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## Interview no. 131

Thomas G. Pillsbury

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO  
INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: Thomas G. Pillsbury  
INTERVIEWER: John H. McNeely  
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Artist.

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Autobiography.

1 1/4 hours (1 7/8 tape speed). 40 pages

Tom G. Pillsbury  
by John H. McNeely  
May 21, 1974

M: You say you were born in Enid, Oklahoma in...?

P: June 9, 1904.

M: So it's your 70th birthday.

P: Yes, that was a day or two ago, yes sir.

M: Well, you haven't reached June the 9th yet.

P: Well, it won't be long.

M: Did your father have some sort of business there?

P: Well, he didn't have a business, no. He was the chief of the fire department, 23 years. That's a long time.

M: Then you lived in Enid?

P: Well, I left Enid to go to school and I went to grade school in Enid and I started high school in Keen, Texas. It was called the South-Western Junior College in those days.

M: Well, that's close to Enid?

P: Oh, no, that's a long ways down, close to Fort Worth. I went there my freshman year. The next two years I went back to Enid at Phillips University. They had a Junior College there. I took my sophomore and junior high school years and that's when I first started to study art.

M: How did you get interested in art?

P: In Texas, I ran into a cartoonist down there that got me started. I thought I liked to draw.

M: At this Keen?

P: Yeah. They didn't have art classes there that amounted to much, so in Phillips University, we were able to get the University art instructors into the high school curriculum, which was an advantage. I started there at Phillips, two years. I got so mad at charcoal and drawing from casts

that I thought, "Boy, this is it!"

M: Well then, this Phillips is just a Junior College?

P: No, it's a University, and it's still there. It's run by the Christian Church, I think.

M: It's religious?

P: So same was Keen, Texas. Then I went from there to a place called Enterprise Academy up in Kansas. That's really being cruising around.

M: This being along in the twenties?

P: Oh, yes, that's right.

M: You were too young to serve for the First World War?

P: Well, I'd been too young for the First World War and too old for the Second. I graduated from high school there at Enterprise Academy, then I went to Lincoln, Nebraska where I again went into art classes at the University of Nebraska. I was there for a year and decided that university art teachers teach basic fundamentals and you don't get to the commercial business that way. So I went to Chicago to the Chicago Academy in September 1925. I started at the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts. I took a full course there for a while, and then I went to the American Academy and took some specialized courses. At that time, I was beginning to pick up who I wanted to paint like. And about that time, I had a long talk with Robert Edmund Jones who, at that time, was a very famous stage designer. So I got a job at the theatre connected with the Chicago Art Institute called the Goodman Memorial Theatre. While I was there, I studied stage design with a man by the name of Nikolai Remizoff. I took drawing lessons, again, from him. He was a stage designer and costume designer, had been or was at that time, to Robert Rhinehart, who was a big production man. After that, I went to work in some advertising agencies, and had various other sources

of income in Chicago until 1933 during the World's Fair. I had then become involved in theatre design quite a bit, I painted stage scenery. I painted a few operas, the backgrounds. I was told that I had better go to Hollywood to get a job, because the shows that I was working for, run by Vincent Minelli, were moved. I did some costume work for him, stage costumes. He was running the show for Public Theatres.

M: Is he the same one who was the father of Liza Minelli?

P: That's right, Vincent Minelli. Well, he was running the stage shows for Public Theatres there in Chicago. They moved to New York. That's about the time Vidaphone started to come in--talking pictures. It began to disturb all of the stage shows; they began to cut them out, and weaken them and so forth. So, the whole Public Theatre outfit moved clear to New York. I decided to go the other way, I went to Hollywood in 1934. After so long a time, I worked at 20th Century Fox for a while. I also worked at General Service Studios, which was a little independent--any producer that wanted to rent a sound stage, that was the idea.

M: What sort of work did you do with these?

P: Background scenery, stage scenery for the movies. But that was still back in the black-and-white days. That was kind of a hectic business, 'cause when you work in a motion picture studio, you work for that particular production and you're liable to work a week, six weeks, or six days or two days. Then I got tired of that, and I went to work for a place that decorated the inside of motion picture theatres. In California, they really decorate the inside of theatres. It was all painting, and it was certainly a diversified schedule.

M: Well, the Depression was going by then in the thirties.

P: Yeah. That was about '35, '36; about '36 was when I was doing theatres.

I worked for a company that built, that decorated theatres.

M: The Depression didn't seem to affect you?

P: Well, no, I always found something to paint. If I couldn't find some job, I would go out and hustle up some signs. Because...the first job I think I ever had in relation to paint of any kind was, I worked for a sign painter when I was in the eighth grade. I used to carry that along with me all through high school. When I'd run out of money, I'd go and find me a sign to paint. Chuckle.

M: Well, maybe it kind of paid your way through those Junior Colleges and all.

P: Well, it helped... It was, what would you call it?...spending money. But, I've always painted something. While I was in California, I lived in Laguna Beach and worked in Hollywood. That was kind of crazy.

M: Was Laguna Beach already an art center?

P: Oh, yes, it was. I painted there, and that's where I studied with Frank Brandriff, who was one of the top artists of Laguna, and Frank Cuprian, who was an ocean painter. I used to talk to him a lot about painting. At that time, I was also lucky enough to get onto the board of directors of the Laguna Beach Art Association. They are still going along up on the corner of Highway 101. Then, I was just painting oceans and boats.

M: Were they already having annual shows?

P: Oh, yes. I and three or four others were the top painters. I assisted a fellow by the name of Roy Ropp in getting the thing together for the living pictures. Do you remember those that they have every year? They still have them in Laguna Beach. Of course, we all had a booth like these arts and crafts fairs where you peddled your works.

M: Well, now, if you were one of the trustees, did they act as jurors?

P: No, I was on the board of directors; it was a kind of, "What are we going

to do next month, and how much money will we spend for brochures to advertise the next show," you know.

M: They didn't act as judges in these...

P: Oh, yes, they had judges.

M: The directors?

P: No, they brought in judges from Los Angeles, San Francisco. Sometimes the judges were columnists. A chap by the name of Miller, I don't remember his first name, he was one of the judges, but he was a big time art critic from Chicago Daily News, I believe. Then I left there during the war, went back to Oklahoma, and worked in a department store. First, I worked for a sign company, [it was] back to the old bulletin business where you paint beer bottles twelve feet high. Then I got a better job with more paid. I went to work for Herzberg's Department Store [in] their advertising and display in Enid. I stayed there until '45. Then I sold everything, and went to Taos to paint. I stayed there until '46, about a year. I lived in Taos at the Harwood Foundation, which is a supplement of the University of New Mexico.

M: You can get room and board there?

