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Oral history interview with Tony DeLap, 2018
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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Tony DeLap on June 8, 11, and 13, 2018. The interview took place at the home of Tony DeLap in Corona del Mar, California, and was conducted by Matthew Simms for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Tony DeLap and Matthew Simms have reviewed the transcript. Selected corrections and emendations appear below in brackets with initials. This transcript has been 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

MATTHEW SIMMS: This is Matthew Simms with Tony DeLap at his home in Corona Del Mar on June 8th, Friday, 2018, for the Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution. How are you feeling this morning, Tony? [Laughs.]

TONY DELAP: Okay.

MATTHEW SIMMS: How are you feeling this morning? Good?

TONY DELAP: I think okay. I've only had one cup of coffee, but I think that I'll make it. [Laughs.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay. Well, I thought we would basically just start at the beginning, if possible. I'm going to double check that your mic is not being blocked. [Brief side conversation about recording device.]. Let's start at the beginning. [They laugh.]

TONY DELAP: At the beginning.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Going way back into the recesses.

TONY DELAP: That is going way back. And when we say, "the beginning," we're talking about my very beginning, or—?

MATTHEW SIMMS: Well, you were born on November 4—

TONY DELAP: That's right.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —1927—

TONY DELAP: That's right.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —in Oakland, California.

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: What was your father's name?

TONY DELAP: My father's name was Truman Henry DeLap.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Truman Henry DeLap. And where was he originally from?

TONY DELAP: I'm sorry?

MATTHEW SIMMS: Where was he originally from?

TONY DELAP: My father was from a very, very large, very poor family—there were nine children involved in the family—in Oregon.

MATTHEW SIMMS: [02:05] In Oregon.

TONY DELAP: And his father, my grandfather, was quite involved with, I think, the church. And I really don't know too much what else. I think that maybe he did a little teaching and so forth. And my—I'm not sure the age of passing of my grandfather, but my grandmother DeLap, I think, died at just 100. And she was a real pioneer lady. They came out from, actually, from Madison, Wisconsin, which, strangely enough, is where Houdini lived for a while, [laughs] which I always thought was kind of—

MATTHEW SIMMS: A coincidence, yes.

TONY DELAP: —kind of curious. She came out in a covered wagon—

MATTHEW SIMMS: A covered wagon.

TONY DELAP: —from Madison, Wisconsin. And I believe she was two or three years old, and they had—they kept her in a bathtub to—for her safety. And when they got to Tulelake, California, they were attacked by Indians, and the Indians surrounded the Americans, and, just like a movie, she was still apparently in this bathtub for safety. And just as the, I guess, the Indians were getting ready to charge, the United States Cavalry came and chased off the Indians.

MATTHEW SIMMS: [Laughs.] Just like in a movie.

TONY DELAP: Just like in the movies. [03:58] So they went on to Klamath Falls, and Klamath Falls is where they settled, and Klamath Falls is where my father was born.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay. And the name DeLap, where does that come from?

TONY DELAP: DeLap, D-E-L-A-P. Well, I don't think anybody knows exactly. My father always thought it was probably Scotch-Irish, something of the sort. And I ran into a lady many, many years ago, at a home that was being viewed, a new home that was being viewed, and she was seeing for the people coming to see the home, and when she saw my name, DeLap, she said, "Oh," she said, "we have a very good friend who we're going over to meet next week in London whose name is DeLap." And I said, "Is he from England?" And she said, "No, he's from Scotland." So apparently it's not that unique.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah. And the D-E and the L-A-P—

TONY DELAP: Well—

MATTHEW SIMMS: —it's interesting because there's a capital L in the middle.

TONY DELAP: Capital L-A-P, and, you know, I said to my father, I guess, probably more than once, I said, "Do we capitalize the L?" And he said, "Well," he said, "I think you ought to do anything you want with it."

MATTHEW SIMMS: [Laughs.] Okay.

TONY DELAP: That was his thought on that. [Laughs.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: So your grandfather—your father, then, coming from Klamath Falls. Your mother's side.

TONY DELAP: My father—my—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Your mother's side.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, all my father's side at the moment.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Right, okay. So if we shift over to your mother's side, then, where—what was her—

TONY DELAP: Skip over to my mother's side. [05:58] My mother was from very close, a little town outside Columbus, Ohio. I'm trying to think of the name of it; I guess it'll come to me. And her father had a—I think it was a men's clothing store, or haberdashery, or whatever, in the—I'm trying to think of the town. This was a town about 40 miles outside Columbus, a small town. And she lived to 103.

MATTHEW SIMMS: My goodness.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. So there is some longevity [laughs] there in the family, which, I'm sure, is good. The men didn't seem to fare so well. They—[they laugh.] They went off a little quicker.

MATTHEW SIMMS: What is her name?

TONY DELAP: My mother?

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yes.

TONY DELAP: Catherine [Elizabeth] DeLap. And my mother went to—I'm trying to think of the name of it. We can easily find out, but it was a—at the time, it was a women's school, after high school, in that area. And when I was quite small, my mother, my sister, and I—my father was always too busy, but my mother, my sister, and I would

take the train from the Bay Area on several early Christmases and all to Chicago, and change trains, and then go from there to Columbus, Ohio for—

MATTHEW SIMMS: [08:06] Wonderful.

TONY DELAP: —Christmas, usually. There was—and that was the main reason for going back.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And they would have those observation cars, sometimes, and you could get up and—

TONY DELAP: I'm not sure if they had observation cars that early. I remember observation cars on other trains, but I think—what I do remember about our train from Berkeley, where we would board to Chicago, had the—what's the last car called?

MATTHEW SIMMS: The caboose.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. And it had that open back. And, of course, I thought that was sensational.

MATTHEW SIMMS: The best part of the train.

TONY DELAP: Best part of the train.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Except that it gets whipped around a lot.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. And so, you know, the memories are—[laughs]—short on those trips, and at my age, but I do remember a—I remember a few things. At the—in Chicago, we always stayed at the Palmer House, which was kind of, I guess, standard practice for people like us going from, you know, coast to coast. And they had, which I found out, they had a magic shop at the Palmer House. And I'm trying to think of the name of it; probably it will come to me. But that was a—that was just one of the great thrills of my life. [10:00] I know I was wandering around the hotel one, I guess, evening, and I saw all these colorful kind of things that I had no idea what they were for, and they were all—it was all magical apparatus that were, you know—so I went into this store and looked around, and just kind of thought all this was very pretty—pretty terrific. And then I don't know if on the first trip, but certainly on the second trip, I then was—I was very young, but I—my mother gave me, you know, I don't know, a dollar and fifty cents, or two dollars or something, and I remember I bought a coin trick. And [laughs] I guess I read the instructions and maybe understood them—I'm not sure—but I do remember that there was a man traveling by himself from Chicago to Columbus, as we were. And I think several times tried to show him a coin trick, and finally, being a rather nice guy, he finally just said, "You know, Tony, I just don't think I can take this anymore," [they laugh] or something equivalent to that. So I quit. But anyway, that was about my—I think my earliest magic experience.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And how old were you then?

TONY DELAP: I must have been about—probably about seven.

MATTHEW SIMMS: About seven.

TONY DELAP: Something like that.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Precocious.

TONY DELAP: [11:57] Yeah, I was born in 1927, and this—I don't know, this was, I guess, sometime in the early '30s, when we were—

MATTHEW SIMMS: So talking a bit about your mother's side of the family, your father's side of the family, and then at some point they moved together to—is it Oakland or to Richmond that they moved to?

TONY DELAP: No, actually—yeah, I'm not in detail about how—[phone rings.] We won't pay any attention to that.

[Side conversation about telephone.]

TONY DELAP: My father was—I think he was about 14 years older than my mother.

MATTHEW SIMMS: That's quite a significant difference.

TONY DELAP: It's a good bit. And my mother had relatives—my Aunt Rose, and my who we called Uncle Doc, because he was a practitioner in Richmond, and he also was a physician for the Pullman Train Company, which housed their Pullman trains in Richmond when they needed repainting, and so forth. [14:15] But anyway, that

was a service that he was paid for, of course. And anyway, he—his practice was in Richmond, and because my Aunt Rose was my mother's aunt, my great-aunt, my mother, in coming out to visit her aunt, met my uncle, of course, and my uncle knew my father, and he was a practicing doctor in Richmond, and my father was a practicing lawyer in Richmond. And so there were a number of doctors in the family from that Eastern group who all settled in that area. And—but my father, being that much older, and having met my mother after he had settled somewhat in the Bay Area, having spent his early years in Oregon, had volunteered and gone to war, and gone to law school, and he went to Berkeley, to law school, before the Berkeley Law School was part of the University of California. [16:08] And that was—I'm trying to think of the name of that—possibly you know.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh, I should know, but we can look it up.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. And he—I remember him telling me that when he graduated from what later became the Berkeley Law School, I think he said there were 11 people in his graduating class. [Laughs.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: Interesting.

TONY DELAP: And this was all before World War—before World War I.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Because when you said he enlisted, he enlisted for World War I.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, and then he went down and enlisted. He was a small man. He was, like, 5'6" and three quarters or something, and he went down and enlisted in the Army, and he said that when he went through on his physical—what I'm doing now, of course, is bragging about my father and his patriotism, but when he went through the—for his—with his physical, he said the doctor said to him, he said, "Well," he said, "you know, Mr. DeLap," he said, "you're a quarter of an inch too short for enlistment." And my father laughed and he said, "Well," he said to the doctor, he said, "you're not going to stop a patriotic man from fighting for his country for a quarter of an inch, are you?" And the doctor said, "No, of course not." So he went in. And then he went to OCS at the Presidio.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh, so he was stationed at the Presidio.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. And after—but he had already gone to law school and done all that, and worked for one of the larger law firms, or was working for one of the larger law firms in San Francisco. [18:00] I forget exactly who they were.

MATTHEW SIMMS: So he commuted across from Richmond to San Francisco.

TONY DELAP: From Richmond, yeah. And he was—I don't think he was even in Richmond then. Maybe he was. I—and then he—I don't know how long he was overseas, and, of course, fortunately survived all that, and he was a first lieutenant in the artillery. And then he came back to Richmond, and he opened an—yeah, that's—he opened his law office after the war in Richmond, I believe, and he—the name Tony comes up because he hired a lady secretary, and he said the first day she said to him, she said, "You sign your name T. H. DeLap." And she said, "What does the H. stand for?" And my father laughed, I guess, a bit about all that, and said, "Well, you know, it's—" I think I'm getting my story a little screwed up. Let me go back a second. He had his—he hired—oh, he hired the lady secretary, and she said, "What does the T. stand for?" And my father said, "Well," he said, "what do you think is a good name that begins with a T?" [They laugh.] Because he was Truman then, of course. [20:02] And she said, "Well," she said, "I don't know." She said, "I guess your name can be Tony," you know. So he said, "That's fine," he said, you know. So they kidded a bit about that, and so on and so forth. Anyway, that name kind of stuck. And it turned out that Tony was a good name in and around Richmond, the Bay Area in those years, because many of his first clients were Portuguese and Italians—[clears throat] excuse me—because there was a lot of empty space for farming in the back hills of El Cerrito and—well, Berkeley, too, but he was not quite that far south with his clients. But at Richmond, El Cerrito, and then a bit north, when you get into areas below Sacramento, and so forth. Anyway, he had a number of those immigrants who—many of them who did quite well, because they had large cattle ranches, and so forth. And it worked out well. My father had always liked horses, and had grown up with them on occasion when he was small. And the only hobby—I guess that's what you would call it—the only hobby that I can think of that he ever had in any way was a horse.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Horseback riding.

TONY DELAP: He liked horses.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And taking care of the horses, and—

TONY DELAP: And through the years, until he got a bit elderly, and it was too hard for him doing all that, he had a horse. [22:05] And we had what we called the barn, which was very close to our home in El Cerrito, about a mile and a half, I guess, away, where the horse was kept, because in those years, that country, before it became

just jammed with homes, was open country, and so forth. So I grew up with a good part of that, when it was still

MATTHEW SIMMS: So if I can ask, the name Tony, then, you said went over well with—

TONY DELAP: Well, yeah, so I was—you know, I didn't—it all was so foolish. So I became a Truman, also. I was a Truman Henry DeLap. And when I started school it was that, and so forth, and then—

MATTHEW SIMMS: You have the same name as your father.

TONY DELAP: I did. And I wanted to know several things a bit later, when I was taking, you know, how to write and so forth, and what to capitalize, and what not to, and so forth. And I, you know, would try to carefully put Truman Henry DeLap and all, but the teachers, when they would call on me, they would say, "Truman," you know, and I wouldn't answer them. And so it became a bit of a problem when I was quite young. [23:57] And so one of the teachers called one day and talked to my mother, and so forth, and she said, "Well, I'll talk to Tony's father when he gets home," and so forth, so she did do that. And my father said, "Well, I don't know, tell him to call him Tony. Maybe he'll respond." So they did. And when—as soon as they started calling me Tony, I'd stand up and answer, and so on and so forth. So I also became a Tony.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Was it pure stubbornness on your part, that you refused to respond to—

TONY DELAP: I refused to respond, yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: What was wrong with the name Truman?

TONY DELAP: I guess there was nothing, but it wasn't a Tony—it wasn't a Truman world, where I was—[they laugh]—in Richmond at that time, you know. And Richmond was—it was a working man's town. And my friends were not numerous, but I had a number of good friends, and they were pretty much from fathers who worked at Standard Oil, or later Union Oil, or one of the oil companies, or Felice & Perelli, which was the cannery. And, in fact, Joe Felice was a descendent of Felice & Perelli, which is a very large cannery in Richmond. Joe was a good—Joe was a good friend of mine. And I had a friend, Lou Keading, K-E-A-D-I-N-G, and his father was not high up, but he was a bit up in Standard Oil in Richmond. And they were both very good friends. [26:00] Lou went on to become a dentist, and—anyway, it was, as I say, very much a working man's town. And art and so forth was just not—it just wasn't there, you know. There was nothing there.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And yet I think you said you had an aunt who—

TONY DELAP: I did. I had an—

MATTHEW SIMMS: —had an interesting—

TONY DELAP: Yeah, I had an Aunt Rose, who was my mother's aunt, my great aunt. She also was one of the four sisters from Ohio, and she had come out with her husband, my Uncle Doc, the doctor who was practicing in Richmond. And she was a very nice lady, very nice to me. They lived only a short distance away, and I, you know—my somewhat told story about the soap bars. I used to beg from her King—White King soap in those days put out an oversized soap bar. And I had read in a boys' magazine or something how it was really a nice size—it was the nice size soap bar to carve a dog from, or a bunny or something. You know, they'd have a picture of all that. [27:53] So I guess my—maybe my mother had a bar or two of that, I don't know, but I used it up quite quickly, so I went down to my aunt's and asked her if she had any White King soap. [Laughs.] So she gave me what she had, you know, three or four bars, and I came—anyway, I used all that up, and this went on for, you know, two or three times. And then finally one day my Aunt Rose called my mother and she said, "You know, I hate to tell you, but," she said, "I can't afford to keep Tony in soap, so." [They laugh.] But it was kind of one of those sort of, kind of nice young persons' stories, I guess. But—

MATTHEW SIMMS: But can—

TONY DELAP: —my Aunt Rose was, I think, pretty much a self-taught artist. And I guess she—yeah, I think she did some painting. But she also did woodcarving and that kind of thing. And there was a—there was a lady in Richmond at the art center who taught woodcarving, and her name will come to me. And my Aunt Rose worked with her on woodcarving and so forth. And I think that probably most of the things I remember were her carvings instead of her paintings. We may have a watercolor or something, but in our downstairs bathroom there's a mirror, little mirror that she carved the frame for, and so forth. But she was very nice to me. [29:54] And my Uncle Doc, the doctor who was an okay guy, I always thought of him as kind of a character, and any story—I realize it's incidental, but he, for example, claimed that never in his lifetime did he ever eat a carrot. [They laugh.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: Interesting.

TONY DELAP: You know, I mean, that's kind of weird. [They laugh.] And he—he had some funny stories about being with my father when they would go out to some, I don't know what, maybe later when my father was in politics, political thing about, you know—but anyway, it—that's how the family got together east and west.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah. So your parents—

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MATTHEW SIMMS: —met in Richmond, ultimately.

TONY DELAP: They really did, yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And so you were talking about your aunt being kind of supportive of the idea of doing some carving, but your parents were not against the idea of you following art.

TONY DELAP: No, no, they weren't. They weren't against it, and my father never—he never—God knows what he thought, [laughs] but he never tried to push me in a direction or anything. I—[laughs.] I always thought I was pretty aware of what he felt, you know. And I—I liked, particularly, making things. And he was very supportive of, you know, if I needed a saw, or hammer, and a chisel and some things, he was very supportive of that. And so I had a little kind of a place in the garage, kind of a little woodshop, I guess you would say, and I could—I made things, and whatever.

MATTHEW SIMMS: What kind of things would you make? I know you made models.

TONY DELAP: Well, yeah. I—it's a good question. I think one of the first things I made were puppets. [01:52] And I first, I remember, cut them as I, I guess, had learned in school, in clay, you know, and then I think I maybe cut some in wood. And Charlie McCarthy was big in those days, and I'm not sure I—I don't think I ever made a Charlie McCarthy, but I was getting interested in magic when I was about 11 or 12.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And we're talking about around that age.

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Eleven, 12.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, I think about then. And my father had a friend, whose name I can drag up but I'm not sure I can at the moment, who was a banker in Richmond, and he was in the same building that my father's office was in, his—my father's law firm. And he was an amateur magician. And anyway, one day—I don't know exactly how—I guess at some local gathering or dinner party or something, magic came up, and he said, "Oh, well—" one day he said to me, he said, "Tony," he said, "you know," he said—he said, "I'm an amateur magician." And I don't recall him ever doing anything, but he had that interest. And he said, "I—" he said, "I have The Tarbell Course in Magic," which I subscribed to. The Tarbell Course in Magic was very popular.

MATTHEW SIMMS: How do you spell Tarbell?

TONY DELAP: T-A-R-B-E-L-L.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay, Tarbell Course.

TONY DELAP: And it was—he went under the name Dr. Tarbell, and he ran ads in major publications. [04:05] And it was a course, and the course was I don't know how many lessons, but the lessons were—each lesson was mimeographed, and illustrated. And anyway, this gentleman, Lesley [ph]—his name, I guess, would come to—will come to me, but the banker said to me one day when we were down at his house in Richmond, he said, "Tony," he said, "I'll lend you The Tarbell Courses if you are good about, you know, what I set up for you." So he said, "I'll let you take one at a time." I can't remember now how many courses there were, but the format was fine. It was mimeographed on taller than wide stock. They were illustrated, and it was quite well laid out, with stage tricks, and card tricks, and, you know, so forth.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Did you have to get your own apparatus, or would it come with it?

TONY DELAP: Yeah, you had to get your own apparatus, or build it—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Or build it. [They laugh.]

TONY DELAP: —you see, which was—

MATTHEW SIMMS: So was that part of what you were doing in that little corner of the garage?

TONY DELAP: Yeah, that's one of the parts I would really love. So anyway, this was great for me, and I kind of—I quite religiously would, you know, bring back these lessons one at a time, and read them, and occasionally build something like a box for, you know, vanishing a rabbit or something of the sort. [06:07] And it was all big time stuff for me. And I—

MATTHEW SIMMS: And you were in elementary school at this point.

TONY DELAP: I was in elementary school then. I was in—I was really hot and heavy—[laughs]—on this when I was out of grammar school and in junior high school.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Junior high, right.

TONY DELAP: And in Richmond, there was—I went to Woodrow Wilson Grammar School, and in the sixth grade I went to Richmond Junior High School, which was in a different location. And then, when I was in what grade I went to Richmond High School, which was a third location.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah, ninth grade.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, so there were the three schools. And when I was in junior high school, I was pretty hot and heavy on the magic, and—

MATTHEW SIMMS: And did you have friends who were also into it, or was it really kind of you—

TONY DELAP: No, I didn't. And I did a magic show for the—I don't know how much of the student body, but I did do a magic show.

MATTHEW SIMMS: In junior high school?

TONY DELAP: Which I don't think was kind of fantastic, but I did do it. And I was always very, very shy, and so on and so forth, about all this, but anyway, I did do it. [08:00] And I—so I had two things that I was really interested in, and I would say rather spoiled about. One was the automobile, and the other was magic.

MATTHEW SIMMS: So the automobile, that would be moving towards high school, probably.

TONY DELAP: Sixteen.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay. So let's shift to talking about high school, and the things that to you, then—

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Richmond High School, I think you said you went to.

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: The cars, then. Do you remember what car you owned?

TONY DELAP: Well, I drove my father crazy about automobiles and so forth, but first I drove him crazy about motor scooters.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh, okay.

TONY DELAP: And there was—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Are we talking about Vespas, or—?

TONY DELAP: Yeah, like that, yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay. [Laughs.]

TONY DELAP: And there was a—it's even now to me kind of a strange story. There was a Vespa that I guess was wrecked or something, but out of my—[laughs]—bedroom window, with field glasses, somewhere down the hill, in somebody's backyard was this Vespa. And I used to come home and sit and look at that with my field glasses, you know. [They laugh.] Anyway, I went crazy—or I didn't go crazy, but I got—I drove my father nuts about wanting a Vespa. And he—it was the first time he just said, "Look, I just am uncomfortable with you having a Vespa, you're—" and so on and so forth. And of course he was quite right. He said, "I'll help you get a car when you're old enough to drive." [10:04] And he did. So when I was 16, the high point of my life up until then, the war

was on, I spent all this time looking in the paper for car sales—[laughs]—and cars, cars, cars. And I found in the paper a 1936 Ford convertible that was \$600.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Which, was that a lot of money at that time?

TONY DELAP: It was a fair bit of money. To make a long story short, my father bought this car for me, and I was in high school, and, you know, it was wonderful. I drove it all through high school, and—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Did you customize it, or—

TONY DELAP: I customized it a bit, and looking back on it now, I find how—what a collector's item a 1936 Ford convertible is.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And did you drive that throughout high school, or did you get other cars?

TONY DELAP: I drove it throughout high school. I drove it throughout junior college.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Maybe not junior college. You wouldn't have been old enough, would you? Oh, junior college. Yes, I was thinking junior high. [Laughs.]

TONY DELAP: Junior college, yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: I could see you driving around as—yeah, to junior college, right.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, not in—not all the way through junior college, but when I started. Now, anyway, I had that—I had that 1936 Ford, which I coveted, worked on, and spent more time on than almost anything in the world. And then I was sort of—I was kind of getting a bit into painting parts of the car, if, you know, I scratched a fender or something like that. [12:04] And there was a neighbor who had a kind of a wacky spray gun bit. I borrowed that from him, and I would, you know— So that's where I learned spraying, spray painting and so forth, and— But my father was good about all that. He, you know, he never interfered much, and made sure that I—[laughs]—made sure that I had my driver's license always with me, and so forth. And being in Richmond, or being the son of a politician and so forth, I found out some things that I thought were interesting, and interesting even at the time. I remember one day I was driving home from Richmond to our home, which was—Richmond was unincorporated in those years, so all of our mail and so forth went through Richmond, and we had Richmond police and fire and so forth. So to some people today, it's a bit complicated, when I say Richmond and El Cerrito.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh, so you mean El Cerrito was unincorporated.

TONY DELAP: Yes, El Cerrito was unincorporated.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay, I see.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. And our house was just—Richmond's here, you know, El Cerrito residential area is kind of up here, and then if you follow El Cerrito down you hit Albany and Berkeley, you know, same side of the hill. And anyway, I—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Talking about learning things about—because your father was a politician, which, by the way, how did he enter politics? [14:04] I heard about him— You mentioned him being a lawyer, and then now you're saying he was a politician, as well. How did he—[inaudible]?

TONY DELAP: When he got onto the Army, he went to work—I don't know just how soon, but he went to work as a—what do you call? He went to work as a—oh, I have to gather my names here. He went to work as a—for Earl Warren.

MATTHEW SIMMS: A—?

TONY DELAP: For Earl Warren.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh.

TONY DELAP: The—who—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Earl Ward.

TONY DELAP: Earl Warren. Earl Warren, who—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh, okay, Earl Warren.

TONY DELAP: You know, who became governor.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yes, Earl Warren, okay. [Laughs.]

TONY DELAP: Yeah, Earl Warren. I didn't say it very well. And Earl Warren was—I'm trying to think of the title. He was—how—he was in Oakland, and he was a—the name escapes me. We can easily place it, but—Earl Warren was a—[they laugh.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: It's okay.

TONY DELAP: My father was an underling for Earl Warren, who was a—I'm trying to think of Earl Warren's title for Oakland.

MATTHEW SIMMS: [16:03] He wasn't the—

TONY DELAP: I'm sorry?

MATTHEW SIMMS: He wasn't the mayor of Oakland.

TONY DELAP: No, he wasn't the mayor.

MATTHEW SIMMS: It was—

TONY DELAP: He was the—

MATTHEW SIMMS: There are so many different layers.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, he was the—it'll come to me. Anyway, he worked for Earl Warren in Oakland as a prosecuting attorney, and that's how they met. And they had that friendship throughout all of Earl Warren's life, because he passed away before my father. And, as a matter of fact, when Earl Warren became governor of California, my father was, at that time, in Sacramento, first as an Assemblyman but then as a State Senator. And Earl Warren said to my father one day—he called him Tony, by the way—he said, "Tony," he said, "we're going"—which they were getting ready to do, to go back to—on the train for the nomination for who was going to be the next Republican president. And Earl Warren was one of the people who was a possibility for that. There was, at that time, what's-his-name, the warrior who became president. [18:00] You know who I mean. [Laughs.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh. We can look it up. [Laughs.]

