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Interview no. 77

Louis Krupp

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO
INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: Louis Krupp (1888-
INTERVIEWER: John H. McNeely
PROJECT: El Paso Area Artists
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BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

Artist.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

Autobiography; experiences as a Bavarian immigrant
and professional musician; teaching Art in schools;
career in El Paso.

3 hours; 52 pages.

Louis Krupp
by John H. McNeely
April 12, May 29, and August 8, 1973

M: We can always start by asking you when you were born.

K: November 26, 1888.

M: And where were you born?

K: In Bavaria. But that is in the Palatinate.

M: The Palatinate. And that town you were born in, what's the name of that?

K: Miesenbach.

M: Miesenbach. What did you father do there? Had he lived there all of his life?

K: My father had lived there for most of his life. He had his apprenticeship as a tailor in Paris, in the same place where his mother was a tailor, and her husband, my grandfather.

M: They weren't Bavarians, then?

K: My grandfather was. But he was a tailor like it was in those days, when they used to go from town to town, to get more experience in their work. See, apprentice like. And he landed in Paris in that tailor shop where my grandmother also worked as a tailor. And that's where they got acquainted. And later, when they got married, they moved to my father's hometown, which was Miesenbach. Those were my grandparents.

M: Well, I guess they spoke both French and German.

K: They did. My father could speak French quite well. He was the interpreter during the First World War when the French occupation was in that section.

M: Maybe that's why they named you Louis instead of Ludwig--the French influence.

K: That's right. There were a lot of French names in my hometown.

M: It's near the Rhine?

K: It's on the left bank of the Rhine. Not close to the Rhine, maybe a hundred miles or so from it. But the distances are much shorter than they are

over here.

M: You had brothers and sisters?

K: We were four brothers and three sisters, seven in the family.

M: Any of them still alive?

K: No, I'm the last one.

M: Were you the youngest one?

K: The second youngest.

M: But you do have nieces and nephews.

K: My nephew was visiting a couple of days ago, from Chicago. I have nephews and nieces in this country.

M: Who have settled here from Germany?

K: Yes.

M: Well, then, you spend the first years of your life there in Miesenbach?

K: Until I was fourteen.

M: And you went to school there?

K: Yes.

M: What sort of school did you attend?

K: Grade school, as you call it, up to the eighth grade. You see, as the law was in those days, all the children from the farm communities had to go to school seven years. And then they could take Sunday School for three years to make up for the eighth grade. But I didn't finish that. I came over here.

M: Was that school run by the state, by the government?

K: All school in those days were government schools.

M: They didn't have any parochial schools?

K: Well, you see, in Germany the Protestant and Catholic religions, they were

run by the government. They were under government control. And the ministers and priests were paid by the government. So the collection box was always very meager. Everybody had to pay church taxes anyway.

M: Did they give religious instruction in the schools?

K: Yes, one hour. From seven to eight o'clock every morning, except on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

M: In your school, was the instruction Catholic or Protestant?

K: Catholic.

M: Almost everybody in the Palatinate was Catholic then?

K: Yes, the majority of the people.

M: You were telling me once you remember a visit that the Prince Regent Luitpold made to the Palatinate when you were a child.

K: Yes. They opened up a colony for drifters, like trade apprentices they call them in German. This was for boys who try to learn a trade and move from town to town to get temporary work. And sometimes they didn't know where to sleep, so this place was for them. They could stay as long as they wanted and make enough money--not much--but they fed them well and they had to work in the fields.

M: Out on the farms?

K: Yes, like a commune. I didn't know what it was.

M: And you were on a place like that?

K: No. My town was quite a bit away from it.

M: But that was the place where the Prince Regent visited?

K: Yes, when that was opened.

M: You didn't get to see him, then?

K: Yes, I got to see him. The whole school did. We had to go there and stand

in line--all barefooted. Some of the children had no shoes. It was in summer. But the shoes were so worn out that they were ashamed to wear them. So the teacher decided to let us all go barefooted. And the Prince Regent asked why we were barefooted. I guess the Burgermeister or who ever it was told him that there were some children who didn't like to wear shoes because they were too ragged. So the Prince Regent went and bought shoes for them.

M: Well, that was nice. Did you have to bow or something when he came?

K: Heck, no. He came around and shook hands with us.

M: He was very democratic.

K: Yes.

M: Was he an older man?

K: Oh, I imagine that he was around 60 or 75 years old, which I don't call old.

M: You told me about King Ludwig, who was King before Luitpold was regent. Would you hear about those things then wehn you were a child or later?

K: I was born the year that King Ludwig died. And it was quite a bit discussed all over for years.

M: What would they tell you about him? Was he very popular?

K: Very popular. Nobody made bad remarks, anyway. If they did they would have been punished. It was against the law.

M: To say something bad about the Royal Family?

K: Yes. My mother told me a story one time. There was a merry-go-round in Miesenbach and when the news came that the King had been killed, that he was drowned, everything had to stop and go into mourning. And the wife of the merry-go-round's owner said, "He could have stayed out of the water."

And she got 14 days in jail for it.

M: Well, did he fall into a river or something?

K: The way the people explain it he was actually drowned. He was taken out by some other people.

M: By his keepers? He had been declared insane.

K: Yes.

M: But he had been famous for building all those castles and also his patronage of Richard Wagner, the famous composer. He was a very intellectual person.

K: Yes. Cultural interest he had. Yes.

M: That family was named the Wittlesbach.

K: Yes, the Wittlesbach.

M: Well, how did you happen to come to the United States?

K: Well, my father and my mother...my father wanted me to be a musician.

And in the seventh grade, at the examination, the Catholic deacon, he looked at my composition book. And he said to the teacher, "How can you have this student sitting at the head of the class when he doesn't know how to spell?" And the teacher was embarrassed and said, "Ask him something else. With all the people around nobody knows anything." So he picked up my drawing book and looked at it and said, "What are you going to be when you grow up?" I said, "My father wants me to be a musician." And he said, "You should study art." And that put the bug in my head, see.

M: Was this the Catholic deacon, not a priest?

K: He was a deacon, higher than a priest.

M: Oh, higher.

K: Yes, he came as a guest, by invitation. When the final examination was of the year, they invited everybody. The Burgermeister, the Protestants

and the Catholics, they all had representatives there to see what we did. And the Catholic deacon sometimes would ask about the catechism or something like that, which I knew very little about.

M: What instrument did your father want you to play?

K: Violin and trombone, because you had to have two instruments in order to... And it happened so that at that time when I was 14 my mother wanted me to work for the coal mines in Saar Bruken. Everybody has to work, but nobody could get me under the ground. I had claustrophobia or something. So this man was organizing people to get a band together, and he had his place of operation in Chicago. He was known as a band leader for picnics, dances, and so on. And he said that he would take me along as an apprentice, and another one of my schoolmates.

M: Oh, this man came to Miesenbach?

K: Yes, he lived about three miles away. My father knew them quite well.

M: But he had been over here before from Chicago?

K: Oh, yes, he came always home after two or three years just to visit and pick up new material.

M: Had you already started playing the violin and trombone by then?

K: He taught me to play the trombone. But I had had lessons in the violin before. And so, when we got to Chicago...I had never been away from home more than 15 miles. And to take that trip, first we went to Antwerp in Belgium, and then from there we went to Harwich in England and then by train to Liverpool. In Liverpool we took the boat. We came to Halifax because the band leader didn't want to take any chances with us because we were too young. And if we were rejected at the border between Canada and the States they couldn't send us any farther than Canada.

M: That must have been about 1902 or '03?

K: 1903. On March the 3rd, I came to this country.

M: Did you begin playing as a musician right away?

K: Yes.

M: What sort of places did you play in?

K: We were playing in excursions, you know. We played on the excursion boats on the Great Lakes. And part of the time we were playing on weekends in those days. We were playing on picnics and dances. You know, in those days they had no television, no radio, not even a phonograph. And the musicians, no matter how mediocre they were, they were quite in demand.

M: Well, you played in an orchestra. About how many members did it have?

K: Six.

M: Only six?

