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Oral history interview with James Magee, 2016 September 29-30

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with James Magee on 2016 November 29-30. The interview took place at Magee's home in El Paso, TX, and was conducted by Jason Stieber for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

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

Interview

MR. STIEBER: This is Jason Stieber, interviewing James Magee for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. The date is September 29, [2016], and its 9:35 in the morning and we are at James' house in El Paso, Texas. So, James, thank you for agreeing to be interviewed.

MR. MAGEE: I have agreed.

MR. STIEBER: [They laugh.] We do like to start from the beginning, so tell us where you were born and when.

MR. MAGEE: Well, I personally don't remember my birth, but what I've been told—and there's some controversy in this—there was any way between my mother and my grandmother and then my first-grade teacher. I was born in a town in Michigan called Fremont. According to my grandmother, it was June 4, 1945; my mother said it was June 3. They never came to an agreement on this during the course of their lives. But my grandmother said that she had a special role in that birth because I was what they call a "blue baby" and when I came home [she – JM] put me into her oven and they turned the heat on and for a week she gave me eye drops—with an eye dropper gave me little bits of whiskey.

MR. STIEBER: Whiskey?

MR. MAGEE: Yeah. And she credits herself for having saved my life. Now my first-grade teacher—I can't think of her name, insisted that I was born in 1946 on June 3. So, I'm somehow within those days, in those two years.

MR. STIEBER: What does your birth certificate say?

MR. MAGEE: My birth certificate, I have not seen it, but it probably says 45. Many times—let's see what was her name? God I can see her—I can also remember taking one of those tests about knowing what the alphabet is—A B C D E F G—it was on mimeographed paper and it smelled—it was a smell that no longer exists in the world.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah that purple ink.

MR. MAGEE: They used purple ink that would smear and I could never get beyond A B C, and then the whole world started falling apart. I'd grab an L and a P and did not know where the R would be. Anyway, she said 1946 and she did this because I did not pass the first grade. I could not get through the A B C D E F G thing—it was too much, so I was held back and for her purposes it was 1946 with my classmates.

MR. STIEBER: So, you were either born on June 3 or June 4, either in 1945 or 1946.

MR. MAGEE: Yeah that's how I'd go for it.

MR. STIEBER: Did I tell you that my birthday was June 3?

MR. MAGEE: Oh, my heavens! God, no wonder why we're getting along so well.

MR. STIEBER: That's right. So, what were your parents' names?

MR. MAGEE: Robert Magee and Mary Jane Branstrom Magee.

MR. STIEBER: Could you spell Branstrom?

MR. MAGEE: B-R-A-N-S-T-R-O-M.

MR. STIEBER: Great. And what was your grandmother's name?

MR. MAGEE: My grandmothers name was—she was a little old Irish American lady. Her name was Cane, I don't

know if it's spelled C-A-N-E; Margaret Cane. And she married William Branstrom, who was a Swede.

MR. STIEBER: Great, and do you have any siblings?

MR. MAGEE: I have two.

MR. STIEBER: And what are their names?

MR. MAGEE: Their names are Barbara Ann Kemble—K-E-M-B-L-E, and Susan Lee Wente, W-E-N-T-E.

MR. STIEBER: Susan Lee?

MR. MAGEE: Yeah.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. So, what did your mother and father do for a living?

MR. MAGEE: My mother was a housekeeper in the old sense, so she took care of all that, and my father had a small Ford Mercury dealership in the town of Fremont, so he sold Fords and Mercurys.

MR. STIEBER: His whole life?

MR. MAGEE: All his life. Yeah. Pretty much.

MR. STIEBER: And by housekeeper you mean that your mother took care—she was a homemaker—

MR. MAGEE: She was a homemaker, yeah.

MR. STIEBER: She didn't take care of anybody else's house?

MR. MAGEE: No, no she was just a homemaker.

MR. STIEBER: And this was in Fremont, Michigan.

MR. MAGEE: Yeah and she had a housekeeper, Caroline.

MR. STIEBER: I'm sorry, what was her name?

MR. MAGEE: Her housekeepers name was Caroline—

MR. STIEBER: Caroline?

MR. MAGEE: Lather.

MR. STIEBER: And what about your grandparents?

MR. MAGEE: My grandfather was an attorney and my grandmother—his wife, Margaret, was also just a housekeeper. And my grandfather was—he was an attorney and he was something of an industrialist after World War II and he was a philanthropist, a noted one in our town at that time.

MR. STIEBER: And these are your mother's parents?

MR. MAGEE: Yes.

MR. STIEBER: What about your father's parents?

MR. MAGEE: My father's parents—Delbert Magee, I believe he was born in or near the Canadian border on the eastern side of the state and he married Matilda Parnell, who was a Canadian.

MR. STIEBER: And they immigrated to the United States?

MR. MAGEE: Yes, to Chicago where he had a stove company, I think it was like for heating stoves, not cooking stoves.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. Describe life in your house when you were a child?

MR. MAGEE: I don't even know how to begin, it includes salt water taffy, which was brought back every year—a whole sack of it was brought back from Florida when my parents would go down there [in winter –JM]. And my little sister, Susan—my older sister was probably off to her—she went to a boarding school, but my little sister and I were in that house with Mrs. Vickstrom who would take care of us?

MR. STIEBER: Mrs. who?

MR. MAGEE: Vickstrom, and she was tough as nails. And so when my parents would return from their little time in Florida, my sister and I would be very happy but we would also know that we would have salt water taffy. Our house was just kind of a normal house. Father worked, mother made sure the house was well kept and food was on the table properly. It was just quintessentially small town, middle class America and I did not do well in school. I could not read for a long time. I mean, I could not read until the fifth grade. And as a result of that—I think that affected me when I have gone to some places that at the end of the day I couldn't read until the fifth grade. And I was just passed along and my parents were quite distressed over this.

In fact, I was not even—I was not part of any reading group for most of those years. It was the red birds who could read great, blue birds could read a little bit bad, and then the baby robins who were [in the middle of the class –JM].

And so, the three Jim's and I or four Jims—Jim King, Jim Hirsh, Jim Haws, and Jim Magee, none of us could read. What we did mostly was play horse, pretended we were horses out in the recess yard. But then my parents—it was a teacher, a fourth-grade teacher who changed my life; got a tutor for me and I picked up reading very quickly, so that by the time I was in the seventh-grade I was right up to par with everybody. But I've often thought about Jim Haws, Jim Hirsh, and Jim King; we were all tall and illiterate, and they didn't have the advantage of having this tutor and they, I don't think, every really did learn how to read well, if at all, and I've often thought about that, about how a little advantage in this world allowed me to be able to get one step ahead and my friends didn't have that.

MR. STIEBER: What do you think held you back in reading?

MR. MAGEE: I don't know. I guess now it would be described as really, really, really, dyslexic. I still can't—I can't figure out right from left. I get mixed up all the time. And I say a word and the word will be—I have the word in my mind but the word will come off like completely different, I mean I can say "I want to go—I need to turn that knob on the door please," and I'll say, "Oh, I need to go to the Nile River."

MR. STIEBER: [They laugh.]

MR. MAGEE: And you know it's okay. I'm alright with it. It does make things a little screwy. Should we tell the people that I'm lying on a bed? So my voice is a little—

MR. STIEBER: Sure. It will be part of my field notes.

MR. MAGEE: I'm lying on a bed. I'm the—what's that Goya painting? It's almost like —an impersonation—

MR. STIEBER: We just need to watch out for this microphone. I'll just put it down here.

MR. MAGEE: Anyway, I feel like that, I'm part of, what was that Goya painting?

MR. STIEBER: *Odalisque*?

MR. MAGEE: The nude and then [*La Maja* –JM]—

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: Yeah, that's how I feel. I'm dressed.

MR. STIEBER: [They laugh.]

MR. MAGEE: But I do look sort of like a Goya painting here.

MR. STIEBER: So was there any art in your home when you were a kid?

MR. MAGEE: Oh yeah, my parents were—my grandparents, my grandfather Branstrom had a house with real art in it. I mean, he had Beaux Arts paintings from the latter part of the 19th Century and he had some statues. So, I was near that even though I was in this little, for the most part, Dutch reform community, I was exposed. And then when I was 12 years old my grandfather bought me Janson's *History of Art*. I mean it was an early edition, this was in the late [19]50s, it might have even been 1960. I could read by that point and by the time I was a tenth grader I had that book memorized, if not before then. So art was appreciated and my mother was quite attuned to it as well, but we didn't have the paintings my grandfather had and all that, but we lived almost next door to him so that was there.

Art was honored at points and as a result of that my drawing—and I guess that would be—I shared the title of

artist of the class with Andy Jenderooski; he could draw landscapes, I could draw figures and faces. But because of that—this was back in grade school, my mother was encouraged to take me to a man who lived outside of our community once a week—went on for about two years—two and a half years, Ray Jansma. And Ray, when I went to his shop—he was very much a builder of things, he built everything in the house even probably the refrigerator, and he was a carver, greatly influenced by Polynesian stuff and he lived right outside of our town. He had a tower that went right up through the center of the house, you could climb up this Polynesian tower and look over the Michigan landscape. And I'll never forget, he took me to his place, it was a little shop in the back where he had his equipment, and he showed me two things; he showed me a reproduction of a Binine—Be-nine—Benin rather, African sculpture that he had sitting there and I can see it right now, and then he showed me a Matisse drawing. I had never heard of Matisse, I was a little kid. And he said, "Okay, now you know these. These are really beautiful things. Now go downstairs and draw my table saw."

MR. STIEBER: "Draw my table—?

MR. MAGEE: Saw. Table saw.

MR. STIEBER: And what was his name?

MR. MAGEE: Ray Jansma.

MR. STIEBER: Could you spell the last name?

MR. MAGEE: J-A-N-S-M-A. Dutch name.

MR. STIEBER: And what was the last name again of your grade school compatriot?

MR. MAGEE: Andy Jenderooski. Jenderooski. We called him "Andy thirteen letters."

MR. STIEBER: And I don't suppose you remember how to spell that?

MR. MAGEE: I don't and I don't remember how to spell "wastepaper basket" either.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MR. MAGEE: His name had sort of the same thing as wastepaper basket. Jenderooski—wastepaper basket.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MR. MAGEE: Both difficult words.

MR. STIEBER: Poetry is a big part of your process too, so I want to talk about your engagement with letters when you were a child. You already spoke about having difficulty learning how to read; what kind of literature was read or talked about in your house when you were a child? Do you remember any?

MR. MAGEE: What I remember is, one year the A&P Store Company had a program where they gave out—or one could buy enough from the store and get these long playing albums [free –JM]of all the great composers and I remember these albums because they had the picture—this is back when I was still in grade school, and they had the photograph or drawing of Mozart or whomever, Schubert, and I think my literary leanings at that early time had to do with those records and the biographies and the music of these people and that, in itself, is sort of poetry. And so, when I was a kid, as a kid we'd play, classical music was a big part of my life just listening to it, not so much for my father but for me it was a big deal. I didn't do a lot of reading and when I was a senior in high school—I'm confessing all this, I feel like I'm with a priest; I was going to college, I knew I had to read a book before I went to college, and so I picked the smallest book I could read.

MR. STIEBER: [They laugh.]

MR. MAGEE: Because I was not interest in really reading—well I read books, I read Ecstasy and—a great book, I can't remember the guys name, but I did read that I was a kid. I got through it.

MR. STIEBER: *The Agony and the Ecstasy* by Irving Stone?

MR. MAGEE: Yeah, I just prefer the Ecstasy.

MR. STIEBER: [They laugh.]

MR. MAGEE: And then I read another book—I can't think of it now because I'm too sleepy, about the founding of Israel and that was important, and the Bible was important in our house in the way that it was a presence even

though I don't think we were terribly religious. My—so I picked out a book, *The Old Man in the Sea* and I read that before I went to—it was 120 pages so [I –JM] figured, "God, you can do this Magee, 120 pages. You're going to college for God's sake."

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MR. MAGEE: "See if you can get through this." And I did. But I also had plowed through these other books—what is the great book on the founding of Israel? I'm trying to think what it is?

MR. STIEBER: Was it the Golda Meir biography?

MR. MAGEE: No, no it wasn't that. But then once I got into college, I really loved reading. College was very good for me. And poetry—I think one of my earliest books was The Cantos—publication of the Cantos, Ezra Pound's Cantos. And from there I just found my way. I didn't take classes in it, but I really started reading. And then I studied French, so I read French Novels. So I read Mauriac, Gide, and Camus and all these guys and I read them out loud in order to get my French perfected. That was one of the ways I learned how to read—learned French reasonably well by reading out loud to myself these novels—

MR. STIEBER: You said—

MR. MAGEE:—and French poetry is more difficult, because poetry, in itself, is more difficult. I just—

MR. STIEBER: You said Gide, Camus, and there was one before that.

MR. MAGEE: Mauriac.

MR. STIEBER: Spell that?

MR. MAGEE: Mauriac. M-A-U-R-I-C-A, somehow, I think. He was difficult. He was like reading Proust.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. I'll look him up. I don't know who he is.

MR. MAGEE: So, all of that was just a big discovery but I had, I think, two foundations for appreciating that; one were these records, all the music we had in our house. And the other, I was taking art lessons from a wonderful man who taught me how to draw, and showed me Matisse and for a middle school kid that was a big deal.

MR. STIEBER: And that was Ray Jansma?

MR. MAGEE: That was Ray Jansma. And so, I had them and I had Janson's *History of Art*, which I knew backwards and forwards. I was always drawn to a black and white print image in that book, I don't know if it's still being done—if the book—if Janson's *History of Art* is still being done, but it was a self portrait of a young Kokoschka and I thought that was just extraordinary. Even when I was a young kid, I thought "My God, that is just a fabulous picture." And he had done a —

MR. STIEBER: —What drew you to it?

MR. MAGEE: Well as I recall it was a black and white and I could almost pose the way he posed right now. Its inner intensity and its external roughness, which I never found in French—well for the most part, French paintings. And he was central European and he was part of a whole group of people who were outside of the canon of what we were taught in American Art which was Paris related and Gertrude Stein. So anyway, so that book allowed me to go in a little bit in different directions, at least European-wise. And because I was brought up in a very churchy Dutch Reform town, I could relate to that perhaps, with somewhat that intensity and roughness, that he portrayed in himself in that self-portrait.

MR. STIEBER: Let's talk about your religions upbringing. You said that your family wasn't particularly religious, but it does seem that that's exerted some influence on you.

MR. MAGEE: Well I do know that—we were religious in a very conventional way. We went to the Congregationalist Church and my dad was a deacon there. We went to church every, every Sunday. My grandfather, the Swede, he was a Lutheran and I can't remember him going to that church, or even going to church, though I know he did, but for him the Bible was really a document of truth and his belief in it—he was a well-read man, was the reconstitution of Israel in 1947. And he said, "The Bible had prophesized this. The Jews had been—"

MR. STIEBER: Watch out for this microphone. If you play with it, it will pick up noise.

MR. MAGEE: Oh, I'm sorry.

MR. STIEBER: It's fine. I think we'll move it here, some place that will be better.

MR. MAGEE: And so with Israel having been brought into being in 1947, he felt the prophecies of the Book of Revelations and elsewhere in the Bible—and his favorite book was the Book of Jeremiah, substantiated the truth of the story of Abraham and everything that came afterwards. And that was Swedish and it had its own kind of Ingmar Bergman aspect to it, you know, that was definitely Nordic. And so, that was very much—he was a great presence in our family and so with that, yes, there was religion. And there were churches all around but they were Dutch Reform churches, many of them, and they were attended every Saturday, Sunday, and Wednesday.

Yeah, I'm a believer, ultimately in—I don't know whether I would say Christ—I think Christ is important for all kinds of reasons and for reasons I can't yet figure out but what stands behind that which could be what stands behind dark matter and the dark force within the universe or the edges of quasars. There is no way that this was not created by something. And I think a lot of people feel that but it doesn't necessarily have to be tailored to a main line Christian church—although that church can be a portal into it, and I do believe that these religions serve, at their best, as portals. And that astronomers are trying to reach right now in our own time which is quite amazing. From the time I was a little boy to now, when you think of the great leaps in astronomy; the difference in quantum physics, it's all beyond us and in the Bible there's a saying—I'm not sure what book it is, it might be in Genesis; "My ways are not your ways, my thoughts are not your thoughts." And that is a humbling statement or direction or enlightenment from God, if we call him God. But I think all of that we can't—we are very limited because we are not highly evolved enough, intelligently speaking, we're still naked apes, and primates. We're not—we climb trees and get our bananas, we cannot really penetrate that but, to our credit, we're trying to.

MR. STIEBER: Right. Great. So, did the church you attended each Sunday, was that a Dutch Reform church?

MR. MAGEE: No, it was Congregationalist.

MR. STIEBER: Congregationalist. That's right you said that.

MR. MAGEE: We were definitely outside of the majority of the town. And I was not so good—one of the papers I sent to you was, I think, Mrs.—a copy of Mrs. Master's letter to the parents of her sixth-grade Sunday school class. It was a letter of despair and desperation saying, "I can't keep these kids under control. Please, Please." I think you have that in your files now.

MR. STIEBER: We do.

MR. MAGEE: And because of that they had to suspend Sunday school class because we were just out of hand and we brought our cards in and played poker.

MR. STIEBER: [They laugh.]

MR. MAGEE: So, I'm glad you have that letter.

MR. STIEBER: So, let's move on to high school, what—who was your best friend? Or who were your best friends?

MR. MAGEE: I was very lucky, I had some very good friends. I grew up next-door—and these people stayed with me all my life because we went from —of course I failed first grade so I was in two different first grade classes, but all these people we stayed in —we didn't move around. To this day, [our Swedish side of the family has been in that area for 140 years –JM]. My best friend growing up was my next-door neighbor and two kids up the street, his name was Chickie Gerber.

MR. STIEBER: Can you spell that? First and last name.

MR. MAGEE: Chickie, how do you spell Chickie? C-H- I-C-K- I don't know how you do Chickie, Y? I-E? Something? And Gerber, G-E-R-B-E-R.

MR. STIEBER: Mm-hmm.

MR. MAGEE: And then I had Timmy and Don Truman. And there were others as well, the three of us we all lived on the same street. We grew up playing football and we grew up pretending that we were building this town we built every summer in the sand which was called Littleville. And my contributions in Littleville, I owned all the grocery stores, because that's where the A&P would give us the records.

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MR. MAGEE: So, I had many grocery stores, more than this little town could sustain, but every—for any number of summers we would get together in the sand and build Littleville.

MR. STIEBER: Built it out of sand?

MR. MAGEE: Out of sand, yeah.

MR. STIEBER: Sand. Oh nice. Did it stay, I mean?

MR. MAGEE: No, cars [ran all over it –JM]. Someone would back their truck over it and there it goes. There it goes, that's the Book of Revelation.

MR. STIEBER: [They laugh.] Like one of those Tibetan sand paintings, right?

MR. MAGEE: Yeah, exactly.

MR. STIEBER: Okay and were you involved in athletics in high school?

MR. MAGEE: Oh yes, it was my—oh, then in high school I had a dear friend, Jimmy Hamilton, and—God I had a lot of friends, I mean, but he was probably my best friend in high school. And Javier Sepúlveda Amor, who was an exchange student, and who lives in—became a psychiatrist and lives in Mexico City. Carl, Javier—

MR. STIEBER: How do you spell Javier's name?

MR. MAGEE: J-A-V-I-E-R. I mean, spelling is not my strength. Sepúlveda , S—-

MR. STIEBER: Oh Sepul—

MR. MAGEE: —Veda.

MR. STIEBER: S-E-P-U-L-V-E-D-A.

MR. MAGEE: Yeah. Amor.

MR. STIEBER: Amor?

MR. MAGEE: A-R-M-O-R.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MR. MAGEE: And sports, we always played touch football when I was in grade school, we called it kickball. So, I always had a helmet and shoulder pads from the time I was in fourth or fifth grade. And when I got into seventh grade, […I actually joined the Jitney league –JM], I guessed they're called—a little group of seventh and eighth graders. And that carried through all the way to high school, I was always in football and I loved it. And then I did track. I did okay, I worked very hard at it as a miler, and a half-miler. I was not great, I was not a great runner, but I could place in these—sometimes win a race, but I didn't have the talent that you need to have to carry that further on into college, I didn't have that. But I loved it, and I knew concurrently, with Janson's *History of Art*, I had books on, you know, Peter Schnell, the New Zealand runner, and Herb Elliott, the Australian—these were heroes of mine, as well as Kokoschka.

MR. STIEBER: Peter Schnell, and—

MR. MAGEE: Herb Elliott, I believe I have that name. They were world-record holders in the mile, they were sub-four.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MR. MAGEE: You know.

MR. STIEBER: So, you were a very athletic student, but not a particularly—you didn't get particularly good grades?

MR. MAGEE: I was more athletic than I was student.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.] All right. And what about your dating life?