P: No, just room. You rented a studio, was what you did; and it was completely equipped with a kitchen and so forth. I only paid \$30 a month. Lo and behold it cost you more than that \_\_\_\_\_. That encouraged me to move to Santa Fe and I went into business in Santa Fe. I started a place called Service Studio. I thought that was a name that you could almost do anything, so I did. I trimmed windows, painted signs, painted pictures, took photographs, did catalogs and all kinds of various and sundry things. While I was there a man named Tyler Dengee, who was a famous commercial photographer, got me interested in motion pictures. He got some

jobs and I went out as his assistant. That's how I happened to start in motion pictures. It was Tyler Dengee's fault.

M: What sort of motion pictures were they?

P: The first stuff that we did was the rodeo there. Then, we got hooked up with the National. In those days, you remember, they used to have news-reels in the movie theatres; that was the stuff we were doing. In other words, we were the so called stringers for the capital. Then along came television and I used to be a stringer for, not only the National news that we had to mail back to New York by air, /but/ all along I worked for KOB /too/. We would shoot local stuff for KOB at the capital; in other words, we were called stringers that covered the capital. /Laughs/.

M: Well, how do you define "stringer"?

P: Well, all of the news media have representatives "strung out" all over the country in different places. And the so-called name /for these representatives / is stringer. "You're a stringer over here; I've got a stringer in Grants and a stringer in Clovis," etcetera.

M: And "for the capital," what was the significance of "capital"?

P: Well, that was everything that went on in the capital of New Mexico as we covered /it/. To me, at that time, it was amazing how many international personalities visited Santa Fe on account of, you know, its historical age, etcetera. But I was there, and I exhibited sometimes in the museum and the local galleries. At that time, the basic thing was earning money to live on. You couldn't spend enough time doing pictures continually. Then in 1953 I moved to Albuquerque, basically to work for another sign shop as a designer of neon signs. It was my duty to make the patterns and original sketches that the salesmen needed. Then from that, a friend of mine called me up one day and he knew I had a lot of motion picture equipment



that I wasn't using at that particular moment. And he said, "How would you like to go to work for me?" So in the latter part of 1953 I went to work for KGGM-TV; that's the CBS station. It was to an advantage, because I, at that time, had acquired a union card with the Hollywood Cinematographers local through some help from a good friend of mine, Johnny Candelaria, who was doing the same thing, but national. I worked there quite a while; it was a television and a radio station-- KGGM-TV here in Albuquerque, yes sir. And I worked there for three, four years. At that time, they didn't think too much of news as they do at the present time--it was a subsidiary department. So I quit and went to work for Electrical Products, which is back again to neon signs. I worked there for two or three years until they figured I was getting too old to climb up, because 90 per cent of the neon signs are 50 to 60 feet in the air. They began to question anybody over 45. [Laughs]. But anyway, then I went to work for Kimbough Engineering doing photography. They're people that take aerial photographs, and you have to print them and put them back together in the aerial map.

-PAUSE-

Well, I worked there as a temporary job. An aerial photography is spontaneous and intermittent, so after the work died down, I don't know how long I was there, perhaps a few months...

M: Is it going up in a plane?

P: Yes, aerial photographers; they are engineers that design roads, plot out ground and they get maps of 100 square miles, for instance. They take the pictures, and then we...I worked just in the developing department, and we have to photograph those things scale-wise, because an 1/8 of an inch might be 1/2 a mile. But anyway, from there I went to Ted Boyd Outdoor Advertising. That was about 1962. I worked for the Outdoor Advertising

Company, which is actually bulletins up and down the highway that Lady Byrd didn't like. In 1969, I believe it was, they sold to Markham Outdoor Advertising, which is a west coast group that have a shop here too. And they're still /doing/ outdoor advertising. I retired and I kept on there at Markham's for a while, intermittently, filling in when they had too much work to do too quickly and so forth. /Then/ about two years ago, I decided I better sit down and just paint; so I did.

M: So now you're painting full time?

P: I paint full time when I'm not looking for something else to paint. /Laughs/.

M: But you /were/ always kind of painting on the side for years, weren't you?

P: Oh, yes, I was always doing sketches and paintings and drawings--I like to draw. When I was in Santa Fe, I used to do lithographs. I'd go over to Highland University at Las Vegas, pick up a stone and bring it back and draw on it, take it back to Highland University and they would print out 25 or 50 /lithographs/. Then, I'd get another stone, bring /it/ back to Santa Fe. That's really round robbing. They don't do that here at this university even though they have a lithography department. But, I don't know whether they're still doing it at Highland or not. It was interesting. I just like to draw different things, but I still stick to drawing buildings and structures, etcetera.

M: Look, Tom, you must have picked up a family along the way here, somewhere.

P: Well, I have a son, he'll be 21 in July. He goes to the university, next year will be his last year there. Strange as it may seem, he's specializing in lithography. He's taken it all three years that he's been there. The art department at the university is a good starting spot. I hope that after he gets through he will go on. Of course, he's bought himself a stone now. And now he wants a press. That's an expensive situation. They cost

four, five hundred dollars up, like automobiles.

M: But you think he's going to be an artist too, then?

P: Well, that's what he says at the present hearing. He's good; real good, but he's like a lot of the, should I say, univeristy art students. They are somewhat non-objective painters. They don't like to do things as they are. I paint real tight, I paint recognizable objects, which an awful lot of the university teachers and students don't. I guess it sells--I hope. But he isn't interested in selling very much. He does sell to his friends, but he's still working on the idea that fine arts is not to be sold, even though you tell him that Rembrandt and a lot of the men sold their material, which makes it commerical.

M: He doesn't want to be commercial?

P: No.

M: What is his name?

P: Samuel Leslie Pillsbury. That's pretty Anglo Saxon. [Laughter]

M: He was your child by your first wife?

P: Second. This is number three that I have now. My wife...it's a joke to me at the time, now, but at that time it wasn't. She ran off with a Navajo Indian Chief, or the son of the chief, maybe I should correct. My second wife died of cancer three and a half years ago or so. She was a registered nurse who used to work at Lovelace Clinic. But I've only been married about two and a half years now.

M: What is your present wife's name?

P: Louise Young Pillsbury.

M: You said she worked in the Post Office?

P: Yes, she used to work in the letter sorting machines down at the main

Post Office.

M: But she was interested in art?

P: Yes, she used to take art from various and assorted people that taught over at Tucumcari. Before we were married she was the postmaster at Conchos Dam, which is close to Tucumcari. She and some lady friends of hers used to go to Tucumcari to take art lessons from itinerant instructors that came through.

M: Is Tucumcari in southern Arizona?

P: No, no, back over about 250 miles east of here. It's the next stop on the other side going east from Santa Rosa in other words. She was located at Conchos Dam, which is the big government reservoir there.

M: Well, I think you ought to tell us about that southwestern water color group that you said you belonged to.

