

Oral History Interview—Herb Simon, 2022 January 5th

Participants:

Christopher N. Breiseth

Tim Gilmour

Jim Rodechko

Herb Simon (interviewee)

Suzanna Calev (recorder)

Transcribed by Kara Beerley, Spring 2022.

[Recording begins on Zoom, 0:00:32]

Jim Rodechko (JR): Hello!

Suzanna Calev (SC): Hi, Jim!

JR: How you doing?

SC: Pretty good! How are you?

JR: I've been better. *[Laughing]*

[Phone rings]

SC: Oh! Someone's calling, one second.

JR: Go ahead, sure.

Chris Breiseth (CB): Hello everybody.

JR: Hello!

CB: Jim, how are you doing?

JR: Oh! I've been better, Chris. I've been better.

CB: You've really gone through the traces.

JR: I was in a car accident, too.

CB: Oh, my God.

SC: Oh my God, are you okay?

JR: Yeah. January 2nd. I was coming home from picking up dinner for Ginny and I, and two cars collided, and one of them was thrown directly into the path of my vehicle. I wasn't hurt at all, although my car is kind of messed up.

SC: Oh, I'm so sorry.

CB: Thank goodness you weren't hurt.

JR: Yeah. No, I wasn't. Ginger is really the one hurting now. She's in great pain. She has hip problems. And tomorrow we have a doctor's appointment.

CB: Oh, dear. Is it arthritis or?

JR: We don't know. She had a CAT scan on Monday, so we should have some answers tomorrow.

Tim Gilmour (TG): What's this all about, Jim?

JR: Ginger has a hip injury.

TG: Oh, you mentioned that before, yeah.

JR: Yeah. I am not seeing Chris.

CB: Well, maybe I should click on here. I wasn't trying to hide.

JR: There you go.

TG: You know what that is? That's his penitentiary number. *[Tim is referring to the numbers on Chris's screen before his camera turned on]* His inmate number. 636424.

[Laughter]

CB: I tried to cancel it, because I thought I should put in a new number, and then I started all over.

TG: Nah, once you get into the New York penal system, Chris, they never change the number.

CB: Even upstate?

TG: Actually, no. There are some exceptions up there, come to think of it.

JR: Funny you would know that much about the penal code in New York

[Laughter]

TG: Well, uh... There's some things you guys don't know about me, you know?

CB: Maybe we have some things to worry about before we knew him!

TG: My middle name is Guido.

[Laughter]

CB: Anyway, happy New Year, everybody.

SC: Happy New Year!

JR: Yeah. Happy New Year!

TG: Yeah, same to you, everybody.

CB: Has Herb gone on the telephone yet?

SC: So Herb, we were having some difficulties, but I think he has the correct numbers and meeting IDs now, so he should be calling at any second.

TG: So we will not be observing him, we will be talking with him.

SC: Yes.

TG: And I see that you're on campus!

SC: Yes. I know, we're technically supposed to be remote, but I have some students that wanted to work over the break, and we've been doing some more social distancing, and we had to get tested, so I've been negative. Getting a lot done, still, so.

CB: Good!

JR: When will classes start, Suzanna?

SC: So I think they're technically starting the 18th, but administration is right now deciding whether to be virtual for the first two weeks and then come back in-person February 1st or start normally. So I think they're pushing more towards going virtual for the first two weeks.

[Note: Wilkes University began classes on January 18th, 2022 and started back in-person on January 30th]

CB: Did you end up in December with a lot of cases in December? Or a lot of positives?

SC: I don't think there were that many. I didn't hear much about them. But I think now it is more about the omicron cases that are really, really boosting. So I'd be interested to see what will happen when students return. I think they all are getting tested anyway to come back.

CB: My modest holiday story was that my grandson's girlfriend tested positive the Monday before Christmas. He and his family flew out to Santa Fe to join my son-in-law's parents, who just moved there from Michigan. He had to quarantine when he got out there. I don't know how he managed the flight. I thought it was indiscreet of me to press the point. Anyway, they returned after Christmas, got to the airport, and he tested positive. No symptoms. So they were denied access to the flight. So they had to drive from Santa Fe in a rental car to Baltimore. We got a photo at every state line that they arrived at, with my grandson always discreetly way behind the others in the selfie. And then they got in on New Year's Eve, and my daughter then had to take her daughter back to Williams on Sunday. Round-trip, since she had to be at her school where she's the director on Monday. Anyway, it was a, what you call, an eventful holiday.

TG: Oh, it was! That's too bad.

JR: Two of my grandsons tested positive this past week, but no symptoms.

CB: Yup. My grandson never had symptoms.

JR: Yep.

TG: Yeah, my grandson was the same.

CB: Clearly, given how infectious this one is, I mean how much it spreads, college campuses are going to be the center of activity. Even if it's not brutal. The number of people involved, it's going to be... the administrators are figuring out all kinds of stratagems to be as safe as possible. Even though it's going to be impossible to be safe.

JR: Yeah.

CB: Apparently, you just have to be near someone who got this, and you get it.

TG: I'm interested to see what happens because, by the way, Wilkes did not have a spike at the end of the year, at the last semester, which was pretty good. But it would be interesting to decide. I think Paul is not on today because I think he is in a Zoom call. I would assume they'll be discussing the very issue that we're discussing in terms of what we do. But you know, there are steps you can take, but you have to have a very good mask. And masking behavior among college students isn't bad, from what I can understand. I mean, when you think about it, most campuses came through it. I realize it wasn't omicron, but nevertheless, it seems to be that colleges have been hotbeds of infectious disease for reasons that we all know about. And it's been surprising how they have handled it. Whether or not they can keep the lid on omicron, I don't know. Seems to be much more viral. But also less seriously infectious.

CB: Well one of my daughters gave me a package of, what is it, N95?

TG: Yeah.

CB: Masks. Which I'm trying to deal with with my glasses and my hearing aids, getting this new mask on. I just decided when I go out, I'm gonna go out without hearing aids!

TG: What'd you say, Chris? Speak up, will ya?

[Laughter]

TG: Actually, they're saying that the mask—I think Herb is on, I see—but just to finish that thought, I saw a thing. There's a guy at Penn who's really good, and he was saying that there were a lot of KN-95 masks that you claim to be—

[Herb joins Zoom call, no visual]

Herb Simon (HS): Hello? Hello?

CB: Hello Herb!

JR: Hello Herb!

TG: Hi, Herb!

HS: Am I on the call thing now?

SC: Yes!

CB: You are on! You are with it!

HS: I was having trouble. Okay, well I'm on now.

CB: Can you hear us?

HS: Yes, I can.

CB: Good.

TG: We can hear you.

CB: Let me begin this exciting adventure. And it's the 5th of January, 2022. And Suzanna Calev and Jim Rodechko, Tim Gilmour, and I, Chris Breiseth, are on with the immensely important sculptor Herb Simon to ask for his reflections on his career, both at Wilkes and elsewhere. Now Herb, we've been doing this...I don't know. Suzanna, how many oral histories?

SC: I would say over 30 something. 31.

CB: Okay. so we've been talking to trustees, to faculty, to alumni, community people, and it's really turned out to be a very rich mane of history for Wilkes. So we wanted a chance to have you cshare with us your own sense of your career, your life, and your sense of Wilkes. Among other things, of course, you've seen the Sordoni Gallery from its start. And I don't think that we have any record of that in these oral history interviews, so your reflections on that will be very important. Before we do that, tell us about where you were born, where you grew up, what your education was before you got to Wilkes.

HS: What was that question?