K: We would always take in others outside for larger jobs.

M: What sort of music did you play--waltzes, polkas?

K: Two steps, waltzes. Even the fox trot was not in vogue yet. But the two step and the cake walk.

M: People would dance, then, to your music?

K: Yes.

M: You did that then for several years. You didn't go to school anymore?

K: No, not while I was in that outfit. They made us work hard at home. They made us wash the dishes, scrub the floors, and everything under the sun.

M: But you still were interested in art, weren't you?

K: Well, when I was through with that bunch--you see the contract was for two and a half years--I got acquainted with Petrillo, James Petrillo. He was the promoter of the American Musicians Union, and he started a union of

his own. He was a young man yet, just a little bit older than I was. I think he was an Italian-Jewish. He organized his own union and we got in for ten dollars each. His union got so big that they outdid the American Federation of Musicians. So they took Petrillo and a whole bunch of us over into the Federation of American Musicians. And from then on we had it easier. I had more free time.

And then I looked around for...I wanted to study art. And most of the jobs were in the night. Especially in the wintertime there was no work in the daytime, except maybe a funeral march or something like that. So one time I went to the Chicago Art Institute and went through Flagstone Hall, which was on the ground floor. In the back was the art school. And there was a door that said, "School Entrance". I don't know how I walked in. But I went to the office and walked up to the girl there and I said, "How do you know that you belong here?" My English was still not very good. She said, "You want to find out whether you have any talent?" I said, "Yes, ma'am." She said, "Why don't you sign up for three months and by that time you'll know whether you like it or whether you don't like it. At least you will have tried. And you'll get it out of your system. I know how you feel. I did the same thing. But I didn't make it." So I signed up for three months and I stayed for the full three years, including summer school. I thought, "To heck with picnics, art school is more important."

M: Well, did you stop playing as a musician then, while you were attending art school?

K: No, I played nights.

M: You had to keep playing to pay for the art school?

K: Yes.

M: This was in a building called Flagstone Hall?

K: That's one hall in the Chicago Art Institute, but only for the Art Institute.

It's the place where they have Greek statues and all that sort of thing.

And there are some big funeral caskets in marble--things like that.

M: From the ancient Greeks and Romans?

K: And from, I think, from Egyptian mummies and stuff like that.

M: Did you have any famous artists as teachers while you were there?

K: Well, my first teacher was Charles Shroeder. He was a very severe teacher.

He taught us construction of the figure and of the head and anatomy. And

I was in his classes for nine months. The first six weeks were on the

skull only. Then came several months of studies of the skeleton. We had

two skeletons in the school, a male and a female. You could pull them

out of glass cases, and you had to make so many drawings. And the teacher

had to approve them before he would let you take a different position.

After that we studied the muscle figure, the muscles. And that was the

same thing. And after you got through with the muscle figure, then you

were ready for the life class. Then he took me and another student--

which we had made the grade--took us to the life class. He did this before

the nine months were over. Things were much more interesting. When I

got to the life class, I looked around and all of the good places were taken

in the front. In the second row not everything was taken yet. So I saw

to it that I got behind the best student. I was using my head. I thought,

if the teacher didn't teach me I'm gonna watch this guy because I liked

what he did. And it worked out all right.

M: You had a different teacher in the life class?

K: Yes. In the life class it was Wellington Joshua Reynolds. He was the descendent of Sir Joshua Reynolds. I was quite good in drawing the nude. I could even get a good likeness on the nude. When he found out I could get a likeness, he said, "Why don't you go to my portrait class? I can teach you more about the head and hands, which is more important than the nude figure is." So I changed over to his portrait class and was in there for seven months. And he said, "I also have students on Saturdays and Sundays painting." He said, "If you want to, you can come to my class on Saturdays and Sundays, I won't charge you." He knew that I had very little money. But he said, "If you want to do some chores for me once in a while, we can even it out that way." So I did take Saturdays and Sundays painting. So in the third year he put me in the portrait class at the Art Institute. And I did very good in that portrait class. My work was exhibited in the school exhibition. I got honorable mention on my work. And after I was through with Reynolds, I had another teacher in the mornings. In the mornings I studied with Carl Bueher. He was teaching the life class. I didn't get along with him so good. He was of an entirely different temperament than Reynolds. Well, you know, when you like a teacher you go out of your way to please him. And I didn't go out of my way to please Bueher. I didn't get too good grades in his class.

M: What did he teach?

K: Life drawing, nude painting. But I got through at the Art Institute and then I decided to go to New York.

M: Did you get some kind of a degree when you finished? Diploma?

K: I didn't work for one. You see, Reynolds said, "If you take the normal course, you'll have to take a lot of other things which keep you out of

my classes." I didn't care for anything else, I just wanted to paint. That was it. When I got to New York I got a job in a book bindery just as a flunky. I had a scholarship to go to Cooper Union, but when I got to Cooper Union there was just no room. He said, "As soon as we get a place in the life class, we'll let you know." So I didn't know how long it would take. In New York I was living with my sister. So I went to the Art Student's League and I got into the class right away. Bridgeman was teaching life. I've got several books of his. He was teaching only life and anatomy. He was an expert at it. I stayed with him for one year. And then my brother was in New York, one of my older brothers, and he worked in a moving picture house. On weekends I substituted for one of the musicians there, trombone. In those days they didn't have talking moving pictures yet. That was in 1918, '19. When I was through with Bridgeman I took my instruments to a pawn shop and sold them. I said, "Now I'm going to make a living in art or I'm going to starve."

M: Well, this teacher you had in New York, George P. Bridgeman, he taught at the Art Students League. They have these two famous schools in New York, the Art Students League and National Academy of Design.

K: That was near Morningside Park On 110th street.

M: Did you ever go to the National Academy?

K: No, I didn't.

M: What sort of place was it? Just an art school, where Bridgeman taught?

K: Oh, they had classes there day and night. Continuously. There were other teachers. At the League the students used to vote for their teachers. If they didn't like them, they voted them out. I don't know where the school got all the money from. I went there at night, five days a week,

from seven to ten o'clock. The tuition was very reasonable. I think it was only seven dollars a month. They must have had some other endowment. Henri was teaching there, Robert Henri.

M: He taught at the National Academy of Design too, I think. Did you have any classes with him?

K: No, only with Bridgeman.

M: And you say the First World War had started by then?

K: Yes. 1918 was the end of the war.

M: Were you disturbed any by the war?

K: You know when you are young you don't take the disturbances so serious.

M: So it just came and went and you weren't affected by it in your personal life?

K: That's right. When I was at the Art Institute everybody had to register for the draft. And when I was in the office one of the men said to news reporter, "Here's a guy by the name of Krupp, maybe you want to ask him some questions." And he asked me all kinds of questions like, "Are you related to the Krupp of Krupp gun works?" And all that sort of thing. How should I know? I didn't trace the relation of my ancestors. I said that I didn't know. And the next day when I got to school the students were all ready and they said, "You made the front page. How did you do it?" We were kind of an international crowd: Russians, French, Italian, and English students, everybody. It was quite silly. I saved the thing for a while but finally it got lost.

M: You weren't a citizen of the United States yet, were you?

K: I was a citizen of the United States. I became naturalized just before the war.

M: You knew you were going to live over here for the rest of your life then?

K: I had made up my mind to stay here. If they had drafted me, I would have gone along.

M: You wouldn't have objected?

K: No, but they probably would have put me where I couldn't do any harm in any direction. (Laughter)

M: Well, Bavaria was an ally of Austria against Prussia in that war. After you finished with Bridgeman, you said that you decided not to be a musician anymore and that you were going to be an artist or starve. Did you starve?

K: Yes.

M: You did? (Laughter)

K: Not exactly, but I did have a hard time. I did work off and on when money got scarce. In those days it was easy to find a job. One time I had a job in a jewelry factory designing jewelry and doing some work around there. They guy asked me during the Christmas season while we were polishing certain jewelry articles, he said, "Did you ever think about why I hired you?" I said, "Yes, I'm still wondering because there must have been 25 people asking for a job, and I was one of the last ones and I got the job." He said, "I hired you because none of the others looked honest to me." But I didn't like the guy, just the same.

