

3-17-1973

Interview no. 69

William Kolliker

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Recommended Citation

Interview with William Kolliker by John. H. McNeely, 1973, "Interview no. 69," Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso.

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: William Kolliker
INTERVIEWER: John H. McNeely
PROJECT: El Paso Area Artists
DATE OF INTERVIEW: March 17, 1973
TERMS OF USE: Unrestricted
TAPE NO.: 69
TRANSCRIPT NO.: 69
TRANSCRIBER: Pat Quinn
DATE TRANSCRIBED: _____

BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

Artist.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

Autobiography; experiences as an immigrant in the East;
art career.

William Kolliker
by John H. McNeely
March 17, 1973

M: You were going to tell us about your grandparents, your grandmother.

K: My grandmother came over from Germany on a sailship. They took three months, at that time, to travel across the ocean. Her mother and father both died of cholera that broke out on that ship. They were both buried at sea. My grandmother was the oldest of 10 children and she took charge. And she was German, naturally

M: What was her name?

K: Lechner when she got married, eventually; her name was Lechner. What her name was when she was a girl, I don't know. She went into a sweat shop and she supported and brought up the rest of her brothers and sisters.

M: In New York?

K: In New York, yes.

M: Lechner?

K: Lechner.

M: You don't know what her first name was?

K: No, it's too bad.

M: Is this your paternal grandmother?

K: No, on my mother's side--maternal. The man she married came from Brienz, Switzerland. In 1965 I went there to see his birthplace. That's on the upper end of the twin lakes, Tund and the Brienz, the Brienzer Sea that connected in the middle of it. They were broken apart by a landfill from a river. That part is called Interlaken. His trade was to make rope. In the early days when they had sailships, rope was an important thing. What he did over here, I just don't know. In his house is where my mother met my father. They went back to Switzerland. He was a little bit ill, a little under the weather. He built a house in Bern on the Aare river's edge

with a huge garden around it. This is the house that I was born in.

M: What was your father's name?

K: Kolliker. William Augustine Kolliker.

M: Same as yours.

K: Yes.

M: They call it Guillaume or Wilhelm?

K: William. It was always William because my mother came from the States and she figured that she would like that better than the name that most Swiss or Germans used, which is Wilhelm. That was after the Kaiser, and she had no use for the Kaiser, so I was William. That house is an amazing place. I remember, one time, a girl by the name of Betty Boykin stayed at our house for three months. She was a Texas Western music major. She went on a European tour with a group for singing and they stopped in various cities, and she stopped for two hours in Bern. [She] walked over to the Cornhouse Bruke and looked over the side, and she saw some interesting houses and she took a picture of those houses to show me that she was actually in Bern. Just by chance, or by luck, she took a picture of the house I was born in, which was just plain unbelievable. It was nice to see it. We had many a laugh about it that this coincidence could possibly take place.

M: Your father built this house, you say?

K: Yes. He was an architect. He built churches in Boston, New York; and if it hadn't been for his health, he probably would have stayed here. But when he went back, he tried to tell some of the architects in Switzerland about the innovations and the ways they had things in America. The stubborn Swiss said, "Sorry. This is Switzerland. We don't do things that way."

No progress. But they have progress now. It's different. They're progressive. It takes a long time. They still think of Switzerland as a nation that needs to be defended even though it is impossible to defend it. It would be just sort of an escape into the mountains if war would ever come. They would sacrifice probably two-thirds of the population, the rest would be the nucleus for a new start. They have, in the mountains, various shelter areas that they think they can survive in and defend. This is reality.

M: How long did you live in Switzerland?

K: For 16 years.

M: You went to schools there, then?

K: I went to schools there. It was different in those days. I could concentrate on Art almost completely. I did most of the art work in the classes that I was in, plus all the other classes in the same building. I was for two years in Paris in school and learned French, like all Swiss have to learn French. The French don't learn German. The German-Swiss learn French. French never learn any other languages.

M: What sort of schools did you go to? Did they have primary and secondary schools?

K: Yes.

M: Gymnasiums, don't they call the...that's the secondary.

