one of the questions was, did they encourage me in my art? They always gave me supplies. I always had whatever was available again. And I always copied. And the reason I was interested in art was because it was the only thing I could do. I was a very poor student. [Laughs.] A planned poor student.

MS. MILOSCH: Does traditional sitting in classes and studying in that way did not engage your imagination full enough I have a feeling.

MR. EARL: Evidently. [Laughs.] That's very kindly put.

MS. MILOSCH: Did you have an art teacher that you —

MR. EARL: In high school.

MS. MILOSCH: — in high school that kind of mentored your skills and —

MR. EARL: Yes. In grade school, it was all mimeographed and you colored in. The girls were always better colorers than I was.

MS. MILOSCH: Uh-huh [affirmative], staying in the lines.

MR. EARL: Yes. So they got their pictures hung up above the blackboard and I didn't.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, that's funny. I wonder how many of them are hanging their pictures up now. Probably not too many.

MR. EARL: Yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: So did you work in clay when you were in elementary school?

MR. EARL: No, no, nor in high school.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, not even in high school — interesting, interesting.

MR. EARL: I was planning on being a factory worker until I went to high school. And I met my high school art teacher, Darvin Lugenbuhl.

MS. MILOSCH: Say that name again.

MR. EARL: Darvin Lugenbuhl.

MS. MILOSCH: Lugenbuhl — that's a pretty good German name there.

MR. EARL: Yes, it is.

MS. MILOSCH: Wow.

MR. EARL: And he's still living, and I visit him, and we're good friends. He always invites me to his house, and he's real nice.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, wow.

MR. EARL: And I know his son. His son teaches at Bluffton University [Bluffton, OH]. And it's been a long relationship.

MS. MILOSCH: Wow. So he — I mean, it became a friendship. And in your high school art classes, what attracted you then? Were you doing a lot of drawing or painting?

MR. EARL: No, no. I —

MS. MILOSCH: Sculpting?

MR. EARL: — just the standard, you know, just the standard kind of project stuff. But it was, you know, that's what interested me, so I became interested in art. And then I wanted to become a high school art teacher.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, okay.

MR. EARL: So that's what I did. I'm stuck.

MS. MILOSCH: Okay, let's see. I guess here's a question I can't remember, because I have to admit I didn't read the whole book. I read as much of the book as I can. Then you gave me your great new book *Jack, Just fer the Fun and Wonder of It* [Lima, OH : Fairway Press, 2007]. And I thought Frank Paluch said there would be a book called Just for the Heck of It. Was there another book that you wrote called that?

MR. EARL: No.

MS. MILOSCH: Really? Okay, well I'll have to show you this — no wonder my intern couldn't find it.

MR. EARL: Frank?

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, Frank thought that there was a book called — yeah — Jack Earl actually wrote a book. Frank believes it was called Just for the Heck of It.

MR. EARL: That's close.

MS. MILOSCH: But I think he must have meant your new book, right?

MR. EARL: Yes, right.

MS. MILOSCH: Right, right — which I have to say I like *The Fun and Wonder of It* better. Actually, I know I shouldn't confuse this recording with other artists, but I think you'll find this interesting because of Ohio and clay. I've always admired so many of Ohio's ceramic artists. And I was fortunate enough — Viktor Schreckengost was in Washington, D.C. last year. He turned 100 —

MR. EARL: Goodness.

MS. MILOSCH: — and it was really neat to meet him. He was still full of so much energy. And I said, you know, I've been a longtime admirer of your work. And you know what he said? He whispered, I had a lot of fun. So when I saw your title, I thought of him saying, you know, I had a lot of fun. And not very many people would probably be able to say that at the end of their lives. So — although at 100, I think he's still going strong, too.

MR. EARL: That's amazing.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, yeah. So you had your high school art classes and decided this engaged you, and you would like to be a high school art teacher. So then did your teacher encourage you to apply to go to a particular college or school?

MR. EARL: I went to Bluffton College, because it was the closest school to our home. And my brother, who is two years older than I am, was there. He started going, so I went to the same school. And Darvin [ph] was from Bluffton and had gone there also. So he may have encouraged me. I don't remember.

MS. MILOSCH: Right.

MR. EARL: He may have recommended, but I don't know.

MS. MILOSCH: And was it there that you started working in clay?

MR. EARL: That's right. And again, I was copying. The person that was teaching there, a Russian Mennonite refugee —

MS. MILOSCH: Really?

MR. EARL: — he was schooled in the European classical arts. And he was making pottery. And so I wanted to do what he was doing, so I made pottery, too.

MS. MILOSCH: Wow.

MR. EARL: And that's how I got started.

MS. MILOSCH: So you learned to throw on the wheel and make pots in high school —

MR. EARL: Right — no, no, that was in college.

MS. MILOSCH: — I mean in college. Excuse me, excuse me, thank you. See? That was a test. [Laughs.] Now I know we're really rolling. And was it when you started working with clay, did you say wow, I can express myself more in this material because it was three dimensional? I mean, was there any "a-ha" sort of —

MR. EARL: I never dreamed of expressing myself. It never entered my mind.

MS. MILOSCH: That's even more interesting. It's just the making.

MR. EARL: Yeah, it was just making things — enjoying making things I guess. It was just interesting.

MS. MILOSCH: But you were observing other things while you were making things, so you didn't know you were expressing yourself, but you actually were.

MR. EARL: Is that right? [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, of course. Well, there's an artist whose work's on view at the Renwick [Renwick Gallery, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC] right now who lived in Ohio. This Beth Cavener Stichter I mentioned was at Kohler [John Michael Kohler Arts Center, Sheboygan, WI]. And she talks about her parents

gave her clay to play with when she was young. And she thought of clay almost as her first language, it was so familiar. So I'm always curious to know when I meet a ceramic artist like yourself who's worked in the material for so long and also kind of when you encountered porcelain because porcelain is almost a different kind of material than clay in certain ways because it's so challenging and smooth and silky. So did you start throwing porcelain in college?

MR. EARL: No.

MS. MILOSCH: So it was just — were you doing low-fire and high-fire?

MR. EARL: It was low-fire clay — you know, this kind of red stuff, smooth clay. That's what we used.

MS. MILOSCH: Interesting. And so were you making tableware, or were you making more vessels?

MR. EARL: Just whatever came off the wheel.

MS. MILOSCH: Really? So at that point, more just —

MR. EARL: Just developing skill and just learning how to do it. The potters wheels were — you know, the old washer — the old clothes washer, the round — well, they redesigned that, and it was just a plate that came up in the middle of the washer, and it went around. And it was one speed —

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, my.

MR. EARL: — and that was fast. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: So like when you touched that clay, you had to know pretty much just that quickly who was going to win the battle. So your practice with guns was probably good preparation for the war with — I mean, one shouldn't have a war with clay, but when that wheel's turning fast. I should confess, I did studio ceramics myself, and art history. So that's why I'm always attracted to know how you moved into your hand-built sculptural work. Because I know that sometimes you've incorporated vessels. But really, these kind of figurines — so it's interesting when you say you were looking, as you said — did you say the word imitating or did I come up with that? Copying!

MR. EARL: Right, copying.

MS. MILOSCH: Copying, which is different than imitating.

MR. EARL: Yes, it's very — copying more basic, more dishonest I guess. I don't know. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: Well, no, no, no. I think actually copying is more than imitating. Imitating sounds like you never really get to the root.

MR. EARL: That's right. Yeah, that's right.

MS. MILOSCH: Copying means you actually recognize there's something worthwhile.

MR. EARL: [Laughs.] Thank you. Oh, I feel better about my life.

MS. MILOSCH: [Laughs.] It has not been in vain. I've not been a mere shadow to another thing, looking in a mirror. So during your time at Bluffton College, did you continue to take painting and sculpture as well and art history coursework?

MR. EARL: At Bluffton College, it was you signed up for a class. And I remember I signed up for a drawing class. And I went into the class, and there was 30 girls in there.

MS. MILOSCH: All right!

MR. EARL: And I was the only boy?

MS. MILOSCH: Really?

MR. EARL: Yep. And there was these bottles sitting in the middle of the room, and the people were around them, and you were supposed to draw these bottles.

MS. MILOSCH: Well, they all must have gotten a smile on their face when you walked in the door.

MR. EARL: No, girls didn't like me. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: I don't believe that.

MR. EARL: No, it's true. Anyway, that was the last time I went to that class.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, you didn't go back?

MR. EARL: Nope. I went into the other room and made things in clay. And that's the way it went. You signed up for a class, and you did whatever you wanted to do.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, okay. So it wasn't like you signed up for — it was art.

MR. EARL: No, it was painting, but you didn't paint.

MS. MILOSCH: Okay.

MR. EARL: You just went and did whatever you wanted to do.

MS. MILOSCH: And was the —

MR. EARL: It was like graduate school.

MS. MILOSCH: And then was there more than one art professor —

MR. EARL: No.

MS. MILOSCH: — other than the —

MR. EARL: No, only one.

MS. MILOSCH: So he taught everything — painting, drawing, ceramics. Did they have metalsmithing or any —

MR. EARL: No, no metal.

MS. MILOSCH: So no metal. And then plaster and —

MR. EARL: He was — yeah. But he didn't teach it. He was an expert plaster modeler, mold maker, but he didn't teach it.

MS. MILOSCH: Really? I wonder why he didn't teach the mold making. That's kind of interesting.

MR. EARL: It's messy.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, yeah.

MR. EARL: Lots of space and —

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, yeah, I know. You've got to keep that clay and plaster separate or you get in trouble quickly.

MR. EARL: He just kept it very simple, and you could do whatever you wanted to do.

MS. MILOSCH: And then did you, at that time — because there's the wheel and then there's that glaze chemistry, that other technical aspect —

MR. EARL: Our glaze came in bottles. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: See that's — okay. So your glaze — right, because — so you were able to pretty much achieve the colors that you saw on the little samples?

MR. EARL: We didn't have any samples. It was just bottles. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: Didn't you create your own little color tile pallet? I remember doing like a little scientific —

MR. EARL: No, no. It was just making, you know. And the glaze was — we really didn't even care about firing. You know, they did fire it, but it wasn't important.

MS. MILOSCH: And was it an electric kiln or —

MR. EARL: Yeah, electric.

MS. MILOSCH: So all-electric kiln.

MR. EARL: All electric.

MS. MILOSCH: So from the very beginning, you were working with low-fire, electric kilns. So you could get those very vivid reds and yellows and blues that you can't get at high-fire.

MR. EARL: I don't remember them.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah.

MR. EARL: I remember one blue bottle.

MS. MILOSCH: One blue bottle. And what kind of a blue was it?

MR. EARL: Deep — very deep blue. You know, the kind that's real dark and you can see into. And I entered it in a hobby who in Findlay [OH], and it was the only ceramic piece in the hobby show, and I got a second place. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, that's — so very — in Finland? So how did you know to enter an exhibition in Finland?

MR. EARL: Well, my teacher encouraged me. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: Wow.

MR. EARL: So — it was so dumb.

MS. MILOSCH: What did the piece look like?

MR. EARL: It was a little — it was nothing. I never made anything that looked like anything.

MS. MILOSCH: So was it a cylinder? Did you start carving on the clay?

MR. EARL: He did scraffito, a lot of it. And so I did learn that.

MS. MILOSCH: Okay.

MR. EARL: You paint the different colored clay on the clay that you're working with and then scratch a design in.

MS. MILOSCH: Scratch through it and —

MR. EARL: But I was very immature. I didn't do any designs that had any significance. They were just childish kind of things.

MS. MILOSCH: But were you taking art history at all when you were there at the college, too?

MR. EARL: Yeah, he had an art history course. He taught that also.

MS. MILOSCH: He taught that also? Oh, that is interesting. Wow, so he was the all-purpose art professor at the college.

MR. EARL: Right.

MS. MILOSCH: Very interesting. And so were there other classes when you were in college that you — another — literature or science or — no, you were just talking about, you know, didn't really like being in school so much. You liked making things.

MR. EARL: I minored in English, because there was only one course in the English area that required any knowledge. The rest of it was all literature. So all I had to do was read, right. So that was very — you know, I learned to read there. I couldn't read when I left high school. I couldn't read.

MS. MILOSCH: Right, right.

MR. EARL: But I did learn to read in college.

MS. MILOSCH: Wow, right. Well, because your work has such a beautiful narrative quality to it, both in the visual but also in the things that you write. So that's — and when you were taking those classes, is there a period or American literature, British, Russian — seeing you had a Russian art teacher, I thought he might — or did you

just take —

MR. EARL: I just — I assume — I don't remember. I assume it's just the standard English literature, some American, primarily English, I would imagine.

MS. MILOSCH: Do you still read a lot now?

MR. EARL: Yes.

MS. MILOSCH: And do you read a lot of fiction or more —

MR. EARL: I don't read anything that was written after 1850.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, that's great! You know, I barely cross over into the 20th century. I'm pretty picky, too. Really — so pre-1850. So what are some of the authors that you like to read — now that I've put you on the spot?

MR. EARL: Yes. I have to remember their names.

MS. MILOSCH: Well, if it's any consolation, I still can't think of the name of the German wood sculptor that I think that may be the picture of his work that you were looking.

MR. EARL: Yeah, I'm glad you didn't because then I would have to remember it also. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah. Sadly to say, I think I'm about eight names behind since yesterday. So reading only things written before 1850.

MR. EARL: And as far back as I can reach. Of course, I read the Bible.

MS. MILOSCH: Right.

MR. EARL: You know, I was taught the Bible. I read the Bible. I know that.

MS. MILOSCH: You know, I've read the Bible, too. And you know, it's amazing how, you know, in colleges now if you're going to basic liberal arts college, I don't even know if they include that in some of their things, whether they read Proverbs, whether they read Revelation, whether they read the New or the Old Testament. But it certainly gives you a sense of history, the world, Christianity, many, many things. Well, Bluffton College, did they have a religious affiliation?

MR. EARL: Mennonite.

MS. MILOSCH: It was Mennonite. And were you raised Mennonite?

MR. EARL: No, no.

MS. MILOSCH: So were there a lot of — was the majority of — well, I guess your Russian — a Russian Mennonite — I've never met a Russian Mennonite. Was he —

MR. EARL: No, he came out of Russia because of the revolution.

MS. MILOSCH: Right, wow. How old was he, Jack, when he was teaching?

MR. EARL: He was — probably when he was teaching me, I would guess 50, so he was still young. I like things that are difficult to read so that I learn something. I don't want to read something that I'm not learning.

MS. MILOSCH: Do you read [William] Shakespeare plays as well?

MR. EARL: Shakespeare — I've read all around him and I just touched just a little bit. But I don't know. I'm just, you know, I'm just not interested in him for some reason. All they talk about is Shakespeare, Shakespeare. You know, all the authors that I read they just think he's just wonderful. But I just am not —

MS. MILOSCH: That's surprising to me, because your work makes me think of Shakespeare, because your work has elements of the comic and the tragic together, and the two-sided natures of some of the pieces make me think of the stage sets and, you know, the complexity of characters and human beings. So what about [John] Milton?

MR. EARL: Oh, yeah, oh, yeah. Yeah, I've read Milton as much as I can find.

MS. MILOSCH: Milton and [Geoffrey] Chaucer.

MR. EARL: Chaucer, [Herbert] Spencer — that poem about that thick. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: So wow, wow, epic poems. And did you read a lot of the Greeks then if you were reading the Old Testament? Did you —

MR. EARL: Yes, I read the philosophers — you know, Roman philosophers and the —

MS. MILOSCH: Who's my favorite guy? The big one — [Marcus Tullius] Cicero — no. He wrote about Vesuvius when Vesuvius erupted and he was watching it from Pompeii. Roman historian — oh, good, that's two names I don't remember now. Oh my goodness.

MR. EARL: But the early Christian philosophers.

MS. MILOSCH: Like [Saint Thomas] Aquinas?

MR. EARL: Yes, Aquinas.

MS. MILOSCH: Aquinas and Augustin.

MR. EARL: The confessions of — St. Augustine.

MS. MILOSCH: St. Augustine, another great — very good, wow. So that's — but nothing post-18th — what about Mark Twain?

MR. EARL: I used — well, when I started to read, then I read, you know, the standard kind of model stuff. But when I learned how to read, then I quit reading that stuff. Yeah, I've read all of Mark Twain.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, yeah. Because I mean, your work has sometimes been compared to a kind of a Mark Twain perspective or a Regionalist perspective.

Let's see — well, let's see. Discuss your early education and career choices — do you think we've kind of done that? Is there anything else that you think — I mean —

MR. EARL: I just — yeah, I just wandered into what I do, you know.

MS. MILOSCH: And that's great. When you majored in art in college, did your parents have any concern that, how is he going to provide for himself or —

MR. EARL: I was working the wheel one time, and my father came into the room where I was working. And he looked at what I was doing and he said how are you going to make a living doing that? [Laughs.] He had a good question. And I told him that I can teach, and so he was satisfied. That's all it took.

MS. MILOSCH: To say that you were going to — right, to teach, right.

MR. EARL: Because that's why he sent me to college, because he didn't want me to work in a factory, because he knew what it was all about.

MS. MILOSCH: Right, right, right, interesting, right. So he was satisfied. And your mother as well, did she think that was —

MR. EARL: My mother never — she never asked.

MS. MILOSCH: So did you send them some of your pots and plates or cups that you made?

MR. EARL: Actually, I saw them every weekend. I'd go home on the weekend.

MS. MILOSCH: And would you bring home your — the things you were making and they'd start using them?

MR. EARL: Yeah. I remember I had made a plate for mom for Mother's Day with her name on it and little flowers around it. I think there was a butterfly on it, too. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, that's great.

MR. EARL: Just the dumbest stuff.

MS. MILOSCH: I like that butterfly. Just like Veronica out there. Oh, no, no. Is that Veronica out there with the hearts coming out?

MR. EARL: Oh, that's what's her name? Betty.

MS. MILOSCH: That's Betty who's in love with — Archie who's in love with Veronica, right? Right, right. Okay, I get them confused. That was Betty. Boy, that's been a long time ago. Yeah, it was in Ohio when I read all those Archie comics.

MR. EARL: They're still printing them.

MS. MILOSCH: Are they? Yeah, there's an exhibition of cartoons and Japanese wood-block prints at the same time at a museum in Iowa. And it was fun to see those old cartoons and also, you know, these 19th-century wood-block prints that kind of inspired, I think drawing.

MR. EARL: That would be neat.

MS. MILOSCH: So part of your — you were throwing and making these things, but it's not that you were captivated, necessarily, with the idea of I'm going to make cups or a table setting or dinnerware or a tureen. The function part seems not to have interested you so much as the mastery of the wheel and the making.

MR. EARL: Right.

MS. MILOSCH: Interesting, okay. So career choices, we know that was teaching. So you had in your mind as you were perfecting, so you got to kind of choose and set your own curriculum in college. So you were probably doing things you thought would make you a good teacher I imagine.

MR. EARL: No, I just — [laughs] —

MS. MILOSCH: [Laughs.] You were just trying to get through.

MR. EARL: I was just making things. I didn't know or care about anything.

MS. MILOSCH: Wow, wow. Boy, the hoops they have us jump through now in art school.

MR. EARL: Oh, yeah, it's just ridiculous.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, yeah. So when you graduated from Bluffton, what was your — or right before you graduated — did you start to look for a teaching high school position?

MR. EARL: No, I'll tell you how that happened.

MS. MILOSCH: Okay.

MR. EARL: There was an old guy — shaky — [laughs] — he was in charge of placement. And I was married, and I was going to graduate and I knew that I —

MS. MILOSCH: You got married when you were in college?

MR. EARL: Yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, how old were you when you got married?

MR. EARL: Twenty-one.

MS. MILOSCH: Twenty-one.

MR. EARL: Yeah. We both waited until we were 21. No, she wasn't quite 21. But this —

MS. MILOSCH: Go ahead.

MR. EARL: This guy, he was in charge of placement. He didn't do anything, you know. And I realized that something was going to have to happen.

MS. MILOSCH: [Laughs.] You were going to have to shape your own destiny, because this guy was not going to do it.

MR. EARL: Well, I went down to his office, and he wasn't there, of course, you know. And I wanted to talk to him about getting a job somewhere. And on his desk was a letter from New Bremen [OH], and it said that they are looking for an art teacher with a minor in English, and that was me.

MS. MILOSCH: Wow, what a coincidence.

MR. EARL: That is incredible.

MS. MILOSCH: And the letter was on his desk, but he wasn't there?

MR. EARL: That's right.

MS. MILOSCH: So did you just kind of see that on his desk —

MR. EARL: I just saw it and left. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: And then went down and applied for the job.

MR. EARL: I went down and interviewed, and they gave me the job. Because I was in Bluffton, and the guy who was interviewing me was from Bluffton also —

MS. MILOSCH: Okay, so —

MR. EARL: — and his wife.

MS. MILOSCH: So everyone had great sympathy for Bluffton. I was going to ask you — during your summers between college, did you continue to work or teach?

MR. EARL: I worked — let's see, I worked at the school bus factory. My dad got me a job there — two summers. Worked in a — it was factory work. Worked in a — what did they do? Shoe-sole factory — one summer.

MS. MILOSCH: One summer. And so then — so you saw the job in New Bremen, the high school, and started teaching. Did you go through a whole student teaching? Did they have that back then where you had to —

MR. EARL: Yes, I did. I did student teaching. And I student taught under my high school teacher.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, wow, so you went back.

MR. EARL: He had moved to Bluffton, and he was teaching high school in Bluffton.

MS. MILOSCH: That was convenient.

MR. EARL: Yes. So I went down and student taught under him.

MS. MILOSCH: Wow, so that got you started. And then how many years did you teach there in New Bremen?

MR. EARL: I'm not sure. It seemed — Fairlie said five, but it seemed to me it was longer than that. I think I taught longer than that.

MS. MILOSCH: And what were those dates again? We were talking about that yesterday — 19?

MR. EARL: I graduated in — college in '56. Let's see, I taught two years in St. Mary's [OH] so that would be — I got out of graduate school in '69 I think. So two years from that would be '67. So I taught nine years at New Bremen.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, so that was a lot longer than — so you graduated in '56 and then —

MR. EARL: Is that right? Does that add up right?

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, let me just see. I'm going to flip to your CV [curriculum vitae], because I'm going to write that down. I have you graduating from Bluffton in my records at 1956. And you graduated from Ohio State in 1964.

MR. EARL: Oh, '64.

MS. MILOSCH: Well, that's what it says here.

MR. EARL: No — well, I guess it could be. I don't know. [Laughs.] When were you born?

MS. MILOSCH: Nineteen sixty-four, remember?

MR. EARL: There you are! It must have been '64.

MS. MILOSCH: [Laughs.] So between Bluffton and graduate school, you were teaching in New Bremen. And now we know that one of your students was Jim Dickey —

MR. EARL: Yes.

MS. MILOSCH: — who has turned out to be quite a art collector and supporter of artists and museums and a painter. Has worked in clay, too, he says. Well, I guess most recently at the spa apparently.

MR. EARL: Yes.

MS. MILOSCH: Made a pinch pot. I saw that pinch pot today.

MR. EARL: Oh, is that right?

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, yeah, yeah. [Laughs.] It's good someone else is going to be glazing it for him, but hopefully it doesn't blow up in the kiln. So let's see, let's see, let's see. Okay. Well, we already talked about what motivated your interest in ceramics didn't we kind of? I mean, you didn't do it in high school, but then in college. We know there were too many girls in drawing, so you went over to the other side just to be with the clay. Were there never many women who threw on the wheel? Do you remember?

MR. EARL: Not very many people at all threw on the wheel.

MS. MILOSCH: Wow.

MR. EARL: There were just maybe four or five as I recall.

MS. MILOSCH: Well, that high speed probably scared a lot of them away.

MR. EARL: There was a big table in the room, and people would sit around that and, you know, make things with their fingers. But not very many people worked on the wheel.

MS. MILOSCH: Wow, interesting. So anything else about, I don't know, the clay or anything that made you think this is my material? Or had you even thought — when you graduated from Bluffton, did you even think, I must work in ceramics? Or were you —

MR. EARL: When I graduated from Bluffton, I wanted — no, that was probably later. I think my brother went and got a Master's degree, and I thought well, you know, I'd like to have a Master's degree too, you know. But no one that I knew knew that it was possible to get a Master's in ceramic art.

MS. MILOSCH: Wow.

MR. EARL: The only Master's that was available was ceramic engineering. And I knew I wasn't going to do that.