M: Well, jewelers had to worry about that, you know.

K: When I got to the shop, they were already filing on gold. They had some pieces of gold-like wires. And even the sweepings on the floor were all sifted again. There was a lot of gold dust in the bottom of the barrel.

M: Well, you just worked polishing the jewelry, you didn't make jewelry then?

K: Well, I didn't make the jewelry, I was working as a designer. It was the Rosen Jewelry Company. They worked for places like Dunhill's. They made some very expensive vanity cases for powder. Sometimes a case was made out of platinum and inlaid in gold with all kinds of designs in them. And they made cigarette cases like that also, and they were usually in gold and silver. And they had to have 35 coats of enamel so that it was even with the gold. Those things got to be very expensive. I don't think that they had one cigarette case that sold for less than \$500.

M: They must have catered to the very rich people then?

K: Yes. And when you opened them up there was gold inside and the enamel was polished to a very high gloss. They were very artistic.

M: Well, they were very artistic then, and you did help design them. So you really had experience in jewelry design?

K: Not when I started. I took a chance.

M: Were you with Rosen then for some time?

K: For about six months.

M: Well, you must have come on fast then in six months?

K: Well, I didn't like the work because it had nothing to do with what I learned in school. Of course in school you learn how to draw. You can draw any kind of design if you make up your mind that you really want to do it, that you had to do it.

M: Then you went into some other kind of work?

K: Then I did some more commercial work. I worked for one firm. That was during the Depression when I got back to New York again. That was in 1931. There was absolutely nothing for artists. They were selling paintings for sacks of potatoes and stuff like that. And so I went to an

employment agency. I made all kinds of beautiful designs and I showed them to the girl. She said, "Oh, I'm so sorry, there is absolutely nothing for artists." So I took my designs and wanted to leave the place. And then she said, "Wait a minute, there is one studio and I'm going to call them. I know that they don't need anybody but they could at least look at your samples." So she called Harry Grobeman and Kircshenbaum. They were making silk screen designs for commercial purposes. When I got there Harry Grobeman was there. It was at that time when Hitler got messed up with the Jews. And Grobeman and Kircshenbaum were both Jews and saw my name. He said, "You're German." I said, "I'm an American. I took my American citizenship and I consider myself an American." He said, "When did you come to this country?" I said, "1903." He said, "You have been here longer than I have. I'll let you make some designs for us, but if you can't do the work, out you go." I said, "If I can't do the work, I don't want to be here." I said, "How much money does your best artist make?" He said, "Listen to him. He wants to know how much money he can make."

So I made designs and they told me what they were supposed to be used for--some for wallhangings, some on lampshades, and some on all kinds of commercial articles. I used my head and thought, "I'll do the best that I can." And on the next day I had a whole table full of stuff. A salesman came in and he said to Harry, "Harry, who's taking out these samples?" I knew then that I was in. I worked there for three and a half years making designs and I got along well with them. I made more money than anybody else in the place.

M: At the depth of the Depression, between then and when you first were in

New York, you must have been back to Chicago? Is that right?

K: No, I went to Florida. There was an opening in an art school there. One of my friends in Florida told me about it. So I went to Florida and got a job in an art school. Grobeman and Kirschenbaum were kind of mad when I left because I really worked that place up in quality. But that was not my desire. In Florida I could teach life drawing and I could teach portraits, both in charcoal and in oil, night classes, elementary drawing classes, and teenager classes. That was my ambition. And when I got there I got in right away and worked there for three years. This was in Pensacola.

M: You have skipped a part of your life there in the 1920s. You worked for this fellow Rosen for six months and then you skipped over some years.

K: Well, before that, I worked in Chicago. I did some commercial work.

M: You went back to Chicago?

K: No. That was before I worked for Rosen and Kirschenbaum. In Chicago I worked before doing commercial portrait work. You had to work all from photographs then. I didn't like that. It was called the Chicago Portrait Company. They had about more than 25 artists working in one big room, and they worked with air brushes, pastels, and other different mediums. Some worked with oils. But it was always done over an enlarged photograph.

M: Oh, you did that on the photograph itself, color it. You didn't make an oil painting from the photograph.

K: Yes, we did. But not all the time. But it was always done so that nothing was left of the photograph. It would look like a painting. But it was very degrading work. I didn't like it at all. Some people had worked there for years and years and I didn't want to look like them.

M: Well, the customers apparently brought in the photographs.

K: No. They had salesmen going out all over creation, even to Australia. Some of the younger men there went to Australia on a contract. They sent them there and paid their fare there and back on a contract for so much a month.

M: And in Australia they would paint portraits of people?

K: They would do the same thing there.

M: Well, in the early or middle 1920s you were doing that kind of work?

K: Yes.

M: Then you went to New York and worked for Rosen and Grobeman and them?

K: Yes.

M: Then you went to Pensacola. That school that you worked in out there, what kind of school was that?

K: That was an art school, it was an art center. They also had wood carving, photographing, and all other kinds of art. But it was the only one that was teaching Life and Portraits.

M: What was the name of this school?

K: It was the Pensacola Art Center.

M: Was it a private school?

K: I think it was a government school.

M: And you taught there for some years?

K: Three years.

M: You hadn't gotten married yet, had you, up to that point?

K: I did get married then, in Pensacola. I opened up a studio then. When this country went into war in 1940, the school was closed up, and all the teachers took other jobs that had to do with the war. Some worked for

the Red Cross and this and that. And also the students disappeared. So I rented a studio in downtown Pensacola. But at the Art School, before it was closed, they had open house Saturdays and Sundays for the enlisted sailors. And on Saturdays and Sundays I worked for three hours each day making six portraits of sailors, free of charge, just for the experience of getting a quick likeness. And we did that until the war was declared. They closed that whole thing up. Then I rented a studio and had some sailors coming in for the portraits. In the beginning I made them free of charge just to get the samples. And I displayed them near the door downstairs. And then they came in and paid money for them. Then they brought in the officers. They carried the pictures into the barracks and they sent them home. As time went on, I kept raising the prices. As the business got too big I kept raising the prices and I always charged more for the officers than I did for the sailors.

M: There must be a big naval base there?

K: Yes. Also during the period when I was teaching portrait class and life class there was mostly Navy people in the classes.

M: You were already married by then?

K: Yes.

M: Tell us about that.

K: My wife? I had a studio in the country, in a small town that was called Villa Tasso. It's about sixty miles east of Pensacola. And my sister had a small place next to it. And my wife...we got acquainted in Chicago years before. My sister invited her to Florida. You know how women are. My sister wanted me to get married eventually. She didn't want to see me as a bachelor for the rest of my life.

M: What was your wife's name?

K: Catherine Serfert.

M: That's a German name too?

K: Yes.

M: Her parents were born in Germany?

K: Her mother was born in Alsace-Lorraine and her father was born in Chicago.

M: Did they speak German in the home?

K: The grandparents did. My wife can understand German. But she is a very poor conversationalist when it comes to speaking it.

M: But you had known her in Chicago before you had left there?

K: Yes.

M: How did you happen to know her? Was she an art student?

K: She was my student for a while. That's how we got acquainted. But the difference in our ages was so big. See, she's fifteen years younger than I am. And when we met I was 35 and she was 20.

M: Were you teaching art in Chicago?

K: In a commercial place. I was the head artist. I had to break in all the new ones and she was a new student. Well, I don't know how it happened but she brought her mother in one time. And her mother looked through the studio. It was a dirty place with paint all over and on the floors. And she said to Catherine, "How can you work in a place like that?" Finally we had a date and I took her to the opera. And finally she took me to her father's house. And that was the most awful thing I ever went through. Because her parents, they had nine children and they were all home. They all looked me over.