MR. MAGEE: I dated, you know, as kids do. I mean, this is so kind of Norman Rockwell. We would have, beginning in the seventh grade, they would have dances for the kids in the seventh grade. Even though most of the town really did not look well upon dancing, or movies. So, a good part of our town couldn't partake in those. But for those of us who were not Dutch Reform, we had dances provided, and I had a—at the end of the day, I had a girlfriend, and [she –JM] was Jane Tinney.

MR. STIEBER: Could you spell the last name?

MR. MAGEE: T-I-N-N-E-Y, I believe. And she was very smart, and very beautiful. And I'm still in communication with her.

MR. STIEBER: Is that right?

MR. MAGEE: Yeah. And I'm in communication with Chickie Gerber, and Jim Hamilton.

MR. STIEBER: Wonderful.

MR. MAGEE: I love all these people. These are the people I love.

MR. STIEBER: So, let's back up a little bit. You said that you had a great teacher, was it fourth grade, who helped you to—

MR. MAGEE: Yes. Miss Bronson, I don't know how to spell it, who later died in my sixth grade, in an auto accident, it was just very traumatic for me. She pulled me out, and I remember this, pulled me out of class one day, I was in the fourth grade, and she was tall [to –JM] me, I was still a little kid. And we were in the hallway, and she said, "I want to talk to you. Do you know what you want to do in this life?" And I don't remember much more of it than that, but it was a talk about "You've got to do better than you are, you know, you need to make something out of yourself, or try to." And with that, and my parents hired this tutor. And so by that point, somewhere in the fourth grade, certainly by the sixth or seventh grade, I was up to par. But I credit her in calling me out of class for—what, five minues? It changed my life. And then she died in an auto wreck, a head-on collision. And it was really hard for me as a little kid, to know that she had been killed.

MR. STIEBER: Isn't it strange how children latch onto and remember specific moments.

MR. MAGEE: Oh, man.

MR. STIEBER: Very strongly.

MR. MAGEE: It is, and it's so utterly unpredictable what those moments will be. Now that was a cornerstone one. Now I can remember [that –JM] time, as if it were today. You know, those little kids sleep over at other friends' house—

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: And I went over to Chickie's house, and—I mean, I had to be in the second grade or first grade or something like that. And so sleeping there, big deal, I went next door to our neighbors, and I was sleeping. And I remember I just had enough, and I got up, they probably put us to bed at seven or eight, and Mr. and Mrs. Gerber were sitting in the living room, and I had my pajamas on and what else. And I said, "I'm going to go home," and I went home. And I remember that. I mean, why would I remember that? There were a lot of things that happened when I was in first grade, and second grade, but I remember that.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. So, in high school, were you—did you have any electives you were able to take, or were there any art classes you took, or—

MR. MAGEE: No. I mean, there were art classes, but see, I'd gone to [Ray] Jansma. I think one semester I took—one semester I did take an art class, and this is how screwy I was. And the art teacher—I can't think of her name, I will in a minute—wanted to send me to Interlocken Art Academy. Because I had a year or two with Jansma, and of course I showed some promise. So I had this opportunity to go Interlocken Art Academy, like, my 11th or 12th year of high school. And I said, "No, I have to play football." So, that's where my priorities were, much more towards football than art. And with my friends, most of my friends were involved with athletics.

MR. STIEBER: Did you have any professional ambitions in football?

MR. MAGEE: I do remember in eighth grade, I told somebody I'd be in the Olympics. I didn't know what it would be. And then I did fairly well in football, and most surprising—because I was small, like, 148 pounds, I was defensive tackle. And I loved it, and I was fast, so I could get around these big farm kids. But then there was one game in my senior year, I played against somebody who was big—bigger than me by many, many pounds, and as fast, and he was at the—it was the Ravenna player, and he just smeared me. I mean, I couldn't handle it, and it was the first and only time that ever happened. But he went on to play football for Michigan State. So, that's the kind of stuff you had to be up against. I loved it in high school, but no great talent. I didn't have the— I was tall, but I wasn't—my bones were not big enough.

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MR. MAGEE: I didn't have enough bulk.

MR. STIEBER: Okay, so you're approaching the end of high school, and you're getting ready to go out, I assume, to college?

MR. MAGEE: To college, yeah.

MR. STIEBER: What's going through your mind at age 18, or—

MR. MAGEE: I got to read a book, I got to read a book.

MR. STIEBER:—[laughs]—

MR. MAGEE: Can't go to college before I read a book. And I was not a great student in high school, so you know, I had no ambitions. And a couple members of our family, a cousin in particular, went to this school called Alma College, A-L-M-A, it's still there, it's a Presbyterian school. And I went there thinking I would absolutely flunk out, you know. And instead I just did the opposite. I loved it. I became a history major, French minor. And I just loved it, to the point when I graduated from that school, the fork in the road was whether I go to law school, or take a program at Northwestern, which was a PhD program, five-year in history—African history. And art was always there. I just didn't think of it as a profession, I still don't. To me, it's still not a profession. I've done professional things, but I mean—

MR. STIEBER: What would you call it?

MR. MAGEE: I don't know. I think it's like something you've always done, and to call it anything you'd have to have a conscious sense of it. And for me, art is almost about the unconscious. So, I don't know what to call it. Of course, it's a profession, you're here taking my interview, I've gotten to this point, gotten this far in it. And I have these shows now and then, and people buy my work from time to time. But I never thought of it as a profession. I have always thought of my life as a life that left a profession. But for what? For this thing of trying to get as far along into it as I can, while I have time left on this earth. I could use all kinds of pretentious terms, starting with that last sentence, but I will not.

MR. STIEBER: Okay, so you're in college. What are you reading?

MR. MAGEE: Well, I—literature-wise, I was reading. I started reading all these French guys, once I got good enough in French. And I tried Proust, which was very difficult, but it's even difficult in English, and I plan to go back to Proust. And so, that's something I should get back into. And so I read a lot of French writers. I didn't take English Lit courses, but I took History as my major. And I read lots of—all the Northumbrian Review, you know, 1880s, the various, you know, monthly editions and stuff like that. I read a lot in college, and I wrote a lot. And it wasn't hard for me, it was just effortless, and I did quite well, I guess.

MR. STIEBER: You wrote creatively?

MR. MAGEE: I wrote what would be some of the titles.

MR. STIEBER: The titles of your work?

MR. MAGEE: Yeah, my first titles. I was writing poetry. I wrote a poem about the Irish Sea, I'd been an exchange student to Northern Ireland when I was a junior, and that greatly affected me. And then I fell in love with this Irish writer by the name of Yeats, and I finally went up to someone at some point and said, "Oh, my God, this guy's just fantastic."

MR. MAGEE: Oh, that's the phone.

MR. STIEBER: Hold on. Okay.

[Audio break.]

MR. MAGEE: And I was so ignorant, I thought, I didn't know it was pronounced Yates. And this guy was embarrassed, "It's pronounced Yates." And I had this [… –JM] little book of Yeats, and it was a British publication, and on the front page was a boy on a rock, not wearing any clothes, really, playing a lute. And I thought that was a very beautiful drawing. And then I started reading that. So Yeats was a really—there was a real identity there, I mean, falsified in a way, because I'm not Irish or anything like that, but I had a great draw towards Ireland for a long time.

MR. STIEBER: So, let's back up to your time as an exchange student in Ireland. You did that your junior year in high school, you said?

MR. MAGEE: Yeah, my junior summer, it was called. And I lived with an Irish family.

MR. STIEBER: Where in Ireland?

MR. MAGEE: North of Belfast. [...In –JM] a town called Balleyclare. And this was 1963.

MR. STIEBER: Do you know how to spell that?

MR. MAGEE: B-A-L-L-E-Y-C-L-A-R-E. County Antrim. They were Protestants. So, I was right in my element, in terms of birthright, I think what it is, because my dad was Scotch-Irish, really, and Presbyterian. So I went back to—so I was in this town, and I was reading Yeats, and I just fell in love with it. And at one point, thought about studying as a graduate student, Irish history, and maybe trying to get a Ph.D. at a university over there. That was sort of a thought of mine. But I didn't do it, I went to law school.

MR. STIEBER: So, you went to law school after Alma?

MR. MAGEE: Yeah.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah. Okay. Tell us about that experience

MR. MAGEE: Well, I had been accepted by Northwestern University, in a five-year Ph.D. program. Which was—a very small group of people were accepted in that, and went there for an interview, it was [... –JM] impressive.

MR. STIEBER: A Ph.D. in law?

MR. MAGEE: No, a Ph.D. in African history.

MR. STIEBER: Oh.

MR. MAGEE: And why African history? God knows, but maybe I was an opportunist, because that was a fashionable topic at the time. And then I was accepted by Penn Law, and I had told them both, I was coming. I told them both I was coming. And in the interim I went to Africa, and I went there alone, I landed in Lagos. And it was during the Biafran War, and I was this 22-year old kid, and my parents were just worried. And I started hitchhiking, and I got up to Kano, and I went over to—I went through Dahomey, and Togo, and Ghana. Just as a kid with his thumb out. You couldn't do it now. And I went up to Mali, and tried to get to Timbuktu, but I got to Mopti, and I couldn't get any further than Mopti, because nobody would take me, because I was a European, that's how I was identified, and they didn't want—if anything happened, it'd be trouble for them, and their pirogue, which is a dugout canoe.

MR. STIEBER: Can you say that word again? Their—

MR. MAGEE: I think it's pronounced pirogue, I don't know how to spell it. Oh, sorry. Anyway, so it's a dugout canoe, it's kind of tippy. And they went up and down the Niger, I don't know if they do it now, the Niger River. So I had to go back to Bamako. It was a long trek, and I took a riverboat that was pulled by a tugboat, which had been French. And see, I could speak French, so I was okay. And I spent three days on this riverboat—or two or three days. And I was with all these very, very elegant Africans. Tall, with their kaftans. And they—actually on that trip, I was the only European or American. And Mali was Maoist, I think, at that point, that's where they were. And you know, *U.S. News and World Report* would have these little maps, and Mali was leaning towards Maoism. But these guys offered me wives on that trip. And I had an offer of, I remember a dowry of a ton of millet, and a ton of something else, it was a commodity. And so I had to—I got friendly, and I was very, yakking like I'm doing right now. And one of them said, "Can you teach us any English?" And I said, "Well, yeah, I can teach you. *Comment allez-vous*?"

MR. STIEBER: What?

MR. MAGEE: *Comment allez-vous?*

MR. STIEBER: Oh.

MR. MAGEE: We can start with that, *Comment allez-vouz?* And I said, *Il y a deux facons [a dire* –JM] *comment allez-vous. Avec l'accent d' Angleterre y Americain. Si vous voulez parler comme la reine de Grande-Bretagne, vous pouvez dire*: "How are you?" *Mais si vouz voulez parler avec l'accent de President Johnson, de les Etats-Unis,* say "How are y'all doing?" And they chose "How are y'all doing?" So, by the time we got to [...Bamako –JM], the whole boat was going, "How are y'all doing?" [Laughs.] They were all talking Texan, you know.

So, from there I had to make a decision. Was I going to Northwestern or Penn? And I decided I could never penetrate Africa. Now there are great advantages in not being able to penetrate something, to be an outsider.

But that wasn't enough of an advantage for me to think I would spend a lifetime studying something I would never really understand. And I think I was correct. You know, even in language, I can get along in some languages. But I'll never know French. Even though I speak Spanish, I'll never know Spanish. And Africa would be the same thing. And it's too far from my innards.

And so, I left a—I sent my father a letter, I said, "Give Penn the deposit, I'm going to go to Penn." But I did it in such a subtle way that he didn't pick up on it. And I said, "Dad, in a market near Ouagadougou, I bought these three ottomans, and I want them in my law office." Well, he didn't, and I should have been more direct, he didn't know that I was saying, "I want to go to law school." And I got finally to Cote d'Ivoire, the Ivory Coast, to Abidjan, and my father tried to connect me with embassies along the way, but it didn't really work. We went to our Congressman, he was supposed to alert people I was sort of in the neighborhood. And it did, and it did not work. But anyway, there [was –JM] a stack of letters from my father. And they started in June, and they said, "Son, I hope you're having a good time, hope you're safe." And then, you know, that kind of tone, July comes, "Son, have you thought any more about law school," or "we have these two different schools thinking you're going to be going there." And I said—I'm opening these up all at one time, because I never got these letters till the end of this trip. By the time August, my dad was saying, "Son, I don't know, you have to tell us, I don't know where we failed you, but you need to give us an answer." And it was too late, but my younger sister Susan said, "He'll go to law school." So without knowing where I was going to go, my dad said, "Okay, Philadelphia here we come."

And I ended up in law school with kind of, with a case of malaria. And I didn't—I went right from West Africa to Philadelphia, to a totally different world. And I had reoccurring malaria for a while, that reoccurred a few times. I don't know if I'm talking well or not.

MR. STIEBER: You are.

MR. MAGEE: Am I, really? Okay. So, I went to law school. And you know, did not really enjoy it. Really felt out of it, you know. Everybody who went there was pretty intelligent, you know, in terms of some kind of measure. But I really was art, and I had other things I really wanted—that drew me. And these cases, and the fact that we'd go to the law school cafeteria, and all these guys who are, you know, who are like Mensa, a good number of them, all they would talk about would be sports. And this and that, and it was—although I played sports, I have no interest in sports as a spectator, I really don't. Or as a follower [of sports –JM]. And so I gravitated towards the undergraduate area, and they had a big dining area, I can't remember the name of it. But built, you know, back in the turn of the last century, of the […20th –JM] century. And I really hung out there. And during law school, I started reading a lot. And one of the great discoveries for me—I read all [of –JM] Joyce, and there was a fellow in our law school who was a Joycean scholar from Columbia, but he was now in law school, and he was a very interesting guy, Mr. Phillips. And I never got to know him very well, but he was—I went to his house on Woodlawn Avenue, I think it was, where he was writing. And I don't know, he knew Joyce and all that sort of thing much better than I.

But I also discovered somebody who's stayed with me all my life, who's been a cornerstone, and who was alive at that point. I mean, I could have visited him, if I'd gone to Wales. It was David Jones, the poet, and I mention him all the time, because he's not appreciated. […T.S.Eliot –JM] and Auden both said, directly or indirectly, that he was the greatest epic poet of the 20th century. And he was also—I've got a lot of books of his, all the books that are possible. And I read his long poems, which were a tremendous experience, written in different languages that I couldn't begin to understand. A lot of Latin, Welsh, he did two great poems, *Anathemata* and *In Parenthesis*, and they're still published. And there's a drawing on the front of them, on one of them, that of World War I of a soldier caught and probably dead in barbed wire. And it was such a […powerful –JM] drawing, it just really took me away, along with the poetry. So he is somebody who really combined what I kind of do today, in whatever form. He's not the first, I mean, Michelangelo wrote a book of sonnets. And I guess Schwitters—my mouth is getting dry, Schwitters did a lot of writing, too, I haven't read it.

MR. STIEBER: Kurt Schwitters?

MR. MAGEE: Yeah, yeah. He was a writer, I think [of –JM] poetry. But it's not uncommon for people who occupy themselves, as I do with aesthetics, to sort of go here and there.

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MR. MAGEE: But David Jones' career was eclipsed by Francis Bacon. And what's his name, [Graham] Sutherland, the English painter after World War II. And there's a whole group of these younger guys. But I contend that David Jones, besides being a great poet, with two of these utterly great masterpieces, was also—was a type of visual artist that is very English. And I think of the, if I pronounce it right, I think of the music of Delius, the English composer, and Vaughn Williams, you know.

MR. STIEBER: Yes.

MR. MAGEE: These were not people—these were not Gertrude Stein people, they harken to something that people can say without knowing exactly what they're saying, that's quintessentially English or British. And so his drawings—

MR. STIEBER: Well, they both drew on, sort of English folk music.

MR. MAGEE: Yeah, they did.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: And so, his drawings did, too. But his greatest drawings [and paintings –JM]for me were from the mid-'20s to the early '30s. And they're of this lyricism that—they're magnificent, and I'll show you some once we get through with this [interview –JM]. So he has become in my life a real hero. And to think that I could have gone and visited him. He died, I think, in 1973—died in the '70s. But more or less forgotten except by very few. In fact, I went to—years and years ago, I was at the Shakespeare and Company Bookstore in Paris, I think they've moved that great bookstore, I'm not sure, I hope they didn't.

MR. STIEBER: They're still next to Notre Dame.

MR. MAGEE: Oh, are they?

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: Okay. Anyway, you know, it's a ramble of books. And I go in there, and there's this English guy who is the manager, whatever, and I said, "Do you have any David Jones?" And he said, "David Jones? You actually know [of –JM] David Jones?" And I said, "I love David Jones." "Oh, this is just unbelievable. Nobody has ever come in here and asked about David Jones." And from there, he showed me all other kinds of people who he liked, and who were forgotten. And we bonded, actually wrote a few times back after that trip to Paris. So.

MR. STIEBER: Did he have any David Jones, there at Shakespeare and Company?

MR. MAGEE: He did, he did, he did.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: He had a few books. And he pointed to somebody else, his name starts with R, of the same era. I'm sorry, I can't remember it, I don't even know what the book is. He was, similarly, a man who wrote epic poetry around the same time.

MR. STIEBER: Robinson Jeffers?

MR. MAGEE: No.

MR. STIEBER: That might be too early, and he's American, not British.

MR. MAGEE: Yeah, yeah, British guy. I want to say Richardson, but I don't think that's it. But anyway, that's how rare a person David Jones came to be. But he's, you know, he's in the Tate, he's in every major collection.

MR. STIEBER: His drawings?

MR. MAGEE: Yeah, his drawings, yeah.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: His watercolors. Eric Gill, he married Eric Gill's daughter, and Eric Gill was the head of a, you know, it wasn't like Bloomsbury, but it was a group of artists, craftspeople, artists, and artisans or whatever, that left London. And David Jones became part of that, for a while, and married Eric Gill's daughter and converted to Catholicism. So, you know, you have these two great—a number of great English writers and painters who were Catholic converts.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. So how long were you in law school?

MR. MAGEE: Well, I graduated, I was there three years.

MR. STIEBER: Oh, so you did get your J.D.?

MR. MAGEE: I'm a Juris Doctorate, yes, call me Dr. Magee. I'll look at your tonsils to see if they're okay.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.] Okay, so what did you do immediately after law school?

MR. MAGEE: Well, I knew I did not fit. In law school, two things happened. I was really—I was not even there. You could go—Penn was—everything was based on a final exam, and the final exam was anonymous, so if you ended up—You could be away the entire term, but if you knew the cases and that, you could take that and pass, or whatever. So it didn't force me to be there much. But at the end of my first term, I came down with a paralysis. It was [misdiagnosed –JM] as MS [multiple sclerosis]. I was at the Penn hospital there, and went through a battery of tests and everything. And MS, I think, is still very hard to diagnose at its onset, but my whole left side was—the electricity was not triggering.

Concurrently with that, my dad came down with cancer, and we were trying to—So I ended up going back to Michigan that summer. My dad was very, very sick. And I thought I had MS And he was one of the first people to really go on chemo. We'd fly back and forth in this plane to Chicago, where he'd get his chemo treatments. But he died, he didn't live much longer than the fall. And that was really hard, and—

[END OF TRACK.]

—prior to that, I actually thought about transferring to a graduate program at Penn, like, in archaeology, where they were very strong. And that was on my mind. Then I got this prognosis, and my dad got sick. And so he was sick into my second year, and my mother was in great despair. And so I said, "What the hell, I'll just stay here." I had a storefront near the old prison in Philadelphia, where I would do all these paintings. Slept on the floor, and never went to class, and nobody knew I was in their class.

MR. STIEBER: It was near the storefront? Or I mean, it was near the prison, the storefront?

MR. MAGEE: Yeah, yeah. So, there was a great prison.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: It was like, two blocks from it. And what I would do is, I would attend law classes sometimes. I'd walk past, I'd go up—I had a nice trek, I would go right by the museum that sits on a hill.

MR. STIEBER: The PMA [Philadelphia Museum of Art]?

MR. MAGEE: Yeah. And in the back, I don't know if it's still there, was a Jacob Epstein sculpture.

MR. STIEBER: It's still there. It's beautiful.

MR. MAGEE: It's beautiful, and another overlooked person.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: I mean, that whole world has seen God, people are shallow sometimes, in terms of fashion. So I would, anyway, go by that statue every day, every day I went to class, which was not a lot. And there was a bridge across, if I remember right, the Schuylkill River.

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

MR. MAGEE: And from there, you could walk to Penn, the campus. So that was my trek. And there was the Rodin Museum, which the Mayor of Philadelphia at that time called the "Road-en" Museum.

MR. STIEBER: He called it the "Road-en" Museum?

MR. MAGEE: Yeah. Understandably.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. So what kind of paintings were you doing?

MR. MAGEE: They were figurative, and they were highly religious and spiritual paintings. And I did them on Masonite.

MR. STIEBER: Were they oil paints?