P: Well, it's a, I guess you would say recognized or accepted or something. Your stuff has to be judged. Then, they have a show every once in a while. It's hooked up or connected with the water color societies all around the United States, and of course being in these area it's the Southwestern Water Color Society which covers Oklahoma, Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico. I'm not sure about California, I think that's the Pacific Coast Water Color Society. [The headquarters for the southwestern is in] Dallas.

M: Is the society very old?

P: I really don't know how old it is--I haven't the least idea. But it's a nationally recognized water color society. I don't know whether it's a subsidiary or... It's an acknowledged representative of watercolorists by the American Water Color Society, I know that.

M: How do you get in it?

P: By showing your work and getting it accepted by...I guess you'd say authorized or recognized jurors.

M: You've been in this for sometime?

P: Oh, three or four years. It was only organized in the Albuquerque area about that long ago. Of course, I'm also a life member of the New Mexico Art League. I was vice-president one year, and the next year I was suckered into being the President of the New Mexico Art League, which is headquartered here. They have a gallery in "Old Town," have had for some time. I think this must be their seventh or eighth year that they've been down there.

M: Do you show your works there?

P: I haven't lately; I have in the past. Of course, being a life member, you can show any time you get ready. But, the outdoor shows that I have been attending for the last two years...and the gallery up in Fair Play, Colorado, that has a lot of my stuff, and the one in the Old Mesilla down in Las Cruces and the two shows, the arts and crafts shows, just about takes everything that I can produce.

M: Tell us something about those arts and crafts shows-- the one in Tucson.

P: The one in Tucson passed in April, that was my second year there. I got an invitation to that when I was showing in the New Mexico Arts and Crafts Fair here in Albuquerque [about] three or four years ago, but I was never able to get enough stuff accumulated to make it, because it takes about 50 or so pictures or there's no use [in] going for the three days. That's as far as I'm concerned, because it costs \$45 for the booth. And every year you send photographs of your recent material; that's the same thing in all of the arts and crafts fairs. Every year you re-enter, so

to speak. Louise says I already plunked down my \$45 for the next Rio Grande Arts and Crafts Fair here in Albuquerque, which will be [in] the latter part of this coming November; it's downtown in the Civic Auditorium or Civic Center, Convention Center--it has all kinds of names, the new one that they just finished last year. It's comfortable because it's inside. The New Mexico Arts and Crafts fair still functions. And then they have another one called the Southwest Art and Crafts Fair. This town is full of arts and crafts fairs, every few months; but as I said, you have to produce enough stuff to make it worth your while to go. And you can't run them out like a production line, or at least I can't. I think I'll go to Fair Play however and pull my stuff out of that gallery. It's called the Sun Dance Gallery in Fair Play. That's about 80 miles plus or minus, south of Denver, back up in the resort area, south and a little to the west, I believe.

M: This one at Tucson is in April.

P: Yes, sir. Well, last year it was the 26th, 27th and 28th of April.

M: And you took around 50 pictures over there and sold most of them?

P: I sold every one I took. I had 40 oils and watercolors and ten pencil drawings. By two o'clock Sunday afternoon--it starts Friday, Saturday and Sunday--I didn't have anything left. Thursday night you set up. [You] bring in your stuff and set up your booth, because all they give you in these arts and crafts fairs, all of them, is mostly just a shelf, so you have to create your own wall, in other words. But, they had an opera going on, Madame Butterfly, I believed it was, in Tucson Thursday evening, and there was a goodly crowd coming by your booth while you were setting up. I sold two pictures right then to people going by. [They] came back the next

day and picked them up. So opera crowds are good customers. [Laughter]

M: And the opera was being shown right there at the Civic Center?

P: Oh, yes. They have a tremendous Civic Center that every executive of any town ought to go and take a look at it. It's beautiful! They have gone into the decrepit part, which was next to the business part of Tucson and built, torn down, [and] refurbished, until they have something that...I say almost any city, if they want to do something with their downtown area, ought to go take a look.

M: Is that where they have this church that you did the watercolor of?

P: Oh, no, that's in Old Tucson, which is about 15 miles or so west of Tucson. As I say, it's over the hill and down in the valley to the west.

M: Well, was that the original settlement?

P: Well, I understand it was an old settlement before the present city became Tucson. Now it's used as a tourist attraction, and they make an awful lot of, in whole or in part, western movies [there] because it is one of the most authentic, reasonably true western villages of all of the... The only one that seems [close] to that is the old western village that they have bought, built, down in Durango, Mexico. Of course, in that one in old Mexico, the people still live there, in a few of the houses around there. But it's still a movie set, and they shoot movies down there several times a year--during the winter mostly, because during the summer it's wet. I found to my disagreement when we took our trip to Mexico, you don't go down in August 'cause it rains morning, noon and every evening. [Chuckle]

M: So much of Mexico is so dry, but that's down in Durango where it begins raining?

P: Well, it was raining up and down the coast. In Guadalajara, it rained

everyday a little bit, and that was in the latter part of August. That's their wet season.

M: Well, tell us something about Charlotte Schwartz, because she does have one of the most successful galleries in southern New Mexico. You say you knew her when you lived in Santa Fe?

P: Oh, yes. I first met Charlotte and her husband Dave when they had a large department store called The Emporium in Santa Fe on San Francisco Street. I used to do a lot of signs; I trimmed windows for her; I decorated specialty departments when they were going to have a sale or when they'd get in a new summer, winter, fall, and Easter, etc., or general display, which was a hangover from the time I worked in the department store in Enid. I've always dabbled in that. When I [went to] the University of Nebraska I used to trim windows [and] work in sign shops when I wasn't going to school for extra pin money, and that's about what it was. [Laughs] It's all a part of...the whole display, arranging and sign work, is a part of layout, of position of objects that coordinate pictorially -- the whole works of which is the picture. A picture is a design of pattern, and that's all theatre display is, and pictorial display -- whether you're trimming a window, doing a stage setting, or shooting a motion picture. The same basic integral part must be in there.

M: Well, it would take some artistic talent, knowledge and training.

P: Well, it all goes back I think to a very diversified experience, and anything in the general direction of the ultimate will assist [you]. Well, it's like playing the piano, for instance; the more you manipulate the piano the more accustomed you begin to feel that there are 88 notes you can use.



And it's the same way in painting. There is innumerable amount of colors and color combinations that you could use, but you can't do it until you have the experience, which is taught to you partially by teachers. And I continuously read and buy books [of] art and other...I'm almost a steady customer of Watson Guptoler(?), publishers of art books. I think anybody that wants to paint can only get...as a man told me one time in a history class at the university, "If out of all I teach you about history, you can remember two or three things that were important in history, I think I will have made a success." I think that's the way you read a book about art. If you can find out two or three things that you can use that you didn't think of using before, I think you've paid the price of the book, and it has earned its value.

M: You said that Charlotte Schwartz and her husband sold this Emporium, she moved down to Las Cruces, and you've been showing with her ever since she opened her Galeria de la Garza.