When I was in Florida, that was about 12 years later, my sister invited

/Catherine/ to spend the vacation in Florida. And that's how we got together again. And one day I said, "Let's get married." Just like that, I was feeling in the mood. She said, "Oh, I have to tell my mother." I said, "Forget it. You tell your mother and we'll never get married." So we went to the priest and he went through a lot of rigamarole. I was supposed to go to confession because we were supposed to be married in a Catholic Church. And I said, "I'll go to church but I'm not going to confession." And they wanted to know why. Then I told him when I came to the United States in 1903 and went to Saint Micheal's Church in Chicago, which was a German church, it was in Easter. You know I came to this country on March third. I had to do my Easter duty. I was still a good Catholic. And the priest at the confessional, before we even started said, "Have you been to the Parish House?" I said, "No." He said, "It's customary on Easter that you go to the Parish House and register and also that you pay a donation." I had no money for the donation so I didn't dare go to the Parish House. So I just left and never went back. I never went back to another confession. That was bad.

M: You were going to tell me about the priest that married you.

K: Well, it was Father McGovern, and he was very much worried about me not going to confession and church, and wanting me to be married in the Church. My wife wanted to be married in the Church. It was more for her parent's sake. So he called in another priest and he was a monsignor, and he brought in permission from the bishop of Mobile that we could be married as long as I was going to Church even if I didn't go to confession.

M: Did you have to agree that your children would be brought up in the Church?

K: Well, they asked me about it and I said that I didn't care. As long as my wife wanted them to be Catholics, they would be baptized Catholic.

M: Then in your early married life you lived there in Pensacola?

K: We lived there in Pensacola, and that is where our children were born. First we had an apartment. When the family increased, the apartment got too small, so I rented a studio downtown, in Pensacola, and we lived in back of the studio. It was a storefront. It was a big place. Later on we used a studio on Palafox in downtown Pensacola. And that was available and had several rooms in it besides the studio where the photographer took the pictures. We lived there from 1941 to 1946. That was where I made all the portraits of the sailors. It was right across the street from a Sears-Roebuck store.

M: That too, was where you made the portrait that you called Evelyn's Letter?

K: Yes, that was done in that studio. She used to do the cleaning in the studio. She was a very nice person. And she also babysat the children. When Rita was about a year and half old she didn't have much experience with colored help, with blacks. Once she put her finger over /Evelyn's/

face and looked at it. Evelyn said, "Won't come off, honey, it's on permanent." (Laughter)

M: Didn't you say that Evelyn had a son in the military service?

K: Yes, she had a son in the Army. He was shipped to Okinawa. And she got a letter from him while she posed for me; that's why she's got that faraway look in her eyes and the letter was laying on her lap. So I used that as a motive.

M: She was sort of sad and pensive. Then you lived in California, didn't you?

K: Yes. After the war, business fell off quite a bit, and the bases around Pensacola were closed. All the soldiers used to come to Pensacola on their furloughs; there was no other place to go. So we decided to move out. Anyway, I got so full of rheumatism in Florida that I couldn't raise my hand to my head. So we started west. First we went to Seattle and stayed there for three months. It was a cold place as far as the people are concerned. The people were not receptive to Southern ways. I was used to southern living and being leisurely. But there it was much more formal and cold. So we stayed for only three months and we moved back to Palm Springs.

M: You had been in Palm Springs before?

K: Well, we passed through. First we stayed near Riverside for a while, just to look around. And when we came to Palm Springs I met some other artists and they kind of encouraged me to stay. One of them let us stay in one of his cottages for a reasonable price, just to take care of the yard. They were gone in the summer. It was near Mt. San Jacinto. The children were old enough to run around in the yard and there was a swimming pool. Not a regular swimming pool, but more like a swimming hole where kids go and swim. They would swim in the nude if they had no swimming suits. Artists'

children, you know. The people around the fence didn't mind.

M: Where is Palm Springs?

K: It's about 160 miles east of Los Angeles.

M: And there was a colony of artists there?

K: There were quite a few artists and also all around there--Desert Hot Springs--there were a lot of resort places where I could do portrait work. I worked at the Shadow Mountain Club for quite a while. It was a very exclusive place where most of the Hollywood crowd had brought themselves in.

M: It was like a country club?

K: It had a golf course, riding place, and a swimming pool, and then square dancing for the older ones.

M: Did you get to do portraits of some of the well known Hollywood personalities?

K: Oh, yes, I did Bing Crosby's mother. Some of my first customers, most of the time, didn't tell me who they were. I hardly ever went to the movies, so I didn't know who they were.

M: That one of Bing Crosby's mother, was it in oil or in charcoal?

K: It was in charcoal. She had it made for his dressing room. She told me that he didn't like any of the photographs he had taken. I don't know if it ended up in the dressing room or not; I hope it did.

M: Did you also do landscapes there?

K: Yes, I did landscapes.

M: Were you in with an art gallery there?

K: There was one art gallery in Palm Desert and it was run by the Hendersons. The building was built in pueblo style. It was really a beautiful building and one-half of it was taken over by the bank. They had no church in the

area so the Catholic priest said mass on Sunday mornings in the saloon part of the club. The bar was out in back.

M: This is exclusive club you were telling me about?

K: Yes, the Shadow Mountain Club.

M: How long did you stay there?

K: We stayed near Palm Springs for eight years.

M: What impelled you to leave there?

K: In the meantime, I had made arrangements at the Del Coronado in Coronado, California. In the summer there wasn't hardly anything to do in Palm Springs. It was hot--110° to 125° in the shade.

M: It must be near Death Valley in that desert area.

K: It's not as low as Death Valley, it's above sea level. But Indio is only 20 miles from Palm Springs and it's way below sea level. In the summer we went to Coronado, California and I did portrait work at the Hotel Del Coronado for 10 years every summer.

M: And where is Coronado located?

K: It's right across the bay from San Diego. You can go by ferry across. It's right on the sea shore. They had a lot of rocks and ferns to keep the water from getting too close.

M: So you stayed there in the summer?

K: All summer for four months.

M: And you painted commission portraits?

K: Yes. And I had exhibits in the hotel. I sold paintings.

M: You sold them directly?

K: Directly.

M: Were there any interesting personalities there?

K: Oh, yes. A lot of Hollywood people stayed there to be away from it all

and recuperate from it all. I met a lot of them there. Some of them were very nice and some of them were kind of snooty.

M: You lived eight years out there in Palm Springs and Coronado. Then where did you go?

K: Then we moved to El Paso, that was in 1955.

M: What interested you in coming here?

K: Well, we had to look for a place where we could stay all year round. In Palm Springs we couldn't stay. My wife didn't like the summers and also there wasn't much future in Palm Springs as far as education for the children was concerned. The only thing they had was a high school. They didn't have a college or a university out there and we couldn't afford to send them out. The first day that I was in El Paso there was a flash flood. I was standing at Kansas Street looking at the water coming down the street. A bill was floating down, a dollar bill. So I picked it up and said, "This must be the place." (Laughter) I rented a small apartment and got the family over and sold the place in Palm Springs. That's how we got started in El Paso.

M: And you painted in the apartment?

K: I painted in the apartment and outdoors. In the summers I still went to Coronado. I left the family here because it was cooler and the children had their friends here. I rented a studio on Yandell.

M: Somebody remembered you being in a building that now has a carpet store in it at Cotton and Yandell.

K: Yes, it was on Cotton and Yandell. I had a studio there for several years, and I had a display. On Yandell there was a stop light and I always had the paintings lit up. I did quite a bit of business there, although the

place was in very bad shape and the owner wouldn't do anything to the ceiling. They had tenants upstairs and the coolers leaked water through the ceiling. Finally, I got out of that place and got another place, also on Yandell, closer to downtown. I stayed there for two years and then built my own studio there.

M: You and your wife must have bought this house soon after you moved here?

K: We first bought a house on Nevada Street, and that was mistake. I didn't know anything about the town although it was close enough to the high school that Rita could walk there. We didn't get here to the studio until 1961.

M: You must have bought the house first and then built the studio?

K: That's right. We had a big back yard and they would let me build there.

M: Your wife, during that period, worked at The Popular, didn't she?

K: Yes. She was commercial artist from way back. She had worked in New York. When we got married in Florida, she had a contract in New York as a commercial artist. She didn't want to lose that contract. Anyway, we didn't have much money. So right after the wedding she went back to New York and worked out her contract. Later she worked at The Popular doing commercial art.