CB: Start with your own life. Where were you born? And—

HS: Oh. Okay, well my name is Herb Simon. I was born in Nashville, Tennessee. And I was educated there for high school. I went to Vanderbilt for two years, then I wasn't very happy there. I went off to New York, to various art schools there. Mainly the book and museum art schools. And then I returned to Nashville and did various things. And then I decided I wanted to move to a new area of the country to finish up my degree. And I went to Colorado College for a year out in Colorado Springs, but I ended up in New York University, and that's when I got my B.A. degree, and eventually a Master's in the school of education.

CB: Does this mean that you found the North more appealing than the South?

HS: Oh, yeah, I always wanted to get out of the south. There's a couple things about it that I loathed. Their attitudes towards almost everything. But anyways, eventually I did get out, and then of course I ended up here in Pennsylvania, where I'm very happy to be. And so definitely the North appealed to me really from a very young age.

CB: And so how did you get to Wilkes?

HS: Well, I was in an organization called the College Art Association, and they had a sort of profile of me. The things that I'd accomplished as an artist. And Chet Colson, who at that time was the chairman of the art department at Wilkes who was looking for someone to teach sculpture. And he was interested in my profile in a publication that the College Art Association puts out each year. And eventually I met with him, came out here. He offered me the position. This was in...I guess it would have been 1969, yeah. So that's how I came out here.

CB: So, even before we get into the Wilkes story, describe your art form and how in the sculpture movement would you define yourself, and how did you develop as a sculptor compared to, say, being a painter.

HS: Okay, well I started out being a painter. And then at a certain point, I didn't know really how I wanted to proceed as a painter. And so I decided to do something in sculpture. I was living in New York at the time, and there was a group that met in a small studio in East Village, and I did a bust self-portrait. And I knew nothing about casting, but there was someone in it who did the casting. And that began my sculpture career. The early works that I did was in plaster. It had almost a figurative-expressionist bend to it. And I would sometimes put—I would paint a patina on it to make it look like metal. And then I was teaching to make my living in New York, I was teaching the public schools there. I applied for a grant at the MacDowell Colony, which is an artist colony in New Hampshire. And I was preparing for a show in a gallery, in the Phoenix Gallery. So I went up to MacDowell. It was around the time that Kennedy was assassinated, the first of the Kennedys. And that's when I—there was a sculptor up there who was working in wood, and I began, after these plaster things, I began working in wood, carving in wood. And so that's basically my experience. Basically, I was a self-taught sculptor. And when I came out here, the school was getting a lot of equipment, welding equipment. I had never done any of that. And so I started working in metal out here. A person that was very helpful to me was Tony Toluba, who was running the machine shop in the engineering department. He taught me welding. And so when I started working in metal, the fabricated pieces in metal. Steel and aluminum, mainly. And then I got interested in doing things that were cast in bronze. I had a grant to the Johnson Atelier down in New Jersey. And that's where I went for several weeks and went through the whole process of casting a piece into bronze. So then my work in metal has been in steel and aluminum, those were the main two, and bronze.

CB: Were there any major sculptures who you looked to as a young man for inspiration, or were drawn to?

HS: Well, in my earlier work, I was certainly influenced by African sculpture. Brancusi, the famous Romanian sculptor. When I started working in metals, David Smith was certainly an influence. And then a greater influence was another Smith, Tony Smith. And he worked in metal in a sort of modular way, which interested me. So they were the main artists that I was influenced by.

CB: Do some of the rest of you have some questions on the artistic side, before I get into the institutional history?

TG: Yes, this is Tim Gilmour, Herb.

HS: How you doing?

TG: And great to talk with you.

HS: Okay.

TG: I remember some really large things that you did, which by the way, I really liked. I'm not saying that gratuitously, I really really like your work. But can you tell us a little bit about how you—I mean there are some things, I believe, that are out in the public now. So could you tell me what were some of your favorite works that you've done, and where they are, and how that relates to Wilkes?

HS: Yeah. Okay, well I have done several commission pieces in this area. The first piece is in Coal Street Park, that's in Wilkes-Barre. It's been moved from its original position. And it's been placed in a terrible position, and it's been neglected horribly. So it once looked really—it's called *Two Modules*. One half was painted orange, and the second half was painted red.

TG: I love it!

HS: What I didn't anticipate was local children playing on it. It's like they read it not as art, but as a playground sculpture. But that was the first commission. Then I did a piece, which I think is one of my best works, which is on the Schaeffer lecture hall wall. It's an exterior piece. It's called *Facets*.

TG: Yeah.

HS: And it's an aluminum piece, if you're familiar with that.

TG: Yes.

HS: And it's in aluminum. And it was fabricated in the Dunmore area of Scranton. McGregor. It looks better now with the new science building than it did formerly.

TG: Interesting.

HS: And then the third large piece was a piece that I did for the airport here. And it's a piece in aluminum, and it was fabricated by Jim McCabe, who has a business here in Dallas. And he did the piece. Then of course, I've done smaller pieces. There's a hanging piece in the stairwell of the library at Wilkes.

TG: Right.

HS: And then individuals. I've done smaller pieces, but individuals. And they're, as I say, they're all in this area.

SC: Do you have the years that you did *Two Modules* and *Facets*? What were the years that you did commission those?

HS: There's a little bit of static on the connection and my hearing. What did you just ask me?

SC: What years did you work on *Two Modules* and *Facets*?

HS: Let's see, it would have been in the 70s and the 80s. And now, the last piece was the airport sculpture. That may have been in the 21st century. You know, I don't have it before me.

TG: No, it would have been after 2000. Probably 2006 or -7, Herb. It was whenever the airport opened. The new part.

HS: Yeah. That's right, yeah.

TG: I really liked it.

HS: Of course, I continued to work smaller-scale, but then I got very interested in printmaking right around 2004. I retired from Wilkes after 23 years, I think it was 1993, '94. Because I had a studio out here in Shavertown. And I continued with sculpture. But then in 2004, I got interested in printmaking and I took a printmaking course with Sharon Cosgrove. And although I'd done some printmaking in the past, it was never a real focus. And so eventually the printmaking thing really took over. And so then I realized that this is really what I wanted to concentrate on. And I realized that I wasn't going to make any—I've done a lot of sculpture, I have hundreds of pieces. But most of it is small-ish. But I figured, oh, I'm going to concentrate on printmaking, and I got an etching press and set up a printmaking studio in my studio, which is just a few steps in the backyard of my house. So that's what I'm doing now.

CB: And what are some of the subjects of your prints?

HS: Well, let's see, subjects. A lot have to do with the city. New York, basically. I'm very interested in—a lot of the pieces had to do with road signage. You know, with a rather simplified picture of things. Where you should make a turn, or when the road is slippery, or so forth. So I did a series, they sort of relate to traffic. And I've done quite a number of prints having to do with mining in this area. Breakers, and things of the sort. It has come to—when I arrived here in '69, there was no longer an anthracite coal industry. But there were still remnants of it in the form of breakers. And so I did some sculptures of this, and printmaking I've done a lot of prints. Another thing is working with language. With words or phrases. And that's a lot of my prints have to do with that.

CB: Give us an example of some of the phrases that you've worked with.

HS: Well let's see... You know I can't think of it. Here, I'm mentioning it, and I can't think of it off-hand. You know, one of the things that I did during these last few years is doing a lot of things relating to COVID-19. And I used up a road sign that says, 'No Outlet'. It's a diamond-shaped sign, the background is yellow, and the words 'No Outlet' is in black. And then I've done quite a number of things having to do with COVID. Also, I've done, occasionally, done some things that have a political saying. An opposition to the Trump Administration. So these are the subjects which, in the sculpture, I really didn't go much into these kinds of things. It's only in printmaking that I've seemed to gravitate that way.