P: Yes, that's been a few years ago. I get stuff down to her as fast as I can. I generally have a little check every month. Sometimes it's only two dollars and sometimes it's \$200, but she has produced a gallery that...to me and to some other people that I've known that have shown down there, she does sell their work. But some of the local galleries, it's difficult unless you are a big producer. It's difficult to have your merchandise--and that's really all it is--separated into a half a dozen non-producing areas. I personally feel that I'm going to stick to Charlotte and two shows for the present time, the two arts and craft shows--one in Arizona and one in Albuquerque. They just about consume everything that I can produce.

M: Well, tell us something about your methods in painting. You do travel

around a lot and make sketches.

P: I make sketches where possible. In some of the places, the situation is so critical that you can't sit down and whip out a sketch pad and pencil because sometimes you will be overburdened by inquisitive children. Sometimes they will be sure that you are going to make a million dollars off of that sketch. In some areas, they are very much against anybody sitting there even taking a photograph. But I take a lot of snapshots of things that you can't get any other way. I did that in Old Mexico, and I did it in Arizona, and I do it all the time. I have [a] record of a lot of the things that are not there anymore. I felt that when I went into Navajo country two years ago, hunting for hogans, a lot of people wanted to know about real livable hogans, where people were living in them. All I found in two days was frame stucco houses that the government had kindly built, but there weren't any Indians in them. [Laughter] They were still out in their hogans. I understand that a few of them lived in the frame stucco houses for a while and then moved back. A lot of the historical material of the Southwest is disappearing as the windmills are giving way to the electric driven pumps. But with the energy crisis maybe they'll build some more windmills. However, my wife and I find that we have a great bit of enjoyment [in] hunting up old towns. We even found an old dilapidated brick yard once that nobody ever heard of or nobody knew where it was. We just stumbled on to it. We have gone on all the by-roads and side-roads just to see what was there. We found a lot of old homesteads; we found a lot of old mines, corrals that haven't been used and the windmills were broken. The stock had gone, I guess, to some other better pastures. But the old towns are all over New Mexico more than Arizona. So much of Arizona is

covered with Indian land [in] which there are no villages anymore, [not] like you find the little adobe villages here in New Mexico. And then, so many of them are villages [where] the people come in, somebody sells them a spot of land, and then they start building frame stucco houses--like Main Street, you know. It's happening in a lot of the old towns, little towns. We were up in Truches, up in that area the other day and the little frame stucco houses were popping up with asbestos or asphalt roofs. And the old peaked, rusty tin roofs that they have in the high country, like up to Truches, they're just collapsing for lack of occupancy and maintenance.

M: There's quite a few ghost towns around too, aren't they?

P: Oh yes. Our next escapade...we want to go down around Deming, there's a lot of them. At Deming last year, we got a map, from a man that sold us our Mexican insurance, of all kinds of little ghost-towns, old mining towns and so forth around Deming, Silver City, and a lot of those places. We've been to quite a few of them, but there is a lot of unexplored territory.

M: Have you ever heard of one, I guess it's just above Truth or Consequences to the west, called Monticello?

P: Well, now that's up towards Hillsboro, is that right? Well, now, I don't know, I've been to Hillsboro and up in there through the Black Range, but don't recall that particular village.

M: Above that, back in the '70s the federal government set up a reservation for some of the Apache Indians, that group that was led by Victorio. But then later, they abolished it and moved them all out to Fort Apache and San Carlos, where they were very unhappy and gave all that trouble.

P: That's when they got mad at everybody. That's what happened to the Hopis, the Apaches and the Navajos were their discomfort. [Chuckle]

M: Tell us about that archeological expedition that you went on.

P: Well, that was north of Santa Fe at about 1950. I went up as the recording photographer. We took movies and stills of the diggings at Cuyai-Mungai, which is about 17 miles north of Santa Fe. We dug there for almost three months, I believe. The specific [purpose] of the diggings was to find what had happened or what influence perhaps the Spaniards had had on the Indians. They dug down and found that the Indians had built their walls for their houses--which the rooms were very small and the openings of course were small--they had built them out of packed mud. They used to put up sticks and run skins along and then fill it in with mud. And then when that would dry they'd go up again, put more skins and fill it in with mud. Along about 1700 or before, we began to find adobe bricks that had been used to stop up unused openings. Some of them were so well preserved down underneath that earth that you could even see where they had run their fingers across the adobe bricks. They were in good shape.

M: Almost like their finger prints.

P: That's it, practically. They dug down [and] as they went to the floor of one, they began to find indications [of other cities] in the debris. They went down through three complete cities or pueblos, if you please, one below the other, and each one had been built on top of plain earth, which was blow(?) dirt. But, they were all right on top of each other, almost room for room, like honey comb. I don't recall how far it actually went back, but it was many hundred years. I think it was about 1200 or something like that when they got down to the last piece of segments of pottery and other debris that they were able to find. I was the chief photographer for the news and the anthropology museum there in Santa Fe.

We would go out every day or every other day. The man in charge, what was his name? Wilcox? No...but anyway, that was his last project for his Ph.D. in Anthropology. After that, he went to some museum in Texas, Dallas or Fort Worth or someplace as the curator of the anthropology exhibits. It was very interesting. They would call me and say, "Come tomorrow, we got some stuff we're gonna unearth in the morning--we need records." So I'd go out and shoot the records shots and then do some more proceedings. We did a whole movie of the entire diggings. I kept it for a couple of years, but [I] didn't have the money to put the sound to it. One of the ladies who was the head of the anthropology museum in downtown Santa Fe was going to do the narration. We never had the money, time, fund, and et cetera, so I finally took the whole thing and gave it to the University of New Mexico here in Albuquerque. It was a complete color movie. I don't know, there was probably 1,000 feet or better. I just gave to the anthropology department here in the University of New Mexico.

M: Are there any painters that you feel have particularly affected your work?

P: Yes. I think Frederick Whitaker...he's a California painter in La Jolla. He and his wife, she goes under the name of Monahan, I think. I have looked at their stuff and their books. But I have a half a dozen books of...I always say, "Books of the National Academy Boys," that I refer to when I get to a point when I say, "Now, how am I going to make this thing look like I want it to [look]?" Some people go back to encyclopedia to find out what happened when or something; I go back through these books, and then you begin to get an idea by referring back to how other people painted a vine or tree or a trunk or a puddle of water or something. You get...I do, I get stuck sometimes, and I say, "Eeee, guys! What do I do now?" That's

why, too, that I paint four, five watercolors at a time, sometimes six, because I paint somewhat dry and control areas. And when I feel I am about to stick my hand in a part that's wet that I don't want to disturb, I'll lay it aside or take it out and lay it in the sun sometimes if I'm in a big hurry. A lot of painters have driers, like hair driers and stuff, that they stick down on their work. I had one once, but it blew too much air and not enough heat, so I disposed of it, because too much air and not enough heat will push your washes in water colors to where they are not supposed to be.