M: That would be like drawings for advertising.

K: Yes, for advertising, for fashion, and sometimes for merchandise like pots and pans, blouses, and jewelry. She was there for about seven years.

M: Both of your children went to El Paso High School?

K: No. Gerald went to Tech [El Paso Technical].

M: Did he go to it while it was still downtown?

K: No, he went to it when it was on Arizona Street.

M: Your daughter, Rita, went to El Paso High?

K: Yes, and she studied violin under Chávez. She sometimes played with the summer symphony. She was quite good at it.

M: Is your son musical too?

K: He is musical. But he came home with a horn one time and that was the most awful thing ever. It was a baritone horn. It's the next thing to a tuba. He didn't get very far with that. I didn't encourage him either.

M: At Tech, he must have studied more technical things?

K: Well, he was more interested in electricity and electronics. He took everything we had in the house apart. Of course, he couldn't put them back together again. When we moved here to 2609 Silver, we had a big basement where he could work on his electronics. He was a ham radio operator all of the time that he lived here.

M: And then he went to the College of Mines?

K: It was Texas Western when he went.

M: He went to the engineering school?

K: Yes.

M: And graduated there?

K: Yes.

M: Now he works in electronics?

K: Yes. He has an electronics shop, he makes electronic speaking systems. He lives in Huntsville, Alabama. He works for the Boeing Company in Huntsville.

M: It was like working for the government?

K: Yes.

M: Then did your daughter go to Texas Western, too?

K: No, she did not. When she was 18, she got married.

M: Later she took up the guitar, didn't she?

K: Yes, she was quite good with the guitar.

M: Then she has given up the violin?

K: Not completely. You don't have to give up one instrument when you take up another. She can play them both quite well.

M: Since you've been in El Paso, from time to time, you have been with various galleries. I remember that you have shown some things in Nancy Cook's gallery.

K: Yes, and Greenfield's gallery.

M: And there have been galleries out of town that you have...

K: Yes. In Tucson, and I have had regular exhibitions at the Del Coronado in California. They were my own. I was also in the four man show at the museum--Mr. Acosta, Mr. Kolliker, Mr. Cogar and myself. That was in the El Paso Museum of Art. And I now have some paintings in Taos, New Mexico at the Gallery Marcos. But I intend to take all of my stuff back and keep everything here in my studio. I'm getting on in years and I don't like to travel so much anymore back and forth.

M: None of the painters that I have talked to, with maybe one or two exceptions, seemed to have satisfactory relations with galleries and their owners.

K: There's too much...I don't want to call it dishonesty, but it is right on that level most of the time. They try to get you down in price as they go up in price.

M: You were never in with that person named Farrell, who had the 222 Gallery before Cita Platt?

K: I never did.

M: He was the one that seemed to leave town with the paintings of quite a lot of the artists around here.

K: And he sold a lot of them and they never got their money either. Because artists are not organized. They can't go and sue him because how do you get ahold of him and how do you explain everything?

M: You have been active in the El Paso Art Association?

K: I've been in that ever since I have been here.

M: Have you ever held any office in it?

K: No, I didn't want that. I didn't want to have any responsibility like that, besides painting.

M: What did you feel would be the advantages of being in the association?

K: Well, you meet other artists and get acquainted. They put out a yearbook every year and I put an ad in it for my classes. And that's how you get to be known. You can get students that way.

M: I was figuring in these art associations that the artists would figure out ways to protect themselves like when they...

K: Yes, they should have some kind of protection, but they don't

M: You have always had students that you have worked with?

K: Yes, I had students most of the time. When I first got here someone told me to teach at the YW when it was downtown there.

M: One of the problems of the professional artists after they begin to have some success, is how much to charge for their paintings. It's possible to get your prices up too high?

K: Let me put it this way: to put a big price on your work doesn't necessarily make it a work of art.

- M: No. I remember you told me that when you first came here and you began to see Acosta's work you had felt that he had gotten to be a pretty good artist, and he seemed to spend a lot of time on his paintings. Then he was only asking maybe two or three hundred dollars for each portrait.
- K: Yes. He had an exhibition at the library. That was the first time that I saw his work and I thought that the paintings were pretty good. And he asked \$350 for a very large painting of a bullfighter standing in front of a door. The costume was all done in detail. I looked at the price and it was \$350. I said, "You know what's wrong with your exhibition? Your prices are too low." Maybe I made a mistake and it got to his head. There is a limit to what you can charge, what a customer can afford.
- M: Well, would it be possible to undercharge?
- K: Yes, there is such a thing. It all depends on how hungry you are.
- M: This artist that Mr. and Mrs. Hacket have had at the art center, Robert French, many people feel that he doesn't charge enough.
- K: It all depends on what you understand about portraits. His colors are not harmonious. His flesh tones...I've seen some of the samples he has there. I don't know if he paints that way all the time, but his flesh tones are all one color. There are quite a variety of tones if you can see color. I don't want to criticize him, but from my own opinion, I wouldn't have any of them as a gift. It's just a cold likeness, that's all, without any special expression. A good portrait is more than that.
- M: In your commission portraits, what is your philosophy? What do you try to get into the portrait?
- K: Well, you get a likeness, but a likeness is not enough. It's got to have the personality of the person. It's got to have life in it. As a teacher

used to say, "Put life into it." We used to work our head off in school trying to put life into it and make it right. Eventually, you begin to notice everything that happens in a person's face or head. They all register in the face--the eyes, mouth, gestures, and looks. When they look far away, worried, pleasant, or think something pleasing, all of that registers in their face. And that has to do with color vibration. If a portrait painter doesn't get that he does not get the portrait of the person. That's the way I feel about it.

M: But most artists have some paintings that are more successful than others. Would that be just fate or chance?

K: That depends upon the rapport between the person and yourself. I have had so much experience at the hotel in Coronado where I was very successful, and with some there was no rapport. They would just sit there like sticks trying to pose and show their most beautiful profile and their largest eyes, and their most beautiful smile. And that's ridiculous in a painting. In a portrait, anyway.

M: When the subject takes that attitude it antagonizes the artist?

K: They should let the artist do the work and not do the work for the artist. That's why I talk to the person when they pose. Or I tell them, "I'm going to work on the eyes." That way they might forget about the mouth, so I will work on the mouth. Or vice versa.

M: Well, all of us feel much more attracted to some people than others. It's often difficult to explain just why. But if you are strongly attracted to a person, you can make a better portrait of them?

K: I don't know. Now, when I did the portrait of Evelyn, I was attracted to her as a model. She acted so natural all the time around the place. And

when I first asked her to pose for me she said, "Oh, who wants a painting of a negro?" And I said, "I want it." She said, "Why?" I said, "That's hard to tell. I like you." When you like a model--a woman--that doesn't mean that you want to sleep with her or anything like that. But you like them as something to work with.

M: Well, another portrait of yours that I have is the young man from Juárez who was brought to you by Mr. Holguin, named Oscar Chávez. And you felt a strong rapport with him?

K: Right away as he came in. He acted so natural. It was almost if we had known each other for years. He felt right at home in here and I felt at ease with him and he with me. And we got together and made a portrait.

M: Yet, he couldn't speak any English and you couldn't speak any Spanish.

K: But that has to do with vibration. When you come into contact with a person like that, you feel their vibrations so strong that you become attracted to them.

M: How would you define the word vibration?

K: I don't know. Sometimes when a person comes into a room...when they come in you feel a chill. You don't know why, but it's their vibrations.

M: Well, if you feel a chill, then the vibrations are unfavorable?

K: Yes, or they could be very weak vibrations. And there are vibrations in color. The strongest vibrations in color are dark blue and black. The weakest vibration is in pink. I'll never know why, but there was a portrait at the Chicago Art Institute of a beautiful older woman in a completely pink formal. I'll never know why, but everytime I got to the museum and looked at the portrait, I never wanted to look at anything else but her head. I know now why I didn't like the rest of it. It was the weak

vibration in color. I was told that the Mona Lisa was painted on a dark background because of the vibrations. You see, the underpainting also has something to do with the vibrations of the painting.