K: No, that's the top school. I went to the secondary school. I went to the Pro-Gymnasium.

M: Pro-Gymnasium. That's sort of like a high school.

K: Yes.

M: And you went to that in Bern.

K: In Bern, yes.

M: Those are public school maintained by the state?

K: Yes. When I was back in '45 with my wife, we visited the school. Still there, still going full boom. The paintings are still on the wall and nobody even knew... Boticher was his name but he was the director of the school there. They had forgotten it.

M: Oh, when you went there.

K: The principal. It's the principal.

M: What sort of school did you go to in Paris?

K: It was an art school.

M: You very early became interested in art?

K: In the first grade. I never wanted to do anything else. Of course, we had no idea at the time as to how you could pursue that sort of a career and eat at the same time. It was easy when we came to America. The first week, I got a job, the first job I had for 37 years. I stayed with the same firm for that length of time. It was with William Randolph Hearst. First I worked on newspapers in New York, Baltimore, Washington, Philadelphia. And finally, I had my heart set, that first week when I was shown the American Weekly art department, to be there as an illustrator. It took me 12 years to eventually qualify and get a job with that outfit. There I became eventually the art director and art editor. It was my first and only thought. This is the place, this is the job I wanted. That was the ultimate. And it was. I bought more art work on that job than any other art director in New York. I bought as much as a million dollars worth of art work a year for the publication. The name of it was the American Weekly.

M: Well, now, when you finished your schooling in Paris you were 16 and you came to the United States for the first time, did you come alone?

K: No, I came with my mother and brother.

M: Your father had died by then?

K: Yes.

M: You think the fact your father was an architect, did that interest you in art?

K: Yes, I think so. Also, I think my mother prevailed upon me.

M: How old were you when your father died?

K: I was fifteen.

M: Well then, there was plenty of time for you to be influenced by him, too.

K: Oh, yes. My mother mostly, though. You know, I believe that a woman has a great deal to do with what her son will eventually pursue. Or at least in the early days, in the older days.

M: She was interested in art?

K: Yes.

M: Did she have other children besides you?

K: Just one other son.

M: Is he still alive?

K: No, he came over here and he died when he was twenty-eight.

M: Then after your father's death she decided to come back over here? She had been over here previously.

K: Yes, she was coming home. We arrived on Ellis Island. There was a quota, at that time, for Swiss. We stayed there a week. She didn't have to stay because she was an American citizen, but she stayed with us. Just last week, I saw this Alistair Cook program at Ellis Island again and Ellis

Island is in ruins, all those rooms that I was in. The greatest of all halls in the U.S. was the main hall in Ellis Island, and that was down. The balcony was in ruins. All the walls were breaking up. It was just a shame to see that. And it's a historic thing. It should be preserved.

M: Well, you were processed through there, then?

K: Yes.

M: What year were you born?

K: 1905.

M: 1905. So it would have been about 1922 that you were coming through there. And they already had a quota system?

K: Yes, sir.

M: But you and your mother and your brother were able to come in under this quota.

K: Yes, eventually. As soon as I got off, that first week I had a job.

M: Could you already speak English?

K: Not a work.

M: Just French and German? How did you manage to swing that?

K: Well, in New York, it's not very hard. There were other Germans that worked in the New York American Art Department where I got this job. Most Jewish people in New York--and there are lots of them--speak German or a sort of German. The things that I did were simple. Within 11 months, after being a office boy there (I wasn't quite 17), they figured that I knew enough to take a job in Baltimore. They transferred me to Baltimore and they tripled my pay, which in the beginning wasn't too much, but I could live on that and support my mother. So I got a real fine deal from that. Of course, I worked day and night. I went to the Art Students'

League and the National Academy of Design. Just worked continuously.

I started at seven o'clock in the morning. The trips from Brooklyn, where we lived, to 110th Street take quite a time in subways and elevators. It was good to arrive in Baltimore; I arrived there and naturally I didn't know a soul. I didn't even know where it was on the map. Somebody had to take me and put me on the train to get to Baltimore. I arrived there on election day where the newspapers were concerned with tabulating the presidential election.

M: 1924?

