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INTERVIEW WITH: Harlan Hubbard

CONDUCTED BY: Joanne Weeter

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JOANNE WEETER: -- in 1987. I'm in Payne Hollow, Kentucky, with Harlan Hubbard. My name is Joanne Weeter. Harlan, I wanted to continue the discussion that we were having about the influences in your life and you mentioned a man named Charles Hoehn

HARLAN HUBBARD: Hoehn. H-O-E-H-N.

JW: Hoehn. H-O-E-H-N. Can you tell me when you first met him?

HH: Well, he was a farmer in New York, upper New York state. He hadn't been a farmer all his life; his early career had been as a carpenter and a master carpenter he was, too. That was down in the outskirts of New York in Westchester County. One time he showed me some of the buildings that he worked on, that's in the same neighborhood where my brother lived, so we were all there together at one time. Some of them were tremendous. I don't think anybody knows about this, some of those three or four story framed buildings that were built in Westchester County at that time -- they wouldn't be built out of frame now, they'd be built out of brick or concrete -- but they were tremendous structures and he was in charge of all that.

But anyway, he figured that wasn't the life he wanted to live all the time so he went up to New York state and bought a farm and settled down; he still had his two sons who were supposed to help him but during the war one of them was in the army and the other was out in California working so he was in need of help. So he subscribed to this program that the government had for supplying farm help from high school students. They offered them full credits even if they went out early and missed all the examinations. That didn't appeal to me much because I wasn't afraid of examinations, I really liked them, but I was glad to get out of school and go up in the country. With me, as I've said before, it was a time in my life when I was turning toward nature. I had just discovered Thoreau and his writings and it made a great influence on me. And then the painting that I was most interested in, landscape, figured very prominently so going out in the country was just the thing I needed at that time.

I didn't know much about farming; I'd never really been on a real – on a farm. But, as I've said, I was raised in the outskirts of Bellevue, Kentucky, and used to being out in the country but. . . .

JW: How big was this farm?

HH: Oh, this farm was about a hundred acres, I guess. It was a good farm. I must say first that this was the second year that I worked on a farm; the first year [tape cuts off and resumes] the first year, I worked on a smaller farm way back in the sticks somewhere, not near any town and it was owned by a man named Mouser, M-o-u-s-e-r. He and his wife and their married daughter had come from Michigan, and it was sort of a reverse migration because the New England farmers used to go out to Michigan to get new

land and the Michigan farmers were now moving back to New England to get land that was worn out and cheap and he expected to build up the farm. So it was a place where a lot of work was going on and I liked it back there; it was just on a small road and the house was very old. All the buildings were old and the people were old except this married daughter had two of her children with her -- her husband was still working out in Michigan as a clerk in a drugstore to earn a living. I fit in pretty well and I think I was a big help to them.

JW: What sort of work would you do?

HH: Everything was done by hand; there was not a tractor in the country, or a truck. Hand work and horses. And the crops were varied more than they are now; they raised a lot of stuff for themselves, of course: hay and grain and a big field of cabbages, which they were going to take to market in the fall; potatoes; I can't think of anything much else they had. But anyway, all of it had to be hoed by hand. [laughs] I got a pretty good job.

And then that old man, he was a generation or two before me, and he had done even the harvesting of grain by hand; he didn't do it now but he still had those tools, the cradle and a lot of other old hand tools and he showed me how to handle them, especially the scythe. He was a master and very strict – a martinet, really -- and I never had a word of praise from him but I did learn the principles of handling a scythe, which now is a lost art except among a few men like myself who have learned from the old-timers. They have competitions and exhibitions now. ‘Till just the last year or two I've used the scythe around here to do all the mowing and making hay for the goats and all that. Well, I think that takes care of the Mousers. Then the second year, for some reason or another, the director of the

program sent me to Charles Hoehn and he lived out on a paved road, the main road from Cortland to Ithaca. Ithaca, of course, is where Cornell University is. And there was a railroad through the town -- Dryden was the name of the town he lived close to -- but it was still an old building and the farming was done about almost the same as it was out in, the year before. I don't remember seeing a tractor all the time I was on the farm. We heard about tractors in war news; in the First World War they were used to haul cannons around -- uh-oh, there's a visitor. [tape off momentarily, then resumes]