TONY DELAP: Yeah, I can. It's hard, isn't it? Yeah, General—there was a—anyway, at that time in the world, Governor Warren said to my father, he said, "Tony," he said, "if by chance I should end up with the nomination for president," he said, "I want to ask you if I would—if it—if I could appoint you to the Supreme Court."

MATTHEW SIMMS: My goodness.

TONY DELAP: And that's, I think, the only—it's the only time I have any recollection of my father ever having got—not excited but saying he wouldn't do it.

MATTHEW SIMMS: He said he would not?

TONY DELAP: You know, and [laughs] when he told us at home this, my mother said, "Oh, you mean we'd have to move to Oakland, or Berkeley, or wherever?" And she said, "No, we'd have to move to Washington," you know. She didn't have—she didn't think that was a good idea. Anyway, it always amused us. But anyway, they were very close politically, and Warren was a liberal Republican. My father was a very liberal Republican. Today, he would not be a Republican, but anyway, that's what he was. And so—

MATTHEW SIMMS: [20:00] Well, I asked about that because you had mentioned that you'd learned some lessons in life—

TONY DELAP: Yeah, yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —through having a father who was in politics somehow.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, he was. So he was a—he was—three times he was elected to the Assembly at Sacramento, still—he always had his law practice. He never gave it up. And when he went to Sacramento, he always had a secretary with him. And then, after that period of time, he was elected Senator, and he had three terms of that. So he had I think it was six terms in Sacramento. And I think he liked it very much.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And was this, in part, through your high school years?

TONY DELAP: This was my high school years, and I—one day he said to me, he said, you know, "Do you want to be a"—what do you call it—what are the young men that run around for the Senators?

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh, a clerk or something, or—?

TONY DELAP: Well, not a clerk, but a [page -TD]. Anyway, I said, "Well, you mean—that means I don't have to go to school?" [They laugh.] He said, "Yeah," he said, "you'd drop out of high school for a quarter." And I said, "Oh, yeah, that's great." So that's what I—and that's what I did. [22:01] And I went to Sacramento with my father, and we stayed at the Sacramento—at the old Sacramento Hotel. And I found it very interesting. I found a lot of the people interesting, and I—you know, I could draw and work on model airplanes or whatever it is I was doing. And I would—there was the pro tem—I sat in, in the pro tem in the Senate. He was, you know, the guy that directs during the day what [laughs] and who is going to be talking, and so on. I sat in on him, so if he had a message for, say, the governor or something, he would give it to me, and I'd run off in the Senate building, you know. So I quite liked it, and not often but once in a while he would give me a note to take to the governor, and I'd run up to the governor's office and go in and give it to the governor, and we'd say hello and have a chat.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh, how nice.

TONY DELAP: So it was quite nice, you know, and I enjoyed that. And it was—and then occasionally there would be a Senator that was trying to get some bill or something through the Senate, and they'd say to my father, "Is it all right if I take Tony to dinner tonight?" You know. And my father was never big on that, but—[laughs]—a couple times I did that, with a couple kind of okay guys, and I thought that was kind of cool. [24:05] And anyway, so my time was my own, pretty much, and—

MATTHEW SIMMS: So a career in politics did not strike you, though, as a path for you.

TONY DELAP: Oh, no, no, no, I—no, no, I was—not at all. I just really—I kind of enjoyed the scene. And then I was still, you know—I was still working on my magic, and pocket puzzles, and so forth. And I'd sit there kind of day after day, under the—right under the pro tem of the Senate, and I'd sometimes have a puzzle box of some kind that I would have worked out the puzzle, and there were about three Senators that would say—they'd catch me somewhere along the line and they'd say, "Hey, Tony, what are you doing there with that?" You know. [They laugh.] And I—

MATTHEW SIMMS: What did these puzzle boxes look like? Because it was a long time ago.

TONY DELAP: Well, they were little boxes where you'd try to get balls in certain holes, something like that.

MATTHEW SIMMS: You kind of tried to get them to land in the right—

TONY DELAP: Yeah. And I had one guy who was—always wore cowboy boots, and he was a rancher and so forth. My father said he was a wealthy rancher from somewhere in the state, I don't remember what. But he got really fascinated with these things that I'd bring in, so he'd kind of occasionally put his hand up like this, and I'd go over, and he'd say, "Tony, you got that?" [They laugh.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: You need to fill the time.

TONY DELAP: So it was kind of always a lot of fun. And so, anyway, it was kind of like that, and then my father and I had a good time, and to me it was good. [26:02] I mean, I enjoyed being with him, and we had a good time. We'd go to dinner most every night, and so forth.

MATTHEW SIMMS: I wonder if that's rare for your generation to have such a close relationship between father and son like that.

TONY DELAP: I think so.

MATTHEW SIMMS: I think it was special, and—

TONY DELAP: And my father was not a party person or anything, but at the same time he loved politics. He really loved it, and I think it was just, you know, something that—no excuses to be made for it; he just did. And anyway, so that took a quarter of my high school, and—or—

MATTHEW SIMMS: And in high school you were also a track star.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. [They laugh.] Well, I was good at track. I was quite fast, and we had a good group of guys, and so they elected me to be the head of the track team. And the one guy I ran with was Larry Hoff, who went on to Stanford and became a—what do you call one who is all—? Anyway, who becomes a champion in a number of different categories. You know what I mean, yeah. [27:57] You can look Larry Hoff up, because you'll

find him, and he was from I wouldn't say a poor family, but he was from a little area outside Richmond, where he lived with, I think, a younger sister and his father. He had no mother. And his father—I don't know what his father did, but I'm sure it was a very not wildly great job. And Larry went to Stanford on a scholarship, and became quite a famous runner.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And there's a story there with you, too.

TONY DELAP: He was a hurdler.

MATTHEW SIMMS: A hurdler, okay.

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Did you have a specialty like that in—

TONY DELAP: I was just—I just—I was—I just—I ran the—you know, there were so many things you could do. That was all. And I ran the hundred yard dash—then yards—I ran the 440, and I ran the anchor man of the 440 relay. And we set a North Coast 440 relay record at Stanford that was—somebody said it was seven years before they broke it. But Larry, when he finished high school, he went to Stanford and became quite a famous hurdler.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And you nearly went to Stanford.

TONY DELAP: I'm sorry?

MATTHEW SIMMS: Did you nearly go to Stanford?

TONY DELAP: Me?

MATTHEW SIMMS: There's a story in there about—

TONY DELAP: Oh, yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —the coach being interested in you, though.

TONY DELAP: My sister was at Stanford.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay, yeah.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, and—[29:59] no, my sister was a good student, and when she was in her high senior year at Richmond High School, they had an offering at Stanford that if one qualified and passed the test they could go to Stanford in their high school year.

MATTHEW SIMMS: So when they were a senior, their last year—

TONY DELAP: A high senior, yeah. And so she took advantage of that and went to Stanford. And anyway, so, no, I—so I finished high school, and I was—got confused here in age, but I had to—you know, I take all the tests for the military, and I was 1-A—

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MATTHEW SIMMS: What does 1-A mean?

TONY DELAP: 1-A meant that you were eligible for call.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay.

TONY DELAP: But the war with Japan was just over. And so Harry Truman came out and said that anybody who was in the situation I was in could do one or two things. They could enlist in the—you know, the—

MATTHEW SIMMS: —the reserves?

TONY DELAP: —one of their choice, the field—yeah—

MATTHEW SIMMS: —the branch or the—

TONY DELAP: —the—

MATTHEW SIMMS: —the Army, the Navy—

TONY DELAP: —the Army, Navy, or whatever.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —Marines, Air Force.

TONY DELAP: And they could go in for just one year!

MATTHEW SIMMS: The branch. That's what they call—

TONY DELAP: The branch—for just one year or they could join a National Guard unit.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay.

TONY DELAP: And if I had gone in for just one year, which would have been the smart thing to have done—I didn't do it. Because by then I was in Southern California, at the—at Claremont, at the art school. And so I joined the National Guard in—California National Guard. And I went to weekly meetings in Pomona.

MATTHEW SIMMS: In Pomona. Okay.

TONY DELAP: And that was a mistake—that was the 40th Division. And it was a disaster, before the—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Why?

TONY DELAP: Because they were activated. The 40th Division was devastatingly heavy—heavily hit. They were not prepared and so on and so forth. [02:01] And what had happened with me is I was down in Claremont there and I don't know exactly how long I was in the unit—this unit in Pomona—But I then went—and then I came back to the Bay Area—went back to the Bay Area. And when I did that, I, of course, changed, you know, outfits. So I went back to the Richmond unit.

MATTHEW SIMMS: When you say they were devastatingly hit, that was during the Korean War.

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah. Because the reserves were sent over—

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —to Korea and they—

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —it was terrible.

TONY DELAP: And it was. And—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Well, we got ahead of ourself a little bit—

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —in the timeline here.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. Okay.

MATTHEW SIMMS: If you don't mind if I bring you back to high school—

TONY DELAP: Oh, of course not.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —a little bit. There are a couple things I'd written on my notes here, one about the way that you began to take shop classes, the way that you were interested in models —

TONY DELAP: Oh, yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS:—things like that.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. Yeah, when I was in junior high school, they did have an art class. And they had a shop class. And I was fascinated in the shop class, because, when I went into the shop to look around, I saw all these bits of machines for cutting metal and, you know, doing all this, which I—which I had had no experience with, I knew nothing about. And the art class didn't amount to very much, because I knew who taught it. [04:00] So I took the metal—the metalworking class, and, of course, felt guilty because I wasn't taking an art class. This is all

my own doing, nobody else's. And anyway, I enjoyed that. And it introduced me to, as I say, metal-cutting equipment.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And then—and then you then took the art class as well.

TONY DELAP: No, I didn't. I could only take one or the other.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay.

TONY DELAP: [Laughs.] When I got to—when I went to high school, then I could take an art class. And I did. And I took an art class, that didn't amount to anything either. So I really didn't have any what you would call art training, where there was any art training as involved with history. It didn't exist.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay.

TONY DELAP: But I did—I did go to—I wasn't—I don't think I was driving yet. I can't remember the exact chronology. But I went to Oakland, and which may have summer. I can't remember. Probably it was summer. But I took a—I guess it was a portrait painting class, at the College of Arts and Crafts at Oakland. And I liked that quite a lot. And I'm trying to think of the teacher. I picture him instantly.

MATTHEW SIMMS: I know you went, during the summer of junior college, for a summer class there. [06:01] Was this before that? Was this—?

TONY DELAP: This was when I was still in high school.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Still in high school.

TONY DELAP: Yeah,

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay.

TONY DELAP: And then—let's see.

MATTHEW SIMMS: So there was a gravitation towards shop, on the one hand—

TONY DELAP: Yeah

MATTHEW SIMMS: —but also art as well, that was—

TONY DELAP: Oh, yeah. And I was painting all this time, myself. And I was painting—my early painting, I found—I was doing—[laughs]—I was doing okay for myself, as far as who I was choosing, because—maybe because of the book or two or three that I had, that I had been given or whatever. But I had some early books on Regional—of the Regional painters.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Mm. The Regional—like Benton—?

TONY DELAP: Yeah, and Hopper—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: —and so forth—who I very much liked. And I remember I—and I've often said one of the things that I loved to do, when I painted a watercolor, was I couldn't wait to put in a telephone pole.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: Because a telephone pole was modern to me. It made the painting modern—and so forth. And so I made a—I—Charles Burchfield was another one I—who I'd copied. I remember I did a pretty good painting, that I copied, of a—of a Charlie Burchfield, who I always—today, I think was really a wonderful painter. [Laughs.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: [07:58] What's fascinating is that it seems like this was all just coming out of your volition. Nobody was—

TONY DELAP: No, there—they weren't.

MATTHEW SIMMS: You were deciding—

TONY DELAP: Yeah, I was doing—I was doing all this on my own, yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Right.

TONY DELAP: And I had my magic and I had painting. And so I was really fucked up, actually—[laughs]—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Just going in many directions.

TONY DELAP: —you know, really a mess.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And at some point, you were interested in lettering, as well, sign painting.

TONY DELAP: I liked—I liked lettering. In fact, one summer I taught—it was not called lettering but I taught poster-making and all, at Point—where was? To a class of black children.

MATTHEW SIMMS: In the East Bay?

TONY DELAP: No, in San Francisco.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh. Hunters Point?

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Or—?

TONY DELAP: No. Point—at—on down where the baseball—the stadium used to be.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah. The—near Candlestick, down there.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. Candlestick Park.

MATTHEW SIMMS: In the—Hunters Point, down there?

TONY DELAP: Yeah. There—at a school down there. And I enjoyed it for several reasons. I enjoyed it because of the nationality of the students. And I—yeah, it—I found it to be—it was a good experience.

MATTHEW SIMMS: How did—how did you—? I'm wondering how you got that invitation, from the—

TONY DELAP: I'm not sure—I'm not sure either. I might have gotten it through old Dick Stephens, at the art school in San Francisco or something like that. I can't remember either.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Do you think you have enough energy to talk about Menlo School? I don't want to—

TONY DELAP: Oh, no. Sure.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay.

TONY DELAP: Of course. No, no, I don't mind at all.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Well, the lettering, you—at some point you got the Speedball textbook, I think. Is—was that the name of this text, the Speedball text? [10:02] Does that ring a bell? Maybe not. I don't want to ask leading questions.

TONY DELAP: No, no. No, no.

MATTHEW SIMMS: I want you to talk freely. But I remember reading someplace that lettering and, you know—in high school, already, had become something that interested you. And it's kind of an interesting tie-in.

TONY DELAP: Well, typography did, certainly. Yeah. And I got—I got interested in kind of all aspects of lettering and commercial design. And I always thought—I thought that—I don't know—I always thought that so many things were—if it was—you know, if it was a commercial something, with a drawing, it had terrible typography or something. And so I got—I got interested in kind of the art of—the art of typography. Because I think it was something that was so often taken for granted, you know. And there was the great guy—and I think I mentioned this before and I couldn't remember and I can't remember now—the great West Coast graphic designer, who went blind.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh, right.

TONY DELAP: And—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Have to look that—

TONY DELAP: —he was—he was working here, on the coast. [12:00] And I have—I have to look it up. But anyway, I was very impressed with his history and his work—and also a number of the—which I think a lot of young artists were—a lot of record-cover—album people.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: Every artist I knew wanted to do a record cover—album, including me. I never did. But I had a—actually, I had a show uptown, with the graphic designer's wife, that I'm trying to think of it—who we're trying to think of the name of—with his wife, at the women's gallery. [Laughs.] Yeah, it'll probably be in the—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Let me find it in here. It was a group exhibition?

TONY DELAP: Yeah, it was a group exhibition.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Let me turn to group shows here. And it would have been in the—

TONY DELAP: —would have been in the—

MATTHEW SIMMS: There was the Seventh California International Home Show, from '55, but I don't think you're talking about that.

TONY DELAP: This would have been the—oh, this would have been in the—at the gallery in Los Angeles, late.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Which one?

TONY DELAP: It would have been late.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Late.

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh. Well, I've—we'll need to circle back to that.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And I can do a little bit of—

TONY DELAP: [14:00] Yeah, yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —reading in the—in the—in the interim, between this installment of our interview and the next one.

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: For your next step, it was Menlo College, for junior college, in Menlo Park, California. And I don't know if there are things that stand out from that, that—Why, for instance, did you decide to make that huge—? Did you—were you a residential student—

TONY DELAP: Oh, yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —who stayed—?

TONY DELAP: Oh, yeah. I stayed—I stayed at Menlo. I think Menlo was a very good experience for me. Because it was a different—it was a different group of people.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: And I—and, actually, I enjoyed Menlo. I had a roommate—[laughs]—who was from the South, who was a very good athlete. And I met my very close—who became my very close friend, through the years, Conrad Hall, and a—a number of other guys, who were of a type, you know, that I never knew existed, like, when I was in Richmond.

MATTHEW SIMMS: What do you mean by that?

TONY DELAP: Well, I think one was because of their backgrounds. Their fathers, their family were from a much more sophisticated, to me more interesting goings on. [15:58] I mean, Conrad's father wrote *Mutiny on the*

Bounty—[laughs]—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay. I see.

TONY DELAP: —for example.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Right.

TONY DELAP: And this was all a big deal for me. I mean, I didn't know anybody in Richmond who did anything like write *Mutiny on the Bounty*, you know. And—or there was one fellow—I can't think of his name right now—whose father owned the—I forget—the great hotel in San Francisco. And we would often go over there—well, not often—a number of times, we went over there before a formal dance and he would send drinks up to the room that we were staying in and—

MATTHEW SIMMS: [Laughs.]

TONY DELAP: I remember he'd—the—he taught me how to tie a bowtie and—But all that—that was all a new experience for me, you know, totally. And when I one day was with James Norman Hall, Conrad Hall's father—and mother and Conrad—And they always rented a small little apartment on Sutter Street, in San Francisco. Because they would come from Tahiti once a year. This was one of the times—at the time they would—they came. And one day I was there with them and Conrad and his father and I were getting ready to take the streetcar out to the art museum.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Like—?

TONY DELAP: Because his father didn't drive. [18:00] But he'd been an ace in World War I, having shot down enough airplanes to become an ace, you know. And we're th—we're there. Mr. Hall and I are in the front room, in this little apartment. And Conrad's in the kitchen with his mother. And Mr. Hall says to me—he said, "Tony," he said, "you know," he said, "you're just a very lucky guy." [Laughs.] I said, "Really?" He said, "Yeah." He said—he said, "You really know what you want to be." He said, "You want to be an artist and so forth and—" you know. And I'd never ever had anybody say that to me, in my whole life, you know, and—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: I mean, I loved my family and all that. But I'd never had anybody say that to me. And it was—it was almost strange, something I just always remembered.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And what's—something that's interesting in that is that what the definition of artist was for you was pretty diverse.

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: I mean, you were involved in a wide range of design—graphic design—I mean, the kind of courses you were interested—

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —commercial, illustration, all the way to—

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS:—what might—one might call traditional fine arts—

TONY DELAP: Exactly.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —painting, you know, watercolors, with telephone poles

TONY DELAP: It's true. But what—I just have to finish up a story. What's amusing to me about that remark from Mr. Hall is that, when he says—tells me this, he says, "You know," he said—he said, "I don't know what the hell Conrad's going to do," he said, "you know." He said, "He doesn't seem to have any plans for anything." [20:00] So he does on and wins, you know, three Academy Awards, for the—how many—how many films he did, you know, and so on—so on and so forth. But it kind of strangely shocked me, I mean, as—I—it was just that I hadn't ever had anything come out, quite like that before.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Hm. Well, you know, it's—be—different people find their path—

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —at different times.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, it's interesting. Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: I asked you once about your time at Menlo College and what Menlo Park was like, at that point.

TONY DELAP: Well, I thought it was interesting. I would occasionally go over to Stanford and say hello to my sister. And I think I told you about the coach coming over to see me?

MATTHEW SIMMS: Tell me that story again.

TONY DELAP: [Laughs.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: That would be—

TONY DELAP: Well, they were—It was—it was wartime. And so they were always looking for athletes. So because of our—I say "our"—the high school team's record at Richmond, the track coach came over to see me one day, nice guy. And he talked to me about, you know, Stanford and so forth. And then—I guess there must have been two meetings, because the one time I s—the two times I—the second time I saw him he said, "You know—" [laughs]—he was kind of laughing—he said, "I saw your grades," and he said, "I couldn't get you into Stanford if you were Jesse Owens."

MATTHEW SIMMS: [22:01] Uh—So.

TONY DELAP: And I said, "Well," I said, "it's not a problem, because I don't really—I don't really want to go anyway," you know. But interestingly enough, not too many years, just probably a few—a few years later, there was a woman who was big in the art world at Stanford who asked me if I had any interest in doing some teaching, you know. And, you know, I had no interest in Stanford, because it had no reputation, in any way, as an art school.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: [Laughs.] It's funny.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Wasn't really—

TONY DELAP: Yeah. And for a long time, it did not.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: In fact, only recently, when it built that new museum, has it sort of come into its own.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Mm. So speaking of track, did—? You didn't continue track, then, at Menlo College.

TONY DELAP: No, I didn't. I—Menlo didn't really offer anything that was an incentive for me, in running track. And then also, it was—it was a whole new world for me, you know.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: I was hanging out—not in any bad way—but I was hanging out at nightclubs and restaurants and places where jazz was being played.

MATTHEW SIMMS: In San Francisco.

TONY DELAP: In San Francisco. And it was a half-hour drive, I guess, from the school to the city. And I—it was just a whole new interesting life for me.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Mm. Yeah. Having grown up in Menlo Park myself, I know—

TONY DELAP: [24:00] Oh, really? For goodness sake.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —that drive—well, driving up to the city was always so exciting. Because you'd come—

TONY DELAP: Oh, yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —come into that energy of San Francisco.

TONY DELAP: Yea—oh, yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: So. And you did say that there was a Frank Lloyd Wright building that, I think, was being made—

TONY DELAP: There was a house—a home that was being built in Menlo Park.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And you had a chance to visit it.

TONY DELAP: And I would go over there quite often. It was not anything fantastic or anything. It had a lot of brick.

MATTHEW SIMMS: I think it was the Arthur Matthews.

TONY DELAP: Okay.

MATTHEW SIMMS: That's the one that I—

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: I did a little research and I think the Arthur—

TONY DELAP: Oh, yeah. That sounds right.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: And I went over there a good number of times, once the—just—and one day—[laughs]—which I think I mentioned to you, I talked to at least one of the carpenters and said something about the house. He said—you know, he said, "Well," he said, "don't ever get involved with one of these goddamn places, you know. He said, "There's not a right angle in the whole—" He went on. [They laugh.] But I remember, so very much, the building of that house. And—But I drove around a lot, in the '36 Ford, to—you know, to buildings and so forth.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah. And this is important, because it's at Menlo College that you began to do some night courses at the Academy of Art College in San Francisco.

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And that opens up a very important, kind of—

TONY DELAP: Yes, I did. Yeah. And old Dick Stephens—that's what we called him—was running the school then. And he was a—he was—he was an interesting guy too. He drank a bit—or a lot. [26:01] I'm not sure of—[laughs]—how you say that. He got me originally to Claremont.

MATTHEW SIMMS: To Claremont. Yeah.

TONY DELAP: Because he was a friend of Millard Sheets—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Right.

TONY DELAP: —which he bragged about. He—Millard Sheets had a—as he put it, he had a—he had horses, he had an airplane, he had a girlfriend in San Francisco—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay.

TONY DELAP: —and he was—he was the big guy of the—of the time. And—so. And then—yeah, and Dick and I became quite good friends. And then Dick's son was about my age. He may have been a year older. And he was very much the opposite. Dick's son was very, in a sense, I would say, protective of his mother. His mother was a woman who had come from some wealth. And she was a very kind of strict, uptight sort of person. And she worried about Dick and his drinking and so forth. And when I went down to Claremont—[laughs]—she used me, two or three times, as a—as a sounding board as to how Dick was behaving himself.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: And it always seems funny to me, because at four o'clock every afternoon a handful of us would go over across this highway from—from the school, to have our beer and play shuffleboard and stuff. [28:09] And Dick, went to that—and so I remember, one time, she called me on the phone. And she said, "Is Dick behaving himself?" And I said, "Oh, he's perfect." [Laughs.] But the son was a bit different. And but young Dick went on to Stanford and I'm sure was a very good student. And then—

MATTHEW SIMMS: And their family was in Atherton. Is that right?

TONY DELAP: I'm sorry?

MATTHEW SIMMS: They lived near where you were going to school.

TONY DELAP: They did. They lived in Atherton.

MATTHEW SIMMS: So would you drive up together to San Francisco, sometimes, I mean, pick him up in Atherton?

TONY DELAP: I didn't—I didn't do that with old Dick Stephens at that time.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh, okay.

TONY DELAP: I had been to the—I had been to the family house, I think once or twice. But I—what was I?—so when Dick, Senior, passed away, I became closer to Dick Stephens, Junior. And that was when I had my show at Orange Coast, up here. Dick came down, and to see that. [30:00] And that was when he wanted to know if I could teach or—I forget what I actually did there. But anyway, I was very—you know, very pleased that he asked me. And so I said, "Sure." So that was fun for me. And Kathy and I would go up. I don't know how many times we went up. But we went up and stayed the weekend. And I went over to the art school—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: —and did a—did a few things. But it was—you know, it didn't really work too well.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: And—

MATTHEW SIMMS: So you were talking about going—some of the nightlife in San Francisco and—

TONY DELAP: [Laughs.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: —that that was significant—a place called Coffee Dan's.

TONY DELAP: Coffee Dan's, yeah. There—Coffee Dan's was very close to where I lived at that time, on Telegraph Hill, you know, everything sort of walking distance—you're—were, and a bit energetic or whatever. [31:04]

[END OF delap18_1of2_sd_track03.]

TONY DELAP: And Coffee—Coffee Dan's was a place that brought in not all but maybe pretty close to all of the really topnotch comics of that time. The—Here I go, trying to think—who was the one that was always just banned?

MATTHEW SIMMS: You mean the one that was censored or—? I'm—I don't remember the name. But I know there was somebody. Yeah.

TONY DELAP: Well, there was a number of them. And there was one—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh, you're not talking about the guy who did—not Lenny Bruce. That's the—

TONY DELAP: Lenny Bruce was one.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Was he one of them?

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay.