K: Yes. I got a job, sat down and went to work. I stayed there for two years. And Baltimore was just too small; it was a little burg for me. And I wanted to come back in the worst way. And eventually, I got an offer to come back.

M: Did your parents have any religious affiliation in Switzerland?

K: No. If we had any, it was just incidental.

M: Well, there in Bern I guess there're both Catholics and Protestants.

K: Mostly Protestants. As a matter of fact, when I went back to visit my school chum, I was simply shocked that it mattered to him if a person was Catholic or Protestant. And it does matter to most Swiss. Catholics you stay away from, if you're Protestant.

M: I guess it's the Reformed Church.

K: Yes, the Zwingli Church. You know, if it wasn't for Calvinism, we wouldn't have the kind of a world we have. In those days, all property belonged to the Church. And with Calvinism, that separated and allowed the man to keep his own goods and earn his own money and bank his money and have his own business, without it belonging to the Church. So, as bigoted as the

early Calvinists were, the Church had to be separated from business.

And I say, as bigoted as they were, they did some good.

M: Well, now, at the National Academy of Design, did you get to know any of the famous teachers who taught there?

K: No, but at the Art Students' League, George Bellows was one of my teachers. I've always been proud of the fact. I thought he was one of the greatest. Robert Henri was teaching at the time.

M: Well, Henri, was he at the National Academy?

K: No, he was with the Art Students' League.

M: What is that exactly? Is it a school?

K: It's a good group of artists that have gotten together and formed a league. They made it into a school. And helpful.

M: It still exists?

K: Oh, yes. And it is simply marvelous; unbelievable what they teach today. Of course, they taught a great deal at that time, too.

M: Well, now, this other one--the National Academy of Design--that goes way back, doesn't it?

K: Yes.

M: They have a museum, don't they?

K: Well, now, I think they have, yes. But they have pictures right up to the ceiling, of previous students' portraits. The National Academy was also free. It's just hard to believe. While I was a student there, you got free student cards to go to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. So we walked there from 110th Street down to 80th Street to the Metropolitan to visit the special exhibits, and to see what's there.

M: This Henri wrote books, didn't he, on his methods of teaching or his theories

about art?

K: Yes. Also Bridgeman. Bridgeman did me more good than most people have. He and Bellows. Bridgeman taught anatomy and he wrote many books.

M: You were inspired, you felt, by all three of those famous teachers?

K: Yes, definitely.

M: But then you went on to Baltimore, now, you say.

K: Yes. I stayed in Baltimore and I worked there in the...they had a Charcoal Club so I went to school there, and the Maryland Institute. So, I attended both. That made it five nights a week, six nights really. I was in school every night. I had no time to lose. I was already getting older. I was 18 then.

M: And you were working for the Hearst paper there?

K: Yes, the Baltimore American.

M: Baltimore American. That was one of his newspapers.

K: Yes, the News and the American. He had two newspapers then. I worked on both of them.

K: Did you do reporting?

K: No, I was a retoucher and a sketch artist at that age. I don't know how good those sketches were. And then on the side I did the promotion work. I did that because I needed the practice. I didn't get paid for it. Also, there was some time when the schools weren't open in the summer, and I became a photographer. I was allowed to work in the photo department--mix the hypo and the developer and go out on assignments. I was real thrilled to pieces with that.

M: This sketching you did, was that for advertisements?

K: No, that was editorial. I did it at banquets, and visitors who came into

Baltimore.

M: What sort of sketches would you make?

K: Just heads and shoulders of people.

M: That would be reproduced in the newspaper? They didn't do photographing so much, then?

K: Yes, photographers were well equipped to do it, but there were restrictions in those days. You couldn't send a photographer into a courtroom to take pictures. That's why you send an artist in to sketches, to make sketches.

M: Well, how long were you there in Baltimore?

K: Two years. Then I finally got a job for twice the money back in New York, and I stayed there. I worked for a short time on the New York Evening Graphic. They did more artists more good that worked on newspapers. Also the writers. Everybody, because of the Graphic, got within two years, his pay doubled. Because they just had to have help. There was no help available so they hired them from somebody else, always at twice the money. It was a wonderful thing for the underpaid New York newspaper people. And then from there I was transferred after I was with the Graphic for two years.