The trucks were just beginning to penetrate into the farm region but I didn't have anything to do with them or saw any. Although the milk truck came along every day to pick up the can of milk to go to New York. But that can of milk, I had to cool it by pumping water out of the well in the milk house, pour over the can until it got down to a certain temperature before they would take it. I used to pump away at that pump and whistle to myself. One day Charlie Hoehn came in and kind of surprised me and said, "Your mother must be awfully proud of you." And that struck me strange. I don't believe she ever showed it. [laughs] Anyway, not that way, you know, just because he thought I was a cheerful worker and all that. So I had another – I had a good year there.

It was a -- We weren't confined to the farm all the time; I remember late in the summer, he made a trip to Syracuse to the state fair of New York, which was quite an experience. And he -- they had considerable company from New York where his wife's relatives lived. She was Dutch like Anna and so much similarity in their speech and background. But uh --

JW: So the state fair was an experience?

HH: Yeah, that was an experience, sure was, after a summer on a farm. I'd never been to anything like that before. He let me do all sorts of things, too; usually a young fellow like that they keep him down to a hoe and a rake or something like that but he let me drive a team of three horses when they were combining wheat, anything like that. I remember the supervisor, who was in charge of all this program of students and farm work, came around once or twice to visit me, he was quite surprised at the things I was doing. On the other hand, he didn't have the farm background that Mr. Mouser had. As I said, he worked in the city. He was, in some ways, an amateur as much as I was.

Anyway, we had a good summer; and they called me "son" and took me into the family, and I kept up with them until they both died and that was years later after they'd moved to California where their older son was.

JW: Well, it sounds like they really took you in as one of their own.

HH: Yeah. [pause] What else could I say about the farm?

JW: Were you the only student on the farm?

HH: I was the only student there, yeah; there were others around. Some of them, one of them was only about five miles away and we got acquainted but I was still -- I had ideas about nature that the farm didn't satisfy and my realization of those ideas was to come much later.

JW: How did your day begin on the farm?

HH: Oh, we got up early.

JW: At dawn?

HH: Yeah, and Mrs. Hoehn was up getting breakfast while Charlie and I were out doing the chores. They had wonderful food and Mrs. Hoehn was always trying to fix things for me. But when I left, [pause] that was 1918 I was there, in the fall I went back to New York and entered the National Academy of Design, and by that time was living in the Bronx. All the family were there and I've told all about that, haven't I?

JW: Um-hmm. Did you sketch while you were on the farm?

HH: No, I didn't. I don't remember doing anything like that. And Mr. Hoehn used to try to get me to say what I was going to do when – now that I was out of high school and I was so, I always kept . . . I thought art was something that he would have no conception of, being such a practical man.

JW: Was that because your father didn't, didn’t appreciate your art?

HH: No, my father, compared to Charles Hoehn, was a very sensitive man in that direction. He didn't have much use for artists, though. [pause, coughs] But he was, he often talked about my future and even asked, said he knew some people who were influential and he could get me a job if I was interested. I remember one of the jobs was with a company out in New Jersey who made metal beds, steel beds. That didn't appeal to me at all. [chuckle] I wanted to go out and live in the woods. But we got along fine and he overlooked my indecision and weakness and I overlooked his obtuseness. And even after, as I say, they moved to California, every time I made a trip out there I spent most of my time with them instead of with the family in Beverly Hills. Well, I think that's all I can say about Charles Hoehn as an influence but his philosophy, and especially his springing from

workman and craftsman instead of intellectuals had a great influence on the rest of my life. And I learned many practical things from him, too.

There was another man something like him whom I met at Brent and I mentioned his name, too, Cornelius Willison, he had a little planing mill there, as I've said, and that's where I gotten started working for a contractor in Fort Thomas as a carpenter's helper. I worked down in his mill one time just to get acquainted with him and the use of tools and woods. He knew so much. He said he was born in a shaving pile. And we had a lot in common. He was more of a – more in sympathy with a man who was an artist than Mr. Hoehn. I remember the two of them met one time, Charles Hoehn stopped in Fort Thomas one time on his way to California and visited there. It was just about the time I had finished that house for my mother in Fort Thomas and he was very critical of it, of course, [laughs] so I don't know whether I made much of an impression on him or not but at least I got the house built. It was partly through his, the knowledge that he had given to me that I could.