MS. MILOSCH: Right, right, interesting.

MR. EARL: So when I did find out that, well, that it was possible to get a Master's in ceramic art, then that was a goal. But that's the kind of education I got at Bluffton.

MS. MILOSCH: Right.

MR. EARL: It was just Bluffton centered.

MS. MILOSCH: Not necessarily exposing you to the, you know, the next step if you want to develop yourself as an — well, if you had a Russian Mennonite teacher who wasn't formed in this country, it's a completely different process. I mean, they have their apprenticeship programs in Europe and then there's art academies. But you didn't have the arts connecting with the university like we do in America. I mean, that —

MR. EARL: Right.

MS. MILOSCH: So you were teaching in New Bremen and found out about the Ohio State [University, Columbus, OH] program.

MR. EARL: I found out about graduate schools.

MS. MILOSCH: Okay.

MR. EARL: And so the closest graduate school was Bowling Green [State University, Bowling Green, OH].

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, yeah.

MR. EARL: So I applied there, and they rejected me. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, that's funny. Wow, wow, their loss. [Laughs.]

MR. EARL: So I went down to Ohio State, and they were more diplomatic. The guy who was the head of the school, he said well, why don't you come down during the summer, and we'll get to know each other.

MS. MILOSCH: Well, that's very human rather than just saying, you know, looking at what you had made and your portfolio.

MR. EARL: So that's what I did. And by the end of the first quarter — or yeah, I think it was a quarter system — during the summer, they gave me graduate credit for the first course.

MS. MILOSCH: So they already — and then at that time, had you started your family yet?

MR. EARL: Yes. We had three kids.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, really? Wow. So while you were — so you had to quit teaching? You quit teaching in New Bremen, entered graduate school at Ohio State. How did you support your family?

MR. EARL: My brother and I built houses during the summers. You know, we were both teachers and we'd build a house and finish it in the summer. Well, we'd work on into the fall and we sold the houses and made money. And I used that money to go to graduate school.

MS. MILOSCH: Wow. I mean, so you're — making things really is something that you — because you would have been pouring concrete and wood and laying bricks.

MR. EARL: Yep, we did it all — wiring, plumbing, did everything.

MS. MILOSCH: And your brother, what did he major in? Or what was his —

MR. EARL: Chemistry. He taught chemistry.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, wow.

MR. EARL: He got a Master's in chemical something or other. But he also taught. He taught in Waynesfield [OH] over here. And then they made him a principal or something like that, you know. Some administrative job. So he was off during the summers, and he had money. He furnished the money for — he wasn't married, so he had the money to buy the materials and so forth.

MS. MILOSCH: Wow, wow. And so graduate programs now are two years. Did you —

MR. EARL: One year.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, in one year. Oh, okay.

MR. EARL: Yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: Wow.

MR. EARL: I don't have a Master's of Fine Arts. I just have a Master's of Arts.

MS. MILOSCH: Masters of Arts, okay, all right.

MR. EARL: Oh, I wanted to tell you that my father was — he always built everything. He remodeled the house and, you know, we were always helping him. It was just making things and repairing things. Nobody ever heard of hiring anyone to do anything.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, that's interesting.

MR. EARL: Fixed his own cars — everything.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, yeah, interesting.

MR. EARL: And he was a welder, so he could handle metal, and wood was easy. And we lived next door to a lumber yard, so I could have all the lumber scraps I wanted.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, wow, no wonder you were making guns out of wood.

MR. EARL: Yep. Made a lot of things.

MS. MILOSCH: Wow, wow. Well, that's good. Had you worked in other media? Well, we kind of covered that. Building those houses, you were basically working in every media.

MR. EARL: Yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: And comfortable with all kinds of tools. I mean — and then when you were in graduate school — I mean, did you go to graduate school with the idea then knowing you could teach college and university level? Was that the —

MR. EARL: Right, yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: Sort of not only develop yourself as an artist but the possibility to continue to teach or —

MR. EARL: Well, college teaching is a nice, soft job, and I wanted the time. And so that's why I wanted to do that.

MS. MILOSCH: Did you want time already thinking to make your own work?

MR. EARL: Yes, yes, but I learned that in graduate school mostly. When I quit teaching high school, I told the guy, you know, that I would like to be able to come back, you know, and teach after I got my Master's. He said you won't be interested. And he was right.

MS. MILOSCH: Right, wow.

MR. EARL: So I learned about art and college teaching and so forth in graduate school.

MS. MILOSCH: Well, I was just trying to do that math again. Because if you left Bluffton in '56 and you started teaching in New Bremen in — would it have been fall of '56?

MR. EARL: Yes, that's right.

MS. MILOSCH: Then '56, '57, '58, '59, '60 — that's — wait, that's more than 10 years of teaching. Did you —

MR. EARL: I taught two years in St. Mary's.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, St. Mary's you said, okay. And that — where is St. Mary's? Is that a high school?

MR. EARL: That's right beside New Bremen.

MS. MILOSCH: Okay.

MR. EARL: It's just down the road.

MS. MILOSCH: Was than an all-girls school?

MR. EARL: No, no, no, just a public school.

MS. MILOSCH: Just a public school.

MR. EARL: St. Mary is the name of the town.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, okay, okay, okay. So two years there and then you were at Bluffton. So that would have been '58 to '68 — almost 10 years which you said you thought it was like nine years. So that makes sense. Let's see, let's see — oh boy, here we go. This is a big one, but you may not find it so interesting. Could you discuss the difference, if any, between a university-trained artist and one who has learned his or her craft outside academia?

MR. EARL: Could I — what was the question?

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, I guess basically —

MR. EARL: Could I discuss it? No. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: Do I want to discuss it? No. Well, we kind of already talked about it a little bit, because your professor, the Russian Mennonite, did not — I mean, he had — in fact, was he trained at an academy in Russia? I

would imagine so. Or was he an apprentice trained?

MR. EARL: Whatever kind of art schools they have over there, that's where he went.

MS. MILOSCH: That's where he went, and then he came here. So I don't even know how this question is really relevant. I'm trying to think of it as relevant at all. I mean, basically they're always trying to get back to artists who don't, I guess, train outside of the academy in craft or, you know, really just —

MR. EARL: The only comment I've got on that is if you are in a academic situation and you're forced to do something, which I believe in, then it has to speed up the process. That's all. You know, you're just gaining time. I don't see where it makes any difference at all because you're really on your own. If you're in a good school you're on your own. It's the same thing.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah. It's a great thing. It is good that you had sort of two mentors in a way — your high school teacher it sounds like, who you're still friends with, and then this Russian professor. It sounds like you had a very —

MR. EARL: I had one in graduate school, too.

MS. MILOSCH: And who was that?

MR. EARL: Paul Bogatay was his name.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, yeah.

MR. EARL: He was a real sharpie.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah. How long — he taught at Ohio State for a long time, right?

MR. EARL: Yeah, yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: And did he — I'm trying to remember which part of the Ohio clay connection he had. Well, I guess — I don't know. I was just reading about him again, because I was thinking about — was he from Cleveland [OH]? Did he —

MR. EARL: It seemed to me, yes.

MS. MILOSCH: Is he the one that said you come down and we'll get to know each other?

MR. EARL: No. That was the director of the school. And the first class I taught Bogatay happened to be teaching then.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, I was trying to think — you know, I guess he's not in this article that I was looking up. And what — how did he challenge you? Or what did he inspire?

MR. EARL: I remember he said one thing to me one time, and it was during the summer, and I was working on the wheel. And he just walked up to me, and he said you know, you can make anything you want. And that never occurred to me.

MS. MILOSCH: He said you know you can make anything you want? Meaning —

MR. EARL: Meaning I don't have to make what I'm making. Whatever was on the wheel there, I don't have to make that. I can make anything.

MS. MILOSCH: Right, right. But it sounds like it was also a comment on your technical skills at that point.

MR. EARL: It might have been. It might have been, I don't know.

MS. MILOSCH: So that's pretty amazing. I mean, that you — so during the time you were at New Bremen, did you continue to throw a lot on the wheel, or did you start hand building at that time?

MR. EARL: No, it was all wheelwork.

MS. MILOSCH: Wow, I've got to see some of your early wheelwork. Do you have any of that around?

MR. EARL: No. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: Really? I bet you have a cup, a plate, a saucer, a bowl somewhere?

MR. EARL: I can't think of anything.

MS. MILOSCH: So that's pretty amazing. So throughout that time, you were still throwing and making pretty traditional — I mean, you were making — let's say approaching clay in a traditional way in terms of vessels off the wheel and then doing various decoration. Were you drawing on the clay surface at that time?

MR. EARL: I don't think so.

MS. MILOSCH: More patterns and decoration than any kind of a scene or drawing figures or —

MR. EARL: Right, right, right. There probably wasn't even any pattern or decoration. It was just glaze, you know. Just put color, seal it.

MS. MILOSCH: Wow, wow. So when you were working on the wheel, did you set up challenges for yourself to throw as thin as possible? Or did you thrown porcelain then eventually? Or were you still —

MR. EARL: Still.

MS. MILOSCH: — low-fire?

MR. EARL: I think it was — no. It was stoneware. You know, university — at that time, the Japanese ceramics was hot, and everybody was using stoneware.

MS. MILOSCH: Right.

MR. EARL: And so that's what they had. And he had just come back from Japan, and he was all Japanese. But I didn't — at that time, I wasn't interested in Japanese. I wasn't interested in anything. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: [Laughs.] Or at least you didn't start making tea bowls right away.

MR. EARL: No, no, no. That was when I stayed there for a year. And then I became a Japanese ceramic artist.

MS. MILOSCH: When you stayed in —

MR. EARL: At the university — you know, in Columbus.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, in — okay, when you stayed in Columbus for the year then you became interested in the Japanese ceramics tradition.

MR. EARL: Yes, because that's what everybody was doing.

MS. MILOSCH: Right, right.

MR. EARL: So that's what I did, too.

MS. MILOSCH: Did they build an anagama kiln then for wood firing?

MR. EARL: No, no. It was all gas.

MS. MILOSCH: Gas.

MR. EARL: It was gas.

MS. MILOSCH: Reduction ware and —

MR. EARL: Right, yes, reduction and all that stuff.

MS. MILOSCH: So no salt or —

MR. EARL: No, they didn't do salt. Maybe they did. I don't remember though. But it was in the university in the basement of a big building and in the middle of Columbus. So I don't know about salt.

MS. MILOSCH: Right, right, right — those chlorine fumes.

MR. EARL: I don't know how that would go.

MS. MILOSCH: Chlorine gas.

MR. EARL: I don't remember salt — might have been.

MS. MILOSCH: But Paul Bogatay, he also did figurative work if I remember correctly.

MR. EARL: Yes, he did.

MS. MILOSCH: Along the lines of Weyland Gregory a little bit. Maybe I'm — did he train at Cranbrook [Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, MI]?

MR. EARL: He didn't have a degree.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, very interesting.

MR. EARL: I don't know. I think he came out of industry — industrial design.

MS. MILOSCH: Industrial design. And was there anyone else? Who else was teaching at Ohio State at that time other than Paul?

MR. EARL: Lots of them.

MS. MILOSCH: Anybody that you want to remember? Anyone that we can mention on the tape recording? People you don't want to remember. That's okay, too. That's where you should have signed a release.

MR. EARL: [Laughs.] They were so funny. I'll tell you, what a tribe. It was funny.

MS. MILOSCH: What a tribe. You don't have to —

MR. EARL: I'm glad Bogatay was there. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, my goodness.

MR. EARL: [Carleton] Atherton was — he drank his lunch.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, my goodness.

MR. EARL: He would come in. He was so happy. [Laughs.] And he'd teach those old ladies. You know, the ceramics classes were high school teachers that came, you know, for the summer.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, okay, okay.

MR. EARL: [Laughs.] And he always dressed really proper — a tie and just these sports jackets, you know.

MS. MILOSCH: Into the clay studio?

MR. EARL: Oh, yes, yes.

MS. MILOSCH: With a tie and a sports coat?

MR. EARL: Oh, yes, yes.

MS. MILOSCH: Really?

MR. EARL: He never got any dirt on him. [Laughs.] Oh, it was funny. But you know, whatever — I was in a big room with lots of people. And the teachers would come. You know, I was there all day, and the teachers would come and go. And I always listened to everything that was said.

MS. MILOSCH: Right.

MR. EARL: And so I really learned. You know, I really learned a lot.

MS. MILOSCH: By other people's questions and how they were responding.

MR. EARL: Yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: So how many people were on the faculty in Ohio State in the ceramics department?

MR. EARL: Let's see — Bogatay, [Edgar] Littlefield, [Gene] Friley — Atherton— and a woman.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh.

MR. EARL: So there were five. The woman — the woman you didn't see much of.

MS. MILOSCH: You don't even remember her name.

MR. EARL: [Margaret] Fetzer.

MS. MILOSCH: Fetzer.

MR. EARL: Yeah. She made pottery this tall.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, miniatures.

MR. EARL: Yeah. Threw it with toothpicks. That was her —

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, you must be kidding me.

MR. EARL: That was her fame.

MS. MILOSCH: Throwing little tiny miniature pots with toothpicks. Wow. Were they for doll houses or ceramic thimbles?

MR. EARL: Ring sets — I don't know. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: Gem stones — oh my goodness, that's funny. Were there fellow students or friendships that were formed during that time?

MR. EARL: Oh, yes, yes.

MS. MILOSCH: Anyone that you met that you maintained a —

MR. EARL: Yeah, my roommate in the studio was — Robert Stull was his name.

MS. MILOSCH: How do you spell that?

MR. EARL: S-t-u-l-l I think.

MS. MILOSCH: Stull, okay.

MR. EARL: And he made Japanese pottery, too. Oh, Howard Kottler was there.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, right.

MR. EARL: Yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: The bag next door. That's the big guy.

MR. EARL: Yeah. He was in the same studio. You know, it was a big room split in half. And Stull and I were in one half, and he was in the other. And we became good friends. I don't know why he liked me, because he hated everybody. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: Kottler hated everybody? I had never got to meet him, but he seemed —

MR. EARL: But he liked Fairlie [Faye Hanson, his wife] and I. And Fairlie would go over and help him make his pots.

MS. MILOSCH: Fairlie would go over and help him make his pots? Was he not doing sculpture yet at that time, too?

MR. EARL: No, it was all pottery.

MS. MILOSCH: Wow. And did he graduate still making pottery? Did he leave?

MR. EARL: Yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: Now, when you were done, were you still making pottery when you left?

MR. EARL: No. That's another thing. Bogatay came in one day, and said why don't you put a Coke bottle on that.

MS. MILOSCH: Put a Coke bottle on that?

MR. EARL: Yeah, because he kind of graduated from the Japanese —

MS. MILOSCH: To the Pop art.

MR. EARL: — to the Pop art, right.

MS. MILOSCH: That's funny.

MR. EARL: And so I started making sculpture. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: But that connects up — you can make anything you want in a way.

MR. EARL: Yeah, yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: You can make your reality in clay if you want.

MR. EARL: Yeah. But Stull, he continued in ceramics. And then he got a job at Ann Arbor, married another ceramic person down there. What's her name? Zirbes was her name.

MS. MILOSCH: Not Georgette Zirbes?

MR. EARL: Yeah, Georgette Zirbes.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, my goodness. I even studied with her.

MR. EARL: Oh, you did?

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, I did. Well, I didn't last long. I had the same experience you did. I applied to Michigan. But after I did my summer, they said you know, we really think you'd be better off at Eastern Michigan University.

MR. EARL: Good grief!

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, yeah. They sent me away. They sent me away.

MR. EARL: Isn't that unbelievable.

MS. MILOSCH: It was pretty funny. Actually, John Stevenson was teaching there. And his wife, Suzanne Stevenson, was teaching at Eastern. But we won't go into my life, because that's not what's interesting.

MR. EARL: That's what's interesting to me.

MS. MILOSCH: [Laughs.] So, oh, wow. Because when I knew Georgette, she was not married. So I don't know —

MR. EARL: Well, he divorced her.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, okay.

MR. EARL: They went up there, and he got — they hired him to start — that's when the African studies thing came in. And he was teaching ceramics there. And they hired him to head up the African studies program.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, wow.

MR. EARL: And he decided that he needed a black wife if he was going to teach — [laughs] — if he was going to teach black studies. So he divorced her and married a woman in Columbus.

MS. MILOSCH: And this was the early '70s now, right?

MR. EARL: Yeah, something like that. I don't remember.

MS. MILOSCH: Or I guess '69 we figured out. That's pretty funny.

MR. EARL: Yeah. That would be probably mid '70s. Yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: Wow, wow.

MR. EARL: So that's the way that went. But I kept in touch with him, you know. He went down to Ohio State — he left there and went to Ohio State and headed the art department down there. And so I stayed friends with him. That was the most long-lasting friendship I got out of that, except for Kottler. I always was friends with Kottler. But you know, he was out in a way away.

MS. MILOSCH: Where did he go after that? I'm trying to remember.

MR. EARL: He went to Seattle.

MS. MILOSCH: Seattle — and stayed out there. Yeah, yeah.

MR. EARL: And went nuts.

MS. MILOSCH: I know — went nuts and it wasn't just the bag next door.

MR. EARL: [Laughs.] Yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: That's the —

MR. EARL: He had his own bag.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, he had his own bag. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Oh boy, whew. Yeah. Well, it's funny because I asked you yesterday if Grant Wood's work was of any particular interest or anything you looked to in imagery and approach, because he was a regional artist or is connected with the regionalist art movement. And Kottler was really attracted to Grant Wood's work. He even did — what he was doing, these decal series. He did a series of *American Gothic* [1930] images on —

MR. EARL: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, I remember that. Those plates were nice.

MS. MILOSCH: Yep. And I'm happy to say we have one in the Renwick now.

MR. EARL: I thought you were going to say you had one.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, I wish had one. No, no. Helen Drutt from Philadelphia — I did a Grant Wood exhibition ["Grant Wood's Studio: Birthplace of *American Gothic*" March 10, 2006 — July 16, 2006] for the Renwick. That was my first show. Actually I had started in Iowa and brought it there. And I thought it was really nice, because she said well, I think you need one of Howard Kottler's American Gothic plates. I said I think so, too.

MR. EARL: He told me one time — he said I'd buy these plates for $1.

MS. MILOSCH: The blanks?

MR. EARL: Yeah. And decorate them and sell them for 50 [dollars]. Pretty smart for a Jewish boy, huh?

MS. MILOSCH: [Laughs.] Oh, man. Wow, wow. Oh, wow, this is so much more interesting than going back to these boring questions, because they sound so rigid. But I think they're good to, you know, spring with it. This one is, what has been your most rewarding educational experience?

MR. EARL: I've already told you that.

MS. MILOSCH: That's what I feel like, too. It was a cumulative one.

MR. EARL: Yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: And now we know Bogatay's comment and the different development.

MR. EARL: Yeah, yes. If you had asked me that question straight out, I wouldn't have been able to answer it. But you know, just conversation —

MS. MILOSCH: Just what we've been talking about kind of answers that. Okay. I'm going to see if I can hit pause here and give everybody a break. Wow, we're almost on 60 minutes.

[END MD 01 TR 01, BEGIN MD 02 TR 01]

MS. MILOSCH: Well, when we left off we were talking about educational experience. What has been your most rewarding educational experience?

MR. EARL: Oh, yes. That's right.

MS. MILOSCH: Did we exhaust that topic?

MR. EARL: I think so.

MS. MILOSCH: Is there anything else you wanted to add about rewarding educational experience?

MR. EARL: No. Oh, there is one thing. I heard [Robert] Arneson say one time that he really learned a lot from his students and I thought — [laughs] —

MS. MILOSCH: Did it happen with you?

MR. EARL: I thought, that is utter nonsense. [They laugh.]

MS. MILOSCH: So those students were not so sharp, huh? Maybe he had a lot to learn.

MR. EARL: That's a dangerous thing for Arneson to take advice from his students, I would say.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, yeah. Well.

MR. EARL: That's it.

MS. MILOSCH: That's it for rewarding educational experiences.

MR. EARL: Yes. That was an educational experience.

MS. MILOSCH: All right. Well, here's the next one — I don't know — did you apprentice with anyone? And if so, describe your relationship.

MR. EARL: No.

MS. MILOSCH: Not really, right — other than not an official kind of university.

MR. EARL: No. Not with anyone. No.

MS. MILOSCH: All right. Let me —

MR. EARL: That saved an hour.

MS. MILOSCH: That saved an hour right there. I'm moving my books back up here.

Okay. The next one is: Have you had any involvement with Penland School of Crafts [Penland, NC], Haystack Mountain School of Craft [Deer Isle, ME], Arrowmont [School of Arts and Crafts, Gatlinburg, TN], Pilchuck [Glass School, Stanwood, WA], Archie Bray [Foundation, Helena, MT] or other educational institutional institutions devoted to craft? If so, please describe your experiences at each.

MR. EARL: No.

MS. MILOSCH: No? Oh, so you —

MR. EARL: I'm heard of all of those.

MS. MILOSCH: You've heard all those, but you did not — but didn't you go back — haven't you taught at some of these places?

MR. EARL: No.

MS. MILOSCH: Really? Oh, wow! So in all the workshops that you do you've done them mostly at universities or —

MR. EARL: Yeah. I went to that one at — oh, what is it? Where [Paul] Soldner lives.

MS. MILOSCH: California, Otis?

MR. EARL: No.

MS. MILOSCH: Wait. Why was I thinking — Soldner was —

MR. EARL: The ski place. Where is that? Where rich people go to ski.

MS. MILOSCH: In Colorado? Banff? No.

MR. EARL: Yeah. I think that was — Denver —

MS. MILOSCH: Oh. That would be Haystack. Isn't that Haystack?

MR. EARL: Denver — right. The airplane landed in Denver and then we went to —

MS. MILOSCH: Arrowmont? Penland's in the south. Haystack is on the island. Yeah, what is the name of the one that's out there?

MR. EARL: Yeah — that real plush little town.

MS. MILOSCH: Right. Oh, I can't —

MR. EARL: But I did do a workshop there. It was a nice workshop. Nice people. Nice students.

MS. MILOSCH: And it's not Penland. It's definitely Penland; not Haystack; not Arrowmont, not Archie Bray — that's in Montana. What is the name of that place? I can't believe it's not listed.

[Pause for direction.]

MS. MILOSCH: Okay. But that was to teach?

MR. EARL: Right.

MS. MILOSCH: Well, I put down Kohler, because I thought this might be a nice time to talk about Kohler, because you told me you were the first artist in residence there. So how did that come about?

MR. EARL: I called her — I wanted to do something in industry.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh wow! This is —

MR. EARL: My first thought was, well, I wanted to learn something about casting.

MS. MILOSCH: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Slip casting?

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And I wanted to — my idea was to use the forms and readjust them and make stuff out of them. What I really wanted to do was to go to a lamp factory where you have a great variety of shapes. But I didn't know any lamp factories, but I know Ruth [Kohler] and so I called her and —

MS. MILOSCH: How did you know Ruth?

MR. EARL: She'd had a show for me — several years — while I was still teaching in Toledo. This was when I was teaching in Virginia. And so I called her up and she said, "We were just thinking about that!"

MS. MILOSCH: Really?

MR. EARL: Yeah. I told her I wanted to — you know, I was thinking about coming up and working maybe in the factory. So I went.

MS. MILOSCH: Did you go over — was it between — you were teaching in Toledo [OH]. Oh, no. You were teaching in Virginia.

MR. EARL: Virginia when I did that.

MS. MILOSCH: So did you go in the summer months? Was it three months?

MR. EARL: I think we went during the Christmas vacation, which is about a month it seemed to me. It's been a long time.

MS. MILOSCH: And were you the only artist there, Jack? Or do did they have another one?

MR. EARL: No. I asked another guy to go with me. LaDousa. I met him somewhere somehow or other.

MS. MILOSCH: LaDousa? What's his first name?

MR. EARL: Tom. Tom LaDousa. Yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: Tom LaDousa.

MR. EARL: He was out of Louisiana. I used to go to the conferences. I probably met him at a conference. I don't know.

MS. MILOSCH: Was that NCECA [National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts]?

MR. EARL: Yeah, probably.

You know, when you teach then you get the time off to do all that business — to go to conference. So that's probably where I met him. He was a real fun guy. So that's how that happened.

MS. MILOSCH: That's how that happened with Kohler.