M: What was this Graphic like?

K: The New York Evening Graphic was a scandal sheet. It was the worst scandal sheet you could think of.

M: And it appeared daily?

K: Yes. It was a McFadden newspaper. They wouldn't read it openly. You had to be /a/ pretty low character to read it. There's even people here in Santa Fe that worked with me at the time on the Graphic. The editor became a close friend of mine. It was a great thing. All through life these people have stayed friends, you know. Then I finally got a job with

Hearst back again. I told them they stopped paying overtime on the Graphic. I told them, "I'm used to making more money and they stopped paying me so I'm looking for another job." The Hearst paper sent me to Boston. I stayed in Boston for four years.

Boston was a wonderful place. I went there as a sketch artist and I spent most of my time in court. Always one or two boys sitting, taking sketches that I had just finished for the next edition. I had the time of my life at 20, 21, 22 years old. I went there when I was 19, and did of course, some editorial art work, too. There was the time Lindberg flying over; I met him. I met the German flyers. Senator Capper came over. Senator Capper had a string of newspapers and he wanted me to come and work for him. I had some heavy decisions to make. Boston was a great place. There wasn't a movie that I ever paid to go to or a theatre. People were just so wonderful. They used to have the Hudson River Day Line. I got off that boat and I had no knowledge of anyone in Boston. I knew nobody. I just had a letter of introduction. I met so many people on that boat that were going to Boston that lived there, that it just started right off. That first week I ate in seven different homes. Super. And it just went on like this. It was just absolutely wonderful. Every store would have once or twice, they'd have a dance for the employees. They would insist that Kolliker would go and make the sketches. And then they would get me a girl, be sure that a girl would sit next to me, that they'd look personable. And they would make sure that I would have a bottle of something to take home after I made the sketches. Life was simply marvelous. In the third year I married there, in Boston. My first child was born there--Josie. You know her, don't you?

M: Yes. What was your wife's name?

K: Doris. Doris Rudy was my first wife.

M: Then where did you go from Boston?

K: Oh, in '29 we had the Depression, and things closed down. Oh, was it terrible out there. The Depression was the worst thing. It finally hit here in '36, but in the East it was in 1929 and '30. I was making more money than the rest of the people in the art department, and they felt they could do without me. This was where they could save, so they just gave me the gate. After doing a lot of calling around, I got some leads in New York and I just had to go.

M: You went back to New York?

K: Back to New York. But that's before my child was born. I hated to leave, but still somebody had to make money. I eventually landed a job with the Associated Press. Before I had that job there was an art director on the New York Evening Journal by the name of Phil Katz. Phil Katz said, "Well, you know how it is. We've had the same sort of cuts here that you had in Boston. I can put you on the payroll." So he put me on the payroll at twice the money that I was making in Boston. He said, "When they discover you, I'll have to drop you. But you'll have a little stake then." I worked there for about a month and a half, for three months pay. While I was there, somebody tipped me off to this job on the Associated Press and I got this job. But I never liked it. It was a miserable place. After working for Hearst, the Associated Press was a hayseed outfit. They exploited aspiring journalists from the Midwest and Farwest. It had them come down there for a "great" opportunity to work in New York--for peanuts. That's the way they paid. It was a penurious type of an outfit. The

entire time that I was with them, I looked for another job.

I finally got another job with the Hearst papers. The Hearst papers offered me three times what I was making on the Associated Press. I'd done a little free-lancing in the mean time with them; I made wood cuts. They had a page with three illustrations, wood cuts. They paid me \$120 for that page. So, I made one. Then they said, "Well, we have a whole stack of them. Do you want to take them?" I took them at \$120 each time. They then said, "We have a whole year that we've done." Another illustrator had produced the illustrations for them. "We don't like them. We're gonna throw them out. You want to do this year's work?" So I did a whole year's work at \$120 a week. I tell you, things were just simply fabulous, after the Depression was over. That's where I stayed for the rest of my time that I was in New York, until Mr. Hearst died. In that time I became an executive. The last editor that I was with was Walter Howey. Ben Hecht wrote a play about him called The Front Page. Things were just hectic but I was one of his cronies, one of his henchmen. There were only three. So four of us, the editor and two other men besides myself, ran the weekly. And we had a marvelous time. It was just great. Dinner was served and I had an expense account that was simply out of this world.