M: Well, the one I have that you did of Oscar Chávez, he's wearing blue jeans and a sort of blue shirt of the same color, like the clothes a workman would wear. Was he wearing those clothes when you first saw him?

K: No. He was wearing a suit. And when he came to pose he was wearing those dungarees and a shirt. I liked that even better.

M: You feel that picture has a very strong color and subject vibrations?

K: Yes. And so does the other one in the dark blue suit.

M: So you particularly use blue then?

K: Yes. My subjects can wear almost any color except pink.

M: Well, I do have a portrait of yours of a boy playing a guitar where he's wearing a red shirt.

K: I borrowed that shirt for him because I didn't want him to wear what he had on. It would not have been the right vibration in the painting.

M: Well, that boy, it seems that you told me that he came from a rather rough background and that you felt an ominous atmosphere about him, that you were almost afraid of him.

K: Yes. In a way his own vibrations were not too good. I was right about that. He lived in Zaragosa, Chihuahua, México. He wanted a lot more money from me. I paid him well; five dollars. I paid him two dollars an hour. That's all it was worth to me at the time. You never know if you can sell a painting even after you finish it. But then when we went across the border he asked me for more money. I said, "No, I paid you."

M: So you never asked him to pose again?

K: No, never.

M: It seems to me that it was quite a successful portrait though.

K: He was interesting enough, even if the vibrations were not the right kind.

Maybe it was the antagonism that I got that made it come out that way.

M: You could do a good portrait then, even if the vibrations were antagonistic?

K: It all depends on how interesting the person is otherwise.

M: Now, the other portrait that I have of yours that's of that same size, 24" by 30", of a boy playing a violin, is of a very different atmosphere.

K: Yes, he had good vibrations. But that was years ago. He has been in here again and his vibrations have changed for the worse. He has become an alcoholic. He was one of the kind that becomes obnoxious when he has a couple of drinks.

M: Did he actually play the violin or did you just pose him?

K: I just posed him with it.

M: Now the other boy, could he actually play the guitar?

K: Yes, he could.

M: Did he play it for you?

K: He played a little. Singing, you know, accompanying himself.

M: You seem to have done several portraits of Oscar Chávez before he went into México as a movie actor. And he went to Acapulco. Now, with a group of his friends he was supposed to have been drowned when they went out fishing and disappeared. But you feel you are still in contact with him?

K: I don't know. I feel that he is not dead. If I live long enough, I might meet him again. Maybe I should take a trip to México City.

M: Two of the other pictures that I have of yours are still life pictures of

some dried corn cobs, and even in those you feel that you could create a mood. How do you go about that?

K: You can't put your finger on hardly anything when you paint. You experiment and work with different colors. And then it is mostly your own mood that goes into the work, the mood that you have or the way that you enjoy what you are doing. You try to make something out of it that appeals to you. And then it also will appeal to Mr. McNeely. (Laughter)

M: Tell us about your visit to Zacatecas.

K: When I first went to Zacatecas, I was supposed to get material for a lot of paintings. I was going to make a series of Mexican paintings. I had never been any farther than Chihuahua before. But I was told that Zacatecas was a town with no tourists and it was cheap enough to live there. Also the people were very congenial. I went around all over town. Mr. Saenz was with me. He could translate. Lupe Saenz was with me and we picked out models. I took photographs of models and old buildings. I wasted a lot of time just walking. The bus transportation was very primitive. Somewhat dangerous to drive in the town because the streets are so narrow. Didn't want to get in trouble with the law. Although I found out that when I told them I was "alemán", I got much better service than as an American.

M: Didn't you get in with some of the government officials there?

K: Yes. I had an exhibition when the paintings were finished. The officials there saw the slides of the paintings. An exhibition was arranged. They were figuring on a new museum at the time, and they were hoping to finish the museum by the time I got there. But I don't know Mexican procedure. Everything was arranged and the brochures were printed and everything.

We took the paintings down there. Nothing was even started. So they arranged it in the largest building that they had downtown, right across the street from the cathedral. It was the entrance of a theatre, the foyer, which was huge. It had big arches in front. The arches were opened and the people would flock in and see the whole exhibition from that place. It was not a movie theatre. The governor, the bishop, and everybody was at the opening. They cut the ribbon, like an unveiling.

M: Didn't you tell me that you had some controversy there, about the paintings?

K: Well, I had a lot of nude studies and there was a guy there, glaring at me when the paintings were put up. I didn't know him but he was the leader of the orchestra. He had to play for the opening. A day or two after, there was a complaint in the newspaper that I was showing obscene paintings and drawings. They were only studies. People who had interest in art wanted me to include those in the exhibition. Even the bishop said that there was nothing wrong with sex, it's what you do with it. (Laughter) I made a charcoal portrait of the bishop. After that article was in the paper, the theatre was jammed with people.

M: Didn't someone want you to do a whole series of 24 paintings on Mexican subjects?

K: Those were the paintings. Some of them have been sold and some of them I still have. War and Peace, The Bride, and The Retreat were added to the series. Lupita was one of them, /and/ The Blind Man up there on the corner.

M: Those kind of pictures that sort of tell a story, are they called genre? There's a French word.

K: Yes, that would be the name.

M: And these are subjects that you made up yourself?

K: Yes, but the backgrounds are from México and the people are Mexican.

M: One of those that you did had Pancho Villa on horseback.

K: Yes, I have that one in the storage room. The Legend of Pancho Villa.

M: What story is that supposed to tell?

K: There is a big monument in Chihuahua of Pancho Villa, and that was supposed to go into the painting because some people have claimed that they have seen him in the night, his spirit riding through the sky on his horse.

M: Isn't there something about hidden treasure in the picture?

K: Yes. There's a place, Concordia, before you get to Chihuahua. You go to the left. It's mostly adobe ruins. I was told that was the original Chihuahua location. Somehow it moved more to the right later. And that place was all left now to the poor people who lived there and fixed up the ruins, made them liveable.

M: I don't know just how much we had said about the Pancho Villa picture you made. You call it the Spirit of Pancho Villa?

K: Yes.

M: And it's taken from the statue of Pancho Villa that they have in Chihuahua City?

K: Yes. The legend was that sometimes people saw him riding through the sky in the night, and that was the idea for the painting.

M: And also that he buried a treasure in this town called Concordia, which is now lying in ruins?

K: It is in ruins and it was mostly adobe buildings.

M: So you show Villa up in the sky as it were, and it's at night and down below the people are digging for Villa's treasure.

K: Yes.

M: I have this note about the Black Range group. Can you comment on that?

K: I used to belong to the Black Range group, but I don't think that there is any significance to it.

M: It's a place up in New Mexico?

K: Yes, it's in New Mexico, just southwest of Truth or Consequences.

M: Is there an old ghost town there?

K: Yes. Formerly it was a mining town.

M: Kingston, isn't that the name of it?

K: Yes.

M: And in the summer, many artists come there?

K: Well, they have an exhibit at the old Percha Bank. There's a Percha Creek that flows through Kingston. That's where they had the flood last spring.

M: When you went up there, would you teach?

K: Yes, I had a workshop out there.

M: Didn't you judge some of the exhibits or show pictures yourself?

K: I showed pictures myself. I was one of the first ones when they started having exhibits at the bank. They had piece of cement in front of the building and every artist who got first in the show and best in the exhibition got his name into the cement.

M: And would they give prizes?

K: Yes.

M: Didn't you get some prizes yourself?

K: Yes, I got several trophies up there; I hide them.

M: How about this American Artists Professional League? What is that?

K: That's in New York. It goes all over the country. I was asked to send in some slides of my work for judging, see whether I can be a member. Somebody sent in my name.

M: Are there any advantages in being a member of this club?

K: Well, they have exhibitions, but I think it is more of a thing of prestige.

M: Then you appeared in three books you were telling me about?

K: I can't find one. It's a German book.

M: And the one I have here is published every year?

K: Every two years.