MR. EARL: There's an extended article on that either in *Ceramics Monthly* or what was that magazine — *Craft Horizons* at that time?

MS. MILOSCH: I didn't see that. I —

MR. EARL: Yeah. That's it right there.

MS. MILOSCH: This one? Oh, okay.

MR. EARL: I think I just saw a picture of some of LaDousa's stuff. Yeah, that stuff.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh.

MR. EARL: We spent a lot of time —

MS. MILOSCH: This is from 2003.

MR. EARL: We spent a lot of time on that article for them.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh. Well, this is called "50 Years of Letters to the Editor."

MR. EARL: I don't know what — that must not be it then.

MS. MILOSCH: But you're right. "Sculptures by Tom LaDousa and Jack Earl Shown in the Kohler Experiment Brought Forth Angry Letters for the Rest of the Year.'"

MR. EARL: Who knows? I don't know.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh. No, no, here's the — it refers to the article. It says, "Sculptures by Tom and Jack Earl shown in January 1975 article. The Kohler experiment brought forth angry letters for the rest of the year. Comments included 'Make up your mind. Do you want to be a magazine for rinky-dink elementary school teachers or a magazine for potters? The day such trash is accepted as art I will change my trade. It makes a good craftsman want to throw up." Oh my goodness. Let's see —

MR. EARL: They could have at least said vomit. [They laugh.] That's gross.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh my goodness! Nineteenth — you saw — let's see, where was the cover? There it was: January 1975. I'm going to have to get a copy of that. Wow! So what do you think they were reacting to? The work?
MR. EARL: I suppose. I don't know. The article's just about the experience there.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh yeah. Here's the sink chair. Oh, that's what you're talking — those were the two pieces, right?

MR. EARL: Oh, we made a gob of stuff.

MS. MILOSCH: Okay.

MR. EARL: We had a show — filled that place.

MS. MILOSCH: *The Good Tooth Fairy Car* [date]*. The Urinary Hand-Built Editions* [date]. That's really funny. It's a little racecar.

MR. EARL: I can understand why potters wouldn't like it — I guess. I don't know. I wouldn't even consider that —

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah. Well, this is funny. The one thing that — maybe just to reverse. When we left Ohio State you were still throwing, right?

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MILOSCH: And at the end you made the Coke bottle — you talked about making some —

MR. EARL: Made some sculpture.

MS. MILOSCH: So that was — you were probably — not your first forays into hand building, but where you started to think off-the-wheel. And did you start exhibiting those pretty much right away?

MR. EARL: No, no. I never showed any of them.

MS. MILOSCH: So you were making them, but just sort of as experiments for yourself.

MR. EARL: Right. They were just graduate school stuff. You know, it wasn't anything.

MS. MILOSCH: And then —

MR. EARL: I never considered showing.

MS. MILOSCH: Well, what about that piece that went to Finland? Didn't we say you threw a piece and it was sent to an exhibition. Was that Findlay?

MR. EARL: Oh, yes! Findlay.

MS. MILOSCH: Findlay, Ohio!

MR. EARL: That's the name of a town. Right — it's just right down —

MS. MILOSCH: Not Finland.

MR. EARL: No, not Finland. Oh dear, no.

MS. MILOSCH: I was thinking, wow, because you had the Russian teacher. I thought the Russian teacher — I thought the Russian teacher said, "You know, Finland's just across the sea — just across the sea." Findlay, Findlay, Findlay.

MR. EARL: Yeah. It's just down the road.

MS. MILOSCH: Okay, okay, okay.

MR. EARL: I'm glad we got that straightened out.

MS. MILOSCH: It was not yet in Finland.

MR. EARL: I don't want to have that kind of image.

MS. MILOSCH: [Laughs.] So then from Ohio State you went to teach at Toledo [Toledo Museum of Art: Toledo School of Art and Design, Toledo, OH].

MR. EARL: At Toledo. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MILOSCH: Were you teaching at the University of Toledo or were you at the —

MR. EARL: Art school.

MS. MILOSCH: You were at the art school, which was part of the museum.

MR. EARL: School of design. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MILOSCH: And that started there in 1969 you finished up, you said, right?

MR. EARL: I guess. I don't remember. I taught there a long while. I can't remember.

MS. MILOSCH: What does it say in your biography? Oh, it doesn't have your teaching stuff on there. Ah, here it is. It say you taught at '64-'72 instructor, Toledo Museum of Art.

MR. EARL: That sounds — yeah that was eight years.

MS. MILOSCH: And how did — we heard how the New Bremen job came up. How did you find out about Toledo or were they advertising for a professor in ceramics?

MR. EARL: No. Do you know Norm Schuman?

MS. MILOSCH: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. EARL: He was teaching ceramics there and they were looking for someone with a background in art and in art education to teach their art education classes at Toledo. So I — and I think I met him at a party that Darvin Lugenbuhl [sp] had at his house. And he told me about it and suggested apply and I did. So I got that job. But I was teaching art education.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh. So when you were in Toledo you were teaching art education?

MR. EARL: For I think two years. And then Norm left and I took his job. So that's how I got into teaching college ceramics.

MS. MILOSCH: And was that the time that Harvey Littleton started showing up there with Dominick Labino and the glass —

MR. EARL: They had their first glass gathering while I was there.

MS. MILOSCH: That's what I would have thought.

MR. EARL: Yeah. They made those little ugly gobs of glass.

MS. MILOSCH: Right. Those blobs, because Harvey trained as a ceramist as well. And he was still teaching in Wisconsin at Madison, right?

MR. EARL: Yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: Wow. So — I — you know, from — I haven't read everything, but I read that you saw some Meissen porcelain figurines.

MR. EARL: Oh, yeah, yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: Is that at the Toledo Museum of Arts collection?

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: Is that where this connection between making the Coke bottles and those narratives came about?

MR. EARL: I don't think it had anything — no, I don't think it had anything to do with it. It's just that during the time that I was in Toledo, the — what's that called — expressionistic ceramics. [Rudy] Autio was making the slab pieces and Voulkos was doing those slab things. And that's what was in style then and everybody was doing that stuff.

MS. MILOSCH: Right.

MR. EARL: And I decided that that was — when everybody does something you can't be doing it too.

MS. MILOSCH: Right. [Laughs.]

MR. EARL: That is not going to work. And so I just — I'd been working at the museum and

I knew — I had some ladies in class and I knew what they liked. They liked the European porcelain. And so I thought, well, I'll make some European porcelain.

MS. MILOSCH: Really?

MR. EARL: Yeah. And so I got — one of the ladies had a porcelain formula with the glaze that fitted and I got that and started to — I went to the library at the museum and found photographs of the European porcelain, picked out the ones I like — are you having trouble there?

MS. MILOSCH: I'm having some trouble here.

[Pause for direction.]

MR. EARL: Anyway, I copied the European porcelain and I never did learn to throw it. I would just coil it and then throw the coils. So it was very thin. I could make it just as thin as I wanted it. And I made templates so that I knew exactly what shape I wanted them to be and then I started putting some Ohio kind of information on the pots and on the lids. And that's how I got started. And the first time I showed them I sent them to the Syracuse Museum [Syracuse Museum of Fine Arts, now the Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, NY]. Is it — yeah, they used to have —

MS. MILOSCH: The ceramics annual exhibition.

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] I sent them there and got an award. So —

MS. MILOSCH: The first time?

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] The first time I showed them. So — the guy who was teaching at Chicago — I forget his name — he gave me an award. He judged the show.

MS. MILOSCH: Well, I was thinking Bill Farrell, but that couldn't have been — Bill Farrell was later, I think.

MR. EARL: Name's —

MS. MILOSCH: It could've been Bill Farrell. He taught here at the Art Institute and I think he was at Alfred [Alfred University, Alfred, NY] and the Everson Museum started — did the Eberson Museum then acquire the pieces that got an award?

MR. EARL: Yes. They took one of them.

MS. MILOSCH: So that was all the response that you needed to know that it was something different. So you started making these delicate, well-crafted things with imagery that was painted on.

MR. EARL: It was sculptured.

MS. MILOSCH: So this was still — those were those solid-colored porcelain pieces.

MR. EARL: Right.

MS. MILOSCH: Okay. So right now there was no color.

MR. EARL: No color. I don't remember when I did start china painting. But I did start — I was china painting in Toledo.

Oh, and that's when — while I was in Toledo is when Paul Smith came out and looked at my work. Oh, yeah, the way I got in contact with Paul Smith was he judged a show in Louisville at the craft center and he gave me an award. And two years later they had this show. He gave me an award. And then I got a letter from him. He wanted to show in New York.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, and you had a show that quickly in New York at American Craft — well, American Craft Museum, now Museum of Art and Design. Somehow, the word "craft" got squeezed out. Wow! That's interesting. Yeah, I saw that listed. So Paul Smith saw your work and encouraged — see, that's why I'm doing what I'm doing? It's not totally without success then. That's great!

MR. EARL: And that's where I — Lee Nordness saw the work there and I became friends with him and met Karen, then Keland, now Boyd, through that.

MS. MILOSCH: Who — was it Karen Boyd? Keland?

MR. EARL: Keland — she's a supporter of the crafts movement. She buys, buys, buys stuff.

MS. MILOSCH: Not Karen Boyd Johnson?

MR. EARL: Yes. Her name was Keland.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, was Keland. Got it. Yeah, yeah. That's makes sense.

MR. EARL: Right. Then she married the Boyd.

MS. MILOSCH: That's kind of funny when I think about it. Kohler there in Wisconsin and Karen —

MR. EARL: Yeah. We know Karen real well.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah. She's lovely. I finally got to meet her. She bought a piece of the artist that was just in a show that's up at the Renwick now.

MR. EARL: Is that right?

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah. So she's still —

MR. EARL: Still collecting.

MS. MILOSCH: Still collecting. And Paul Smith — but he's still doing independent stuff. You know, the first show I curated in Detroit was he was the guest curator and I worked with him on it. And I'll never forget because I was the junior-junior and he came in. He already was the director emeritus from New York. But he cultivated the observation and decision of all the work. So I really respected that right away and that he was so thoughtful towards a young curator. And actually, he'll be one of the jurors for next year's — well, the invitational in two years. So he's still out there, but —

MR. EARL: Well, good.

MS. MILOSCH: So that's how the — connection to Toledo. And then the porcelain pieces started winning awards and you must have started selling right away too. I mean, you did a lot of them. Do you have any of those still from those early?

MR. EARL: No. They were in the house when the house burned.

MS. MILOSCH: In Virginia. And it just —

MR. EARL: So we lost those.

MS. MILOSCH: Lost all of those? Oh!

MR. EARL: Well, I didn't have a whole lot left. You know, they sold.

MS. MILOSCH: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Wow, it's kind of amazing when you think about it, because you fire porcelain at a high temperature, but the house burned at a —

MR. EARL: Rate of heat rise and then it drops off too suddenly and then it cracks the pieces.

MS. MILOSCH: Even though they were already fired?

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: Wow, interesting. So at Toledo, then, when you were starting these and the women were interested in the Meissen and in these sort of — did you actually go up and sketch them sometimes? Or did you work more from —

MR. EARL: I went up to the galleries and looked at quality. That's what I was interested in. And then I went to the library to get the shapes.

MS. MILOSCH: To look at books. And taking the Ohio imagery — sort of like the way the Renaissance was placing biblical scenes in contemporary clothing of the Europeans —

MR. EARL: Oh yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: — the way — trying to take the gospel of the past and place it in familiar surroundings. In a way you —

MR. EARL: Well, thank you. Yes, I hadn't thought of that.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah. I mean, you were, yeah, looking at those things. Those events aren't meaningful, but those were people and you took those events and placed them in the now. That's good. Wow. What was I going to say?

So did you stay away from the color initially to — just thinking that it was too decorative?

MR. EARL: I never — no. You don't think.

MS. MILOSCH: It's not like you were thinking —

MR. EARL: No — no thinking. It's just you make things until you're a little bored with it and then you do something else. And I knew about china painting and so I bought some china paints and went at it. But I don't china paint like the china painters. I put it on, finish it and fire it once instead of this multiple firing and all this business. I never did that.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh. So you just painted all the colors you want first time around —

MR. EARL: Right. Yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: — and fired it once?

MR. EARL: And fired it once. Right.

MS. MILOSCH: And is that how, when things came out, if you weren't happy with them in someway or they needed more, did you just decide to start using oil paints then or when did that come about?

MR. EARL: I started oil painting when I was here. And that came about because I had the piece of china painted. Yes, yes. And it cracked. Well, I didn't have — it was made for a show and I didn't have time to make another piece, so I oil painted it.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh — the piece that cracked or you made a new piece and just painted it in oil? No, the cracked piece.

MR. EARL: The cracked piece. I repaired the crack and painted it in oil.

MS. MILOSCH: Okay. Repaired the crack, hid the crack. And was that in porcelain at that time?

MR. EARL: No. It was low-fire. I had quit working in porcelain when I came here, because I couldn't fire porcelain.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, okay.

MR. EARL: And I covered it with color anyway so there's no need to work in porcelain.

MS. MILOSCH: So that's how you kind of made that.

MR. EARL: Right, right. So it was low-fire white then.

MS. MILOSCH: So that's interesting. You didn't — but when you started working in porcelain you're saying you didn't throw porcelain. You would build up in coils and —

MR. EARL: And throw the coils.

MS. MILOSCH: — and throw the coils. And then in the hand building sculpture part — that just came right — so you were first throwing and hand building in combination?

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MILOSCH: Do you still do that or do you just do mostly hand building?

MR. EARL: No. It's all hand building now.

MS. MILOSCH: That's what I thought. So knowing how hard it is to work with porcelain — I'm trying to think of the scale of your work then. I mean, initially they were figurine size kind of, right?

MR. EARL: Yeah, small stuff. They kept getting larger, you know, but the larger you get the more problems you're going to have. And I had more problems, but I didn't care. Just try it again and make something else.

MS. MILOSCH: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And you weren't tempted to spray any kind of glaze on, other than just a clear glaze on that porcelain?

MR. EARL: Well, the glaze that I used had something in it — I don't remember what. Some kind of an oxide in it — yes, that's right. I had forgotten the names of things it's been so long. But the thicker it was, you got a depth. So it already had a wonderful quality. You know, a good deep — you could see into the glaze. And the modeling became stronger through the glaze. So it looked good without color. And I don't know why I did start using color. I don't remember how that went.

MS. MILOSCH: It's funny. I just heard something again and I thought, oh no, but it was just another boat going by. Oh, I forgot. I was supposed to start at the beginning of this tape with this —

MR. EARL: Oh, yeah. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: — is tape number two, second round. That's the boat in Lakeview, Ohio. Here we are on the screened-in porch, already 27 minutes in — thank the Lord — into the —

MR. EARL: Yes, yes. It's still working.

MS. MILOSCH: — with a few boats going by. Great.

Well, let's see. Ah, the next question — and we'll just keep coming back to it — because I'm still curious to know the evolution of your work. It'll say to hear the story again since I missed the fire in the reading of the book. That's pretty bad. It says tell me about your travels in Japan, Czechoslovakia, England, Italy, Bolivia —

MR. EARL: Good grief!

MS. MILOSCH: — that have impacted on your life and work. So what travels?

MR. EARL: None.

MS. MILOSCH: Okay. N-o-n-e.

MR. EARL: No. I go to Florida and that doesn't impact me at all. [Laughter.]

MS. MILOSCH: Maybe it facilitates you, though, right? When you're down in Florida you're not working on your sculptures, right?

MR. EARL: No.

MS. MILOSCH: You take a break.

MR. EARL: Right. I paint and draw down there.

MS. MILOSCH: You paint and draw, okay.

MR. EARL: Yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: Have you exhibited your drawings with your sculptures? I've seen some of the sketches —

MR. EARL: I think so — some. Yeah, some. But people don't want to buy paintings or — well, I've been painting watercolors and oil paints. And people, when they buy something, they want something that represents the artist and that is not — that doesn't represent me. So they want ceramics.

MS. MILOSCH: Well, you know, it's kind of interesting, though, because Viola Frey started selling her 2-D works and Arneson. And they also kind of worked in the figurative tradition like you did.

MR. EARL: Yes. And Autio. I've seen some of his. Autio is still —

MS. MILOSCH: Of course, he would really draw right onto those platters with those figurative pieces. And Ken Ferguson as well. Who else do I know that — I guess it's really Arneson's and Viola Frey whose big drawings and so forth.

MR. EARL: Well, they don't like mine.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, but the little sketches — I was going to ask you this. In *Jack Earl: The Genesis and Triumphant Survival of an Underground Ohio Artist* [Lee Nordness. Perimeter Press. 1985] are those your sketches in there?

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, those are lovely! I love the little sketches in here of the birds, the car — the Buick. And the animals. The tree stumps. Of course, the dogs. Carrots and corn. Hats. You were looking for your hat earlier. Do you normally wear your hat?

MR. EARL: Yes.

MS. MILOSCH: I noticed it was a French racing hat — a French bicycle racing hat.

MR. EARL: I don't know where it came from.

MS. MILOSCH: You weren't out racing. What else do we have in here — so that's why I wondered if your drawings — but now you just published the book of your writing in the book that we mentioned, which I sat down here *Just fer the Fun and Wonder of It*.

All right. Well, traveling to Florida. And that's the reprieve of three months. Let's see — do you think of yourself as part of an international tradition or one that is particularly American?

MR. EARL: American.

MS. MILOSCH: Really?

MR. EARL: Yes.

MS. MILOSCH: Even though those Meissen figurines kind of launched you?

MR. EARL: Yes. That's — as soon as you put an Ohio scene on a Meissen object it isn't Meissen anymore.

MS. MILOSCH: But it's funny because you call a lot of — when we were talking — copy from European art.

MR. EARL: Yeah, I do. Yeah, I sure do.

MS. MILOSCH: A tremendous amount from European art. I was wondering, is [Vitaly] Bulgarov someone that you've — the painter Bulgarov and some of his figurative, romantic — [Bartolome Esteban] Murillo. Well you have the — we were talking about the German woodcarver that we can't think of the name of. Maybe before the day is over I'll still be able to find that one.

MR. EARL: When did this guy paint?

MS. MILOSCH: Murillo was 18th century Rococo religious scenes.

MR. EARL: I should know him. I probably know his work.

MS. MILOSCH: Because you do a lot of sort of contemporary Madonna and child scenes so I thought maybe —

MR. EARL: Those Madonna and child things are all copied. Well, I did do one black woman, Madonna and child. But that was copied too — I just put a halo on her and it made her look like a Madonna. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: So then you do look at Raphael [Sanzio] and probably [Peter Paul] Rubens and [Leonardo] da Vinci's — I'm trying to think of some of the other Madonna and child scenes that you have that are kind of reminiscent. But what you're saying, the Renaissance, essentially, the European and Italian women from the life of Christ, but in the surroundings, in the clothing.

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MILOSCH: It's really interesting. I want to throw back in there Grant Wood. For him — he studied in Paris for a long time and was painting French Barbizon landscape paintings and — come back to kind of paint —

MR. EARL: Is that right?

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah. Paint in a very French Impressionist style. And then he was depicting Iowa like that and then he went to Munich, Germany in 1928 and was there to work on a stained glass window. He actually trained as a craftsman. Grant Wood trained first in metalsmithing. And he also made things — built homes, houses, worked in all kinds of materials.

And he started setting Lucas Chranach and [Albrecht] Durer in metaling — religious paintings in the — [inaudible] — in Munich and thought, I want to — he thought that, hey, the clothing of my every day Iowan and the architecture are just as beautiful as what I'm seeing here. So he went back and painted *American Gothic*. And so it became this vernacular sort of religious subject reinterpreted in a vernacular vein of the characters in his life. So that's why I — I'll have to send you that book too. I think you would enjoy that.

And in fact, so this regionalist art movement of painters — John Steuart Curry, Wood and [Thomas Hart] Benton — they were looking to their native surroundings for inspiration. They sort of validated it in many ways, but it really grew out of the arts and crafts permission to do so.

So you didn't even — didn't even have a problem. You just started doing it without ever thinking about those other — it just seemed normal to make people you knew and lived and thing you saw and knew, right?

MR. EARL: Well, one of the things that I believe is that the people who lives two centuries ago were the same as we are now.

MS. MILOSCH: Right, right.

MR. EARL: And so, you know, it's easy to — well, I used that subject on a lot of pieces. That's some of the — front and back was that relationship. So it's easy to bring them into this and bring myself into their situations. It's the same kind of thinking.

And I don't want to copy. I have always copied what I liked. If I see something I like, I want to make it. And the

Renaissance is the best, I think. It's the best stuff that's ever been made. So I copied a lot of it.

MS. MILOSCH: And you still — I saw some books opened earlier that you say you're, yeah, you're always looking still.

MR. EARL: Yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: And then you also collect photographs that you find — every day photographs — and sort of bring the two together.

MR. EARL: And for several years I would photograph myself and then bring those photographs into —

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, I didn't know that! So you would photograph yourself?

MR. EARL: Well —

MS. MILOSCH: With a little tripod?

MR. EARL: No. I photographed —

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, you photographed other things.

MR. EARL: Right. Ohio. We used to drive to a little town over here to eat breakfast and I'd photograph on the way in and the way back and make different, you know, go different ways. And I use a lot of those photographs in work.

MS. MILOSCH: That's great. Wow. It's funny, because you really paint these scenes on your pieces that are coming from two-dimensional sources and they go on a three-dimensional form, but almost in a two-dimensional way.

MR. EARL: Right, right. I noticed that when you take the photograph, make it into a three-dimensional scene or very high relief, and then when you photograph it, it turns back into a photograph.

MS. MILOSCH: Right.

MR. EARL: So it's — you have to kind of move over to an angle a little bit to get the look of it. I thought that was pretty interesting.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah. And I mean, with your works that's the case. If you're not moving around all the time one could think once they photographed that they in fact are flat and not — and they do become flat in the reproduction.

MR. EARL: That's right.

MS. MILOSCH: Well, okay. So that answers the American scene. Even though your work's been exhibited in Europe I'm sure in various — well, it's traveled in U.S. — Paul Smith's "USA Today" ["Objects USA", Smithsonian Institute, Washington, DC].

MR. EARL: Yeah, it's traveled. It's traveled in the Orient and in Europe.

MS. MILOSCH: And I think your works in collections also — well, although in here it doesn't say because it's selected collections. But I imagine it's also been collected in Japan. And I'm sure —

MR. EARL: I don't know about Japan. Thailand, I know there's — there. And I don't know anywhere else.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, that was it: "Objects USA". That's what I was thinking of. "Objects USA" — that was 1969. It opened at Washington and then traveled.

MR. EARL: Yeah. That's when I was working in Toledo. That show came to Toledo.

MS. MILOSCH: Well, all right. That kind of — the America scene, the Ohio scene. And then when you live in Virginia, did you feel like — were you depicting — did you think about Ohio when you were in Virginia or?

MR. EARL: That was one of the problems with living there is that —

MS. MILOSCH: Well, you just did Sherman.

MR. EARL: I did him in Ohio.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, you — okay, okay.

MR. EARL: Yes, yes. No, my work went — it was no good.

MS. MILOSCH: Really?

MR. EARL: Yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: That was your feeling when you left Toledo to go to Virginia?

MR. EARL: It just — there's nothing down there to take a hold of. It's a whole different culture. So I didn't make — in the five years that I was there of really no advancement in the work.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, because you were there — associate professor at Virginia Commonwealth 1972 to '78. So six years. And you were still doing just the porcelain and not adding color yet or had you already started adding color?

MR. EARL: Yeah. I was doing color in Toledo.

MS. MILOSCH: In Toledo already, okay.

MR. EARL: Yeah. I was still — I was china painting then. I made things, you know, I kept making things but there wasn't — it was just kind of treading water and just nothing — no changes. Nothing significant.

MS. MILOSCH: Was it the teaching load too? Was that part of it as well do you think?

MR. EARL: No. It was cultural.

MS. MILOSCH: You just did not feel —

MR. EARL: I just couldn't relate to the place. It was a weird place.

MS. MILOSCH: Really?

MR. EARL: Yeah. Well, the only — the only culture there was the university culture. When you — we had our neighborhood, there was two — there was three — there was three cultures there. One was the black culture. Well, I couldn't fit there. And there was the poor whites and we did our best, but we couldn't fit there. [They laugh.] And there was the upper class and I couldn't fit there. There was just — so it was university and that's nothing.

MS. MILOSCH: The university crowd or crew?

MR. EARL: Right.