M: This was the American Weekly?

K: American Weekly, yes. To me it was just the greatest time. Of course, you worked like a Trojan. It was just constant. There were sometimes as many as 30 people in my outer office, waiting to see me. Then you'd have two hour lunches. You'd go out with artist, you could discuss the business, you could discuss illustrations, the astronomy at the time. That took time. That was also a wonderful thing to get into, meeting lots of astronomers

from all over the States. I'd just get rid of those 30 artists, one at a time. I says, "Yes, yes, this, this, that; oh no, this won't do." I had three secretaries. I had a place in Connecticut that I traveled to. It took me two hours to travel in the morning and two hours at night. But I got most of my manuscripts read on the train--50 manuscripts I would have to read.

And I had a very smart assitant. My assistant was an Oxford graduate. And he sure helped me. Oh, gosh, I wouldn't have been able to do the work that I did if I didn't have that man--you know, a wonderful person like him. His name was Johnny Stergaven. He was really most outstnading. He was three times as smart as I was but he was my assistant. We would have to remember every plot and every illustration that we had for about seven weeks, because we made the magazine up seven weeks in advance. So the editor could ask almost anytime, "Now, what did you have illustrated, and who did you have, and why did you illustrate it and why did you spend this amount of money?" Well, I would have to know. In these sessions, he'd come from Chicago; he was also the editor for Chicago. In these sessions, I would take in a secretary that would take down every word he would say to me so that we could review it and to be sure that we wouldn't miss anything that had to be done. He would say, "You sure keep tabs on me." He was one of those fabulous people that either he liked you and you liked him so much that you would jump out of a window for him, or he was hated. He had his enemies. But he enjoyed enemies, too. He made some of them deliberately. But he put out a tremendous newspaper. During the periods that we were there, that newspaper made five million a year for Hearst. I felt that we actually were producing something.

M: This American Weekly, what sort of thing was it? Was it short stories?

K: Yes. We considered it as the "poor man's university".

M: Something like the Saturday Evening Post?

K: No, something like Parade, only better.

M: Lots of short stories. Maybe serialized stories?

K: No. Every story ended.

M: Did it have any non-fictional things? About news?

K: It was all news. Some of it may have been a little bit far fetched. The Czechoslovakian stories; you know, unusual stories were with a headline like, "She Nailed Her Father's Head on the Front Door". Spectacular things like this. And the Merry-Go-Round just on society. We had one illustrator who was absolutely fabulous. He had a photographic mind. His name was Lee Conrey. He made line illustrations with a split-hair brush that made multiple lines at the same time. With his way of thinking, he could project an image that was in his head on the paper, and just trace it off. I have a few. His illustrations are absolutely fabulous, and spectacular. You looked at one of those pictures and you had to read the story because it was so intriguing. This is what we called the American Weekly type of thinking. This is the sort of talking I would have to do to make sure that when the illustration was brought in eventually, that it would fall into that category. The circulation of the magazine at that time was the largest in the world. It was over 10 million. That's before any publications came into these fabulous circulations like they have today.

M: Well, Mr. Hearst was very much interested in collecting art. Didn't you tell me you had some ties with his activities?

K: No, not that way, only indirectly. He had specialists that bought famous

paintings in Europe, and castles. He had castles taken apart stone by stone and numbered. There are still, I hear, two or three castles in New York in crates with numbered blocks that have never been built and probably never will be built. The time has passed when we would do things like this in America. Hearst lived like no king ever lived. He had finer castles, he had finer art, he had more of everything than any king ever had. And he had nobody to account to.

M: You didn't have very much contact with him?

K: No. He was sitting in a castle with telephones on trees. But some of the editors went out, and especially Walter Howey, he was a favorite of his. And that was enough. He used to say, "Well, whatever you do, you get the local credit, I get the national credit." Howey would say that. Which was all right by me.