MR. MAGEE: Yeah, they were oil, yeah. And I had my law books interspersed among paintings and paint and drawing. My third year, in fact, part of my third year was spent in Mexico with Javier, that was a small part of it. And I came back, and I had this great teacher who I would have loved to spend more time with. William Twinning, who was an heir to the Twinning Tea Company fortune, and whose father was, or grandfather, was the last governor-general of Tanganyika, you know. And he was a wonderful man, he actually taught at Queens

College in Belfast. He was on loan from Queens College. And he taught legal philosophy and the sorts of things that didn't bear directly on case study and this and that.

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MR. MAGEE: And I really liked him a lot. And I came back, and I had to go into his office and say: "What! We're having the exam. Tell me what we've been reading, you know, I've got to get ready for this exam." And he says, "Mr. Magee, you're not taking this very seriously, are you?" He's British, you know. And I said, "Well, yeah, no. I'm not taking it very seriously." So anyway, he was a good guy. I had some good professors, they were all pretty much really good people.

MR. STIEBER: So tell me a little bit about your artistic process during this time. Would you paint at night, would you paint when you woke up in the morning?

MR. MAGEE: So I had a storefront.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: Had a little kitchen, not unlike this place right here, really. This is a better situation. But I had a storefront, and I had to get through these classes, you know, I did have to read whatever law I was doing, at the time. But I painted—but the classes, I didn't attend a lot. So I had daylight in there. There were no skylights, in it. And so I guess day and night, but they were figurative, and they were done with lots of glazes. In a strange way, Annabel [Livermore] would feel very comfortable with these paintings. They're very, you know, they're different, but they're not a hell of a lot different.

MR. STIEBER: Do you know if any of them survive?

MR. MAGEE: One might. I had one I liked, it was a big one, and I was going to give it to Jeffrey Lord, who did very well in our class, who became a judge. And he was on Law Review, so I remember dragging this painting up to wherever the Law Review rooms were, it was a great big painting. And I said, "Please give this to Jeffrey." And Harry Bryant or somebody, he was on Law Review, this is a world I really didn't interact with, Harry Bryant. So I'd been in the class for a few years, he'd been in the class, and he had never seen me in class in those three years. I said, "Really?" And I tell you, what was so alluring, the archaeology school had a reflecting pool in front of it, beautiful, and if I remember right, it was near the Hutch Gym, Hutchinson Gym, where I used to go swimming sometimes. But I just loved the architecture of that school and what was in it, the archaeology deal. And I really—if it weren't for my father getting sick, and me being told I had MS, which I didn't have in the end, I probably—I have a sense I would have either dropped out, or I would have gone in another direction.

MR. STIEBER: What happened to your symptoms? Did you get a different diagnosis?

MR. MAGEE: Yeah, they slowly disappeared, I think over the course of a year, or maybe less, even. They were very apparent when I came down. My arm, my side. And you know, maybe it's changed, but, the tools they had to try to decipher what was going on were really primitive.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: Like sticking pins, "Do you feel this, do you feel that?" I think probably they have a better system or something now, or a range of tools. So it dissipated, but my father's didn't, and he died. And I had to have some anchor, I couldn't quit school at that point, and my mother was just in mourning and everything else. So.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. Who were some of the more important relationships that you had? Or what were some of the more important relationships that you had during law school?

MR. MAGEE: Oh, I had two good friends, Julian Karpoff, who is an attorney in Maryland, I really don't communicate much with him. And then what was the other guy? Alexander. Sandy Alexander, I think was his name. And then I had two girlfriends in that time. Katie Quinn, she was not part of the law school, she was Philadelphia. And then I had—I was a year with a most interesting and eccentric woman by the name of Sandra Sherman. And she followed me to what was then a village in Corsica at the end of all this, where German nudists would come, though there were hardly any nudists there. And that's where we broke up, in a vacant German nudist colony on the island of Corsica. And I think she thought I was destroying her life in terms of having a path that made sense.

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MR. MAGEE: But she was highly original, as a person. And hopefully still is.

MR. STIEBER: So, you went to Corsica just to celebrate your graduation?

MR. MAGEE: No, I went to—I graduated, and then, again to my mother's despair, so I had my degree, I had drawn a little drawing in Corporations class in the margin, Professor Mundheim's class. And it was a drawing of a three-armed crucifix. And it was just, because I was doing all these religious things, and I couldn't get it out of my mind. And I said, "This has to be a sculpture." I never had done anything like that. And there was a professor—I showed to an art professor at Penn, whose name was Professor Ingman, or something like that. And he said, you know, because I was a law student about to graduate, he said, "You should come, you know, you should go into our graduate program." He saw the drawings and the paintings, he actually came to my loft. I was really reaching out, I guess, thinking back on it. And he came to my loft, and said, "Well, you know, we have a graduate program." And then he said, "Maybe you should just go and practice [your art –JM]." I don't know what happened during that conversation, but I didn't go to graduate school. Instead I did something that was, I thought, made sense. I got a one-way ticket to Paris. I had been there, I spent a junior abroad, in Paris, so I knew the city. I didn't even think of New York, which was by far and away the more important place to go to if you wanted to have a career, which I still don't have. And—

MR. STIEBER: I'm sorry, back up again. You said you had a junior year in Paris?

MR. MAGEE: Yeah.

MR. STIEBER: So, you had a junior summer in Ireland?

MR. MAGEE: No, a whole year in Paris.

MR. STIEBER: During college?

MR. MAGEE: College, yeah, yeah, yeah.

MR. STIEBER: College, got it, okay.

MR. MAGEE: And Ireland, I'd go back to again and again, during that time. And that junior in Paris is something that really actually affected me. I started to take classes. We went to a school called—we went to some language school there as a class, a big one. And I was doing all these paintings in college, too, I had lots of paintings in my room going on. And drawings. And never took an art class there or anything like that. But I was studying history really seriously, and loving it, loving every bit of it. But in Paris, this professor said, "Well, maybe you should also take—go to the art school." So, he took me to the—I took some life drawing classes at the Academie de la Grande Chaumiere. *Rue de* I don't know what—

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

MR. MAGEE: And the other thing that affected me deeply is that I had a yearning to go to a monastery, to see it. And I was on the metro, and I was, again, a kid, I [was] 20, 21 years old. And there was a nun there, and I said, "Do you know where there's a monastery I might go and visit?" I figured she might know. And she said, "*Oui, je connais le monastere, Notre Dame de Grace*." Anyway, so I went there—I went on a retreat, and I became friends with Father Amad*ée*, and Father Nivard. Amad*ée*—they're both gone now. It's a Trappist monastery, A-M-A-D-E, Amad*ée*, with an accent.

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

MR. MAGEE: And then Nivard, N-I-V-A-R-D. Father [Le Père] Amad*ée* was—he was called the [père d'hotelier –JM], he was the head of the guest service, because retreatments were part of their mission. And I went back to that any number of times, and I became friends with Amad*ée* and Nivard. Amad*ée* was this cherubic monk who had pinned up all over his office, and he could talk to us because we were retreatments, again, cartoons of Peanuts—Peanut cartoons. He loved Peanuts, so it was all over. And he was absolutely—both these guys were absolutely the most cheerful people I've ever met. And Nivard, and they were all scholars, I mean, they all had their Ph.D.s and stuff like that. And they couldn't leave that monastery unless they were given permission, it was quite strict, an order of silence. I thought it was just fabulous. And I would go back—I went back any number of times.

Last time I was back there was 2003, they both had died. And there were cellphones now, in the monastery, can you believe that? A Trappist monastery, there were cellphones. People were carrying on: "Oh, yeah, okay, I'll go over there." And of course, there were hardly anybody in the monastery, they had all died off, and the youngest person was 45. And I'd get up at 2:30 in the morning or whatever, and go to the first Vespers, and they would come in, it was very cold. And the last time, I had my first leg taken off. I went there with my first leg taken off, and it was winter, it was cold, you know, it was snowing, and my leg didn't fit. And I had to get to this goddamn monastery, because I could get to a town nearby, but I couldn't get to the monastery, I was in really, quite pain. But I remember that, I remember that.

Those two guys are important because when I left college, when I left law school and I came back from working

with Caroline Lee in Paris, I was her assistant, Caroline Lee—I don't know what I was going to say, what was I saying? I'm rattling on so much, my God, I'm embarrassed.

MR. STIEBER: So, let's sort of back up to your final year of law school.

MR. MAGEE: Right.

MR. STIEBER: So, you graduated from law school.

MR. MAGEE: Did not go for any interviews.

MR. STIEBER: For jobs?

MR. MAGEE: Jobs. And headed to Paris to do this sculpture [*Crucifix* –JM].

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MR. MAGEE: Which has the first title, clear title, I've ever done in my life [… –JM]. Which is in my shop, now, I still have it.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah, I saw it, I remember seeing it, yeah.

MR. MAGEE: And I took this drawing, I went to Paris, and because young people, the world opens up to a fresh face, and youthful eagerness, I eventually walked into the Galerie Darthea Speyer.

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

MR. MAGEE: On the Left Bank. And I said, "I want to be an assistant," just as direct as that. And she said, "There's a person who's"—and she was from a wealthy Pittsburgh family, and she was showing George Segal at the time, I remember. And she said, "There's a woman coming in after lunch, and you can come." She was an American, she was an expatriate. "And you can maybe hook up with her." And so Caroline Lee came in, and we had an immediate rapport. And she said, "I don't need an assistant, but come home with me." I think I had to be staying in some little hotel or something. And I actually went during this very confusing time in my life. I actually went back to the Academie de Grande Chaumiere to see if they knew anybody who needed assistants, so that I could learn how to make this thing I'm drawing. And so I went home with her, and she lived near the Père Lachiase, had an apartment there, and also had a studio on the outside of some *banlieue*.

MR. STIEBER: Outside of what?

MR. MAGEE: Outside of Paris, she had a studio in a *banlieue*, a suburb. But I stayed with her, and her companion, Radivoje Knezevic. They were both professional sculptors with galleries, and you know, *le Salons de Printemps*, I don't know, the various salons you'd enter.

MR. STIEBER: Could you spell her partner's name?

MR. MAGEE: [… He was Serbian, Radivoje, whatever –JM]. And I fumbled around with them, I was just at that point learning. I had this law degree and everything else, I turned my back on it. But a very important and prescient thing happened. They allowed me to sleep in their living room. Everything was modest, and essentially, I was doing everything for room and board, you know.

MR. STIEBER: You were doing everything what?

MR. MAGEE: Room and board.

MR. STIEBER: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MR. MAGEE: My mouth is, I think, getting very dry. Room and board. And so I slept, and they had books and everything else. They were, you know, Paris, artists, intellectuals altogether.

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MR. MAGEE: Which doesn't happen in our country at all. Really, I mean, it's said, but it's true. Anyway, so they would have people—I became their assistant for the rest of that year, most of the rest of that year. And my memory's all foggy on this. And they did a major—she did a major—they had won a major commission at that time, of a huge monumental sculpture abstract. And she had graduated from the art institute, and was part of a second generation of abstract sculpturist-painters. And it was at a place called—it was at the Hotel de Ville de Sarcelles, I don't know how to spell it.

MR. STIEBER: Hotel de Ville de—

MR. MAGEE: Sarcelles. It still is in front of the City Hall, the Sarcelles, which is on the south of Paris.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. This would have been about 1965?

MR. MAGEE: Oh, no, this is like 1971.

MR. STIEBER: Oh, okay.

MR. MAGEE: I graduated law school in '71, went right to Paris.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MR. MAGEE: I graduated from high school in '64, and then college '68, law school '71. Bump, bump, bump, bump. And so at that point, I had broken with my training, and she was a fabulous person, and—

MR. STIEBER: This is Caroline Lee.

MR. MAGEE: Caroline Lee. We were lifelong friends. As I was at that time with Père Nivard and Père Amadée. And I would visit them once in a while, when I was there. And so, I was their assistant, and they got the commission, a big deal, we made the maquette for that. And I was involved in that, as best I could. And they had made their own work, they welded, they were—they had rigor. And she was very much rigorous. And I think she may have imparted some of that to me, a little bit. But after we won that, they said, "Why don't you go to our house? Just take a break, and go to our house in Corsica for a break?" And this was the house at the, I don't know what the name of the town was. "And the only thing wrong with the house, be forewarned, one of the walls in falling down." But I was okay. And so I called Sandy Sherman, my law school girlfriend at the time. And she came over dressed to the nines, with suitcases and everything else. And I told her, "We're going to hitchhike to Marseilles or Antibes, I don't know, we will take the boat to Corsica." I don't think she had ever hitchhiked before. She was very cute. And so our technique was she would put her thumb out with her little dress on, I'd hide in the bushes, a trucker would come by and pick […her up, and I would come out of the bushes –JM]. And would go to take us along the road, oh, there are so many funny stories on that. But she was my bait to get to Corsica. I just wish I could remember the name of that town.

MR. STIEBER: So, you started in Marseilles, or you started in Paris?

MR. MAGEE: No, we started in Paris.

MR. STIEBER: She came to Paris, and then you guys hitchhiked.

MR. MAGEE: Yeah, and then we hitched to, I think it was Marseilles. There was a boat to Corsica.

MR. STIEBER: And then took a boat to Corsica, okay.

MR. MAGEE: And we got to Corsica, Corsica's a really wiped out, wonderful place of sunlight and rugged cliffs and everything else. And this town—now why can't I remember the name of the woman that had the key to this house? Madame de la Gam, Madame de la Gab.

MR. STIEBER: Madame de la—

MR. MAGEE: De la Gab, I don't know how you spell it. I haven't said the word for key in years, decades, but *clé*, I think key is *clé*.

MR. STIEBER: Could you try to spell her name, or what does it sound like?

MR. MAGEE: D—

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: Probably D, big D, E. No, that's almost Spanish-sounding. I don't know how to spell it, but it was Madame de la Gab.

MR. STIEBER: Gam?

MR. MAGEE: Gab. De la Gab.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MR. MAGEE: And the school we went to was the Alliance Francaise, in Paris, back several years before, to learn French. [I remember now –JM] in my high school, the high school art teacher was a very sweet woman who wanted me to go to Interlocken, I remember her name now, Miss Cool, Miss Cool.

MR. STIEBER: C-O-L-L, or C-O-O?

MR. MAGEE: I think it's C-O-O-L.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MR. MAGEE: So anyway, we got to Corsica, and it was empty, it was off-season. There was a lot of—normally, there was a lot of nudism. There were no nudists, but there were two German guys there. And Sandra and I broke up—broke up under the harsh sunlight of Corsica. And she went her way, which was to work for G.E., I think, out in California. And I went my way, back to Paris, and worked with Caroline. Until Caroline took me to a café [one day –JM]. She said, "I want to talk to you. You know you can get a job here and there, we know all these sculptors, you work okay. And I think you should go back to the United States. I've been an expatriate, you know, this and that, and I'll tell you, the art careers can be really rough." It was really rough on her at one point. So she says, "Go back to [our –JM] country," and she was from Chicago. And that was a keystone comment, a keystone moment.

But the other keystone moment was when I was sleeping in their [living room –JM] bed, where they had all their books. I pulled down a book of *City of Night*, James Rechy. Or Ricky, I don't know how you—

MR. STIEBER: Rechy?

MR. MAGEE: Rechy, excuse me, Rechy. And my God, I read it, and it was about hustling in El Paso, Texas, a town I'd never been in. And it was about gay hustling. And that kind of lit my fire. And so certain things were sort of bubbling to the surface. And of course, back then, if you wanted to enter that world, there were certainly many ways in Paris, I didn't know how to do it. And I didn't know what was going on inside me exactly, but it was. And that was sort of seminal. And then years later, I mean, I can't believe it, I ended up in El Paso. And I meet this guy Rechy once, and I told him this story. I think he's dead now, and wrote him a couple letters saying how prophetic his book was to my life in more than one way.

MR. STIEBER: Right. Had you had any homosexual experiences before reading *City of Night*?

MR. MAGEE: I had a few. I don't want to go into them.

MR. STIEBER: Sure.

MR. MAGEE: But I had a few. And then later, I went to a homosexual bar in Amsterdam. That was really the first time I ever went to a bar. It was really depressing. And I had a—I went to Amsterdam after another bit of work, and I wanted to see what this was all about, how men could love each other, you know. And I thought it was quite beautiful, and so. And then I went back [to the USA –JM], then I left, I followed Caroline's advice. And again, my sense of chronology is all screwed up now. But I do remember some of these names. And I went back to—and I didn't want to go back to New York, I didn't want to set up there. It always scared me, New York. The movie I saw in law school was *Midnight Cowboy*, and "Everybody's Talking About Him," you know, Nielson, Harry Nielson singing that song. And that was my sense of New York, so I went up there a couple of times. Oh, this is so funny, this is really funny. So, I started interviewing for a summer job. I mean, I was, you know, a Penn Law student, this is before Caroline. And it was the second—it could have been, it was the second going into the third year. And I interviewed with a guy, I just knocked on doors.

MR. STIEBER: This is in Philadelphia?

MR. MAGEE: No, this is New York.

MR. STIEBER: New York, okay.

MR. MAGEE: Because we went up there with Harry Nielson singing the soundtrack.

MR. STIEBER: This is in New York, but it's before you went to Paris to be the assistant for Caroline Lee, okay.

MR. MAGEE: Yeah, this is like my second—for the second-year summer in law school.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MR. MAGEE: Other than working a law firm, I wanted to see what a gallery was like. So, I went up there, and SoHo was just happening. And I went down there in SoHo, and Reese Paley was just starting his gallery, and Ivan

Karp was starting his gallery, I mean, he was like, the paint was still fresh on the door. And Patterson Sims was—I'm very glad to be able to say this, because these are important people in my life, was his gallery director, and he was from Philadelphia. And he said, "You know, with your education, you should consider going to Parke-Bernet, it's a big auction house." I didn't know Parke-Bernet from Adam. "And I have a friend up there, Michael Conforti, and I will call him up, and you should go up there, and Michael will talk to you."

MR. STIEBER: Spell Michael's last name.

MR. MAGEE: C-O-N-F-O-R-T-I. And I went up there, and I went through two weekends of interviews with Michael. Very intense, but in the end, I couldn't do it because I didn't want to make art money. And so I said, I don't know why, so I am in a rut, because I don't think of it as product. […And for them art was not even product, it was material. –JM]

MR. STIEBER: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.]

MR. MAGEE: And here I was in love with Kokoschka, and all that. And so at the end of the two weekends, I said, "I don't think I'm going to pursue this." And I never saw him again, never saw Patterson Sims again. I ended up hitchhiking from Philadelphia to Anchorage, Alaska, and ended up getting a job in a law firm there. Eric Wolforth, I worked for him that summer, and I was part of a hippie commune, [… –JM] which was run by Jamie Love. Jamie Love, he was the charismatic person in that commune.

MR. STIEBER: Did the commune have a name?

MR. MAGEE: I don't remember the name.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MR. MAGEE: But Jamie Love—And they were, like, really trying to get active—this was like 1970, and I lived on a garage roof with this girl from somewhere.

MR. STIEBER: This is before Paris?

MR. MAGEE: Oh, yeah, before Paris.

MR. STIEBER: Wow. Wow, a lot happened in law school. [Laughs.]

MR. MAGEE: Come to think about it, I'm just rattling on here.

MR. STIEBER: No, that's good, this is good. I wouldn't know to ask this, so this is good.

MR. MAGEE: Okay, so I lived with her on top of a [roof –JM]—in a tent, and you could never sleep, because the sun was always up. You know, it never got dark.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: And I was working with Eric, who had worked for John Mitchell, and […he –JM] had gone up there. And I was working on nuisance statutes. And later had a nice job offer from Eric to go back to Alaska in my third year, after my graduation_

[END OF TRACK.]

MR. MAGEE: and work with him, dealing with investment decisions that had to be made with the then-newly discovered oil revenues that were—they had over a billion dollars in assets. Became many, many more times that, but […Eric –JM] at one point, at least, became head of that whole investment deal.

MR. STIEBER: And it's Eric Wolforth?

MR. MAGEE: Wolforth. Like—
MR. STIEBER: Or Harry?

MR. MAGEE: Eric.

MR. STIEBER: Eric, okay.

MR. MAGEE: Yeah. So then back in law school—we've probably spoken for hours now.

MR. STIEBER: Nope. We're at an hour and forty minutes, about.

MR. MAGEE: Alright. So, we're heading for a long one I think.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.]

MR. MAGEE: So anyway, *City of Night* was seminal, Caroline telling me to go back to the U.S. was seminal, and I first—I ended up going to Boston because I thought that would be more—and I took a summer course one year in college at Harvard in Economics. And so, I sort of knew Boston a little bit.

MR. STIEBER: So, this is 1973?

MR. MAGEE: No, 19—late 1971, 1972.

MR. STIEBER: Okay, so you were in Paris a little under a year?

MR. MAGEE: Yeah.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah?