He said -- well, Mr. Willison put it as a joke -- he said there was an old man up in New York State who took me in hand and couldn't make anything out of me but now he was going to try and see what he could do. [laughter] We used to walk down to Brent and he'd describe all the people and he'd say, "Now this is where the mayor lives." Lou Gander, no, it was George Gander, lived in the center of a house, the top of it was all burned one time and he had them all lined up. Of course, George Grimm was the powerful figure in Brent, he had the planing mill and directed the whole works down there and employed a lot of men. It happened that the Willisons had started that mill, his father, Cornelius' father, and I guess they couldn't make a go of it and sold it at a very low price to George Grimm

and that was one of his remarks, he said, "Socialism wouldn't do any good; if they'd divide all the money up equally, George Grimm would have most of it in three weeks." So -- but his lighthearted approach to life, even when he was not well and not successful and had a wife that was a torment, he was still happy and smiling and enjoying himself with his garden and his bees and his woodwork.

JW: So you first met him when you were a teenager?

HH: Yeah. Well, no, I was twenty-one by that time. I guess that's all I can say about Cornelius Willison. All the other men around Brent influenced me a lot but they were mostly as examples of different types of shantyboaters and farmers.

JW: What was your relationship with the shantyboaters?

HH: Well, they were used to uh, young fellows coming down from Fort Thomas up on the hill. Some of them kept canoes down there and a shantyboater, one of them had a whole rack of canoes he was looking -- overlooking and taking care of, supposed to be. So they were used to -- the type of young man who was sort of an amateur at everything.

JW: Did they appreciate your interest in their lifestyle?

HH: I think George . . . yeah, I got pretty well acquainted with Bill Edwards. I think he was . . . and then the one I knew best was – oh, what's his name? -- Ed Wills was the one I got best acquainted with. He was a man of mystery to me; he claimed to have lived in California and said that Helen Wills, the tennis star, was his niece, I believe he said. I never believed it but. . . . I've talked about Ed Wills and Bob Wills before and told how he helped me mount that mural in the library so I guess I better not say much more about

him because he didn't have any real lasting influence. I think I -- I can't think of any other men.

JW: What about the literary influences in your life?

HH: Well, it's mostly a matter of books. I think I have a natural bent toward writing and as I've said, the strain comes up in the family every once in awhile. My uncle was a writer of books on engineering and my mother had a yen for writing. And of course, my brother Lucien, he wrote for newspapers and finally went to California and became a writer of motion picture scripts, stories.

JW: When you were in high school and in grade school did you show any aptitude for writing?

HH: Yes, I did. Some of the things I wrote were, I didn't think they were good but I remember once in New York the professor, Dr. Miles, was, said he had a theme that had been written by a student and he wanted to read it as an example of form in writing, that the passages were all connected one to another and one led into the other and it was very good in that way. And I was surprised when he read my theme. I said, "Oh, I'm pretty good." He said, "But I had to give this only a grade of ‘D’ because he didn't say anything worthwhile." [chuckle]

JW: [laughs] Do you remember what the subject was?

HH: No, I have no idea. Dudley Miles was really, I don't know what he ever wrote but he wrote some textbooks. The teacher in New York that I had that influenced me most was Charles Raubicheck. He reminded me so much of Clay Crawford that I sometimes get the two of them mixed. He was a (unintelligible) man and he'd write on my

papers, "Come out of your shell!" And I can see just how that would apply because I was really in a shell, I didn't come out. And I don't think I ever did as far as that goes; I'm still in the shell. But I've developed inside that shell, I think, partly through the help of all these men and the books I've read.

JW: Well, I know Thoreau had a great influence on you. What other writers made an impact? Especially the books that you read when you were younger?