CB: Can you give us an example of some of your political prints?

HS: Well there's one, it's a portrait I drew of Donald Trump with his mouth open, as if he's speaking. And I call it, *Screaming Trump*. Well there's a very famous painting by an English sculptor Francis Bacon, called, *Screaming Pope*, maybe you're familiar with it.

CB: I am, indeed!

HS: It's one of his most famous works. People who follow contemporary art like you would make that connection right away.

CB: Wonderful. I was at Oxford in '60-'62 when Bacon really was very prominent in terms of the English museums.

HS: That's right.

CB: I went to an exhibit of all Bacon, and it was a shaking experience.

HS: Yeah, he's hard to deal with. I mean, his work, you know? But anyway, that's all I know.

CB: So is Trump. Difficult to deal with.

HS: Yeah.

TG: So does your Trump portrait look like the *Screaming Pope*?

HS: No, his mouth is open as if he's speaking. I mean, I've been on Facebook since the beginning. So if you go to Facebook 'Herbert Simon,' you can look. It's years of work. See, I have pictures of all—everything I do I eventually photograph. I have archives. Since we're speaking to the archivist. I have some albums with pictures of work that goes back to when I was a painter. But anyway, it's all there. So I can use this material whenever I need to.

CB: That's wonderful.

TG: So, Herb, are you—I'm not sure what to say, but I always am reluctant to ask artists this question, which is: are you still selling some of your works or are they just kind of always in your archives.

HS: Well, I'm always interested in selling my work. I have a lot of work that is unsold, as is the case with a lot of artists. I don't want to hold on. I love to see it go. It's like, teenage children are nice to have around, but there's a point where you really want them to go. And I feel the same way about my art. So I have quite a lot that's out in the world, you might say.

TG: Next time I get up, I may try to get in touch with you. I really like some those things that you've done. I'd love to see some of the prints. I bet they're really very nice, and maybe a little clever.

HS: Is this Tim that I'm talking to?

TG: Yep.

HS: Yeah, well anytime you want to come out to—are you living in Pennsylvania? I thought you moved to Tennessee.

TG: No, I didn't move to Tennessee, I moved to Missouri, which is even farther south than Tennessee, psychologically.

HS: And you're where?

TG: I moved to Missouri, but now I'm back in Virginia, in Richmond. So I get up—this group that's on the phone gets together every once in a while. I think when COVID abates, which I suspect will be not

too long from now, we may get together. And at that point, maybe I can prevail on Chris to come out with me or something.

HS: Yeah, I'd love it.

TG: I've always liked your stuff, Herb. I'm glad I'm on here to be able to tell you that!

HS: So is Jim Rodechko online?

JR: Yes, I am, Herb!

HS: Oh, there you are. So I've spoken to all three of you now.

JR: Yes.

CB: Well, and Suzanna, too, so there's four.

TG: Our boss, yep.

HS: Yeah.

CB: And you may have some conversations with her in terms of the archives. I don't push that in this format any further, but I'm sure I've seen her taking some notes. Which is a segue to say that your relationship with Wilkes and the archives and the art dimension of the University, including the Sordoni Gallery. So why don't you talk about the art department as you found it and how it evolved and how you were involved and how you were part of that process.

HS: In '69, when I came out here, Dick Fuller arrived that year. I came on board, and Ellen Jacobs who taught ceramics and jewelry making. So three people that came on board. Bernice D'Vorzon had joined the department the year before. So it was a real big expansion. We had over 100 art majors, it was really a very thriving thing. So the chairman was Chet Colson. Phillip—oh, I've forgotten his name.

JR: Phil Richards.

HS: Phil Richards was there. Mark Owen came on as an adjunct, he taught photography. So there was really a lot of expansion in that year.

CB: A lot of talent!

TG: Yeah, I know Mark real well, so.

HS: The appointment was scattered over quite a number of buildings. So then I was very much interested and involved with the Sordoni Gallery, when they built the new part of the science building.

TG: Stark.

HS: The admiral, what's his name? Stark! Stark. There was a certain amount of controversy in the beginning. There were people in the new part of Stark who really wanted that space to be like a waiting room for people who were calling on professors at Wilkes. That's pretty much all that I know about it. But eventually, the decision was made to turn it into a gallery. And I think that Phil Richards was the first,

you might say, “curator” of it. He was on for several years, but eventually he retired. There was an art historian named Vivian Guyler and part of her job description was running the gallery in addition to teaching art history courses. That was Vivian Guyler. Then there was O’Tooles,” because Judy was the curator, but Kevin, the sculptor, was very much involved with it. And Judy was there for quite a number of years. And then she moved to the Westmoreland Museum out in Weston, Pennsylvania. And then Stanley Grand came on board. It’s usually an art historian that does things like that. And then the move to the new building and everything. So I had several shows in the old part of Stark, and was in group shows as well. But I was very much a part of it.

CB: One of the things we’ve done in these interviews, Herb, is get some word portraits of major people at Wilkes, and so there’s several that I’d like to ask you about. Starting with Dr. Farley. What was your relationship with him? What was your view of him since you were in when he was in his last years.

HS: Well when I arrived, he was in his last years at Wilkes. But I didn’t really have that many one-on-one meetings with him. But whenever they took place, it was very satisfactory. Dr. Michelini, Tim Gilmour, Chris Breiseth. I may be forgetting people.

HS: You’re remembering the right ones!

HS: I haven’t met Dr. Cant yet. But anyway, so they were the presidents that I—and there were some other ones, but I may have forgotten them.

CB: Do you have any view or remembrance of Dr. Farley that would be worth recording?

HS: No, I really can’t think of anything that is anecdotal.

CB: How about AJ Sordoni?

HS: I met Andy, and from time to time, I see him. I mean, we’re not close friends, but he’s certainly been a supporter of arts and music at Wilkes. You know, art and music used to really be big majors.

TG: They sure did.

HS: But things change, so that’s what happened.

CB: One of the things about Wilkes and its majors, was that they were linked to teaching. So you had, in effect, an ed department linked to the discipline department. So if you were a history major, you might also be taking your education courses so that you are a certified teacher by the time you left Wilkes. When you talk about 100 majors in art, were most of those people preparing to be teachers in art?

HS: Yes, they were. And those jobs began to dry up. High schools were cutting back on things like art and music. And that certainly had an effect on, Chris, as you ask or stated, most of the students who we dealt with either wanted to be art or music teachers in local public schools.

CB: This is really an issue and a dimension that we really haven’t paid enough attention to in all of these interviews. When I came to Wilkes in ‘84, this pattern was still dominant, and while I was there, it faded. And Jim, you can speak to this better than any of us. It really changed the nature of the disciplined departments. It particularly had an effect on art and music. Because those opportunities, as you said,

started to dry up. And that cut into our base of student majors in theater and dance. Well, dance was a new major in my time, so that was an up and coming thing. But you've really touched on a crucial point that we haven't given enough attention to.

JR: It's characteristic of a lot of the areas that were dependent on teaching. I think all the liberal arts areas suffered student declines as the teaching area became more and more restrictive in terms of hiring. Which now, by the way, is drastically going to change. There's going to be a big demand for teachers.

TG: Yeah, I think that will be really salutary. I also think, Jim, and you put it nicely, but I think what happened was that the discipline of education began to insert a lot of specific requirements and required specific courses that pushed out the liberal arts and even the sciences, although, one of the problems has always been getting enough science educators into the school system. Because scientists have so many other options.