TONY DELAP: Lenny Bruce and—anyway. They—I pretty much kept up on everyone that went there. And what's—his-name, who I found to be really a—quite a good guy—Oh, God, what was his name? I know he—know it so well. Another thing that he had, the guy whose name I'm looking—it will come to me—he had a BMW with the doors that opened—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh.

TONY DELAP: —you remember.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: [Laughs.] And I remember there was an article in the San Francisco newspaper. He was stopped by the police for, I guess, speeding. And he rolled down the window and the policeman said, "Would you please get out?" He said, "Get out of this car?" [Laughs.] He said, "Do you know what I have to go through to get out of this car?"

MATTHEW SIMMS: [Laughs.]

TONY DELAP: It became quite a news item. I can see—but—Anyway. He was—he was—it'll come to me. [02:00] But anyway, I could—I could get all those names.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: We'll do that. I just didn't know if there was anything more that you wanted to say about that period, before you—

TONY DELAP: Well, it was interesting period.

MATTHEW SIMMS: That—

TONY DELAP: My friend—my friend Paul Darrow, from down here, from—yeah, from down here, from Pomona, who was—

F1: Excuse me, folks. I'm just looking for a chair.

TONY DELAP: —who was—who was teaching, he—I forgot what I was going to say.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Paul Darrow.

TONY DELAP: Oh, yeah. Paul. Paul and I were—you—you know, were good friends. And when I went down to Corbai U. [in Claremont -TD], so I often stayed with them.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: And—

F1: They're bringing in "Houdini" ["Houdini's House" -MS], in a couple of minutes.

TONY DELAP: Okay. [Laughs.]

F1: It's just going to go in front of the cupboards a little bit.

TONY DELAP: Oh, good.

MATTHEW SIMMS: We can pause—

TONY DELAP: And Paul had a number of kids. They kind of grew more—the—his group grew more, through the years. And he was always so glad to get away from it all.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: He was—he was kind of a good father. In another way, he wasn't such a great father. But he loved the road. He had a—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Well, this is touching on the whole Claremont experience. And maybe, because that's quite a big chunk and it's very significant, maybe we draw the line here and we just pause and get together another time—

TONY DELAP: Oh, absolutely. What—?

MATTHEW SIMMS: —to talk about it, just because it sounds like you have a delivery coming and maybe you want to—?

TONY DELAP: Oh, well, that won't bother us. But—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay. If you feel up to delving into Claremont, talking through some of that—

TONY DELAP: [03:59] Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —that would be—that would be fine. I just—I don't want—

TONY DELAP: Oh, no. No. I do—I don't mind at all—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay. Well, so Paul Darrow was part of—

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —the Claremont contingent but—

TONY DELAP: Yeah, he was.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —maybe we step back a second, just for people who might not know the—back to Dick Stephens and how that whole thing happened. How is it that you wound up going down to Claremont?

TONY DELAP: Yeah. We—I wound up going down to Claremont because old Dick, as we called him, said to me one day—he said, "Millard Sheets has invited me down to talk at summer and give a number of lessons on advertising art." And he said—as he said—he said, "I think I can get you in there, if you want—[laughs]—if you want to go."

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: That sounded great to me. And so, anyway, that worked out. And we went down. And we—Dick did not have a class. No, he didn't have a class. He just gave some lectures. But we took Henry Lee McPhee's painting class. I should say I did. And when I was in that class, I met my old friend—you can tell me—the s—the sculptor.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Jack Zajac.

TONY DELAP: Jack Zajac. And Jack Zajac was younger than I was, who just graduated from high school. He'd won a high school—an award, from a very poor background. He was taking care of his mother. [05:58] They—the two of them were living in a trailer, out in—out beyond Claremont or—I can't remember the exact area. But he was I don't know how much younger but a couple years. And so Jack and I, through the years, became quite good friends. And then Jack was one of the early Los Angeles artists who had made a name for himself by winning a Guggenheim to the Academy in Rome.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh, right. He got the—yeah—the Rome Prize.

TONY DELAP: The Rome Prize.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: So he went to Rome. And then, I'm not sure how much later, I went over. I had never been to Europe. I went over. It must have been about—I think it was '53, 1953. Because Paul and I had just—had just done this very commercial mural and—Tomorrowland.

MATTHEW SIMMS: In Disneyland.

TONY DELAP: At Disneyland. And we—yeah. And I—that was '53—and I think—I could be wrong but I think Disneyland opened to the public in '54. Anyway, we did Disney, our bit at Disneyland. And—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Then going to Europe.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. I'm sorry?

MATTHEW SIMMS: Then going—you were talking about going to Europe.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. And then, for my first time, went to Europe—I went to Europe. [08:01] That was a big adventure for me. And—

MATTHEW SIMMS: What countries did you visit?

TONY DELAP: We stayed in Italy.

MATTHEW SIMMS: When you say we, did you go with Jack or was there some—?

TONY DELAP: With Jack. Yeah. Jack and I toured around for quite a fair time. And—Well, Jack said—he said, "I— [laughs]—think probably I better get back to school—" or not school but, you know, to the—so—and then I went—and then I went from there to Spain. And that was, again, an added adventure for me, because of—I met a—I met a guy—I sat with a guy on the airplane to Spain who was a head of the—who was a head of the police department in Argentina or someplace like that.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Interesting!

TONY DELAP: And it was all really weird. And anyway, we were going to—I forget where in Spain. We couldn't land, because of weather. So they landed in—in France, and, of course—in those years—put it—put us up and—you know, royally and so forth. Anyway, we go—we got to—and then when I'm in Spain, I'm wandering around one evening by myself and I go into this little place where there was music and so on. [10:05] And here is the group of Spaniards—the same guy I flew—I flew with, you know. Comes over, puts his arm around me, and—"Hey," you know, "Have a big time." So we did have a big time. And we went to a nightclub. And they picked out a girl or two for me, for the evening. And, you know, was—big deal—big—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Lot of fun.

TONY DELAP: —big deal for old Ton' from Richmond. [Laughs.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: Well—

TONY DELAP: And then I don't think I—I don't think I saw him again. And it was the damndest thing. When I got on the plane to come home, to New York first, he was on that flight. And you had to land in the Azores, in those days. And he didn't speak English but he got to me and he said, "Tony, we have some drinks in the Azores." [They laugh.] So we were stopped there I don't know how long. We got utterly plowed at the bar. And here I am back with the—supposedly the police chief from Argentina or something.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Right.

TONY DELAP: And then—anyway, and then I went—yeah—on to New York and all. But anyway, it was a—it was—

MATTHEW SIMMS: That's a great story.

TONY DELAP: —it was a great adventure.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And Claremont, thinking about other things that you did, you also had an architecture class, I think, in Claremont, where you visited—

TONY DELAP: [12:03] I did—from—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Was that significant?

TONY DELAP: —yes—I had a class from Whitney Smith. And that I enjoyed very much. And I think I—I think I was beginning to shape out my interests, about the time I was taking that class. Because I found that I was particularly more interested in probably making a model of something architectural than I was in making a painting. And I remember some of the things that I made and worked on. And then Whitney Smith would take the class—it was not very large class—he would take us to one of the sites that had just maybe recently been built in that case study program—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: —or to a site—they were still working on. And he knew really everybody involved in all that. So there was someone around. It was always pleasant. Because he had no problem, you know, getting in and all that. And I felt him to be a very interesting guy. I don't think I—I read, not too long ago, where there was no building that he designed for that case study program, that was ever built.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh. Okay.

TONY DELAP: But—[laughs]—anyway. [14:00] And he had a partner, whose name I can't think of right now, who I never did meet but he was—he was also quite an architectural—what do I want to say—a—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Are you thinking of a critic or a historian?

TONY DELAP: Well, he—I think—I think Whitney Smith's partner was also a very—teacher-like is the wrong word

but—or knowledgeable in the field.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Sure.

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And you had a visit to a Frank Lloyd Wright house.

TONY DELAP: We went to, first, the Pasadena house.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Now is that—I'm trying remember—is that the Hollyhock house or is that the other one?

TONY DELAP: The—no.

MATTHEW SIMMS: The Ennis.

TONY DELAP: The Ennis—

MATTHEW SIMMS: —House.

TONY DELAP: No. Is—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Is yet another one.

TONY DELAP: —it's the—the Pasadena house is the—is that the Ennis House?

MATTHEW SIMMS: It's the one that's—feels very Mayan, the—

TONY DELAP: Well, the Pasadena house has the perforated brick walls—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: —and is—I guess—I guess that's the—that's easy to—easy for us to find out.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah. [Millard House -MS]

TONY DELAP: And—yeah—and, no, it's—[16:02] Mrs.—I'm trying to think of the name—Mrs.—that may help me with the name—was still living. And she knew the teacher. So we got in to see the house. And she tells this, you know, kind of classic story about being there one day and hearing this sawing and coming in and Frank Lloyd Wright is taking a few inches off the bottom of the dining room table, sawing the legs to make them just a little shorter. [Laughs.] Anyway. But that was where I saw the perforated brick and became fascinated with it. And then I'm sure that, a number of years later, when I started working on the—what I called the double-sided glass pieces, those very much were to be remembered.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah. I mean, Wright, when you think of Frank Lloyd Wright as an architect and as somebody who's so interested in the role that architecture and these things could play in, kind of, contemporary society—

TONY DELAP: Yes.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —and the responsibility to make architecture that was in harmony with the site and so on, the idea of organic architecture—I don't know if, in any ways beyond being interested in the design and the formal qualities of things—

TONY DELAP: Yes.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —if there was a broader interest in him and his approach or if that was something that was still—not yet.

TONY DELAP: You mean the impact of the—

MATTHEW SIMMS: [18:00] Yeah, just the idea that somehow architecture had this—that, architecture and design, these things had a kind of contribution to society—

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —which was vast.

TONY DELAP: Well, you know, that's a good question. I think that Frank Lloyd Wright and California—I think—I

think maybe some of that's questionable, you know. And what his legacy left on the plus side was probably more—it probably had more to do with, certainly, aspects of design and so forth. You know, whether it was even proper for where the buildings were is a good question, I think, as compared to, you know, the—that wonderful little house that now they're using as the—as the office, that—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh.

TONY DELAP: —you know, that—in Hollywood.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Mm. Yeah.

TONY DELAP: You know what I mean.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Who—? It's not a Wright building. It's—whose—?

TONY DELAP: No.

MATTHEW SIMMS: It's—

TONY DELAP: It's a—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Not—

TONY DELAP: —it's a—it's the architecture of Germany.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh, not—oh, I know who you—

TONY DELAP: You know.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Not Neutra but—

TONY DELAP: Not—

MATTHEW SIMMS: —the other one—

TONY DELAP: Yeah. There was—Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —Scho—

TONY DELAP: Neutra's enemy.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Schindler?

TONY DELAP: Huh?

MATTHEW SIMMS: Schindler? Is that the one?

TONY DELAP: Schindler.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: The Schindler House, you know.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah. So that's interesting. [20:00] Because that comes more from—

TONY DELAP: Yeah. Well, I think—I think Schindler was the ultimate West Coast, early architect.

MATTHEW SIMMS: He had inherited quite a bit of the Bauhaus kind of design ideas—

TONY DELAP: Yeah. But he—

MATTHEW SIMMS: —Mies van der Rohe.

TONY DELAP: —his work just seems to have fit, I think.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah. That's interesting. Would love to—that's something I'd love to hear more about, in a sense that—because that esthetic is quite different from Wright.

TONY DELAP: It is. It's very much different. I think Wright's contribution was—I don't know—it was kind of the—

kind of—I don't know. Like just pay more attention to a great artist, regardless of—[laughs]—what—of what it's all about, you know. I mean—

MATTHEW SIMMS: So you think his personality was—

TONY DELAP: Yeah, you know. I—it could have been a cathedral or something but—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: You know.

MATTHEW SIMMS: But because it was Frank Lloyd Wright, it—

TONY DELAP: Yeah. I think so, yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay.

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Whereas Schindler, you feel is—

TONY DELAP: Schindler really fit—he fit what—weather and income and—I think income, in a sense.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: You know, you could build a Schindler house for very little money.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: That's a—that is interesting. Coming back to Claremont and Paul Darrow—

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —Paul Darrow and you then actually had a—you got commissions to do more of the murals, as well, I think, for department stores. [22:00] Is that right?

TONY DELAP: Yeah, we did. Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: I wonder if any of those exist anymore.

TONY DELAP: The—that's a good question.

MATTHEW SIMMS: How would you describe those murals? What was the—what did they look like?

TONY DELAP: [Laughs.] They were not very interesting. They were decorative. They—a couple were better than others—which, probably not unusual. But I don't think—I don't think any of them that we did was anything to get excited about, for us, even at the time, other than the fact that we had the job.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Did you design it or was it designed and sent to you, as a—?

TONY DELAP: A few we designed. And a few came out of—I'm trying to think of the design firm, in the New York—a very—a very good one, actually.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Is it Raymond Loewy—or—?

TONY DELAP: No it wasn't. Well, I think—I think some of the early ones came out of Raymond Loewy. And—yeah. Anyway. No, I think that—I think it was mainly transferring, you know, their quite commercial images to the walls.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And you did some for—so the Broadway Stores.

TONY DELAP: We did a number for the Broadway Stores. And then—and then I did—I did a Broadway store in Sacramento, just on my own.

MATTHEW SIMMS: [24:01] Mm. Yeah.

TONY DELAP: And I remember I went up there for a fair bit of time, as one of those very warm—got hot as hell,

Sacramento.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And other ones, you did for General Dynamics, the aircraft?

TONY DELAP: General Dynamics and—I don't think any—I don't think any of the—the murals—I don't think any of them were really very exciting as art. I think that the thing that made them so interesting for us was the opportunity to be able to do them, you know—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: —and get—and get paid at what we thought—and was—we were quite right about a good—a good price. But we did—we did a bar in Oakland, which was probably the most interesting. And Paul did the cartoons for it. And it was—I think we—I went through this before and couldn't remember.

MATTHEW SIMMS: The Burma Lounge.

TONY DELAP: The what?

MATTHEW SIMMS: The Burma Lounge?

TONY DELAP: Yeah, the Burma Lounge.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: And we did that on our—on our own. And it was quite nice. I designed the architectural bit and Paul did the cartoon walls—cartooned walls and so forth. And it was quite—it was quite okay. [26:02] And it was there for, I think, quite a fair time, a number of years.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Well, it's around about this time that you're also going to some of the Aspen design conferences.

TONY DELAP: I did.

MATTHEW SIMMS: So I don't know if you've moved back to the Bay Area, at this point.

TONY DELAP: No.

MATTHEW SIMMS: But maybe starting in '55, '56, kind of through there, you start to go to these design conferences.

TONY DELAP: Well, I don't think I went that early.

MATTHEW SIMMS: No? Okay.

TONY DELAP: I don't know what it says. But—

MATTHEW SIMMS: No, I could double-check on the dates.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. No, I think—I think it was—it could have been as late as maybe '59 or something.

MATTHEW SIMMS: '59 to '60.

TONY DELAP: I remember one day very clearly, which was '61. Because I had a friend who had a Corvette, a new Corvette and we drove that to Aspen. And he was—he was not an artist in any way. But he was—he s—he had some money and background. And he opened a little restaurant in Aspen. And that poster I designed, that's in our house, is—[laughs]—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: —that poster that I have in the house and—do you remember—do you recognize it?

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yes, I do.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. I did that for his—I think for his opening or something of the sort. [27:58] And I think that

was '61.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay. And you said you do—fly-fishing and you drove up in the—

TONY DELAP: Yeah. I met two guys who were art directors for—they were art directors for—I don't know—any—a big company, in Chicago. And they were also fishermen. And I met them. The guys I went up with were not fishermen at all. But these guys were. They were—they were—they were—they were really nice guys. And we did—I—well, that's not true. Bob Henry, a—I think on two—on two of the—on two of the trips to the design conference in Aspen, I went—I went up with Bob. Because he was the owner of Floats, Incorporated.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Mm-hmm. Floats.

TONY DELAP: And he was a—he was a—he was a fisherman and a camper. And he—and I've talked about him and Floats, Incorporated, and—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Not on this. We need to talk about it on this one.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. Okay. And anyway—and Bob is a good guy and a friend. And he was a war veteran, who had been a DC-3 pilot, and had flown the—and flown the Hump, you know. And he was a pretty seasoned guy. But we —[30:00] he came to San Francisco and opened an office. And I often thought that he opened it because he wanted a place for us to be able to go eat and drink and he could get away from his wife and spend more time with his girlfriend—

MATTHEW SIMMS: [Laughs.] Okay.

TONY DELAP: —which I think was about true. But he was a—was a friend. And he had been very good to me and given me a fair bit of work and so forth.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: And he liked to go to Aspen, because we camped. And then we could just fish right from there. And it was—it was—it was always very pleasant. It was always a very pleasant outing or—

MATTHEW SIMMS: How did—how does Bob Henry enter the picture? How—did you become friends with him?

TONY DELAP: That's the guy I'm speaking of.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah. But how did he—how did you originally kind of become—so how'd you meet?

TONY DELAP: Henry was from Pasadena. [31:04]

[END OF delap18_1of2_sd_track04.]

TONY DELAP: And he knew Paul Darrow and some of those people—before I knew him. Because they were all from down here. And Henry, as I say, went into the—he was—he was very much involved with—in airplanes. As I say, he was a—he was a World War II pilot and so survived all that, and came back to his hometown of Pasadena. And he and another guy, whose name I couldn't think of—

MATTHEW SIMMS: It's Roger—

TONY DELAP: Roger—yeah—

MATTHEW SIMMS: —Tourney?

TONY DELAP: —Tourne—Tierney.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Tierney—

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —T-I-E-R—

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —N-E-Y.

TONY DELAP: He and Roger Tierney, who I think had been boyhood friends or something in Pasadena, they started a company called Floats, Incorporated. And Tierney was the very opposite of Bob Henry. He was a very

uptight nondrinker, religious person, that just was so opposite to Henry it's hard to believe that they were—But, you know, friends are friends. But anyway, they started Floats, Incorporated—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: —which became quite a—kind of a terrible name—but became quite a going operation, as they matured. And they had a year-round going bit, because those—many of those floats were started on a year before.

MATTHEW SIMMS: What kind of events were they doing floats for?

TONY DELAP: [02:00] They were doing them for all these corporations and companies and so forth. And a lot of the—a lot of it was last-minute work, with frightful hours and all of that. But there were a number that were also just straight-out design, with accommodation of that kind of thing.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And were they based in Pasadena?

TONY DELAP: They were based in Pasadena. No, they were—the shop was in—the shop was in—begins with an e—right—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Eagle Rock?

TONY DELAP: No. No, not Eagle Rock. Near Eagle Rock. Encino? No.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Encino's down—

TONY DELAP: Yeah. No. Near Pasadena. Oh—

MATTHEW SIMMS: It's okay. [Laughs.]

TONY DELAP: Yeah. Anyway—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Southern California, no—

TONY DELAP: Yeah. Right. And they—so they started there. And then Henry got—he got a good number of clients that were involved with the Paris Air Show.

MATTHEW SIMMS: That's—

TONY DELAP: And the Paris Air Show was a big deal, in those years. And they were traveling exhibitions. So that one that's illustrated in there, I think, is one of the exhibitions I did, one of the, I say folding exhibitions—traveling exhibitions for the—one of the Paris Air Shows.

MATTHEW SIMMS: The image in here is a model of it, I think.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, the—the model of it.

MATTHEW SIMMS: So you did a model. But then you would also scale it up to—

TONY DELAP: Yeah. And he—and then they had a—quite a good shop. And I was a part-time art director. And then there was a regular art director and I don't know how many in the shop and so on and so forth. [04:00] And Henry and Tierney were both salesmen—salespeople.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay.

TONY DELAP: And Henry was a good salesperson, because of his—of his personality and because he had this—he had this true-life adventure background—[laughs]—you know—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: —of having flown the Hump.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Now I guess I—I'd love to ask you to reflect a little bit on that whole question of the role of graphic design in this kind of work, how it fits with our understanding of you as a fine artist—

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —your conception of that maybe at that time, as it was developing, or now, thinking back

about it, how—how does that play out for you? Because obviously, you know, commercial art and fine art often are—

TONY DELAP: Yeah. I think—I've thought about it a lot. And in some ways, I occasionally still do. I think—I think that the commercial arts, architecture, graphic design, and so on and so forth, I think I always felt—and enjoyed the procedures, the—I always enjoyed the, in a sense, perfection that comes in working with that aspect and—by working in the field. [06:16] And that's changed too, because the graphic arts don't have to be as rigid and as whatever as they once were, you know. And a lot of what was in the graphic world certainly crept into the fine-art world. And I think that we see that with Andy Warhol. And I think Andy Warhol's early work, his design work and so on, some's quite good. But I think there's a—my own opinion is there's kind of a—maybe almost a strange discipline that the graphic arts give you, that the—in a certain way, the fine arts don't, at least for the time and the interests and all that I was doing—that I was doing and working. And I—it's—I think that—I think there's what you could sense as a kind of professionalism about the graphic arts, regardless of what the attack is or what they'd look like, that makes them, in a sense, successful or not successful, you know. [08:25] And I think that, because of my background and so on and so forth, I had a good bit of wanting to feel that what I was doing was worthwhile, was maybe successful or not successful or whatever. But when I—when I, in the very early 1960s, started seeing some work, the fine arts and—Well, I mean, even just somebody like Mondrian, who was a clean, you know, straightforward—putting things down. I got more and more interested in the psychology and the—you know—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Who are we talking about?

TONY DELAP: —the—Mondrian.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Mondrian.

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: And just a number of, you know—[09:57] And I found—I began to—I just—I always—you know, it's hard to pin down certain thoughts but I just have always found a certain kind of correctness, hopefully, or something that isn't quite that, about so many things that I see.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Sure.

TONY DELAP: And so when I did a few early things, in the '60s, that were somewhere between my strong thoughts on graphic design and my strong thoughts on the fine arts and all, what I—what I could—I got very excited. Because I just—I just felt so strongly about—I just felt like, you know, this is something that nobody can—you may not want it at all but you can't take it apart, kind of.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: I don't know that makes sense.

MATTHEW SIMMS: When you say can't take it apart, do you mean it—

TONY DELAP: Yeah. You—

MATTHEW SIMMS: —it's—every part of it—?

TONY DELAP: Yeah. And it's all—it all makes—well, *sense* is the wrong word—but it's all just as it should be.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah. It's good design.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. It's good design but it's kind of more—it transcends design, in a sense—

MATTHEW SIMMS: [12:03] Yes.

TONY DELAP: —and, I think, the kind of thing that I was after.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: And so it gets you into a metaphysical kind of state, where something, for you, hopefully, is, kind of, perfect but it has no use, you know.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah. So what—so where is the sense of perception—or perfection—pardon me—where is the

sense of perfection coming from, if it's not in its use, it's not solving a problem?

TONY DELAP: Yeah, that's right.

MATTHEW SIMMS: So the perfection comes simply from its craft?

TONY DELAP: Just from its very essence.

MATTHEW SIMMS: From its essence.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. I mean, it's not—it's no—it's there and it's to be looked at and it's not selling anything, it's not—it's just—[laughs.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: Well, we'll have a chance to come back to these kinds—

TONY DELAP: Yeah. Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —of issues, when we do make that shift into when you begin to exhibit. And we're not quite there, in this [phone rings] area, but I think we're almost there. I think, in a way, we're almost at the point when you move back to the San Francisco Bay area—

TONY DELAP: Yes.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —after the stint—

TONY DELAP: Yes.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —in Southern California. You've been doing the murals.

TONY DELAP: Yes.

MATTHEW SIMMS: [14:00] You've been—you're going to the Aspen conferences. You're doing some work with Floats, Incorporated. You design, I believe, your father's law firm? There's an architectural project in here, as well. So—

TONY DELAP: Yeah. I had a very good friend in San Francisco who had gone to the Yale School of Architecture and studied under Louis Kahn.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Lou Kahn. Oh, yeah, Lou Kahn.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. And he, I—I never thought, was a great architect but he'd had that background. And so I very much enjoyed—I enjoyed his conversation of this and that. And so we decide a few things. And that was educational for me, you know.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And did that building get—was it realized?

TONY DELAP: We did a house in Aspen. I think it was changed a bit. I didn't ever go see it.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay.

TONY DELAP: [Laughs.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: And the other little piece—

TONY DELAP: Oh. Then my father's law office. We did—yeah, that came out to be quite a nice building.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: So you were—you were involved—not just reflecting on these—

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —actually making architecture—

TONY DELAP: Yeah. I was.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —making an exhibition.

TONY DELAP: And he—he detailed the—he detailed the working drawings of that and all. [15:56] But the—this—It's very hard—like it's very hard for me to say why I think—From a—for me, I think that the art—the graphic arts and painting and all just—they just merged, you know.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: They just came together. And I think one reason that happened is because—maybe because, in a sense, nothing really much was happening for me in either one, outside of what—I mean, the—of the work itself, you know. And so I developed strong thoughts about painting and sculpture and so on—and—I mean, painting and the graphic arts. And I—the bit I knew about the graphic arts, I never really felt comfortable around those places, because they were so incredibly commercial. And changes were made—drastic changes were made because something didn't fit or something, you know. [18:00] I hated that, you know.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah. Or cost, something ran over the—

TONY DELAP: Yeah. And painting and all was something that I often just didn't like, simply because it just seemed so stupid. [Laughs.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: Do you mean to say just seemed purposeless, in a way—

TONY DELAP: Well—

MATTHEW SIMMS: —like—[inaudible]—or—?