MR. MAGEE: Yeah.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MR. MAGEE: And then a year before that, you know, as a student. So, I went to Boston and I became a guard—I had to get a—I had to get something—I got a little space and I tried to get some tools. Couldn't quite get money enough for a truck together. And I started working as a sculptor; as what I thought a sculptor would work as. And I was a Pinkerton Guard Number Two—what was it called—Number Two City [or Center –JM]Plaza, something, right across from the [City Hall –JM]—

MR. STIEBER: Pinkerton.

MR. MAGEE: Pinkerton, yeah. And I was there for, I don't know, a number of months. And then I heard this song on the radio, "It never rains in Southern California, but when it rains, it really pours." And it's about this fellow who goes out to California from, like, the Midwest. It's the saddest song. It made my heart break. And Beatles—or the Rolling Stone's song of "Wild Horses" had just come out. You know, you're prickly at that point.

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

MR. MAGEE: It's wonderful. You can't be prickly at my age like that. Yeah, so everything was prickly and I said, "I have to go to California." So, I had this concept that the only house I would ever need—and now I have, like, multiple houses—

MR. STIEBER:—[laughs]—

MR. MAGEE:—would be the pack on my back.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: And I had trouble with my leg; I was walking in a brace at that point. This leg.

MR. STIEBER: Was it related to the MS, or what they thought was MS?

MR. MAGEE: No, it had related to a football injury—

MR. STIEBER: Oh.

MR. MAGEE:—where the bone was broken, and didn't heal right and bone had gotten into one of those joints your foot has. So, from third year law school right through—I wore a brace. A big, thumping brace. Anyway, I end up in New York. I hitchhike and I end up in New York, a place I was always afraid of, but I was sort of fascinated by it. Just a couple summers ago, you know, I'd done those interviews.

MR. STIEBER: Was your plan to go to Los Angeles via New York?

MR. MAGEE: Yeah.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah. Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: I was just hitchhiking, right? Drop me off, and of course New York is a temptation no matter what. And I got a hotel room in a little flea-bag place, had my backpack. Meanwhile my mother, I have communication

with. They all want me to come home or go back to the family—what was then something of a family business in North Carolina.

MR. STIEBER: What was the family business in North Carolina?

MR. MAGEE: It was a—they made—my grandfather started this company called Wolverine Finishes which was for the furniture industry.

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

MR. MAGEE: And so, he had a couple—there were plants that were run by my uncles, my one uncle. And it would have been [simple –JM] to have stepped into. It would have been very easy. And it was later sold to, I think, Carrier there—some Carrier or United Technologies. But there was a plant. There was a plant with people making—doing all these finishes. And gosh, I don't know what to say. I don't even know where I am now. I'm confused.

MR. STIEBER: So, you've gone to New York, you're in a flea-bag motel there—

MR. MAGEE: Oh yeah.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: I'm in New York and I—this song is still playing, "It never rains in Southern California, but when it rains, it really pours. Oh, going back to Ohio, don't tell them I almost made it." You know, it was kind of—

MR. STIEBER: Do you remember who the artist was?

MR. MAGEE: No, but I heard this song later on. It's not really a great song.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: But it just—[laughs]—tugged at me. And so I meet this guy at the end of—you know, things just happen—I meet this guy at the end of Christopher Street. I'm, like, two days in New York. I don't know why I got to Christopher Street. I had been to a gay bar in Amsterdam before. That was a real first time for me. I went home with somebody who I still remember. And this kid was a blind kid in Amsterdam and he was sort of a hustler. And he told me his father was an Ambassador. He came from—I think they had disowned him because of his stuff and he had gone, like so many people, "Okay, fuck you."

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MR. MAGEE: "I'm going to start selling, myself." But he didn't charge me anything. Quite nice. I had a student rate.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.]

MR. MAGEE: So anyway, I meet this guy Joel Lovett [Joseph P. Lovett], who's a well-known documentarian now.

MR. STIEBER: Who—a well-known what?

MR. MAGEE: Documentarian.

MR. STIEBER: Oh. Joel Lovett?

MR. MAGEE: Yeah. Joel Lovett. You can Google him. He's done well. And I meet him at [the end of –JM] Christopher Street. And I guess I kind of know what Christopher Street was about because I'm sort of gravitating to the West Village and—on my two-day, my only—my short two-day stay in New York. And I'm there and I look over and I said, really, I think in innocence, I said, "Is that the *Queen Mary*," the boat. And he thought that was a come-on. [Laughs.] And he said, "No, but would you like to come back to my apartment for some tea?"

MR. STIEBER:—[laughs]—

MR. MAGEE: And so, I went back there and nothing happened. But we became—what happened was, [the next day –JM] as I was leaving New York with my backpack, following this song, I run into Joel Lovett and he's walking his dogs again. It […was –JM] in the morning. He said, "Where are you going?" I said, "I'm off to California." And he said, "You know, I have a friend. You don't have to—you can go stay here for nothing. You can live with a friend if you want to stay a couple days. He's doing an apartment on Perry Street and his name is Morley Morgana.

MR. STIEBER: Morley—

MR. MAGEE: Morgana. Who figures into some of my titles. Morgana.

MR. STIEBER: Morgana.

MR. MAGEE: M-O-R-G-A-N-A.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MR. MAGEE: And so, I sort of camp out at Morley's […place –JM]. But what was very opportune was that it was, like, five doors away from the International Stud, one of the biggest gay bars in New York. And I was trying to keep my running going, so even with a bad leg I'd kind of run or walk a lot. It was a lot of exercise. And I ventured into there, and it was really—first time in an American gay bar. And that's 1972, thereabouts. And then everything just exploded. But concurrently, again, concurrently with that I—through Morley I met up with a wonderful woman who I lived with—I mean, it was all very mixed up—and who I've stayed the dearest of friends. Annie Nitschke. N-I-T-S-C-H-K-E. I can find the spelling later. And she and I were together for about a year and half as companions, lovers, whatever. And she worked at the Negro Ensemble Company.

MR. STIEBER: At the what?

MR. MAGEE: Negro Ensemble Company, which was the place for black theatre. Now she was a white lady but she was there—and she was a wonderful person. And she's in hospice right now. But just a New Yorker, New Yorker. She grew up in Hell's Kitchens. You know, Irish mother and dad was a cabbie. And she had a natural talent and a natural warmth to her that was —that would attract artistic people. Even though she was not a writer, but when she did write a short story once it was fabulous. But she was—so she worked there, she worked at Andy Warhol's *Interview* Magazine, stuff like that. Anyway, so that was a very topsy-turvy year or two. And then I met a young man, Rod McCall, who declared himself to be a movie director, but of course he wasn't [yet –JM]. And I declared myself as a welder, which I was not very good at. I was going to Robert's School of Trades which was somewhere on the Upper West side. It was a trade school, learning ways not to blow myself up with—

MR. STIEBER:—[Laughs]—

MR. MAGEE:—acetylene and oxygen. And, anyway, so I met Rod a year and a half into that, or two years.

MR. STIEBER: And you and Rod had a relationship?

MR. MAGEE: For 30 years, yeah.

MR. STIEBER: Wow. Could you spell his last name?

MR. MAGEE: M-C, capital C-A-L-L.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. All right. So, you're working at the trade—you're taking classes at the trade school on welding?

MR. MAGEE: Oh, and I'm driving a cab.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MR. MAGEE: Am I driving a cab then? That was later. Oh, so Morley Morgana says—I get to meet Morley and he's this very interesting Bohemian guy. You know, well-read and this and that. Under-performer, as many Bohemians are, because they don't give a damn.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.] Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: And so—but he had a job with the City Planning Commission on Staten Island, and he said, "Oh, you're […a law graduate –JM]. We could maybe use a lawyer out at our office." Of course, I was just going to stay two days in New York. Already gone to the International Stud. And I went to Staten Island and they offered me a job. And I became their, sort of, whatever it was, because there were zoning issues and everything. And then from there I went and I rented a warehouse at Lester Kehoe—is it still in existence—Lester Kehoe Junkyard, which was on Staten Island near the Bayonne Bridge. And I bought my first vehicle, a 1965 Ford F-150 or 250, with a wooden camper in the back. I unloaded that camper and I lived in that for, God knows, a year and a half.

MR. STIEBER: One of those snap-tops?

MR. MAGEE: Yeah.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: But it was [homemade –JM] out of wood. It was extremely heavy—

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: It was like somebody constructed it. It was solid to say the least. And I used the truck as my truck so I could get supplies. And I was in a junkyard, but across from another junkyard, and near a couple bars where Hell's Angels [or the Breed –JM] hung out at. And so, I was this fellow trying to build a three-arm crucifix.

MR. STIEBER: Which borough was this in?

MR. MAGEE: Staten Island.

MR. STIEBER: Oh, it was on Staten Island.

MR. MAGEE: Yeah.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MR. MAGEE: And meanwhile I had this—what came—I could buy equipment. I bought a welder, which you saw up on The Hill. I've had that for 45 years. It was my big purchase. They don't even make them anymore. It was, like 600 bucks. And, again, through this my family thought maybe I'm just sowing my wild oats. And you know, they were well-meaning, good people, but they didn't know this was not a phase. And so, I started making my first sculpture in that deal. And the other thing that was pertinent to my titles is that Lester Kehoe Junkyard had lots of dairy equipment in it. Big tanks, second hand, that they'd send to Venezuela and South America for the dairy industry. They'd buy these cheap [… –JM]. And I used to crawl in at night and sing my titles because the echo was so fantastic.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah, yeah.

MR. MAGEE: And I'd go after work. Nobody would be in the junkyard. I had this place by myself, and that was the—there was the waterfront right there with a tugboat or two, and I could go into these containers, which were all reflective they were so clean, like grand, giant long sausage mirrors, and sing my titles. And Doug Cohen, who is a composer up in New York, has that tape because I would tape them on my little tape recorder. Anyway, that is a whole body of work that nobody knows about. I don't even know if I can get my hands on it.

MR. STIEBER: You don't think those tapes still exist?

MR. MAGEE: I think they do and I think Doug was trying to look for them. I'd love to give you those tape—a tape of those.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. I think this is a good—

MR. MAGEE: Time to stop?

MR. STIEBER:—place to stop because you're really just about to get into it in a serious, serious way, so I think this is a—we're about two hours in now.

MR. MAGEE: Wow. This is going to be a long interview, maybe.

MR. STIEBER: There's a lot more to cover.

MR. MAGEE: I'm rattling on—oh, yeah, there's a lot to cover.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. We'll pick up in a little bit.

[END OF TRACK.]

[END OF SESSION 1.]

MR. STIEBER: Ready to go. This is Jason Stieber interviewing James Magee for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. The date is September 30, 2016, and it is 10:11 in the morning. Good to see you again, James.

MR. MAGEE: Great to see you again.

MR. STIEBER: Okay, when we left off yesterday, you had moved to Staten Island, you were working as an

attorney in Staten Island, and you also had a studio space at the Lester Kehoe junkyards. Is that right?

MR. MAGEE: That's right.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. And just to be sure, is Kehoe spelled K-E-H-O-E?

MR. MAGEE: I believe you're right.

MR. STIEBER: Okay, great. So, tell me about your—a common day for you working on your sculpture when you were there. How would you organize your time in the studio?

MR. MAGEE: I don't think I've organized my time then or since. I had what they call a day job at the planning commission, and for the first couple years I had to really be there during the work week, but I lived in—at Lester Kehoe junkyard in my camper in this small warehouse. And I would take the bus to Bay Street, where the office was, right where the ferry terminal happens to be. St. George, I think it's called. And I didn't have a shower where I lived or anything like that, I just had a little Coleman stove and a—and kerosene or whatever it is, lights, camp lights, camper lights. And the City Planning Commission office was kind enough to allow me to keep my suit and my tie and my shirt there, so that if I ever wanted to—when I needed to go into New York, into Manhattan I could look the part. And I would work and then during the early, early months of my starting that, I was enrolled in Roberts School of Trades. And then I went to some other trade school too. But I was basically in this warehouse, and I was beginning to acquire some tools, and to be comfortable with them.

And I started building that three-armed cross, crucifix, that was the first piece. And I would just go back home at night into the junkyard, and it was kind of—it kind of evolved so that I would be doing what I call titles and singing them, I sung them, I didn't read them or anything. And it was quite wonderful at night because of the lights of the Bayonne Bridge, and I was alone. And I felt more or less safe except for one night, it was in winter when there had been a snowfall, and my warehouse was adjacent to shared common walls with three other warehouses. And I heard somebody in one of the warehouses, and I was told occasionally people would come in there from the water front, and actually rip places off. So, I was quite afraid because I could not close my door from the inside. My warehouse door was just a roll-up metal door, it would only close from the outside. And I did have a [timid –JM] dog named Hank, who was a German shepherd, but we—then we became quite aware that there were—it was like one or two in the morning, there was clanging around and banging in the place right next to mine. And I didn't know what to do, it was kind of—because I was there alone, and the dog was cowering under my truck of no help. And so, the only thing I—

MR. STIEBER: Not such a good guard dog.

MR. MAGEE: The only thing I'd think of was I had to do something very radical, and I—and there was an inch of snow or something on the ground. And I stepped out of my camper and I was stark naked and I had an axe, and as these guys were coming around the corner, and I had just seen a [Yevgeny] Yevtushenko poetry reading in Manhattan. I had my axe and I stepped out and I started yelling, [*Russian*]. So, I remembered from Yevtushenko. But, anyway, they were not expecting that as they came around [the corner to see –JM] a naked man with an axe yelling in Russian, and they tore off.

I'm not sure what really happened. I was there for about a year and a half, and I'd go into New York a lot socially. I was certainly exploring the world of Manhattan with my dear friends. Morley Morgana had that [… –JM] core group of friends, but also the world that was then beckoning the—in newly revived post-Stonewall world of what we thought of as gay liberation, a real political kind of frame of mind. And—

MR. STIEBER: Were you hanging out with other artists at this time?

MR. MAGEE: No, my habit has always been, you know, I do—I don't really hang out with too many people. But no, I don't think I hung out with anybody except for Morley Morgana's group on Perry Street. I—

MR. STIEBER: Harry Street?

MR. MAGEE: Perry Street.

MR. STIEBER: Perry Street, that's right.

MR. MAGEE: Yeah. And I had some encounters with a couple of artists at—from time to time at the trucks, which was a place near Morley's place.

MR. STIEBER: It's a bar?

MR. MAGEE: No, it's where they park these big trucks.

MR. STIEBER: Oh, that's right.

MR. MAGEE: And people would congregate there, and I would congregate with them. And—

MR. STIEBER: It was a cruising spot.

MR. MAGEE: It would be called a cruising spot. I would think of it more as a docking spot rather than a cruising spot. So, it was all—it was really all fresh [… –JM], because I had—I was discovering a part of myself. And I had made a commitment to not practice law, and this is really not that long after law school, I could easily have thought about perhaps going [back to law –JM] again. But I think I had jumped the track at that point on both counts. Had I jumped it on just one, my life would've been different. But those were both were simultaneous jumps and—

MR. STIEBER: Do you feel that you were kind of just going through the motions at the City Planning Commission?

MR. MAGEE: To a large extent. The office was filled with very nice people, we—actually what was disconcerting or troubling to developers who'd come and show us their plans for development on Staten Island, and Staten Island was developing then quite rapidly, was that as soon as they walked into the office on the second or third floor, they would be immediately confronted with a Che Guevara poster. So, it was a kind of special office. There were actually great people there, really great people.

What happened that saved my skin in a sense was, in and around that time there was an explosion while I was in my—I was at my warehouse working on something. And I—it was a beautiful day I remember, and there was—and I didn't hear any explosion, but there was huge black smoke coming, billowing up, and—and it ended up that that gigantic smoke column was the—was an explosion that was done in a liquefied natural gas terminal. And that a week prior to that—I being the city planning legal whiz or whatever—I was picked up, it was just about a week before that, [with –JM] Curly and some other guy in a relatively old Cadillac limousine. And they were working for Distragas or Texas natural gas who were—they were building this $180 million project which was a gigantic amount of money at that point, to bring liquefied natural gas in from, I guess, Algeria. And they wanted to make sure they were okay with the City Planning Commission, so they came up and they wanted to take me [on a tour of the facility –JM]. And I was dressed in my usual black leather jacket and dirty jeans and everything else and they—I get in the limousine with them and they drive me to the site, where they're building this gigantic—men looked like little teeny dots, little ants on the floor. When we drove all the way up to the top of it in our car and looked—peered down into this tank. And then they drove me back, and they knew that I had some—I [locally –JM] had some political strength or something, I could be somewhat problematic for them if I—

MR. STIEBER: Clout.

MR. MAGEE: Clout if the—if I really raised concerns. And I didn't, it was fine. But what had happened was that that—what had happened was that at that tank, somebody lit—somebody—something got lit in the bottom where I was peering into and it blew up and 40 some people—40 some workers were killed, it was a major industrial mishap. But as they drove me back, they said can we take you home. And I said sure. And again, I was like—it was not even a new leather jacket, it was one that my girlfriend Annie got out of a garbage can in Manhattan for me. And I said, "Yeah, sure, I'm—drive down here, oh, Lester Kehoe Junk Yard. Yeah, that's me, I live in a junkyard." And the next time I saw […Curly –JM] was in Manhattan with—at hearings, and they were sort of in the back row, and I—and they were not so cocky as they had been in their Cadillac driving me up there [a couple of weeks before –JM].

MR. STIEBER: Sure.

MR. MAGEE: And I—my position was there was a fire department, police department, everybody else involved in this—involved in this now investigation of a major deal. And I represented Staten Island, and everybody—especially the engineers said well let them proceed, you know, chances of this happening [again –JM] are slim or something. And I had—and I was the only one that immediately raised my hand, I said no, we're not going to proceed with this. There's something askew here. And so, what happened for me was I had all the paperwork on that explosion for the City Planning Commission. And I didn't have to go to work anymore, I just had to go to these hearings.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: And nobody could really fire me because I knew more about it than anybody else. And so, I spent two years there, lo and behold, without really attending the office much. And I can't remember [when –JM] I did attend but it wasn't work. But I had these files and this investigation went on for quite some time. After which I did leave City Planning Commission. And I ended up driving a cab for a while in New York, in Manhattan.

MR. STIEBER: Now why did you leave the commission?

MR. MAGEE: I left it because strangely enough I could've stayed longer, I was civil service. I felt this was too easy. I mean I didn't have to go to work, I didn't feel good about that. And yet I had a corner on all the information for the Planning Commission. And the Planning Commission's initial concern about this tank was its height, what it would do aesthetically to the island. And then it became this other issue of safety and they understood how explosive this stuff could be and they investigated what had happened in Texas years and years before, where I don't know how many people were killed with liquefied natural gas.

MR. STIEBER: And that's happened more recently too.

MR. MAGEE: Yeah, it's really tricky stuff.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: So, I just wanted—I got antsy, I didn't want to—I didn't like being a—- I think a civil servant. And so I decided to […leave –JM] that, and I had moved with a friend of mine [Rod McCall –JM]] to a place in the flower district of New York, near the old Everard Baths really. Three doors down. And we got a loft. [… –JM] And he and I hooked up and became *compadres, amantes por* muchos años. And he was a budding film director, and I was—trying to be a budding something or other. And we set up our little house in a loft with our Saint Bernard dog [Audrey –JM], several doors down from the flower district. And several doors down from the Everard Baths.

MR. STIEBER: Describe Rod.

MR. MAGEE: He is a—he still is—I think of him as a highly talented, well-educated with an architect's degree, and motivated man with a very sophisticated aesthetic, much more so than mine I think. He just had a—he had a handle on fashion and stuff like that that I never had much of a sense for. And he was determined to become a film director, which he has become. He's done about seven movies. He's doing this latest one with Cybill Shepherd and some other people. James Brolin, Pam Grier, I guess those are the people, if I have that right. And so we were just too young fellows, and it was a very […. –JM] supportive relationship mostly, for most of that time. On both our parts.

MR. STIEBER: And can you remind me how you met him?

MR. MAGEE: I met him at the—a bar across from the White Horse Tavern that was called the Road House. I met him there.

MR. STIEBER: Great. And so, you were driving a taxi when you moved to the flower district, is that right or were you still working—

MR. MAGEE: I started driving cab yeah. And I—I'm trying to think I did that for maybe—I may be wrong, a couple years. And I—and Rod and I were living there and I had a little printing press, and I was trying to figure out how do I make money. And camp was a—well first of all the City Planning Commission I just did not like being in a bureaucracy. It was too fucking safe. I mean it really—you know, they talk about these foxes that they have domesticated in Russia, you know, they've had all these animal testing and study programs over there. Anyway, I think this was done during the 50s. They took a bunch of foxes, and their tails were—the wild ones, their tails were horizontal to up. And by the time the third generation came around, those tails were drooping.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: Just like with the whale sharks at Sea World. You know, these—

MR. STIEBER: The fins?

MR. MAGEE: The fin just flops. And I think being in a bureaucracy happens like that. You know, you're in a bureaucracy, I don't mean to say that, I apologize, but—

MR. STIEBER: No need to apologize.