CB: But one of the strengths, and Wilkes should think about this in the future, and I'm sure they are—one of the strengths is that our "it" majors had a strong discipline base. When it was going to one of the state teacher's college in education, you led the education courses. That was your kind of meat and potatoes. So we had serious history teachers and English teachers who were into the discipline when they went out into the school system. And I think that was part of where Wilkes really was very distinctive in Northeastern Pennsylvania. With the students who were leaving Wilkes with that discipline degree in hand, plus a teacher's credential.

TG: I'm kind of mindful that we have Herb here. So I could go on on that, Chris. I'm right with you. But Herb, what I'm kind of missing here in terms of your relationship with Wilkes is can you just tell us, from the time you came to Wilkes to the time you left, I think it was 23 years later, how Wilkes evolved, how you evolved, and what was right and wrong in that relationship.

HS: Well, that's difficult to answer. I mean, I think that Wilkes, the orientation was more in terms of professions than in the past. I don't know if I'm expressing that correctly.

TG: Yes, you are.

HS: For me, personally, I always wanted to do what was required of me as a teacher, but I didn't want this to completely overwhelm me and not be able to work as an individual artist. So I was very productive in those years, even though I was teaching full-time. And so that was the thing that I wanted to try and maintain, and I was able to. We had some very supportive chairmen. I failed to mention Bill Sterling, who was the chairman. He was an art historian. He also was a very good painter. He died two years ago. I think there was a period of time where he ran the Sordoni Gallery. That I'm not sure. But maybe there's someone you can interview that knows much more about that.

HS: Can you say anything about Phil Richards?

JR: Herb, I have a question for you regarding Phil Richards. I know Phil very well. In fact, I stayed in his hotel up in Maine for a couple summers.

HS: I remember. He invited me, but I never got up there.

JR: I was up there quite a bit and I knew him well. Phil let me know that Chet was very protective of his role as chair. And was very concerned about keeping it. In fact, Phil was worried at one point that his tenure might be jeopardized because of Chet's fear that Phil might want to become chair. Do you have any insight on that?

HS: No, I don't know. That I know nothing about.

JR: Okay.

CB: Well let me ask you to talk a little more about Phil Richards, who he was still around when I came and he certainly was a very large character and the Sordoni Gallery certainly had his thumbprint on it. So talk to us a little bit about your colleague.

HS: He taught painting, mainly watercolor. And he ran the—I'm pretty sure he was the first...I guess the title would be "curator" of the Sordoni Gallery. He had a lot of connections socially in the area, and his wife, too. So that gave him an advantage, you know. So I wasn't socially close to the Richards. I knew them and was friendly with them, but you know, we didn't party or anything together.

TG: Their loss!

CB: Was he technically the first chair of the Sordoni Gallery? The first director?

HS: I think he may have been.

CB: From my recollection, it was before my time.

HS: I think he may be. I guess Andy Sordoni would have information of that sort.

CB: And we want to do an interview with him, but we want to do it in person. We don't think he'd be open to a Zoom interview. But he's clearly crucial, not only to the art, but to the music side of Wilkes. I came at just the point that the first exhibit of Bob Crosby's art was put together as an exhibit at the Sordoni. And then there was a jazz concert of his music. And Jane and I arrived, before I took over, we arrived for a visit. And that's when I got to meet not only Andy and Susan, but also Andy's mother, who was a very important part of the Sordoni gallery. Which leads to: what do you know, or what do you remember about how the actual art collection that we had, until it was decommissioned for the new Sordoni Gallery on Main Street. What do you know about how that collection came about?

HS: Well, as far as I know, it was things that Andy Sordoni's father collected. When I arrived here for my first interview, I was met at the bus station by Chet Colson and Dr. Mike Michelini. And we went to the Sterling Hotel for lunch. And there were a lot of paintings and things on the walls in that dining room. But I presume, I don't know whether Andy was responsible for the purchase of those things. But I think it was more his father.

CB: Or even the senator.

HS: Yeah, well I guess his father was the senator.

CB: No, no. His father was the son of the senator. The senator had the penthouse apartment in the newer Sterling building.

TG: The annex.

HS: You're right.

TG: No, it's in Tower.

CB: Tower, yeah.

TG: I don't know. Maybe this, Herb, would—but I guess I had the understanding that the collection that Wilkes had had basically been what were the paintings that Andy's mother didn't want. Which was a lot of them. I mean, she probably picked the cream of the crop. Does that ring a bell with you?

HS: No, it doesn't. I never met Andy's mother or his mother.

TG: Right, right.

JR: Beaty O'Toole had the opinion that the collection in our art gallery was not a very good collection.

HS: Yeah. I sort of agree with that.

CB: There were some things with the Ashcan School that were pretty valuable.

TG: Yes. I can remember Andy telling me that the Ashcan School paintings were probably the best. And they might have gotten greater notoriety.

HS: They had things. I think of **Robert Enrye** and a few others. I guess they were the most, in the collection, that I could say were the most valuable things.

CB: Clearly, Helen Sloan's portrait by John Sloan. That was a wonderful, wonderful piece. And she was a very good supporter of the gallery in my experience.

HS: Who is this you're talking about?

CB: Helen Sloan. John Sloan's widow.

HS: Yeah, I met her once. John Sloan and Helen Sloan. Yeah.

CB: Can you say something about Bernice D'Vorzon as a colleague?

HS: Bernice arrived in '68, and she was really, as far as I know, the first person that was in the department who had a kind of New York background. And she taught painting, advanced painting, and printmaking. And she was very charismatic. She had a certain glamour that the students responded to. So she was a very good friend of mine. And of course, I came out of the New York—that's where my art education was. And I lived in New York for years and graduated at NYU. So we connected up with that whole environment.

CB: How about Chet himself? What can you tell us about Chet Coleson?

HS: Well one of the things was he scheduled our classes Monday through Thursday, so that we would have a long weekend. Two of those four days, it was very crowded, and the other two were a little bit

lighter in terms of teaching load. But I would frequently go into New York once a month, twice a month, and usually had to go in for a Saturday. I wanted to see what was going on in the galleries. I don't do that anymore. I'm just not fit healthwise to be going into the city. New York is difficult. You have to have a lot of energy for it, you know?

TG: Yeah, yeah.

HS: But Bernice, she was the—as I say, painting and printmaking. She was in Rome, Italy for a year. She took a year off. Well anyway, she had a son, Randall, and then eventually she married for a second time to Michael Seitz, who was the then-chairman of the language department.

CB: So a home-grown marriage at Wilkes.

TG: Yeah!

CB: Jim, you wanted to get in this.

JR: Did Bernice have a number of showings in New York?

HS: Oh yeah, she was constantly trying to get her work out into the world and into the public. She had a place out on Long Island in East Hampton, which she had purchased years before. So she would go out there in the summertime.

JR: East Hampton is quite a place!

HS: Yeah, yeah. I was more oriented toward Provincetown, because I didn't have a car back then. So you could get around Provincetown on a bicycle. But you can't do that in the Hamptons, it's too big an area.

CB: Are there places where you had shows that you are particularly happy about and fond of thinking about in retrospect?

HS: Let's see... I was in a show in Washington, D.C. I think it was the theme of city and art or something like that. There was a show at the museum in the city of New York. It's really a historical museum. I was in there. And there were a lot of shows. I had a show at the Allentown museum and Lehigh College. So despite the fact that I was teaching full-time, I still exhibited a lot. She did, too.