HH: I started reading books when I was quite young, before I was ten years old. I don't know where they came from; some of them came into the family . . . as I said, my father was an interior decorator and he'd go into a house where people had been living to redecorate for the next tenant or something like that and there'd be books, or most anything. He even found a pool table one time that he brought home [chuckle] and put up in the upstairs bedroom that we weren't using, which was a source of great excitement to all the boys in the neighborhood. And he also found a player piano somewhere and brought it home. That's the kind that had to be pushed up along against a standard piano and connected some way and by pumping it and putting a roll of music in it, it would play the piano. That became a great influence on Frank and on me, too; especially on Frank because he was interested in music and understood it at the time better than I did. But I used to play that thing, too, and I got a very confused notion of what good music was. I remember the "William Tell Overture" and – and a military patrol coming through, you'd hear the piano imitating a drum in the distance and then they come closer and it'll play lively music as it was the fife and get louder and then there'd be a full chorus of imitations of different

instruments, and then it would begin to fade off again until it went back to the original drumbeat. I thought that was great. But I did get some idea of music, too.

JW: When did you first pick up the violin?

HH: Oh, I told all that, too, haven't I? Frank sent it to me in 19--, I think it was 1923. It was an old fiddle that belonged to my father that Frank got. Frank took it up and got so interested that he procured a better instrument and sent that out to me, thought I might like to take it on.

JW: Well, back to the literary influences when your father would bring books home . . .

HH: Well, Frank brought some and Lucien brought some, too. He'd get them around in courthouses somewhere or courtrooms where they were -- I don't know what they were, evidence or something and they were going to throw them out. But Frank picked up some art books, which I enjoyed, and then he brought home a book on Robin Hood, I thought that was a wonderful tale. And also an abridged and simplified version of *Arabian Nights Entertainments*, illustrated by Maxfield Parrish and that was real good. I devoured those stories. I still remember them.

JW: Did you like the illustrations?

HH: Oh, yes. I thought Maxfield Parrish was a great artist. I still think so, by the way. And he also brought the book on Robin Hood; did I mention that? The outlaw. That appealed to me because they lived in the woods and shot deer and lived on the deer and shot the deer on the rich man's grounds and always helping the poor people, very romantic. And he also sent a, somehow a book came into my hands on Velasquez, the painter, the Spanish

painter, and I could get anything, something out of anything, any book I guess. Of course, I didn't get a full idea what they were all about but. . . .

JW: It was the story of Velasquez's life?

HH: Yes. And his paintings, too, and illustrations of his work. I understood it all pretty well in my youth, when very young. I can't think . . . there was another book, it was a one volume edition of Shakespeare that I used to try to read and also a book on English literature by a man named Swinton, which was probably a textbook. I think I mentioned all these, Vince Kohler has mentioned all these things in his introduction to the *Journals* so I won't go into that much any more.

JW: Do you still read pretty much everyday?

HH: Yes, I do. Do you want to jump from then to now? [chuckle]

JW: Perhaps we should go back then.

HH: [laughs] Well, I would like to mention the few books that I have enjoyed all through my life and I reread over and over: one of them is *Two Years Before the Mast* by Richard Henry Dana; another is *Arabia Deserta* by Charles Doughty; I think they're great books and every time I read them I understand them better.

JW: What of them appeals to you?

HH: Well, of course, the *Two Years Before the Mast* was just an adventure of a young boy -- well, he wasn't as young as I was of course, but he was just out of Harvard -- and he shipped on a sailing vessel going out of Boston to go around the California coast, round Cape Horn and all his experiences on the coast and then back again. That's all good for anybody. And later I read his autobiography, which was a strange book and it was

disappointing in a way because I didn't think he grew up into the sort of man I expected him to from that early book. [laughs]

JW: And the book about Arabia, *The Arabian*. . .?

HH: Charles Doughty was an Englishman and a poet and he was one of the first to penetrate Arabia, and the remarkable thing about him was that he didn't accommodate himself to the Arabs. He was himself to the end; he was a Christian and a Protestant. Other men who have gone into Arabia, some of them have even turned Mohammedan for a certain length of time which is very easy thing to do; all you had to do was repeat a certain formula and you were Mohammedan and then you were allowed to go into all the places that were denied to Christians. But Doughty kept to himself and he defied the whole Arabian nation, really. And it was a very unpleasant book in some ways because he had such a, he had such an unpleasant life at times, hardships. And he's not a great strong man either, but he certainly had courage. I kept on my habits of reading and I think most of it is, I don't think I've specialized much.