MS. MILOSCH: Now, why is that? That's interesting.

MR. EARL: Well, you — there is no — I don't know. There's just nothing. They don't have a culture.

MS. MILOSCH: The university.

MR. EARL: Right. They're just — I don't know what they are. You can't learn off — you know, there's nothing to learn from.

MS. MILOSCH: For professors.

MR. EARL: There's nothing to relate to and get information from as far as what emotional kind of understanding about people and those kind of things. I mean, there's — it's just flat.

MS. MILOSCH: But you were going to the NCECA conferences every year. So were those pretty valuable?

MR. EARL: No.

MS. MILOSCH: No.

MR. EARL: No, there was nothing. No.

MS. MILOSCH: Even in that it just got going — that was more — did you find those helpful to get a pulse on what other people were making and teaching?

MR. EARL: Oh, I knew — I knew who was teaching in all the schools —

MS. MILOSCH: In the country?

MR. EARL: Right. And I knew what they were making.

MS. MILOSCH: From that conference?

MR. EARL: No. I just — it was business.

MS. MILOSCH: Right. That was your business to know what was being made out there.

MR. EARL: That's right. Right.

MS. MILOSCH: And you didn't need the university to really follow that. Was anyone else teaching in ceramics at Virginia [Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA] when you were there?

MR. EARL: Yes. Tom Kerrigan taught there while I was there.

MS. MILOSCH: Any other craft-media artists that were —

MR. EARL: Well, we were in — we were in the crafts department. So there was a couple weavers, jewelry makers, mixed media guy, woodworker. You know, there was a lot of — it was a big department.

But it was fun. It was interesting.

MS. MILOSCH: Who was teaching painting there? Anybody —

MR. EARL: I don't know.

MS. MILOSCH: Since you went away, I mean, you've been carving and painting your ceramics. It's after a certain point when you stopped. Did you just stop working on the wheel just when you got to the Toledo? Was that — you talked when you finished graduate school and starting making — hand building?

MR. EARL: I don't remember when I did stop working on the wheel.

MS. MILOSCH: Interesting. After spending so many years of building up a technical vocabulary and skill you just kept moving forward and then —

MR. EARL: I just lost interest in it, I guess.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah. And then you were building with those coils. And it seems to me that you also — when the porcelain piece was hard and dry, you were also carving away too. So you work at wet and dry.

MR. EARL: Yeah, some. Mostly leather hard.

MS. MILOSCH: Mostly leather hard. Okay.

MR. EARL: That's easiest.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah. Well, yeah, as long as it doesn't crack. And with porcelain that's all — I mean, keeping it that right — it's so sensitive.

Let's see. Americans — we answered that. Explore — oh, this is so funny. I didn't realize that. Explore issues of gender, race, ethnicity as it relates to the artists' work. We kind of dealt with that with your experience in Virginia.

MR. EARL: Yes. We don't like any other cultures but Ohio! [Laughter.]

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah. What is your — your ethnic origin? Jack Earl — British? Or did your parents —

MR. EARL: I think we're British all the way through. All British.

MS. MILOSCH: And your family had been in the United States for how far back? Have you ever traced your genealogy?

MR. EARL: I don't know. No. I don't know. But some generations — I don't know.

MS. MILOSCH: But long enough that no one ever said, you know, great grandmother was from —

MR. EARL: No. The only way I know where they're from is by their last names. They had the English or the — last names.

But I like other cultures, you know. I like the Mexican culture. I like their music. I like the black culture. I like their music. I go to a black church.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, wow.

MR. EARL: It's neat.

MS. MILOSCH: Is it a Baptist church? Or what kind of —

MR. EARL: No. It's an independent.

MS. MILOSCH: Independent church. But it's mostly —

MR. EARL: Mostly black. About 20 percent white, I suppose. And I took all my — my grandkids all were raised in that church. I took them to that church.

MS. MILOSCH: Wow.

MR. EARL: And it's their church.

MS. MILOSCH: Your kids and your grandkids.

MR. EARL: No. My kids —

MS. MILOSCH: When they were living, yeah.

MR. EARL: Right. When I came back to Ohio my kids were — well, my youngest was — I think she went to high school one year here and the others were in college.

MS. MILOSCH: So when you decided to leave Virginia and come back, did you just quit your teaching job and just say, I'm going to just devote myself to my artwork full time and if I'm going to do it somewhere I'm going to do it in Ohio or?

MR. EARL: I left Virginia and it wasn't an art decision. It was a family decision, because my kids were marrying age and I didn't want them to marry anyone in Virginia.

MS. MILOSCH: Really?

MR. EARL: Because I knew I wanted to live in Ohio.

MS. MILOSCH: You wanted your family to be near you.

MR. EARL: Right.

MS. MILOSCH: And did they feel uprooted when you brought them back to Ohio?

MR. EARL: I don't know. I didn't care. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: [Laughs.] No kicking and screaming on their part?

MR. EARL: No, no.

MS. MILOSCH: Because you said they were all older — did many of them go to college here in Ohio?

MR. EARL: Steven was going to school in Virginia. And he left there and went to school — started at Bluffton. And my Kathy went to school at Bluffton and Dianne went to school at Bluffton.

MS. MILOSCH: All three? Wow.

MR. EARL: Dianne's the only one that didn't finish. But the other two finished.

MS. MILOSCH: And now you have a grandson and — so your grandsons have gone to Bluffton or are at Bluffton.

MR. EARL: Yeah, one.

MS. MILOSCH: Wow. That's really — boy.

MR. EARL: And everyone lives within 30 miles of me.

MS. MILOSCH: Still, right now? Today? All three kids?

MR. EARL: All three kids. All the families.

MS. MILOSCH: Wow. That's pretty amazing, because you can't make them live near you. So you must be a pretty pleasant person to be around, Jack.

MR. EARL: I am a wonderful person. [Laughter.]

MS. MILOSCH: They don't want to leave you!

MR. EARL: Yes.

MS. MILOSCH: So that was the decision to come back. And did you look for a teaching job initially then when you decided to come back to Ohio?

MR. EARL: No, because I knew the business. I knew who was where and there wasn't any jobs in Ohio so I didn't want any jobs anywhere else.

MS. MILOSCH: So did you plan then — but were you thinking, oh, I'd like to teach again or did you think — you know, I've just had enough of teaching, or — ?

MR. EARL: Well, I had had enough of teaching. But teaching is a very comfortable life. And it's a real kind of — what do you — it's just a pleasant kind of drawing card. You know, it just kind of would suck you in. If somebody offers you a job, you know, and you don't have to do anything and very — spend very few hours doing it, you know, it's — it would be a real temptation.

But — at that time. But there wasn't anything, which worked out fine. I got alone fine.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah. I think one of the complaints today is that a lot of the craft artists find that teaching consumes so much of their time that it is hard for them to find time to make their work and exhibit their work. But did you find that to be —

MR. EARL: They are too serious about their teaching. [Laughs.] You have to —

MS. MILOSCH: Is that it?

MR. EARL: Sure. [Laughs.]

Teaching will grab you. [Laughs.] It'll take — it'll just suck you right in.

MS. MILOSCH: Right. Right. So you —

MR. EARL: So you have to know enough to protect yourself from it and spend your time working.

MS. MILOSCH: And how did you create those boundaries? Was it just — was your studio at home, or was it —

MR. EARL: Yes, studio was at home.

MS. MILOSCH: Always at home, even when you were in Virginia and Toledo.

MR. EARL: Yeah. Three days there and four days home. And that's — and they don't come together. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: [Laughs.] The twain shall never meet.

MR. EARL: That's right.

MS. MILOSCH: So that — okay. Well, and by then, too, I would think your — I mean, you were really exhibiting and selling pretty well, or — I mean, because that's still — you know, to leave that teaching behind —

MR. EARL: That's right. I didn't realize the checks would stop coming. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: [Laughs.] But they didn't. They just —

MR. EARL: They just — I made enough, you know. So — and we had had that fire, and —

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, that's what we needed to talk about.

MR. EARL: Yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: I wanted to back up. When did the fire happen during the time that you were there in Virginia?

MR. EARL: I had decided to leave, and — but I had my house up for sale —

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, my.

MR. EARL: — and it burnt. So that was close.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, wow. Was it an older home, like a —

MR. EARL: No, it was a — well, I don't know — might have been 20 years old, you know.

MS. MILOSCH: Was anybody hurt?

MR. EARL: No. No. We lost everything but — [laughs] — the pet. And my son was home with the pet, and they both got out. And the fire department had to stop for gas, and it was just a joke —

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, my goodness!

MR. EARL: Yeah. So the house —

MS. MILOSCH: So it could have been saved, in a way, if they hadn't —

MR. EARL: It's possible. But everything worked out perfectly. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: It was — so then that was kind of the sign that —

MR. EARL: That was a pretty clear sign, yes, that it was time to go. That's —

MS. MILOSCH: Boy. But it is something to lose all your earthly possessions suddenly in a fire, I think —

MR. EARL: Yes. I hear about the hurricanes and the floods and all that, but there's nothing like fire. Fire is total. Even the coins are melted. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: The dollar bills burn and the coins melt down.

MR. EARL: That's right. There's nothing left.

MS. MILOSCH: Wow. Wow.

MR. EARL: But it's interesting that when we came back — we were looking for a place to live, and Fairlie wanted to live on the lake. So we started driving around the lake. And we saw the sign, "Stop." And we — they — we found out what they wanted for it, and we thought about it for a couple days, like you're supposed to, you know, when you're making a big — and we bought the place. And when we moved in, there was food in the refrigerator, towels on the racks in the bathroom, completely furnished.

MS. MILOSCH: It was completely furnished?

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MILOSCH: You mean you bought the house with the furniture or —

MR. EARL: Everything. Yup.

MS. MILOSCH: Now, that's pretty unusual.

MR. EARL: Yes. To have nothing — [laughs] —

MS. MILOSCH: And then suddenly to have someone —

MR. EARL: Everything. Yes, yes, to have it all.

MS. MILOSCH: They just didn't want — whoever the sold the house just —

MR. EARL: They just loaded a trailer and went to Florida. They had a home in Florida — a trailer, I suppose.

MS. MILOSCH: So you were provided for.

MR. EARL: Yep. It's —

MS. MILOSCH: That's pretty miraculous, in some ways.

MR. EARL: Yes, it is. It certainly is, in every way.

MS. MILOSCH: Wow.

MR. EARL: But well, not only did I get to, you know, start making things but I picked up a relationship with my grandchildren.

MS. MILOSCH: Very nice.

MR. EARL: And so if I had stayed in Virginia, see, I would never have known my grandchildren. So — worked out just right, the way it's supposed to.

MS. MILOSCH: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Yeah, but still, it took a decision to say, "I want to go back to Ohio and —"

MR. EARL: Well, not after your house burns.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, I guess you're right.

MR. EARL: Yeah —

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah. So — because you then you've just got to start over somewhere, and you may as well start over where you want.

MR. EARL: Yeah, yeah. Right. There was no decision, fortunately. If there would have been a decision, I would have made the wrong one.

MS. MILOSCH: [Laughs.] I'm not so sure about that.

Well, let's see. I'll go to another question, so I don't — I know — okay. Does the function of objects play a part in the meaning of your work? We kind of answered that before, didn't we?

MR. EARL: "Function of objects"?

MS. MILOSCH: Well, I guess, you know, the fact — I asked you earlier about making cups and bowls and saucers —

MR. EARL: Oh, oh.

MS. MILOSCH: — if that was an exciting aspect of the work. At that time, it didn't seem —

MR. EARL: No, it never has been, no.

MS. MILOSCH: Right.

MR. EARL: Their use was never a concern.

MS. MILOSCH: That is really interesting. Because I think so many people assume when you throw on the wheel that you're throwing on the wheel because you're making something to be used, you know, as a vessel.

MR. EARL: Never.

MS. MILOSCH: So why did you think you were making all that stuff?

MR. EARL: Just — I have no idea. [They laugh.]

MS. MILOSCH: It's kind of funny when you think about it, though.

MR. EARL: Yep. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: Because I think that's, you know, what's so funny about this craft — well, for those who believe in the craft versus art debate, I think it's a modern thing to spend and invent, that the arts have always been the arts. And, you know, we've created these artificial boundaries through time that function has always in a weird way played a part of any kind of art, even painting a sculpture, but not in terms of use so much, you know, a

narrative role or — so — so, yeah, so that answers that question. All right?

Does religion or sense of spirituality play a role in your art, and in what way? I know this is going to be —

MR. EARL: Oh —

MS. MILOSCH: — this is a big one, right?

MR. EARL: That is.

MS. MILOSCH: The spiritual in art —

MR. EARL: Again, who knows, you know, with —

MS. MILOSCH: A pretty formulated question, isn't it?

MR. EARL: Yes —

MS. MILOSCH: Almost the same as your heartbeat?

MR. EARL: Yes. And —

MS. MILOSCH: [Laughs.] Remember, I didn't write these questions.

MR. EARL: Yeah. It's — you know, if religion is a part of your life, then of course, you know, it becomes a part of your work.

MS. MILOSCH: Mm-hmm, Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. EARL: And what was the last — does it play a part or something?

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah. It says, "or a sense of spirituality play a role, and in what way?"

MR. EARL: Yes, it does. And in what way? It's a part of life, so if your work reflects your life, then it has to be there. And it has to reflect your life; you're making it. So it's like I have had enough students to know — I can relate the students' skill to my own skill, and I know that I have to labor to get what other people can do easily. So that labor has to be reflected in what I make. So, you know, there's that — [inaudible word] — awkwardness has to be in there. And, you know, you keep fighting it, but it's there. So you can't get away from it.

And what was the last part?

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, it — does it play a role in your art, and in what way? I mean, I guess, you know, in terms of your iconography, the images that you choose quite often vary — those that you're talking about are drawn from Renaissance, which was largely art that was created for churches, for —

MR. EARL: Yeah, right, it was created for churches. So that's — and if you're going to copy the best, you have to copy church-purchased work, which I think is a good idea. It's — I think that you need a — you need someone over you so that you can't do just whatever you want to do, that the best work comes from people who had demands made on them. And so I think that's one of the reasons why that best work was made during that period.

MS. MILOSCH: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Something was being required of them.

MR. EARL: That's right.

MS. MILOSCH: There was — right. They had a — we were talking about a role or a function, something that had to be — that was being produced.

MR. EARL: Yeah. The quality had to be there, or it was rejected. I saw a — I copied a wood relief of John the Baptist, and the guy who made it — it was Spanish. The guy who made it, the John the Baptist was just so — muscles and legs and — you know, just distorted, you know, just pain in every — everything, except when it got to the head, and then the head was kind of pleasant. And my thought was that he had made the head to fit the body, but the head was rejected and he had to redo it so that it looked —

MS. MILOSCH: Interesting.

MR. EARL: — more pleasant. And it was a little small, too.

MS. MILOSCH: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Yeah, so — right.

MR. EARL: It was a wonderful piece. Somebody's got it.

MS. MILOSCH: Did you just find an image of it or did you see —

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Yeah, I found a photograph of it.

MS. MILOSCH: Because when you were in the Toledo Museum of Art did you sometimes just — because they have such a wonderful Rubens collection, you know, paintings of religious scenes, and I'm trying to think — you know, wonderful Italian Renaissance collection of paintings. Were there any paintings specifically there that attracted you, or did you —

MR. EARL: No. I was interested in ceramics, and I wasn't —

MS. MILOSCH: So you weren't at that time looking for that narrative imagery that you then later — so do you spend a lot of time visiting museums? Or I was just curious how you came across this image of John the Baptist.

MR. EARL: Books. Books. Always books.

MS. MILOSCH: Always books.

MR. EARL: Yeah. I don't go to museums.

MS. MILOSCH: Really? I mean, you go to museums, but you don't, like —

MR. EARL: I go to museums because someone wants me to go with them, and so I go. But I don't go to the museums.

MS. MILOSCH: Wow!

MR. EARL: I'm just not interested. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: But now your work's in a bunch of museums, so —

MR. EARL: Yes. Yeah, it is, which is very nice. The reason it's nice is because from what I've just gathered about how work is valued, if it's in a museum while the artist is still alive, that means that there is — it's going to be perpetuated. So that's what's interesting to me about it.

MS. MILOSCH: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Yeah.

MR. EARL: I don't believe in people being discovered; you know, you work and work and work and then suddenly you're discovered. I don't believe in that. It's a long, hard process.

MS. MILOSCH: Well, but early on were you encouraged to enter your art work in various exhibitions? Because that's how Paul Smith saw your work, you were saying, he saw it in a couple of exhibitions. So was it your professor at Bluffton that said —

MR. EARL: No, it was —

MS. MILOSCH: — it was important to enter exhibitions?

MR. EARL: It was when I went to graduate school.

MS. MILOSCH: At Ohio State?

MR. EARL: Yeah, that they started talking that kind of thing. And then when I went to Toledo, I, of course, taught with other artists, and they would enter shows and so forth, so I just did what they did. So that's how I got started. I've always copied off of everybody. [They laugh.]

MS. MILOSCH: Ah, I don't know about that, but you were — yeah, you're actually responding to what people are doing around.

MR. EARL: Yeah, sure.

MS. MILOSCH: And often — that isn't always the case, because you were just saying Voulkos and Soldner and most those guys were into the Japanese Expressionists —

MR. EARL: Oh, yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: — tear, rip, cut, punch the clay, you know, tear it, show its rips, and you thought, you know, if they're all doing that, I'm not going to do that. But, you know, sharing your work, that was something I think you must have enjoyed, sharing it with other people and having it — otherwise you — and you're saying to be discovered, that that's the new venue.

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

Well, I just — I just did it because other people were doing it. I didn't have any particular goal.

MS. MILOSCH: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. EARL: — and I didn't — when I got the letter from New York wanting me to have a show, I said, well, all right, that's a good idea. I had no idea, you know, what it meant.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah. Yeah. Really? Wow.

MR. EARL: Yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: Well, actually, I think for me seeing — I mean, when artists are that way it's because you've been really thinking about your work and also thinking about, how do I make myself famous.

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MILOSCH: So, well that talks about the religion and spirituality a little bit, because, I mean, I see that, I mean, so profoundly connected to your work, but you're saying because it's so profoundly connected to your life.

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MILOSCH: But not everybody has the courage to look at their life and allow it to be so directly impacted on their work.

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MILOSCH: And I do think that is a characteristic of a lot of great artists, that someone's honest in a way with who they are asking questions.

And so I see your work is so often about powerful questions about life and death —

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MILOSCH: — why are we here, who are you, who am I.

Am I right or am I reading into your work?

MR. EARL: Well, no, I'd — I don't know. I don't — I don't know.

MS. MILOSCH: Well, it seems to me that you've always been interested in some of the big existential questions.

MR. EARL: Well —

MS. MILOSCH: Especially reading all pre-1850s.

MR. EARL: Yes, yes.

I — I'm not fast on my feet. I mean, you ask me a question, and I don't have an answer for you. But tomorrow or the next day, you know, when I have time to think about it, then I can —

MS. MILOSCH: Okay, good. We can come back to that.

MR. EARL: [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: Remember, that's why I said depending how far we get today, you might see me tomorrow morning.

MR. EARL: Well, I'll tell you, if you read that book, then you'll have a sense of what I think about things.

MS. MILOSCH: I know, but I've got to squash it into this recording.

MR. EARL: Yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: Well, I mean, yeah, that's why I think these questions are here, and I think it's also really a great opportunity, Jack, because you're — at some point people aren't going to be able to be here to meet you and talk with you, and the books will be there. So it is great because not every artist writes and writes about their life. So I was trying to read as much as I could, but —

MR. EARL: No, I know you can't read the book.

MS. MILOSCH: — but I think that that's why I wanted to leave time today to maybe come back, not to torture you tomorrow morning, but, you know, maybe cut off early today; because I think if this could be any kind of reflective time for you that's fun and meaningful, then these answers may come tonight, and tomorrow, at least, we could just finish up with other things that you wanted to say. So we can keep going through the questions, and whether we answer them all today or not ever answer them, maybe at least there's something else that's —

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] All right.

MS. MILOSCH: — really important to your work that you think may help another artist, may help someone else.

MR. EARL: I don't care anything about those artists.

MS. MILOSCH: [Laughs.]

MR. EARL: [Laughs.] That's good education.

MS. MILOSCH: What about your grandson?

MR. EARL: [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: Adam? Where'd Adam go?

MR. EARL: [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: Is Adam still here? He hopefully didn't hear that.

MR. EARL: [Laughs.] No, I don't mind saying that to him. [Laughs.] I can say anything I want to.

MS. MILOSCH: There you go! There you go!

MR. EARL: Yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: There you go!

MR. EARL: Well, you can't teach — you can't teach that. There's no way to — you know, there's no way to say that to someone and for him to take it in and then do it.

MS. MILOSCH: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. EARL: It's just got to be learned. It's got to be a part of you.

MS. MILOSCH: Although, I like the fact that there were a few moments that you remember when someone said, you know —

MR. EARL: Yeah, just — right, right.

MS. MILOSCH: Kind of epiphanies that happen —

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MILOSCH: — that kind of push you to another level if you're listening.

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Oh, dear.

MS. MILOSCH: I'm never very good at listening.

MR. EARL: [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: I'm trying to listen now.

MR. EARL: [Laughs.] I'll bet you do — oh, you are, too. You're just talking.

[END MD 02 TR 01, BEGIN MD 02 TR 02.]

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, boy, all right, here — I'll give you another question. I don't think — how has the market for American craft changed in your lifetime? That's kind of an interesting one.

MR. EARL: From nothing to much, much, much, much.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah.

MR. EARL: When I started there was only one gallery in the country that handled crafts and that was Lee Nordness in New York. And there was —

MS. MILOSCH: And did Helen Drutt — didn't she — no, that was later.

MR. EARL: Yeah, that was — yeah, I don't think so.

MS. MILOSCH: Seventy-two or '73 or '74, maybe '75 — I think she opened it in 1974.

MR. EARL: I don't think so. I don't think so.

MS. MILOSCH: So — trying to see if — so Lee Nordness was the — yeah, 1973 you had your first show — or at least that's what's on the CV.

MR. EARL: Yeah, I don't know.

Well, I met him through that show that I had in New York. And he took —

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, from the — [inaudible] —.

MR. EARL: — I think he took — yeah, I think he took — I think he took things out of that show to his gallery. I'm not sure — seems to me he did.

MR. EARL: And I sold some stuff out of that show.

But then — that was before I had a gallery, so the stuff sold really cheap. So, you know, I was selling it — I sold there just like I sell to my friends in Ohio, you know. So that's why I let the gallery — I learned to let the gallery price my stuff because they're in the business; they know the business — they — and I don't want to be bothered with it.

MS. MILOSCH: Right, right, right. And Lee — he did that, he just took it over and said this is what we're going to do and — well, that's —

Did you show in any craft fairs? Did you do any of that kind of craft — like at the Smithsonian, they had a show and —

MR. EARL: No, nothing, no — no craft fairs. And there wasn't any craft fairs when I started. There was just no markets.

MS. MILOSCH: So there was no market. And now —

MR. EARL: And now it's crafts pollution. It's everywhere. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: That's funny. Yeah, so you think there's too much or —

MR. EARL: No, no, no, no, no — no, there's nothing wrong with pollution. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: There's nothing wrong with pollution.

MR. EARL: It's just — the word's got a bad reputation. [Laughs.]

No, it's just that someone graduating from college now doesn't — if they are serious and they want to stay with it, they don't have any trouble finding a market.

MS. MILOSCH: Right, right.

MR. EARL: The market is there. It's just — and it's the society. You know, people have more money and there's

more people — many more people. So — and there's more — evidently there's a lot more collectors than there used to be, too. So it's — it's a wonderful time to be a craftsman or to be any kind of an artist. People are aware now — they want things that are individualistic.

MS. MILOSCH: That sounds good —

MR. EARL: It is good. It's good for business. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: — sounds positive. Good for business — for business.

Well, I — the next question is, describe your relationships with dealers. So I would be —

MR. EARL: I love dealers. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: [Laughs.] That's good — not all artists say that so —

MR. EARL: The only thing that I don't like about the gallery business is when I have to get involved in it. When I take my stuff I just — you know, there it is. I don't — they have — they set it up, they do, you know, they do everything. And — but when one gallery wants to get involved with another gallery and puts me in the middle, then I don't like that.

MS. MILOSCH: Right.

MR. EARL: Otherwise I don't — I don't care. And there are very nice people — as long as they like you.

