

CCAC PRESIDENT HARRY FORD's INTERVIEWS WITH BABS MEYER

The audio tape bears handwritten labels:

Side A: *CCAC Hist. Interviews with Babs Meyer, June 25, 1984 by Harry X. Ford*

Side B: *Babs Meyer Interview June 25<sup>th</sup> cont. and July 2, 1984 by Harry X. Ford*

Transcribed from audio tape by Helen Frierson December 8, 15 +16, 2018. Tape probably reflects 3-4 hours of conversation. Received the impression conversations took place at Bab's home in Piedmont Gardens, Oakland, California.

Note: Helen found this tape in the President's office. No idea where or which year. Took it home to transcribe. Forgot about it. Found it in a drawer on December 7, 2018 and started to transcribe!

HF = Harry Ford; BM = Babs Meyer; TV = a third male voice, possibly that of Dr. Eddelson.

SIDE ONE: June 25, 1984

HF: I thought what we might do, Babs, is just kind of start from the beginning and maybe you could, to get started, give me a little bit of information. Were you born here in Oakland or San Francisco?

BM: San Francisco, July 28, 1903.

HF: Where were you living at that time – were you in the city itself?

Yes, I have a very nice letter, that fortunately did not get lost, one that my father wrote from San Francisco to my mother while she was up visiting in Stockton. That gives our address. I don't remember it, but it is on the envelope, which is kind of interesting: date and all.

His shop was in an old horse stall at Mahogany – imagine, Mahogany, because that was where the, - he wasn't in a palatial home by any means, - but it was an area of palatial homes that had been burned and here were these mahogany stalls and that was his cabinet shop.

HF: I'll be darned.

BM: We can get that address.

HF: Then you were how old when you came over to Oakland.

BM: I was three years old, almost four.

HF: Do you recall any of that at all?

BM: Yes. Well. I remember the first year of the school, I do. I used to like to sit down at the entrance to the elevator. An old man named Gates operated it. It was one of those old fashioned ones where turn a crank and all that, and I would receive the people at the door and take them up to my mother, which kind of made a hit some times.

HF: (chuckles) I can imagine it did! That's very interesting. Well do you remember any of the time you lived in San Francisco? Do you have any recollections of that at all?

BM: No. None at all.

HF: So you really started – yes I think that is about the age – I can remember a few things out of my life when I was three or four; usually they were rather exciting things that happened.

BM: You see, I also spent quite a bit of time with my aunt in Stockton, my aunt and uncle, so it is possible that some of the time I wasn't in San Francisco, although they hadn't started the school then, so my mother wasn't so busy. I was in Stockton off and on, and then from the third grade on through the eighth, I attend Stockton public schools, graduated in the eighth grade and came down to enter the old University High School in Oakland, which was very tough like Lowell In San Francisco; that's where they trained their teachers.

HF: was University High School there on Allston Way at the time?

BM: the University High school was in Oakland, in our district, in the Temescal district. It was an old building with a cupola and a bell and the principal was a very distinguished man and one of the principals in the past at that high school had been an outstanding educator, but his idea of being

principal was to ring the bell for the students, so no matter who was visiting, he excused himself and saw to it that the bell was rung. So I spent that year at the old University High School in Oakland, and then I spent three years at Berkeley High and graduated from there in 1921.

HF: What were your first recollections about the other instructors, like Perham Nahl and Isabelle West?

BM: Oh, I loved them. Isabelle was awfully fond of me. Yes, and I liked Marty. There were the four persons at first: my father and mother and Perham Nahl and Isabelle. Those were the original four. But very soon thereafter came in Marty. I think maybe he came in as early as the spring of 1908.

HF: I see.

BM: "Oh, hello Dr. Eddelson." (Disjointed here – don't know who is being referred to in what follows.) Were doing something about it because we knew he wouldn't always be here. And I called him up one night, just on impulse, and oh it was kind of hard evidently to get the 'phone to him, but they did finally, and after I called I felt terrible because he sounded so weak. However, a day or so later I got one of these marvelous letters of his, a typewritten page, every speck of paper covered, a long letter, and he said it had been wonderful to hear from me, he was very happy, and that he wished we could do something about it, but I know we didn't.

HF: Yes. Well, we are certainly going to try to do something about it now.

BM: Yes.

HF: And I have got lots of time to work on it. And it has been one of my first priorities for a long time.