JR: Herb, how was the art department affected by the flood?

HS: Well you know, it was all the equipment that was flooded. But it was—I don't know, I'm trying to remember. They were in the process of building the new part of Stark when this happened. They hadn't gotten very far with it. But anyway, a lot of the classes were taught outdoors somehow. On the front porch of buildings, something like that.

CB: Of course, the new building—

HS: I just know that I was living on Malorie Place. The other half of Dick Chapline's double, and there was water to the ceiling on the first floor. But everything was completely dry on the second floor. The basement was filled with Helen Jacob's--She was going on to a new position at a school down in Florida, so she asked me could she store things in the basement, which I let her. And she had lots of books. And

she had some friends over in Kingston and they said yeah, you can put them in the basement. So all of her stuff was underwater. I mean, none of us could anticipate. I was very lucky. The sculptures that I had in metal, I could clean off any rust or anything. I had some wood pieces, which I wondered what was gonna happen to them, but they survived it. So I was truly lucky in that respect.

CB: Were you on the second floor of the building? Or were you on the first floor?

HS: No, the sculpture studio was in the basement, and so was printmaking. And so was part of nursing. There were two big buildings, at the corner of the building.

CB: The new Stark that was being built during the flood also—I think I’m correct, Jim—housed the collection, one of the Sordoni Gallery collections, which is one of the things I worried about .

JR: It was all down there, right in the basement!

TG: Didn’t they move it all?

JR: Oh, wait a minute. That might have been after the new building.

CB: We moved it all up when in 1991 it flooded.

JR: I don’t know where it was before the flood.

CB: Do you, Herb?

HS: Yeah, I don’t know either.

JR: I know the rare book room in the library was in the basement of the library when the flood hit it.

HS: My God.

CB: We lost Harold Stark’s papers, which was probably one of the—particularly his World War I records—which were very important in naval history. That was probably intellectually the greatest loss.

JR: I’m surprised we lost them.

CB: Well, I don’t know what the emergency role was and what things were saved under the pressure of the water coming or not, but the correspondence. Books were saved and dried out, frozen, things like that. But the news correspondence just got utterly destroyed. I talked to Harold Stark’s daughter about that, and they remain loyal to Wilkes despite that really major loss. And Stark gave himself over to Wilkes in ways that I’m not sure we ever have fully celebrated. Not only his role with the board, but what he did with his collections. We had all his major trophies and honors. And those we still have, I assume Suzanna, right?

SC: Yeah, it’s interesting that you mention it. I didn’t even know that we initially had his World War I records, because most of the materials from his collection that we have now are from World War II, his time. So I’m also really upset at that news!

CB: Oh, it was a huge loss.

JR: I wonder if a lot of that loss was due to oversight. Because materials up at the Historical Society were shipped to Harrisburg and put in ovens, and they were basically saved, the correspondence there. I wonder if people just didn't understand what was at stake with the Stark collection.

CB: Yeah, the National Endowment for the Humanities' freezer trucks that took care of a lot of the books. I'm not sure what they did on correspondence. And there was work on records. I mean, for registrar records and things like that. Those were priority.

JR: I suspect the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission might have done a better job, because they were the ones handling the Wyoming Valley Historical Society collections.

CB: Coming back, Herb, to the art department. Say a little bit about Dick Fuller and Bob Sterling. Their art interests and specialties.

HS: Well, Dick Fuller was art education. And he got interested in a—I don't know how it happened, but it's a certain dye process.

CB: Shibori!

HS: Shibori, yeah. And he spent part of a year in Japan working with a master of that type of dye. I have one of his fall pieces. And he was an educator. You know I can't remember what—if he was teaching, it would have certainly been painting, because that's what he was

JR: Did he do any pencil sketches?

HS: I guess he did.

JR: I seem to have a remembrance of him. They had a faculty display of materials at one time in the 70s. Hobbies and things we would do, and I thought he had provided a number of pencil and pen-and-ink sketches.

HS: I'm sure he did. I mean, a lot of his work was either destroyed or damaged in the flood. Because he had a place over in Kingston, where he and Sarah Lee lived. And it was basically in her house. So I think he lost quite a lot in that respect. And then eventually he moved out to the back mountain, that's where he ended up.

CB: Going to high ground, as so many people did.

HS: So did I.

CB: This is a not very significant question, but I spent time with Chet in his last months. I was at his hospital room a fair amount, and got to know Sarah Lee. Was Sarah Lee the person for whom Sarah Lee Bakery products were named?

HS: What are you asking me of Sarah Lee?

CB: Was she the Sarah Lee of Sarah Lee Indulgences and other things that were—was that her family business?

HS: Her maiden name was Cohen. Her father had a recycling business. Although, it was more impolitely called “**Junk.**” They were well-to-do. And then her first husband was Herman Baltimore, and they had two daughters. And then this marriage ended in divorce. And then she met Chet and eventually were married. They didn’t have any children. But I was very friendly with Sarah Lee after Chet died. We’d have dinner together every few months. But she passed away a number of years ago.

CB: I was very close with her as well. She was a lot of fun to be with. Bill Sterling. What can you tell us about him as a person and as an artist?

HS: Well he was a wonderful chairman. Very intelligent. I always admired his work as an artist. But maybe he was a little bit too modest about it. There was only so much time that he could devote to it because he was full-time teaching art history courses. And then for a while he was very much involved with the Sordoni Gallery. But Bill was a wonderful person, a really good friend of mine. I used to—when they moved down to the Allentown area, I visited them several times. In this old schoolhouse which they made into their living quarters. They have a son. I guess is still down there. But anyway, I have a very positive feeling for him both as an artist and as a chairman.

CB: Right. He was one of the best at Wilkes, as I got to know the faculty. Just as a human being. Any general comments about Wilkes as an institution as you saw it evolve from ‘69 forward?

HS: I can say personally that I feel that Wilkes was very good to me. I mean, for a number of years, I had a garage which I used as a studio and they installed heat in it because I was doing things in metal and welding. And then there was welding equipment. And then they tore down the first garage, they needed more parking spaces. And then a number of years later, when I was in the second garage, the same thing happened. So that’s when I decided I was going to have to build something in my backyard. So I had a studio built—I guess in the 80s sometime. And, as I say, it’s just a few steps behind my kitchen door.

CB: Was the second garage the one behind Waller?

HS: I can’t remember.

CB: Which was our neighbor, and I was responsible for dealing with that one. First of all, making it an art center. And then I think it was torn down.

TG: No, it’s still there.

CB: Still there? Okay.

TG: Not in great shape, but it’s still there.

HS: There used to be a building behind—there were two very large mansions. They faced out to River Street.

TG: Yes.

HS: And there was a small building behind one. It was called the annex. That’s the building where jewelry and ceramics was. But there was also a small gallery in there, which was a gallery devoted to student shows. Because the main gallery was over at the Sordoni Gallery. So part of the graduation

requirements for an art major was to have a one-person show in that space. It was the two Cunningham mansions, and one of them is still standing there.

CB: Right. Which became the student—

HS: There was another one next to it, which was torn down.

CB: I'm trying to remember the building on the corner of South River and South Street. Opposite Kirby Hall. Princeton—

HS: Well now that was—are you talking about the performing arts center? The Darte? Dorothy-Dickinson Darte?

CB: No, across the street from that.

HS: That's where—that eventually became the art building.

CB: Right. And that happened in my period.

HS: And I didn't have much experience. That was very late for me. I can't remember the name of the building. What was it called?