MS. MILOSCH: As long as they like you.

Uh-oh.

So Lee and — now that we've talked about Nancy Margolis [Margolis Gallery, New York, NY] is going to be having an exhibition of your work —

MR. EARL: I think so, yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: And Frank Paluch and the Perimeter Gallery in Chicago [IL].

MR. EARL: I take — the way I handle him — or the way he handles me is — and this is kind of worked its way out — I take him maybe four or five pieces every year. And I haven't had a show there for — well, that card there's the last show I had.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, yeah.

MR. EARL: So he doesn't have one-man shows of my work.

MS. MILOSCH: But Nancy does.

MR. EARL: Yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: And then you've had these recent ones here in Ohio.

MR. EARL: But I don't have many shows — doesn't seem to matter.

MS. MILOSCH: The work keeps selling.

MR. EARL: Yeah, the money comes from somewhere.

MS. MILOSCH: [Laughs.]

MR. EARL: I don't know where. [Laughs.]

Well, it's strange. Every year, you know, it's a different source. Isn't that strange?

MS. MILOSCH: Oh — from galleries that are contacting you or —

MR. EARL: Not just galleries, just, you know, there are people around just like Jim Dickey.

MS. MILOSCH: Last night.

MR. EARL: Yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: They just show up.

MR. EARL: They just show up and buy something. Well, he's never done that before and he probably will never do it again.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, yeah — that's — so even — do the galleries get upset if they hear that you sell directly? No, because they came and found you, you didn't go out and find them, so —

MR. EARL: No. Yeah — I don't — no.

They told me that they didn't want me to sell — undersell them. That's the only thing because they don't like people to come in and say, "Oh, that's too high. I paid this for something." But other than that, no, they don't have any — it's none of their business who I sell to, so —

MS. MILOSCH: Right, who you sell to — that's good — that's good.

Well, that's — so your relationship with dealers has been good for the most part.

MR. EARL: Yeah, it's real good — yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: And we talked about pretty much the ones that deal — is there any other dealers — anyone else? You — we talked about the fact that Dan Jacobs and Derek Mason had, you know, two or three — two major pieces.

MR. EARL: They bought from Portnoy when Portnoy was in New York.

MS. MILOSCH: Portnoy — I didn't know that — the gallery —

MR. EARL: She was there. I was with her for nine or 10 years — something like that.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, wow. Let me see if I —

MR. EARL: Theo Portnoy — 57th Street, I think — 52nd Street — something like that.

MR. EARL: Oh, yeah — Theo Portnoy Gallery. Okay. Clay Ceramic Gallery, San Francisco — that was one.

MR. EARL: That was just a — one show.

MS. MILOSCH: And Dorothy Weiss in San Francisco.

MR. EARL: Yeah, she handled my work for a while.

MS. MILOSCH: Is she not handling it anymore?

MR. EARL: She's — she was old.

MS. MILOSCH: She closed her gallery.

MR. EARL: Yeah, I think so — right.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, I forgot about that — she and a lot of other people down in the Southwest for — the other one there in Phoenix. I can't think of her — it was the Hand and the Spirit Gallery, but they probably never carried your work, I don't think.

MR. EARL: Yeah, I heard of that. No.

MS. MILOSCH: So Garth Clark never showed your work or —

MR. EARL: No. As I understood it, he's — if you show with him you can't show with anyone else. And so I'm not interested in that.

MS. MILOSCH: And he's closing in August —

MR. EARL: Is that right?

MS. MILOSCH: — of 2007. They're — they just, in fact, donated their own private collection to the Houston Museum of Fine Arts — I think it was a donation purchase.

So, let's see — well, let's go on to the next question. How about, what are the qualities of your working

environment? Kind of been talking about that, too — already out here —

MR. EARL: Just that when I was in graduate school, the students — the kids or the people I was with, they always talked about, you know, having a studio — building a studio and working. And I've never done that. I've always started to work and then the studio built around, you know, where I was working. And that's what this is — it's just the back of the garage.

MS. MILOSCH: That's great. And so you just — it just kind of —

MR. EARL: It built itself. It just — when winter comes, then I build a wall. So — [laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: When winter comes, you build a wall?

MR. EARL: Well, when winter — that's how that wall got built out there — that separates my work area from the rest of the garage — was winter came. And so I had to close it off so I could heat it easily. So that's — so I built a wall. So that's —

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah. Okay, okay. Oh, okay, right because otherwise the garage would've went all the way through.

MR. EARL: Right, so it would be much more difficult to heat, so —

MS. MILOSCH: And now you go down to Florida so you're probably not heating it — three months of the year, you're down there.

MR. EARL: Right, right.

I just use a little electric heater to heat that — heats it fine.

MS. MILOSCH: Wow. So — and now these — and your studio —

MR. EARL: And — and you can work with your coat on as well as with your coat off. It doesn't matter. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: I think that is the bottom line. If you really want to work you can work whether you have a studio or not. If you've got to make the argument, it sounds like you're saying, you know, you don't buy this thing, like, "I really would like to make my work but I don't have a studio."

MR. EARL: Yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: That's something you could not relate to.

MR. EARL: No. At night, when it's cold out there, you bring your clay in and put it in front of the furnace. And in the morning you go back — you take it back out and it's nice and warm, no problem. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: This is the no-fuss, no-complaining approach to studio workspace.

MR. EARL: That's right.

MS. MILOSCH: Great. Well, and then also I think because — well, that we've talked about your work is fired, you don't have the kilns here in your studio. For a lot of ceramic artists that's —

MR. EARL: No. Oh, yes.

MS. MILOSCH: Don't you think that's one of the big — what evolves —

MR. EARL: It's something to talk about. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah.

MR. EARL: Yes, they can talk kilns.

MS. MILOSCH: They what?

MR. EARL: They can talk kilns.

MS. MILOSCH: They can talk kilns and — and you didn't — did you ever — well, this is great — when you came back to Ohio you said you discovered the hobby shop across the lake. And, I mean, was that when you stopped firing your own work — up to that point had you always fired your own work?

MR. EARL: I had the university so I fired there.

MS. MILOSCH: Right, right, right, right. But you ran the kilns then.

MR. EARL: Right.

MS. MILOSCH: But when you came here —

MR. EARL: When I came here, I didn't have a kiln, so I had someone else fire for me.

MS. MILOSCH: And that didn't bother you at all?

MR. EARL: No, they're better at firing than I am, so —

MS. MILOSCH: Because by then you'd been doing electric kiln firing and not messing any — hadn't done that kind of reduction high all — is it mostly low?

MR. EARL: It's all low-fire.

MS. MILOSCH: White ware, low-fire.

MR. EARL: Right. And the clay is Trinity Ceramics out of Dallas, Texas.

MS. MILOSCH: Really? Not Ohio clay?

MR. EARL: Nope. It's the best clay in the world.

MS. MILOSCH: Trinity Clay — and where is it out of?

MR. EARL: Dallas.

MS. MILOSCH: Dallas, Texas. Really?

MR. EARL: It is wonderful clay.

MS. MILOSCH: That's your white, low-fire clay. So yeah, you don't — I mean, you don't have a clay mixing area, so you save on space that way.

MR. EARL: Yep.

MS. MILOSCH: And do you have your own — what did we used to call those — where you stick your clay scraps?

MR. EARL: I've got a five-gallon bucket.

MS. MILOSCH: Right. And then do you reuse that clay then or —

MR. EARL: Well, if I get desperate. If I'm short of clay and I haven't called and told them to send me some clay soon enough, then I use it. Otherwise, no, I don't use it.

MS. MILOSCH: What do you do with it?

MR. EARL: It just sits there. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: You must have a lot of clay just sitting there then.

MR. EARL: No, it just — it doesn't accumulate. I don't — I don't, you know, what — when you work in coils, all you have is just a few little pieces off the end of your tool, you know, that — there's no waste — there's no —

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, well, so even those larger slabs, those are all coil built?

MR. EARL: Yes.

MS. MILOSCH: They're not flat-rolled slabs?

MR. EARL: No, I don't believe in rolling slabs — no.

MS. MILOSCH: No slabs.

MR. EARL: No.

MS. MILOSCH: Everything starts — has its origin of life as a coil.

MR. EARL: Yep. It's all coiled.

MS. MILOSCH: Wow. So — and so you maintain the thickness the same?

MR. EARL: The reason that coil is not only technical but it's also ignorance because as you coil, then you have plenty of time to make adjustments. You know, you coil this far and it's time to change, you know, you can make adjustments and go on up and come back down a little ways. So it's — there's plenty of room for — plenty of time to correct mistakes. And then the clay — the character of the clay has so broken up with the coils that there's no warping — a lot less warping and very seldom have any trouble with any cracks. And the clay is very fine. It will leave a thumbprint — and it models beautifully.

MS. MILOSCH: This Trinity Clay out of — did it take a while to find the exact clay body you wanted and liked?

MR. EARL: I — yes. I used to buy it out of Columbus but every time I bought it, they had to keep refining the clay.

MS. MILOSCH: Like the grog that was in there or just —

MR. EARL: No, I never used grog. It was always low-fire white. But even in that, they wouldn't keep the same formula. So every time you got — you bought clay, you had to relearn — it was like working in a different media.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, my goodness.

MR. EARL: It was terrible. So I just — I don't remember how I discovered this clay. But he never changes his clay — said he never has. And it's really good stuff.

MS. MILOSCH: Wow.

MR. EARL: Costs more to ship it than it does to buy it.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, I would think so because the Ohio clay, I mean, so many people, you know, that's why all those clay — all those pottery workshops were here. So that's pretty interesting. I didn't realize —

MR. EARL: But, now you see, that place in Columbus — they have their dust shipped in and they, you know, mix it there.

MS. MILOSCH: They mix it there. Okay.

MR. EARL: Right, so it's their clay. But that clay doesn't come from Ohio.

MS. MILOSCH: That clay does not come from Ohio.

MR. EARL: No. No.

MS. MILOSCH: Okay, okay.

MR. EARL: This guy in Dallas he gets his — some of his — I think he said the bulk of it comes from New York — state of New York, you know? So —

MS. MILOSCH: So it's his own formula mixing but it's consistent — the quality's consistent.

MR. EARL: Right. And it isn't clay anymore, you know, as you think of clay. It's a chemical formula.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah.

MR. EARL: That's, you know, it isn't this old romantic thing about working in clay — that's just a bunch of — that's just nonsense. [Laughs.] If you go out in the backyard and dig up the dirt, ah, well, maybe. [Laughs.] But you can fire that stuff — it works fine, but it's silly. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: So — well, what was I going to ask you about the coils? So then you use different thickness of coils, obviously, right, depending on how quickly a little piece long or —

MR. EARL: That's all — I work a quarter — about a quarter-of-an-inch thick. And the coils are about a half-an-inch round. And so you get a little more mileage out of each coil — so, yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: Wow. That's great. So — well, that kind of — oh, I wrote down a question of — with — in

conjunction with that, the qualities of your work environment. And I wrote down, you know, the idea of being in a rural area not near a major city — I mean, was this a conscious decision? Or this is, I mean, Toledo was a city; Richmond was a city, not too far from —

MR. EARL: Well, the only difference — the only difference between living here, you know, I've lived here and I've lived in Toledo. When I lived in Toledo, you have more of a market for your work because, you know, you're working for an organization, the people in the organization know you and you become known in the community.

MS. MILOSCH: Right.

MR. EARL: So there is that market. And here there is no market —

MS. MILOSCH: Right.

MR. EARL: — so everything has to be taken away. So — that's the only difference that — so — that I can think of — except my wife wanted to live here so that's where we're living.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, she was saying how many of her family also live — not just your kids and your grandkids but her family as well in the 30-mile radius is pretty amazing. Well — and it's really beautiful here on the lake.

MR. EARL: Quiet, except for the few boats that go by.

MS. MILOSCH: The few boats that go by — and the chimes there in the corner and the birds.

Well, let's see. One of the next questions, is there an element of play in your process of finished — or finished work of art? Is there an element of play in your process or is there an element of play in your finished work of art? Boy, the —

MR. EARL: No. [Laughs.] Certainly not. I mean, when I make something I want to know what it's going to look like. There's no room for playing — as I understand playing. Humor is not the same as playing. And, you know, humor is a subject of life but play is — no, there's no play.

MS. MILOSCH: More humor — lot of humor.

MR. EARL: Yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: You have a lot of humor in your work.

MR. EARL: And the reason I have humor in my work is because I think that's part of the American ceramic tradition. That's how it got started; that's where — that is what set ceramics apart as far as sculpture goes. There was humor in that — all the other sculpture was serious, New York sculpture.

MS. MILOSCH: Right — well, yeah.

MR. EARL: And those guys out in California put humor in it. And so — and I — that's how I — that's where I learned that it was all right to have humor in your work. Again, I copied that.

MS. MILOSCH: So, I mean — that's pretty interesting. Was — did you see someone — was it Arneson's work or Kottler? No, we talked about — it wasn't Kottler.

MR. EARL: No, no, it wasn't Kottler.

MS. MILOSCH: What about — well, [David] Gihooly's later, too.

MR. EARL: Yes, well, Gihooly his stuff was silly.

MR. EARL: And Bacerra is that —

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, yeah, Ralph Bacerra, yeah.

MR. EARL: Yeah, I remember his tennis shoe — the best thing he ever made. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: He made a tennis shoe?

MR. EARL: I think it was him.

MS. MILOSCH: Was that him or was that — that wasn't Marilyn Levine who made that?

MR. EARL: No, no, no, no.

MS. MILOSCH: No, okay.

MR. EARL: There's no humor in her stuff.

MS. MILOSCH: You don't think there's any humor in — nah.

MR. EARL: I don't see any.

MS. MILOSCH: Who's the other one — no, there's Richard Shaw.

MR. EARL: Yes, I've met Richard. I like Richard. I like his work. I think he's one of the best working. He is — it's too bad it's so fragile.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah.

MR. EARL: Frank doesn't like it. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: [Laughs.]

MR. EARL: About Richard, so I said, all right — breaks.

MS. MILOSCH: I'm trying to think who else was — so when you — you saw these California artists putting humor —

MR. EARL: Oh, yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: — I mean, when you say humor, were you even thinking of someone like Voulkos and Soldner even though they were —

MR. EARL: No, there's no humor in their work.

MS. MILOSCH: You don't think Voulkos' Rocking Pot is pretty funny?

MR. EARL: Voulkos's Rocking Pots?

MS. MILOSCH: Have you ever seen his rocking — he made — well, we have a piece in the Renwick it's called the Rocking Pot — made in late 1960s.

MR. EARL: I don't know. When I think of Voulkos I think of the strong — what, you know, the strong art tradition. And no, I didn't know he made anything humorous.

But that's — and my family — well, her father was just — he lived on humor. And I learned that kind of down-home farm, hillbilly humor. And it's — so it's a part of me. And it's, you know, it's perpetuated through the family. My son is just the dumbest — tells the dumbest jokes in the world. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: [Laughs.]

MR. EARL: But — so, you know, that's another, you know, the way you live, the way you think, you know, that goes into the stuff.

MS. MILOSCH: How you kind of deal with life, too.

MR. EARL: Yeah. And as I said I like it because it — I think that's an important part of American ceramics. And —

MS. MILOSCH: Not taking itself so seriously. Especially when you look at the Meissen — well, when we were talking about Meissen or Nymphenberg Porcelain or — Staffordshire or any of those things.

And you're right, there's — well, the French majolica tradition would probably be the one that has a bit of humor — those gurgling fish pictures and frogs and snakes — Palasti [sp] —

MR. EARL: Right, right.

MS. MILOSCH: — Palasti. He — don't you think he was very funny?

MR. EARL: Yeah, yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: I mean, not ha-ha funny, but witty funny.

MR. EARL: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Yeah, I liked his stuff. I couldn't copy it though. It would be too obvious. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: It would be — [laughs.]

MR. EARL: I have seen it copied though.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah.

MR. EARL: But, oh — goodness, gracious — forgot the guy's name. Oh, well.

MS. MILOSCH: An American again or —

MR. EARL: Arneson.

MS. MILOSCH: Robert, yeah.

MR. EARL: How could anyone forget his name?

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: He — so you remember seeing his work and thinking — yeah.

MR. EARL: Oh, yeah. He was the king of — well, he was the king. He had a very unusual talent. He knew what high art looks like. And he could do it. And that's — even Voulkos didn't have that.

MS. MILOSCH: Interesting.

MR. EARL: I mean, his — Arneson's stuff had a Renaissance quality about it — the real stuff. And he did it by accident. I mean, you know, he never thought about it. I know, you know, it was just intuitive. Just — I've never been able to do that — never hoped to be able to do that.

MS. MILOSCH: Interesting. What about Viola Frey?

MR. EARL: I never liked her stuff.

MS. MILOSCH: Really?

MR. EARL: Yeah — some small stuff that she's made I liked. But her big figures, I didn't like them at all.

MS. MILOSCH: Because she also had that, you know, she collected all those — chichi porcelain pieces and did those brickerbrack composites and she's in that craft —

MR. EARL: Well, I don't — all I know is what I see, you know. And I haven't seen anything for years because I don't take any magazines, you know, and —

MS. MILOSCH: Right, right, yeah. Oh, you don't take any magazines anymore.

MR. EARL: No.

MS. MILOSCH: *Ceramics Monthly* or *Art in America* or anything?

MR. EARL: No, no magazines.

The only think I get is people sending me show announcements. That's the only way I know what's going on.

MS. MILOSCH: Or if you show up in one of those, hopefully they send you —

MR. EARL: Yes, yeah. But — so, you know, I don't know everyone, you know, I don't know her work completely, but I just, you know, what I know of it is — I just never liked it.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah.

MR. EARL: It was — I don't know.

MS. MILOSCH: But, yeah, so Arneson and — who — seems like there was one other I was trying to think of — but that's — well, because I think a lot of those feminists who used humor — Patti Warashina was another one who used humor —

MR. EARL: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I know Patti. Yeah, she's made some nice stuff. There's a lot of people who make

nice stuff.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, I know who I was thinking of, but again, it's completely different, is Beatrice Wood.

MR. EARL: Yeah, she's nice and makes nice stuff.

MS. MILOSCH: She, you know, kind of came out of a playful tradition.

MR. EARL: Yep. Yeah, I like her stuff — yeah. Sure would be nice to be able to work like that.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, she died just two — two or three years ago; it wasn't too long ago — maybe it's a little longer than that actually. And Viola Frey also just three years ago I think.

MR. EARL: Yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: So —

MR. EARL: Oh, I want to say about Arneson — he was all right as long as he stayed in his media but as soon as he started dealing with something serious, his stuff went to pot. It just wasn't any good.

MS. MILOSCH: You mean when he started dealing with —

MR. EARL: Any kind of serious social subject or death and things like that, you know, just — his stuff just was — who is this guy?

He started — became interested in some painter that committed suicide or something — or had a car wreck and killed himself — just — but when he was doing the real Arneson stuff, it was — none better.

Well, you can only get so good — you can only get renaissance good.

MS. MILOSCH: You can only get renaissance good. And did you just — did you see these guys normally when — at these NCECA conferences?

MR. EARL: I've met them. I've met them.

MS. MILOSCH: That's when you would meet them and —

MR. EARL: I've never talked to them, you know, just hello, you know, and that kind of — like you'd talk to your neighbor, but never talked.

MS. MILOSCH: Not like how you knew Howard and — Darvin? Oh, no, who was I thinking — who did you — who were we talking about just a second ago? Tom LaDousa.

MR. EARL: Oh, yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: LaDousa. Tom LaDousa.

MR. EARL: Yeah, I knew those guys. Tom LaDousa was funny. And he could sing — unbelievable.

MS. MILOSCH: Wow. Did he sing when he was in the studio?

MR. EARL: No, we went to —

MS. MILOSCH: At Kohler he was singing?

MR. EARL: Yeah, we went to a — what was that — *Sound of Music*. We took the evening off while we were in Kohler and went to *Sound of Music*. And he came out of there and was dancing down the street and singing. And I'm telling you, it was good. He could sure sing.

MS. MILOSCH: [Laughs.]

MR. EARL: And he wasn't drunk — he hadn't been drinking either. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: Oh my goodness. That's funny. Wow.

MR. EARL: And he made — he tried to make some funny stuff but he just —

MS. MILOSCH: He tried to make some funny stuff?

MR. EARL: Yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: Well, I think this one that was in this article, the Kohler Experiment 1975, that sure created a stir, urinal car —

MR. EARL: Yes, yes, yes. Well, I guess that is pretty funny when you think about it. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: It is pretty funny — it's a port-a-potty.

MR. EARL: Ooooh. [Laughs.] Well, he needs you.

MS. MILOSCH: He calls it the *Good Tooth Fairy Car*. That's probably what caused the problem. He should have called it the port-a-potty.

MR. EARL: [Laughs.] Yes.

MS. MILOSCH: Well, you know, Grant Wood — great sense of humor. You know that was the whole problem there, too, with *American Gothic*, even now, when we were working to get — I wanted *American Gothic* to be on the back of the Iowa coin for, you know, the quarters —

MR. EARL: Oh.

MS. MILOSCH: And it was so fascinating, Jack, because so many Iowans still felt angry about that image making fun of them, rather than —

MR. EARL: Good grief.

MS. MILOSCH: — rather than laughing at themselves, you know, and Grant Wood loved them — he was one — like you are to Ohio, Grant Wood was to Iowa.

MR. EARL: Good grief.

MS. MILOSCH: I mean, he loved those people — just tried to take a mirror every once in a while and I'll tell you, I remember reading the original reactions to *American Gothic* in 1930. You know, "Iowa farm girls don't look like that." [Laughs.] So in the end, it didn't make it onto the back of the quarter. And I'll never forget my mother-in-law from Michigan said something like, "Well, the world — the world has chosen that image, what will Iowa do?" [Laughs.] And they didn't choose it.

MR. EARL: Yep.

MS. MILOSCH: But — so I think you, you know, it would be — I was just curious, too, for you, how many people here even — I don't want to say understand and appreciate because, you know, I don't know if one can even ever fully measure that but, you know, because you're capturing so much of the place and the people — how many of them actually buy your work — those are not the people buying your work, right?

MR. EARL: Huh-uh.

MS. MILOSCH: No, these people from other places who see something in your work where they feel like, "I know that; I've seen that; I've felt that; I've experienced that."

MR. EARL: Well, Ohio is a big state. It reaches from Pennsylvania all the way — [laughs] — I don't know how far it goes. I've driven and driven and driven and haven't found the end of it.

MS. MILOSCH: [Laughs.]

MR. EARL: It's, you know, it's a way of life and kind of a landscape and —

MS. MILOSCH: — [Inaudible.] —

MR. EARL: It's big.

MS. MILOSCH: Well, I think that's how your work moves — that universal quality. I mean, you're doing something that seems very personal, regional, but in fact it has such universal dimensions which kind of goes back to that —

MR. EARL: Yeah, yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: You want the next question?

MR. EARL: Sure.

MS. MILOSCH: Is there a community that has been important to your development as an artist?

MR. EARL: Yes — home.

MS. MILOSCH: [Laughs.] Your family.

MR. EARL: Yes — family and the culture that I live in — that's it.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, I mean because you have a real sense of community. This is something that most people, I think, strangely enough don't experience at all anymore. So maybe that's what attracts a lot of people to your work is they can almost feel that community in your work.

MR. EARL: I don't know.

MS. MILOSCH: Well, you said when you were in Virginia, you didn't have that sense of community — you felt —

MR. EARL: Yep. Well, and it's — I don't even know if I realized it while I was there. But, you know, when you come back and look back over things, then you understand things. You don't think of things and then do them. You do them and then think about them.

MS. MILOSCH: Right. Yeah, yeah, true, true.

Well, let's see. Here's another one. Where does —

MR. EARL: How many are there?

MS. MILOSCH: Oh my gosh, you don't even want to know. We'll just —

MR. EARL: [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: — I think that I'll read a couple and we'll decide which ones are really that interesting to answer. And the ones that we think are not interesting to answer, we're just not going to answer.

MR. EARL: Okay.

MS. MILOSCH: This one is where does American craft glass, wood, fiber, clay, metal rank on an international scale? Is the field moving in any obvious direction or not? Do you even care? That was my question.

MR. EARL: I don't care. But what I do care about is when galleries start showing European art — European ceramics that is copied from American ceramics. That upsets me.

MS. MILOSCH: Wow.