M: You think it's better to wait, then?

P: Yes, because I can wait and go to work on another one or maybe two or three more before I get back to that.

[PAUSE]

P: Arizona... Yes, there's a lot of retired people going up in there. They're selling property, I understand, up in the high country. I think there's a lake close to there where you can fish and so forth.

M: Where is it near?

P: I go out to Showlow(?) by way of McNary. McNary is one of the largest lumber mills, moulding companies in the world. I don't hardly know how to tell you how to get there--south of Holbrook is for sure. But we zig-zagged around all those funny roads, anyplace we can find on the map.

M: You were going to tell us about this person [who] was telling you to exaggerate a little for effect.

P: Oh, yes, that was Frank Branderiff(?) back in Laguna Beach. I used to study with him. We'd go out on painting trips along the ocean or up to Newport where the boats were, particularly fishing boats; [they] were always of

interest.

One time we were out painting a barn, it was a class [of] probably three or four of us. Mr. Branderiff was there, who, strange enough, was a retired dentist. He pulled teeth, he told me, for 17 years; he quit and decided to paint. [Laughter] He was also a good painter; he was one of the top brand Southern California painters. We were painting an old barn and I guess I was getting it too neat. He explained to me about when they were trying to describe an old man. He stood up, bent over, crooked his back, wiggled and shook a little bit, and he said, "Now that is the way you say an old man. So you can't paint a barn like they just got through building it." Everytime I try to do an old barn or an old windmill or an old adobe shack, I don't get the fire(?) wall along the top of the old adobe shack neat and trim like it was [just] finished today. You have to let mother nature take her course--tear it down a little bit, weather it a little bit, give it a little experience.

M: Well, that's like they say in painting people--young people don't have any lines in their faces [because] life hasn't done anything much to them yet. So, in many ways older people are more interesting to paint.

P: Oh, yes, that's why I think an awful lot of artists paint older people. I noticed in the galleries up in Santa Fe and Taos, some of the most interesting paintings were of the elders of the Indian groups.

M: But you have always just stuck to landscapes?

P: Well, I've never painted scenery, so to speak of. What is the formula? You have trees, mountains and a little stream--it just don't appeal to me for some reason. I guess I should have been an architect, because I like to paint buildings and structures. When I was a kid, I used to draw houses,

buildings, barns on the edge of my books at school.

M: Places that really exist, though. You never paint a barn out of your imagination?

P: I don't paint nothing out of my imagination--my wife says I don't have any. Everything I paint I can take a map and show 'em where it is. A lot of people write me back [and say], "I have been to such and such a place and we like our picture better now." Almost everybody that buys something wants to know where it is, and I generally write on the back /of the picture/ where they are. I don't know--I feel better about the picture because the people know they have something that exists. And as the man says, "It's no fairy tale."

M: You did say, though, you think it's very important to have a good ground work in basic drawing.

P: I think drawing is the basis for any type of artwork, no matter what you are going to do--pottery or anything else. Remember Leonardo Da Vinci always drew out everything very meticulously, sometimes even his inventions that never worked, and his flying machine and so forth. You must learn to draw. I think most of the art teachers do not impress [on] the coming student that think they want to learn art nowadays...in the present schools, they don't put enough emphasis on being able to draw. You'll notice that an awful lot of painters of people never draw hands, feet, and they cover part of [the] ear with some hair or something because those things are hard to draw. If you don't know your anatomy and you draw a picture of a person with his clothes on, [you] are not sure whether the arm is going to stick into the shoulder. I've seen it happen in the last few days when we were in the galleries north of here.



- M: Well, the same would be true about painting animals, like horses. You have to know the anatomy.
- P: Just let a cowboy look at [your drawing of] a horse and he'll tell you whether you know anything about horses or not.
- M: Well, you got your original drawing techniques when you were going to Phillips and those colleges you spoke of.
- P: I would say the basic foundation. We drew for two years. We never had any color whatsoever; we had charcoal and pencil. We drew from casts most of the time. Once in a while the University [of Nebraska] would let some student, boy /or/ girl, come /to pose/--fully clothed, I assure you. In that type of school and in those days, along in there, a lot of times they would have costume on and so forth. At one point, when I joined the University of Nebraska, I thought I was going to be a head painter [laughter]--just paint heads, that's all I was gonna to do. The magazines and so forth in those days were chock-full of heads. They didn't have color photography, which ruined all the good artists that were painters. They almost ruined a lot of the old time boys that painted for [the] Saturday Evening Post.

You got to learn to draw, to paint a barn. And if you don't know the perspective on the barn, one part of it is gotta go one way and the other part is not supposed to even be connected. But I just draw anything you can draw. I studied one time with a man in an art class in Oklahoma that says, "After you draw 5,000 human figures you will know what the body looks like." He could sit down and draw you a body of three inches tall in any shape [or] size, [and] running, sitting, or standing on their heads in a very few minutes.

- M: When you do your watercolors, you first draw.

- P: I draw in everything, sometimes too carefully; but everything is drawn in with a H or a 2H pencil. I keep the drawing there until I have arrived at a placement of color so that I know where the area is supposed to be. Then slowly, by degrees and future washes, I take a kneaded eraser, which is one of the few things that don't disturb your paper, and begin to eliminate the pencil lines. So when I get through they're hard to find--nothing but the transparent watercolor exists on the paper.
- M: Well, now, how about painting in oil? Is that different?
- P: The oil paints will cover it up. I generally draw in there carefully in either a pencil or charcoal--charcoal pencil preferably--and then I spray it out with a fixative, so that when I paint in oil it doesn't tear up that drawing. But as you build up, you automatically have covered up your drawing, and it becomes looser. That's why I like this man's stuff here, the picture on the wall there--it is very loose. And that was one of the things that I used to admire about Frank Brangwyn, who was another British painter. He could put more things in a painting with less effort [than you can imagine]. And you knew it was there; and yet, if you looked closely, it was not there--that is, I mean, in intricate shape. The [one that gave the] best example of that, I think, was John Pike in his book of water color. He has a picture that he illustrates in there, I'll show it to you in a little bit. A man bought the painting, and says, "It looks like those sheep back there are not drawn in too good." John Pike said, "How did you know they were sheep?" I'll show it to you after a bit. That, I think, is a good explanation of a good painter. John Pike is a National Academy man.
- M: Well, after you get more experienced you can suggest things.

P: That's it.

M: And a sort of economy of...

P: It's a process of elimination.

M: Yes.

P: It's there, but it isn't there. [Pause]. Now, look at the figures in there. They are there, but they aren't there, and there is a lot of them. Those are two of prints of Frank Brangwyn.

M: Is this the size they actually were?