[Note: The building is Bedford Hall]

CB: Begins with "P." This is the state of my deterioration. And somehow, we had to commit to keep the chauffeur housed in that garage area behind it, until he died, which was a commitment we made to the family that gave us that building. It was one of those very personal things. Now, my daughter did seek a degree in art at Wilkes, and she had her show in that building. And Dick Fuller was one of her major—

HS: Then she must have studied with Jean Adams, too.

CB: Yeah, Jean Adams. And we've got a shibori production on her part that she did with Dick, which was really quite lovely. She really got into that dying technique with him.

HS: Yeah.

CB: Well, what have we not talked about that you'd like to talk about, Herb?

HS: Let's see... you know, the commissions that I got, when I got the idea for a piece on the lecture hall—this was named in honor of a—I believe he was a banker or something, who was very friendly with Wilkes. And he had a daughter named Marianne, who lived out in the Mountaintop area. And when they built the lecture hall, the Schaeffer lecture hall, there was that space—the entrance was not in the center of that space, it's over to the right. And so there was a large brick wall that was exposed. And that's where I thought would be a good location for a relief sculpture. And I did a smaller, what's called a maquette, a smaller version of it in aluminum and so forth. And at that time, I was—Essie Davidowitz was taking a sculpture course with me. I was talking about—"You know, I would like to have a sculpture piece on that wall. A relief piece." And she said, "Why don't you get a few people to write something in support." And one of them was a person who was involved with the architectural firm that built and designed the shape of the lecture hall. And did I meet with him? I guess I did. Anyway, he said something which I'll never

forget. He said, "If you put this relief piece—" I guess I must have shown the maquette. He said, "If you took it down from where it had been, the brick would have a different color." So obviously, I didn't use him as a recommended person. Essie suggested. So eventually I presented it to the board of trustees, and it was—they approved it and they got people to fund it. Marianne Schaeffer was one of them. And then who was the other? I can't remember his name. He had an automobile dealership.

CB: Ron Ertley?

HS: No, no, it wasn't that. But anyway, the piece in Coal Street Park was done by a fabricating place in south Wilkes-Barre. But the *Facets* was done by McGregor, which is a factory up in an industrial park in Dunmore. And they did it. It's a very big organization. You know, they pay someone just to answer the telephone. And so they did it. And they installed it. And I still think it's one of my best pieces. And I think with the new science building next to it, the Cohen Science building, the way it ties in with the silver quality of that building. And I remember talking to the architects. They were Philadelphia architects. The one architect said to talk to [someone] who was very appreciative of what I'd done as a sculptor. And so it ties in very well, almost as if it always had been intended to be that way. But until then, there was no Cohen Science building there. It was just, you know, there. I have all of this photographed. I have this in my own archives.

CB: You and Tim Gilmour were collaborators, since Tim was responsible for the science building.

HS: Yeah.

TG: I'm trying to remember his name. We were lucky to get him, the architect. It was a downtime in construction.

HS: Yeah, it was small—it wasn't a real big, super large architectural firm. It had two names. I don't have them before me. It was two men, and they were located in Philadelphia.

TG: Yeah, the principle I think was called by the name of Bill 'Something'. I really enjoyed working with them, just as a side light. They beat out Peter...

CB: Bohlin?

TG: Yeah. Actually, Peter made a very good proposal, but.

HS: One period with the Sordoni Gallery. I think it was when Vivian Guyler was running it. I designed a lot of the mailing things announcing a new show. I still have those things. They had quite a large budget for that. And that was a fun thing to do. And then also, the original logo. They used to be in front of—as I said there were these two Conyngham mansions, and they tore down one, but they held on to a fragment of the front porch of it, which was columns and things. And it was sitting right out there on River Street. So my logo that I designed showed that with the curving lines of the river through the opening.

TG: That's pretty cool.

HS: But of course, they have a different [one]. But I enjoyed doing those things with the gallery. I had shows there, so it was a very important part of my exhibition history.

TG: Did you, Herb, have any?

JR: Do you have a memory of Cara Berryman?

HS: Oh, of course! Her husband taught biology, didn't he?

JR: Environmental science.

HS: You know, I had completely forgotten! That's right, she was running the gallery, wasn't she?

JR: Yeah.

HS: See, there had been a lot of people. And he left and went to another school.

JR: Yeah.

HS: Yeah, I remember. What was her first name?

JR: I think it was Cara. I may be wrong on that.

HS: Yeah, we were very friendly. You know, before computers, every department had their own secretary. And **Tara Markey [1:25:29]** was the secretary in art. And her background was in music. And if you had something, you'd write it out in longhand and hand it to Tara and she would type it up. See, I got there when the whole computer thing was just in its beginning. They used to have a room in the top floor of Stark where it was what was called the mainframe. It was the size of a room!

JR: A big room.

HS: The mainframe. And now, all of that can be in something that you hold in your hand.

TG: Oh, yeah. Actually they got a lot more in the hand than they had on the mainframe.

HS: That's right. But I'm really a computer dummy. I have a website, www.herbertsimon.com/index.html. It was designed by Chris Slebota who was an art major. He wasn't a student of mine because I'd already retired. But he did my website. And that got me into the computer thing. But I mean there are still all sorts of things that go wrong so I still had to call on friends over there to mail me out, you know?

CB: Herb, are there students of yours that you're particularly proud of in terms of what they've done with art?

HS: Yeah. I heard just recently from Danny House, who was an art major. But he was also a wrestler. Very big guy. And he was black, from Norfolk, Virginia. And you know, there were very few black students at Wilkes back then.

CB: And a school principal.

HS: Yeah, that's right. And Claire Maziarczyk. I remember her very well. And Rick—it's a Polish name, Mahoney or something.

JR: Mahonsky.

HS: Yeah. he's a goldsmith. And he bought one of my—I had a small bronze, it was too rusty. He was a wrestler. Danny House was big, and Rick was small. But they were both very good at it. So I keep in touch. I just reconnected with Danny just a week ago.

TG: Wow.

HS: And then of course, there are a lot of people on Facebook, which I've been on for years, who are ex-art majors.

CB: When you talk to Danny, give him my regards.

HS: Okay, I certainly—

CB: He had to come down and have a talk at his school.

HS: Remember Reginald? His friend Reginald?

CB: No, I only knew Danny as an alum. I mean, he was already—

HS: Well there were these two guys. They were both black, they were both very big, they were both wrestlers, and both art majors.

JR: Reggie something.

HS: And they both became principals. You know, you didn't get many people from the south. I mean, when I was in the navy, I was stationed for a while in the Norfolk area. But it was very rare that you encountered a student who had a southern background at Wilkes.

CB: By the way, you should make note of the fact that one of your Vanderbilt colleagues is going to be at the Max Rosenn lecture with John Meacham in April.

TG: Oh, is he?

HS: Who is this person?

CB: John Meacham, which is, if you watch MSNBC, he's on a lot. One of the wisest—

HS: I went to Vanderbilt for two years. But that was—I was majoring in English. I did quite poorly. I think even in my major, I only managed to make a 'B'. But I was torn with what I wanted to do. And that's when I decided I wanted to study art. And I went to—see, most of my education was paid for by the G.I. Bill. So I went to a summer arts school in Maine. And that was when I really became in contact with people who were in the art world. And that's when I decided I was going to—so it was a question of convincing my mother to send me an allowance, and she agreed to it. And so then I went to—took courses at the Brooklyn Museum. So anyway, that's my background.

CB: Can you say a little bit about your family in Tennessee?

HS: Yeah, well my father was from Lock Haven.