MR. EARL: Yes, I think they should — I mean, why show copies? And that's what European ceramics is. From top to bottom, it's all copied from the American ceramics.

MS. MILOSCH: Really?

MR. EARL: But — from what I've seen.

MS. MILOSCH: From what you've seen.

MR. EARL: Right.

MS. MILOSCH: And so — trying to think of some examples but I — I don't really know.

MR. EARL: That's good — you don't want to know that stuff. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: But did you see this happening even when you were in Toledo or even more just recently in the last 10 years or —

MR. EARL: No, no, no. It's — yeah, the last 10 or maybe 15 years.

MS. MILOSCH: The Europeans kind of copying the American style?

MR. EARL: Oh, yes, it's just — I've got a book that must have — all ceramic sculptors and there must be 3 [hundred], maybe 400 of them. And it just is unbelievable — the images and it's all derivative. And it's just

incredible.

MS. MILOSCH: Really? I guess I haven't seen that. I mean, I — for me, it's funny, I've just — when I studied — I studied at the Art Academy in Munich in ceramics in 1987. And I started art history at the University of Munich and — of course this is not supposed to be about me so I'm going to accelerate this — but I didn't — I was doing hand built vessels. I didn't learn to throw on the wheel. I was at the Art Academy. The guy wouldn't even let me continue in class. He said, "Don't even come until you can start to throw perfectly," because all the kids — students there had had apprenticeships with master potters before they could even get into the Art Academy. And I thought, But I'm not interested in making pots" — I was always interested in art — I was always interested in life drawing and slab building and, you know, there.

So I don't even remember seeing anything anywhere near — in fact, I went there to study the Bauhaus thinking that the Bauhaus aesthetic which was combining craft and art would have taken off. And then I realized, oh, no, all of that — like your Russian teacher coming over here, it was a different sensibility. So I guess I don't remember even seeing anything in the '80s in Europe that made me think of American ceramics.

MR. EARL: Right.

MS. MILOSCH: So maybe now —

MR. EARL: That's — they should still be making that stuff. But now they're into the same kinds of things that we make.

MS. MILOSCH: Interesting. You'll have to show me that book.

MR. EARL: Yeah, I don't know where it is — it's up there somewhere.

MS. MILOSCH: But you remember seeing it and thinking, "I've seen this before." This is —

MR. EARL: Yeah. Some of them were pretty good, you know, but they could have been made in Wichita [KS].

MS. MILOSCH: Interesting. Wow. Wow. Well, that answers that question about the international scale and scope. Is the field moving in any obvious direction or not?

MR. EARL: Yes, it's getting more decorative which I don't like — the guts is gone out of it.

MS. MILOSCH: And you're seeing that in the books and in the shows and —

MR. EARL: Yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: You think it's kind of a little soulless — the guts have gone out of it?

MR. EARL: It's just — decoration sells. And it's getting more and more and more decoration so — that just — that's where it came from. And it's just reverting right back to where it was. So much effort and work and money and concern and conferences gone into getting some subject matter into ceramics and then — and then — and now it's disappearing.

MS. MILOSCH: Interesting.

MR. EARL: As far as I know.

MS. MILOSCH: Well, you want the next question?

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MILOSCH: All right. What are the — yeah, I know, we may need to take a coffee break. Actually I think I have — well, I still have some time — 30 minutes on this tape — and then we can — what are the most powerful influences in your career: people, art movements, technological developments? We kind of talked about art movements in the renaissance, but is there any other —

MR. EARL: I would say ignorance is the greatest influence.

MS. MILOSCH: [Laughs.] Okay.

MR. EARL: Well, you have to be ignorant in order to search for knowledge.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh my gosh. Yeah, I was having a conversation — was this with you off the record or with another artist yesterday —

MR. EARL: Must've — I don't know.

MS. MILOSCH: No, it's just same thing. I think the interns and the young people I see, I'm so astonished because they seem to think they know everything so they're ready to just start doing something. And I keep thinking don't you have any questions?

MR. EARL: [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: I still have more questions than I do answers. [Laughs.]

MR. EARL: Yep.

MS. MILOSCH: And in fact, I think I — that's again what I see in your work. I see a lot of questions.

MR. EARL: Well, if there's no searching and if you don't see any searching in the piece, it may hurt the piece, you know, it may lack quality. But that searching quality is — I think it needs to be there. Who wants to make the same thing 10 times just because you can make it?

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, boy, I think that's — do you think the craft — those collector's market kind of encourage that in some — some of them just stayed doing that? I mean, I don't know, I think of some of those Ron Nagle cups.

MR. EARL: Beautiful stuff — I'm glad I don't have to make them. [Laughs.] That's, you know, that's — there's a lot of good things being made, but the way I judge it is that I'm glad I didn't make it.

No matter how good it is, I just don't, you know, it's, you know, takes a certain mindset, a certain attitude that I don't want to have.

MS. MILOSCH: So there is — is there any other person that — we've talked about a lot of the people that have impacted you and it was great to hear that about Robert Arneson — that's really interesting to know. Is there anyone else — any other artist? We talked about the renaissance but are there any other American artists that you've been intrigued with in any way — painter or sculptor?

MR. EARL: Well, I've always liked Richard Shaw and the way he handles images. And I would — I like the way he works. Now, that kind of thing, I would like to make, but — it's good stuff. And it's got that kind of New York quality to it. It isn't hokey. It's nice stuff but, you know, it's — that's his stuff. He doesn't influence me, you know, it's just that I appreciate what he does.

MS. MILOSCH: Right, right. Technological developments. Well, you found the better clay out of Dallas. [Laughs.]

MR. EARL: That's right.

MS. MILOSCH: I don't know if that counts as a technological development, but — all right. I'll go to the next question.

MR. EARL: All right.

MS. MILOSCH: If you think of anything we can go — what do you see as the place of universities in the American craft movement, especially for artists working in the craft media?

MR. EARL: Well, that's where the craft movement is, is in the universities.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah.

MR. EARL: And that's all there is to that.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, and you, I mean, as a teacher, you participated in it. So do you — do any of your former students keep up with you?

MR. EARL: No.

MS. MILOSCH: None? I bet there's one or two? Any of them still making, you know —

MR. EARL: Oh, I'm sure there are. You know, there are people working but they aren't, you know, they don't stay —

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, they actually — they aren't personal friends that you stay —

MR. EARL: No, no, no — they don't stay in contact with me at all. And, you know, that's fine. I don't want to be answering letters.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, right, right, right.

MR. EARL: I don't do that.

I could have. You know, people have written to me but I never answered back because I don't want to do it. You know, it's —

MS. MILOSCH: Right, it's just another thing you've complicated into — take your time away from your work.

MR. EARL: That's right. It's like writing another check, right. I don't want to do it.

MS. MILOSCH: It's like writing another check. [Laughs.] It requires another signature.

MR. EARL: That's right.

MS. MILOSCH: Got to date it and sign it.

MR. EARL: If I answer a letter, it's business. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: [Laughs.] So — but have you watched — is there any students that come to mind who's work you've kind of seen show up again, any —

MR. EARL: Well, the names — I've seen their names. And I'm glad to see that they're still in the business.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, yeah. Okay. That's good.

MR. EARL: But that's all.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah.

MR. EARL: I don't know what they're making or anything.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, yeah. There you go.

Let's see — all right, next question. How has your work been received over time? In your opinion, who are the most significant writers in the field of American craft? And why is their writing meaningful to you? Is criticism written by artists more valuable to you? Well, I don't know if you want to start with the first one.

MR. EARL: I don't know anything about that business. I don't know — I don't —

MS. MILOSCH: Well, we talked about how your work's been received over time a little bit, right? Paul Smith kind of —

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And I've been supported for 30 years so —

MS. MILOSCH: That's amazing.

MR. EARL: And so I've got no complaints.

MS. MILOSCH: Right, right. That kind of answers that.

And then, in terms of writers, I guess, I mean, the friendship that you have with Lee to — was it his idea for the book?

MR. EARL: Karen Boyd — now — yeah, her name was — no her name was Keland when — that was — it was her idea. And the reason for the book is that she wanted a "wordy" book instead of a picture book of an American ceramic artist. She did that book to promote crafts — ceramics.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, wow.

MR. EARL: And I understood that so, you know, it — and she knew me. You know, we were friends and so that's how that happened. So it's not because I'm, you know, I'm a special artist. It's just — it's just what she wanted to do for the field.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, because it said Perimeter Press, Racine, Chicago. And I thought, was that part of Perimeter

Gallery then?

MR. EARL: Yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: That was really Perimeter Gallery and then — but I didn't see her name in here so it must have been in the forward.

MR. EARL: She signed some of those books — maybe —

MS. MILOSCH: Lee signed —

MR. EARL: Would the person who furnishes the money be the publisher?

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah.

MR. EARL: Well, she's probably — she just didn't sign that one. The publishers probably missed it. Is her name listed under publisher?

MS. MILOSCH: I was just looking —

MR. EARL: I know she signed some of them.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, well, Paul Smith wrote the forward and he didn't mention it. And then there's the copyright, Perimeter Press.

MR. EARL: Paul Smith wrote the forward?

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah.

MR. EARL: I'll have to read that. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: And it says, "The contents of this book on Jack Earl make an important contribution to the understanding of Jack's life and work and place in perspective is truly unique American artist." Very nice. And then on the back flap — oh, Walter Hamady was the proprietor of Perishable Press. He designed the book. Perimeter Press Limited — it doesn't say —

MR. EARL: Yeah, it probably doesn't mention her.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, so that's good to know. I didn't realize that. So it was her idea to do this?

MR. EARL: Her idea and her money, right.

MS. MILOSCH: And this was published in 1985.

MR. EARL: It's been a long time, hasn't it?

MS. MILOSCH: [Laughs.]

MR. EARL: I don't even know how long that is — 20 years — that's incredible.

MS. MILOSCH: Wow. Yeah, more — 27 — wait 25 —

MR. EARL: Twenty-two years.

MS. MILOSCH: Twenty-two years — yeah, I jumped too far.

And it's the sort of — and then who's idea was it to do this back and forth conversation? Was that Lee's idea?

MR. EARL: Probably, yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: Because I — you said that you do still write and write poetry, so how did you have time to write this?

MR. EARL: Oh, I didn't write that.

MS. MILOSCH: No, but there are comments from you.

MR. EARL: Oh, well, he just — yeah, he just came here. And I went to New York a couple times and we just —

MS. MILOSCH: Okay. Back and forth?

MR. EARL: Yeah, he just recorded things.

MS. MILOSCH: He didn't have one of these annoying — he had a real tape recorder where you could see it, yeah.

MR. EARL: Well, he had a real tape recorder. Yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: Boy, oh, boy. Maybe this will be a book someday. I just wish that first part were going, "Test 1, 2, 3" saved by your grandson.

MR. EARL: That's a good way to start. I like that.

MS. MILOSCH: Saved by your grandson. Saved by your grandson.

Let's see — so as far as people writing about your work, critics — it seems like none of that really interests you so much. You just want to be making your work.

MR. EARL: I don't — there's no way for me to find out if anybody writes about my work.

MS. MILOSCH: Well, I mean, I have all these articles in here.

MR. EARL: Oh, you mean that old stuff. I don't think about it.

MS. MILOSCH: Because you've had, you know —

MR. EARL: Yes, I did.

MS. MILOSCH: — leading people in the field, you know, write about your work.

MR. EARL: Is that right?

MS. MILOSCH: Yes. I don't know who did the essay for the KMPG Collection [Peat Marwick Collection of American Craft, Renwick Gallery, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC] but it's really beautiful for the piece that we did.

MR. EARL: There was a woman who wrote a nice article about my work in *Craft Horizons* — or what was *Craft Horizons*. I don't remember her name. It was a real nice article and a real — well, one of my pieces was on the cover — the front was on the cover and the other side was on the back. And she wrote the article. And it was a very nice article — except she called me a humanist. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: A humanist?

MR. EARL: Yeah, I'm not sure — I think I know what that is but I'm not sure.

MS. MILOSCH: Let's see — boy, the ones that are listed here only go back to 1978. David Burden; Jack Earl, Art in America; John Classen; Marciann Herr Geraldine Wojno Kiefer — that was 1982; Lee Nordness was '85; Ronny Cohen, Richard —

MR. EARL: Yeah, I don't know. Maybe that was her name.

MS. MILOSCH: Ronny Cohen?

MR. EARL: That could be.

MS. MILOSCH: *American Craft*, 1985.

MR. EARL: Yeah, that's probably it.

MS. MILOSCH: And you thought she did a good job?

MR. EARL: Yeah, it was nice. Well, it was a real nice article, nice photographs.

MS. MILOSCH: Well, you know —

MR. EARL: It made me look good.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, I don't think she had to work — she just held up a mirror.

Well, you know, the piece that was in the KMPG collection, *Dear Fay* [1994] is in the Renwick collection now.

MR. EARL: Oh, it is? Oh.

MS. MILOSCH: I was wondering if you knew that.

MR. EARL: No, I didn't know that.

MS. MILOSCH: Yes, that's why when I told Fay I was glad to meet her —

MR. EARL: Oh, you thought that was her. Yeah, I guess, it could be. It could be, you know —

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, because I thought maybe that was —

MR. EARL: It could be. It's possible. It's been so long ago.

MS. MILOSCH: Let's see, how has your work been received? Oh, we already did that. So we just talked about that. One more then — what role have specialized periodicals for craft such as *American Craft*, *Craft Horizons*, *American Ceramics*, *Studio Potter* played in your development as an artist?

MR. EARL: I knew — they taught me what was going on.

MS. MILOSCH: Okay.

MR. EARL: And so I knew enough not to do that.

MS. MILOSCH: And so you haven't taken these magazines though since —

MR. EARL: Not since I've moved to Ohio.

MS. MILOSCH: Wow. So now you don't — you just feel like you're just going to make what you're going to make and — so you don't look at very many — and that's the same with Art News or Art in America.

MR. EARL: Nothing, right.

MS. MILOSCH: So they taught you — they got you started on the map and on the journey. Not really, but, I mean, you know, there were sign posts.

MR. EARL: Sure, yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: But now you don't feel compelled to know necessarily what's going on out there?

MR. EARL: No, no.

MS. MILOSCH: Do you thinks that's a result of your wisdom of years that you just don't need to know anymore or you don't want to know anymore — I mean, that you just — the time that you have you want to spend making your work rather than looking at what's going on?

MR. EARL: It's — what other people are doing is interesting, you know, so — but it doesn't have anything to do with me — that's all — just doesn't matter. That's it, I guess.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, so early on it was helpful but once you moved back to Ohio and finished that teaching stint you felt like —

MR. EARL: Well, if you're making your living teaching, then you have to have something to teach. And if you know what's going on, then you can — there is a level of ceramics and you want to teach at the highest level. And so if you know what's going on, then you are teaching. You can teach at that level. So that's — I think. Now, you know, it isn't, like I said, you do a thing and then you figure it out. And that's what I was just thinking. Perhaps that was it. And it was just as interesting what other people were doing.

MS. MILOSCH: But that's really interesting because I think a lot of times as I visit artist in their studios, and I don't get to do that as much as I used to — the one thing that I discovered — well, especially in Iowa and Michigan, Midwest is virtual isolation of a lot of artists.

Now, you have a community here and we've talked about that, but I often find that that becomes the community for a lot of these artists who are working on their own because they're even more removable from a major city. They don't have a community and maybe it's — maybe these are more mid-career developing — I don't know, where they still —

MR. EARL: Well, you can't be dumb. I mean, you can't be just —

MS. MILOSCH: Right, in complete isolation.

MR. EARL: Right. I mean, you have to have interests. You can't be interested in mud.

MS. MILOSCH: You can't be interested in mud. [Laughs.] With clay, it's a kind of interest in a mud but as you were saying, not the high-quality mud.

MR. EARL: And you have to — I would think you would want to improve, you know, have some adventure in what you're doing. I would think that — if I understand the kind of people that you're talking about.

MS. MILOSCH: Right, right, right.

MR. EARL: Where they just do the same thing year after year and are satisfied — well, that's good. I appreciate those kind of people. They should be working in a factory. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: [Laughs.] Well, no, no, I meant that they actually, you know, they are, I mean, they want or they're seeking out an adventure through, you know, knowing what's going on out there.

I mean, I just know painters — and maybe that's more common for painters than craft artists just to know what's being made in China and, you know, and those, so those art publications are still the major means — even artists who don't look — or don't watch TV or don't read the newspaper still might take *Art Journal* simply because they want to know what's being made. Or like your comments seeing the Europeans things — but it was in a book.

So I have a feeling you're not someone who surfs the Internet?

MR. EARL: Nope, never been there.

MS. MILOSCH: So you're still getting the images other — yeah, whereas it's — you can't believe how many of these people, that's their new virtual reality. It's kind of strange but —

Let's see, okay, I'm getting to the end of this. Well, let's see. What else do we have here? Could you discuss your views on the importance of clay as a means for expression? What are the strengths and limitations of that medium?

MR. EARL: Well, the strength is that you can turn clay into anything you want it to be. It was be any media you want it to be. So that's the good thing. It can be smoke or it can be a rock.

What was the rest?

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, the importance of clay as a means of expression.

MR. EARL: I don't believe in expression.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, yeah, we're back to that one again.

MR. EARL: Yes. [Laughs.] Forget that.

MS. MILOSCH: It's a means of investigation versus expression?

MR. EARL: I don't know but —

MS. MILOSCH: It's a means of expression.

MR. EARL: To express one's self — if that's what they're talking about — is a pretty limited subject I would say. That's why I like to deal with culture, you know. Then you're outside observing and, you know, but I can't imagine spending more than an hour of your life thinking of yourself and anxious about expressing yourself.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, that's kind of a dead-end way.

MR. EARL: That's just ridiculous.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah.

MR. EARL: The reason for that is the godless society, the emphasis on self. That's where that all comes from. That's what it teaches.

MS. MILOSCH: Well, this — yeah, I'm not sure how they mean expression here, though. Could you discuss your views on the importance of clay as a means for expression?

MR. EARL: Usually they have "self" in front of that expression.

MS. MILOSCH: Right.

MR. EARL: Not necessarily, yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: Right. I mean, it could just mean that so much of your imagination finds expression in the clay. I mean, you just kind of said it, you like the fact that you can make anything you want in clay. It seems to me that that's what attracts you to the material is the fact that you can make smoke or bricks or wood — the wood slats you used to make furniture and wooden guns from. And I see that in the Tremblay [ph] approach that you use. It's somewhere between an optical allusion but also very tactical.

So — and I've seen you sometimes create water or a sense of reflection. So you're right, like that's a kind a glass in a looking mirror so — for you that seems feeling. That's why clay is so exciting for you for face again and again. And even though you paint and draw, I have this feeling that the clay allows you to go into, like you said, the third dimension and back out again and —

MR. EARL: And that's how I make my living. Yes. [Laughs.] But that's a good basic —

MS. MILOSCH: [Laughs.] That's a basic part.

MR. EARL: My reputation's in clay so I have to work in clay. I like the smell of wood, but I like to work in clay.

MS. MILOSCH: Could you ever see yourself switching at this —

MR. EARL: Well, it would be — no. But, you know, it would be exciting to make something out of some other material. It would be an adventure, but — love to be able to, you know, go to a junkyard and weld stuff together and make things. It'd be fun. But it's not for me anymore.

MS. MILOSCH: It's funny, it's kind of a — I'm not sure a philosophical thing — it's interesting because it's — what you've been given is what you've been given which is the clay. I mean, it's sort of like, I always think of when people decide I'm going to have a faith or religion and you're brought up in America where Christianity is the primary religion and someone says but I'm going to live my faith through Buddhism. I'm not saying there's anything wrong with it, but to me it's almost like, but what have you experienced in faith in your life to sort of adopt something — I'm not making — I'm not putting words into your mouth — but I find it interesting that you would say that about the welding — it would be fun and an interesting experience — and then eventually probably teach you something more about clay or maybe not go back.

But it is interesting how many craft artists tend to stick to that one material because even Beth Litman through the Kohler experiment, even as a glass artist, you know, she loves hot sculpting the glass, she found porcelain process very interesting and intriguing but in the end she still — although she is working in photography — I have to say — now photographing the glass.

So in Kohler, that had to been a fun place for you because —

MR. EARL: Yeah, it was. It was exciting.

MS. MILOSCH: Casting —

MR. EARL: But you've got to come home. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: [Laughs.] I've got to pay the bills.

MR. EARL: Yep.

MS. MILOSCH: All right. Okay, well, let's see, seven minutes — I'll try and get this last — let's see — what are your most important commissioned works?

MR. EARL: None.

MS. MILOSCH: Major commissioned work?

MR. EARL: None, none, none. I've done, you know, what — maybe two or three portraits but that's it.

MS. MILOSCH: Really?

MR. EARL: Yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: Everything else is — are works that you've generated?

MR. EARL: Right.

MS. MILOSCH: That's really important to know. I've always wondered that, Jack, because Jim Dicky asked if you —

MR. EARL: He asked me if I could do that. I said sure. Well, I can do anything. I can make anything.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, right. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

MR. EARL: And I can do it to specifications. And that's what I like. I like to —

MS. MILOSCH: We were talking about parameters before.

MR. EARL: Yeah, I like to be — I like for somebody to tell me what to do. When I did the portrait of — I don't know if you remember, the Richard Mink portrait — I photographed him and I got, you know, and I got it built up and then I had him come out and look at it. And he okayed it and then I brought him back out when I had it refined. And he okayed it. And that's the way I like to work. When I'm working for somebody, I want to be right.

MS. MILOSCH: Not like that John the Baptist head that was on —

MR. EARL: Right — poor guy.

MS. MILOSCH: [Laughs.]

MR. EARL: Can you imagine that poor artist?

MS. MILOSCH: It had to have a different head to go with the body.

MS. MILOSCH: So how — oh, then the other one was, how did these commissions come about for the other — they just approached you or approached the gallery?

MR. EARL: Well, Richard Mink, I asked him if I could do his portrait.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, okay.

MR. EARL: Yeah, and he said, yes that I could so — there's no system.

I've had, you know, received stuff in the mail, you know, to enter this, I guess it's a contest, make drawings and mock ups and, you know, enter this and maybe you'll get the $100,000 commission to make this enormous thing and that's — I'm just not interested in that kind of stuff.

MS. MILOSCH: Right. Right.

MR. EARL: If I could do it in my garage — maybe. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: So the scale of your work, I mean, is pretty much defined by what kind fit in the kiln or — what can fit in the kiln, right? One of the largest electric kiln. Was Sherman already kind of at the top of this largest?

MR. EARL: Yep. That's it.

MS. MILOSCH: That's it.

MR. EARL: Width.

MS. MILOSCH: Width more, yeah, because you can keep adding the rings, right — pretty high — so it's a filler.

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MILOSCH: Well, the next one's, could you describe how they differ from your other works, your commissions?

I think you kind of did a little —

MR. EARL: They don't differ.

MS. MILOSCH: They don't differ? It's just these parameters are there and you're happy and challenged to address them. Okay. Four minutes ticking down —

Do the circumstances the commission have an impact on your other work?

MR. EARL: No.

MS. MILOSCH: Okay, then this last one is going to be no, too. Describe the difficulties or opportunities presented by the commissions.

MR. EARL: Well, the commissions have to be exact and as far as I'm concerned, the other — my other work has to be exact, too. So, you know, there isn't any difference in them.

MS. MILOSCH: Okay, that sounds good.

The next question is so huge I don't even want — I'll say it but I don't think there's time to answer it in four minutes because it's ridiculous. What are the similarities and differences between your early work and recent work? And when did you begin exhibiting? And can you recall the character — recall character of those early — the character of those early exhibitions? That's a — those are big questions.

MR. EARL: Well, we've already answered those.

MS. MILOSCH: Kind of — I think we have. You're right. The early work —

MR. EARL: Yeah, I described the early work.

MS. MILOSCH: The vessels.

MR. EARL: Yep. And the scrafitto and, you know, just the childishness of it all. And then the — what was it — the early work was the porcelain that somehow or other I had enough sense not to show any — or not to try to show anything until I was making something good, so that was the first stuff I showed.

MS. MILOSCH: And the maximum height of those porcelain pieces was usually what — 10 inches by —

MR. EARL: Yeah, the successful ones, yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: Were about 10 inches by, I don't know, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8?

MR. EARL: Yeah, the casserole kind of size, yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: And then you started working in the white earthenware when you came back out here.

MR. EARL: Right.