JW: I understand that you and Anna used to read to each other?

HH: Yes, that was a great part of our life. One would read while the other would do some of the endless chores that we had to do at the time, in front of the fireplace, and Anna was always sewing or mending something and did a lot of the knitting for me and I was always making something or fixing something or cracking nuts or picking them out, toasting things over the fire, toasting soy beans, sorting over beans that needed to be cleaned up before we could use them, dry beans. And somehow we both enjoyed the reading so

much that it made the chores seem part of the enjoyment, whereas if we had had to do them separately, they would have seemed tiresome, maybe.

But we read, I can't say what we read because it was such a great variety. There was many things on music, musicians, the history of music, and that sort of thing; some books on painting.

JW: And you said you kept a list of the books that you two read?

HH: Anna kept a list of them; she was always a great person for keeping a list, lists of all kinds. She had many lists going but I don't know where that list is now unless it's with the Hubbard Collection at the University of Louisville, which I suppose it is. I might find parts of it anyway, sometime. But one thing we were interested in was Jane Austen; we read those novels over and over and it's even stranger that I'm reading them still, by myself. I've just finished, starting all over again, first I read *Sense and Sensibility* and then, after an interval of some weeks or months, I read *Pride and Prejudice*. And I think, I still think they're great novels, I think she's a great writer. And I can enter into them thoroughly; I enjoy every word.

END OF TAPE 6, SIDE A

START OF TAPE 6, SIDE B

JW: This is an interview with Harlan Hubbard; we're talking about literary influences.

HH: [pause] When I was in high school I became very much interested in the study of Latin. I had four years of Latin in high school and the last year we got into Virgil, who was a very sympathetic teacher, and I enjoyed that very much. So much so that when I

came back to Kentucky I kept it up a little bit and tried to read books beyond the -- we were reading in the *Aeneid* in school and I tried to read the *Eclogues* and the *Georgics* and even tried to write translations of them. I remember how when I walked down to my studio in Brent on a cool day and get in there and build a fire, before I did anything else I'd wait for the place to warm up and I'd sit up on top of the table, which was the -- the heat went upwards and that was the warmest place -- and that's where I'd do my reading of Latin in the morning. But I never became a good classical scholar, never would. Although at times, I used to dream how nice it would be to be a Latin professor in a small college somewhere and not have much to do, a few students, carry on your own researches. But that was just a dream and I realized I couldn't do everything, so I stuck to painting.

But my ideas of painting were formulated in those years very much while I was in New York, by the exhibitions I saw at the museums and galleries. And I picked up a pretty good understanding of the Impressionists and Cezanne and Van Gogh and Gauguin and what they . . . and that's about as far as I went. When you get into modernists stemming from Cezanne, like Picasso, I didn't go with them, because they were denying realism for abstract art and trying to make a work of art by abstract painting. But I don't think, I don’t think it can be done, at least no abstract painting has ever had much influence on me. It seemed like there has to be some connection with actual life, with what you see. But then it had to get away from the nineteenth century painters, who were making such detailed paintings, which were really nothing but photographs.

JW: Like John Singer Sargent?

HH: Yeah. Sargent and the landscape painters, too. Some of the landscape painters were, like Twachtman and Ryder, were adding something besides just realism and that's where I got my foundation for what I -- my relation to the history of art. Since then I've made very little progress. Still where I was then, trying to do the same thing, trying to reproduce nature so it will satisfy me and my love for it and at the same time produce a work of art which will have something more, something that the camera couldn't give. That's a crude way of saying it but that's the basis of it and I'm still working on those same lines.

JW: You mentioned in one of the earlier tapes about how Van Gogh and his technique, he seemed like he was always having fun with the paint.