TG: Oh!

HS: And they had a wholesale grocery business. They were originally from Germany. They were Jews from Germany. And they settled—and Lock Haven at that time was much more of a thriving place. All of those cities were thriving back then.

TG: Yes.

HS: The Pennsylvania railroad went through Lock Haven. My mother's background, she was from Washington, D.C. And she was a Roman Catholic, and her background was Scotland. And both her parents died when she was still a teenager. And she met a young man in Washington D.C. where she lived. She was working at the National Geographic. And he was Jewish, and they married, and she converted to Judaism. And they were just married a few years. And World War I came along. And then the Spanish Influenza epidemic came along, which he died from in 1919 or 1918. They didn't even know about viruses back then. So then she was a widow for five years, working at the National Geographic. And somehow, my father in Nashville, Tennessee, who was an optometrist, had heard about her and visited. And that was her second husband. And that is my father. But originally he was from Lock Haven. So I had a lot of Pennsylvania relatives who I'd never met prior to coming out here.

CB: So you were kind of coming home when you came to Wilkes.

HS: In a way, yeah.

CB: Did you have siblings?

HS: I had a brother who became an optometrist.

CB: Okay.

HS: My brother and I were quite different. Physically and intellectually. He followed in my fathers's—he went on his honeymoon, he stayed with his betrothed wife, in the Plaza Hotel for a honeymoon. And that's what my father did when he married. And then of course my brother became an optometrist. So he fit it into that whole national world. And the Jewish world then was very much a separate thing. They had their own everything. There was a country club that—you know, things now that are illegal were quite legal back then. And then he died when he was 47. My father, I'm talking about. He had coronary thrombosis. They were having dinner with some friends in a hotel in Nashville. And a few years ago, I had open heart surgery. So I had bypass surgery. I'd never had any problems prior to that, but I guess it was partially, with me, a genetic thing.

TG: It probably was.

HS: My brother died a few years ago.

CB: Well I must say, I am 85, and I assume we're in the same league. Your memory is terrific.

HS: I'm 94.

[Laughter]

CB: So you're older than I. but your memory is astounding, Herb.

TG: It really is.

CB: It's wonderful.

HS: You know, I can remember the most insignificant thing. I can remember when Michelini and Ted Cosen met me at the bus station for an interview. We went to the Sterling Hotel. And I ordered shrimp salad for lunch. That's not a very important thing to remember!

TG: That's cool!

JR: Herb, do you remember your first place where you lived? On 303 South Franklin?

HS: Do I remember what? I know you and Ginny lived next door, didn't you?

JR: I thought we lived on the first floor and you lived on the second?

HS: Yeah, I lived on the second. And you see, in '72, I moved to Malorie Place. In the half double of Chapline's I owned. So then a month later, the flood came.

TG: Yeah.

HS: And I lived in various places for a few years. And then eventually Tony Toluba convinced me that I should really think about living in the back mountain. I didn't want to commute . I wanted to be able to walk to work. And that was the nice thing about Malorie Place. There were so many Wilkes people that lived there. The Garbers, and the English guy, Stan Gutin. And the number of pianos, when they were dumping all of the stuff from the flood out of the gutters, the number of pianos that were fatally damaged, it was incredible. But I really liked living there. And if I hadn't moved a month earlier, I would have lost nothing, you know?

TG: Yeah.

CB: Timing is everything.

HS: And then in '74 I came out here, in Shavertown.

CB: Tony Toluba keeps in touch with me, every three months or so, calls up to find out how I'm doing. So I will—

HS: Yeah, Tony's really a wonderful person. Very intelligent. He and his brother and his sister all went to Wilkes. I think he and his brother were wrestlers.

JR: Yes.

HS: But I don't think Tony—Tony didn't graduate from Wilkes. He went to some school in Hartford, Connecticut to become a tool and die maker. He was a whiz at things. You know, if I had a problem in sculpting that was of some technical nature, I would go to Tony and he would tell me five different ways to do it. And I'd say, "Well what's the simplest?" He was amazing.

CB: He still is amazing. And he loves Wilkes. And I got to know him—because he wasn't a part of Wilkes at that point—at the Sordoni Gallery openings! And I was always at every one, and so was he and his wife. And now they're out near Lewisburg. They've got a bed and breakfast kind of operation which they've been running. I don't think they're doing that anymore, but that's where they live. Very proud of his kids. He gives me an update on what they're doing.

HS: Yeah, one is a judge and the other is an emergency nurse out in Portland, Oregon.

CB: Right.

HS: But anyway, yeah, it was Peggy's idea to—they had bad experiences in terms of the job market. He was let go in the job that he worked for, and he was convinced it was because of his age and his salary. And they hired a teenager or something and trained him at one-third his salary. And so he challenged it in court. He got a lawyer up in Scranton whose specialty was this. Age discrimination. And he won his case. And so Peggy was having problems with the public schools out here, it was so political. So she—one of their sons went to Bucknell, Joel, who became a judge. And she got this idea, she saw this huge Victorian house in a place called Vicksburg, which is near Lewisburg, and she had this idea of a B&B, and that's what they had for years. But anyway, they're still there. And I talk to them quite regularly.

CB: Good! Well, give Tony my regards. He'll call me, but probably not as often as he calls you.

HS: Herb, are you in contact with other participants in that back mountain art community? I'm thinking people like Sue Hand.

HS: I know Sue. You mean that you interviewed for the oral history?

JR: No, people who are—I know there's kind of an active art community out there, in addition to Sue Hand and you. But other people too?

HS: I'm not aware of that.

JR: Oh, okay.

TG: Herb, were you involved with the Fine Arts Fiesta at all?

HS: Well I had things in it. I had some of my sculptures in it towards the early years of my—but I didn't—it was just once or maybe twice that I participated in it.

TG: Got it.

CB: Were you at all close to Al Grow?

HS: Yeah, well he was a friend, and I wasn't—I can't say he was close. I know he was—I remember him.

CB: Because that was his baby, the Fine Arts Fiesta.

HS: Yeah.

CB: Well what else can you share with us, or that you would like to ask us?

HS: Let's see. Yeah, Suzanna mentioned to me some of the people that you've already interviewed. Is this going to be something that will be available to—what are you going to do with all of this recorded material? I guess it will be edited.

CB: Suzanna, you're on.

SC: Yeah, so I've been having a lot of students transcribe these, and I'm hoping that once we get them transcribed as first rough drafts, we'll try to send them back to the interviewee for comments, maybe edits, anything you want to add or redact. And then I'll have Tim and Chris and Jim all edit them as well, and then I'm hoping to get them online so that people can use—

HS: Oh, well that would be good. Who's some of the people that you've interviewed? Give me some names.

SC: Oh, so many.

JR: Tom Kelley, Rich Sours, Clayton Karambelas.

HS: Well Clayton wasn't actually—he was a student at Wilkes, but he wasn't a teacher, was he?

JR: No.

CB: No, but he was a major alumnus in supporting everything.

HS: Yeah, he was a big benefactor to the school.

TG: Yes.

CB: So that was part of why we interviewed him.

HS: I think Suzanna mentioned Rob Bomboy.

TG: Yeah.

JR: Ben Fiester.

CB: Helen Ralston, Jane Elms Crahall. Owen Faut.

SC: Gene Roth.

CB: Tim Gilmour and me and Jim.

HS: Oh, that's quite a lot.

TG: It's been a lot of fun for us, Herb. and this has just been a great interview with you. I wanted to mention to Suzanna, in the materials, we need to get Herb's website in there, because it has an even richer array of information about what he's done. It's a nice website. Although the *Screaming Trump* was not there! What happened there?