MR. MAGEE: Here I've said something, I'm very sorry to say. But it's something to beware of, because it's so comfortable and mid-level. You have your insurance. And I was young, I didn't—I was out there on the street. I wanted to have a little rattling and—so we had this warehouse, and—not a warehouse, excuse me, a loft on—[… on –JM] 28th Street off of something or other. And I had a little room in there where I had a printing press. And I was sure I was going to do this thing, I was going to make books, and print them up on my etching press and sell them and I—and I did a bunch, and I have still some of those copies. And they're very subtle etchings, I mean, [..too –JM] subtle and small. And New York is about in some ways about being as loud as you can. And the first and only time in my life I took my slides and copies of those little books around to galleries. And I was devastated by the reception. The comments, you would show the slides to somebody in their little 35 millimeter things. Didn't begin to portray what you were trying to do. And these books were so quiet and faint, few people

could really read up. And I came back from that day, the only day I ever went to a—went out cold to dealers, to see if they would take me. I was so devastated I could just lie on the floor, I couldn't move. And Rod was there, he was terrific, he—but I never did that again. I never said I would—I'll sell myself on this. It's too hard on me.

MR. STIEBER: Did these books include artwork, etchings as you say as well as text?

MR. MAGEE: Oh yeah. Yeah. Yeah, not unlike the scroll we're making. We've been making for four years this scroll.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: Which I guess I've never shown you.

MR. STIEBER: You've shown me some of the drawings, yeah.

MR. MAGEE: Well now I need to show you a scroll before you leave here.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: Yes, in many ways, yeah. Little bits and pieces, words, I can't remember them now, but there was one called the *Plain of Jars*, and there [were –JM] slight words that had to go with that. And I have most of the old prints with me. Not all of them. And they had to do with some—a vision that somebody was having, like—almost an Old Testament figure, in a vision he would have of I don't, now I remember. It was Moses having a vision of Christ. And it was not a comfortable vision. It was a difficult vision for him. And the drawings were—tried to portray that, but they did it in such a quiet manner, nobody—and nobody was interested in them. So, from there I had to—I left New York, mostly, and I said I can't survive here easily, but I can drive my cab. And all these times and dates are kind of soupy for me right now. But—

MR. STIEBER: But you left New York shortly after you had walked your slides around to various galleries?

MR. MAGEE: No, well actually prior to that. I—in 1973 or so, I bought a chicken coop in upstate New York. It was Grotto's—it had been built by Mr. Ginsberg in the old borscht belt as a chicken coop, and then some guy did Grotto's Ladies Underwear Manufacturing Company in it. It was 4000 square feet, 40 by 100. And I bought this thing for like $6000. I had two acres of land. And it was filled with sewing machines and old underwear and, I mean, we're talking about bales of [ladies –JM] underwear, and so I bought it,thinking this is where I would spend the rest of my life, because I would own it and nobody would be able to kick me out of it. And I built a little living quarters there and I tried to fix the roof and Annie would come up. I was still very much with Annie at that point too.

MR. STIEBER: This is before you met Rod.

MR. MAGEE: Yeah, yeah, right prior to meeting Rod. And she would help me fix this [and that –JM]—she was great company, she would help me fix the floor and build this very primitive kitchen. And I had a bathroom above the toilet and a wood burning stove. And I could make it there financially. And also [nearby –JM] there were these homes for the retarded that had been old borscht belt hotels that the mob had bought a number of them expecting gambling to come through, and so there were—they rented them out as homes for the retarded, and had like slot machines in the basement ready to ring right up as soon as Albany passed the legislation, which it never did.

And so, I started working with retarded kids making hardly minimum wage, and most of these homes were really dreadful, and—but they were extremely vivid. There was—there's not a recollection of them that is not filled with stark contrasts. And—but I finally got into one home, one hotel that was run beautifully and with a very caring staff, and it was for the retarded adults, people 18 and older. And these people still remain some of the most fond people, not just those—not just the staff, which I thought—who I thought was wonderful. But also, the residents, and I would—my idea was—my job besides seeing everything was okay was to—I had the art class, and the art class at one point consisted of me having a restaurant in the hotel, or in the—it was called New Hope, that was the name of the—

MR. STIEBER: You had a restaurant?

MR. MAGEE: Yes. My restaurant, made up of paper and crayons, and I would have—we'd have people sitting around tables of the residence, and then one would be—I would be a chef for a while, and some of the residents would be waiters, and they'd go to the table and [ask –JM] what would you like to eat today? And Benny would say I want a hamburger with a vanilla milkshake. And so, they'd bring the order back to me, I'd draw a hamburger with vanilla milkshake and give it back to them, and they would color it. And so, we had this going restaurant. It was actually a lot of fun.

MR. STIEBER: How fun.

MR. MAGEE: And then I found this guy there too. I mean all of this really splits away from so called what was happening in New York which was a lot. I met a guy up there who was a resident, his name—I never forgot his name. Last name was Berman, I think it might—Arthur Berman [Lester Berman –JM]. And he drew these abstract drawings with his crayon and paper. He had to be about 70 years old. Institutionalized all his life. And they were wonderful, and he had—he would—his descriptions of them were wonderful, they were—had to do with shields and Africa. And I looked at that and I said there was something so utterly genuine. And this guy had talent. And he didn't know Jackson Pollock from a hole in the ground. But these were really wonderful and somewhere I have a bunch of them.

But I would come across people like that who were real special in spite of their handicap and greatly enrich my life. I mean, just the vividness of their personalities. You would leave that place, New Hope, and you'd have to take these people to K-Mart to shop, you know, a little field trip. And when you did that and you entered K-Mart you felt you were entering the world of the lobotomized. All of the normal people had part of their brains taken out.

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MR. MAGEE: And only the residents of New Hope had true connection with the extremities of this world. And that was a revelation for me. And true enough, we are all foxes with our tails drooping, most of us, myself included. But these people no, they were—most of them were not like that emotionally.

MR. STIEBER: Do you think that some of the work that they did had an impact on your subsequent work?

MR. MAGEE: I can't really tell that, I—I would like to think it did. What I'm sure happened was my worldview shifted a little bit by being part of those communities. A world—mind you, I had never even gone to an art program in a college or anything else. So, I was kind of out of the ring anyway. And I had mistaken Paris for New York. I was just totally out of the loop. And so, this idea of this—of a small mass of humanity that, you know, could if they got mad enough at you they would—they could put a fork in the back of your head. Which was tried once. Yeah, I mean it just shifted, I don't know how to say how that would be. It made me look at the world differently and in that of course it affected everything. It was a radical situation. It was like, you know, I had radicalized myself moving to Staten Island to a junk yard and radicalized myself somewhat in the gay world in whole different norms and acceptances of morality. And a morality that I—that was completely out of my reference in, when I was growing up, but a morality that I came to understand as—as it has its' own truths, and beauty to it. So, all of that was shifting away from, not that long ago, Penn Law.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah. So, you were at New Hope before you met Rod.

MR. MAGEE: No, I met—I was at—I don't mean to be taking up all your time on this recorder.

MR. STIEBER: No, no, no.

MR. MAGEE: I met Rod before that. I met Rod and he—and we moved in together ultimately to this place in the Flower District.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: And I drove a cab, and I quit driving cab after a long period of time, when I was—when I would drive at night,I'd pick my cab up on Hudson Street, I worked for a number of cab companies, and I drove night because I thought it was easier even though at four in the afternoon it was—you'd get rush hour and people wanting to go to LaGuardia and whatever. And it was—that time was really tough, but after you got through that, it was night, and I would go until two in the morning or three in the morning. And one night I went—I picked up—and I would pick up rides at gay bars because I thought they'd be safe. And I picked up these two kids that, I say kids, teenagers, early twenties, whatever, at—or outside of The Strap. No, it was called The Anvil. No, it was called The Strap. I'm sorry. The Anvil was someplace else. And I—as soon as they got into my cab, it was so strange, it was like the laying on of hands in a church. The cab was filled with a prickly energy. And I didn't know whether it was an energy of sex, or an energy of violence.

MR. STIEBER: There was an energy of sex or violence.

MR. MAGEE: And it was really—so they said we'd like to go to the Upper West Side 70-some street or whatever. And I said okay, it was like one o'clock in the morning, and I—as I drove them, and they were in the back seat, I just—I felt this strange kind of energy force inside that cab. And we got up to like 38th Street and Ninth Avenue and they said turn left here and I'm kind of now hypnotized by this energy. And I turn, like automatic pilot, and I realize we're in a warehouse district, nobody's here. These people can't be living here, what's this about. Very

slow on the uptake myself. And I turned around and he had a gun and they had it to my head and I just went into like—what every animal goes into when you're in the jaws of another animal and about to be devoured.

I just went—I went out of body and they said give us your cash, and I put my foot on the brake, no one around. And I gave him my wallet, gave him everything. And then they said, "All right, get out of the cab. Stand up against that warehouse with your back to us." And I thought well maybe they'll kill me because that was the summer where a good number of cabbies had been knocked off. And so, I was standing there and then I sort of looked around and I saw the—their car, my cab rolling down the road with them in the backseat, nobody driving. And so I take my hands down from there, and I run to them and I said, "Oh, I'm sorry I'm sorry, I didn't put it into park, I apologize," and I put it into park, and then I went back up and I put my hands up. And I—there was a police precinct, police station I went in there, I was like—just being around these guys had […taken –JM] everything and they had a gun, and […the police –JM] could care less because I hadn't been shot. Had I been killed they would've thought—had a second thought about it.

MR. STIEBER: Right. They would've opened a file.

MR. MAGEE: Yeah, they [just –JM] would've opened a file. So, I went home to our Flower District place, and I said Rod, these guys have my license, they have my keys, they have all, needless to say all the money. And we drove [nails –JM] into the—our doors locks, we ruined the locks on our doors and I tried to fuck them up. And—

MR. STIEBER: Because they would've had your address. Yeah. And your keys.

MR. MAGEE: Well low and behold, the next day, that cab was found on our street. They had come back and I was really shaken by that. It took me a couple days, I couldn't drive. And then I went out—finally went out, and my friends said—my New York friends didn't really raise an eyebrow on this. They thought again like the cops, well, you weren't killed, [so –JM] go ahead, you know. And I was really taken back by that, and I went out the next night and a guy—road rage. I'm in the Upper East Side, very swanky area, and I'm driving my cab, and I want to make a turn, and this car is between me and the curb and I don't think I did anything wrong but this guy started saying I did, yelling at me, and traffic was sort of bumper to bumper. So, he gets out and starts spitting at my window. He gets back in [..his –JM] car, and he pulls out a gun from the glove compartment. And I somehow just sped on, and I was—this was two nights in a row. And so, I told Rod and everybody in New York, I'm not driving a cab any more, this is too much. And at that point I went and I started working with retarded people near my chicken coop. And—

MR. STIEBER: So, you kind of retreated to upstate?

MR. MAGEE: Absolutely retreated. I just couldn't handle that. And New York was hard because it was minimum wage, and you know.

MR. STIEBER: So what—

MR. MAGEE: But I was young so being young you can do these things.

MR. STIEBER: So, what was your dwelling like in upstate? Did—was there a house on the property, or?

MR. MAGEE: No. I had a chicken coop, and—and the dwelling was, I don't know how big, it was tiny, it was not like this, I always end up being comfortable in little places, not big places. I put a wall up between the cinder block—the […chicken coop –JM] was cinder block. And they had two floors, it was built into the side of the hill. And the first floor might've been 2000 square feet above the second. And so eventually I tore out that that second floor and raised part of it to maybe 18 feet high—foot high ceilings. And then back of that which was built sort of in the—towards the—built on top of a pad, one building mind you, I'd built in the tiny corner a little tiny residence for me, and the residence [had –JM] a wood burning stove, which I have right here by the way. I bought that stove for that chicken coop, that rusty little thing. And there was a little kitchen, and the kitchen consisted of a sink and a hot plate. And a little place to sit for your dinner. It was all built in with plywood. It was kind of neat, I just didn't get my corners right.

And then there was a bed, a loft bed above the toilet. And the toilet was what I have here, it's very similar. I had a shower head over a toilet. I combined all that so you could wash it down. And then I had a drawing table. And then I had—in that little space, I had a [glass –JM] patio door that looked out into the rest of the chicken coop. And the chicken coop—now that I'm thinking about it, there's a lot of things that I've done at the Hill that are not unlike the chicken coop. I made sure that every window looked into another window that no one felt utterly claustrophobic. And it was a big space with no heat, so winters were really tough up there. And I would—I would go around and collect wood in the spring time when the road crews were clearing the sides of the roads. And I tried to have that dried out and split it, so I had cords and cords of wood. Eventually I put in a little gas stove, which I don't think I used much, but—

MR. STIEBER: What kind of artwork were you doing while you were there? You said you had a drawing table.

MR. MAGEE: Yeah, I had a drawing table. I was doing large figurative works, mostly. And none of them have really survived except for one called *The Plumber's Wife*. A couple of them are depicted in the book on the Hill. Rick Brettell talks about that period of time, he has some photographs. And there was a […short –JM] movie made of them, Rod McCall, and through Rod McCall I got to meet Ushio Shinohara and Noriko and a whole group of Japanese artists. And I did hang out with them very much, even slept in their lofts when I was in New York with Rod, and they by the way were just—they've been the subject of *Cutie and the Boxer*, which just won the Emmy, and last year was nominated for an Oscar. And so that Ushio and Noriko and their family and their friends were really part of my life after 1973 [onwards –JM] when I met Rod. I met Rod in '73.

MR. STIEBER: Could you spell their names?

MR. MAGEE: And he had met them in Japan when he was a sailor. Ushio, U-S—

MR. STIEBER: H-I-O?

MR. MAGEE: Yeah. Ushio. Ushio, Ushio. We called him *Gyu-chan*, little pig. If I have my Japanese right. And Shinohara, S-H-I-N-O-H-A-R-A. Does that make sense?

MR. STIEBER: Yeah, Shinohara.

MR. MAGEE: Yeah, and Noriko.

MR. STIEBER: Noriko. Also, [Alex] Shinohara, [their son –JM].

MR. MAGEE: Yeah. And they become, because of this movie, they've become—they just did a show in Poland I think. They're like all over the globe now. And they're both great people, I—I knew Ushio was very important for me, because for me this is a part from the world of trying to make it with OK Harris, all these other things, and I'm an American. But Ushio for me has always been a very much of a moral character. Now he was drunk and everything else, but by morality I mean he is 80 some years old now. He has given his life to getting at the bottom of it aesthetically. I don't know how to describe it more than that. But it wasn't done as trying to follow a fashion or anything cheap like that. Very earnest, extremely earnest, and he is not a—he's not a cynical man. To this day, he's a man with—of great explosive imagery, most of which has been most famously done as—well he has those boxing paintings which I think people should look deeper into them than that, with his motorcycle sculptures and his paintings with brush. He's an extraordinary person, enough said on that. As Caroline Lee was an extraordinary person for me. They both were people who dealt with these aesthetic issues as not art and entertainment, but art and philosophy, art and morality. You know, it wasn't brushed aside like it is today and has been forever in America anyway.

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MR. MAGEE: When you look at the *New York Times*, it's art and leisure, which needs to be—no it's art and leisure, maybe art and entertainment, and those who—the plastic arts are only given one page at the very end. And if anybody wants to have a real sense of cultural insignificance, just look how the *New York Times* sets us up. And it's okay I—

MR. STIEBER: And it's stories about Game of Thrones and—

MR. MAGEE: Oh yeah, I mean there's no way—

MR. STIEBER: Not that television isn't great, but—

MR. MAGEE: It's not taken seriously.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: It's only taken seriously if there's money involved.

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MR. MAGEE: And for Shinohara, for me, and for Caroline, the money has been very, very thin. It has happened to all of us, sometimes with chunks, and we can ride it out for a while, but it's always well, where will I be six months from now, trying to—and I've been incredibly fortunate when these people who've helped me here, supporting my Hill and so I've been one of the lucky ones. [Also, because of a modest legacy left to my by my mother. –JM]

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MR. MAGEE: I'm rattling on, I'm sorry.

MR. STIEBER: No, you're not, this is all really good stuff. So how long did you sort of "live," because it seems like you were back and forth between upstate New York and New York City?

MR. MAGEE: Yeah, I was two hours away and I could take a bus into Manhattan.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah. So how long were—did you live upstate?

MR. MAGEE: I was there for nearly ten, eight, ten years.

MR. STIEBER: Okay, a long time.

MR. MAGEE: Yeah. And I would go in and out, I'd stay with the Shinohara's, stay with Rod. Rod would come up. And only the people—hardly anybody visited me up there. It was quite lonely. And the only company I had were empty bottles of Mrs. Butterworth's maple syrup. And I had hundreds of those all around. I actually made a piece called, which never survived that place, called the—it was called the *Rapture*, and it was hundreds of Mrs. Butterworth bottles [and an old VW Bug with a sprinkler system –JM.]

MR. STIEBER: Where did you acquire them?

MR. MAGEE: I ate lots of pancakes. I would put in fruit in them, I loved them. [I loved Mrs. Butterworth –JM] I would do pancakes, pancakes, pancakes.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. So were you doing any sculpture while you were at the—

MR. MAGEE: All the time.

MR. STIEBER: All the time, okay.

MR. MAGEE: That's what it was all about.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. So not just drawing at the chicken coop, but also—

MR. MAGEE: Oh no, drawing was just incidental.

MR. STIEBER: All right.

MR. MAGEE: It was important to it, but no, that whole space was filled with sculpture. I'd work a year or two on a piece, and bring some people up, sometimes my Japanese friends and Rod would always be coming to visit. Always supportive of me and he bought a house not far away, about twenty miles away in another town called Grahamsville. And I would go over there, you know. I had a good life, and I worked with the retarded kids, and or with the adults.

MR. STIEBER: Had you started working on the floor piece that's at the Hill?

MR. MAGEE: Well the floor piece [was started in 1977 –JM.] Oh yeah, I have lots of photographs from upstate New York with the floor piece there.

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MR. MAGEE: Which I guess you'd probably want—

MR. STIEBER: I remember seeing them, yeah.

MR. MAGEE: Want copies maybe for your archives. And the floor piece was started, and that was seminal to me because I said, because I'd have to tear down everything I did to begin another one, and my audience would be five or six people. And it was sort of driving me nuts. And I've said this before when I've been asked, you know, why did you think of coming to Texas.

In part, it was Bolton Landing with David Smith. You know, I so admired the fact that he had a field, and my stuff couldn't hold up outdoors like his stuff. Mine was always just on the verge of utter junk. And—which is what I wanted it to be. And—but it couldn't hold up outdoors. And my stuff is really not outdoors stuff, never has been. But he could go out there and look at his work, and of course he had a lot of art world support which I didn't have. But he seemed like—he would've been a terrific guy. And he had this hillside of his stuff. And I said I need to get a place for my—I said this. I'm not going to—I'm going to make this floor piece here, I'm never going to

tear it down, and I'm not going to start another one until I find a place for it. And that was really the inception of the Hill. And I thought it would be upstate New York near Ithaca, because I started working with the Quakers. There was—and felt very comfortable with them. I was with—became part of a Quaker, small, tiny Quaker community. It actually was in Grahamsville they would meet. And—

MR. STIEBER: Grahamsville?

MR. MAGEE: Grahamsville, Grahamsville, still there.

MR. STIEBER: Could you spell that?

MR. MAGEE: Oh, I don't know. Graham.

MR. STIEBER: Oh, so like graham cracker.

MR. MAGEE: G-R-A-H-M. Grahamsville.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah. Grahamsville, okay.

MR. MAGEE: And the—by the way, upstate New York in the Catskills is just so beautiful.

MR. STIEBER: Stunning.

MR. MAGEE: Stunning. And much overlooked. You know, I like the Pacific Highway and various other sorts of natural wonders in this country. The Grand Canyon, the Tetons. But upstate New York is utterly past—it's kind of a Beethoven pastoral.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: It's wonderful. So, I very much loved that area. And I thought when I got to this point, like '77 or '78, like I will not tear down any more work. I decided to go to—thought I'd center myself in Ithaca, because Cornell [University] was there, and I was working with the Quakers in and around the United Nations, they had a great—good library at the—at Cornell. And they had a big Quaker community, and the land was beautiful. And I thought I could maybe buy like some acreage and start this thing which is called the Hill. And that's where I looked first, seriously looked first.

MR. STIEBER: Did the name the Hill occur to you early on, or was that something that came later?

MR. MAGEE: No, that came afterwards.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MR. MAGEE: All I knew is I needed an indoor place to continue to build these things. And to have them so that like David Smith I could look at them for my life if need be. But mine is basically indoor stuff, and that's probably in some ways close to—closer to painting in terms of also being flat against the wall. Oftentimes they're collage—there are constructions of course, whatever the word is.

MR. STIEBER: And many of them are like books too, so there's—

MR. MAGEE: Many of them are like books, yeah.