HH: Yes. I think that's one of the requirements of a painter is he should enjoy his work and enjoy just the mere application and manipulation of colors and putting them on canvas or wherever he's painting on. The only writer on aesthetics that I've gotten much out of is Roger Fry, the Englishman. He has differentiated very much between illustrative painting and plastic painting. He wrote a very striking article on Sargent, how much he admired him and what an admirable painter he was, but he concluded that his painting was worthless as a work of art. And his idea was that, at least the conception I got, was that beside your depicting what you see, you're building up a formal design in your painting of those colors and forms, which depict the realism, which is entirely separate from the illustrative part of the painting. And after I thought about that a long time I began to see in my own painting that there was a formal design. I've tried to say this over and over, I tried to say it in the book on -- *Journal* --and when I was writing the journal I tried over and over

to say the same thing that there is a formal design, separate from the realism, but you have to do both at the same time. But the realistic part you do consciously and the design is done by your subconscious; you don't – you don’t try to produce that, it just comes of itself from your own instinct and your feeling for proportion and design and rhythm, balance of color, and balance of light and shade and all that sort of thing.

JW: What is your routine for painting? Do you get up at a certain time and paint or do you just go in and start. . . ?

HH: Oh no, painting is the last thing; everything else comes first and in these busy years that I've had living in Payne Hollow, there's so much to do, so much handwork and I kept piling it on, getting goats when I didn't have to and raising a lot of crops that could be bought. And for twenty-five years I cut all our firewood with a handsaw, worked all the gardens with a hoe. And that's one change I've made since I've gotten to my present condition; I felt that a life like that continued to its very end would be unbalanced and lacking in the essentials somehow. I feel that a time for leisure and thought and just enjoying yourself, enjoying animal life, enjoying the seasons and landscape and all that's going on around you. If you didn't have time for that, your life wouldn't be complete. And I feel like it's not dignified for an old man to be digging around in the, trying to get a lot of details done. Let somebody else do it. And somehow that scheme seems to work because somebody else is doing it really: I don't cut any wood any more, my friends come with their power saws and cut it; I've almost eliminated the garden; I still have an abundance of food, without buying very much of it.

JW: So you have a lot more time to paint then?

HH: Yes, I have more time to paint now than I have had since that golden period between 1930 and 1940 when I had my mother settled and before I met Anna.

JW: You stated once before that those paintings from that golden period seem to be appreciated by people more than what you do now.

HH: Yes, it's a strange thing. When I made them nobody was interested in them at all and as I've said before, when we went down the river in shantyboat I stored them all in my studio in Fort Thomas. But now people ask definitely, "Have you any more of your old paintings?" I think the tide is turning, though, because the things I did last winter, it’s not a great output, of course, but those things are beginning to be appreciated now for what they are. So I've great hopes of really doing something different. It'll be a continuation of the old, and faithful to the old ideas and conceptions, but it'll be more free, more lighthearted and more emotional, I think.

JW: And somehow more honest?

HH: Yes, it is. The other was honest, too, but I've advanced into a new period in my life and you can't go on doing the same thing all your life, the same thing. You still have to be faithful to your old ideas but develop them and bring something new out of them.

JW: What did Steacy Holmes think of your work?

HH: Well, Steacy Holmes, I realize now, was a bogus artist anyway. He never did anything much, but he had all the characteristics and the nature of an artist, and he dressed like one, and he had an understanding of painting, and he inspired students to do their best and inspired in them a love for painting which was very important, I think. I don't

believe he could ever develop anyone the rest -- with the rest of their life as a . . . his things were just mostly for young people.

JW: So his gift was that he can inspire rather than producing something that people would necessarily imitate?

HH: I think people would say, "Well, I can do better than he can." And they might, but at first you think he's a great artist and then, "I'd like to paint like that myself." But then they get beyond him, of course, and then he's left behind. But it's just at that young period when an artist needs some encouragement . . . .

He was a good leader, too, with the young people, as I've mentioned about his . . . he was one of the first scout leaders in the history, I guess, and he certainly influenced my brother Frank and myself.

JW: You stated before that your work hasn't changed drastically over the years in terms of your style. Why do you suppose that is?