MS. MILOSCH: And that's when your — is that when the scale — no, because — is that when the scale jumped up?

MR. EARL: The kiln — the first kiln I fired in was about like this and so the stuff had to be small. And then when the —

MS. MILOSCH: About like this is about three-foot-by-three-foot?

MR. EARL: No, it was even smaller than that — maybe 18 [inches] by two foot. And then when I started firing with another guy, then I started working larger.

MS. MILOSCH: And so that started happen here in Ohio.

MR EARL: Right, yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: Okay. And your recent work — you just started — we've been talking about, but, I mean, I saw some pretty diverse pieces out there. So it would be kind of fun to go out and look at some of the stuff.

MR. EARL: Okay.

MS. MILOSCH: I'd like to do that when this ends which is in two minutes. And we kind of — we already talked about when you began exhibiting. And it says, can you recall the character of those early exhibitions?

MR. EARL: Yeah, we —

MS. MILOSCH: Kind of talked about that, right?

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MILOSCH: That it was all new. People were just kind of learning to buy this stuff.

MR. EARL: It was that early porcelain stuff — some sculpture in it — straight sculpture. That's when I did the dog.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh the big — the famous dog.

MR. EARL: I did that for that show — and penguins. I did a series of penguins.

MS. MILOSCH: They were the first ones.

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] The first — and those were slip cast.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, okay. Then that was — wait, no because you went out to Kohler when you were in Virginia?

MR. EARL: Right.

MS. MILOSCH: And so that's when you started slip casting?

MR. EARL: No, I wanted to slip cast while I was in Toledo so I went to the library and got a book on how to slip cast. [Laughs.] So I learned how to — that's how I learned.

MS. MILOSCH: But do you use slip casting now very much?

MR. EARL: No.

MS. MILOSCH: Because coils — we were just talking about that.

MR. EARL: Right, it's all coils.

MS. MILOSCH: So slip casting was only a brief period that you did that and —

MR. EARL: Yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: Okay, I think that's good for this — we got to the second page that's completely done.

[END MD 02 TR 02, BEGIN MD 03 TR 01.]

MS. MILOSCH: This is Jane Milosch interviewing Jack Earl," and — in Lakeview, Ohio on June 20th for Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, disk number three — and I'll even throw in it's 9:30 in the morning. And I'm very thrilled to be back here to talk with Jack because I actually demonstrated that I do know how to learn some things —

MR. EARL: [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: — and have learned how to operate this contraption. So did anything occur to you after we talked yesterday, that you wanted to throw in because we were saying — ask a question, and —

MR. EARL: No. I was exhausted.

MS. MILOSCH: Me too. Harder for you because you had to do a lot more — you had to really think about the past.

MR. EARL: Yeah, I guess, I don't know.

MS. MILOSCH: Okay well then I'm just going to — I'm going to just finish up my questions so those people in Washington will be very proud that I followed the instructions — at least to the best that I could. And then I think I think we, kind of, answered all of these. The next one was, explore the artist's teaching experience including workshops, demonstrations, and gather personal insight into the formation and philosophies of various teaching programs.

Talked a little bit about your teaching, but is there anything else that you'd like to talk about from when you were teaching in Toledo or Virginia —

MR. EARL: Well, it's just that I learned to teach from my teachers, which was not good —

So I wasn't a good teacher. Well, I told you that I was — teaching was second place to the work. But I've — I

know a good teacher, but I just couldn't — I couldn't live that, so. Well, it's a sacrifice. You have to sacrifice your life for other people's lives if you're going to teach.

MS. MILOSCH: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. EARL: I was a good high school teacher because I had a lot of energy and I was interested, and it was — teaching is exciting.

MS. MILOSCH: Well, like I said, I keep meeting people here in New Bremen that remember you as their teacher, so you must have made a big impression on them. You know, they remember — they felt challenged to be creative.

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Well, I don't know how I taught, I just, you know — well, I would present, you know, a project or an idea and then let them do what they wanted to with it, so — and help them if they had any problems, and that's about it.

MS. MILOSCH: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Just kind of teach them some of the skills — throwing and handling and coiling and all that.

MR. EARL: Oh yeah. Yeah, yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: Did you encourage them or feel it was important that they look at what was being made in ceramics — you know, to attend NSECA for the college level, or any of that stuff, or did you feel like they needed to focus on their work?

MR. EARL: I don't know, it was just — I guess I had them do what I did, and that was just make things, you know, and not — no, there wasn't any — I wasn't interested in any outside influences for them. I didn't teach any art history to them, didn't show them any photographs of ceramics and things. So they just made what they would naturally make — what they were aware of, so — .

MS. MILOSCH: But that's kind of interesting because you do look at a lot of art and art history and images but you did not necessarily encourage them to think in that way.

MR. EARL: Well, that was so long ago, you know, I was what, 23, [2]4, [2]5? One of my students is — became a ceramic artist and he's teaching at Toledo, my old job.

MS. MILOSCH: Do you think — is he still there?

MR. EARL: Yeah, mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MILOSCH: And who's that?

MR. EARL: Rex Fogt.

MS. MILOSCH: Rex Fogt. Okay. F— ?

MR. EARL: F-o-g-t.

MS. MILOSCH: Okay.

MR. EARL: That's a New Bremen name. He's from New Bremen there.

MILOSCH: And who's that?

MR. EARL: Rex Fogt, is his name.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, wow. So one that — [and has ?] remained in Ohio.

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] I had another student who went other art school and became a — he worked for GM [General Motors] in their design —

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Well, that was the other thing that Jim Dickey said yesterday, that his father hired you to make a clay model for —

MR. EARL: Right. Yeah, I remember that.

MS. MILOSCH: What was that about? That was interesting.

MR. EARL: It was — they were making these rotors for the antennas, and they had — it must have been a drawing, and they wanted to know what it was going to look like in the — three-dimension and I made that for them. And his father offered me a job.

MS. MILOSCH: [Laughs.]

MR. EARL: [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: But you weren't going to give up teaching for that?

MR. EARL: No. Well, he wanted me — he offered me a job as a draftsman and that's — you know, who knows where it might have led, but I didn't want to be a draftsman, so —

MS. MILOSCH: Right.

MR. EARL: — it didn't even — you know, it didn't stir my spirit at all — [laughs].

MS. MILOSCH: Right. Right. But did you end up making more models or was that just a one-time, sort of —

MR. EARL: No. That was a one-time. And he — that little boy remembered that — huh.

MS. MILOSCH: Did you remember — do you remember him, Tim Dicky — oh yeah, because he was your student. Yeah, because I think he —

MR. EARL: Well, I don't remember him as, you know, as a child — as, you know, just one of the students — I don't remember him. But I remember his father and just, you know, a vague image, you know. I remember that experience, and since I made that thing I remember exactly what it looked like.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, wow — interesting. When we were talking, I thought it was funny too that Jim asked you if you liked to do commissions — and we already talked about that a little bit, because — that those kind of parameters were fun and a challenge for you as an —

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MILOSCH: — attempt to solve.

MR. EARL: Yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: All right, well so that covers teaching.

MR. EARL: Yep, that takes care of [laughs] —

MS. MILOSCH: That takes care of teaching?

MR. EARL: That takes care of, let's see — I don't know, a quick — a long time. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: A long time —

MR. EARL: Twenty-five years, I guess. I don't know. I don't know, it's just a guess.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, I think so. I had the — yeah, because you started teaching in public school in 1957 and you stopped teaching in 1978.

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MILOSCH: So — 21 years. And I have a feeling you didn't miss it after you left it. Am I right, or?

MR. EARL: No, I didn't like — I didn't like the university. The art school at Toledo was, you know, kind of a home place, you know, everybody knew everyone. We knew the director well and, you know, it was just — everyone had been there for a long time and, you know, it was just a real pleasant place.

MS. MILOSCH: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. EARL: But the university situation was altogether different. And the only reason I left Toledo was that it was the kind of — it was the style to leave the art school and go — if you could get a job at a university, to go. It was a step up.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, that's interesting.

MR. EARL: And of course you got paid a little more, so that's why I went. It was — the university situation was just stupid.

MS. MILOSCH: Just the politics of the place, the forms, the structure?

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] I had to rebel. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: [Laughs.]

MR. EARL: And they took it. They let me alone. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: That's great. Oh, wow — [laughs]. I'm sure they kept adding — well, because universities sort of — any kind of institution starts to create these structures and measures and, you know, wants to standardize, codify, all kinds of things. And somehow if you do too much of that, then it loses the freedom to be an individual teacher following something that was —

MR. EARL: I just don't know.

MS. MILOSCH: Well, you should be glad because I think nowadays they — student reviews are the things which guide who they hire and who they reward. It's kind of scary, actually, so.

MR. EARL: Good grief.

MS. MILOSCH: I know, yes, it's sort of reverse.

MR. EARL: Oh, that reminds me. I heard the name — I've forgotten it again — of the place we were trying to remember — Aspen.

MS. MILOSCH Aspen.

MR. EARL: The name of that school there is — ? [Laughs] I don't know, I forgot.

MS. MILOSCH: Shoot. It's in Aspen —

MR. EARL: Ranch — some ranch.

MS. MILOSCH: Anderson Ranch [Anderson Ranch Arts Center, Snowmass Village, CO].

MR. EARL: Anderson Ranch. Yes, there it is.

MS. MILOSCH: Anderson Ranch — I'm writing that down. Now you're already — you're 1-for-1 and I'm 0-for-1 on that German wood sculptor that — I still can't believe I can't think of, but —

MR. EARL: Anyway, they had reviews there, you know, and — which, you know, I just made friends with the people, so then no problem there — [laughs]. But I told the students that I wanted to — I wanted a form — I wanted to review them. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: [Laughs.] And then do you — do you still go — do you give workshops how, Jack? I mean, do you do maybe one a year, or two a year?

MR. EARL: Well, I would if someone would offer me some money — [laughs].

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, well they should be paying you money to do this.

MR. EARL: Yes, but I'm out of style. You know, there are so many ceramic artists and it's just — they've got ceramic artist pollution. [Laughs.] And, the way it —

MS. MILOSCH: The European invasion.

MR. EARL: — I know how it works. You know, people know people — and they invite their friends to do the workshops instead of some stranger that, you know, they don't — which is fine, you know, I believe in that, that's good. You get real value that way [laughs].

MS. MILOSCH: But you would still be open to doing a workshop if you were invited?

MR. EARL: Sure. Yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: It's good to know. I'm going to spread — I'm going to spread the word on that one. [Laughs.]

MR. EARL: [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: Get you and Fairlie out to Washington.

MR. EARL: Oh, that'd be fun.

MS. MILOSCH: I think so too.

MS. MILOSCH: Well, that's good. Let's see, well here's a big one but I think we kind of answered it too in various ways. Where do you get — I think this is kind of funny — where do you get your ideas for your work? How have your sources of inspiration changed over the years?

MR. EARL: Well, I'm a very impressionable person — [laughs]. I get — well, like Margolis called me and said she was thinking about doing a show of cartoon characters. Well, just the idea came to my head — and I've been making cartoons characters since that telephone call, and I don't know whether she wants them or not, you know, she hasn't said for sure, so — I saw a nice landscape in this — and the color, and texture, and so forth, that I want to do, you know — I've got that in my mind. And just anything — a picture, so.

MS. MILOSCH: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] How did the bust of [William Tecumseh] Sherman come about, again? You told that story, but I thought it was pretty interesting.

MR. EARL: Well, I made a bust of [Abraham] Lincoln some years ago, and the reason I made him was because — oh, when I was young I read — what was that guy who wrote — I think it was in so many volumes on Lincoln —

MS. MILOSCH: That's something my husband would know.

MR. EARL: — he was a poet from Chicago? Sandburg —

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, Carl Sandburg.

MR. EARL: — yeah, Carl Sandburg wrote. And I read all those and — when I was young — and then I reread them later, and Lincoln's been one of my favorites. I've read it — I've read — someone said, some great-name philosopher said, study Jesus Christ and Abraham Lincoln.

MS. MILOSCH: Really, wow.

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MILOSCH: How interesting. Well, Lincoln — especially not living in Washington, and seeing some of the — you know, the place where he was shot, where — we also, you know, have a ball for Lincoln's presidency — Lincoln Hall. When you come to Washington, we'll see that again.

So Lincoln and then Sherman —

MR. EARL: And Lincoln — you know, Lincoln and Sherman were connected. And I learned something about Sherman from reading — and I also read — who was that? [Ulysses S.] Grant. I read a lot about Grant.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, that's why I got confused — I accidentally was about to say "president," I was thinking Grant and then Jim said, "Well, President's Hall, that wouldn't be — " — that's right, because Grant is from the Midwest as well, so —

MR. EARL: Right, yeah, he's from Ohio.

MS. MILOSCH: Ohio.

MR. EARL: Yeah, and Sherman is — yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: But I guess, was it up in — not Moline, in Illinois just across from Iowa in the north, there's his home after the Civil War. He settled up there — I can't think of that city right now either, but.

MR. EARL: I don't know. I thought he —

MS. MILOSCH: Across from Dubuque, towards Chicago, I mean —

MR. EARL: This is Grant?

MS. MILOSCH: Grant. Grant, yeah, yeah, yeah. So you —

MR. EARL: I didn't know that.

MS. MILOSCH: So you were thinking — and so there was no one that asked you to do Sherman, you just —

MR. EARL: No. No, no.

MS. MILOSCH: It wasn't part of a series —

MR. EARL: No, I just found that photograph and it's such a — well, it's the famous photograph of Sherman —

MS. MILOSCH: Right.

MR. EARL: — and it was just — it was so detailed and so, you know, powerful that — the plan was to imitate that photograph —

MS. MILOSCH: Wow.

MR. EARL: — and make it as — make the piece as powerful as the photograph.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, wow. Well, I think you captured it and actually I think that's, you know — it has so much life for it not having — to photograph someone that was in front of his, you know, real presence — and yet you managed to transfer that into that piece, it's really pretty powerful.

MR. EARL: I can copy.

MS. MILOSCH: You could —

MR. EARL: [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: Well, you do more than copy. That's the whole point, you imbue it with your vision and experience, so. I mean, that's — you choose what to add and, I mean, it's the textures. That's why I wondered if you looked at [Vincent] Van Gogh — all of his self-portraits because —

MR. EARL: Oh yeah, I've — I used to copy Van Gogh too when I was at — when I was at Bluffton — [laughs].

MS. MILOSCH: See, I could just — there's an element of that kind of observation that I think he was, you know, notorious for, but also — yeah, really observation in nature in people but never feeling totally comfortable and a little agitated, so I think that agitation comes out in that bust of Grant.

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MILOSCH: I mean — not Grant, that was [laughs] —

MR. EARL: That's close enough. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: [Laughs.] I think you're going to have to make a bust of Grant just so that I'll stop — from Sherman to Grant.

MR. EARL: You find — I like — I looked at the photograph of Lee, but he is, you know, he's kind of the handsome stereotype southerner and he's just — he don't have no guts. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: He doesn't inspire you to — [laughs].

MR. EARL: No. [Laughs.] No.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, that's funny — a little too slick.

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MILOSCH: So that kind of answers inspiration and ideas; of the cartoons, we were talking about that; the two-sided pieces, we've talked about that; the portraits, which tend to be these, sort of, composites and these, sort of, self-portraits that, sort of —

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Yeah, just Ohio culture-related, and —

MS. MILOSCH: But, sort of, through your own eyes, which —

MR. EARL: Oh yeah. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MILOSCH: I mean, I think that's true of a lot of artists, that they always — you see them in their work and — oh boy, I know you're going to get tired of this, I'm going to send you that Grant Wood book — but Grant Wood too, I see him in a lot of his paintings, and I see you, but I see — you know, very distinctly.

MR. EARL: Well, it'll be interesting to see that book.

MS. MILOSCH: Especially knowing that that's not someone that you've copied and looked at and read about. I think you'll be intrigued with the story.

MS. MILOSCH: Any other source that you want to go down for posterity's sake, that has captivated you again and again, or —

MR. EARL: Any old classical photographs of art. I did a — I worked with — I copied illuminated manuscripts for years.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, wow. Really?

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] I've got some out in the garage that I found — some copies that —

MS. MILOSCH: Now, like also a book of hours, and prayers like, *Tres Riches Heures* [Limbourg brothers, early fifteenth century]that the Lorenzetti brothers — well, that's not right, who did the book of hours?

MR. EARL: I don't know.

MS. MILOSCH: Here we go again. Well, I'm not going to waste the valuable tape time because we can add this in later on. Well, I thought it was the Lorenzetti brothers.

MR. EARL: Could be, I don't know.

MS. MILOSCH: So — all right, well, that — and then the found photos that you've — you find photos, take photos, books. I still think it's really interesting, though, that you don't get any more contemporary art magazines or crafter magazines. That would just take time to keep up — looking at that stuff.

MR. EARL: Well, they're depressing. [Laughs.] They are either better than what I'm making — and I know photographs can lie, or they are, you know — they shouldn't be in the magazine. There's — both categories are depressing. [Laughs.] When somebody's doing better than you are, that is not good.

MS. MILOSCH: [Laughs.]

MR. EARL: And when they're doing worse than you are, that's not good either.

MS. MILOSCH: That was what was great about that ceramics thing you're, you know, you're — when they did that — was it 1971 or '75, they were — that controversial —

MR. EARL: Oh, yeah, that's — I didn't even know that was going on.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, yeah. Isn't that — it's great —

MR. EARL: Howard Kottler, he answered the letters. I guess they must have sent him the letters to the editor, and he answered them, and they printed them. And oh, he was — you know how nas — well, I don't know whether you know how nasty he could be — oh.

MS. MILOSCH: I heard he could be nasty, I never —

MR. EARL: Oh, terrible.

MS. MILOSCH: So he just kind of gave them a one-two punch back, and —

MR. EARL: Yep, yep — just. He'd call people names.

MS. MILOSCH: Wow.

MR. EARL: Oh, man.

MS. MILOSCH: Well, I remember the thing between Volkous and — was it Rose Slifka, for studio potter on Marguerite Wildenheim — these two different polar — I think it was Marguerite Wildenheim and Volkous — do you remember that controversy?

MR. EARL: No. No, I don't. I've read some of Volkous' comments and he was always — he always had a different viewpoint than usual in those early years. Now everyone thinks the same. Do your own thing. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: [Laughs.] Do your own thing.

MR. EARL: I guess, I don't know.

MS. MILOSCH: Well, let's see, the next question's kind of funny because we've talked about it and around it: In what ways do political and social commentary figure into your work?

MR. EARL: Social commentary? What is that? Someone else's opinion of —

MS. MILOSCH: I guess social commentary is your opinion, if you —

MR. EARL: Oh, my opinion.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, yeah, but I think — we were talking about it with that other question that wasn't so quite straightforward, which was — not the influences — there was another one that reminded me of those nebulous — I think — you don't approach your work with a political or social agenda. They end up being political-social comments I think, but not — that seems to me not — I don't feel like you have it in your mind when you start a piece —

MR. EARL: Nothing —

MS. MILOSCH: — it's not — you think I'm going to — am I — ?

MR. EARL: No. Nothing specific, it's a generalization of things. And I know that if you comment on some — like if you did a bust of Bush, and you distorted it and you, you know, had some kind of message in it — Bush is going to leave office in a year and the piece is dead. You know, politics change and I don't make things — I'm not interested in making things that are going to die, as far as subject matter goes. I want the subject matter to be, what — well, stable, something that is — was, is, and if, will be — so.

MS. MILOSCH: Part of the human condition more than —

MR. EARL: Right — more than anything specific.

MS. MILOSCH: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Right. Interesting. Wow. Because — though in the end, in some of your works, what makes that so specific — I should say — but through your details and specifics — wait, I'm not being — with that general approach, though, the details of your work, to me, do have these political-social observations, but it's clear that you leave it open. I have the sense that — which I think is characteristic of all great art is that — it holds up a mirror to the situation with a kind of an encouragement, again, of — am I wrong? I mean, there are a lot of — it's not a moralistic way of saying, "This is how it should be," right? I mean you approach it more as a question, am I — am I —

MR. EARL: Well, you approach — I don't know. What I don't like about the modern authors is that they — as I understand it, they're — they want to present things the way they are, without any redeeming parts to it. And I don't want my work to be like that. So I don't know exactly — I got the impression from what you said that, you know, it was a — what I do is a presentation of the way things are and that's — you just present it and let people see it. But that's — I don't want to do that, if I do do it.

MS. MILOSCH: No, no. I think — no, no I think you say they're — things are more than they seem. I mean, that's the whole thing is that you look into your work and you recognize something, but you know that there's something more to that tree than just the tree. I mean, you put them in — to me, what I really am engrossed by is your combination and choice of subject matter and sometimes words, so that you push — you push, challenge someone to look deeper — and looking for those redeeming elements.

And I think you upset any kind of ideas or prejudice. And I think that's, too, what is so interesting for people who've not — I was thinking about this again driving here in the Midwest, it's open, it's — I mean, this idea of time is so different than living out on the East Coast or in a major city, that these people come here and they can't believe things are so simple. And then — because they want to think — I'm not saying "they," I mean, people who aren't — maybe not quite experienced, quite a life of tranquility and simplicity, they're mystified by it. It's — you know, they want to try to define it and I think it's not something easily quantified or categorized for being — producing this or producing that, it's not — it's not a — life's not an equation.

So, no I think — I think you're absolutely right, there's another clay artist that's in the show, staying at the Renwick, and some people think her work is depressing. And I say the very same thing that you just said, what makes it so powerful, she — there are elements that are open.

MR. EARL: Right, right. There has to be a sense of mystery in what you make.

MS. MILOSCH: Exactly. And I don't know what you think about that, but to me that's why I've always been drawn back to craft, because it — and I think painting and sculpture used to be more traditionally like that — but the material itself is so mysterious that you're making this thing that — the process you can't completely, utterly control.

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MILOSCH: All right, well that's —

MR. EARL: Oh, we're in agreement. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: Political and social commentary — check.

Okay, this is an easy one I think. This goes back to these national craft organizations, it says "What involvement have you had with" — and one was NSECA, and we talked about that, and then it also says, "With local craft organizations, guilds and gatherings such as Supermud [Supermud Student Invitational, Pennsylvania State University, College Park, PA, 1970s]." I don't even know what Supermud is, and I'm supposed to be in the field — do you — what is that?

MR. EARL: That was — some time ago, while I was teaching in Virginia, that's been a long time ago — I think it was the University of Pennsylvania, started presenting this gathering and they called it Supermud.

MS. MILOSCH: I did not know that.

MR. EARL: And there was — it was like NCECA, only looser. You know, you had the feeling that it was more cool, you know, and just — all the —

MS. MILOSCH: All the chaos.

MR. EARL: — all the bib overalls — [laughs] — just flocked there — [laughs] —

MS. MILOSCH: Really.

MR. EARL: — and drank beer. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: [Laughs.]

MR. EARL: I never went, but it was just — you know, you got the impression —

MS. MILOSCH: So you never went to a Supermud?

MR. EARL: No, no, no, no. [Laughs.] I was married and had three kids. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: [Laughs.] Then I'm not going to drag my kids up there or waste my weekend rolling around in the mud.

MR. EARL: Yep, that's what —

MS. MILOSCH: That's pretty much what they were doing, huh?

MR. EARL: Yeah. Yeah, that was about it. But it died. And they had it every year for a while.

MS. MILOSCH: Did they really? Okay, well I'm going to have to look into this because I — goodness. I mean, I went to NCECA when I was in graduate school, but not undergraduate, so. And I remember feeling it was very formulaic, so I can see how Supermud would, you know, counter —

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: Because we were talking about things that are quantified, organized, you know. Somehow as soon as you create podiums, you create certain personalities. [Laughs.] Certain personalities excel and like to get up there on that podium. [Laughs.]

MR. EARL: But I've become associated with the Lima Art Center [ArtSpace/Lima, Lima, OH] just because they did that little retrospective on my work.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, that's great. I was looking at that catalogue again.

MR. EARL: But that's —

MS. MILOSCH: In Bluffton.

MR. EARL: Oh, yeah Bluffton. Oh, yeah, that's — I've made some pieces for Bluffton and I did a portrait of my old art teacher.

MS. MILOSCH: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. EARL: And I did a portrait of the founder of their religion — Menno-simons, and I put a varsity "B" athletic jacket — I put a varsity "B" jacket on him and a ball cap turned backwards. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, that's funny.

MR. EARL: Yeah, they liked it.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, that's funny.