P: Oh, I don't think so. On the back, what does it say? It doesn't say the size, but I imagine...he painted large.

M: Brangwyn...B-R-A-N-G-W-Y-N.

P: Yeah, National Academy. And he was a British painter and he died, I think, during Second World War. He was a big mural painter, too. He is one of my pick of all of the painters. He and another British painter, William Russell Flint; are, they really handle water colors like I wish the devil I could. [Chuckle] Those are somewhat semi-opaque in them, you'll notice in the cloud and so forth. He used a little Chinese white once in a while. I don't know for sure, but I have been told by reading stuff about him, that he carried a little Chinese white with him, which is an opaque white. But you see, the figures are all there, but they're not there.

M: Yes, [if] you look at them real closely, and they tend to vanish.

P: Yeah.

M: That's right. I supposed that's the same as impressionism, to give an impression or something.

P: Well, it is to an extent, but the impressionists in the old school were a

little farther fetched than that. [Laughter] Remember the man that painted-- what was his name?--that painted with little dabs of color all over, little bitty spots as big as the end of your finger. And if he wanted to make green he'd put a yellow and a blue dot on top of it, which is actual the way the modern printing is done. When they have the four color prints, if you would scrutinize through a high power magnifying glass you'll find out there's a yellow dot and a blue dot and there is no green ink in the whole business. Maybe that's where they got the idea. [Laughs]

M: Yeah. You have ideas about framing of pictures?

P: Yes, I think framing can either make or break any painting. I think a lot of frames that you see nowadays and, well, all the time, they overpower the picture. And that's why I think a lot of people that I know...Fremont Ellis, for instance. He used to take a lot of color out of his paintings and splatter or speckle, whatever you want to term it, his outside frames. His outside frames were somewhat ornate. But he'd take some color from his painting and splatter around in the picture. Of course, then he would have a grey vatina coating over it, which would subdue. But it will tie the frame to the painting. And I think you have to do that. That particular formula don't work all time, as no formula works all time. But I think that whatever you do to a frame, you have to experiment.

M: Well, you've long made your own frames, haven't you?

P: Oh, yes. I've made frames for, I don't know, ten years, for my own pictures. And now we have a few of our artist friends and people that buy paintings from other artists come in and say, "Would you please frame these pictures?" I think a frame should enhance, but not overpower, any painting. We're going to reframe that one. I don't think that frame does it justice.

M: Well, this picture now of a Taos scene by this, what's this artist's name?

P: Zzerkass.

M: [He's] Russian?

P: He's a Russian, yes. He does motion picture directing and few other things on the side, according to his brochure. But I think he's a good painter; I like his looseness. The technique that he has is similar, but not authoritatively correct, to what Nikolar Fechen...the way he paints. Nikolar Fechen was a loose, rough, suggestive painter. If you look at the rungs in the ladder going up there, they are all there, but if you look closely they aren't all there. [Laughs] I mean, carpentry speaking.

M: This Fechen, was he one of the Taos artists?

P: He was a Taos artist once. He painted in Taos, let's put it that way, but he was not one of the original five or six that gathered together to create the original internationally famous art colony. That was Blumenshein, Bruringhouse(?), Sharpe, Phillips, Dunham and the...

M: There was one they called Couse.

P: Yes, Couse, Irving Couse. He came in [at] about the middle of the show over there, but he was there, too. Yes, Irving Couse.

M: He did a lot of pictures of Indians and especially night scenes--moonlight coming down and all that. I think Charlotte has one on yours, like a courtyard with maybe a burro in it.

P: Oh, yeah, that was old Mexico.

M: Oh, that was in Mexico itself?

P: Yeah. I forgot, I even forget how many pictures they got or what they

look like, until you remembered that one. Oh, yes, that was an old one I did down in Mexico, [with] the old burro standing with the wood on his back. That was a little town along...I forget where it was now; it's written on the back of it, I am sure. But they've more burros in Mexico, as many as there used to be here. When I first came to Santa Fe in 1932, there was burros there hauling wood around. It was that trip, I think, that got me interested in New Mexico. Then, I went back to Chicago and painted blue skies, red trees and yellow trees, and people would say, "There isn't such a place."

M: Well, how about some more now of your specific paintings? I have that one of that little church. Is it at Golden?

P: Golden? Yes, that's over here on Highway 10, it's the old gold mining town.

M: And that was one of the churches restored by Fray Angelico Chavez?

P: Yes, they built it probably 50 years before that. Of course, all the Indian insurrections always tear down the churches; I guess it's been rebuilt several times, not in its entirety. Weather takes its toll and something falls off, because, of course, they're all built out of mud or adobe. The other one I want to tackle before too long is the one over [at] Trampas(?). It's been restored, and rebuilt. It's an old one, because that was the original way to get to Taos from Santa Fe. You didn't go up the river like you do now, you had to go clear around to Truches and back around to Trampas and so forth.

M: Then isn't there a famous one up there [in] those parts where miracles were supposed to be performed?

P: Oh, Sanctuario de Chimayo.

M: Chimayo.

P: Yeah, that's the Sanctuary of Chimayo. I have done a lot of pictures of that; they kinda ruined it when one of the big trees died. They used to have two. Oh, they were enormous cottonwood trees, and a little stream runs along in front of it--enormous! They must be three, three and a half feet in diameter, and they used to be one on each side of the gate as you went in, which added an awful lot to the pictorial quality of the church. But there was miracles when I first went there, in the '30s--there used to be crutches up in the balcony in front of the church. The people had come crippled with crutches, canes and etcetera, and went away [leaving] their little crutches in front. They stuck them up in the top--it was just chock-full of them.

M: Is there something there like a spring or mud or something that the people put on them, or you just go to pray?

P: Well, I don't...that part I don't know. I don't know where they got it. I've heard, now that I recall, there's something there that has made miracles. It's a very old church. I have written down someplace in there, in the book, when it was built. But it's a sanctuary--they come continually, all the time. People come from that whole area in there.

M: What is the "G" in your name stand for?

P: Giles.

M: Tell us...

P: That's a family name handed down. Almost everybody gets a family name from some place.

M: But Pillsbury is English, though, isn't it?

P: That's right.

M: I remember Charlotte telling me that you have a connection with this famous Pillsbury family.

P: Well, they're all related; everybody by that name is related one way or another. The first Pillsbury that came was William Pillsbury, and it all sprung from them--various brothers, sisters, uncles and aunts. But everybody by that name is related one way or another. There is a family book [that tells] you where anybody was born, when they died, and so forth.

M: Well, these were, I guess, originally in the bakery business or manufacturing?

P: Well, some of them were bakers and some of them were carpenters. The bakers made good, and the carpenters--that was where I fit /TaughS/--they didn't do so good; but they're all still related. They used to have big reunions. There's a book called The Pillsbury Family [where] you can look up almost anybody [and see] where they were.