HH: It hasn't changed because it's based on the same thing, which is nature and my love and respect for nature; I wouldn't violate it by making an abstract work of art out of it just to make something striking in design or color. But at the same time I'm trying all the time to develop that inner design which nobody seems to credit at all or have any understanding of. So it has something that the early work didn't have although, as I say, that was in, that's the thing that is in a work of art. You go back even to the Italian primitives, it was very strong, and El Greco.

JW: Why haven't your works been placed in a major museum?

HH: [laughs] Museums are strange things in a way. They get a new building done in a modern style of architecture and then they see some of my work and say, "Well, that stuff is old hat. I want something more modern for this museum." And then they'll get something, like the Metropolitan Museum spending something like twenty-five million dollars to build a new wing to house American art of the '20s and that period but [long pause], I don't know; life is really short and you're not changed much from when you're young and I think it's better to have a life that's a unity instead of having one that's full of abrupt changes and changes in direction and starting all over and following different styles and fads as they come up. And when you look at modern art today, you just can't see anything that's standard; it's all just a lot of individual stuff, and the artist's whole idea seems to be to make something that's striking and that will attract people's attention. They begin to use these brilliant neon colors and make paintings that have motion, you have to look through a hole in the frame to see the different colors change in shape and pattern. But I've just been plugging along on the same old ideas that I had when I was young, trying to do something better. It's discouraging in a way to find out that, in a way, some of the early things that were much better than you thought they were.

JW: Flo Fowler's catalog that she did of your paintings is very important because it covers a long span of time and it's a very important reference for people who are taking a look at the work that you've done over the span of your lifetime. Are you pleased with her catalog?

HH: Oh, yes. I would not be pleased if she tried to arrange it too formally to prove something, but she just took things as they came and got some good photographs and

slides and some essential data and put them all together and it's really a good record of what I've done.

JW: Why did she not include your watercolors or your prints?

HH: Well, she had enough to do as it was. [chuckle] It got to be quite a chore. At first she started out paying for everything herself, photography and travel, and it got to be rather expensive, you know, photographic material and printing, so she finally got a grant from the National -- whatever it is.

JW: National Endowment . . .

HH: National Endowment for the Humanities, yeah. [pause] So I think it's better that she didn't go into watercolors and other things.

JW: Perhaps that's a, that’s a subject for someone else's study.

HH: [laughs] I don't know. People talk about things like that but future people might want to study my work and there's no sign of it now. The people that have been interested are strictly amateurs themselves, most of them.

JW: Are your watercolors and prints as important as your. . . ?

HH: Oh, I think the watercolors are the best things I've done. In fact, I'm trying to get the more formal oil paintings and acrylics and larger paintings into that same form that the watercolors are done.

JW: In *Shantyboat* you include a lot of sketches, or a lot of prints, excuse me; but in *Payne Hollow* you just have sketches. Is that – is there a reason?

HH: Well, I think I wanted to illustrate *Payne Hollow* and I didn't have any wood blocks that would do it, or water colors, either, so I made sketches of different things like

the dogs waiting for the johnboat when I come in, when we're coming home from town and all the different operations; the garden and the -- cutting wood. I did use a wood block for the wood cutting illustration.

JW: So you sketched so that it could accompany the text . . .

HH: Yeah.

JW: Rather than having the finished product and seeing what fit.

HH: Yeah, I did that. I guess I could have used photographs if I'd had them to illustrate the different . . . but I think the drawings are more suitable and better, too.

JW: When – when someone wants to buy one of your paintings, how do you determine the price?

HH: Well, that's – I determine it through a very agonized consideration of it; it would be much better if I'd put a price tag on all of them and write it on the back of the picture and when they say, "How much?" I'd turn over the picture and look. [laughs] But I don't do that. I consider who it is and how much money they have and how much I like them and what picture they want and whether I think they will enjoy it and keep it and it'll be something they'll enjoy all their lives. I'd much rather give them away without any financial transaction at all, but of course, they won't take it. I usually end up by selling them for about half of what an agent would get for them.

JW: Well, of course, an agent is going to get a percentage, right?

HH: Yeah, they get forty percent.

JW: Well, you seem to be selling a lot now; is it hard for you to part with your paintings?