M: It's called Artist U.S.A.: The Buyer's Guide to Contemporary Art. It's published in Philadelphia. You appeared in this one in 1970-71, where it shows your painting War and Peace that you made in 1969. And also you appeared in Artist U.S.A., 1972-73: A Guide to Contemporary American Art. In this one it has your painting of the bracero, and the shepherd, and a study of a nude. It also speaks of awards you have received: the El Paso

Art Association first place and the El Paso Museum of Art first place in oils, 1966 and 1968. Then I have a note on this trip you took to Zaragoza, Chihuahua where you made a number of paintings.

K: Yes, I had a small studio there for about a year. Heavy rains flooded us out. (Laughter) It was an old adobe building. I made a charcoal portrait of my landlady. I did a lot of sketches of children there.

M: That was your main objective in sketching those people?

K: I wanted to get acquainted with the children. When you first go there, nobody knows you. After they saw me a couple of times they got more cooperative.

M: That's the way it is. We could talk about this boy, Jesús González, that we called Borrego, who has modeled for you? And we could talk about the paintings you have recently done of him?

K: His name is José.

M: No, I'm talking about the one that I brought to you here as a model. Maybe you could talk about the ones you did of him.

K: That's the one, Borrego.

M: He's supposed to be shipwrecked.

K: Yes. He was a good model. He has a nice figure and he holds a pose. Only we didn't understand each other. If I wanted his arm lowered, I'd pull it down, if I wanted it higher, I'd have to push it up. I had to move him into the right position. But he didn't seem to mind.

M: Have you had other models that couldn't speak English?

K: Well, they all knew a little English. I also had one from Torreón. He couldn't speak a word of English, but we got along all right, too. He needed the money.

M: How did you conceive of a subject like that, a person shipwrecked?

K: I lived near the water for about 25 years. First I did a woman in a watercolor. I still have that somewhere. But I couldn't find a good woman model, so I gave up the idea. Finally I got a man to pose and changed it. It was first supposed to be the sirens.

M: Oh, yes, a siren that lures men to shipwrecks. Now you have a man there. He's holding a stick with a cloth on it, trying to attract attention to be rescued?

K: That's right. Like Robinson Crusoe or something.

M: Why did you think of painting him from the back instead of the front?

K: How could I paint him from the front if he wants to signal the ship? But the ship seems to be going on, that's bad.

M: In this, it's supposed to be like the evening when the sun's going down and there's the play of the sun on the back. Does one really need to know anatomy in order to be able to paint a nude painting?

K: That's quite understood. I don't see anybody can paint a nude without knowing something about anatomy. When I went to the art institute we had to draw from the skull first. Then we had to draw the skeleton from all angles and then the muscle figure. And then there is still anatomy as we go along in life class.

M: Now this picture over here, like a shepherd with a beard...

K: He was the son of one of my students. He had that beautiful red beard. He came to pick up his mother one time and I asked him if he would pose for me. He looked just like that painting. You see so many pictures of Christ, you know. I thought he would make a good model. Then he got a job and had to take the beard off.

M: The boy here had a hat and he's wearing a serape.

K: Yes, he's an older boy.

M: He has very long hair.

K: Yes. I do like long hair on boys; it makes them look so much more attractive.

M: What are some of the notes you have made here?

K: These notes are from the seances. In the spring of 1968 at my studio, we had a psychic medium who was able to go into a deep trance and contact different spirits, especially artists who had passed away years ago. Some would come through and talk to the gathering of mostly art students. I guess the spirits are bored sometimes and look for some kind of activity in their own line of work. The medium didn't know anything at all about art or artists. The voices came through him and told us who they were.

M: This is the medium that was named /Mr. S/?

K: Yes. The first one who came through was Brother Abel. Later on, we found out, in a round-about way, that he was, of all people, Rembrandt. I didn't even believe it when he told it. Then Leonardo /da Vinci/ came through. Fray Angelico and Goethe, the German poet, also came through. He wanted my wife to write a story about me--the story which you are writing now, of my life. My wife and I, we never got together. And Pancho Villa came through but he had a different name, Arango Doroteo. And then an artist; his first name was /Brother/ Jesus.* He lived around 1800 and was a painter of nudes. Goya was one of the nicest ones to talk to. He wanted me to paint monsters. You know there is a book of his etchings on /his/ monsters out. When I wanted to paint an ocean scene, he told me that he wanted monsters in the sky. I told him that I didn't

* Pronounced Haysus

know how to paint monsters.

M: This Mr. S. really influenced you to draw some of the subjects that you painted?

K: Yes.

M: Do you feel that he, in the seances, revealed knowledge of art and artists that he really couldn't have known? As a person?

K: He didn't even /know/ what Dürer even was. He said there is a guy here by the name of Dürer. We were talking about Jesus who lived around 1800 and was a painter of nudes. Rembrandt suggested the painting of War and Peace. /Brother/ Jesus suggested all of the nude studies I made. I had neglected working from the nude for years. /Brother/ Jesus talked to me about the beauty and elegant harmony of the human body, God's most beautiful creation. Rembrandt suggested the Mexican series. This is how I got interested in the Mexican people. So we went to Zacatecas and Chihuahua and gathered material for the Mexican series. I was supposed to do a painting on the revolution of Pancho Villa and the battle scene in Zacatecas, but it was such a big scope. There's a mountain that's called The Hump that was supposed to be in the painting and the cannons and the garrison below, the soldiers, the cathedral, the cacti, and everything. It would have taken at least three large panels to do a painting like that. The size he wanted was 22 by 62 inches. Goya interfered and said that that was impossible; it's not the right dimension for any kind of a painting. So they got into an argument and the whole thing was dropped. Then I made a painting of War and Peace and Goya suggested that I make it 42 inches wide and 62 inches high. There was another spirit by the name of Radiel and he was a friend of Rembrandt. He was really the one who was

around most of the time while I was painting. He made suggestions.

M: You mean also outside the seance when /Mr. S/ wasn't there?

K: Yes. They impress on your mind. Rembrandt was very moody and not to easy to please and get along with. One day we got into an argument and he quit and I was glad he did. He wanted too many things in a short time. The spirits can travel to México in a second, but if I wanted something I would have to take the bus or the car and go for miles. I told him once, "Why don't you go and get the material for me and explain it?" He wanted me to paint one scene near Chihuahua City. It was about 60 miles out. There was a small hacienda on this big plantation. They had their own little church. I only saw it from a distance. We travelled 60 miles to the place and when we got there, they wouldn't let us in. Rembrandt didn't even find out before that they wouldn't let anybody in. Because to someone in spirit it made no difference. That's how we got into the argument and I dropped him. He had arranged some other artists like /Brother/ Jesus and Sister Diana, who was a healer, to work with me. /Brother/ Jesus is a very fine spirit, he's very helpful. He's with me with all the nudes I do.

M: What does he tell you?

K: It's hard to tell. It just seems like clockwork. When I work on a nude, everything seems to fall into a pattern. And I know when he's not around; when he's not around I have much more of a struggle to get what I want. I don't know whether you believe this.

M: Well, it's very interesting.

K: I have some tapes of the seances. The first one is of Brother Abel when he approached me. Then he was Rembrandt. Diana was supposed to take

care of my health and look after me so I wouldn't collapse under all the work I had to do. Sister Diana was also at the hospital when I had a heart attack. Also five other spirits were there. They were at the foot of the bed. When spirits appear to you they don't look like spooky, wild things. They look like real people with healthy complexions. You don't have to be afraid of them. I don't care whether anyone believes this or not, but it's strictly my experience. I also learned about color vibrations and the vibrations of man. I'm /somewhat/ psychic myself and spirits have appeared to me, but I don't go into a trance. There is a book by Rosemary Brown called Rosemary Brown's Unfinished Symphony. Schubert appeared to her and she finished his unfinished symphony. The spirits appeared to her and talked to her directly. She's more psychic than I am. /I need a medium to interpret the messages, usually/. One can get an idea how the spirits work through and with a medium. I enjoy my work and try to please myself only. Sister Diana and Brother Jesus are with me most of the time. They told me that they try to impress their suggestions onto the brain. They enjoy their work when they see results. One has to believe in the spirit world or otherwise they can't work with you at all. When they appear it usually feels like a cool breeze all around.