TONY DELAP: —to—as something to—Yeah, I mean, kind of irresponsible or—it's—but it gets—it gets difficult to—it gets difficult to be convincing, I think, at a certain level.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Mm. Well, can I ask you one last question?

TONY DELAP: Of course.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And then we'll finish for today. And that is—you mentioned getting a book, Moholy-Nagy—

TONY DELAP: Yes.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —*Vision in Motion*, as—I don't—I think, already in high school—

TONY DELAP: Yes.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —you had mentioned that. And there's an artist who, interestingly enough, seemed to move between—

TONY DELAP: He did. Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —in ways that kind of anticipates the way you seem to have been moving in between, some. I don't know if that—if you remember receiving that book or—

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —whether it was significant to you.

TONY DELAP: I think that's very true. [19:52] And I think that what so much impressed me, as you—you know, in mentioning that book, I think what so much impressed me is that he found a reason to be so completely and totally uncompromising, in what—in what he—in what he was doing. And when I went to the Aspen design conferences—and I mentioned this before—I was impressed with the—I was impressed with the lack of hierarchy between certain things. And having known and been very close to my friend Conrad Hall and a number of his friends who were filmmakers, that helped me also, because, you know, of the way they worked and how they—how they felt about what they were doing. And I've always thought that painting was—and trying to think of what I want to say about it—that painting was a—you know, in a—in a classic sense, painting was always a square or a rectangle, where you put something in it. [22:06] And the imagery, the shapes, whatever they were, they still always stayed in that physical format. So, for me, like, in my paintings and all, the content, for me, is the image itself. And so whatever that shape is is the—is the—is the content of what you're looking at.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yes. Yeah. That's a very handy way of kind of putting it, shape as content.

TONY DELAP: So when I—you know, when I put the cut back wood edge to, say, a square that went to the wall and I cut back that edge and it, as a—in a—in a mobile band, went around or across, whatever, the painting, as I

looked at it from wherever, I always saw it slightly different. But I was always seeing the same thing. [24:00]
And that was the content.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Right.

TONY DELAP: And it was not the—it was not the frame, the square or the rectangle being used to put something into. It was the content itself.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Well, we've been talking for some time. I think that might be enough for today.

TONY DELAP: [Laughs.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: And then next time we can kind of start up with when you move back to the San Francisco Bay Area and—

TONY DELAP: Okay. I hope it's not too—I hope it's not too crazy.

MATTHEW SIMMS: No, no. Thank you, very much. So we'll sign off.

TONY DELAP: Thank you for putting up with it. [24:50]

[END OF delap18_1of2_sd_track05.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: This is Matthew Simms, on—

TONY DELAP: I'll give you the name.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —the date again—June 13, 2018, interviewing Tony DeLap, at his home in Corona del Mar. And we're going to start with going over a few details that kind of spill over from last time.

TONY DELAP: Sort of from last time. Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah. Great.

TONY DELAP: I've got a few names here, few that I thought—after we had finished last time, on, well—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Things are falling off. I just want to—

TONY DELAP: Oh.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —let's put that someplace where it's bound not to come off, here—

TONY DELAP: Okay.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —maybe here. There.

TONY DELAP: Okay?

MATTHEW SIMMS: So these are—

TONY DELAP: On—

MATTHEW SIMMS: —a few names that—

TONY DELAP: —names on well-known graphic designers, who I knew of at the time, in the—in the early years, '40s, '50s probably mainly. And there's Paul Rand and Herbert Bayer.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Rand is spelled R-A-N-D? Is that right?

TONY DELAP: R-A-N-D, yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And Bayer, B—?

TONY DELAP: And Saul Bass, who was Los Angeles, primarily, as far as I knew. And Lester Beall—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Lester Beall.

TONY DELAP: —and Milton Glaser.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Milton Glaser. That's the name we were looking for.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. And there were others but—

MATTHEW SIMMS: So these are some of the—

TONY DELAP: —that's the best I've been able to do—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Right.

TONY DELAP: —at this time. And—[01:59] oh, I wrote down some names that are not necessarily pertinent—what we were talking about. But, yeah. The story that I wanted to tell you, because it was always a big deal for me, is that I was working in my funny little studio place in San Francisco, 3410 California Street, where Kathy and I lived until we came down here. In other words, when I met Kathy I was living there.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: And we—were there until I came down here to teach, to UCI. And I was doing—this—the story I'm about to tell is I was still doing pretty much collage and I was going to various dump sites and so on, that were in—in and around San Francisco, sometimes in Oakland. And I'd sort of browse through those—[laughs]—dump sites and maybe take a few pictures, not much—I was not much with the camera but sometimes I did. And I would maybe pick up a scrap or something and—anyway, I had a bit of a lot of found materials, from time to time. And I'd bring those back and work out collages with them, at the studio. And I was, about that time, told about a job at the College of Arts and Crafts at Oakland. [04:08] So I took that—the opportunity to go over to Arts and Crafts and see whoever. I had a Morgan, at that time. I would drive my Morgan. So I went like—I went like crazy over to Oakland, to see about this job. And I talked to the woman who I was, just, told to see. And I was in—it was a funny feeling—I was in one of the studio rooms at Arts and Crafts, in Oakland, and I saw some placards, a pile of placards, just so high, that I'm sure were giveaways from—you know—do you remember Foster & Kleiser?

MATTHEW SIMMS: Vaguely, yes, I do.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. They were—and what I'm thinking of were outdoor billboards. And they'd have billboards out of doors. And there was always a sign in the middle of the big billboard that said, "Foster & Kleiser," you know. And in my day, a lot of those outdoor billboards had a lattice—a crosshatch lattice from the bottom of the billboard—I mean, the image to the ground. Does that make sense?

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yes. Yes.

TONY DELAP: [05:58] And these little placards were not cardboard but a stiff paper and they were apparently giveaways advertising Foster & Kleiser, that I guess one of the teachers had gotten somehow. And there was a pile of them there. And I—so I picked one up and looked at it. I guess—I think I took it. So—anyway, I drove back to San Francisco. And I don't know if it was the same day or the next day but I started thinking about my work and so on and so forth and about what the next image I was going to do was. And this was—You know, I'd been talking with Coplans, thinking more and more about what I did and so forth. And I thought—and it, you know, was really kind of strange to me. And I guess that's why I remember it all so well. I saw that placard, the Foster & Kleiser thing, and I said, God, what if I did a collage or whatever with that on both sides, with glass on both sides but—that sat in space? And I got—I got really kind of funny—about, I—well, I already have one of these; I need some more. So I got in my Morgan and drove like hell back over to the art school in Oakland. [08:01] I thought, I just hope to hell they still have that—and went into the room where these things were and I took a bunch of them, you know, eight or 10, something like that, and got in my car and went back to San Francisco and started thinking and working about—and working on what my idea was. That was one of the very first of the double-sided boxes.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Interesting. So can you describe what was on the card sort of a bit more or—?

TONY DELAP: The card was, as I remember it, about eight by 10 maybe, something like that. And it was a photograph of a billboard, a Foster & Kleiser billboard. I can't remember what the I mean—what the imagery—imagery was. And then below, because it was to have been like a—an outdoor image, it was that crosshatched bit—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: —that was like green or something like that. And anyway, this fascinated me. And I worked like hell and—and I put this double-sided bit together. And aspects of it are still hazy now, in retelling the situation. But it was a—an epiphany?

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: Is that true?

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah, that's the word for it. [Laughs.]

TONY DELAP: Is that the word for it?

MATTHEW SIMMS: Right.

TONY DELAP: And it was kind of spooky, I mean, as I look back on it. And anyway, I did that. And I can't remember what happened to the piece. I don't remember if I showed it in one of the early shows at the San Francisco museum or when I—I have no recollection of the piece itself. [09:57] But I do have a very clear—a very—as I just have said, a very clear image of how, almost in a spooky way, it made me do what I did.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: And then from that time on, I got more involved in the double-sided image. And I did a large painting—for me, a large painting—that had three step-down—I think there's—we've seen images of that, of late—with three—stepped-down sections. The painting went to the wall. And I remember, when I had it off the wall, I looked at it and thought, you know, What if I did the same damn thing on the other side? You know. So I got all involved in that, in other words the two-sided painting, as I called them. And then that was probably—I hope I'm right here—that was probably about 1964, -sixty—no, was earlier, about 1963. Because I went back to Madison, Wisconsin, to teach summer school. And when I was back there, I thought more and more about these double-sided pieces. Anyway, somewhere in there, the mid-'60s, early—I think '62 is too early but maybe '63, I did— [12:07] Well, we had a couple—we had some of the show—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: —from sixty—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Right. I think they're early '60s—

TONY DELAP: Early '60s.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —I think '61, '62.

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: I think that's—

TONY DELAP: Yeah—

MATTHEW SIMMS: —the range we're in here.

TONY DELAP: —early '60s. So, you know, we know what those are. And those—I became—Yeah. So there was the transition there of going from a loose, so-called fine-art—g—more of fine arts going on, into a hard-edge, more commercial appearance but something with no use. I mean—[laughs]—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Right.

TONY DELAP: —in other words, taking that style, in a sense, of something that was commercial and a—and really applying it and presenting it as a painting or a sculpture or something.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Something to be contemplated without thinking of its use, somehow.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, exactly. And that was when, as I think we maybe mentioned last time, the man called me from Oakland for the show. And—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Right. Well—now, you had a show in Oakland in 1960. I don't know if that's too early. But this was the collage and drawing show. This is a little later, that you're talking ab—

TONY DELAP: I don't know if that's too early or if I—in telling this story, I'm telling too late.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Well, I have here 1962 is your first construction, *Mona Lisa*—was 1962.

TONY DELAP: '62?

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: [14:00] Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: That's what I have here in my notes.

TONY DELAP: Well, I was going to say that *Mona Lisa*, I know, was one of the very early pieces. And there was kind of a counterpart to the *Mona Lisa* which went to Pasadena. And when the Pasadena museum was taken over by the big wheel—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Norton Simon. Norton Simon?

TONY DELAP: Norton Simon.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: And then the story goes that he froze everything that they had at that time. And I mentioned this to Melinda Wortz. And she said—"Oh," she said, "I'll get that for you." And I think the—I think my work had been dropped or—anyway, damaged. And I never did get it back.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh, no.

TONY DELAP: But it was about that time that—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: —those two pieces. It would have been those two pieces that came about. And it was the early '60s.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah. And I do have the timeline here I could look at, as we get going—

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —just to nail down specific dates—

TONY DELAP: Yeah. Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —so—just so that we're not kind of guessing—

TONY DELAP: [Laughs.] Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —trying to remember. As I'm looking at this, Tony, could you say—? So I'm sorry to bring you back to this wonderful story you just told, about the card, finding the card and then going back over to get more.

TONY DELAP: Oh, yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: I'm—the only thing I'm having difficulty understanding is how you physically enclosed this in glass, how you—did you float it on—

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —a two-sided glass?

TONY DELAP: What I did was—when I—when I moved from my location at Hyde and Larkin Street, in San Francisco, which, incidentally, it was for no particular reason—But Hyde and Larkin is just kind of up not far from the Art Institute.

MATTHEW SIMMS: [16:00] Okay. So that was—

TONY DELAP: That's where—that's where my studio was. And it was also kind of a bus stop. Because—[laughs]—my front door had kind of a setback, little setback and glass windows. And I—you know, I covered the windows with paper and all that.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: Anyway, I could—that's another story in itself. But—so that's where I was for a while. And then, when—I knew an artist and his wife who lived on Potrero, up—no—they did not move there until they left where they had been. And they—this friend of mine and his wife were living in this space, out on California Street, and they found what they wanted up on Potrero Hill. So they moved. Bob Holden was his name.

MATTHEW SIMMS: H-O-L—?

TONY DELAP: H-O-L-D—

MATTHEW SIMMS: —E—

TONY DELAP: —E-N, I believe.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay.

TONY DELAP: I think it was E-N. And he was an artist. He was an older guy, older than I was at the time, very nice guy, had had a lot of architectural training. And they knew a fair number of artists in San Francisco and all that kind of thing. Anyway, they moved up to Potrero Hill. And Bob called me and said, "I just wanted to tell you that we're going to be leaving this space and it's rentable, if you want to rent it." So I did rent it. [17:56] And it had this funny space, where you went up these kind of rickety stairs to an upstairs, which was probably about the size of a boxcar, inside, maybe a little less. But then, down on the—on the road that went into this space, there was kind of a spacious garage. And then next to that was—which I called the studio. And I had been told that, during the days of the—what you call the—when liquor was outlawed?

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh, Prohibition.

TONY DELAP: Prohibition, it was used to make booze. I—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay.

TONY DELAP: And that same space, there was, in front of that space—was quite a nice little Italian garden. And it was run by this old man—or managed by this old Italian man, whose two sisters—two daughters owned the property. They didn't live there. But anyway, they had this garden for him. I don't know—I guess they took care of him maybe where they—they lived four or five blocks over, in a nice apartment. But they owned this space, is what I'm getting at.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: And they were very nice. So they were very nice to me. They were from—I forget now the exact—the exact part of Europe. Kathy will know. And anyway, I paid very little. [20:00] So—and so I rented that space. And I was there until we came down here. Kathy and I lived there for—I guess we probably lived there for about a year.

MATTHEW SIMMS: It says here you were—you moved in there 1962. Does that make sense?

TONY DELAP: Nineteen sixty—

MATTHEW SIMMS: —two.

TONY DELAP: —sixty-two?

MATTHEW SIMMS: Mm.

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And that before that, from 1959 until 1962, it was Hyde and Larkin and then '57 was Telegraph Hill, so kind of went Telegraph Hill and then over to Hyde and Larkin in '59 and then over to California on '62.

TONY DELAP: '62.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. Then Kathy and I left there in '65—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: —'64, actually, I think.

MATTHEW SIMMS: To—

TONY DELAP: —come down here.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: So it was—give or take, I was there about three years, I think.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: So—and that's then where—it was essentially there, on California Street, that you began to make these constructions.

TONY DELAP: That's true. And—that's exactly right. And I—when I was first starting to work on California Street, in the new place, I wanted to—you know, I wanted to pursue my new, overwhelming desires. So I went to—I went to Montgomery Ward and I bought a bandsaw one time and I bought a drill press and a sander. Was a big deal. And I brought those back. And—[21:58] oh, and a—and a small circular saw. And I brought those back. So then it meant that I could cut wood and so forth and shapes and so forth, and all. And so I got those. And that was what wonderful for me, because it also brought back a lot of my very early years—

MATTHEW SIMMS: How so?

TONY DELAP: —when I was working with tools.

MATTHEW SIMMS: The same...

TONY DELAP: And so I thought, Well, God, here I am, you know, just an old child, in a—[they laugh]—in a way, back to where I—back to where I started. But I—it was kind of true. Because I was working with wood, cutting things and making things and so forth. So I had wood. And then I found just simple chipboard and used that for the step-down pieces. And John McCracken and I had spent some time exploring the—the spray gun and that kind of thing. I had a spray gun. And I had—or found a hardware store very near me, a Japanese hardware store, that sold numerous kinds of that stainless steel molding, which I think was sold maybe for bathrooms, and lighting, you know. So it meant I was back to so many things that I really loved, you know, lumberyards and wood and hardware stores and so on and so forth. [24:03] So one of the first things I made was just a simple square box—square box shape. And I made—well, I think one of the first is probably that red piece that's—that was in the show, that was step-down, with a line at—near the center.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Right.

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Trying to remember the name of that one.

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: See if it's illustrated in here. Right.

TONY DELAP: That was really—Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: *Lompoc*?

TONY DELAP: What's the date on that?

MATTHEW SIMMS: That's 1963. So that could—right. That's about—that's right. *Ping Pong* is 1962.

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: So that might be slightly—just a bit—

TONY DELAP: Yeah. There's a yellow piece that is up there, that—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh, right. *Antigravico*?

TONY DELAP: Yeah. We didn't show it in the show.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh, you didn't show it in the—oh, okay.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. And this—is that illustrated? Yeah, that piece.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay.

TONY DELAP: Is that '62?

MATTHEW SIMMS: That's '62.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. That piece I remember quite clearly. I had—so what do you call the—like a dentist's drill, with the various tools on the end?

MATTHEW SIMMS: Like a—you said like a dentist's—?

TONY DELAP: Like a dentist's drill, when you—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh.

TONY DELAP: What is that tool called?

MATTHEW SIMMS: A drill?

TONY DELAP: Yeah, it could be a drill, or—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh, when you grind? You're talking about one of those—

TONY DELAP: Yeah, they have all those various shapes.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah, yeah. Not an augur.

TONY DELAP: No. It's a patented tool, and they—[25:55] and anyway, I had one of those, or I had a tool of a little heavier duty, but on that '62 piece I took a block of wood and I old-fashionedly carved it.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah, just kind of gradually—

TONY DELAP: I honed it out—[laughs]—on both sides. And it was lovely for me, because I got back to so much of the stuff that I love doing, and then I sheathed it on both sides with brass.

MATTHEW SIMMS: So that you would have a kind of a brass—

TONY DELAP: So the brass is on the front.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh, it's on the front, right.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. And then the yellow was spray-painted. And then on the—and so there were two sides to this that fit together. So when I got to where I wanted to put them together, I would inscribe where that yellow stripe went, and I would tape that off and paint it, that little thing in the center.

MATTHEW SIMMS: This little bit there.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, that—because sometimes that was a black dot or, you know, whatever.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah. This is the—this kind of cutout part right at the center that is—

TONY DELAP: And the cutout part was—by the time I honed that out, I could cut it fairly easy.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah. And is there a bit of Plexiglas in there, so that the—

TONY DELAP: Yeah, and then there's a sheet of thin Plexi that usually went and sandwiched two side—the two sides.

MATTHEW SIMMS: [27:57] And when you were making these decisions about different materials, creating transparency, was there—I mean, was it just exploring to see what was going to happen, or do you have certain intentions here?

TONY DELAP: I pretty much knew what it was going to be.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah. Well, so then why was it necessary to have that sense of visibility through, getting it—

TONY DELAP: I thought, you know, isn't it interesting that you do something like that and you set it in real space, and something walks by, for example? You don't know what—well, maybe you do, but in looking [ph] just that you don't know what it is. All you know is there's a flicker or something, but you do know there's something there, and so you're suddenly aware of another side, and that really fascinated the hell out of me.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Is it because it would then encourage you to walk around to the other side.

TONY DELAP: You can walk around it, and you can find out what the other side was. And then I got into the kind of the word game with those—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Like Mona Lisa, which is—

TONY DELAP: Yeah, Mona Lisa.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —the next page.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, I had a—I had very good friends. My friend Lou Keading and his wife—he was a high school friend who actually became a dentist. But they were by, I remember, one weekend in the early '60s, and we sat out one afternoon, I guess probably drinking some beer and having lunch, thinking of four-letter words. [They laugh.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah. And just making lists of them?

TONY DELAP: Yeah, then, you know, I'd write down—and so I had "lovesick," and I had you know names like "timebomb," or—

MATTHEW SIMMS: [29:59] So not just four-letter words, but two-word expressions that were both four letters each.

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: You know, where both of the words were two—

TONY DELAP: And—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: So, in fact, somebody said—which certainly doesn't concern me one way or the other, but somebody said that I did all that before Ed Ruscha did his word pieces.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah, the paintings with the words.

TONY DELAP: And so I did a number of those, one way or the other, and enjoyed it, and it was a lot of fun.

MATTHEW SIMMS: "Ping-pong" was another.

TONY DELAP: And "ping-pong," and "hardedge," and—

MATTHEW SIMMS: And the—and when—

TONY DELAP: I always thought I should have had, you know, "fuck-fuck"—[they laugh]—or something of the sort.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Well, when you say, "four-letter words," we naturally think of that word.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, yeah. And so the connotations, I thought, were kind of wonderful.

MATTHEW SIMMS: In "ping-pong," obviously you think—

[END OF delap18_1of2_sd_track06.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: —of the little white ball, and then, of course—

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —there's this floating element here, but I don't think that that's—

TONY DELAP: No, no, it's true.

MATTHEW SIMMS: You weren't trying to refer to that, I'm sure.

TONY DELAP: And so anyway, that—but I liked the idea of always—that when you looked into it, there was something about the other side that made reference to what—the side you're looking at. You know, so I say it's a flicker. Somebody walks by it.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: You know—

MATTHEW SIMMS: So with the wordplay that goes in here, I wonder if there's any—when I see those, I always—I think a little bit of the lettering background you had, and the interest in the appearance of words.

TONY DELAP: Well, that was important, because then I had a chance to use the commercial aspect of taking a standard in—I say in use—use what were being used then for graphic design.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: And I went—I'd go to the art store, and I don't know how many different font images they had, but that's obviously one that I liked a lot. And so I would take that, and those were not rub-on, but they were, you know, soak—the soakable letters that you'd slide off.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh, right, you'd get it kind of wet and slide it on.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, exactly, exactly. And I loved all that, I mean, because with all that, I was back to—I was—I was back to where I was a kid again, working with my tools, and I was working with some of my own aspects of design, and I was—I felt—which, I think was true—I was also working at a kind of a new area of, you know, hard-edge painting, and so forth. [02:18] So that was when Coplans was—[laughs]—so insistent that I come to Los Angeles. And I think I told you the story. Kathy always gets cross at me for telling this story, but Irving Blum sent me the check. He sent me a check for round trip to bring one of these typical pieces down to LA.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And what was he planning to do with it?

TONY DELAP: But—

MATTHEW SIMMS: He was planning to show it at Ferus Gallery?

TONY DELAP: Well, he wanted to see it and show it. Coplans was behind a lot of that, because he was really playing pretty hard for me in those days down here. So the check came to me, and I saw it, and, you know, I was pretty naïve about so many things—still am, actually—but I saw it, and I was so pleased, but I didn't phone him. I just wrote a note, and sent the check back to him, and said, you know, "Irving, you know, I'm so flattered that you would like to—" but I said, "I can't do it, because I promised Felix Landau, the gallery down the street, you know, that I would have a show with him." And if I'd been smart, I would have canceled the show and gone with him, but I didn't do that. And—

MATTHEW SIMMS: [04:00] And of course at that time those galleries were in cutthroat competition, and if you were with one you couldn't—

TONY DELAP: Oh, yeah, and that was—and so that was, you know, my own sort of stupid history. But at any rate, a story I heard was that—which I thought—always thought was silly, in a way, but that, you know, Irving got his guys together, and showed them my work, to see whether they would approve of Irving—you know—which, apparently he did do that. And, anyway, so I came down and—

MATTHEW SIMMS: They all said yes, obviously.

TONY DELAP: And so a few of those people did become my good friends. Craig Kauffman and I were very good friends. I saw the most of Craig. And I always thought that Craig—[laughs]—he had his—he had his idiosyncrasies, God knows, but I always thought that Craig was the brighter—one of the brighter of that whole gang.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: And his whole attitude about the thing with more what—anyway, I thought—I somewhat thought, but—Anyway, so—and then Kathy and I went to a beach party that Felix Landau put on, and that was just before I had my show with Felix. And Felix said to me—did I tell you this?

MATTHEW SIMMS: No.

TONY DELAP: And Felix said to me, "Do you know John McLaughlin?" [06:00] And I said, "No." I didn't know who he was. And so he told me about John McLaughlin a bit. He said, "Well," he said, "you've got to meet John," you know. And so McLaughlin was in the hospital for minor—I don't think there's any surgery. He was in the Laguna Beach Hospital for something. Anyway, he said, "Go by and see him," and so forth. And so anyway, I did, and that's how we first met. And then John was out of the hospital, and apparently is fine and all. And then I, you

know, would go down there and see him. Kathy and I sometimes would go down together. And then there was a short time, I believe—I could be wrong—when I think he was still driving, but I may be wrong, because the most I could remember is through the years that we knew him, he was not—

MATTHEW SIMMS: He was—

TONY DELAP: —he was not driving. And I can't remember whether—I can't remember if it was eyesight or for what reasons. So when we would have a party at the house or some kind of a goings-on, one of us would usually go down and get him—

MATTHEW SIMMS: And bring him up.

TONY DELAP: —and bring him up, because he loved to be with the artists, you know. And does Irwin talk a bit about John McLaughlin?

MATTHEW SIMMS: [07:54] He said that—so Robert Irwin said that John McLaughlin once told him that he had to marry a schoolteacher; that if he wanted to be, you know, comfortable as an artist, you had to have a schoolteacher as a wife, because then she would dutifully bring home the paycheck at the end of—[they laugh.] Which sounded a little kind of, you know, weird, but—

TONY DELAP: Well, yeah. Well, maybe—

MATTHEW SIMMS: —that was the one anecdote.

TONY DELAP: It might be—that might've been, also, the Army background, and—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: —so forth, you know, where, you know, you're nice, and do this, but things—well, anyway, I always felt that John did pretty much just exactly as he felt he should. But he—[laughs]—we'd go to this restaurant somewhere between Laguna Beach and the next town. What's the next town down?

MATTHEW SIMMS: Dana Point?

TONY DELAP: Dana Point.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: Where he lived. And when he and I had lunch, and we'd go down, and he liked to go down—I can't remember if it was Thursday or Friday, but there was one of those afternoons when there was a fashion show in the restaurant, and the young ladies would—[laughs]—present their—and they'd walk by our table, you know. And John's wife, Florence, didn't even want to—didn't want him having—didn't want him having alcohol, and she didn't want him smoking. So when John and I went to lunch, to where he liked to go, because he's very good looking, ladies would come by. [They laugh.] [09:57] He would have a cigarette, and he'd have a drink. He had a—and my—anyway, it was always quite amusing. And—but anyway, and then we'd talk about art, and so on and so forth. I enjoyed it a lot. I don't know if I—did I tell you the story about the time I was there—I probably did—with John and a number of the other artists?