M: When Mr. Hearst died, were his various holdings liquidated?

K: Oh, yes a lot of it went down, including the Weekly was shut down. I had the honor of being fired second or third. They just lopped them off from the top. Bill Hearst, Mr. Hearst's son, didn't have much use for his father's older employees, so he just let them go. I eventually got into something that I always thought was fascinating--advertising. The first job I had in advertising--not knowing one thing about it, I had no idea how thing worked in an advertising agency--I get a job and I kept it for a long time, as long as I wanted, with Cunningham and Walsh in New York. It was one of the top agencies at twice the money I was making for Hearst. And I could have asked for another \$10,000 if I had been smart enough, known a little more about the workings in agencies. I produced drawings and ideas, and I was mostly an idea man for the Ligget and Meyers tobacco

account. I learned a great deal about the tobacco industry. As a matter of fact it got so I, having read the entire library on tobacco, just was fresh with all the things that were in the books. Most of the other employees came and asked me.

M: Didn't you have to smoke if you worked for them?

K: If you smoked, you smoked Chesterfield cigarettes. You couldn't promote their cigarette if you smoked any other one. Because rightly so, I never felt that this was an imposition on any one. Rightly so, you had to have product loyalty. Otherwise, you couldn't promote the product. I smoked Chesterfield until my fingertips were numb and my lung tips were hurting. Finally I decided that I would just have to cut out smoking altogether. That was okay, to cut out smoking.

M: You cut out smoking while you were still working for them?

K: Yes, and I've never smoked again. That was 25 or 30 years ago.

M: How long did you do this commercial art?

K: Well, I was with them for two years. Then I worked for a short time with an advertising agency doing all the A&P newspaper ads. They had nine divisions and I've made the ads for all nine divisions. Let me tell you, that was fun. I enjoyed it because it was a challenge. I felt that I should be able to do this and do it easily. There were lot of details that had to be in it. I had assistants, all I did was make the pencil drawings. Somebody got the typeset. Somebody pasted it up. I had an assistant that would tell me what had to go in, in what department, and at what prices. It wasn't any hard job. We all ate together at a restaurant called The President. It was in the same building. Then my first girlfriend and I met again. It was then we had decided that we had to live either in

Texas or New York. She came down to visit New York to see how it is. She was just a Texan; that's all. She couldn't see the wonderful things that were all there in New York. She was absolutely flabbergasted with all the things that were there, but it was too much. She said, "Why don't you come to Texas?"

I was engaged to her when I was in Baltimore, at seventeen. She contacted TB and her uncle brought her to Las Cruces. She stayed here and promptly married somebody else. When her husband died, we had met again. In the meantime, my wife died. And so, within, six months, we were married. I gave up my job and my outside business. I had three other jobs besides this one, and I had three offices--one in Radio City, too. All free offices, free office space. And it was just great. There was a time when the French government had offices in Radio City and they put out a French Digest. I was the art director because I spoke French, they liked my art work and I did that sort of thing. I had offices in their area. I tell you, nothing could have been better. It was just absolutely great. I always liked Radio City anyhow, it was inspiring. Beautiful, beautiful buildings. It was the first, I would say, 10-block area in New York that was made into one city. And was designed all at one time with all the buildings matching and looking beautiful--together.

M: You must have been making a lot of money in that period of life?

K: I managed to get by.

M: Then this lady that had been your sweetheart and married someone else from here, is your second wife?

K: That's the woman that I've been married to for the last 20 years.

M: You told me you had two daughters by your first wife. And then your second

wife, you have a child by her?

K: She had an adopted child,

M: Oh, yes, a girl, too. They're all like your own.

K: Oh, yes. She is Katy McIntire now. She married a lawyer here.

M: And then your two daughters...

K: Another one has married a geologist who has a degree from Texas Western. He decided that he saw the handwriting on the wall while he was working for an oil company in Louisiana and he started to study law at night. He's a lawyer, partner with one of the top firms in Houston. Josie also married well, a young fellow by the name of Bruce Brown. He has a very lucrative business here. Several of them, in fact. He is a manufacturer and has a brokerage firm and he has a refrigerated storage warehouse.