M: There was one seance I saw that, with /Mr. S/, there was a lot of contact through a spirit called Sister Concepción. Did she influence your painting in any way?

K: No, not the painting, but she got the artists together. She was in charge, so to speak, of a whole group of artists. When they found out that they were coming to work in the studio here, they came in, more and more. The interest increased as we worked. It was like a gathering of artists.

M: They can go anywhere they want to?

K: And as fast as they want to.

M: Do you believe in reincarnation of the soul?

K: I do.

M: Well, how many persons does the soul pass through?

K: That's hard to tell, because the human race is much older than it says in the Bible. It's millions of years old. They claim that they have found skeletons that are over two million years old. And there were several civilizations here already which disappeared again. The people who have lived here over these millions of years have reincarnated over and over again. That's the way I understand it.

M: Do you feel that you have been in a previous /body/ before?

K: Yes, I have been an artist in former lives, in Italy and in France, /and even in ancient Egypt/.

M: But these spirits that you contact through the medium, they are not incarnated in anybody at the time? They're free from incarnation anymore?

K: That I don't quite know. /They have a spirit body./ When Rembrandt approached me, he said his time was up in the spirit world. He was due for reincarnation unless he created for himself a mission /in which/ he did something of merit for others, /to work with an artist who was able to cooperate and produce paintings of spiritual significance and human interest/. If he could finish the mission before his time was up, his time in the spirit world would be prolonged. That's why we went through with it. And that's why we went so fast, because there was only one year's time to finish 20 paintings.

M: This is Brother Abel?

K: Yes.

M: Who was really Rembrandt?

K: That's right. He worked like the dickens. He was with me most of the time, and when something went wrong he would call /Mr. S/. /Mr. S/ would come and go into a trance and /Brother Abel/ would explain it to me again.

M: You don't see /Brother Abel/ any more?

K: No. And I don't want to be going into so much work with the spirits.

Brother Jesus is much easier and he tells me I can work on a painting as long as I want to, because he has all the time in the world. Some of the paintings that I did at the time /under Brother Abel/ would have been better if I had had more time. It must have taken Rembrandt a long time to finish his paintings because they are all so detailed. But while he was talking to me through /Mr. S/ he explained the vibrations of different colors and of people. Also, /Brother/ Jesus had been talking about that through Lupe. Pink has the weakest vibration of all the colors. And the dark, intense colors have the stronger vibrations. Leonardo /da Vinci/ told me that the Mona Lisa was painted /over/ a black /underpainting/. If they want to find out whether it's the original all they have to do is scratch it on a little corner and find out. If it's black underneath it's the original.

M: I guess it was Titian who lived to be so old?

K: Well, Michelangelo got to be very old too, and he did not come through in spirit.

M: Do you think that those who came through are still in the spirit world and those who didn't have been reincarnated?

K: I can't tell. They might not have been interested. They might have had

some other interest maybe in an entirely different part of the world.

M: Can the spirits be in several places at the same time?

K: That I don't know. But the whole thing was very fascinating to me because I could learn so much, especially about the vibration of colors. For instance, that nude over there. The underpainting is yellow so as to not get the wrong idea from it. The spirits would call it the color of sex. But it is only used in painting the male body. I have not been told what color to use as the underpainting for the female body. I guess it didn't matter. I just paint the flesh tone right away.

M: I guess that's like the idea in Hindu philosophy that the male body is positive and the female body is negative?

K: And so Brother Jesus pushed the paintings of the male nude. He said, "You will be able to sell your paintings of the male nude over the female nude because the female nude painting is not in style now." I have a customer in northern New Mexico who has three of my paintings. I just had a letter from him where he offered \$1000 for one of my male nude paintings. He and another man both like it.

M: Do you think it is your best one?

K: I don't think so; I think the other one has better vibrations.

M: How do you define the word vibration as you'd use it in connection with a painting?

K: Well, the way the spirits explain it, the whole universe is based on vibration. Anything you see is vibration if you could magnify it enough. For instance, if you're with a group of people and someone comes in and there's a chill in the room, it's their vibration that is not harmonious with any vibrations in the room.

M: And you feel that's sinister?

K: Yes, you feel that.

M: Then someone else may come in and you feel very strong favorable vibrations?

K: Yes.

M: But you don't know why?

K: I don't know how I am able to tell.

M: Do you feel that favorable vibrations mean that a person is of good character?

K: Yes. One time I was introduced to a woman in Chicago at a party. I thought she was the ugliest thing I ever came across. My friend said, "Just stay around her for a little while and you will change your mind." And sure enough, that woman was the nicest person I ever came across. She did not mind her appearance at all. She didn't care.

M: When you do a portrait of a person, do you try to capture that in the portrait?

K: Yes. I had one young woman come in here with her baby. She wanted a portrait of herself to give to her husband as a birthday present. I always get suspicious when somebody wants a portrait of themselves to give to somebody else. When she came in here with the baby, I knew I couldn't do the portrait when I saw her. But I took about six photographs of her and the baby because I liked the baby. The baby boy had wonderful vibrations and looked so masculine already. He was only three months old. The lady was very much annoyed. She had large eyes and she had an awful lot of stuff around them. It looked as if somebody had given her a black eye. She didn't care about the baby, I cared about the baby. When she forgot about posing and looked down at the baby, I snapped her

picture. That was the best one of the whole set because she didn't know it was taken. When I had the photographs finished, I called her up and I said it was impossible to make a portrait of her. I didn't think she would like it because all the pictures were too posed. And if she were to come and pose we would have to come to an understanding that she would leave all her makeup off. I haven't heard from her since. She was the most conceited thing that I ever laid eyes on. And that doesn't create good vibrations. I feel sorry for the man that married her.

M: There really is a much greater demand now for male nudes than female nudes?

K: Yes.

M: Well, it's supposed to be the day of the woman's liberation.

K: Maybe that's what it is. One of my students remarked about the nude on the beach there. She said, "I never looked at my husband from the rear."
(Laughter)

M: Have you had offers from anyone interested in buying that one of Borrego?

K: Everybody who saw it liked it. But it has not been shown to enough people, yet.

M: What do you feel are the strong points of it? Composition?

K: Composition and the vibrations of the model; also the vibrations of the colors. When I painted the water I had the first movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony going.

M: Do you often play music when you paint?

K: I do, especially the classics. Modern music would go well with modern art. It would not go with my type of work. I like the French and Russian composers--Tchaikovsky is wonderful. He can give you goose pimples.

M: What about the three B's--Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms?

K: Well, Bach, I like some of his music, especially his choral music. The compositions of Beethoven and Wagner have a lot of punch in them. And I like Brahms' music, too, Brahms' Hungarian dances and all that.

M: And Richard Strauss?

K: Richard Strauss, I like some of his music. I like the Dance of the Seven Veils in Salome. I've never seen his opera on stage.

M: Well, Salome was the character in the Bible who was very beautiful and I guess she did the Dance of the Seven Veils for King Herod. He got so enthused that he said he would give her anything she wanted, so she asked for the head of Saint John the Baptist on a platter.

K: She asked her mother. See, her mother was the wife of Herod. Her mother was so jealous of John the Baptist that she tried to have him make love to her, but he wouldn't respond. So she had his head.

M: You never have painted Biblical legendary subjects?

K: No, that has been done so much already.

M: I think it's wonderful that you have been influenced by Mexican scenes.

K: Well, it's right here on the border. That's why I came here, to get acquainted with the... I like darker skins to paint. I think they're more picturesque than the Anglos.

M: If you make the background dark when you are painting a dark person, the whole picture is too dark?

K: Well, it doesn't have to be dark, you can keep the background light. The background on the beachcomber there is not dark. I haven't given it a name yet.

M: There's a word in Spanish that would be good for that beachcomber painting,

"naufragio". It's a noun so you would call it El Naufragio. It's a shipwreck. A shipwrecked person would be a "naufragiado".