MATTHEW SIMMS: No, you didn't tell me that story.

TONY DELAP: And there was Craig Kauffman and Nick Wilder and John McLaughlin and me. I think that was the number. And we went to this—I can't remember the restaurant. We went to Laguna Beach, and we were in a table—[laughs]—and—it was very crowded. It was incredibly crowded. And we waited—we went to our table, but we sat and waited and waited, and it went—finally a waiter walked by. I think it was Nick Wilder put up—he said, "Sir," and the waiter walked over. Nick said, "Look." He said, "I want to tell you something." He said, "At this table," he said, "you've got two alcoholics—[they laugh]—and two heavy drinkers, and if you don't bring us a drink within the next five minutes we're going to tear this goddamn place apart." [They laugh.] It was wonderful. Anyway, "Oh, yeah, yes, sir," right?

MATTHEW SIMMS: Right, right.

TONY DELAP: Anyway.

MATTHEW SIMMS: That's hilarious.

TONY DELAP: But that's about what—there was truth to that.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Can I bring you to a few more San Francisco-related things?

TONY DELAP: [12:00] Yes, sure.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Because we started out talking—and I'm really enjoying hearing these stories about McLaughlin, and I want to hear more. It would make sense, I think, since we did touch on something like collage, I'd love to hear a little bit more about the kind of things that interested you with collage, where you went to find the things, and when you started to exhibit them, any things that you remember about that. I realize it's a long time ago, so—

TONY DELAP: Yeah, it was a long time ago. Well, when I was on—when I was on Hyde Street, Hyde and Larkin—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Like '59 to '62.

TONY DELAP: —yeah—I was—you know, I was a bachelor, and I had, you know, some good friends in San Francisco. And I knew a few guys. I knew a few girls. [13:00] And it was, you know—the guys were, like, downtown businessmen. No artists. [Laughs.] And, you know, the girls worked at various jobs in the city. And, you know, they were nice friends and all, but I still—you know, I don't know. It was just nothing much to do with the art world, in that sense. And so I was—but I was painting away, and doing my best to—and that was when I did the mural—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yes.

TONY DELAP: —that won the prize.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Right, in San Francisco.

TONY DELAP: In San Francisco. And I think I was also appointed on the board of the San Francisco Art—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yes, that's right, yeah. I've got some of those details in here.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. [13:59] And there was a guy named Jerry Ets-Hokin, who was the son of Ets-Hokin, did—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Son of whom?

TONY DELAP: I'm sorry?

MATTHEW SIMMS: Who was he the son—

TONY DELAP: Ets-Hokin.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh, okay.

TONY DELAP: Jerry Ets-Hokin.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay.

TONY DELAP: And—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah, you were appointed to the San Francisco Arts Commission—

TONY DELAP: Arts Commission.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —in 1962.

TONY DELAP: And I think Jerry Ets-Hokin got that commission for me, because his father—I mean, it's—[inaudible]—story, but Jerry Ets-Hokin's father had known and was a friend of—here I go [ph]—the early scientist of real note. Who was the scientist that invented the electric light, and—?

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh, we're talking about Edison.

TONY DELAP: I think it was Edison, yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: I mean, the light—[laughs.] That's—he's the one. He's the famous inventor.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. And anyway, and Jerry Ets-Hokin was at Menlo—

MATTHEW SIMMS: How do you spell Ed—how do you spell—

TONY DELAP: —he was at Menlo Junior College.

MATTHEW SIMMS: How do you spell the last name? Because I'm sure that when we're—

TONY DELAP: Ets-Hokin—Kathy will do that.

MATTHEW SIMMS: [Laughs.] Okay.

TONY DELAP: H-O-K-A-N is the last, I believe.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay.

TONY DELAP: That's—anyway, he was at Menlo when I was, and kind of a crazy man. I think he was very brilliant, but that kind of personality that you really wondered whether the guy was really screwy, or maybe something of a genius type. [15:59] He was a big person, I guess, in his way in San Francisco, and he'd come by once in a while and get me to go to lunch, and so we'd go to lunch, and—anyway, whatever, but he got that appointment for me on the San Francisco Art Commission.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Mm. What did that involve? Do you remember what you did?

TONY DELAP: Yeah, they had meetings—we had meetings in the—we had our meetings in the City Hall San Francisco City Hall, and I remember we'd often walk by where the mayor was, kind of a well-known mayor at the time in San Francisco, but he was often there, and we'd always wave at each other—[laughs]—when we'd go up to our meeting, you know. And there was—there were some prominent people on the Arts Commission. I'm trying to think who they were. I think Kathy can give you that information. I think she has it.

MATTHEW SIMMS: So were you in charge of public art?

TONY DELAP: It was public art, yeah, and so forth. And I didn't have an awful lot to do with it. I don't know how long I was on that commission, but it was a novelty for me.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And for collage, you've mentioned in the past that you were inspired by Marca-Relli, Esteban Vicente.

TONY DELAP: Vicente.

MATTHEW SIMMS: I don't know if those—it's—the reason why I ask is that so much of your work before you were doing collage, and then after collage, is very crisp, clean, and—

TONY DELAP: That's right.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —whereas the collage, it seems like you were exploring a very different side of—

TONY DELAP: [18:02] I was. I was an abstract expressionist.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah. So that's the way you look upon those, as—

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —kind of abstract expressionist.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, and I—I think probably I mentioned, maybe several times, that I would go to a number of dump yards in San Francisco. There was one around Third and Townsend at that time, which I liked. And I would just—you know, I'd take a little satchel with me, and I'd walk through there, and when I found a shape of something or whatever it was, I threw it in my bag, you know, and—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Were you looking for anything in particular?

TONY DELAP: Not in particular. I was just looking for imagery.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Imagery.

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Texture, also, possibly, or—?

TONY DELAP: Texture, yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay.

TONY DELAP: And—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Recognizable objects that might—

TONY DELAP: Maybe. Sometimes it was; sometimes it wasn't. You know, and I'd bring that back, and I'd sort that stuff out, and put it in with the collage. But I also had the other—I also had the other side, where I was interested in the clean design, and the commercial goings-on. So I was separating my interests. And when I put it together in any—when I put together, finally, I put it together probably first with the two-sided boxes. [20:11] And, you know, I'm often referred to and referenced to the sided boxes—they will mention Joseph Cornell, but I never saw a Joseph Cornell until I had come to Southern California. And Irving Blum had—Irving Blum and Jim Newman, my dealer in San Francisco, had been in business at one time, and—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah, I think Newman was part of the early Ferus Gallery—

TONY DELAP: That's right.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —when Walter Hopps was—[inaudible]—

TONY DELAP: That's right, and that was before I ever got involved with him. But when I first was around—when I first was around Ferus and Irving Blum, they had some—

[Side conversation.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: It's back on now.

TONY DELAP: So, yeah, and—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay, we're back on.

TONY DELAP: Where were we?

MATTHEW SIMMS: We were—[laughs]—we were—well, you know what? You had said something about Jim Newman and—

TONY DELAP: Oh, yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —it was when you first saw the Joseph Cornell—[inaudible]—

TONY DELAP: Yeah, and so the first time I have any recollection of having seen a Joseph Cornell was—I think there were two pieces at Ferus in Los Angeles, and they were two double-sided, quite beautiful, boxes of his. [22:09] And—no, they weren't two-sided, because he didn't do two-sided boxes.

MATTHEW SIMMS: No, no, he didn't.

TONY DELAP: And—but, you know, artists are irritated by sort of everything, but I do sometimes get irritated when they mention Joseph Cornell so much with my work, because he never did—

MATTHEW SIMMS: No.

TONY DELAP: —double-sided pieces—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Right.

TONY DELAP: —and he never did see-through pieces.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And it's also about recognizable imagery, whereas yours—

TONY DELAP: Exactly. Exactly. I mean, I love Joseph Cornell, but it was—you know, it was only that they were freestanding, I think, that—yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Art historians tend to like to find the—

TONY DELAP: Well, it seems that way, yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —most obvious thing, and then—

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah. Well, I'm going to keep bringing you back to San Francisco, if you don't mind.

TONY DELAP: I don't care at all. Anything.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And I don't know if there's anything else that you wanted to say about the collages, in terms of how they began to function for you as some kind of outlet for—

TONY DELAP: Yeah, well, it's certainly a good question, and I—you know, I'm not even—in a sense, I think sometimes—or maybe not sure myself, but I was doing these—[laughs]—found junkyard collages, as I'm speaking of, and so forth. They're small-scale, most of them, and a lot of what I liked in that goings-on was pretty much what I saw in the art magazines—[laughs]—because they were New York artists, and I didn't have that much to see in where I was. [24:12] And then, when Coplans came to San Francisco—

MATTHEW SIMMS: What year do you think he—

TONY DELAP: I'm sorry?

MATTHEW SIMMS: I wonder what year that was when he first came.

TONY DELAP: That was probably about—if I had to guess, I would say probably about '62.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah, that sounds about right.

TONY DELAP: Does that sound right?

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: And—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yes, because together you do the Pop Art USA show in '63.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, I know. That was a fair time later.

MATTHEW SIMMS: At the Oakland Art Museum.

TONY DELAP: At the Oakland Art Museum. But—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Then maybe he came as early as '61.

TONY DELAP: He may have. It's easy enough to find out, but I think it is of importance. And he came with his wife, who I think I've mentioned was an architect, and a person I found very pleasant and all. They did—they were not together any longer when they got to San Francisco. I—

MATTHEW SIMMS: He didn't come with her?

TONY DELAP: What?

MATTHEW SIMMS: They didn't come together?

TONY DELAP: They—I think they did.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. And—I told you that story about John and his early work.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Well, tell me—tell me again.

TONY DELAP: The story—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Because I don't think we have it on record.

TONY DELAP: That story that Larry Bell told me.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Well, it's worth telling again.

TONY DELAP: Well, and—you know, you should—if you get an opportunity, you should ask Larry Bell about this.

MATTHEW SIMMS: [26:01] Yeah, I will.

TONY DELAP: Because I heard this story that when Larry Bell and John Coplans were driving around LA one day, very early years—and Larry was very young—and it came lunchtime, and I'm not going to belabor all this, but they went to lunch at Musso & Frank's, the well-known restaurant, still going, in Los Angeles. And John had his newspaper, and the waiter—or the waiter said—kept asking John these questions, and John said, "God damn it, all I want to do is read my newspaper. Bring me this." And so forth. So anyway, they had lunch, and Larry has a lot more to say about this afternoon, but right at the end the waiter—they're ready to pay the bill, and the waiter says to John, he said, "I know who you are." And John said, "Oh, you do?" And he said, "Yeah." He said, "You captured me." And John was a regimental commander at that time in the British Army. And he said, "You were a mean sonofabitch." And he said, "When your food came out on the table in the kitchen," he said, "I spit on it."

MATTHEW SIMMS: [Laughs.]

TONY DELAP: Now, that's—according to Larry Bell, that's an absolute true story, as he witnessed, you know.

MATTHEW SIMMS: I wonder where this young man was from, because a British regimental sergeant, you said?

TONY DELAP: Regimental commander.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Commander? Wouldn't have been capturing Americans, so who—I wonder how that—

TONY DELAP: [28:00] Well, he wasn't an American, though. He was a British soldier.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: John was.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Right. But I wonder who this person was, that he would have been in a position to be captured by John Coplans, you know. He—British weren't capturing American soldiers, so—

TONY DELAP: I don't know.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —[laughs]—it's very strange, but I'll ask Larry when—

TONY DELAP: Check it out, yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: I'll need to interview him, as well, so I'll get a chance.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, because I always thought Larry to be kind of a straight shooter, you know?

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh, yeah, yeah, definitely.

TONY DELAP: And I would like to—[laughs.] I'd like to know more about this time. But anyway, John, you know, he was a very—I thought he was very good at what he saw, and—

MATTHEW SIMMS: How did you first—how did you first meet?

TONY DELAP: We first met because we were both teaching in Arts and Crafts in Oakland. And I think it was what's-his-name, up—from uptown.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Not Mills?

TONY DELAP: Who's the LA artist who does the stair—did the stairs? Joe Goode.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Joe Goode.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, Joe Goode. And Joe Goode was at the Oakland School as a guest. John was teaching there. I was there one day. I had not met Joe Goode until I was introduced to him, and so on and so forth. And anyway, then John was working for *Artforum*.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Right, which was brand new at that point.

TONY DELAP: Which was brand new. [30:00] And the fellow that ran—you probably know all this—the fellow that ran *Artforum* was actually an advertising man.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Phil Leider.

TONY DELAP: I'm sorry?

MATTHEW SIMMS: Phil Leider, or Cal [ph]—

TONY DELAP: No, it was not Phil Leider at all. Phil Leider was working—Phil Leider had a gallery then in San Francisco, and Phil Leider was doing some writing, as managing whatever for the—for *Artforum*, but this fellow who owned *Artforum* was an advertising man.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay.

TONY DELAP: And then he sold *Artforum*, and it—I don't know the—I don't know that San Francisco history very well, but it stayed in San Francisco until, I don't know, for a year or so, anyway, and—

[END OF delap18_1of2_sd_track07.]

TONY DELAP: —had moved to Los Angeles, uh, which made sense. And Coplans, of course, continued to write for *Artforum*.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And Coplans wrote twice about your work. He reviewed a group show—

TONY DELAP: He wrote about it a number of times, and sometimes for other things.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay. But the first time was a group show. It was Roy De Forest—

TONY DELAP: That may be. I can't remember.

MATTHEW SIMMS: I think so, and you said that you were a little peeved about the way he ended his article, I think. Didn't—did you not say that?

TONY DELAP: I can't remember. [Laughs.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: You had a group show in 1962 at the San Francisco Museum of Art, and it was with Roy De Forest, Fred Martin, and Nell Sinton.

TONY DELAP: Yes.

MATTHEW SIMMS: So, and I thought that Coplans had written a short review of that.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, he may have—he—I think what probably he wrote, that I didn't like but was maybe true, was that, "Well, these collage pieces and all DeLap makes are, you know, handsome enough, and so on and so forth, but we find that such-and-such artists have done it before," you know, that kind of thing, and that pissed the shit out of me. [Laughs.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: So what'd you tell him the next time you saw him?

TONY DELAP: Well, I—it didn't really quite work that way, because when I then saw John, he had seen some things of mine that were different, and I remember—you know, and then I have the story about when he came by with the British critic.

MATTHEW SIMMS: So I want to hear that story. Was that—

TONY DELAP: [02:00] Well, I don't know who it was, and the three of us were in my little place on California Street, talking, and I had the first version of, uh, the painting in the house that—on Gherkin.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Gherkin, mm.

TONY DELAP: I had the first version of *Gherkin*, which was about, oh, that big square.

MATTHEW SIMMS: About two feet square.

TONY DELAP: And this friend of John's—I can't remember who he was—said—he said, "I really like this"—I said—as I say, early '60s—he said, "I really like that painting." I said, "Oh, thank you." And John—then John said something like, "Well, have you showed that?" I said, "No, I—" then I, you know, laughed, and said, "I haven't had the nerve to show it." So we talked about that painting for a while. And anyway, they left and I thought, well, maybe the painting's more interesting than I think it is. So it—then it was shown.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And that was sort of a hard-edge kind of painting.

TONY DELAP: It was exactly like the big one.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: And then I did a second one that was about 40 by 40 for this show up at Orange County—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah. Yeah.

TONY DELAP: —Art Museum. And that was sold, too, and I don't think Kathy's been able to find out who bought it.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And that—the original painting, the original *Gherkin*, was simultaneously with the collages, so you were able to move between this very first—

TONY DELAP: I was, and I was doing—I had done other hard-edge paintings out of *Gherkin*, and showed them a couple places, or tried to show them, and I didn't have—[04:03] I couldn't—they didn't work—it didn't work, you know. And then when—and then was when the tools were coming back into my life, and cutting wood and sawing wood, and various tools, you know, that it would take to do, like, those early pieces. And then Coplans was extremely taken.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Now, these are the box-like constructions—

TONY DELAP: Yeah, yeah—

MATTHEW SIMMS: —double-sided—

TONY DELAP: My—yeah, the double-sided pieces and all. And I was getting some attention from others. I told you the story about the guy that called, asked me—from a show that was being put—a sculpture show that was being put together at Oakland, and wanted one of the double-sided pieces. And I said, "Well, gee." I said, "I'm really honored that you want one of my pieces, but," I said, "I don't think I'm a sculptor."

MATTHEW SIMMS: Right. [Laughs.]

TONY DELAP: And he said, "I don't give a damn what you call yourself,"—[laughs]—you know. So anyway, I gave the guy—this guy—I kind of ran around—every time I'd see somebody, I'd say, "Hey, you know, I'm a sculptor as well as a painter." [They laugh.] But so it was—it opened up kind of a new world for me, and so on. And then I started doing a lot of things where I didn't have—I didn't have a commercial—[06:00] I didn't have any interest for commercial life, with commercial work. I was more interested in putting together work that, in a sense, came out of what, to me, were both worlds.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Mm. And that, um, that was the work that you then showed at Dilexi, those—

TONY DELAP: That's right, the first show at Dilexi.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: Uh—

MATTHEW SIMMS: And any interesting stories to tell about that, or—?

TONY DELAP: Well, the black piece that was in the show that was freestanding in the main room

MATTHEW SIMMS: *Magpie*.

TONY DELAP: —that San Fran—yeah, that San Francisco owns, that piece was what the—I think it was—yeah, from the—when the show—from a show with Jim Newman was over, that piece went to New York for a show—I think had been in a show in the San Francisco Museum, and it went to New York for a show—to be in a show at a gallery in New York.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Pace Gallery?

TONY DELAP: No, uh—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh, no, for Elkon.

TONY DELAP: For Bob Elkon's. And there was a—there was a, uh, San Francisco museum guy, whose name escapes me. [07:59] I can't think of his name. He was—which I think sometimes often happens places—he was one of those guys who was more the friend of the artist than he was the museum, although he'd been a long time at the museum. But anyway, he made a good bit, I think, and—I'm not sure exactly how this came about, but the painting did go from San Francisco back to East Coast, and then back to San Francisco, but he, I think, helped in attention being paid to it. God, I can't remember his name.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Well, I know you're friends with Fred Martin, but he's not—

TONY DELAP: Yes, yes, Fred Martin.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Is that the one you're thinking of?

TONY DELAP: No.

MATTHEW SIMMS: No, but Fred Martin was somebody who was—

TONY DELAP: Fred Martin was with the San Francisco Art Institute.

MATTHEW SIMMS: That's right, so different—and he was an artist.

TONY DELAP: And I understand Fred Martin's still living.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yes, he is.

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: And he—Fred Martin was—[laughs]—really, really an interesting guy. He was certainly his own—his own man, as they say. He was forever at the San Francisco Art Institute, and if Fred had a weakness, it was, in my opinion, it was that he hated—at that time, he hated the image that had been created of New York artists. [10:08] [Laughs.] You know, really hated 'em, and so forth. And a real—in my opinion, again—a real intellectual, who had been very close—he was quite young, but who had been—he'd been very close to—who was Richard Diebenkorn's teacher?

MATTHEW SIMMS: Uh, Victor Arnautoff?

TONY DELAP: I'm sorry?

MATTHEW SIMMS: Arnautoff?

TONY DELAP: Artisan?

MATTHEW SIMMS: Arnautoff was one of his teachers at Stanford.

TONY DELAP: No, uh—

MATTHEW SIMMS: There was another one, though, you're right. I'm blanking on the name, too.

TONY DELAP: Who died, died of cancer in the '60s. Uh, and a painter, great painter. Uh—

MATTHEW SIMMS: [Inaudible.]

TONY DELAP: Anyway, Fred had been a friend of his, and, uh, I remember when Fred went to the hospital, where he was, and he died when he was—he never got out of the hospital. Uh, but it's, it's important that we—[inaudible]—his name. Uh—

MATTHEW SIMMS: We can do that afterwards.

TONY DELAP: He was the—an early—an early painter, and when you see his paintings, you see, in my opinion, you see more of where Diebenkorn came from than any other painter that I know.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Hmm. We'll dig it up. We'll find the name, and we can insert it.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. [11:59] And, uh, I think Diebenkorn's Berkeley—what they called the Berkeley paintings, I think, in my opinion, those were his best paintings. And, uh, when he came down south and, you know, worked a while at La Cienega and all, they're—They're prettier paintings, but I think that, you know, the early Berkeley

paintings were really great paintings.

MATTHEW SIMMS: They are great ones. Uh, in San Francisco, you had John McCracken as—

TONY DELAP: Yes.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —but—at first a teaching assistant, and then a studio—

TONY DELAP: Yes.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —assistant. Uh, he—was he just a student of yours? How did that come about?

TONY DELAP: Yeah. When I started teaching at Arts and Crafts, I took Diebenkorn's class.

MATTHEW SIMMS: So he had taught it before you, and then you—

TONY DELAP: Diebenkorn was teaching there, and he gave all that up at that school. And then when I went and taught, to teach my class, I took what was called the class Diebenkorn had had—Diebenkorn had had, and shortly after I started teaching that class, uh, John surfaced, because he started making paintings out of my two-sided paintings. [Laughs.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: How so?

TONY DELAP: [13:59] Well, I was doing some double-sided paintings, but he would take one side of one of my paintings—not exactly, but very much—so anyway, and I thought—naturally, I guess—I thought they were very good, so we became very good friends. And so he became my TA. And then, he was married at the time, and they lived in Berkeley, and I was in San Francisco. And I don't know how many days a week John was there at the school, but probably a couple, and that's when I was as a teacher, so there were several days a week when—that he had when he could be my assistant. So he came over and did a lot of things for me. I mean, he was a very good craftsman. And he was just beginning, because it was being used—he was becoming interested in fiberglass. And I had a little—a piece that was owned by the guy who was a collector in the wine country, Napa, who is—I can't think of his name, but anyway. The collector up there at that time was one of the early art collectors, and he had this piece of mine, and it had become damaged. [16:06] And so I mentioned—and I was going to New York, I think, for about—my first show with Elkon. So I asked John if he got a chance to maybe refurbish that piece. So when I got back, he—the piece looked wonderful, and I said, "John, the piece looks great." He said, "Well," he said, "I hope you don't mind." He said, "I fiberglassed it." [They laugh.] And then when we came down here, uh, and he was doing his work, and I was doing what I was doing, when I came to my pieces to be fiberglass, I always asked him to do it because he didn't—he had no problem with the material, and he rather liked it, but I didn't care for it. And then he developed some of his early pieces here using fiberglass.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Hm, yeah. It's a—you know, I was not aware of that—

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —when you mentioned it. Makes complete sense that—

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —that he might gravitate to your aesthetic somehow.

TONY DELAP: Oh, yeah, and he, you know—I liked John very much. [17:50] He was a very good friend, and we had a lot of good times together, and he was here when the school was very young, so it only made sense that we could find, you know, something for him to do at the school.

MATTHEW SIMMS: You can tell I'm sort of following up all the threads about San Francisco. There's one last very important one, and that is when you got married, 1964.

TONY DELAP: No, 1965.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Nineteen sixty-five, okay. Okay. Well, you—how long had—how long had you been friendly before getting married?

TONY DELAP: Oh, that's a good question. Kathy will probably tell you a different story. [They laugh.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay.

TONY DELAP: Uh—well, see, we were married in '65, I believe, and—No, maybe you're right, '64.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Well, I just said—

TONY DELAP: I don't know, a year, year and a half, something like that. And Kathy—Kathy and I met. I had a number of friends who called one day and said, you know—I said, "Come on over. We'll have dinner or something." And they said, "Well, we have this friend with us from Canada." And I said, "Well, that's fine." You know, so anyway, that was Kathy. So they came over, and I had this German Shepherd dog that I was taking care of for this artist who—I can find out his name but I can't think of it now—who was teaching at UC Berkeley, and he and his wife were going to Italy for summer. [20:03] And I just happened to be over one day—as friends—and I said, "What are you going to do with your dog?" And they said, "Well, we're not quite sure." And so, kind of laughingly, he said, "Do you want to—would you like a dog?" I said, "Yeah." I said, "I really would." So I took their dog. And I think their dog was fairly old, but it was, you know, a good companion, and I always loved German Shepherds anyway, so—so anyway, I was there, and then when Kathy came over with her friends, we all had dinner there at my place, and they left, and Kathy stayed. And Kathy and I and the dog took a walk, and that's how we met. [Laughs.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: That's nice. That's a great story. And I think, then, right after that is more or less—well, it was around this time when you began to do some teaching at UC Davis, also.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, and then in—and then for the schoolyear '64—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Mm-hmm, you were—

TONY DELAP: —I went to Davis.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And I think you told me you had a new Porsche at that time, or maybe you still had the Morgan.

TONY DELAP: I had the Morgan.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay. Okay. [Inaudible.]

TONY DELAP: And somewhere doing—before I think I ended that, I got the Porsche, yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay. And then you would drive out to Davis, teach—

TONY DELAP: Teach.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —and then—

TONY DELAP: Two days a week.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah. And—

TONY DELAP: And, you know, it was pretty much an open run in those years from San Francisco to Davis, after a certain hour, but it was still—it was still 90 miles.

MATTHEW SIMMS: [22:01] What kind of teaching? What kind of class? Was it a standard painting—

TONY DELAP: I had a painting class, which was called a painting class, and so that was the—that was the class that what's-his-name had signed up to.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Bruce—

TONY DELAP: Bruce Nauman.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Nauman.