MR. STIEBER: Okay, so when did you first come out to Texas?

MR. MAGEE: Oh, I thought you were going to say, "When did you first come out?"

MR. STIEBER: Oh no. Well we can talk about that, because it does seem—but it seems to me that that was a very organic process for you.

MR. MAGEE: Well I—yeah. It was absolutely organic.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: With no guilt or shame.

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MR. MAGEE: Just absolute wonder, you know, "How great this is." And I always—and I didn't—I was part of both worlds a little bit, but I—this other thing was just, my God. And that's what I went through. A, "my God," moment.

I came out to Texas because for some reason, I can't remember which, I started working for Goldmark Industries, welding truck bodies. Not truck bodies, we welded the—the reinforcements, steel reinforcements for the inside of some kind of container, truck container trailer. It was a lot of welding, had to be spec and everything else. And Goldmark Industries was in Monticello, I think. And I became at that point a member of the—and I'm still a member I guess. The International Brotherhood of Shipbuilders and Boilermakers, AFL-CIO. I joined the union. And became a union welder in the AFL-CIO. And I—it was very grey, this factory you punched in, you punched out, and there was—we were on a little team of five of us, and I was probably the—I was the low man on the totem pole. Everybody else was a much better welder than I was. I would tend to cause an undercut if I wasn't feeling well. And nonetheless I stayed there, but it was—I remember four dollars and 20 some cents an hour. And it was really grim, it was like 19th century factory. Everybody was in grey and we had our lunches. But what was really great about it was the team of five, they were really, as with any group of five, they were a collection of personalities. And we had Danny Shanahan, I don't know whatever happened to him. He could weld really—they all could weld better than I could. And he was a poet, he—a serious poet. He knew Creeley and—

[Tape stops, restarts.]

MR. STIEBER: And that he was a serious poet.

MR. MAGEE: He was, he was a—Danny Shanahan knew Creeley and others. And he—
MR. STIEBER: Robert Creeley.
MR. MAGEE: Yeah, and he would stand and, a little guy, all the charm you would want you could ask for. And then there was this younger fellow who was, I can't think of his name, but he looked like a doe, as in a deer. And then there was a real great welder and he was a tough guy, and a good guy. And then there was a kind of a fellow who was—you know, kind of college type. I don't know whether he went to college. But really kind of straight regular sort of fellow. But we would every now and then to break through the grey, the five of us would sing, "In the jungle the mighty jungle, the lion sleeps tonight." And the big,—[laughs]—the tough guy. really full time, lifetime welder about my age, and he'd go "oom baba," you know whatever that.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah, the bass.

MR. MAGEE: Yeah, and we would just sing out, and we actually did a great job. And you know, the whole factory who was in hearing distance would stop for a minute, and it was cool. But I only was making four dollars and 25 cents an hour. And what had happened—

MR. STIEBER: And I'm sorry, where in Texas was this?

MR. MAGEE: No this was not Texas, this is upstate New York.

MR. STIEBER: Oh, upstate New York, okay.

MR. MAGEE: This is Goldmark Industries. And I had gone through Texas initially on that train wreck, you know, going—taking the opera set out to [San Franscico –JM]—from Eastman School of Music.

MR. STIEBER:
We haven't talked about that yet, so.

MR. MAGEE: Oh, my God, we're really jumping over things, okay.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah. So, finish telling me about the welding, and then we'll go through the—

MR. MAGEE: Well that was the welding, and I'd been to Texas once before because I had worked—I'd done an opera set for Eastman School of Music that went from Rochester to Hidden Valley Music Seminars in [Carmel Valley] California. And I went out there and my first time in San Francisco and all that. And—

MR. STIEBER: This is an opera set that you had designed?

MR. MAGEE: Designed and built.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MR. MAGEE: It was a Conrad Susa's *Transformations* based on Anne Sexton's book of poems called *Transformations*. And Richard Pearlman was the director, and the head of the opera department at Eastman School. And he hired me to do this set. And that was like '77, '78. And it went out to the west coast. And I—so I set it up, and I was to go from there to Mexicali, Cal-Mexico, get a train in Mexico, to Mexico City to see my friend Javier Sepúlveda Amor. And that train north of a town called Los Mochis, didn't crash. It sort of tipped over. It went sideways.

MR. STIEBER: It derailed.

MR. MAGEE: It derailed but it didn't fall flat because there was like a hill or a bank there. But it was a great panic in the middle of the night when this thing was going down and dark at night. And they ran another train up to meet us to get all the people, and as I understand it a couple people were killed on that. I can't utterly verify that, but they ran a train up to where our train was tipped over, or tilted more than that. And we got on that train and then it backed its way to Las Mochis, which was a railroad hub. [Phrase unclear.] So, from there I went to Chihuahua by train. First time over the Sierra Madres, so it was—it was just utterly intoxicatingly beautiful. Smelt of pine needles. Went to Creel and got to Chihuahua, the city of Chihuahua. I looked at it, it was a fabulous city, it was—it had a beautiful cathedral and park and I stayed in a little hotel for nothing. Mennonites who—there's a big Mennonite community down there. And I was kind of in this hotel, I can't remember the name of it. But god it was fantastic. It was old world, old hotel with bad mattresses. And then I said well you got to get Juarez to get to El Paso to get to New York. So, I went to Juarez. I think it was March or something.

MR. STIEBER: Of '76?

MR. MAGEE: I—well, '76, '77.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MR. MAGEE: I can't quite—maybe '76. […Things are muddled for me. –JM] But I landed in Juarez, and I had to get over to the other side of [to –JM] the US, and I did, and there was a sandstorm, like we get every now and then. And that's why I think it was March. And so, I saw Juarez in the middle of a sandstorm and I thought it was unbelievably powerful. Not pretty, but powerful. Like something I'd never seen in my life. And I was just stunned by it, and then I took a—I walked over the bridge to El Paso. Stayed at the YMCA […for –JM] a night or two. Ended up staying an extra two or three nights because I was so fascinated by this area. And then I got a bus back to—Trailways or something back to New York. And I went through the countryside that I now have my Hill in. Actually, the bus was 60 miles south of where the Hill is. And it's arid desert grassland, and I—unlike Bolton Landing, which was perfectly right for his sculpture.

MR. STIEBER: David Smith's.

MR. MAGEE: Yeah. My—I without even—without—with just looking out a window on that bus, I realized my work could look great here. That this is really the interesting backdrop to the kind of thing that I am drawn to. And that just stayed in my mind. And then I—what had happened was, let's see. Then I went back to New York and—

MR. STIEBER: You were still living at the chicken coop.

MR. MAGEE: Oh yeah.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: And somebody had broken into the chicken coop and spray painted everything with epithets against me. It was horrible. I was just so taken—and in my absence—

MR. STIEBER: What kind? I mean, were they—was it a hate crime or—

MR. MAGEE: Yeah. Well, it was not a hate crime but it was anti, you know, faggot this and that—

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE:—and I really—and the door was ripped apart and—they didn't get to my tool room because my truck was parked in the way. And I just said I really got to get [out of –JM] this—I really felt bad about even being there. And I'd been there then for at least five or six years. I'm sure I'm—I'm sure I'm getting the chronologies all wrong on this. So, I started—I think it was then I started [to work at –JM] Goldmark Industries. And—

MR. STIEBER: Did you take a job at Goldmark because you wanted to gain skills? Was it—

MR. MAGEE: No, not really.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MR. MAGEE: It was a little bit more money. I mean—

MR. STIEBER: Because you weren't—you would make more—

MR. MAGEE:—I think the minimum wage at that time was $3 an hour.

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MR. MAGEE: This was $4.25.

MR. STIEBER: But Goldmark paid more than the Home for—

MR. MAGEE: Oh yeah.

MR. STIEBER:—the Developmentally Disabled? Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: Of course, then you had to pay the—these sharkskin reps of the

—[laughs]—AFL-CIO. And as I understood it even then, when I was working at Goldmark Industries the Office of AFL-CIO Long Island was taken under receivership because of corruption. These guys would be driving out; they'd come up and see us. Great big guys with suits on and Cadillacs and, you know, here we were paying our dues. And then what happened was—all right so this gives me a sense of time. In '79, a number of things happened. I started working for Goldmark Industries in '78 or something like—I don't know; '76—no, that was after the—after the homes for [the –JM] retarded. But I also started getting involved with Quakers in New York and the Catholic Worker people. And that was simultaneous because, again, I felt comfortable with that more than the art thing in terms of what I was supposed to be doing, you know, in terms of a career, [making good use of my education –JM]. And I—

MR. STIEBER: You mean the New York art world.

MR. MAGEE: Yeah. And I went to—I introduced myself—I had this law degree and I could speak French pretty well and New York was an international city and had the U.N. and everything. And I had a political—I had a political leaning, which was internationalist and inclusive and all, so. And I was doing a Quaker meeting up in upstate New York and the Quakers had a U.N. office. And—but the first place I went to was the Catholic Worker. And Eileen Egan was a friend of Dorothy Day's. Dorothy Day was still alive. I never met her; she was upstairs in very bad health.

But Eileen Egan took me under her wing. And I sort of told her, I said, "I want to do something with you." I have this degree, which I might be able to make use of in your service. Well, the first thing we did was my little sister, Susan Magee Wente, and I we did a Tube Sock Program at night—in the winter. We bought a lot like 1,000 tube socks. And we gave them to people in the Bowery. And she was there doing some study with—in midwifery there.

And so with that, and the Catholic Worker sort of—I never was a Catholic Worker, not even Catholic. But with their friendship and support and encouragement, Susan and I would go out at night and, while she was there, and give [away –JM] tube socks. We did that one—

MR. STIEBER: To the homeless?

MR. MAGEE: Yeah.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: Because they could put them on their—they were one size—

MR. STIEBER: On the hands.

MR. MAGEE:—fits all—

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE:—and put them on their hands. And we did that at least one year if not two. And then Eileen Egan and I—and I started talking and she got me introduced to Pax Christi group. And they in turn introduced me to the Lawyers Committee for International Human Rights, if I have the name right. And that was run by two people in New York in the Upper East Side office. And mind you this is—I've been a long time now away from wearing a suit. And the head of it was Maureen somebody. She was a really dynamic woman. And then the other head of it was—I think his name was Mike Posner who eventually, as I understand it—I need some water—became Under Secretary of State under Obama for Human Rights.

MR. STIEBER: Oh.

MR. MAGEE: And they both were great people. And they were, you know, dedicated professionals. And they were like with—they worked with Helsinki Watch and Amnesty. The—and they were one of the heavy weights, you

know, where they would be taken seriously as NGO's. And I—and so I offered myself to Mike who loved—who—and I not only offered myself to Mike but I drew him little drawings of the Moose, Bullwinkle, which he liked. He really liked Bullwinkle.

And Mike said, "We need to have some work on this right to conscientiously object to military service." That's a right that we believe should be a right. And is hardly recognized and certainly not in the U.N. [at that time –JM] because of the complexity of how the militaries in different countries serve all sorts of different functions besides fighting war. They take care of hospitals, et cetera, whatever; build schools. And I said I'll do it. But I just have to be paid enough to stay here and do the research. I asked for no more than that. And so he got the funds from I think Rockefeller or Princeton for me to do this. And I started working with [the Quaker U.N. office and –JM] this really sharp attorney from the U.K., who was a Quaker. Her name was Rachel, I can't remember the last name. And we concocted a way to get that actually recognized. And this is when apartheid was still a big issue.

And so the way we had it worked out was—and she was great to work with; was we would put a resolution [… before –JM] the General Assembly that would state the right to conscientiously object to military service in the—in the armies of apartheid. Now that's the first [… –JM] time it's ever been recognized by the U.N. And it was a little foot in the door. It still is there. And it—they voted, they—it passed. It was a big sort of coup. And while—but the second leg of that I had to go to Geneva, Switzerland. And now I was wearing my suit again that I—[laughs]—had at the—at the Office of the Planning Commission years before. And I worked for the—I stayed at John Knox [Foyer –JM] or whatever it might—hostel right up from the U.N. offices. And Rachel and I worked there; we got this thing passed. In trying to get it passed I wrote this big paper on Conscientious Objection and the various permutations and different ways in which it might be looked at. And there was a man in Geneva by the name of Arthur Booth. And he was—he was an old Quaker activist. And I can see him right now. And he was the head of a organization that in 19—it was like 1926 had won the Nobel Prize for Peace. I can't think of the name of it. But by the time I got there he was the only member of it or maybe there was a secretary. And it was dusty and everything else.

Arthur had been involved in trying to get peace in Ireland. And he had to be like 60 some years old, at least, at that point if not 70. And he had become friends with—he was so active in the peace movements of Ireland and North Ireland that he had—he couldn't go over there. He was a Brit but he couldn't go over to Ireland and stay in the same hotel a second night.

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MR. MAGEE: And he became friends of Sean MacBride who was so—interestingly, Sean MacBride is the only person [who's –JM] ever won the Nobel Peace Prize and the Lenin Peace Prize; won them both. But for me more importantly he was the—he was the son of Maud Gonne, the most beautiful woman in Ireland at the turn of the 19th century. And who had been the unrequited love of William Butler Yeats.

And who left him—she was a political person. She was—she's mythic in Irish history. And I knew all this and not only that I saw a picture of—and he—and anyway Maud Gonne married Captain MacBride who died—was executed after the post office uprising in 1916 in Dublin. And Maud went on to live to the 50s as—and there's pictures of her as an old, old lady haunted, you know, and ravaged and running around—[laughs]—in Dublin. She came from a very wealthy Anglo Irish background, as I understand it. But anyway, so Sean MacBride was taught Latin by Ezra Pound, because he was around; and certainly had some key notes on literature from William Butler Yeats.

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

MR. MAGEE: These were his tutors. They were a—and Captain—though Captain MacBride was not an artist or an intellectual. Yeats evidently still was [in love with Maud Gonne, but Yeats eventually married Maud Gonne's daughter. –JM] He got the—and […Maud and Willie –JM] had a lifelong relationship. Here I'm talking about Irish history—[they laugh]—more than I should. You were talking about the—anyway—

MR. STIEBER: Well, so we went to—

MR. MAGEE:—anyway the thrill—

MR. STIEBER:—what we're talking about is your—

MR. MAGEE: The thrill was this: Arthur Booth called up Sean MacBride to tell him what I was doing. Sean MacBride was living in Paris at the time, an old man. And Arthur said, "Here, Sean's on the phone." And I pick up the phone and I tell him what I'm doing. And Sean MacBride utterly disagrees with my approach to this [right to conscientious objection –JM]. And he's in his bathtub, he's taking a bath in his place in Paris, and talking to me on the phone. And I'm like a young person quite impressionable. And, you know, he disagrees with me. He thinks that it's a slippery slope of some kind and you've got to really take this right and just be hardcore and don't give

an inch on it. And I was all for—all for the middle ground—

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

MR. MAGEE:—if we could at least get that. And I hung up and then Arthur told me who he was. And then at that moment all of this history just—I had spoken to somebody who was taught by William Butler Yeats who was the son of Maud Gonne and knew Ezra Pound. I talked to him and he was in his bathtub, and he was washing himself, and so what if he disagreed with me.

This was extraordinary. [Laughs.] You know I […felt hardly removed from that historic circle of people. –JM]

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MR. MAGEE: It was a great thrill. And so we got that passed and I went back to Geneva a second time to work on the Law of the Sea negotiation. And I was the assistant to Tommy Koh, who was the head of the Group of 77 non-aligned states. And I was an assistant to Dr.—Mr.—Ambassador Flipe Bole from the Fiji Islands. That was my position. I was not a U.S. rep. I was working—and I worked [also –JM] with two other people, an economist from Bangladesh, Moti Pol.

MR. STIEBER: Could you spell that?

MR. MAGEE: Moti is like M-O-T-I; Pol, P-O-L I believe. And Sunji, I can't remember his last name. But he was a political scientist from Japan. And we were like the team for Tommy Koh and I worked on—I worked on various ways in which [voting eligibility on –JM] the Seabed Council might be constituted. And it was this treaty we never signed, the U.S., that we—Reagan immediately dropped away from it. And it's never been signed by the U.S. but it's been signed by most—almost all of the rest of the world, including China. And it's in—it's in—where we're seeing it finally ultimately having great bearing, but unsuccessfully so, is in the South China sea.

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

MR. MAGEE: With the Spratly Islands in there with the Chinese utterly thumbing their nose at it, even though they're signatories. And there was this recent ruling, you know, in the Hague saying, "China, you're wrong. You can't—

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE:—use artificial islands." Also in the Antarctic, or Arctic rather, with the breakup of the ice unforeseen; and the—now the thought that you could go in there and go put your drilling equipment in—

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE:—the seabed. So, I worked on that, worked on a small part of it. It was a very […expansive –JM] treaty. And I went back to Geneva and I did something that I have never done before. I met that—I'm not that forward. But I knew Kokoschka lived at the end of Lake Geneva or someplace. And I took my—I took the photographs from a movie that was done on my work in 1975 by Toshito Endo, a Japanese guy [and Rod McCall –JM]. And it was called "J.R. McCoy." And it was a short film of my work done in my chicken coop as a young man.

And I took the stills from that and I took this train ride to where I knew Kokoschka was living. And I couldn't believe it I walked, I got off, I found his villa. I was working—a day off of the trip at Geneva. Had my little black valise or whatever it is, my portfolio. I knocked on the door and a lady comes to the door and I said I want to show Mr. Kokoschka my photographs. And she said, "He's taking a nap but would you like to come in and maybe wait for him?" And I went inside his villa, and this was his housekeeper, and I sat there and I sat there and I thought this is really not right. And I should not intrude upon this man. I felt utterly embarrassed by that.

[They laugh.]

And like I had—had somehow had the chutzpah to do this and it was—it was not—it was disrespectful to him, he's an old guy. And I got up and I left his house. But I at least—

MR. STIEBER: Your Midwestern nature—

MR. MAGEE: Yeah, my Midwestern nature.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: Yeah, but I was one door—he was on the other side of that door sleeping. And he's the guy who so

struck me when I was—and I would have told him I—he probably would have liked it, that when I was 12 or 13 I saw his self portrait—

[They laugh.]

—in Janson's *History of Art*. And it was a—has been a big force in my life.

MR. STIEBER: Let's talk about J.R. McCoy because if I—unless I'm wrong that's the first sort of personality that—who isn't necessarily James Magee that came forward to do work. Tell me about that. Tell me about this—

MR. MAGEE: I—well, in the early—with whatever public interface I had, which was minimal to nothing, I presented myself as J.R. McCoy. I think out of some kind of embarrassment—

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

MR. MAGEE:—as to who I was and what I was. And my family was just heartbroken that—except for my younger sister, of my having done this life that I had chosen. And that is both the gay thing and the art thing. And—

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

MR. MAGEE:—had not followed in the footsteps of my grandfather and my father in terms of becoming a pillar of the community and this and that. And I think I did that as a liberating thing by saying—and I used it for a very short period of time. But there is a movie, a wonderful movie, directed by Rod McCall shot by his friend, Endo, friend of Shinohara's that's out there somewhere called—it was about three minutes and Rod thought this would be a big breakthrough for me. Now mind you we're in our 20s.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: And he showed it to—Rod had chutzpah he would go anywhere. And he showed it to different places nobody picked it up. So it lies there in—somewhere in my container. That's J.R. McCoy.

MR. STIEBER: So, J.R. was really a pseudonym not necessarily—

MR. MAGEE: Yeah, it was really—

MR. STIEBER:—a personality—

MR. MAGEE: Absolutely [not –JM].

MR. STIEBER:—on the level of—

MR. MAGEE: It was—

MR. STIEBER:—Annabel.

MR. MAGEE: […No –JM.]

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: It was a pseudonym.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: It was very much a pseudonym—

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MR. MAGEE:—to hide who I was so my parent—my mother wouldn't be upset and all that sort of thing.

MR. STIEBER: Your phone again?

MR. MAGEE: I guess I don't—well, no—and did I pull this thing?

MR. STIEBER: No, I think you're good.

MR. MAGEE: All right.

MR. STIEBER: Okay, so let's leave Switzerland and leave your work at the U.N. and talk about your transition from upstate New York to Texas

MR. MAGEE: Okay, so I was working at Goldmark Industries, at $4.25. There was an oil boom in the winter of '79 and '80. And the going rate was $9 an hour.

MR. STIEBER: Because of the energy crisis.

MR. MAGEE: Yeah.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: You got paid $9 an hour. And so I packed up my little car and drove down to Texas like many, many people did. And how you got a job on an oilrig was you just simply drove up to the oilrig, [and asked –JM] you need help? And they did or did not. And if they did they'd hire—looked at you and they—

MR. STIEBER: Gotcha.

MR. MAGEE: Well, good for you. I'm so sorry that that mosquito's there. He—oh.

[They laugh.]

Good for you.

MR. STIEBER: She's done.

MR. MAGEE: Well—

MR. STIEBER: She's done feasting on me.

MR. MAGEE: Yeah.