HH: No, it isn't. I feel like I'm casting the bread on the waters, not thinking anything about reward. The strange thing is I feel like I'm richly rewarded; I don't know where all the money comes from, but I have a lot more than I ever thought that Anna and I could get together. It's partly because I'm so parsimonious in spending money on myself, I guess, but that's just part of my nature. I wouldn't be happy if I had a fine new car and took long trips in it and all that sort of thing.

JW: You do still have your Volkswagen, though, don't you?

HH: Yeah, we still have that '68 Volkswagen. And I enjoy it, too, in a way. It takes me back to the memory of the old Model T Ford that my brother Lucien bought, with the straight fenders and the carbide lights and so high you'd think it would tip over when you went around the bend. Just had a top, a folding top, of course, that you had to put up if it started to rain. But he let me -- that was when I was in high school -- and he let me do things about it: check the oil and tires and wipe it off and sweep it out. And he let me drive it awhile. There's no such thing as driver's licenses in those days.

JW: Let me ask you one more question about the catalog. Where are other copies of the catalog kept?

HH: Well, Hanover College and the Frankfort, Indiana, library. I don't know whether the Behringer-Crawford Museum -- they said they were going to get some, I don't know whether they did or not.

JW: And do they – do these include the prints or the slides as well?

HH: No, Hanover has a whole, complete set. I think that's really the only one I know except Bill Caddell and Frankfort Library. [tape off momentarily, then resumes] Is this the same tape?

JW: Hm-hm. Harlan and I are looking through a catalog that Flo Fowler compiled. Harlan, would you like to comment?

HH: Well, this is the second volume; we've already talked something about the first. I think these later pictures have more variety of conception and I'm trying more experiments and trying to express things in a looser, simplified manner. I think it's a good sign. But in reality, they're not very different from the beginning, even though some of them are large murals in a country church or in a small town bank; they're all about the same. I don't have a particular style for murals and regular painting. But in the end it seemed like they haven't changed a great deal since I first started. The conception is the same and the subject matter; I'm still satisfied to paint the Ohio River and the Kentucky landscape. And the steamboat is still a major theme. I stick to that because I like it and because I feel that all the other paintings I see of steamboats are so grotesque.

JW: How so?

HH: Hm?

JW: How are they grotesque?

HH: A lot are made by people who don't understand steamboats and sometimes they try to dramatize them and make them something else or they'll . . . they're so phony. They just copy a photograph and they have no life to them and they're not . . . and the setting is terrible in some of them. That's what I mean by grotesque.

JW: If you had – if you had grown up on the coast, on the ocean, do you think you would be painting lobster boats if you were in Maine?

HH: Oh yes. I quite think I would. I think that's a very true observation because even now when I go, I spent a couple of weeks on Martha's Vineyard one time and I thought that would be a wonderful place to paint. There's something about the Ohio River and this landscape that's a part of me and I can't adapt to anything else. But when I look at my work and then look at this other book that you have about modern art or art of today, I can't see that mine has any place there; it's something entirely outside. Some of the earlier work, when it's realistic paintings of landscape, are something like mine but I feel I've added something more to it than just the representational part. It becomes so much a part of a critic's eye that if a painting doesn't fit into a certain style and be stylized, it can't rank as a work of art, and these things of mine, it's such a personal expression [pause – sound of airplane flying overhead] that I doubt if they ever do make their way and be considered as anything more than what they are considered today.

On the other hand, some of the later things I've done show maybe the beginnings of a change. I wouldn't want to make any radical change, not in conception or subject matter, but just in the way you express it. After all, painting is a very fluid method – a very fluid medium and can be expressed in so many different ways. And the experiments I'm making now in new directions and a freer style and some, I wouldn't say distortion -- it's more like a concentration of emphasis instead of depending entirely on painting a thing just like it is. I try to make the forms more expressive, even if they're not quite right. And especially the matter of perspective and drawing. A good painting almost has to violate both those --

perspective and drawing to be expressive. And I think if I can keep on painting awhile, especially now when conditions are such that I have more time for painting and give more attention to it, I still might develop something that would be a continuation of the old . . .

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