TONY DELAP: And I, you know—as you so well know, art history sometimes is not as truthful as it should be, and they always list—when that thing about me up there comes up, they always list Bruce Nauman. And it annoys me a kind of bit, because I didn't spend that much time with Bruce Nauman. I mean, he was an early acquaintance, and he was at the school anyway, and he took a class with me when I was doing—not so much teaching, but a part of it was really not his interest, to speak of. And so, you know, it isn't really quite the way, you know, it's written about.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Well, he developed in a very interesting direction.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, yeah, but—but nice guy, and—

MATTHEW SIMMS: You can't take responsibility for what—you know, art historians like to say that, oh, you were his teacher; therefore you must be—have influenced what he became. And that's what you're saying is— [inaudible]—

TONY DELAP: Well, I think I did—[laughs]—I influenced him, you know, even in a—maybe a negative way. I think I told you about the time I went up there and he'd taken one of my so-called hard-edged pieces, or made sort of like a hard-edged piece in clear plastic, and put it in the oven.

MATTHEW SIMMS: [24:04] [Laughs.] You didn't tell me that story.

TONY DELAP: And it kind of all melted, you know, into a very surrealistic kind of way. And I said, "Bruce," I said, "I think you need a new direction," or something like that. [They laugh.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: So he had made a Plexiglas—

TONY DELAP: Yeah, he made some kind of a Plexiglas bit, but it kind of all melted, you know.

MATTHEW SIMMS: [Laughs.] That's an interesting—

TONY DELAP: And then he had—and then he had these hanging—I don't know what he called them—these hanging pieces, eight feet tall, something like that, that were about so wide, kind of roughly made and all, and they were covered in fiberglass and painted. And I traded him a print for one of those, and that was the piece that I told you that Nick Wilder came up with some—did I tell you that?

MATTHEW SIMMS: No, no.

TONY DELAP: [Laughs.] Well, I had this—actually, Kathy gets provoked because I sold it, but—a long time ago, but it was a piece about eight feet long, just went to the wall, about this deep, kind of a squiggly—

MATTHEW SIMMS: It was a cast of some type.

TONY DELAP: —hanging piece.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Was it a cast of some kind? A cast of something?

TONY DELAP: With a nail.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah, well...

TONY DELAP: And the piece I had was yellow. And Nick Wilder came by one day, and I'm working in my studio, and Nick says something about he's going to the bathroom or something, and that's—it was a separate place from the studio. [26:04] So he went up, stayed there a while, came back down, and he said, "What the fuck is that thing on the wall?" [They laugh.] He said, "That's the most outrageous thing I've ever seen." I said, "Well," I say—he was—he's a student up at Davis, and I said, "I thought it was kind of interesting." And Nick said, "Jeez." You know, and went on and on about it. And that, uh—And that's quite true. And then about two weeks later he came back again, and we're talking in the studio, and he said, "Can I go see that thing again that you had on your wall?" And I said, "Yeah." He said, "You know," he said, "I haven't quite gotten that thing out of my head," you know.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah, yeah.

TONY DELAP: So he went back up and saw this piece, and he said it—he said, "Can I meet that guy?" I said, "Yeah." I said, "I go up to Davis two days a week." So, uh, he said, "Well, that would work for me." So he went up with me—I don't know, I went up on Tuesday and Thursday, I think. And so anyway, he went up to Davis with me, and met Bruce, and spent some time with him, and so forth, and that was how they—that was how they became acquainted.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Wow. So there's—that's fascinating. And so Nick Wilder was up in San Francisco.

TONY DELAP: Nick was—when I first knew him, he was in San Francisco.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay, because I tend to know him from LA.

TONY DELAP: Because when I very first knew him, he—at least I think the very first time I knew him—he came by, and he was working for Doctor—[28:06] I'm trying to think of his name. Anyway, he was the, uh—I can't remember the doctor's title. He was at the Stanford Lane Hospital, and he was a head of something there. And he and his wife had an art gallery at Palo Alto. You know, right next to Stanford is Palo Alto.

MATTHEW SIMMS: California Avenue, maybe, or—?

TONY DELAP: I'm sorry?

MATTHEW SIMMS: California Avenue, I think, or University—

TONY DELAP: No, University—no, he was at the University at Stanford.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: But, uh—

MATTHEW SIMMS: There's a downtown Palo Alto, and I think University Avenue, as well.

TONY DELAP: Well, no, this is a separate city.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh.

TONY DELAP: There's a little—still—it's still there, but there's a little town, at least in these days in particular. There's a separate town—not separate, but there's a town separate from the university, but right next to it.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: Right off the main drag.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: Palo—it's called—it's—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Palo Alto.

TONY DELAP: Well, that's—the town is Palo Alto, yeah, okay.

MATTHEW SIMMS: I grew up right near there.

TONY DELAP: Oh, okay, well, you know that so well.

MATTHEW SIMMS: I can visualize—

TONY DELAP: You know it so well.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —what we're talking about.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. I'm sure you know it better than I do. Anyway, he—[30:00] Doctor—his name will come to me—they had an art gallery there in the town, and his wife ran it, but they were both art folk—you know, art—interesting art people. And Nick was doing some selling for them, and what always amused me is they quickly realized that when Nick left their sales didn't do very well. [Laughs.] Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: He was good at what he did.

TONY DELAP: So Nick was in law school there, at Stanford, and then one day came to me, and when he was asking me about, you know, what I thought about him going to—

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TONY DELAP: —Los Angeles to open an art museum and all, I said, "God," I said, "you know, it sounds great, Nick." And he said, "Well—" He said, "My father recently died." His father was apparently a scientist of some kind for, I think—this all has to be—would have to be researched, but I think, like, for Kodak and Eastman Kodak or something in the East.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah, in Rochester, I think.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, and that he said his father had left him. I think his father was the chemist. He said his father had left him \$50,000, and he said, "You know," he said, "that's not very much money, but," he said, "I'm going to start an art gallery. I'm going to—you know." So we talked about that and so forth. And so Bruce Nauman was one of the first people—

MATTHEW SIMMS: That he represented?

TONY DELAP: —that he signed up for that. And I can't remember what year that was, but, you know, that when Felix Landau closed, you know, he called me and asked me—I told you that story, I think.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Tell me again.

TONY DELAP: He called. He said—you know, he said, "You know, you mentioned about Felix being closed." And I said, "Yeah." And he said, "Well, can you come over to my gallery now?" And I said, "Oh, yeah, Nick." I said, "I'd be flattered to come over to your gallery." And he said, "Well," he said, "you know," he said, "I never thought you were the smartest guy in the world—[they laugh]—but," he said, "don't you think it's a good idea to do that?" [02:07] And I said, "Yeah, I do." So, anyway, that's how we got together, as far as a working partnership was concerned.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And you also got—you also drew his attention to McLaughlin.

TONY DELAP: To McLaughlin, and there was a party at—again, the people were talking about earlier—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Melinda Turbell, at that time.

TONY DELAP: I'm sorry?

MATTHEW SIMMS: Was it Turbell? Melinda Turbell?

TONY DELAP: Turbell's. And a big art party, and it was nighttime. People were wandering around. And I was outside by the swimming pool. I wasn't swimming, but I was just out there by it. And Nick was there, and he was kind of by himself, and we're kind of walking towards each other, in a sense. And I said—and I said, "Oh, Nick," I said, "I've got something I need to tell you." I said, "Yesterday," which I think was true—I said, "Yesterday, I went down and saw John McCracken." And I said, "You know—"

MATTHEW SIMMS: McLaughlin.

TONY DELAP: McLaughlin.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yes. [Laughs.]

TONY DELAP: I said, "He doesn't have a—he doesn't have a dealer anymore, because Felix closed." And Dick just, you know, looked at me, and didn't kind of bat an eye. I could see—almost see his look. He said, "I'll go see him in the morning."

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah. It was important.

TONY DELAP: And, of course, he did. And that's how all that started. [04:02] But that was—I don't know what—I think '77.

MATTHEW SIMMS: How are you feeling, energy-wise? Do you want to continue a little bit?

TONY DELAP: Oh, sure, I'm fine.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay.

TONY DELAP: [Laughs.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: Because we've more or less spoken about the time in Northern California. I think we've covered most things, unless you wanted to say anything about your colleagues at Davis—Thiebaud and others—whether that was a significant kind of—

TONY DELAP: Well, I never—I was never wildly close to Thiebaud. He was always most friendly, and so forth, and—I mean, I have no recollection of, like, going to his home, or anything like that, you know.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah, you were a commuter. You came in—

TONY DELAP: Yeah, I really was a commuter.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Is it—I'd love to ask you a very simple question about teaching, about how you taught. You are obviously someone who has been teaching a large part of your life, and you are a beloved teacher.

TONY DELAP: [Laughs.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: What is it about the way you teach, you think, that—and maybe starting already there in

Davis, or going back, even, to the Arts and Crafts, or—did—was there something about teaching that you felt strongly about?

TONY DELAP: Well, it's a good question, and I'm not sure I ever learned myself, but I think information is one of the most important things you can give students, information about artists' lives, not the—maybe the most often thought of kind of part of their life, but about, like, what—who they liked as they were growing up, you know, and what kind of opportunity they had to work as an artist. [06:23] I mean, were they thrown out of their house for wanting to, you know, even suggest or—and I think that—I don't know, it's, for me, awfully hard to say. I think—It seems that—like, maybe it's almost a calling. [Laughs.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: But it sounds like you like to humanize the artist, make them into people, rather than just works of art, so sort of explain how they lived and how they—so that the students could see themselves in, you know—

TONY DELAP: Well, in a lot of ways, I don't think most people—I think art's not really what people think it is. [They laugh.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: Say more about that. That's good.

TONY DELAP: You know—

MATTHEW SIMMS: How so?

TONY DELAP: Well, I think it's—I think, first of all, it's a way of life, and I think that it's, you know—People seem to—they seem to say, "Well, I like this, and I don't like that," but they never know what they're talking about. [08:01] You know, they don't know why—[laughs]—they like this or they like that. And I think that that is a very, uh—I think it's a very important, uh—What do I want to say? I don't know.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Well, the idea that people don't seem to be educated about the decisions they're making.

TONY DELAP: That what?

MATTHEW SIMMS: People are maybe not educated about why they like certain things, don't like other things—

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —and perhaps they're—well, we can leave the teaching. If something comes to mind.

TONY DELAP: Well, yeah. I mean, I think that what—I think—I think the layman who says they like this or like that, they don't like it or dislike it for any, very often, any reasons at all that has anything to do with the importance of the work.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah, so—

TONY DELAP: Yeah. With the—[laughs.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: Well, it's—what did Immanuel Kant say about freedom of aesthetic judgment, you know? [Laughs.] Everybody has to have the right to be able to—but what you're saying is that there has to be some understanding [inaudible]—

TONY DELAP: [10:03] Yeah, I think there has to. I mean, there's nothing wrong with people saying they like this and they like that. I mean, that's, of course, their prerogative. But I think that—I don't know. I just kind of feel that—I don't think there's a lot of people—I don't think there's a lot of people out there who know a lot about what they say when they talk about art, any more than a biochemist knows about what he asks somebody about —[laughs]—what they think of that field, you know, or brain surgery, or—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Sure. [Laughs.]

TONY DELAP: —or something.

MATTHEW SIMMS: It seems very distant and remote.

TONY DELAP: I think it seems very distant, yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Well—

TONY DELAP: Uh—

MATTHEW SIMMS: It would be—I'd love to talk a little bit about the changes that happened when you moved to Southern California—

TONY DELAP: Oh, yeah, okay.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —in founding the Department—maybe we could talk a little bit about that, and, you know, if you feel like you want to wind things up. Nineteen six—

TONY DELAP: I don't—no, I'm happy to talk about anything you want to talk about.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay. I just—I don't want to just—

TONY DELAP: Anytime. I'm honored that you—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh, it's my pleasure.

TONY DELAP: I'm honored that you—[laughs]—that you want to talk about it. I hope it makes some sense.

MATTHEW SIMMS: It looks like 1965 was a really big year, in the sense that you had—[inaudible]—

TONY DELAP: Yeah, I think it was a—I think it was a big year, because Kathy and I were together, and we also came down here. I left my haunts. I, uh—[11:59] I think that one of those things that was so good for me is that I had some, uh, quite good art, uh—what do I want to say? Some nods to my work.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Some recognition.

TONY DELAP: Yes, some recognition. And I think that—I think all artists who take it serious are certainly ambitious, at least in their own way. And I—hello?

MATTHEW SIMMS: We—

[Side conversation.] [14:00]

MATTHEW SIMMS: Sixty-five, coming—you said it was an important year.

TONY DELAP: Well, I think—yeah, it was—

MATTHEW SIMMS: You got some recognition for your work.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, it was, and, for me, and maybe artists—you know, I—in students I have known and so forth, I've known students who seem to continue on through mature years, or years after school, and so on and so forth, and seem pretty happy about things, but, I don't know, it seems my ambition was different than that. [15:59] I always felt like I, you know, wanted to be a noted contributor to whatever I was doing. And I was somewhat surrounded with that kind of talent, also, and I think that, in my own way—I think, in my own way, a competitor. And I think that, you know, there were those artists that I liked who didn't give a drizzle as to what I did and all. Some did and some didn't, but, I mean, I—all of that was important to me. And that—you know, also, and I think so much of it was family background, and what you—you know, what—you kind of figure that—it would sound so corny, but you want to prove, in your own way, and that kind of thing. I think it's—I think, you know—and I think that a lot of it is not anything that's at all foreseeable for a particular artist, because it does have a lot to do with in which the times were that you were born. And I think that, in a kind of sense, as, in my way, ambitious as I was, I also could not have, in any way, picked a better time, I think, for what I wanted to do and be, because there's an aspect of modern art, particularly, you know, a new artist in America, that was, as we know, very different as to what had been going on. [18:14] And there were the end of the war years, and there were—you know, the United States engaged so much from the war, in reference to artists, because we had such a good number of them come here, you know.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah, emigrate.

TONY DELAP: And really all that kind of thing. And I think that—and not just—you know, not just that. We had, again, collectors and people and so forth that, because of all that goings-on, put together incredible collections that for kind of the first time were easy to see, and they were things that were there, the de Koonings and so forth. And I think it's much different now. And I don't think it's different because people say, well, you know, it's usually just the—it's always the same; it's just that you're older. I don't think that's true at all. I think that it's different, you know—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Genuinely different.

TONY DELAP: —and I don't think—I don't think there's the—I don't think that, in some ways, there are the opportunities now, as there were then.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Irvine, though, was quite remote—

TONY DELAP: It was.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —in a way, so there was a certain, actually, say, a—an exchange you were making, a very vibrant urban environment—

TONY DELAP: [20:04] Yeah, Irvine was remote, but there were a handful of potent people that assembled there.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Beginning with John Coplans.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, the Coplans, and the Irving Blums, and the comings-out of Barbara Rose and Frank Stella and all this kind of thing. And, you know, around here, I don't think that there was a clue in the world as to what and who—[laughs]—any of these people were. You know, they might as well have been from the moon, and I think maybe it's still true.

MATTHEW SIMMS: [They laugh.] I think you're right. So you and Coplans were the first two faculty members. Is that right?

TONY DELAP: Well, I—in the Studio Art Department—

MATTHEW SIMMS: In the Studio Art Department.

TONY DELAP: —I think that's about true, yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And do you remember some of your very first students coming through?

TONY DELAP: Oh, yeah. Of course, you know, there was certainly a goodly number of—and not immediately, but a little later, also a number of women—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yes, right.

TONY DELAP: —who came through. And I—my memory on a lot of things is not the best, but I have it all—we have it all down, and we could take some time with that—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: —one day if you'd like.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And look at it, and maybe—

TONY DELAP: Yeah, and work out a sort of it, because—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Well, it's a big topic, I think. Irvine in general is a big topic that maybe we'd want to take our time working through.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. I'm—yeah. [21:58] I think that there was a period of time for a number of years when it was a very hot school to attend, and then I think that, like so many art schools, it got caught up with by other places. Certainly, UCLA, when I first came down here, was just ghastly as an art school.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Well, you had Brice. Was that right?

TONY DELAP: Who?

MATTHEW SIMMS: William, Bill Brice was there teaching, I think.

TONY DELAP: Bill Brice, I guess, yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And others. I'm trying to remember who was there.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, well, there were some okay teachers. They were, I think, in looking at us and all—they were rather square, in a sense. And there was—then Claremont, which had, I think, for—there was a period of time when Claremont, because of Millard Sheets and a handful of others, was kind of a hotbed for the arts in Southern California, but that went away so very quickly when a few of the LA galleries, like Felix Landau, you know, started having interest in some of the California artists, you know. And I think that, you know, with that, then, of

course, came the golden era—[laughs]—so to speak, when there was Wilder and Irving and so forth.

MATTHEW SIMMS: [24:10] Yeah, the whole—[inaudible]—

TONY DELAP: But that was the new art.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah. Well, if we—well, we can talk about Irvine next time, maybe. We'll—I'll spend a little time looking. And the last question I'll ask you for today is just about whether or not in 1965, when you had a piece in the *Responsive Eye* exhibition, I think that there was this big exhibition at Museum of Modern Art in New York, that you had a piece in that.

TONY DELAP: Yes.

MATTHEW SIMMS: I'm wondering if it was Dilexi Gallery that might have been contacted, although you had already moved down here. I'm wondering how that happened, how that piece wound up. It may not be something that—

TONY DELAP: What was the year of the—?

MATTHEW SIMMS: Sixty-five, and the piece was called *Magpie*.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, '65. Well, that's when, yeah, I was beginning to get some, you know, out of California attention and all, and probably an early *Artforum* cover, and also I was showing with—I was showing at Bob Elkon's, and so forth.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Did Pace Gallery try to pick you up at some point?

TONY DELAP: They may have that I—and if that's true, I don't really know about it. I had a—I was in a show at Pace with Craig Kauffman and myself and I think there were four, five of us—

MATTHEW SIMMS: [26:08] Yeah, I can tell you.

TONY DELAP: —that were at a show at Pace.

MATTHEW SIMMS: It was Larry Bell—

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —Craig Kauffman, yourself, Ed Ruscha—

TONY DELAP: Ed Ruscha.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —and William Reynolds.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. Well, uh—

MATTHEW SIMMS: And the show was called *Five at Pace*.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, *Five at Pace*. And I think that I could maybe say, because I don't really know, I could—I think I could probably say, well, what from that—like, on—a lot of it would be politics.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Mm, politics, yeah.

TONY DELAP: You know, because I remember seeing a review or something about that show, and I think I—I think they had more to say about what I did than what else was in that show. And that may be true, and it may not be, but I think that, uh, other people had to do with thing—Elkon was never known as a powerhouse dealer. He was known, from what I have heard to know, he was known as a respected dealer, you know, and so forth. But so much of all that, uh, and who ends up where, and how, and why, so much of it to me, even today, is a bit of a mystery. [Laughs.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: [28:00] Yeah. Seems like friendships with other artists were—and friendships, sometimes, with dealers—

TONY DELAP: Yeah, yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —like Wilder, and others—

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —were what interested you most.

TONY DELAP: I'm sorry?

MATTHEW SIMMS: It sounds like friendships were what mattered to you most.

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: The—you know, not politics in the art world.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, well, I think that's one of the things that was rather clean about those very early days. I mean, seems to have had more to do with art, you know, to me. And then I think to where I never got bitter about it, but I think—so much, you begin to feel, doesn't have that much to do with art, as you see it, you know. But it's—you know, it's very interesting. And I see some things now that I really wonder about how it all worked out the way it did, you know. But it's, you know—

MATTHEW SIMMS: One friend was Agnes Martin.

TONY DELAP: Yes.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Did she—? You got to know Agnes Martin.

TONY DELAP: Well, I got to know her because she first saw my work in San Francisco. I had two pieces. I think one of them, I know, is still around. I had two of the little diamond-set sculptures, you know, and they were in a show at the San Francisco Museum of Art. [29:58] And that was probably, I don't know, '63, something like that.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Sixty-three, yeah.

TONY DELAP: And Agnes Martin came out for a vacation, by herself, as I understand it. And when she went back to New York, Elkon said, "Did you see anything out there?" And she said, "Well, not too much I was interested in, except for these two pieces," and she mentioned the name of the artist. And so that's how we met. And then when I went back to New York for a show with Elkon, we, of course, met with her. And she took me around to a number of places in New York, and so forth. But—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Was she living, at that time, down at that—?

TONY DELAP: She was still at—what was it—Coenties Street, or—?

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah, the street down there with Robert Indiana and, I think, Ellsworth Kelly was—

[END OF delap18_1of2_sd_track09.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: —down there, and other—it was kind of an interesting area.

TONY DELAP: It was a very interesting area. And she never took us there—[laughs]—but she was always very, very gracious, and we—you know—and then, uh, there were a couple of years of that friendship. And then, about the next year, was one of the hard times for her, when she kind of, I guess we could say, got a bit off-base.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: You know.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Well—

TONY DELAP: And that—the years went by, and I—we tried to find her one year, and we didn't have an address and so forth. It never worked out. But it's very, very—[laughs.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: Well, we made a lot of progress today.

TONY DELAP: Well, that's—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Talked about a lot of things.

TONY DELAP: —that's great. I—

MATTHEW SIMMS: I think that this is a great place to kind of pull things to a conclusion.

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: So I'll turn this off.

TONY DELAP: Okay.

MATTHEW SIMMS: I'll stop it here.

[END OF delap18_1of2_sd_track10.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: This is Matthew Simms, interviewing Tony DeLap on, um—what are we today? We are June 14, 2018, at his home in Corona del Mar, California. This, I think, is our third session of interviewing, so—I think so. We had spoken in our first interview about the 1950s, and I'll try to come a bit closer so you can hear me. And in our second interview, we moved on to the 1960s. And we left things by—we just started talking about the beginning of your teaching at UC Irvine. And I was hoping today we'd talk a bit more about your experience there; also, your experience showing at the *Primary Structures* exhibition, which was a seminal exhibition in 1966, and then other things that we'll work our way towards. Last time, however, you had a few stories that you had thought of in between. I don't know if today there are some things that you wanted to talk about first—

TONY DELAP: [Laughs.] Well—

MATTHEW SIMMS: —before I start pummeling you with questions. [They laugh.]

TONY DELAP: I'm sure I did. What, do you remember the stories, and were they to be continued?

MATTHEW SIMMS: No, no, I think we finished things up—

TONY DELAP: Yeah, okay.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —but I think last time you had thought of some things in between that you wanted to start with. But if you haven't, that's fine.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. No, okay.

MATTHEW SIMMS: [01:57] So you come to UC Irvine in 1965, brand new, middle of nowhere.

TONY DELAP: Right.

MATTHEW SIMMS: It used to be orchards, or farms; I don't know what it is. You've got temporary administration building, uh, one core set of buildings that represented the campus, I think, and then you guys, you know. And I guess what was that like?

TONY DELAP: Yeah, it was—it was interesting, and it was—it was very free, in a sense that, uh, much of the faculty that was there then were in trailers. The dean was in a trailer. In fact, when I did my interview—[laughs] —for the job, I saw the dean in a trailer. And there was a very muddy road from Coast Highway up to the campus during the wet season. And it—you know, it was—Kathy and I found it very comfortable. It was very unscheduled, it seemed, and it was very un—certainly—organized. And at the very first, before the classes started, John Coplans and I spent some time on what should the studio buildings look like, and there were plans, but we laughed a bit, because the sculpture—what they had indicated, plan-wise, for the sculpture building was on the second floor—

MATTHEW SIMMS: [04:17] That makes no sense.

TONY DELAP: —which, you know, really just made no sense. And so we changed things of that sort, and it was kind of fun. As a matter of fact, John and I drew up, just somewhat roughly—[inaudible]—goings-on, but we drew up a studio plan, based on the Pereira—what Pereira had done. But it, of course, was never really used.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh. But you at least had some contribution to the—

TONY DELAP: Absolutely, and we spent time doing that, which I—you know, which I rather enjoyed. And as John said—he said, "Look," he said, "you do the—[laughs]—you do the plans and I'll do the writing."

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay.

TONY DELAP: So we had a—you know, we had a bit of a good time doing that. And then there was—I'm not sure exactly—there was, I think, a couple buildings, one where there was still space already, space for a studio—I mean, for a gallery. And so it was very early on that John organized an exhibition of one kind or the other for that space. [06:01] And, as you probably have gone through to see what Robin has—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Right, your assistant [Robin Johnson -MS].

TONY DELAP: —set aside, the various shows and all that were—that John organized, one of—I know one of the amusing moments was John had done a show for—a sculpture show—my God, my mind is going—with—I'm trying to think of the artist. Anyway, it was a small piece of his, and it was borrowed by a collector uptown that Kathy and John had visited, and gone by to get the piece. But—[laughs]—it—I mean, nowadays it's rather amazing, and rather—certainly, you know, frighteningly amusing, because, uh, John had an MG sedan, and Kathy was, of course, the passenger, and she carried the piece in her lap. [They laugh.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: We'll have to track down the name of the artist.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, it was—I'll tell you here before we finish. But anyway, it was that kind of thing, you know, and—often. [08:02] And so it was just—the whole situation was very nice in that way, and there was no tough, you know, regimented goings-on for faculty or anything of that sort. And, of course, right at the beginning there was really no one yet selected and approved for the studio arts, because nothing had been mentioned. There was John and I, and John McCracken was with me, and he needed a place to work, so I just said, well, you know, come and use a part of the studio in Costa Mesa. And we, of course, hired him, which only made sense. And then it kind of went from there, and there were, you know, the number of the people from uptown—Joe Goode and Larry Bell and Craig Kauffman, and so forth, uh, were down often, and out of that core, and more, they were, from time to time, hired, not all of them for full time. Craig was.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Craig Kauffman.