MR. STIEBER: So, you showed up to the oil rig and—

MR. MAGEE: And you'd show up to any number of oilrigs. And you'd get on an oilrig and you would stay there until you didn't stay there. Either you were fired or you quit. There was no vacation. I think we had one day off or something like that. And there were always three crews, every eight-hour crews. And I never worked the night, night except once. And so, I did that it was easy to get a job, they'd take anybody, they were short—

[END OF TRACK.]

MR. STIEBER: Okay, we're back with James Magee on September 30th, 2016 in El Paso, Texas at his home on East Yandell. The time is 1:19. So Jim, when we left off you were working on the rigs in—

MR. MAGEE: Yeah.

MR. STIEBER:—West Texas is that right?

MR. MAGEE: West Texas, outside of Odessa-Midland. [The home is called Pompeii –JM.]

MR. STIEBER: Yeah. Okay, and what effect do you think that that experience had on your subsequent work, if any?

MR. MAGEE: Of course, it all does. Well, the—you're in the midst of great machinery, great sounds like Wagnerian atmospheres. But more than that it really brought me back—it made me be here and stay here for a period of time to get my—at least my toes into West Texas and maybe getting away from thinking about just the East Coast—

MR. STIEBER: Do you—were you thinking—

MR. MAGEE:—as a possibility.

MR. STIEBER:—about the possibility of buying land here while you were on the rigs? Was that something that was going through your mind?

MR. MAGEE: It might have been. I kind of—I mean it's such a wonderful expansive country. I'm sure that probably entered my mind, but I was still probably thinking mostly upstate near Ithaca, New York.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. And when did that change? When did—when did the idea of West Texas become fixed in your mind?

MR. MAGEE: Well, after I worked on the rigs and I was also working in and around the U.N., in New York and Geneva, now and then it was all interspersed. I went back to my little house I had rented near Ithaca.

MR. STIEBER: Whoops.

MR. MAGEE: And to search out property there to construct the Hill. This is like 19, I don't know, I think it was 1980. And I went home to Michigan and drove back through Ontario, 16-hour drive, to get to the Ithaca area late at night. And I rolled up to my little cabin I was—had rented to search for a place to build my hill. And I was tired as hell and I drove up that road and I couldn't find my cabin. It's was on a little pond. And I left it and I said I—we—I went up the wrong road. Then I said no, this is my driveway. And I drove back up there and the house was gone, it had been struck by lightning.

MR. STIEBER: Oh.

MR. MAGEE: And I called the Rod McCall at like one o'clock, 12 o'clock, 11 o'clock, I don't know what, at night when I had just figured out what had happened. And I was really beside myself and I said I need to get out of here. Just like the porn graffiti that was put in my shop. And Rod was, as usual, always there supportive of me. And the next day I left for San Antonio, Texas where—I don't know why San Antonio. All because of a friend by the name of Michael Tracy was near Laredo.

MR. STIEBER: Michael Tracy?

MR. MAGEE: Tracy. And I knew a little bit about San Antonio because I went through there and visited with Mr. Tracy, who I met while I was working in the oil fields near Giddings, Texas, Giddings and that part, Austin Shell. And so I just said I need to get back to Texas. Now clearly at that point Texas was already strong because that was my immediate reflex. And I said "There's writing on the wall, you need to go there." And I went there and I stayed with a group, which I may have known through the Catholic Worker. I was a—I stayed for a while with the Little Brothers of the Poor, which is an order of monks that work in the barrio.

MR. STIEBER: Could you repeat that, Little Brothers—

MR. STIEBER: Little Brothers of the Poor, it's an order.

MR. STIEBER: Of the—of the—

MR. STIEBER: Of the poor. Poor.

MR. STIEBER: Oh, of the poor. Okay.

MR. MAGEE: And there were only three brothers there but they were all—they were all very receptive to my staying for a while. Not forever but for a while. And I did and I—but then I couldn't get El Paso out of my mind. And I wasn't working on oilrigs now I was just trying to find a place to lay my head. And I dilly dallied between east of San Antonio near Hondo, the Hondo area to buy maybe 100 acres there or something, or to West Texas. And I went back out to check out El Paso again, I had great recollections; and then I did that and I was coming back to San Antonio and I got as far as Van Horn and I called my friend, Michael Tracy. I said, "Michael, I really don't want to go back to what is essentially your part of the state. For one thing I like the arid air here and the mountains around this town of El Paso." And he said, "Then, go back." And I went back and I stayed at the YMCA until I closed up my shop in upstate New York and drove everything back to this shop I had rented near the Rio Grande. And that was my—

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MR. MAGEE:—move.

MR. STIEBER: And you got everything from your—what did you do with your property in upstate New York?

MR. MAGEE: I sold it.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MR. MAGEE: For about—[laughs]—as much, if that, as what I bought it for, because I had to put a well in there and I made the improvements but I probably got my money out of it and that was about it. I was lucky.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. And so you moved to El Paso more or less permanently at that point?

MR. MAGEE: Yeah, I think that was it. Yeah.

MR. STIEBER: And about what year was that would you—would you—

MR. MAGEE: '80, '81.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MR. MAGEE: Blurry.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MR. MAGEE: But I was also doing a little work with the Quakers still in New York, Law of the Sea. And, you know, hanging around the Mineshaft and St. Rose's Home on the Lower East Side taking care of Otis.

MR. STIEBER: St. Rose's.

MR. MAGEE: Nathaniel Hawthorne's daughter [...built –JM] this place for the poor, the dying poor. It's been there since her time. And I volunteered there.

MR. STIEBER: And who is Otis?

MR. MAGEE: Otis was the person I was in charge of. He was a retired cab driver. And when he went there he had no money. And his problem was that he had a brain tumor. He got there and it just wouldn't grow. And he was—he and I communicated by blinking our eyes and things like that. He couldn't talk. And so after I saw Otis I would take care of him and—when I was in New York and then I'd go to the Eagle's Nest or the Mineshaft. And then I'd get tired of that I'd go to clean off at St. Mark's Baths. And then I would—this is terrible that I'm saying all of this.

[They laugh.]

I'll really be indicted by the—by the sex police probably.

[They laugh.]

MR. STIEBER: I don't think they exist much anymore.

MR. MAGEE: Not yet—[laughs]—And then—yeah, I'm signing my warrant. And then I would dress in my little suit and go to the U.N. to be with Tommy Koh. That was my cycle, which was absolutely insane. You know, U.N., Home for the Dying [... –JM] who weren't ready to die, gay bar, sex club, gay bar, gigantic four floors. And then by one or two in the morning St. Mark's Baths and then go home to bed. It was a place—a little place I was renting. Then wake up with six hours of sleep and go to the U.N.

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

MR. MAGEE: And that was when I was working on Law of the Sea. And it was so nuts that I even knew it. I mean I was aware of how crazy this was and it really worried me.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: Because it couldn't—I could not keep this up. This was just nuts. And so Texas was there and my oil field experience and I knew that might be able to save me from just a merry-go-round of too much.

MR. STIEBER: Right. Okay, so what were your first—what was your first year in El Paso like? What dominated your time?

MR. MAGEE: My first year was bringing my shop equipment down to McKinney Wrecking Company, or renting this space from Hans McKinney to live and work in and then to be scouting for a hill property. And I scouted all the way up to Hatch, New Mexico for a place. Somewhere on the river, I wanted to keep it near the river. And in the end, I bought 100 acres out east of town, which started the Hill.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: And then after that, this house came on the market in downtown El Paso where I still am at. And I bought that and put apartments in it to cover, you know, expenses and taxes and—and so I thought I had it made. I had secured a place to begin the Hill and I had—I had an abode. And El Paso just grew on me, as did Juarez. I knew it was just an extraordinary place to be.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. And what kind of work were you doing those first few years in El Paso?

MR. MAGEE: Well, I was doing—I was starting what, I don't know how to call them. But I've continued on with

them, at least until recently, these freestanding sculptural pieces. I don't know how to describe that. And I started them here, and then I started the triptych, I called it the triple triptych or the double triptych that now dominates the south building at the Hill. That took me four years to make, four or five years to make. And so that really occupied me.

MR. STIEBER: Did you have any assistance or were you working solo?

MR. MAGEE: I was working for the first part solo then I hired somebody part time.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MR. MAGEE: From Juarez.

MR. STIEBER: From Juarez? Okay.

MR. MAGEE: Yeah.

MR. STIEBER: Characterize your relationship with Rod after your move to El Paso. How did it change?

MR. MAGEE: It really didn't change, he was always just there for me. And he was out in LA, living, he had a very successful career going in commercial art direction of ads for T.V. and had some big accounts; financially doing very well but always wanting to be a movie director not somebody selling RC Cola. And he was dealing with that and living at Hancock Park in a nice apartment. And we would—I would drive out there, he'd come here and see me. But he said, "Sure, if that's where you can—need to do it, do it there." And so he would spend time here. And then eventually in '86 he bought a place two hours north of here in a town called Hillsboro.

MR. STIEBER: Hills—

MR. MAGEE: Hillsboro.

MR. STIEBER: Boro.

MR. MAGEE: I don't know if my pronunciation is getting too dry in the mouth. I should take a drink of water.

MR. STIEBER: Okay, so when did you first start construction on the Hill?

MR. MAGEE: '81 the first building was done. And concurrently—a word I'm using a lot I see in this interview—the triptych in the south building was being started.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. So you were working on the buildings for the Hill while you were working on—

MR. MAGEE: The first building. The first—

MR. STIEBER: Yeah, the first building.

MR. MAGEE:—of four.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MR. MAGEE: I knew what I wanted to do ultimately but I could only start one. And so, I'm not a stonemason so I hired a guy to pour a slab and put the walls up. And, you know, I felt [… –JM] great—when I feel grateful or great or whatever, when I finally had those walls up I said, my God, you're doing it. You know it's like what John F. Kennedy said about our space program. He said, you know, in 1960-'61 he said, "We're going to go to the moon. But there's this old Irish story or whatever is that the way to get to the other side of the field and cross that fence is to throw your hat over there."

[They laugh.]

Then you have to do it. And that's how—

MR. STIEBER: Then you have to do it.

MR. MAGEE: Yeah, that's how he viewed the moon shot. And I thought this was my moon shot.

MR. STIEBER: What was the name of the stonemason?

MR. MAGEE: I can't remember his name.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. But it was one?

MR. MAGEE: No, he had a crew.

MR. STIEBER: He had a crew? Okay.

MR. MAGEE: You have to have a crew to do what has happened out there.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah. Okay, and when did the personalities of Annabel and who is the other one, I'm sorry?

MR. MAGEE: Horace Mayfield.

MR. STIEBER: Horace, yeah.

MR. MAGEE: Annabel actually appeared to me in 1976, when I had sent that movie of "J.R. McCoy" to Father Amadée and Father Nivard in Normandy and they showed it to their community. And I have this letter it's somewhere, which I hope will end up in your archive, if I can—

MR. STIEBER: Mm-hmm [Affirmative.]

MR. MAGEE:—find it is from Father, I think, Father Amadée. And he said, "James , or Jacques," as they called me, "I showed it to the community, we congratulate you on your—on the—on the work you've done and how it portrays urban man and his plight, et cetera, et cetera, existential. But you should, James, you should look a little bit more maybe at God's handiwork." And what was happening as the '70s moved on I was getting into a really severe state of depression. And I went to the U.N. and the Quakers and everybody else like that in order to save myself from that depression. And the depression came about because I was utterly alone at that—in that chicken coop and building things that I have to tear apart after two years. It was like insane.

And so, he said that, it was a short note in French, and with that Annabel came to me. I mean quite really it really, really. And I bought a set of watercolors and I put a tent out back near a bunch of wild blueberry bushes. And started looking at blueberry bushes and doing, with Annabel, watercolors. Rod has the oldest colors; this is like '76. And I swear to God she and the advice of Father Amadée saved my shirt emotionally. And she came with me to Texas but she started doing oil paintings in the early '80s maybe for the first time. And essentially our house became full of her paintings.

MR. STIEBER: Any why Livermore? What does that name—

MR. MAGEE: I can't tell you why she has that name?

MR. STIEBER: Okay. And the other?

MR. MAGEE: Horace Mayfield?

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

MR. MAGEE: Horace arrived later. I don't know how these people arrive, really, because they're not like—it's not like J.R. McCoy, it's not like taking on a name. It's something else. It's really like the coming into the room of a presence. And Horace came quite a bit later. I'd say in the '90s, after I was diagnosed with HIV and starting to really feel the results of my legs going and all the medication. And he somehow came into my life, and to the extent that I rented a trailer for him in a trailer park in downtown El Paso where he did a lot of his work.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah, it's interesting to me the difference between these people and J.R. McCoy. And I want to—I'm just curious what is the process that happens, because each of these artists has his or her own studio in a sense. What happens when you move from your shop, where you work with Juan on your sculptures, to Annabel's studio, to Horace's studio, which is here at [Pompeii –JM]—on East Yandell.

MR. MAGEE: Well, I would say I would not put J.R. McCoy in the—in that mix.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: Because that really would have been called a pseudonym.

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MR. MAGEE: But there's no trouble, I mean, where we are right now is where Horace and I and now Annabel, to some sense, is we're doing our drawings in our bible. There's—I can't explain it.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: There is no—there's no fence or door or preparation to go through that door. It utterly awaits me wherever I go.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: And I can't explain it. But it's really—it's really there.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah. Each of their work, their bodies of work, is so completely different from the other that it is as if there are multiple people, so—

MR. MAGEE: Rod McCall called me the Cybill of the art world.

MR. STIEBER: The Cybill.

[They laugh.]

I like that.

MR. MAGEE: And I—I'm constantly trying to correct people. I do it to some extent. Oftentimes I just give up when they say, "Well, Annabel's a pseudonym." It's not a pseudonym. No, this is a woman with—this is a friend of mine who's had 35, 40 years of my life. And we're trying to do the best we can.

MR. STIEBER: Right. So, let's talk about your HIV diagnosis. When did that happen? You said in—

MR. MAGEE: 1989.

MR. STIEBER: '89; so relatively late.

MR. MAGEE: Relatively late, yeah.

MR. STIEBER: Did you have any inkling that you might be positive before then?

MR. MAGEE: None. But I knew I'd probably exposed myself back in New York—

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MR. MAGEE:—during the '70s, late '70s for sure. And the specter of that diagnosis and disease, you know, started becoming ever more present from the, say, 1982 or '83 on because of our friends getting sick and everything. But in 1989 you could get—there was a drug that finally came out for it, which showed hope, AZT.

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

MR. MAGEE: And I told Rod I said, now there's a drug. Now we can—I can take this test, you can take one too, and there's something to do […for –JM] it. So, that was the critical point. I went and tested, I had no symptoms, came back positive. It was three doctors, four doctors, or I don't know how many, four doctors or whatever said I had like a three-year life expectancy. My sister Susan, who is in the medical field, flew out to El Paso and then she was—now, she was in Houston working at Baylor Medical complex. And she took me around to all the HIV doctors at that point, which was a real specialty. And I was just given three years to live, two years would be okay, the last year would be painful or whatever but we'd get you through it. We have, you know, enough to keep you comfortable. And that's what that was about. And I can't even—can't even describe it. It, you know, I was 43 years old or something and—

MR. STIEBER: Yeah. What was the—what was the immediate effect of that diagnosis on your work, on your artwork?

MR. MAGEE: Oh, I think Horace came full fledged after that.

MR. STIEBER: After that.

MR. MAGEE: Yeah. Horace absolutely—and he had an incredible decade in the '90s. And see […by –JM] '96 that death sentence was still there; then Protease came out. That was the miracle thing. And so up until Protease everybody just thought they'd die in short order.

MR. STIEBER: And just to be sure is Horace's name spelled, H-O-R-U-S in the Egyptian fashion or—

MR. MAGEE: No, H-O-R—

MR. STIEBER: H-O-R-A -C-E.

MR. MAGEE: Yeah, but if he ever goes to Egypt he'll change his—[laughs]—spelling.

MR. STIEBER: Got it. Okay. So describe Annabel's creative process. Sometimes she seems to paint from imagination or memory and sometimes en plein air.

MR. MAGEE: Well, mostly from memory. And she's done two big efforts almost all from memory or whatever, imagination.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: The plein air her two big efforts were the "Big Bend" series, which included 18 paintings dealing with a scenic drive between Lajitas and Presidio. And then the last one, which are part of the Museo Livermore, the "Journey of Death As Seen through the Eyes of the Rancher's Wife," which are 10 paintings begun en plein air as were the "Big Bend." But outside of that she hasn't really done much plein air. She probably would—it'd be probably be good for her to do it but she just hasn't done it.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah. So, in terms of the—of the oil painting what's that process like? Are there lots of layers? Is there a lot of glazing or—?

MR. MAGEE: Yeah, I mean she never does a pre-study.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: We get a piece of board, it's always on plywood, and we gesso it with Kilz from—we use the sealant from—you can get from a hardware store.

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

MR. MAGEE: And then she just paints directly on it, usually with a light wash. And she sort of knows what's going to happen but not really. And then over the course of maybe 12 to 16 months the picture is done with many different glazes, and many different trips back, and whole—and periods of awkwardness. But—and then she tries to, what is the term? Pull it out of the hat.

[They Laugh.]

MR. STIEBER: In the final layers?

MR. MAGEE: Yeah. Final layers.

MR. STIEBER: What about the selection of themes? How do those—how do those come to her?

MR. MAGEE: Father Amadée, God's handiwork.

MR. STIEBER: God's handiwork.

MR. MAGEE: Which is a article of faith, not only for her but for me now too.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: I truly believe in that.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. And how did she react to your HIV diagnosis?

MR. MAGEE: Startled. I mean everyone was shocked, myself included. Rod was not HIV positive. So, that put an asymmetry into our relationship. But he was with me for a good deal, for at least 10 years of my dealing with that.

MR. STIEBER: Okay. And what Horace's process? There are certainly religious themes as there are in Annabel's but—

MR. MAGEE: Yeah, I just had—well, I think we all sort of share not an orthodoxy but a belief in the light, the being of the universe. You know [we are –JM] just little creatures, just little […grains –JM] of dust. So, that's part of him as well. And he—during the '90s when he had his own trailer he did a lot of constructions, which I would like to show you someday.

MR. STIEBER: You showed them—

MR. MAGEE: They—

MR. STIEBER:—to me when I was here last time now—

MR. MAGEE: Very few of them have ever been—ever shown.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: Harmony Hammond has put them in—put them into a couple of shows but that's it. Lately he has been working in conjunction with Annabel in doing the "Scroll of Light and Tribulation." And that cooperation between the two of them has been a very difficult thing to iron out. I mean, it was so awkward and Annabel was so insistent that she be part of this scroll, we have finally worked it out.

MR. STIEBER: You mentioned when I was here last time that you were—it's almost as if Annabel had snuck into the work. You didn't realize her presence until—

MR. MAGEE: Yeah, I didn't—I—it's like I tried to keep her away from the door.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: And in the end you're only so strong. And she is now very much part of this ongoing interpretation as best we can, of the Old and New Testament in the form of a scroll.

MR. STIEBER: Let's talk about the religious themes, if there are any, for the Hill. Does it have a spiritual component to it?

MR. MAGEE: Only in that its purpose and place is to do honor as we see it to a past, present, and future.

MR. STIEBER: And how has that—how has has that manifested in the form, and of the structures in —

MR. MAGEE: Well, a lot of it I can't—I don't know it's sort of—it sort of escapes me as well. But uh—

MR. STIEBER: But I mean, I guess, because your titles seem very much concerned with, say, childhood, the past, working out the—what was the—in one title you call it the texture of your—of your—

MR. MAGEE: Right. Yeah, the—

MR. STIEBER:—of your childhood.

MR. MAGEE: Yeah. That's all comingled.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: But I mean I'll go back to Father Amadeé and Father Nivard. You know God's handiwork is not always sweet. [It can be –JM] terrifyingly powerful. And we rightfully cower in its presence.

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MR. MAGEE: And the Hill is an acknowledgement of that maybe. But it's not for me to say what the Hill is. It's for others to say what it is for themselves.

MR. STIEBER: In an interview, you gave to—it was on television, it was on a public access television—

MR. MAGEE: Right, years ago, yeah.

MR. STIEBER:—station. You said that a work of art only has to speak to one person in order to be successful.

MR. MAGEE: I believe so. Yeah.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: I don't—there's [always –JM] a common [question –JM] like, don't you do this for other, or something like that, to share with others, and this and that. That's valid, that's quite valid, in fact, I like that. But ultimately —

[END OF TRACK.]

—art for me is a kind of—and it sounds pretentious as hell, I'm sorry. I apologize. It's some kind of [a –JM] meditation, and it's a meditation about, between, whatever, and that is a very private act. And it has nothing to do with show biz, or anything else. That's how I see it. It's the taking in of beauty, you know, and in all its

strange configurations.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah. Did the form of the Hill occur before or after you purchased the land?