MR. EARL: Oh, he had a great big long beard — well, there really wasn't any photographs but there was just one print of him. They loved that. [Laughs.] I asked permission before I did it, you know, I —

MS. MILOSCH: So it wasn't a commission, this was something you wanted to do, or?

MR. EARL: Well, I had made — I had made a piece for them out of clay and they wanted it related to the tradition of Bluffton College. Well, the old teacher that I had had done a kobzar, and so I put Bill in the kobzar lap as a student —

MS. MILOSCH: Is that in the catalogue?

MR. EARL: — at Bluffton College. I don't think so, I don't know. And I made it out of ceramics and it didn't fire well and it started to fall apart, so I remade it and they put it inside. And then I had to make something for the outside too, I felt, so I made this thing out of cement — this — Menno-simons is cement, it's a bust.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, so we were talking about working in other materials, so you did — you decided to make it out of cement.

MR. EARL: Yeah. Just so it would last.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, wow.

MR. EARL: So I learned how to do that.

MS. MILOSCH: See, now we're getting — see, it was worth coming the third day.

MR. EARL: [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: Well, I was relistening to the tape and I have to say that when you first said you made guns in wood, I was thinking real guns that fired.

MR. EARL: Oh. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: Then I realized, no he was talking about play guns, of course, of course.

MR. EARL: Yes, yes, yes, yes.

MS. MILOSCH: It's just that you modeled them after pictures. You made them very realistic.

MR. EARL: Right, right, yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: Right, right, right. I'm thinking, wow, your dad let you make guns. [Laughs.]

MR. EARL: Did — yeah. Zip guns, right — no. Do you remember zip guns?

MS. MILOSCH: No, I don't.

MR. EARL: They were —

MS. MILOSCH: Kind of like a BB gun, or?

MR. EARL: No, they shot .22 rifle bullets, and the kids — well, as I understand, you know, the kids in New York City made them and they used them for guns —

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, I didn't know that.

MR. EARL: — and they would get a cylinder that would fit the size of the bullet, and put — use a rubber band and just pull back on the rubber band and have the pin hit the bullet —

MS. MILOSCH: With enough force?

MR. EARL: — yeah, and it was — it was a gun.

MS. MILOSCH: Wow.

MR. EARL: So kids were making their own guns. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: Well, it just shows you, you can take away the guns but you can't take away the violence or that — well, you know what I mean, that people actually want to hurt other people. [Laughs].

MR. EARL: Yes, they're going to do it. Yes. Yes.

MS. MILOSCH: [Laughs.] Yeah, they're going find a way. Okay, well do you — any other craft, anything else — Lima— that's good to know about? Any other craft, clay —

MR. EARL: — organizations, no.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, because it seems to me from what you've said, it was important for you — you made a conscious decision along the way, "I'm not going to let this other stuff distract" from being able to do your work. Like you respected your teaching, but still your teaching enabled you to do your work.

MR. EARL: Right, right, right — instead of the work enabled me to be a teacher. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: Right. [Laughs.] Yeah, well, that there's — there are those out there who really are just great teachers, and that's —

MR. EARL: That's right. Yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: But I do think it's great when art departments have a mixture of those different types, because it's not so homogenous.

MR. EARL: Oh, well absolutely — yeah. I think a great teacher should teach. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: Well, did I ask you who was teaching with you in Virginia? Did I already ask that question?

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: Okay, so we covered those names — we've talked about Toledo, so. I'm sure I'll get back and think of something, but we'll have to figure that out. The next question, describe your working process and how it changed over time. Do you work alone or with others?

Some of these questions are just reworded, I mean, we've — your working process. We've kind of talked about the changes over the years. I mean, that sounds exactly like the question on the other page. Yeah.

MR. EARL: Yeah, well, now I coil, I used to — I used to slip cast. But again, you know, what's interesting about clay is that — well, while you're working with it, you know, you work with it, it can be a liquid or it can be dried clay. I use dust — clay dust a lot for texture.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, I didn't know that.

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And slip — you can paint slip on it, and if you leave the brush marks, of course, when you oil paint on it then it becomes an oil brush mark. So you can make clay taut— you can make [laughs] any material.

MS. MILOSCH: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] But also in these various forms — from the dust to the liquid.

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Right.

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah, because there is a lot of texture —

MR. EARL: And this clay that I'm using, you can take a piece of dry clay and wet it, and stick it on wet clay and it sticks. Yes. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: Wow.

MR. EARL: Yes.

MS. MILOSCH: Without scoring it? Do you score and add a little bit of slip so it sticks?

MR. EARL: Oh, yeah, you know, you have to, you know, get it tacky and then stick it on.

MS. MILOSCH: But you can rewet it a little bit and it will —

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] As long as the piece isn't real large, you know, a small piece.

MS. MILOSCH: Right. Right.

MR. EARL: Like to make a rock, well you just take a chunk of clay and crush it there's a lot of rocks there. So you pick them up and stick them on, so.

MS. MILOSCH: Of your — the work that's out there, it seems like a lot of oil paint, are you still doing a lot of the glazing and oil paint — do you still use both methods, or?

MR. EARL: I did just a, you know, I just did, what, maybe a year or two ago I was, you know, doing that — doing the glazes. It's just whatever — whatever the piece requires. The cartoon characters that I used to do were glazed, and I decided to change the image of the cartoon characters and make them — do some more — do modeling on them. You know how flat cartoon characters is, well, I decided to model the features with the paint, and so I'm oil painting those now. And I haven't decided whether to — I'll ask your opinion about that, don't forget —

MS. MILOSCH: We want to look at the work.

MR. EARL: — you give me your opinion. I want to know whether to varnish the cartoon characters and make them shiny or to leave them with that kind of velvet look, so.

MS. MILOSCH: Agreed.

MR. EARL: I don't know, so that's — I want you to tell me what to do. [Laughs].

MS. MILOSCH: Well, it's interesting because when we were doing those solid porcelain pieces you were talking about, that clear glaze that you had sprayed on gave it a depth, you know, of color. So varnish can do the same thing, but it can be slicky and sticky and —

MR. EARL: Well, right. It just — it gives it more pizzazz and it makes it shiny.

MS. MILOSCH: Right. Right. People think it's a glaze — I mean, I think most people think glazes are always shiny, in fact, we know that's obviously not true, but it's funny how they get confused with things that have been burnished and —

MR. EARL: But what I — you know, I don't care what they, you know, I don't care whether it's ceramic or paint, but just — its image is what I'm interested in — what it looks like.

MS. MILOSCH: Right. Well, so this is a good question, because I think this is great because some people make a big debate out of this, and I don't — for you, when you shifted to paint, it's not that you think the work is — you use what's required, it's not like you said, well, I'm tired of glazing, I couldn't achieve what I wanted in glaze.

MR. EARL: No, no, no. It's — right, it's what you want the thing to look like.

MS. MILOSCH: Right. But you said that what kind of led you to do that was that crack in that one piece — which I like that, there was a problem to solve and you didn't have a lot of time to refire it.

MR. EARL: Right, I couldn't — I couldn't remake it, so. There were people who said I shouldn't oil paint because, you know, it wouldn't last. But my response was, well, there is — paintings in the pyramids, you know, so, you know, that's — paint will last.

MS. MILOSCH: Right. Right. Right.

MR. EARL: It works better on clay than it does on glaze, you know, it sticks better to — and I've scratched into

the clay to find out how far the paint goes in, and it goes way in. The oil will go in — oh probably, I know a 16th of an inch, almost an eighth — so it really soaks in, there's a real bind there.

MS. MILOSCH: So there are some where there's no glaze on it at all, that you just — you prime in all oil paint?

MR. EARL: Oh, yeah, most of the work, mm-hmm [affirmative], is all oil paint.

MS. MILOSCH: And do you prime the surface then with a white paint or do you just start painting —

MR. EARL: No. Just start painting.

MS. MILOSCH: Okay, that's interesting, wow. So then it really does soak into the —

MR. EARL: Oh, yeah, way, you know —

MS. MILOSCH: Because that bisque wear is pretty porous still.

MR. EARL: Oh, it's very porous. And the —

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, that was a question, if you fired your work higher — because you're not going to glaze it later on, do you fire it to a higher temperature?

MR. EARL: I fired — I fired — I used to fire at .04, which is, you know, a little harder than .06 — the clay is designed for .04, .06. But lately I've been firing it at .06 because I just, you know, it's hard, why fire it on 4? If it's going to break, it's going to break. If you drop it, it breaks whether the temperature is — that much temperature I don't think makes really any difference. If the piece is going to be respected, then they aren't going to break it. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: Right, right, right, right. Well, and even after you fire it at .06, if you wanted to go back and glaze it you could, it would just go back to the — I mean, it just probably doesn't take the glaze as much as it does at .04, if I remember, it's less porous.

MR. EARL: What was that, you bisque — you bisque at .04, this clay, you bisque at .04 and glaze at .06.

MS. MILOSCH: Right.

MR. EARL: Because of the, you know, so that the clay doesn't shrink on you —

MS. MILOSCH: Right.

MR. EARL: — when you're firing.

MS. MILOSCH: Right. But I mean if you — having done so many, trying all kinds of kooky things — but if you fire at .06 and you decided you wanted to glaze, you still could.

MR. EARL: Oh, yeah. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MILOSCH: I just remembered there was a danger the piece may blow up, or the glaze may crack —

MR. EARL: Yeah. I don't — no, I don't have any trouble. I buy good stuff. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: Yeah yeah. Well, and also you're talking about that you still have the — what's the name of the guy that fires your stuff across the way in the hobby shop?

MR. EARL: Richard Burton is his name.

MS. MILOSCH: Richard Burton. And you were telling us that he was going to close and you said, "You're not allowed to close," no [laughs] — basically he fires just for you then, and keeps his glaze — the glazes that he has, over there?

MR. EARL: I've got all of his — I bought everything.

MS. MILOSCH: So you have all of his —

MR. EARL: I have all of that stuff, right.

MS. MILOSCH: — he just has the kilns over there then.

MR. EARL: It's all stored out at my daughter's farm. And when I went —

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, even the kiln, so —

MR. EARL: I've got one kiln out there and he's got the other one.

MS. MILOSCH: Okay.

MR. EARL: Yeah, so. All I've got is my little jars that I need.

MS. MILOSCH: Okay. Oh, that's funny. All right, well, I thought his name should go down on the —

MR. EARL: All right.

MS. MILOSCH: — so we get it in here.

MR. EARL: Well, I'll tell him. [Laughs].

MS. MILOSCH: Tell him he's in the, he's in — okay, let's see, I want to have plenty of time to look at the work, so we — I asked the second to the last question. One was, consider the motivating factors of major shifts in forms, techniques, and materials. Well, we've kind of talked about that already.

MR. EARL: Yeah, I think we've gone through all the things that I've done, places I've worked, and the processes, and — when they happened, so.

MS. MILOSCH: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Yeah, because it's not — correct me if I'm wrong, but the times that you were doing a lot of the small figures, you would shift to, you know, something like the Kohler sink, and you went to Kohler at least three times or four times it seems?

MR. EARL: I think three, maybe four, I don't know. Better to be — better a smaller number than to exaggerate.

MS. MILOSCH: Right. [Laughs.] That modesty — modesty, modesty — it goes a long way. Yeah, because I'm looking at the — and a lot of these Kohler pieces they sold right away, did Ruth buy some for the collection, I see?

MR. EARL: Kohler took pieces.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, that's right. Right.

MR. EARL: They had the choices, so they took pieces.

MS. MILOSCH: Right, because the ones in here I was looking at —

MR. EARL: And the other thing —

MS. MILOSCH: Then you did an addition, that was the slip — were these the slip-casted —

MR. EARL: Oh, yeah. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MILOSCH: — multiples — the Ohio dresser —

MR. EARL: I've got a Kohler piece out there.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, we've got to — I would definitely like to see that. And there's Tom LaDousa, and that's Schotz [ph].

Well, and you know you were making these cups, but again, we talked about how function doesn't really — did someone ask you to make cups or did you just decide —

MR. EARL: No, no, no.

S. MILOSCH: — that you liked the idea of a cup in the form and the subject matter of a cup?

MR. EARL: It's just the kind of — right, whatever that is. That's just the idea of it, which is, kind of, artificial — a clever idea.

MS. MILOSCH: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Here are the penguins — I like those penguins. And there's — George Segal, I wanted to ask you if you ever looked at any of his sculpture. You know, he does those —

MR. EARL: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: — plaster figures. This piece here, you know — although he does them large, there's a kind of ghostly quality to some of your work that reminds me of his. But I didn't know —

MR. EARL: I know.

MS. MILOSCH: — if any of the pop artists were artists that you —

MR. EARL: No, I never looked at their stuff — in relation to copying anything or getting ideas from it — no.

MS. MILOSCH: I was trying to think if there's any — anything else, because I think we have talked about all the different — I did have one other question, because your pieces sometimes are often like little theater or stages or scenarios — and you've talked about reading, has theater — theater itself — plays, or going to plays, or any kind of —

MR. EARL: No, I don't do that.

MS. MILOSCH: That — yeah, okay well that's —

Well, I'll end with one last question — I'll probably think of one more before we end but — what impact has technology has had on your work? [Laughs.]

MR. EARL: [Laughs.] Well, I have no idea. I mean, if you — it probably has a lot of impact because the clay is a technological object. The guy who made the clay, I heard him talk about it, about how little particles of clay lay and what makes it plastic and all this business, but I don't know anything about it. But, you know, there's certainly technology in that.

MS. MILOSCH: Right, right, right.

MR. EARL: And in the — what, there's, you know, there's probably hundreds of people working on redesigning slips and glazes and — so, certainly. You know, but there's not technology — as far as I'm concerned, there's no technology. Fire bricks, you know, there's a lot of technology in fire bricks.

MS. MILOSCH: Right, right, right.

MR. EARL: And the kiln sits there and fires over and over and over and doesn't break down.

MS. MILOSCH: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And you're using oil paints that have been oil paints for centuries, so —

MR. EARL: But they're getting worse.

MS. MILOSCH: They're getting worse?

MR. EARL: Yeah, they are — there's so much oil in the oil paints, and they don't have any — they don't have enough body, so. And you can tell by lifting a tube — it's light.

MS. MILOSCH: Boy oh boy. Every — at every turn, they're trying to give you less and still take more money for it [laughs].

MR. EARL: Yeah, yeah, it's incredible.

MS. MILOSCH: Wow, wow. Well, that's it for the formal questions, is there —

MR. EARL: All right.

MS. MILOSCH: — anything — is there anything else that occurred to you that is, you know, I don't know, that's been really important, I think, in your life? I mean, in terms of, you know, being an artist?

We were talking about that a little last night at dinner with Diane, and someone was saying, you know, being an artist, you know, you've already — just being that enough, you've done something with your life, the idea that it's such a challenging vocation to follow. So I didn't know if you had any — any comments on that, just?

MR. EARL: Well, I've — I've just — I've always done the only thing I could do, so there's no — there's no glory in that. There's no — there's not even any, what — [laughs] there's no thought in it, you're just being led because that's what you do.

MS. MILOSCH: Well, I think it took courage. I mean, I think it sounds to me that what's so beautiful is your

parents — we've talked that your father was welder and your mother was a housewife, and once your father asked you what are you going to do with this, and you said you were going to teach. He was completely comfortable, so you weren't discouraged from pursuing what you were naturally good at, and you were — your skills early on were acknowledged by your teachers and you were encouraged, right, and so —

MR. EARL: But my wife put up with me being an artist.

MS. MILOSCH: Very supportive.

MR. EARL: Well, no, I mean, I could have — I could have been a contractor and made a lot of money. You know, we were building houses, and I could have quit teaching and started building houses. And who knows how much money you'd have now, you'd know, you've spent a lifetime making houses.

And when I left teaching, she let me leave, so.

MS. MILOSCH: That's supportive, though. I mean, that's —

MR. EARL: Yes. Yeah, yeah, so she deserves more credit for me being an artist than I do. She has to — [laughs] — she had to make the sacrifices and I've just worked in the garage.

MS. MILOSCH: She has a lot — I mean, I think that's a beautiful thing. She has a lot of faith in your abilities, and your dedication to it, and to I think cut out a lot of distractions, but what I — you know.

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Well, it's — to know your limitations is very beneficial. It keeps you solid, you know, it keeps you — it keeps me in contact with my life around me, which is my source. So it's kind of a circular —

MS. MILOSCH: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] I mean, was there ever any point where you thought — because, I mean, you have done this your whole life, it's really astonishing, it's really rare — was there ever a point where you thought, am I doing the right thing? Should I be doing this? Was there ever kind of a crisis point or just —

MR. EARL: Well, one time we were driving down the road out here, and Fairlie says something about money. And I said, well, I'm either — if I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing, then it'll be all right. If I'm not, then I'll get a job. You know, I'll support, and — but I didn't have to get a job. Everything worked out, so.

Art is a job.

MS. MILOSCH: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. EARL: I've got a cousin who — when he was farming, he's in ill health now, but when he was farming, he was a better farmer than I was an artist. He was more dedicated and he had larger goals. He was working for his family, in that he wanted to have something to leave them so that the farm would continue on in the family. And I never had a goal like that. My goals were always self-centered and more — what, right now, living now, so.

MS. MILOSCH: Then with your working hours, once you came back here, did you — I think this is kind of interesting, I'd be curious, did you find yourself saying, I'm going work in the studio nine to five, or did you work morning to night, or did you — I mean, did you come up with a routine? Because, I mean, I think people don't realize how much dedication and time it takes to make these things. And I was just curious if you had a disciplined structure that you followed. I mean, obviously you have tremendous discipline, but I just mean your work —

MR. EARL: I don't —

MS. MILOSCH: — when you mentioned a farmer, you know, they've got to get up in the morning, and they —

MR. EARL: Right. It isn't a discipline. I don't have any discipline, it's just — it's you're compelled. And so it's outside of you. You can't take any credit for being compelled to do something. And I work — we go to breakfast, I come home, and I work until I get tired and hungry. And then I eat, take a nap, and get up and work until I'm tired and hungry. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: [Laughs.]

MR. EARL: But I very seldom work at night because I'm a little tired and that's when I go up and type, you know, and read, so. But I don't waste any time. I don't — I don't do "nothing."

MS. MILOSCH: Well, you don't — you don't — you've never been — you've never found yourself avoiding your studio, because — boy, I can't solve that; or I can't deal with that; or taking — but you take these three months,

that's kind of a nice thing, to go down to Florida and just write and think. Do you find yourself refreshed when you come back, to know what you want to try to do in the studio?

MR. EARL: No.

[They laugh.]

MS. MILOSCH: Just part of being a whole person, isn't it?

MR. EARL: Yeah, it's — oh, let's see, I had a thought and I can't remember it. You were talking and it reminded me of something, but I forget what it was.

MS. MILOSCH: The hours you worked, your schedule, time off — oh, if you went into the studio and you —

MR. EARL: Oh, yes, yes, yes. Right, right, right —

MS. MILOSCH: — were trying to avoid it, then some reason, like a problem —

MR. EARL: — if you've got a problem — if you've got a problem, well, what you do is just leave the problem and you'd go do something else, and when you come back you've changed. And so there you are, you just solved — then the problem is solved. I've done that hundreds of times.

MS. MILOSCH: Right.

MR. EARL: You just see things in a different way.

MS. MILOSCH: Go away and do something else and come back.

MR. EARL: Yeah.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, I know, I've one other — that was — because it seems, too, when I was out there in the studio, you tend to work on a couple pieces at once. I mean, you were working on several things at once, really, if I'm — I saw Veronica — no, not Veronica, Betty.

MR. EARL: Well, that's — I made Betty, and there she sits. Now I'll paint her. So that's two different processes — two different things completely. So, no, I'm only working on one thing at a time.

MS. MILOSCH: And when you're building a piece, it's that piece, you're not working on two or three —

MR. EARL: That's right. No, no. I don't paint and build, or I don't build two things at once. That's —

MS. MILOSCH: So right now are you building something and painting her? Or where are you in the —

MR. EARL: I'm painting right now because I've got — the stuff seems to be crowding in on me — the white stuff, and I want to get it — I want to get it cleared up. I don't want to have a bunch of stuff to paint.

MS. MILOSCH: Oh yeah, so at least you do maybe two or three pieces in clay, fire those together, and then there's a cycle of painting, and then — okay, so that's good to know. I think that's — I think that's interesting especially because you are painting on them, and you are, you know, just the whole idea of having to fire the — so you get some distance from them before they come back.

I mean, I think that's another difference, again, about process, and it's ceramic artists who sculpt in clay, unlike someone working in stone — of course, bronze, there's a couple layers to the process, but I think that kind of distance informs you and is a — I think ceramic artists are more attuned to that — those periods of waiting.

MR. EARL: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Yeah, I thought about that.

MS. MILOSCH: That was that glass artist who went to Kohler and suddenly worked in porcelain, realized she was so used to being right there when with the liquid fluid glass. Once you pulled, cut it, pushed it, it was done, and with ceramics she learned — wow, there are a lot of steps. [Laughs.]

MR. EARL: [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: There were a lot of steps. And where you start and where you think you're going to end up are very, very different, she discovered. And then it kind of changed how she approached glass, so that she stops just working glass hot, but became very intrigued with working it cold, hot, breaking and fusing it, putting things —

MR. EARL: Oh, well, sure, yeah. Neat.

MS. MILOSCH: Well and then that's why I liked hearing that you made that one bust in cement, that you wanted it to last. Like there's a recognition, there's the fragility to the ceramics, and the paint — it can't be a piece that sits outside. But you weren't afraid to approach it in cement — and with your slip-casting background —

MR. EARL: I've worked in cement. I know, you know, I understand cement. I know how it works, and that was part of building houses — we used cement.

MS. MILOSCH: Did you paint the cement or is it just a solid, I mean —

MR. EARL: It's — you mean the piece in Bluffton?

MS. MILOSCH: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. EARL: They wanted me to paint it, but I told them — if they want it painted, you know — if you want it painted, I'll paint it. But I don't think it should be painted because it's strong enough — you know, cement, you know, I modeled it with my hands —

MS. MILOSCH: Wow. You mean, in like in over just an hour — because cement sets so quickly —

MR. EARL: One day. One day.

MS. MILOSCH: And did you add —

MR. EARL: Just a handful of cement, and just —

MS. MILOSCH: Almost like your coils in a way.

MR. EARL: Yeah, just stacked it up.

MS. MILOSCH: Wow.

MR. EARL: I think I made the — maybe not. I know I made — maybe I took — it's on a cement base, so I made the base and it's about that thick — like coils —

MS. MILOSCH: Oh, wow. Okay.

MR. EARL: So it's not solid.

MS. MILOSCH: It's not solid, so it's hollow —

MR. EARL: Right. And it's a bust shape, you know, it comes up, so the cement would support itself as it came up in the head, you know, it's a real simple shape — so it supported itself.

MS. MILOSCH: And you said you had made a version in clay first.

MR. EARL: No. No, that was something — that was something different.

MS. MILOSCH: And — I don't think I asked this basic question, do you sketch out a lot of your pieces in a drawing? Do you draw out your pieces before you start or do you just start thinking right away in the coil and the clay?

MR. EARL: No, I always copy in clay. I either copy a drawing of my own, or I copy something, because when you're coiling, you have to know what it's going to look like when it's done. So you have to have that proportion, you have to know. You can't just start building and expect it to be what you want at the end. Because I don't have that skill, someone else might, but I don't have it. There's a piece — the one of the guy swallowing his coffee and it going in him — that is from a drawing. And all of those little lines was in — you know, the wiggles in his shirt, those were in the drawing.

MS. MILOSCH: In your drawing?

MR. EARL: Right. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MS. MILOSCH: Okay, so you do — you do have a drawing and then that is the idea, okay. So you — or you're looking at a painting that you didn't redraw, you're copying it in clay rather than trying to draw it flat in some kind of three-point perspective for a modeling. That, to you, that's not — I mean, you just —

MR. EARL: Yeah, I can — I can show you what — how I operate out there.

MS. MILOSCH: Okay, that sounds good. Well, I think that — I cannot think of any more questions.

MR. EARL: Oh, goodie. [Laughs.]

MS. MILOSCH: All right. All right, here we are signing off so we can actually go look at the art, which will be a lot more fun. No, actually this has been great. Thank you so much, Jack.

MR. EARL: Well, bless you. Thank you.

MS. MILOSCH: This has been fun.

[END MD 03 TR 01]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]