TONY DELAP: And Craig enjoyed—he enjoyed teaching. And so it was—it was like that. [10:02] And the—you know, the classrooms were sparse, and sometimes, with weather permitting, held outside and so forth. Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Who was responsible for writing the curriculum? Do you remember sort of what students would have to take, what classes, in order to graduate?

TONY DELAP: Well, I imagine Coplans had a good bit to do with that, until Alan Solomon came, who was the chairman of the, you know—more official chairman of the department.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Right. And Alan Solomon arrives in 1968, I believe, or '69, is it?

TONY DELAP: Uh—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Maybe early 1969.

TONY DELAP: I didn't realize—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Or late 1968.

TONY DELAP: I didn't realize it was that late.

MATTHEW SIMMS: It was maybe towards the end of nineteen six—I think he was supposed to start—

TONY DELAP: Okay.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —maybe in 1968, in the semester—

TONY DELAP: Okay.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Um, I'll have to double check that, but he came along, and, of course, he had been the director of the Jewish Museum—

TONY DELAP: Yes.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —had been quite involved with curating independently, also, exhibitions, but didn't really have a background in teaching, I don't think. And then he was hired to both run the gallery and actually run the Art Department.

TONY DELAP: Yes.

MATTHEW SIMMS: So then maybe you think he had a hand—

TONY DELAP: Well, you know, in New York he made quite a name for himself for that story, which one would have to review, but that—[laughs]—very newsworthy story of moving at night the Rauschenbergs and so on, up

MATTHEW SIMMS: And that date I do have. That's—

TONY DELAP: —up the river—

MATTHEW SIMMS: —[laughs]—1964.

TONY DELAP: —the blanket, and so forth.

MATTHEW SIMMS: That was the Venice Biennale in 1964 where Robert Rauschenberg—

TONY DELAP: [12:01] Yes.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —won the painting—

TONY DELAP: Exactly.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —award.

TONY DELAP: And he was the main instigator of that.

MATTHEW SIMMS: He was.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. He—yeah, so he came out, and, you know, Kathy and I found him to be just a very—just a very good friend. I mean, we—the three of us got along quickly, very well, and we spent—most of our meals were with Alan, because it was here, and, you know, we'd cook, or we'd go out, or something of that sort. And he—yeah, he just became a very—a very good friend. And so he—I don't know how long he had been here before he decided to do that show, [. . .] but—

MATTHEW SIMMS: That was the first show, I believe, that he curated in, you know—at UC Irvine was your—

TONY DELAP: That was at UC Irvine.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —1969, I think in February.

TONY DELAP: And the—I'm trying to think of the name of the—of a designer. Anyway, I have it—I have it. When I was around San Francisco, I think I had mentioned earlier, a designer from—a graphic designer from Pasadena—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Right, it was on a list of terms—names that you had written down. [Laughs.]

TONY DELAP: Yeah, and—

MATTHEW SIMMS: It was on the last interview, so—

TONY DELAP: And he and I, we didn't get in a fight, but we got in a, you know, in a rather—at the time, a rather unfortunate little bit. [14:08] I had my funky little house in San Francisco, and he was putting together slowly this design operation, and he was going to—he was going to have it just about as class—oh, here comes the bus—just about as classy, just about as classy as he could, you know. And he said, "Of course, you realize that you're going to be coming to work every day, and you're going to dress properly," and so on and so forth. And I said, "I'm real sorry, but," I said, "that's not going to work." And he, in a huff, just really pissed, he went—I can still hear him going down the stairs in a—leaving. And so I said—so I just thought, well, that's too bad, but that's the way things go. And that was before—that was just shortly before we came down here to—for permanent residency, you know. So when Alan said that he wanted to do this show of mine, we talked about a catalog, and I said, "Well, I have a designer that I can call." And I said, "I wouldn't—I'm not going to ask him to do it, but," I said, "I'll ask him who he would recommend." [15:58] And I'm about ready to tell you his name, and I can't quite, but I will.

MATTHEW SIMMS: [Laughs.] Yeah. And we can dig it out of the [inaudible].

TONY DELAP: Yeah, right. And anyway, so I did do that, and when I called—Rex Goode, as a matter of fact, was his name.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Rex Goode.

TONY DELAP: Rex Goode. And he was, uh, very well known as a graphic designer, and—in Pasadena and all. I assumed he was still in the business. And when I called, he said he was. So I said, "Rex," I said, "I'm not calling to ask you to do this." I said, "I'm calling to ask for a reference for a catalog for me that Alan Solomon is working on." And he said, "I'll do it."

MATTHEW SIMMS: He did.

TONY DELAP: And so that brought our friendship back, and so forth. [Laughs.] And he did do the catalog. And Kathy asked me the other day—she couldn't remember when he—the—when the two of us met to do all that. And I said, "Well, I know that on several occasions it was the Magic Castle."

MATTHEW SIMMS: And the Magic Castle was a famous magic kind of headquarters.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, it was just a good place to kind of go over things, you know. And in those days, it was a good—it was very good for that kind of thing, because it—no one bothered you, and, you know, so forth. Anyway, so Rex did do the catalog, and that catalog, you—

MATTHEW SIMMS: I can visualize it. I've seen it.

TONY DELAP: —the cover is an embossed white shape. Yeah, like that, but it—

MATTHEW SIMMS: The—[inaudible.]

TONY DELAP: —it does not have a step down. [18:01] It only has an outer—

MATTHEW SIMMS: That's right.

TONY DELAP: So I said to Rex, you know, not being annoyed, but I said to Rex, I said, "Had you thought about having the step down in?" And he kind of smiled, and he said, "Yeah, but," he said, "we couldn't afford it," which probably was a correct answer. So he did design the catalog, and that's how that came about.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And that was a really important show, I think.

TONY DELAP: Well, I think so, too.

MATTHEW SIMMS: You had—I'm trying to think now—and for that you did an interview with Alan Solomon, and—

TONY DELAP: Yes.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —I believe the—you refer to it in a letter that you wrote to him shortly afterwards, filling in the gaps. You said there were a few things that you had—

TONY DELAP: Okay.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —you neglected to say that you wanted to fill in, and you refer to the tape, you know, that you'd made. And, unfortunately, maddeningly, that tape is missing. No one knows where it is, and so—

TONY DELAP: Oh, really?

MATTHEW SIMMS: —that interview from 1969 would've been really—

TONY DELAP: There's one short little bit that I wrote on setting up—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yes, *Houdini's*—

TONY DELAP: —exhibitions.

MATTHEW SIMMS: The *Houdini's House*? Is that right?

TONY DELAP: Yeah, and when I—and when I talked to Alan about that, Alan said to me, he said, "Why don't you just write that yourself?"

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: You know, and I said, "Well, okay." But he was, as I say, a very good friend. He was out here by himself. Alan had a wife he was separated from, but he had a young son. [19:56] And he—who later we—I don't think we ever did meet the wife, but the son, Alan said, got interested in magic, and he said one of the best things I did for him was—Well, it's another story. I think it was—Anyway, I've—Kathy will have to verify this, but I think he was taken much later to the Magic Castle, on a Sunday, because that's the only day children could go

there. And we were very much thanked for making that—making that—to make that opportunity.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And Alan was not well, though.

TONY DELAP: Alan was not well, and he was pretty open about it. He had a heart problem. And what I found interesting was that it was about that time that there was that very famous heart doctor who did the heart implant, or surgery, and I can't think of his name, but he made world news. And Alan knew him fairly well, but it was—Alan's problem was not what the surgeon could've done for Alan. So at a later date, of course, Alan was semi-bedridden, and when Kathy and I went to New York for a show, I presume at Bob Elkon's, we went by his apartment and spent some time with him, but he was bedridden.

MATTHEW SIMMS: [22:11] And so he moved back to New York as his illness progressed.

TONY DELAP: Yes. And he—but he was a splendid person, and we were very proud of him.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah. So I'm just thinking a little bit about the timeline here. Other faculty members at UCI—Vija Celmins, I believe, was there.

TONY DELAP: Vija Celmins was there, and I can't remember just exactly when. I remember, on occasion, being in a studio faculty meeting with her now and then, and we would see her a bit. She—she wasn't difficult, but she had a personality that was—that just—I don't know quite how to say it.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Uncompromising?

TONY DELAP: Yeah, I think so. Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: [Laughs.] You were in the faculty '68 show, I think.

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Some of you had work in that.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And there are some famous—there are some great photographs of that—

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —with—you're in there. David Hockney, I think, is in there.

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Did David Hockney spend some time here, as well?

TONY DELAP: [23:57] David Hockney did spend time here, and, uh, I'm sure a bit of time, because—and also his friend, the British artist—and here I go—I'll tell you in a minute.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay.

TONY DELAP: [Laughs.] And then there was another British—another young British artist, whose name I can't remember, who I had first known before I left San Francisco, and it was one of those things where people in San Francisco knew him, and introduced me to him, and he was also part of that new British artists. There was a fair number of them. And a good number of them came here to be with the uptown artists that they knew. And so we knew some of them. I'm trying to—[laughs.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: I can toss out other—a few other names, too, just to see if there are any anecdotes, as those —

TONY DELAP: Yeah, and the—David Hockney, I—my favorite David Hockney story is that David Hockney—one of the—one of the studio faculty asked David if he would talk to his class. So David came down that day. [26:00] And somebody said, "Well, I'll take you up to meet the dean, Dean Garrison." So I took David over, and David was all in orange. He had on an orange hat, an orange suit, orange socks, and so on. And I said, "Dean Garrison," I said, "this is David Hockney from England, and he's going to, as a guest, talk to some of the students this morning," or afternoon; I can't remember what it was. And I said, "I just thought you would enjoy meeting him." So they said hello, and David—[laughs]—I can still hear and see David Hockney. He said to the dean, "I'm so—it's such a pleasure to meet you." He said, "I'm all in orange because I'm in Orange County." [They laugh.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: That's perfect.

TONY DELAP: You know, it was ridiculous. But yeah, he was—he was—he was friends, and part of the group, with Nick Wilder.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah, yeah.

TONY DELAP: And a number of Nick's friends, and so forth.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Obviously Robert Irwin was one of the faculty, also.

TONY DELAP: [27:56] Irwin was around here, and he was asked to teach on a regular basis, and declined. I'm not sure of that. But there was a time when Craig and Bob and Kathy and I would often go to dinner. And also—and then when Alan Solomon came out, he would go, too. And Bob loved to kid Alan Solomon.

MATTHEW SIMMS: About what?

TONY DELAP: About being an Easterner. [They laugh.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: Well—

TONY DELAP: You know, and Alan Solomon would have on a shirt or a sweater, really, or something that was a warm weather, you know, and I can still hear Bob Irwin say, "You don't wear clothes like that out here." [They laugh.] He was always torturing—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Right. And I'm looking at this famous photograph from when Ansel Adams—

TONY DELAP: Yeah, oh, yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —who was also taking photographs, was around.

TONY DELAP: Ansel Adams came to the university, of course, at that time, and asked the dean—the president if he could photograph. But it was not quite like that.

MATTHEW SIMMS: That's the picture from 1967.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. [They laugh.] He was under contract to photograph all campuses.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh, I see.

TONY DELAP: And so I had my class at that time over on property where the campus has its—keeps its cars. [30:09] And there was also, over there, a science building where they would cut up whales and things of that sort. And I didn't mind the cars at all, but the odor—[they laugh]—of the whales and all often got to me, and to my students. But anyway, he came over one day, and—he came over one day, and the students were working on kind of things that you see there, and very pleasant guy, and took these pictures.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Right.

TONY DELAP: And then I had read later—probably, I think, a good time later—where that was a financial low period—

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TONY DELAP: —for Ansel Adams, because of his work not having really reached the point to where it became extremely expensive for purchase and all. And so he made this contract with the University of California to go to all the campuses to—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah, and document it.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, to document it.

MATTHEW SIMMS: It would be interesting to see those photographs. I've never—

TONY DELAP: Yeah, yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: There must be a book. [They laugh.] And just sort of browsing through, I'm seeing that you were in a group show with Eva Hesse in 1970.

TONY DELAP: Eva Hesse, yeah, yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Was she still alive?

TONY DELAP: In New—

MATTHEW SIMMS: That was in New York.

TONY DELAP: Oh, no, no. That was—

MATTHEW SIMMS: At the Owens Corning Fiberglass Center.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. [Laughs.] I was in that show because I had done some round pieces—we have photos there—we have photos of them—with the step down pieces, and, you know, and I had done some pieces like that that I believe Felix Landau had, and Owens Corning bought. And then the wood outer shell was fiberglass. I think John—fiberglass—McCracken fiberglassed those for me. So I had a number of those, and that was—so there was—yeah, there was Hesse and myself, and then that realist—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Frank Gallo.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, Frank Gallo, who was a favorite of the owner of *Playboy* magazine. [They laugh.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh, okay.

TONY DELAP: And anyway, that was the show. [02:00] And at that time, they had a gallery right downtown, and it was, you know, very, very, very posh, actually. And when I went back—well, let's see—when I went back to the museum—now, what museum am I thinking of? Where I was presenting the award pieces. It says there somewhere.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Carborundum—

TONY DELAP: Was it Albright—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Albright-Knox, right.

TONY DELAP: Albright-Knox. Yeah. You probably had your reading, maybe, found out that I won the award to do—to design an award, to be given to various people who work for—who work for the company, for—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah, it's the Carborundum.

TONY DELAP: For Carborundum Company.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: And the Carborundum Company was one of the major contributors to Albright-Knox, and every year they had a dinner where an artist they had chosen did a small number of works for the brass of that company. So I did a number of—like the little blue piece there, you know. [04:01] I mean, give or take in that area. And I did a series of those, which were, to me, presented at the dinner they had for the officials and all.

MATTHEW SIMMS: I see.

TONY DELAP: The show was up a fair time, but there was that one night when—so anyway, they sent me—They sent me a ticket. They sent me two tickets, round trip, to Albright-Knox: one for Kathy and one for myself, to come back, of course, to that. And Kathy had just given birth to Jack, so she couldn't go. So I had a friend at—I had a student and friend who was a racecar driver. [Laughs.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: Who's that?

TONY DELAP: And I said—I thought, well, what's better to have when you're in New York and you want to get around than a racecar driver?

MATTHEW SIMMS: [Laughs.] Right.

TONY DELAP: So I asked him if he wanted to go, and he was delighted. So he took the ticket, and we went to New York—[laughs]—and when we first—we didn't go to New York first; we went to Albright-Knox.

MATTHEW SIMMS: To Buffalo.

TONY DELAP: To Buffalo. And I met there with the director and various people, and so on and so forth. And that was the lunch, and it was—which was very nice. And I can't remember who it was; it might have been the art

director for the company. [05:59] But anyway, they had just—uh oh.

MATTHEW SIMMS: It's okay.

TONY DELAP: They had just come from New York—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Stick the—that's your microphone. It needs to go—let's put it back on you. We got the little fuzzy bit that came off again, but that's—the fuzzy bit's there. There it is.

TONY DELAP: They had just come from New York. Eva Hesse had died.

MATTHEW SIMMS: That's right. It was right at that time.

TONY DELAP: And so I never—obviously, I never met her.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: But the art director for the—anyway, the—I can't remember the name of the publication, but he said to me—he said, "You're going to New York." And I said, "Yes," because I, of course, wanted to see this show and all. And he said, "Well," he said, "I belong to the Yale Club." So he said, "I'll get rooms for you and your friend at the Yale Club." So he did.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh, great.

TONY DELAP: And so we went there. And then at that time I also had friends, mostly from out here, but a number of friends who were in New York at that time. I think Craig was there, and a number of his friends and all. So it was a real pleasant trip. And then coming back, it was another Tony, my friend the racecar driver. Tony and I got on the first flight of one of the new aircrafts. It was—

MATTHEW SIMMS: The super-fast?

TONY DELAP: [08:02] Yeah, yeah—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Not the *Concorde*. That was one of the more fast—

TONY DELAP: I don't think it was the *Concorde*.

MATTHEW SIMMS: So which one are you thinking?

TONY DELAP: We can find out.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Okay.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, yeah, but—so—and this is not much of a story, but it's kind of amusing: there—we sat forever before takeoff on the plane, and, of course, everybody wondered why, and then the stewardesses started bringing out liquor, and they put a bottle of gin or Scotch or whatever it was that you wanted on your table, you know. Well, there was a—[laughs]—there was a drunk man who, I don't know, was mumbling over by himself someplace on the airplane that he was going to kill everybody and, you know, do all this. So the airline just kept plying—[laughs]—the passengers already on the plane with, you know—And then, finally, this man went into the men's room, and it was kind of interesting to see, because the instant that men's room door was closed there must have been ten Secret Service men—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Really?

TONY DELAP: —right at that door. And when that guy came out, they had him, you know. So they took him right off the plane, and we took off. And anyway, it was a great trip, you know. So—

MATTHEW SIMMS: I wonder what plane you're thinking of. Not the—

TONY DELAP: What?

MATTHEW SIMMS: The kind of plane that you were thinking—

TONY DELAP: Oh, yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: [10:00] Yeah, the 747s came in in the '70s, I think, so it wouldn't have been that. I don't remember what—

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Well, you know, we've been jumping around a little bit, and it strikes me that I—people would be interested, I'm sure, to hear your firsthand thoughts about the 1966 *Primary Structures* show, which you were included in, which was such a—

TONY DELAP: Yes, yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —kind of seen as one of a couple crucial shows for so-called—what came called—what was called later minimalism, but at the time hadn't—nobody really had a word.

TONY DELAP: Well, there were—there were two shows on at that same time, weren't there? There was—

MATTHEW SIMMS: In 1966.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, there—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Well, in '65 there was *Responsive Eye*, and in '66 you had *Primary Structures*, um, and—

TONY DELAP: Because I do know my claim to fame is I was the only West Coast artist that was at both of those shows at the same time.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Well, you were in both the *Responsive Eye* and the—and the *Primary Structures*.

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: I know that. I think that may be what you're thinking of, is that you were the only one that was in both of those shows.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, that's right.

MATTHEW SIMMS: The work you showed in *Primary Structures* was radically different—

TONY DELAP: Yes.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —from the piece you showed in the *Responsive Eye*—

TONY DELAP: Yes.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —which was—we talked about it last time—it was *Maggie*, which is, you know, a rectangular construction, with two step—horizontal step-down elements, with a red line. I don't know if you can—if you remember that piece. For *Primary Structures*, you did these twisted sculptures. [Correction: DeLap exhibited a bent sculpture at the *Primary Structures* exhibition and twisted sculptures at the Whitney Museum of American Art's exhibition "Contemporary American Sculpture" of the same year. -MS] [. . . -MS]

So, for you, did you think that was an important moment? Or do you think it's just become important in retrospect?

TONY DELAP: No, I thought—I think at the time it, for me, it was important. [14:00] It was important to me, not that there were that many, but any of those shows that took me—that took my work to New York, or Chicago, or wherever, were important, because that was—that got me out of my more provincial background, and—

MATTHEW SIMMS: And was that the first time you exhibited those pieces? I can't think of—I know that you began to exhibit them more later, but that may have been one of the first times those were—those were shown.

TONY DELAP: You say the first time they were—?

MATTHEW SIMMS: Exhibited, I think.

TONY DELAP: No, because I had shown them in—with Elkon.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh, you had. Okay.

TONY DELAP: And I showed at Elkon—we have pictures of—we have pictures of those exhibitions at Elkon, where the small-scale and the large-scale were both in the same space.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Mm-hmm. Well, this is a—that's a nice opening, because I'd like to hear you say a few things about that interesting relationship of scale, that you worked on both the smaller and the larger scale.

TONY DELAP: I did.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And—

TONY DELAP: And I think I talked about that piece—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yes.

TONY DELAP: —cutting it in half.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Right.

TONY DELAP: Or cutting it—

MATTHEW SIMMS: You cutting a thicker kind of conception.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, and making two pieces.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah, so cutting it bilaterally somehow—

TONY DELAP: That's right.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —and then being able to—

TONY DELAP: And I did that when I was still in San Francisco, and then I took—and working with those two pieces—not exactly, but I put together what I call the twisted pieces. [16:06] And then I did that series, which I called the Charlie Chaplin series. And the interesting thing about that is that Felix Landau sold a set of those to the director, who was Charlie Chaplin's—one of Charlie Chaplin's director. And he had a set of those pieces on his deck—[laughs]—on—I'm trying to think. Any—on the main boulevard uptown.

MATTHEW SIMMS: In his—

TONY DELAP: And they were there for—they were there—they were there for years, and he had—yes. And so after I did the first piece, having cut that more cumbersome piece, and, in a sense, somewhat reshaped it to make what I call the twisted pieces, from that, I made two pieces out of one—yeah—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Right.

TONY DELAP: —exactly.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Now, for these, it seems like cutting them made it so that you could slide them into relationships. You still kept them—

TONY DELAP: Yeah, all—the whole thing.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: The whole thing.

MATTHEW SIMMS: What was it about—you have your foot on the—

TONY DELAP: Oh, I'm sorry.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Just lift your foot there. [18:00] Was there something special about this, being able to bring them together close like this, have them—?

TONY DELAP: Yeah, very much so, and they can tiered [ph] up, or, you know—there's certainly just an amazing number of ways those pieces can interrelate. And, you know, I told the story before about when I had Conrad come and photograph to make a little film of those—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh.

TONY DELAP: —on those pieces, and he spent about three hours filming the way I had positioned them in the studio.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And who is the person who did this?

TONY DELAP: Conrad Hall, the cinematographer. [Laughs.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: Ah. Because I've seen a photo—a series of photographs of them that was used, I think, in the

TONY DELAP: Conrad was a very good friend, and then when we finished we came here to the house, and Conrad said that—he said, "That was the most boring three hours I've ever spent in my life." [They laugh.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: Well, something that makes this so different from the other work that you were doing is that it's no longer dealing with the step down, seeing through.

TONY DELAP: That's right.

MATTHEW SIMMS: There—

TONY DELAP: It was a whole different thing. And—

MATTHEW SIMMS: But still, there's something—there feel—when I look at them, without knowing as much about them as I should, but I—they remind me of furniture, in interesting ways.

TONY DELAP: Oh, yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: But the way that one would think about the design of an ergonomic kind of shape that's—

TONY DELAP: I see, yes.

MATTHEW SIMMS: You know, but I don't think—I don't know if any of these kinds of associations—

TONY DELAP: [20:00] Well, the—you know, my titling came from Charlie Chaplin's film.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Well, was the titling meant to say something about the pieces, or was it, for you, just a way to—?

TONY DELAP: Just that I kind of thought all the repositioning was rather comical, in the sense that, you know—and Charlie was pretty comical.

MATTHEW SIMMS: So there's a sense of humor in this body of work.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, I think so. And—

MATTHEW SIMMS: In this kind of thing.

TONY DELAP: —John Coplans said, you know, kind of a—[laughs]—I don't know what you'd call that kind of remark that he made, really. He said—well, he said—I can't remember who he said it to; maybe he said it to me, but, you know, he said, "You're never going to be a famous artist, because," he said, "you change too quickly."

MATTHEW SIMMS: You change too quickly. Mm.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, you know. And he said, "Look at all the artists that have been doing the same thing for 20 years." And there may be something to that, in a way. I don't know.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Well—

TONY DELAP: Because then, from this, it went on to the, you know—And so, anyway, I don't know.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Right.

TONY DELAP: I took it as a backhanded compliment.

MATTHEW SIMMS: I think it is a compliment, in a way. Well, you began to work with beams, with wood. You became—

TONY DELAP: Yes.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —you began to pivot, in a way, towards wood, as a very important material, starting in the late '60s, into the early '70s. It led to the exploration of wood as a boundary around paintings, or a kind of edge

TONY DELAP: Yes.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —that then eventually would be torqued and brought in. Also, the floating wooden, you know, kind of pieces that were suspended. [22:08] So it seems that at a certain point you moved—you began to step away from some of the more industrial looking materials, toward some more—the sort of organic appearance of wood. I don't know if that was a significant moment, or if it's—if I'm even characterizing it correctly.

TONY DELAP: I don't think I quite—I don't think I quite see what you're saying.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Well, just that you began to—I see wood appear—

TONY DELAP: Oh, yes.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —you know, in your work as—

TONY DELAP: Well, I think that—you know, that—I think all of that is in reference to my interest in architecture.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh.

TONY DELAP: And scale. And there were a number of things that I felt very strongly—I feel very strongly about. One is scale, and I found that making paintings, whether they're this size or that size or that size, you know, I found that okay, but I found that also it wasn't the same as making something that was outdoors, or something people could walk through, or something of the sort. And I had this, you know—I've always had this feeling about my work that when I had an opportunity to—for better or worse, that I could expand it and make it at a different scale. Now, that's why I—and was fortunate enough to do, like, the piece over Wilshire.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Right. Now, that's—

TONY DELAP: You see. Yeah. And—

MATTHEW SIMMS: That's in there, as well.

TONY DELAP: [23:57] And some of the outdoor sculpture, because I loved that change of scale, and I loved the—

MATTHEW SIMMS: This was the maquette for the piece.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, and I love the idea of making work that can be walked through or around, or something of the sort. And I thought that it—I always thought that it was important, in a way, to, if possible, have that opportunity, because it took you away from objects, you know.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Well, that was this one that we're talking about here, the *Big Wave*.

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Was preceded by the *Floating Lady*, which was installed in front of the Orange County Museum of Art.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, yes.