MR. MAGEE: Okay, before—

MR. STIEBER: The cruciform structures, yeah.

MR. MAGEE:—it actually occurred while I was working on the oil rigs in Texas.

MR. STIEBER: On the oil rigs, okay.

MR. MAGEE: Yeah. It really crystallized at that point. So, when I was going upstate in Ithaca, looking for a place to buy, I had that configuration, that shape, or whatever.

MR. STIEBER: Right. What was my first one? Okay, so you said that the vision for the Hill came early, while you were still working on the rigs?

MR. MAGEE: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]. Probably even a little bit earlier than that. I think by the time the floor piece really congealed in Upstate New York, I knew what I sort of wanted. [Coughs.] Excuse me. I apologize.

MR. STIEBER: That's all right.

MR. MAGEE: All right.

MR. STIEBER: Okay, so who were the first people, except—aside from the crews that you brought to the Hill, and what was their reaction?

MR. MAGEE: Well, the first people—the first person was Rod McCall.

MR. STIEBER: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MR. MAGEE: And he, as I said in everything, was very supportive, and kind of excited by it. And then, so I started that in '81, both interior and exterior because I was working on the triptych in the south building, but I had brought big chunks of the portion of the floor piece in from New York.

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

MR. MAGEE: So, I had all of that, but it had to be expanded and refined, and so I was kind of working in the south building, north building. No, it was the north building and the east building, not the south building. I don't know [why –JM] I get that all mixed up. And nobody came up mostly for 10 years. And then, this couple who were at one point really feverishly collecting Texas art, and looking for Texas artists came by, and visited Adair Margo Gallery, which was Annabelle's gallery. And the name of this couple were Nona and Richard Barrett from Dallas. And I would think that they were the really first visitors to the Hill. And that would have been '89. And it was utterly solitary. I mean, I just—I had occasional helpers, and of course then this HIV thing happened. And I think about that. And a small trickle of people came in. And respectful of my privacy. And through the '90s, then I would have curators come by, you know, sort of art people, and they'd come by.

And they would be out there, [… –JM] a fair bit of activity in the '90s. Of word of mouth in and around Texas, and then my leg situation got so bad towards the late '90s, I couldn't show it to anybody. I didn't want to show it to anybody, and I couldn't show it to anybody. I couldn't climb the ladders, and Rick Brettell was the critical person that—[Dr.] Richard Brettell, the art historian—was a critical person who came via Adaire Margo, via Richard and Nona Barrett. And that is a major relationship I have in terms of the Hill in my life [… –JM]. He wrote the book, and he has been a champion of the Hill from the early '90s on, and still is. And so, slowly different luminaries, you know, artists would come through, and —but showing it took so much effort.

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

MR. MAGEE: I just couldn't do it, couldn't afford it. I had to have people to open it up for me, and then—I'm jumping ahead. And then about 19—or 2003, when I was really not showing it to anybody, and everything was being covered with cobwebs, Rick Brettell insisted that this remarkable man, Rudolph—Rudy Weingartner, and his wife Gissa, that I show it to them, and this is like, 2003. And Rick said, Rudy was the former Dean of Northwestern and a provost at the University of [Pittsburgh]—one of the major academicians of his generation. He was about 75, 76, and I showed it to him, legs [and all –JM]. I think I still had one leg left, and so I climbed up, and took all the [covering down –JM] with great effort. And Rick had to really wrestle with me to show it, because like I said, "No, I'm not going to do it, not going to do it." Finally, Rick said, called me up a third time. He says, "I'm calling to tell you not to show it to them."

MR. STIEBER:—[laughs]—

MR. MAGEE: And I said, "Okay, Rick. I'll show it to them."

[They Laugh.]

So, they came out, and this is, you know, [a] highly sophisticated, educated, American European, and I showed him what we had to show. The east building hadn't been finished yet. We were still reassembling the floor piece. I showed him what we had to show, and he said—and they were on their way to Marfa, where there's all sorts of parties, and everything. And he said, "Well, this needs to be—you can't"—how did he put it? "You can't cover a lighted candle under a basket," or something like—and he said, "I want to go back to Pittsburgh." He was retiring, "and put together something." And I said, "Sure, go right ahead." And never thinking I'd ever hear from him again. And four or five months, he had a whole program. And we [already –JM] had a 501(c)(3) that I had put in place, once I had HIV. And I had my two sisters on the board.

MR. STIEBER: Was that Cornudas?

MR. MAGEE: Yeah, that's [the] Cornudas Mountain Foundation.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: It had been an in existence long before Rudy, but Rudy wanted to reactivate a board, and with Rick's blessing, and everybody else's, this is—from that point on, I entered another stage of my life where I had really people coming out, and people making big contributions from time to time. People were making little ones, but meaningful little ones, and for this place I'm doing, to become more integrated with our El Paso community.

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

MR. MAGEE: And so, that has happened. And things have happened out of that, including the occasional music [concert –JM]at the Hill that we do now. And with great effort of trying to get these columns around the periphery. And finish up the fourth building, which was going so—

MR. STIEBER: Explain your idea for the columns. What are you trying to achieve with adding columns?

MR. MAGEE: Well, the [stone –JM] columns first of all will be in and of themselves beautiful, because they will be of rock, and they will be—and it's all been surveyed. There is a—they're all staked 500 feet out from the center of the […cruciform –JM]. So, 1,000, what would that be, 1,000-foot circumference.

MR. STIEBER: A—or diameter?

MR. MAGEE: Or the diameter, diameter, right.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: Excuse me, 1,000-foot diameter, and we have stakes every 50 feet for a column. The columns are 30 inches wide, and they rise as the Hill buildings emerge from the Hill, in the same manner, becoming taller towards the lower part. And the governing deal on that in terms of their height, is five and a half feet higher than the platforms, essentially my eye level more or less.

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

MR. MAGEE: And they're being erected in a way that we can erect them ourselves. We don't have to bring in any fancy equipment. You saw the truck […we are –JM] putting together for this. But what they're for, what had transpired before that, because of increasing development within eyeshot of this Hill where there had never been any, there was an absolutely virgin ranch countryside. I had first wanted to do a berm […at one time –JM] I said, "Yes, this is a great idea," and God bless. They went out and they tried to get somebody to do the berm. And realized this was a humongous job that would require—because as near as we could tell, 6,800 truckloads of dirt, all sorts of equipment, carving up land, everything else, and a lot, a lot of money, which we didn't have.

And so, as an alternative, I thought about putting a series of columns around there, and I really like it better than the berm, because it doesn't deny what is happening on the other side. I think that would be kind of wrong to hide a place from what is happening on the other side.

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MR. MAGEE: But it discerns a parameter which we can fill in if we wish.

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MR. MAGEE: And so, I helped to start those— kind of start—we have six staked out. And we've got to start doing the footings on them.

MR. STIEBER: Right. What is your earliest memory?

MR. MAGEE: My earliest memory—

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE:—in life? Being in my baby crib, and being very frightened, looking at—it had to be a sunset, looking at a monkey that was dancing up and down on probably what was a closet door. And the monkey was made of shadows.

MR. STIEBER: Oh, do you think maybe it was tree branches, the shadow of tree branches?

MR. MAGEE: Something, something like that.

MR. STIEBER: Tree branches? Huh, interesting. When you talk about the experience of losing your legs, first you lost one, and then the other?

MR. MAGEE: Yeah, I only had two to lose.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

[They laugh.]

MR. MAGEE: So, what had happened during the '90s, for whatever reason, I developed a neuropathy unrelated to HIV, we think, though its causes remain unknown. And it started—it became apparent in 1986 or '87, when I came across the Bridge of Juarez, and I had a stick shift. And I realized that the ball on my foot there was a spot about the size of a quarter. It was absolutely numb. I didn't pay any attention to it, but by the time I got in the '90s, when I was also on drugs like, all these DDT's, or whatever they are DRT's, or—well, it was alphabet soup of AIDS medication, which exacerbated all sorts of neurological landscapes. Then, it started getting really bad, and I started developing Charcot feet, which is a condition where your bones become so soft and powdery, they even disappear from the X-Ray.

MR. STIEBER: What's it called again?

MR. MAGEE: Charcot, Charcot, French term. I don't know how to spell it, and it was—the '90s were really rough because I'd stinted my legs, and they'd get infected. I had like, they started cutting off bits and pieces of my feet, and what was left would be these infections that were very dangerous, because they could [...become –JM] bone infection. And I had HIV. And everything like that. And it was—I was in a hospital about every six months. At one point I was having surgery every six months, practically for [five years –JM].

And I must say I enjoyed the surgery. And I never having taken alcohol or drugs recreationally, I was nonetheless given these pre-op medications for my operations. And they'd say, "Mr. Magee," and they'd have a few pills for me to—my God, I enjoyed those.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.]

MR. MAGEE: So, I was just hoping they wouldn't cut everything off, so we could have some more pre-op maybe six months later.

MR. STIEBER: [They laugh.]

MR. MAGEE: I mean, I was so happy I would fall in love with everything and everyone around me, and ask them all if they wanted to marry me. And even the chair, you know.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.]

MR. MAGEE: So, but it got really bad, and it was dangerous for me. And I couldn't walk. I walked with all kinds of braces, and finally I had a very good surgeon here. And he said, "We should just take these off." And I said, "Well, let's start with one." And I wanted to have it done—I'd be in my [late –JM] 50s. I don't know. I was 50-something, where I'd be strong enough to recover it, and not stay in a wheelchair.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: And so, they took it off. I learned how to walk. It was easier than walking with a brace, and then three years later, I had the other one taken off.

MR. STIEBER: And that was about—the first one was?

MR. MAGEE: Was 1999.

MR. STIEBER: '99, okay.

MR. MAGEE: And 2002, or [20]03. And I'd try to stay out of wheelchair as much as I can, but there are always issues, because I'm getting older, and my skin's getting thinner, and—

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: That breaks down, but I try to remain really active.

MR. STIEBER: So, that must have placed a lot of time strain on your work schedule, all these operations?

MR. MAGEE: I don't know. I never thought of it as that.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MR. MAGEE: I just thought of it as having to plow through something.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: I don't know how it affected, but yeah. I was always being—I was always recovering from something, and I have a little bit of that now, really. It's sort of a chronic situation, but I have—I had good help. I had people in the community who would be helpful, and then it was—I managed it. I work very slowly, so—and I don't do things in a jiffy. Everything I do is almost geological [in –JM] time, so—

MR. STIEBER: So, how did all of these health crises affect your relationship with Rod?

MR. MAGEE: Oh, they weren't—he was—not to undercut him in the least.

MR. STIEBER: Right.

MR. MAGEE: They were harder on him than I ever understood, and that's all I can say.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MR. MAGEE: You know.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah. Okay, when did you meet Juan?

MR. MAGEE: Well, I've had numbers of Juans. This Juan was an absolutely A-1 plus, plus, plus friend, and assistant, whatever. I met him after Rudy Weingartner formed his group and they got money for me to hire somebody. So, that's about 10 or 11 years ago?

MR. STIEBER: What's Juan's last name?

MR. MAGEE: Munoz.

MR. STIEBER: Munoz, okay. Great, and I think I remember you telling me that you only hire assistants only named Juan. Is that right?

MR. MAGEE: I've said that to people, yeah, and it's pretty much the truth.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.]

MR. MAGEE: It's not only a beautiful name, but I've never had problems with a Juan.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: Or as they say in Spanish, Juan.

MR. STIEBER: Juan, yeah.

MR. MAGEE: Which is so—beautiful name, you know.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah, there's nothing like English to butcher a beautiful name in Spanish, right?

MR. MAGEE: Yeah, yeah.

MR. STIEBER: Let's talk about language. Language seems to come rather easily to you. How long did it take you to learn Spanish, or did you already speak Spanish when you first came to Texas?

MR. MAGEE: I really didn't. I picked it up. One of my great regrets is I never studied it formally, as I [had –JM] studied French. I was really lazy, and I could kind of get into it because of the French. And then, I would hang out in Juarez as much during the 1980s, half of my life was over there. And so, I just picked it up. And I'm not educated in it. I don't know how to—I can write horribly but, and read more or less. And I speak to get along well enough, but I wish I had studied it years—yeah, years ago, seriously, and I didn't. But I don't know. I don't think I'm—I'm kind of shameless when it comes to speaking a foreign language.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: I'm not fastidious about it, and so I don't care if I run roughshod over *plus-que-parfait*, or whatever you want to call it.

MR. STIEBER: I think that's the secret to speaking a language, actually.

MR. MAGEE: I think it is too.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.] Okay, pause.

[Audio break.]

Okay, so Camilla is an important person in your life right now. When did you meet her and what is her last name?

MR. MAGEE: Carr, C-A-R-R.

MR. STIEBER: That's right.

MR. MAGEE: Yeah, she's my *comandante amante*. She's been wonderful. What was your question?

MR. STIEBER: How did you meet her?

MR. MAGEE: Rod McCall introduced us.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MR. MAGEE: At a film festival in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1997, I think, and Camilla was there as a participant. Rod was there as a participant, an entry with a movie in town, and I got a ticket because I said I was a producer, which I was not, but they gave me a ticket.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.]

MR. MAGEE: And I went there. And we met Camilla together. And both quite taken with her as well as another woman, Beatrix Ost. I don't know how to spell her name. We call her Trixie, and she is [German –JM]—she actually ended up having been a student of Kokoschka's, believe it or not, but back in the '50s. She lives in New York, and elsewhere, and does design work, writes novels which have been published in German and in English. And quite, quite well praised, but at that point she was the producer on a movie I believe her son had done. And so, she—but anyway the four of us became tight during that—

MR. STIEBER: And Camilla is—

MR. MAGEE:—festival.

MR. STIEBER:—a writer, and a playwright, and a producer?

MR. MAGEE: She has quite—she has spent her entire life in theatre in one way or the other. I mean, from the time she got out of college, she was involved in acting in Dallas, and became a shining star there. And then, went out west to Hollywood with her son. [She was a three time recipient of the Hollywood Dramalogue Award –JM] And did acting out there. She's in the T.V. Hall of Fame for her role in "Designing Women." She—

MR. STIEBER: What role did she play in "Designing Woman?"

MR. MAGEE: She was the bitch who said, "At least they're killing all the right people."

MR. STIEBER: Oh, wow.

MR. MAGEE: Do you remember that segment?

MR. STIEBER: That's right, yes. Yes, I do.

MR. MAGEE: That's Camilla.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah, okay.

MR. MAGEE: And ironic, here I am.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: They haven't killed me yet, Camilla?

MR. STIEBER:—[laughs]—

MR. MAGEE: But that was her thing, yeah, killing all the right people, and Rod left our relationship. And lucky for me. And then, Camilla became a writer. Her husband was Edward Anhalt.

MR. STIEBER: Edward.

MR. MAGEE: Anhalt. That's a very famous Hollywood name.

MR. STIEBER: Anhalt? Can you spell it?

MR. MAGEE: Anhalt, Anhalt, A-N-H-A-L-T.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MR. MAGEE: He wrote—

MR. STIEBER: And I just want to interrupt you a second. I don't think you meant to say that Rod McCall left your relationship, lucky for you. You meant to say that lucky for you Camilla was there?

MR. MAGEE: Yes, absolutely.

MR. STIEBER: Okay.

MR. MAGEE: I was heartbroken when Rod left.

MR. STIEBER: I just didn't want that to show up in the transcript.

MR. MAGEE: Yeah, yeah.

MR. STIEBER: And look weird, because I knew—

MR. MAGEE: No, no. I don't—absolutely. I was heartbroken when he left.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah, yeah.

MR. MAGEE: It was the worst thing I've ever dealt with in my life. More than any health crisis.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: So, I was devastated. I was just a pile of dust on the sidewalk. So, lucky for me in that aftermath, I met Camilla Carr [who] started becoming interested in my life, and I became interested in her life. And she had—she was living out in LA. Her husband was Edward Anhalt, who had written "Jeremiah Johnson," "The Boston Strangler," and "Beckett"—he had won two Academy Awards, and was one of the really leading writers of his generation, and during—towards the end, they were kind of working on some projects together. And she also towards the end wrote a well-received book called "Topsy Dingo Wild Dog," which was published in the USA, and in the U.K., and had a presence for a while. And then she got involved in writing TV shows that I guess—what would they be called? *True Stories*, she did it all through the '90s, stopped acting for the most part, except for once in a while [a little role –JM] here or there, and now, she is writing some other projects. And we've been together for 10 years, going on 11 years. It's been very—I'm a lucky dog.

MR. STIEBER:—[laughs]—

MR. MAGEE: But still a dog.

MR. STIEBER: [Laughs.] So, what would your greatest hopes be for the legacy of your work, not just the Hill, but also Annabel's work, and Horace's work? What would you like it to do after you're gone?

MR. MAGEE: [I control nothing once it goes out the door. But I would hope that some of this effort would be meaningful for someone, not any throng of people necessarily. That's all I really hope for, that maybe somebody might come by, and whose sensibilities are similar to mine. And he or she would say, "Oh, yeah. This Magee was here, and he kind of saw some things that I saw or felt." Now, that can be very minimalist, but I don't think of it as a legacy beyond my wish that the work that I've spent my life on will be given the opportunity to affect that person who might come after me.–JM]

MR. STIEBER: Right. That finally reminds me of the last sort of topic I wanted to cover, and that's the subject of your titles, these long form poems which operate as titles. What is your process there? How do you—do you have a regular schedule of writing, or does the titles come to you as you work on the piece?

MR. MAGEE: It's interesting. They come always afterwards, and I have been much more diligent on writing in the past than I am right now for whatever reason. I take notes, or if I'm really—and I love doing this. This is all to me endlessly engrossing. They are to be related to but non-sequiturs to what those pieces are about. They are to—not to be explanations, but sideline glances to the work itself, and related to it. And they start with just a little glimmer. And sometimes that glimmer like with the work, the physical work, takes a while for it to resolve itself into a piece, or into a title.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah. Interesting. Do you ever write in a manner that's not related to a work of visual art?

MR. MAGEE: No, not at this stage. I did a lot of writing for the UN, and I've always enjoyed writing, enjoyed writing papers for history when I was a history student. So, I've always liked writing. It is the other side of the brain. I think sometime—is it John O'Hara the poet?

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

MR. MAGEE: Had that right, who was a curator at The Met?

MR. STIEBER: Oh, you're thinking of Frank O'Hara.

MR. MAGEE: Frank O'Hara, excuse me.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: I get their names mixed up. Frank O'Hara. He was friends with Larry Rivers, and there's a poem or something that he wrote, that expresses a kind of jealousy for the ease with which Larry Rivers went about his work, compared to the different sort of intense concentration, I mean brutally so, that it takes to do a poem. And I think that is probably the case from what I know that Annabel can cover a blank piece of plywood gessoed with utter ease. Now, if she worked 12 months—

[END OF TRACK.]

—later on it, for 12 months, there'll be a lot of yes and no, hum and hah.

But the titles are utterly [of] a different kind of energy. They are—they might be called—they might be described as more difficult to do, but not really. It's just different, but it's not easy.

MR. STIEBER: Yeah.

MR. MAGEE: But it's gratifying. Once I get far enough along with one of these titles, it's very gratifying, and if I can pull it off.

MR. STIEBER: You're also experimenting a bit with sound and instrumentation. When I was here last time you performed a couple of titles for me that included synthesized sound?

MR. MAGEE: Yeah, to some extent, yeah, and I started that because I was inspired by my experiences with the composer, Bob Ostertag, and the composer, Doug Cohen, who both worked on computers. And I had done any number of concerts with them where they would do the computer stuff. And I would get up on stage shamelessly, and add my titles to the mix. And right now, I really don't—I've figured out I really don't care to travel much anymore. We went to, you know, all different kinds of places including Hunter College, and Stanford.

And to do these little, tiny concerts which I enjoyed doing, but I think that maybe has passed for me. It may not be. I mean, after I had some surgery six years ago, I don't think I want to travel that much, and so if you come here from Washington, D.C., it's a long ways. I'd better give you a treat.

MR. STIEBER:—[laughs]—

MR. MAGEE: You can't just come here with your [travel –JM] bags and me just saying, "Hello." I got to give you a little show and tell, and—

MR. STIEBER: Well, when I was here last time, you gave me a big show and tell. Not only was I treated to titles at the shop, but also at the Hill. So, I was—

MR. MAGEE: Yeah, the titles at the Hill.

MR. STIEBER:—very grateful for that. Well, would you like to close this interview with one of your titles? Is there one that you think you can call to mind easily?

MR. MAGEE: A short one maybe.

MR. STIEBER: Yes, a short one.

MR. MAGEE: Juans—or I should say Juans':

"Juan's, ax, aches.

His tracks lead backwards.

He takes another swing at the boat floating on the lake.

His wife and kiddos sailing by too fast to ask why."

MR. STIEBER: Beautiful. Thank you so much.

MR. MAGEE: You're welcome.

MR. STIEBER: I think we're done.

MR. MAGEE: I think we're done.

[END OF TRACK.]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]