M: This one lives in Houston, what is her name?

K: Davis.

M: That's Josie?

K: No, that's Betsy Davis. His name is "Cowboy" Davis. He was a legislator for two terms.

M: In Texas?

K: In Texas, from Houston.

M: Well, after you lost out with the Hearst's, you did this advertising business for a while?

K: Actually, it wasn't a loss, because the first job that I got after I left them was for twice the money. I think, sometimes, you stay too long with one firm. As a matter of fact, all my life I thought that I should have been in business for myself. When I came back from Europe, I decided not to work for anybody anymore and started, slowly, the business of making owls

and selling etchings. Now I'm making out better than I ever have. I sell owls, etchings of all kinds, but mostly owls, in every state of the union and in three foreign countries.

M: You went back to Europe for a while.

K: For six months, just for a visit. I lived in Bern, Switzerland. We took trips. You see, these countries are so small, that if you centrally locate you can make day trips to the border in any direction. We went to Geneva and came back the same day. We saw everything we wanted to see. We went to Lichenstein. It's a principality, one of the smallest principalities in Europe. It is sort of under the apron of protection of Switzerland. It's very interesting and very nice to see.

M: The prince there is supposed to have a fabulous collection of art. It goes back to the Middle Ages.

K: Yes, I saw it. It's been passed down for generations. Every once in a while he sells one for a million dollars. Then his principality can continue to exist--or he can exist in the style to which he has become accustomed.

M: Well, you worked then for a while for these advertising firms and then you married your present wife. What is her first name?

K: Helen.

M: Then you came out here.

K: On her say-so. She said, "You live twice as long in Texas as you do in New York." And I'm beginning to believe it. For a long time it took some doing to believe it, because I came here and I worked twice as hard for half the money, and that worried me for a long time. But I got to the point where I felt that money wasn't everything. You would have to be a millionaire

to meet the people that you meet in El Paso anywhere else, especially in New York. Even a millionaire couldn't meet the sort of people we have. I've met the president of the Metropolitan [Museum] here. He stayed at my house and I was able to entertain him, not only at my house but at the club. I heard things about the Metropolitan that I never would have heard, nor could I have ever met him in New York. After all, there's just too many people. The sort of opportunities that you have here to do civic work, why, there'd be 50 people standing ahead of you, all bigger and fatter than you, all more capable than you to do that sort of thing that is handed to you on a platter here. "Would you do it? We'd be grateful if you would do it. We'd be appreciate if you would do it." This is a great town. This is the best.

M: Well, you've lived here 20 years and all that time you've just worked for yourself, mostly.

K: Well, part of that time, yes.

M: As an artist and selling your paintings.

K: Yes, paintings, mostly etchings. You see, etchings are different from selling paintings. A painting is unique, one thing, and you sell that and the man has the one thing of its kind for a price that not everybody can afford. But with an etching, it's just the opposite. Most people can afford an etching at the prices they are sold. By the time you've sold a whole edition, you've gotten yourself a very good price. The smallest etching that I sell, I could make \$1,200 if I sell the whole edition.

M: About how many will there be in?

K: There'll be one hundred.

M: So it's \$12 apiece.

K: Yes.

M: So you do pretty well just on etchings.

K: Yes, even in El Paso. I have three outlets, plus a lot of people wouldn't go to any store to buy them. They come to the house. And ever so many people come and they don't buy one or two, but they buy a dozen or 20 etchings. So it's almost the same price then when they walk out as if they had bought a painting. And many times after they have all the etchings they want, they'll start buying some paintings.

M: You've been very active in the El Paso Art Association, haven't you?

K: Yes. I was president three time. I've met a lot of fine people and I've gotten a great deal of help and suggestions. So many artists are so free giving--oh, just help you all the time. All you have to have is your ears open to listen and be congenial enough to want to take some assistance and help. It was a good experience each time.

M: Have you ever done any teaching? Had classes yourself, where you taught?