M: You didn't go to these reunions that they had, did you?

P: No, they kinda petered-out about the time I was able to do those things. One of the Pillsbury's wives that lives down in Phoenix, I understand, is trying to recollect the information to publish another book of all the families. I guess it was a pretty tight family for many generations, but along in the early 1900s, they began to not feel, I guess, so conscious of the situation.

M: Well, tell us that story about the numerologist.

P: Oh, how I became successful? [Laughs] Well, a friend of my wife writes books on numerology. One time I was complaining to her that I just didn't know why, that my stuff was as good as the next guy's, but he was selling and I wasn't--or something to that effect. And she says, "Well, let me look into your name." She took [down] when I was born, when I went to school, all kinds of numbers. [She wrote] my complete name as I was assigned



on my birth certificate. And she figured for half an hour or so and says, "Your name is no good." She says, "If you would call yourself Tom G. Pillsbury, it comes out into a numbered sign of which money can be obtained." So, from then on, I changed my name. [Laughs] On all my pictures I sell, I put down on them Tom G. Pillsbury. See now--that's the key to success. [Laughs] But how she figured it out, [I don't know]. They have a formula, a theory of each letter, each year, and combination of adding. Like 1904, you add those all together and you get one number. You do that with the names of everything, the alphabet and so forth, and you boil it down to have certain numbers; and those numbers definitely signify success or failure--you will be born or you won't be born; you'll get rich or you won't get rich, and so forth. [Laughs]

M: Have you lived in this house very long?

P: Well, no, this was Louise's house. My house was down on South Georgia Street here in Albuquerque, We sold it after we got married, about two and a half years ago, and moved up here to this house for several reasons. We felt that this house was closer to being paid for than my other house, and as we put more money into this house we could create a better working quarter. So we tore out a couple of windows and built the studio in the back, and paid off a big chunk of this house and paid out that thing in cash. That's how we arrived at our present comparable low-income to match a low rent.

M: Well, that studio you built yourself, or did you have an architect do all that?

P: No, I drew all the designs, all patterns and plans, and sent them down

to the city. They said that was all right. So then I hired a building contractor to put up the shelf, so to speak. Then Louise and I finished the inside. They stuccoed it and so got it out of the weather, in other words. Then we came in and we did the inside. I hired a man to put up the ceiling sheetrock and so forth; we did the rest. Of course, we hired a constructor to lay the linoleum that's really a specific job. I got a man from Armstrong Linoleum Company to put it down. I had them backing their own product, so I felt that was fairly safe. But we'll finish it someday; I still have some tile to lay. I built the stuff around the fireplace, and we still have stuff to do outside in the patio. Our diversion is to finish the room. The old garage is our picture-frame headquarters. You haven't seen that yet; you have to go in and I'll show you what a mess a picture frame shop looks like. [Laughs]

M: Well, that's wonderful though. Then, you frame your own pictures; [you] have everything you need.

P: Well, yes, we do everything to them. We assemble from odds and ends of moldings that we can get from the molding plants here in town to make our frames; we buy the glass by the case. And I buy the watercolor paper from a place in Illinois where I can get it at a much better price. [The price is] suitable to keep down the overhead of everything, which will enable you to sell pictures better at a lower figure.

M: You were telling about this paper that you use for your watercolors. Is it manufactured in Britain?

P: No, in Germany?

M: In Germany?

P: It's a British paper; no, I mean a German paper. I've used some British paper and there is a French paper called Arches and an Italian paper called

Faberino, but they are expensive. They cost \$2.50 to \$3.00 a sheet, and I buy this other 25 sheets for \$31.00.

M: You buy directly from Germany?

P: No, I buy it from the importer.

M: /In/ Illinois?

P: Yeah.

M: And that you said was entirely rag content?

P: Yes, it's 100 percent rag content. Any watercolor paper that any watercolorist uses...of which there's /some/ very debatable, because a lot of watercolorists do their watercolors on matboard, which is the pebbly matboard that they do their watercolors on, but it is unstable. It won't last the time, it deteriorates, it turns yellow, because the basic of that is pulp, matboard, you know. That's a cheap matboard /which/ sells \$1.35 for a sheet of 28 by 44 or 30 by 40, when the good watercolor paper is \$2.50 for a 22 by 30. There's a lot of difference.

M: The rag is made of linen?

P: Not necessarily--just a hundred percent rag. /It's/ most likely cotton that was probably shipped from United States to France or Germany. They made paper out of it and sent it back. /Laughs/ But it's a hundred percent rag content. But the British Watercolor Society paper is also rag. Any suitable, I would say, watercolor paper should be a hundred percent rag paper.

M: Then the colors that you use are made in Britain.

P: I use almost exclusively Windsor Newton, which is Great Britain--almost exclusively. You get used to a name brand of a certain type of material and you know how to handle it, because the formulas that the different

manufacturers [use], their formulas and the components of their mixture are not identical, so they don't work exactly the same. It's like oil and your automobile. If you're gonna use Standard automobile oil from Standard company, you won't put Mobile oil in on top of it. The engine don't like it!

M: You never tried mixing of paint yourself, then.

P: No. When I was doing egg tempera many years ago, I used to buy dry pigment. But even then I didn't go into the problem of mixing up egg emulsion because I didn't like to strain eggs. So I bought from Mr. Grumbaker the egg tempera emulsion already premixed. But I've never tried to grind paints, no.

M: When you paint oils, you use canvas board or masonite?

P: Mostly I use linen canvas and sometimes I paint on canvas that I mount to pressed wood. Lately I've been doing that because I used to stretch it on stretcher bars, and then you sand it off and it comes back with a hole in it or a poke in it that makes a little rain spot. Then you spend the next three hours going around the back wetting it around that area and hope that it'll stretch back out again. So, most of the things that I've painted on oil lately, I mount prepared canvas on pressed wood with Elmer's glue.

M: That's better than manufactured canvas board because that tends to warp.

P: Well, even if I use canvas board, I shellac the back of it or paint it with a flat oil paint so as to keep the weather out.

M: You shellac the back of it?

P: Shellac the back or paint it, take a little roller and roll out the back with a semi-gloss enamel or flat wall paint or something, in other words,

just to seal it up.

M: You think that's what causes the warping--the dampness?

P: It helps. Because here now, for instance, if you get canvas board that's shipped in here from New York or Chicago, it's pretty wet. And you bring it over here and begins to dry out. It'll tell you that it was wet. So after you have it awhile and you seal it up, and then if I do paint on canvas board for small things like 12 by 16's or something, I put a bar across the back and glue it to the back of the picture in the longways direction so that [there] would be less chances of bulging. But I still think the best thing is pressed wood or masonite--whatever you want to call it. And then I size it; you get the untempered kind, or the tempered is all right if you sand it well so that it has little tooth that will hang onto it, because the tempered has oil in it, you know. But anyway, you size it, and then take Elmer's glue and smear on it and smear on the canvas till it's completely covered. Then you let it set a few minutes until the fabric in the canvas board, or the canvas itself, will began to stretch, as things do when they're wet. And then I take rollers and roll it in all directions until I've got all surplus glue--which I use white glue, Elmer's glue, or any of those types of things--and then I put it under weights for 24, 48, 72 hours sometimes.