HS: Well that was Facebook. My website was designed decades ago. And this was the beginning of my involvement with computers. So this thing with the *Screaming Trump* was—that's later.

TG: So basically, you've moved onto Facebook and you still have the website.

HS: You know, Facebook, they came to me. It's available to anyone who's been on Facebook. But they were making a book out of one's postings. It was in two different sizes, a small and a large size. And this has many of my postings. It's basically just pictures. But all of the work in it is mine. And I got it just a week ago, and it's bound like a book. It cost \$80. But as I say, that is all relates to—and there's a lot of *Screaming Trumps* in that because, as I say, it's only concerned with Facebook material.

TG: Yeah. Well, I'll have to look that up.

JR: I've seen a lot of your postings on Facebook, Herb. Very good.

HS: Hey Jim, are you writing another book?

JR: Well, I'm working on it very slowly. My—

HS: I really enjoyed your mystery.

JR: Thank you!

TG: Isn't it great?

CB: Have you read both of them? There's two.

HS: I didn't realize you had two of them?

JR: Yeah, yeah.

HS: I probably did read. What were the titles?

JR: One was *The Old Boys' Club* and the other was *The Ladies in Their Lives*.

HS: Yeah I think I read both of them. You know, you tell me of that experience you had as a teenager growing up in Long Island.

JR: Oh, yeah!

HS: When you were working a parking lot and you encountered this German? He had been let off of a submarine or something?

JR: He was on a submarine. This is before the American entry into the war, and they were sitting off the coast of Long Island, waiting for British ships to come out of New York Harbor.

HS: And there was a real resistance on the part of a lot of businesses in New Jersey and in Long Island to a Brown Out, because they found it to be bad for business.

JR: Yes. particularly on the New Jersey coast. They— *[JR's audio cuts out]*

HS: Yeah, well I enjoyed your mysteries. You write another one and I'll read it.

CB: Herb, I take this last comment as an example of your memory being truly extraordinary.

TG: Yes!

CB: You're very fortunate, and so are we.

HS: Well, I'm glad that it could be—I hope I've helped you.

TG: You have.

CB: You have, indeed. Is there anyone that you think we really should interview that we maybe have not?

HS: Let's see. Let me think. See, so many people are dead now. Eventually, we're all dead.

CB: That's what they tell me.

HS: I think Andy Sordoni definitely I think should be interviewed.

TG: Yeah.

CB: We're zeroing in on that, with strategic purpose.

HS: Let's see... well, Essie Davidowitz I think.

CB: We've interviewed Essie at her house and she gave us a fantastic breakfast.

HS: Yeah, I understand, yeah. I'm trying to think of anyone else, but I can't.

CB: We interviewed Gene Roth, fortunately. His loss was just tremendous.

HS: Yeah, Eugene Roth, yeah.

CB: Of course, we interviewed—Dr. Mike was crucial to this whole thing. I mean, he really was the one that helped get going.

TG: He got us moving.

CB: So we've got a lot of material on him because he was part of the interviews. And even more than we've done today, they became a basis for those of us doing the interviewing to kind of give our own story. So we've got a lot of Dr. Mike. and he's also given Suzanna major material savings from the flood and other things. So his part is going to be very richly preserved.

HS: You know, you may be interested in interviewing Tony Toluba down in Vicksburg. I mean, he would have a different perspective because he was a staff person, basically involved with the maintenance of the machine shop. But I don't know, that's just someone I thought.

CB: Interesting. Suzanna, get that. T-O-L-U-B-A.

HS: T-O-L-U-B-A, yeah. It's a Lithuanian name.

JR: What do you think about Danny House?

HS: Well, you know, I just reconnected with him a few weeks ago. And I said, when you're in this area, stop by. But I guess he's retired now, isn't he?

CB: I don't know.

JR: I think.

CB: But we can do this by Zoom. I mean, we're doing it all by Zoom. we haven't had an in-person one since the pandemic. Danny would be—and Danny is married to a fascinating African woman, who has also been a principal. And they have two—

HS: I think you're saying he's married to an African woman?

CB: Yes. This goes back to my time.

HS: It seems to me that I read something in his website that he was single.

CB: No, he has children.

HS: Oh, really? Yeah, it may be that the website is earlier.

CB: He was head of a school in Yonkers, I think. A high school in Yonkers. And I went to it and gave a talk. And his daughter became one of our awardees in Poughkeepsie on Martin Luther King Day. So she was a very impressive young lady. His wife is brilliant. So he's been a very interesting guy. He'd be a wonderful person to interview and he would have some reflections on what race relations were like at Wilkes and in Wilkes-Barre. And he would have some views on our friend John Reese, which would be—

HS: I am—could you wait? I'll get my telephone book, and I'll give you a telephone.

CB: Good.

HS: Hold on just a minute.

JR: I'm going to have to leave. Ginger needs me downstairs.

TG: I understand.

CB: Okay, Jim. Give her my best.

TG: Tell her we're thinking of her.

SC: Please take care of yourself.

JR: Thank you very much.

TG: Talk to you soon, Jim.

JR: Okay.

CB: Hang in there.

JR: Right. *[chuckles]*

CB: Which you've been doing. Thank goodness of it.

JR: Yes.

SC: How do you spell Tony's last name?

CB: T-O-L-U-B-A.

SC: Okay, got it.

CB: The Danny House one—

HS: Are you there?

CB: We're here.

HS: Hold on, I have it written. Let's see. I thought I had it written down here but maybe I—oh wait, I'm looking at the wrong... Hold on, just a minute. Okay, H. Where in the hell? I thought I had written something down, but maybe I didn't. I think I'd have to—because I don't find it in my book. But anyway, I mean you have information about him so you can get it, you know. It's Bob Heaman.

TG: Oh, yeah.

HS: Have you interviewed Bob Heaman? Or is he in-interviewable?

CB: He's been part of this. We haven't had a full-length interview with him, but he's actually been on the interviewing team.

HS: Oh, really? Uh-huh.

CB: So Danny, the address I have for Danny is in Yonkers.

HS: Yeah.

CB: And he was principal of Gorton High School.

HS: Yeah. I thought I had it written down some place, but apparently—

CB: And his wife's name is Ayodele. A-Y-O-D-E-L-E. She's co-principal—

HS: But anyway, you'll get in touch with him.

CB: I will. That's a really brilliant suggestion. Well Herb, thank you. This has been—I just wish we could have seen you. And that you could have seen us.

HS: Yeah, well I enjoyed it. It was sort of bringing things back to me. So I'll be interested in what will be done with all of this data that you've gathered.

CB: Well Suzanna is our key link, and she keeps whipping us to approve the edited versions. And we're not as swift as she'd like us to be. But the products—she's had a lot of students working on this, so it is already an invaluable resource for the University. And you've added to the—

HS: It's funny, I wrote down something about Danny. And it's not in my address book, and I don't understand. It must be some place. But I can't get to it.

CB: Well if you find it, let Suzanna know. You can get in touch with her.

SC: Yes, please.

CB: And I might be the one to call him up and see if he can do it.

HS: Okay. Nice talking to you.

CB: Good to talk to you, I hope you have a great 2022.

TG: Great Herb, take care of yourself.

SC: Thank you so much, too.

HS: Okay, thanks Suzanna. And I'm gonna hang up now.

TG: Okay.

CB: Okay. Thanks.

HS: Bye.

CB: Bye-bye.

[Herb Simon's interview ends, 1:57:01]