MATTHEW SIMMS: I believe it was preceded by that. I don't know which one came first. This piece here—

TONY DELAP: Yeah, that really comes—that really comes from finding out—for me, finding out about the edge of paintings.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: This.

MATTHEW SIMMS: I'd love to hear you say a bit about that.

TONY DELAP: I'm sorry?

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah, tell us—tell me about that. [Laughs.]

TONY DELAP: Well, I—You know, I remember I had a painting in the studio that was, I think, a round painting, and it had a wood edge, but it just went straight back, you know. And I did it, and I went back the next year. So I looked at it, and I thought—I just looked at it, and I thought, this is the most goddamn awful looking thing I've ever seen. And, you know, it just really annoyed me. [26:00] And I said, "What—?" So that was when, uh, I took that ring off and cut it back, and so on, and changed the whole flavor of what I was doing. Because, you know, it's like I—I think—I think that the—for painting, I just think—I've always thought of painting being a container for

imagery.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Right.

TONY DELAP: You know, traditionally, it's a container. It changed a lot, of course, through the years, but—and I always—I wanted to make the image the content. Absolutely the content. And I think that, you know, you can make a round painting and put, you know, people in it, or something, or you can make a round painting, but for me it doesn't work the same as a painting that integrates itself with the architectural space, like those paintings of mine do when they're cut.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Right. Well, there's one on the wall behind us here—

TONY DELAP: That's right, yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —where the negative space that appears is actually the wall.

TONY DELAP: [28:00] Yeah, and as you move—as you move across it, it—as you move across it, it simply is changing its conformation.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah. Changing its—

TONY DELAP: Its conformation.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Conformation.

TONY DELAP: Conformation.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah, the way it—

TONY DELAP: Isn't that correct?

MATTHEW SIMMS: —conforms?

TONY DELAP: Yeah, exactly. Yeah, I mean, the—it—the whole image is changing.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Right. When you say "image," you mean the overall—

TONY DELAP: The overall piece—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah, the—

TONY DELAP: —is changing, because—and I think a good example is that, yeah, that log, the big log—

MATTHEW SIMMS: This one.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. No, I was thinking of the print, the big log print.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Right. Oh, yes.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, you know. Yeah, also.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Well, for this piece that's on the wall behind us, these paintings—they remind me a little bit of the twisted sculpture, in the sense that there's a lot of tucking—

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —and alignment and proximity, uh, to things that are different, nevertheless brought close into relationship, or almost kind of clicked into—you know, I don't mean that—

TONY DELAP: Yes.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —in a mechanical way, but—

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —there's so—there's a sense of different pieces being brought together to create a whole, and yet you're aware of these differences as your eye moves—

TONY DELAP: Yes.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —from wood to paint, and the paint comes onto the wood, up to a point.

TONY DELAP: Yes.

MATTHEW SIMMS: I find that unique to your work, that interest in pulling those things together in proximity like that, that there's—it's not one piece all together. It's a series of pieces that come together to create a whole, that are nevertheless very carefully handcrafted—

TONY DELAP: Yes.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —so that the joins are perfect, you know.

TONY DELAP: [30:02] I think that—there's a difference, of course, but I think that Picasso's—his—what is it called? His, uh, uh—What is that period called?

MATTHEW SIMMS: There's the—

TONY DELAP: Where he—oh, God, I'm losing my mind. The—

MATTHEW SIMMS: There's analytic cubism, and synthetic cubism.

TONY DELAP: No, no. No, the specific pieces where he constructed—

MATTHEW SIMMS: The welded sculpture?

TONY DELAP: No, the—[laughs.] Where he constructed the, uh—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh, you're thinking of the—

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MATTHEW SIMMS: —guitar.

TONY DELAP: The what?

MATTHEW SIMMS: Are you thinking of his guitar?

TONY DELAP: Yeah, the guitar series.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Right, so—

TONY DELAP: And for me, the guitar series is the most important period he had, because what he did was he took—and he took and fused sculpture and painting.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Mm. Right. Working on a flat surface, but building—

TONY DELAP: Yeah. And—you know—he seemed to have—to me, he seemed to have integrated the physical space with the painter's space.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Mm-hmm. Right.

TONY DELAP: And that's the content, you know.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Right.

TONY DELAP: And I really like that. I mean, I really feel very strongly about that. So I figure that my idea was as you moved across a—if a painting's hung, and if you move across it, and so on and so forth, every time you make a move you're seeing that differently than you are than if you stand in one place. And people—you know, some—I know sometimes you're taught to—well, go to the museum and stand in front of a painting for ten minutes, and don't move. [They laugh.] Well, I say, if it's my work, go to the front of a painting and go back and forth ten minutes.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah, because you're interested in the relationships—

TONY DELAP: [02:00] Well, because—yeah, because it's changing.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah. Well, painting, painting becomes very important, starting in the early '70s, and you begin with canvases that have rounded top edges and then come down, and yet they're almost like jigsaw puzzles. So in a way, there are pieces that are joined, and—are each of those pieces independent canvases that are stretched, and then—?

TONY DELAP: Yes.

MATTHEW SIMMS: So that's quite a complex enterprise.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: A lot of woodworking—

TONY DELAP: Yes.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —to create a structure, part of the wood—

TONY DELAP: That's true.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And all of that labor that went into that, then are you saying that was in the name of generating a painting that was to be seen as a configuration of these important transitions? That you move from one area to another, or—? I'm just trying to understand—you've said in a different context that it wasn't the surface of the canvas, or the color, even, so much that mattered that to you; it was the edges between things.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. Well, the color mattered, but—in a sense, but not—yeah, not like the physicality did.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And by physicality, it's that sense that—

TONY DELAP: Is the physical part of the piece.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Right.

TONY DELAP: And, but for me, that's the content. That's what the painting is about. You know, it—[04:00] When I say what it's about, it's not about a dog or a little child or something; it's about that. [Laughs.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah. Those interlocking shapes.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. It's about an abstract goings-on. [Laughs.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah. We're talking quite a bit about painting, and I know that drawing has also been a very important part of what you've—

TONY DELAP: It's very important, yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Is it true to say that a lot of times drawing, for you, is something that comes after the fact, after making an object—[inaudible]—

TONY DELAP: It can. It can.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah. How—say a few things about how drawing might—how it operates for you, how it has operated for you.

TONY DELAP: Well, sometimes I'd have a piece, and it'll be on the wall, and then a shadow falls where it falls, and I'll look at it and I'll think, "Oh, that would kind of make a nice drawing," you know. But most of—over the years, most of my drawings are preliminaries, or thoughts and—that pretty much—not always—complete in itself for a piece, but at least partially so. There's something—I'll make a drawing sometimes, and there's something about the drawing, or something for—where, for me, I can see that drawing, and maybe part of that drawing in reference to the wall. [06:03] Now, that's what I really—that's what I really am interested in, you know. And I don't kind of know how else to say it. I just—you know, well, why is that interesting? Well, it's because I think it is, I guess. [They laugh.] But—

MATTHEW SIMMS: As simple as that.

TONY DELAP: But I—as I say, I mean, I have nothing against historic painting or anything, and I sure like a lot of

it, but, as I say, for me, it is a container to put something on, you know.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Sticking with drawing for a second, if I could, I think I also read that you—somewhere where you said that drawings for the twisted sculptures began to give you some ideas for the next step into painting.

TONY DELAP: Oh, absolutely.

MATTHEW SIMMS: So that drawing—not drawings for paintings, but drawings of sculptures started to feed into new thoughts—

TONY DELAP: Absolutely. Absolutely, yeah, yeah. Very much so. And one of the things that I have made a big mistake about is through the years, up to—oh, I don't know how long ago, but I made full-size drawings.

MATTHEW SIMMS: You mean to scale.

TONY DELAP: To scale. And then I almost always would destroy those drawings.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh, that was a mistake. [They laugh.]

TONY DELAP: Yeah. And sometimes they were nothing more than something diagrammatic, without much excitement. [08:04] But sometimes they also had an inner meaning that I wished I had saved, and I didn't.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And these were mainly done as a way to plan out—

TONY DELAP: Yeah, because the first thing I would do would be to put, you know, a large piece of paper on the wall, and then just start working on the drawing, and realizing what I did, you know, when I put this down, what is that going to look like when it's in dimension.

MATTHEW SIMMS: So this would be, already, when you were working on the—

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —constructions, the boxes—

TONY DELAP: That's right.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —you would do that, as well.

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh, and all of those preliminary drawings are—were thrown away, as you say. Most of them.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. They were, yeah. And—

MATTHEW SIMMS: That's a shame.

TONY DELAP: —it was too bad. Let me get us a coffee.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Sure. I'm going to put this on—

[Audio break.]

TONY DELAP: Okay.

MATTHEW SIMMS: All right, we're back on. We were going to start by talking briefly about the Duchamp Festival in 1971, I think it was—double check on the date—at UCI, and that, then, can lead into a larger discussion about questions of magic, and specifically your relationship with Dai Vernon.

TONY DELAP: Well, I'm certainly not a Duchamp expert in any way. I've always, you know, enjoyed him and enjoyed his work. [09:53] He was here on the West Coast for a period of time, and a number of the artists of my generation knew him—I mean, had met him, actually. [Laughs.] The difference between the two of us is that I compulsively wanted to make things, and Duchamp compulsively didn't want to make anything at all.

MATTHEW SIMMS: [They laugh.] That's a big difference.

TONY DELAP: You know.

MATTHEW SIMMS: That festival was—you were invited by Barbara Rose, I think.

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And you decided to do a levitation. You want to talk about how that went?

TONY DELAP: Well, that—you know, that came by in a very offhanded way. I was not—I was not teaching that quarter. I had taken off. And I knew that she was out, and I knew of her reputation, and I knew, you know, that at that time she was Frank Stella's wife, and all of that. So because I was distanced—distant—I was somewhat distant from the show that they were doing—she did that show, you know, with the lady from northern California.

MATTHEW SIMMS: [12:07] Moira Roth?

TONY DELAP: Yeah, Moira—I don't know if she still is—who taught at the women's school in Oakland.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Mills?

TONY DELAP: At Mills, yeah. Anyway, so I, of course, knew about all that, and I thought, well, it'd be kind of fun to do a levitation. So I got a room, a small room, at the school to do my—[laughs]—to do my number. And I thought, well, what—you know, what kind of a levitation am I going to do? Because I wasn't all that versed in the whole thing, technically. So I did know one levitation where—I can't draw a picture of it, but I almost can—that goes to your leg, and the way it's designed—And you have a table or something, and anyway, it works in conjunction with a table or something, which is usually draped. And so I thought of that, and so I went to the Magic Castle one day, and saw Milt Larsen, who's one—was—who is one of the brothers that started the whole thing. [14:10] And I told him what I was doing, and so on. And he said, "Well, you know," he said, "I think we've got one of these in storage." [They laugh.] So I walked around there with him, and he did. And so he gave it to me, and I said, "When do you need it back?" And he said, "Oh, look," he said, "there's no hurry. Don't worry about it." So I took that and realized—I would tell you in detail more, but it's been just so long I can't, because I've forgotten. But so I brought that back, and worked with it, and what I thought I would do would be to have the woman who's being levitated—I'm trying to think now—come out and lay down on the table. And—but the visual levitation itself took place not when the lights were dim, but when the lights were bright, which I just thought was interesting. And so I had two or three guys in the department help me, and I think they—the levitation's here, and they put some candles around on the floor, and the students came in and sat down, you know. And when they came in—[16:02] I'm just trying to think of the—what happened, was—I think I—yeah, I think the cloth was over the table, and I had the lady get up there—and then—There was a chair under each end of this plank, and the students would come up, and they would remove that plank, and she would appear to, you know—The levitation was very successful, in that sense. And then after a few minutes of this not very interesting conversation, probably, by me, the lights would go up. No, the lights were up. And they would leave. That was just kind of the—[they laugh]—you know, was kind of a strange thing. And I—What actually, in a strange way, scared me was there was one student who I saw afterwards who said, "Oh," he said, "I really enjoyed your performance." He said, "I didn't know that a person could be levitated, just—you know, without anything—" [18:02] In other words, "I didn't know a person could be levitated in space." And I thought, my God, you know. That's frightening.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah. [They laugh.]

TONY DELAP: But it looked that way, so it worked well. And—but it was just a—you know, it was just a—It was nothing more than a kind of a fun thing to do is what it was. And it's funny how something like that catches on more than you ever think it would.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Well, there's a wonderful photograph of you doing it, so it helps.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. [Laughs.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: It's interesting, while we're talking about students: I didn't ask you this, and I thought it would be worth asking, if you had any particular students at UCI that you really felt a deep connection to, or maybe all of them, but specific ones, maybe, that you felt like had passed through your courses or you had mentored that you felt a strong connection to.

TONY DELAP: Oh, I think so. Certainly over the years, both men and women.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah. Any that stick out?

TONY DELAP: Oh, I had one—I had one TA, a young lady who went on to—I think she went to Yale, and to the School of Architecture, and graduated, and then decided she wanted to be a painter—[laughs]—after all. And I had, you know, not a lot, but occasionally there would be somebody such as that. I had one woman painter, whose name I can't think of, who is really a good—is really a good artist, and, as far as I know, still working, and

so on. [20:06] And—

MATTHEW SIMMS: What about some of the sort of names that are very well known now, who also passed through—

TONY DELAP: Oh, yeah. Well, no, now—Well, yeah. I mean, what's his name was there, who did the lampposts, you know.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Oh, Chris Burden.

TONY DELAP: Chris Burden.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Were you aware of him as a student? Did he work with you?

TONY DELAP: Yeah, they were sitting outdoors one day, a bunch of the kids, and I walked by. Chris was there. And I said, "Chris, you know," I said, "there's only one person I can think of that reminds me of you." And I said, "That's Harry Houdini, because he was always, you know, in a small space for two days, or something of that sort." And I think that's quite true, actually.

MATTHEW SIMMS: That's true. He would—

TONY DELAP: He probably spent more time being miserable than Harry ever did, you know.

MATTHEW SIMMS: He must have been able to get himself into a state of meditative calm—

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —to be able to—

TONY DELAP: But I love those stories. And speaking of Harry Houdini, my friend Vernon—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah, Dai Vernon.

TONY DELAP: —was—you know, he knew Houdini very well, and he said he was not much of a magician but he was a hell of a showman. And—But there's quite a well-known story among the magicians. There was a magicians' gathering one evening, probably in New York, at one of the hotels. [22:00] And it was for Houdini, for whatever reasons. And at the end of the whatever was going on, some of the magicians said to Vernon, they said, "Hey, Dai, show Harry something." You know, "Show Harry a trick." So Houdini always said that if he saw a magic trick three times, he'd be able to tell what was happening. So anyway, they got this going, and Vernon took out a deck of cards—[laughs]—and he said to Houdini, he said, "Well, look," he said, "you take a card." And Harry Houdini did. He said, "Turn it over and put it on the top of the deck." So Houdini does. And he said, "All right," he said, "I'm going to take that card and turn it over and put it second from the top." Right, second from the top. Very—he would do that very obviously. But he would say, "Now, look." He said, "I'm going to turn over those two cards." And he said, "When I do that," he said, "your card is back on top." In other words, he would move it and it would be back on top. And so the story goes that he did that seven times for Houdini, who was just going flat out crazy, and finally left for a taxicab or something like that. And anyway, I know the simple trick, but—[24:07] the story continues that a day later or something Bess Houdini called Dai Vernon and said, "Dai, for God's sakes, will you show—will you show Harry how to do that trick? He's driving me crazy." [They laugh.] You know. But I think that the thing that's interesting about this story is that the—in a kind of sense, that's what magic is about. It's about—I mean, it's—and I think in some ways, in its own way, I like to think that a painting or something is, too. In other words, it's not fooling the senses, necessarily, but it's changing the senses.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Changing them, yeah.

TONY DELAP: You know.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah, that's a nice way of putting it, and you became quite friendly with Vernon, and—

TONY DELAP: I did.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And did a big—

TONY DELAP: I became very friendly with him, and he left home, not in disgust or anything, but he left home as a young person and went to New York, to the Art Students League. And he was there for a short time, and then he got involved with magic and so forth. And what he was doing was spending all of his time in the back room at Mortinka's, which was the magic shop where the pros all went, and he was showing them card tricks, and so on, and blowing their minds, because they didn't know what he was doing. [26:05] And what he was doing was from

a book—this is all very famous stuff to magicians, but what he was doing was he was doing tricks and all from a book called *The Expert at the Card Table*. And they never have found out exactly who wrote that book. And Vernon memorized it by the time he was six, seven years old. And most of the magicians had seen it. A lot of them didn't understand it, you know. And that's all very true. And the expert at the card table is still, you know, something that is widely read by magicians, and also read for very practical reasons. But so that kind of thing, and those kind of stories, you know, for a particularly young person, always—I always liked. And so when I applied for membership at the Magic Castle, as a magician member, I, you know, really kind of cheated, because I—I think it was about 1967, maybe 1968; I can't remember, but Magic Castle hadn't been open very long. And I went there one evening, and it was still a club without a lot of money to run it, and so on and so forth. [28:00] But it had a number of—still, of the old-timers, who were still kicking, did come out, because they found a new home. And so I went in, and I knocked, you know, on the door, so to speak, and was—I said, "Well," I said, "I'm just here to show whoever some of my work, and—you know, for a magician's membership." And so some—one of the guys held up their hand, and he said, "Hey, Dai, come here." And so Mr. Dai Vernon came over, you know, and I just certainly knew who he was. And he, you know, couldn't have been nicer. And so I showed him some slides, you know, over in the corner or something. And when I got all finished, he called over one of the other guys, and he said, "Hey, you know," he said, "look," he said, "Tony here," he said, "wants to be a magician's member." He said, "Why don't we let him do that, bring a little class to this place?" [They laugh.] His exact words, you know. So he did become a friend, and he was a very interesting guy. He was amazingly intelligent. And he was really the—you know, through the years, the best card handler in the world. And he, every night, had a—you know, a roundtable or whatever with magicians from sometimes all various places of the world, you know: Japan, or wherever. [30:03] And then I brought him down here one time when I did that outdoor floating lady.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Mm-hmm. That was the second performance of the *Levitation*.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. And—

MATTHEW SIMMS: And it was at the Orange County Museum of Art, I believe.

TONY DELAP: Yeah, that's right. And that was kind of fun, and kind of wacko. And the only crane that we could get, traveling crane that could be driven on the highway, had to be on the highway at certain times of the day. That was one thing that we had to pay attention to. And then the other was who to get to be the floating lady, and—

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TONY DELAP: —uh, did I tell you this story before?

MATTHEW SIMMS: No, but keep going. It's—

TONY DELAP: Yeah. So I inquired, and so on and so forth, and I catch—I can't remember who found this out for me, but we got Farrah Fawcett's stand-in, or Farrah Fawcett's double. Lovely, very pretty girl. And so she came. Hi there. And the truck could only come on the freeway a certain time of day, so it came to this—there was, like, a building then, but it came into the site where the museum is now. And a bunch of us went up there, and the double came up, and, as I say, just a lovely person and all, but she told us that in whatever we did that she would have to be paid according to how high she went.

MATTHEW SIMMS: In the levitation.

TONY DELAP: [Laughs.] In the levitation. And so many feet was this, and after she got up to a height where if she fell she died, that was the most expensive, and, you know, it kind of started with, "If you fall here at ten feet you'll break a leg or an arm," and, you know, that's really true. That's the way they had it measured. It was all studio, you know. And so she gave us all that goings-on. [01:57] And so the truck made a tremendous amount of noise when it was—because it had to run its—

MATTHEW SIMMS: The engine.

TONY DELAP: Whatever.

MATTHEW SIMMS: The motor, the—

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: The thing that was hoisting—

TONY DELAP: And so I had talked to my friend, Conrad Hall, the cinematographer, who was uptown, and asked Conrad if he would come down and stop by and get diverted. [Laughs.] And so—it's a crazy story, isn't it? So he

did do that at the time, you know, and it becomes nightfall. And we had an awful lot of people out there, I must say, sitting. It was before the second building was built, but we had an awful lot of people out there. And the floating lady is sitting up with a flowing white bit on. She—I designed this cradle, which looked not too much unlike *The Big Wave*, actually. And she laid on this, and the truck driver who was running the lift, you know, when the time came, and it was dark, and so forth, he very slowly lifts her up, and then she starts going across like this to the right, when you're facing the water. And it was beautiful. I mean, we had a high-intensity light on her. [04:00] And—wasn't it, Kathy? You know, she was just floating there. And she didn't go real far, but she went over to, at that time, really a back—to the back of where the police station is, and then was slowly lowered, and when she got down a certain—the high-intensity light went off, and so everything went dark again. And I had a couple guys there that met her, and took care of her, you know, and so on and so forth. So it was kind of strangely successful. Are you agreeing with me so far? [Laughs.] And, anyway, it was—the evening was a lot of fun, and people seemed to enjoy it very much. And I guess it was, oh, I don't know, maybe three weeks later or something like that, Kathy and I were at the Magic Castle, and Dai Vernon was there, holding court with—he had a kind of area there at the Magic Court where he met with magicians, you know. So when we went in, Dai holds up—he said, like, "Hey, Tony," he said, "come over here a minute." So I went over, and he said, "Tell these guys about that levitation," you know. So I did. Dai said, "Yeah," he said, "you know, it's the damndest thing," he said. You know, he said, "This lady starts floating." He said, "She just floats right across the—like, over the bay there, at Newport, and goes down, and some—" And one of the magicians said, "Well, how in the hell did he do that?" And Dai said, "I'll be damned if I know." [They laugh.] You know.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Right.

TONY DELAP: And so it was kind of a joke around the Magic Castle, you know. [05:58] And so, anyway, that was quite a lot of fun. And so it's—

MATTHEW SIMMS: Well, this was—we were winding up.

KATHY DELAP: Pardon?

MATTHEW SIMMS: We were just winding up, talking about stories about magic.

KATHY DELAP: Yeah, the story's getting a little long.

MATTHEW SIMMS: [Laughs.] That's okay.

KATHY DELAP: Are you all right?

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: I think we're going to wind it up soon.

TONY DELAP: Yeah.

MATTHEW SIMMS: And I just—were—are there—you know, we had talked about what we hadn't gotten to yet, which was just those kinds of stories.

TONY DELAP: Oh, probably.

MATTHEW SIMMS: It could be that we've—it could be that we've covered most of the territory, though.

TONY DELAP: I—but I used to not resent, but I used to be kind of annoyed that the magic interfered with the public—I mean, the viewer, with what I did, because they always really were more interested in hearing about the magic than they were about art. [Laughs.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: Well—

TONY DELAP: And I found that that continued to be true. So I always hated to not so much embellish, but to get into magic stories, because I always thought it was—there's nothing wrong with that, but I didn't feel that it was really what I should be particularly talking about.

MATTHEW SIMMS: So when you're looking—when you—you had mentioned to me that one of the reasons that you titled pieces with references to magic was not to indicate that this piece is about magic, but just as a memory aid, to separate the pieces in your own mind.

TONY DELAP: [08:00] I never—I almost never titled a piece that had anything to do with the name. Almost never.

MATTHEW SIMMS: So there's no connection between names—

TONY DELAP: And so very often people want to know, or they read into it their own—maybe that's okay, I mean, if people want to sit around and worry about what the title does, and so forth, in reference to the piece, but it never had anything to do with, never had anything to do with the piece, unless, you know—I mean, certain names just didn't seem proper.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Right.

TONY DELAP: But I always liked kind of a funny, abstract name just in itself.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Right.

TONY DELAP: You know, and—so. But it's all been—you know, it's all been an experience, that whole area of art and magic, and how, in the case of my work, it would most often be interpreted, and I find it very interesting.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Yeah.

TONY DELAP: [Laughs.] Do you have anything to say, Kathy?

KATHY DELAP: Well, I might suggest that there is an exception to the titles. Are we on? [Laughs.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: Sure, this is fine.

KATHY DELAP: The thing that I'm most aware of is that the *Floating Ladys* are, in fact, floating ladies.

TONY DELAP: Oh, yes.

KATHY DELAP: I mean, the floating lady is a wonderful touchstone through his work, and it has certainly—like the piece in front of the Orange County Museum. [10:07] I mean, that's certainly a floating lady, and it makes reference to the human body, and he certainly has a lady floating beside it. So I think that's a sort of major exception to the—a lot of the titles, as he said. I mean, they were kind of fun, because he'd go through his old magic books, and pull up names that he'd like. But the *Floating Lady* certainly is different from that.

TONY DELAP: Yeah. I—But—

KATHY DELAP: I think *Performance*—was it *Performance* magazine? One of the magazines had a description, maybe a drawing or a photograph or something, that Tony had done, where he had plotted the way the *Floating Lady* was supposed to go out, you know, the way he—

TONY DELAP: The way it was to circle.

KATHY DELAP: It was a very beautiful illusion, and she was draped and flowered, and—

MATTHEW SIMMS: I imagine.

KATHY DELAP: —it was quite theatrical.

TONY DELAP: It was another instance where my friend Conrad Hall, the cinematographer, was so bored—[They laugh.]

MATTHEW SIMMS: I don't know why you kept saying that he was bored.

TONY DELAP: Only because he was a good friend did he do that, but how many Academy Awards did Conrad win? Four? Four, I think.

MATTHEW SIMMS: Well, this might be a good spot to kind of—

TONY DELAP: Sure.

MATTHEW SIMMS: —sign off, then.

KATHY DELAP: Have you guys been going full tilt?

MATTHEW SIMMS: We have, yeah.

KATHY DELAP: That's all fine?

MATTHEW SIMMS: I'll go ahead and stop—

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]