M: Then there are no bubbles in it?

P: No bubbles, no nothing, as long you roll it. That's the only way you get 'em out, is [with] a pressure roller. And you just roll it from the center out and you push all your surplus out. And it stays.

M: But that does avoid the danger of canvas on stretchers, as you say, that they poke a hole.

[Pause]

M: You said John Steinbeck lived in Laguna.

P: He lived in Laguna when I was there and the story was...I knew some people who knew him real well. I met him, but that's about all. But he went out and went places with the people. He picked oranges with the people, he went into areas of which he was writing about, and then he knew what he was talking about.

M: Well, in The Grapes of Wrath and the Okies, he really was familiar with it.

P: He was there. You have to know where of you speak. And because the good... it calls to mind now, the good cowboy artists, that draw horses and cowboys, are cowboys. And the original group of cowboy artists have a law that they must go back to the cattle so many weeks or days or so per year to continue their authority, so to speak. And that's the original cowboy artists that belong to the Cowboy Artists Hall of Fame.

M: Well, you say you tried to write at one time.

P: Oh, yes, when I was in high school and at the university. And then while I was going to the University of Nebraska, I was also going to another school in Union, called Union College, which is on the edge of Lincoln. But it's another religious... See, my mother was bound and determined I was going to be a preacher, but it didn't come out that way.

M: What was her denomination?

P: She was a Seventh Day Adventist. That's what all the schools were except... Phillips University is also a denominational school but that belongs to Christian church.

M: It's a sort of fundamentalist approach.

P: That's right. But I almost was going to be a preacher, almost, but I wanted to do, and they couldn't see, I wanted to do what the Peace

Corps is doing now, to go to Africa [and] other places, in countries, and show them how to do the things, or how to improve their crops. And the fundamentalist, so to speak, you don't go unless you are a doctor that can vaccinate them or you have a Bible under your hand to tell them how they're gonna save their soul. To heck with a person and his living condition, as long as his soul is saved. Well, I didn't go along with that.

M: Well, you're more interested in the social aspects of it, the social problems more than the religious.

P: That's right. In those days, that was back in the early '20s...In 1917, I was going to high school, [and] they didn't even dig ditches like the Indians did here to irrigate. They didn't know about those things, they didn't do them, anyway, in India and Africa. They were starving like they're starving right now. And the religion hasn't...it might have saved a lot of souls, but it sure has let millions of people die.

M: You don't have any religious affiliation now?

P: Not at all.

M: Well, you still haven't told us about your attempts at creative writing, though.

P: Oh, we got off, didn't we? [Laughs] I used to write and I was writing little short stories. My ideal then was O'Henry. My ideal was little excerpts from life that happened within 20, 30 minutes or an hour period. You know, there used to be a good columnist that wrote in those days like that, but I don't recall his name right off.

M: That's called the unity of time, when you have very compact stories.

P: Short, short stories, 500 words or so. And then in the English classes, they used to have contests all the time in the short story writing classes

at the university and college, and in high school. And I used to sit down and bat them out; they used to publish them in the college papers and such stuff. Then one time the English teacher said that I was writing things that was not the quality of the things that were supposed to be of life. I'd write little sad, sob stories once in a while, or like the... you remember O'Henry's Gift of the Magi, where the guy sold his watch and she cut off her hair, each one to give each other a present. But that type of thing that I used to like to create out of little excerpts that I would find in the newspaper, an incident, and I'd go along from that. It was very interesting, when I was taking a course from the Famous Artists School--I didn't think about that--John Whitcolm was one of the teachers, and [my] lessons at that time was under John Whitcolm. And they give you a little excerpt to create an illustration for a magazine, so to speak, you know. They'd write the stories, excerpts of it, and I'd always finish the story. And John Whitcolm [would] always write back [and say], "You better correct so and so to the picture, but I like the way you ended the story." [Laughs]

M: That was a correspondence [course].

P: That's right. That was the way back. I almost forgot I ever did that. I've still got the book.

M: Did you ever get any of your creative writing published?

P: No, except in the school papers. [Laughs] They had contest and all kinds of that kind of junk, you know.

M: I think you saying last night, though, that what the artist is trying to do and what they person producing literature, is similar.

P: I think so. You're trying to tell a story.



M: In the picture.

P: That's right, only you paint it in color instead of words. And then, another thing is, I think that you've written a story that people that will look at the picture will write a story about what they see--at different times, under different lighting conditions, or under different moods. And that's why I think that it's important to paint the stuff I'm painting, because pretty quick it isn't going to be there.

M: These things are disappearing?

P: That's right.

M: I expect that Taos will be there, though, another thousand years?

P: Oh, I'm sure it will, I'm sure it will. But there are so many segments of any pueblo that arouse the imagination for almost anybody that looks at it on account of its age and the way they're built and the way the people live in all simplicity without a lot of gadgets. And yet it's real interesting, you go into different Indians' houses and they have a little television and a little icebox and a little either electric or gas stove run by butane. So somewhat of the modern civilization has snuck in on the primitive areas, so to speak. And yet, were they actually primitive?

M: Well, I was up there two or three summers ago at this gallery that's owned by the artist Charles Stewart, and sort of in behind it there was like a cantina, you know, a bar. And there were some of those Taos men there and they were singing in that kind of funny way they sing. And the people there said, "Well, they're drunk," and that a lot of them have that problem. I said, "Well, what is wrong?" And they said, "Well, their religion has disintegrated and they're just kind of like a lost people, they're sort of suspended between their civilization and ours and they don't really fit

either way any more."

P: Well, I don't know about that. I think the Indian people as a whole have a wonderful religion. They're not attuned to any human segment of explanation. They still say that the sun and the moon and the water and the leaves and the field and the earth is a religion. And I don't know how more elevated you can get than to recognize that that's a fact instead of, what do they call them?--ingraven images.

M: Well, you think there's a supernatural presence in all objects, as it were.

P: That's right, that's right. Why not have a ear of corn and what makes it grow and what makes it edible, and the sun comes and the rain comes and produces things for your existence. Why not feel that that is your religion? Why not pray to a ear of corn? If you want to pray to God, why not pray to one of His objects that He created? 'Cause man didn't make a ear of corn.

M: Well, the way you talk, now, though you say you don't have any denominational affiliation, you still believe in God.

P: Well, there's got to be. There's got to be a power that's handling this business 'cause man sure loused it up! /Laughs/