K: I taught at UTEP for three years. I taught advertising art at night. Was an instructor. I enjoyed that tremendously. To just have an opportunity to pass it on is a nice experience. There were so many people in my life that have helped me that I've always hoped that I could have students that I could pass it on, tell them all I know and give them some help. And that has given me that sort of an opportunity. I would still do it if they could use me. It's taxing. What you tell in class is not what comes right out of the top of your head. You have to prepare yourself before you go to class. It's really a double job.

M: Well, were these mostly lecture classes that you did?

K: Yes. They produced ads, layouts, drawings. We even had one session a

month--a life class--to learn how to draw. A lot of them took advertising art when they couldn't draw. So, in order to make any kind of drawings at all you had to learn how to draw. So we had to tackle that, too.

M: You've also been active in the Museum of Art, haven't you? Weren't you one of the directors?

K: Yes, I was on the Board of Directors for six years, and the Accessions Committee. I've always felt that I had helped bring the El Paso Museum into existence, into being. I went on a trip with the architect for ideas as to how to bring this about, to all the museums in the Southwest and East, up to New York. We and our wives spent a real happy 10 days visiting museums and getting information bringing it back here. Many things that have been incorporated in this museum are the result of that trip.

M: You had a great deal to do with getting up the design of the building?

K: No, none whatsoever. Louis Daeuble did that. He's the architect.

M: But you went along?

K: Ideas...for instance, should we have an auditorium? Well on this trip we saw the necessity and the usefulness for an auditorium in other museums and we could make those recommendations. We also saw the necessity for a landing dock to bring a truck up to unload heavy crates with pictures properly, and to have them in a room adjacent to the docks for storage until they would go up on the walls. We met Rush Kress. We were at his house and were entertained by him. He and his wife showed us their collection and sort of told us that we could pick what we liked best for our museum here, out of his home.

M: You had a part in picking the Kress pictures that were brought here?

K: It seems so. Actually, the pictures that I like, that I expressed my

thoughts about, eventually we got. But I'm sure that if he had decided not to give them to us he wouldn't have given them to us. Evidently these are pictures that he wanted to have come here. He was very fond of El Paso. The Kress store here was one of the first stores that they had and a real money maker. It was a good business enterprise here for them. So they were sort of fondly disposed to El Paso. They had so many collections. For instance, the largest collection is in the national galleries. They have 40 rooms. In Washington. We saw that. It was necessary for us to see what was there. Like The Shepherds, painted by Gorgioni. That picture was one of the most expensive that they had in the collection. Paid a million dollars for that picture. In those days, that was a fabulous sum to pay. For us to eventually get something like this sort of collection here in El Paso, in a museum, it almost makes you feel that you were back East. But just how much I had to do with it, I can't say. I stood around and I said, "Yes," and that sort of stuff.

M: Who went along with you?

K: Louis Daeuble.

M: You two then, were the ones. You and Louis would express interest or preference for a picture, and those seemed to be the ones we have.

K: Many of them. We met all Mr. Kress' employees. Officials, you know. We visited them in their offices, they gave us ideas as to what could be done and so on, and what was necessary to exhibit pictures, like the lighting that we have. There was one person and only one person that could do the type of lighting that we have in this museum. That man had to come here. And anybody that has had the opportunity to help build housing for a collection for Kress and had thoughts that they could have the type of

lighting that they thought was good just were wrong; they were up the wrong track. They eventually were convinced that if they wanted the pictures this was the type of lighting that was good for them.

M: When they first put the pictures in, they didn't have that humidity control, did they?

K: Yes, right from the beginning. One thing more that they have the wires in for is the system that they have in the national galleries, where you walk around with a receiver and earphones. As you stand in front of a picture, there is a recording that tells you about this picture. This so tremendously impressed me that I felt that we ought to have it, especially in two languages, in El Paso. We installed the wires, that was the only concession to make. The rest was forgotten and probably will always be forgotten.

M: Would it be rather expensive?

K: Probably.

M: Does the Board choose the Director of the Museum? Are they the ones?

K: Yes. There was a group that decided on our Director. You know, R. E. McKee was really responsible for us getting the collection.