Unidentified THIRD MALE VOICE (Dr. Eddelson??): "I know it is to her advantage to have someone stimulate her memories of the past, because it is like reliving her usefulness, of which she has fond memories."

HF: Sure. Well Babs has been very useful to us over the years. Thanks to her we have kept good contact with the alumni. There were many years there where, during the changes of administration, there was no one taking much care of the alumni but Babs on her own would write to them, letters, kept correspondence going all the time, -

TV: wasn't that great.

BM: Some, yes.

HF: And thanks to her we have one of the strongest alumni associations of any art school in the country.

BM: we have a very old alumni association. It began right in the very first year by Lucy Pierce, 1908, Harry Dickson and all those people. You see, the strange thing was that we graduated pupils from a 3-year course after one year but, it was the San Francisco fire that started our school; it caused our school

TV: everybody had to continue matriculating and established the school ...

BM: they had all of these people who entered either the University of California or the San Francisco Art Institute. And, of course, the San Francisco Art Institute, then called the Mark Hopkins Institute was burned down, so for a year there was no school there, so all of those people who had known Dad as an instructor there came over to our school. We had about;

HF: And that really gave you a boost, didn't it?

BM: Yes, and after one year they were under four very excellent instructors and they were able to go forth into the world very successfully. But our school year was funny. It was two semesters of 20 weeks each – twenty - plus one 6-week session, so it was quite a full program, and, of course, the instruction was highly individualized. And the girls went into teaching in high school, in good high schools, right away and then some practiced arts, some did fine arts.

TV: I think the most important thing I took in high school was free-hand drawing.

BM: Well, it's important, yes.

TV: Because through a microscope that's what you do, day in day out, in histology anything that relates, you have got to draw pictures to duplicate things that you see.

BM: that's right.

TV: And you have to add color, and things like that to it, and our teacher was an excellent artist herself, Ms. Brandt (?) Oroville? Union High School, Class of '27. I went to my 50<sup>th</sup> reunion here not too many years ago.

BM: I'm class of 1921, Berkeley High. (Laughs)

TV: Well, anyway. I went to my 50<sup>th</sup> and met quite a few of my former students.

Gap in tape

BM: I had to do an awful lot of 'phoning for somebody yesterday. We were trying to get a group together, which we did successfully but it was an awful job, and I just got very tired.

HF: Well, I don't want to tire you today.

BM: No. You are not tiring me.

HF: when you do get to feeling tired, let me know, because we are not going to do this all in one day, anyway. Before the doctor came in we were talking about the founder and the founding instructors and you said that Xavier Martinez arrived about a year after the ...

BM: Yes, I think perhaps in the - it could have been in the second half of the first year, 1908. I noticed on the postcards, on those historic postcards, that it seemed to indicate that and that is more my impression. So we will try to run that down. Yes. Then we had a very wonderful sculpture teacher who came in the second year of the school: Elizabeth Freer Ehat - and she was an excellent teacher/sculptor; just splendid, she was highly regarded and she sold things through Gumps, and Paul Elder and the like, and also taught at Mission High, - had taught, I guess, and then she married and had children and then the poor lady then eventually got diphtheria. She had of course been raised a Catholic, because she had come from an Italian family and she changed to Christian Science and she got this terrible thing that became diphtheria and she would take no action, and she died. My father couldn't get over it, you know. Too bad. So those were the six. After that, of course, the others came. But they were the four pioneers and the two that came very soon thereafter, they were early birds, too, yes.

HF: as you were saying, Isabelle took quite a liking to you.

BM: agrees.

HF: Was she in - about in her twenties when she started at the college?

BM: Well, you know, that picture that, again, is in that series of postcards, shows her as a very young woman. Now she had been four years at the Mark Hopkins Institute and one year at Columbia University Teachers College under Arthur Wesley Dow, so there is 5 years past high school, high school would be 17 or 18, yes, early twenties. Of course, Mr. Nahl was older, he was more like a father.

HF: Yes, about the same age.

HF: And I gather from my talks with Isabelle that she wasn't around the college all that much. She would be in for a while and then off to Europe.

BM: Yes, that's right. Her father was a splendid architect. They had a lovely home. And she had every - her father and mother provided her with every advantage. She studied with great painters in Europe, in Spain and in Holland and Belgium. No, she was not consistently at the school, whereas Marty was. She always made the point that she was a founder, and Marty wasn't, but (laughs a bit) when Marty came he stayed.

HF: Yes. She used to make that point all the time: that he was not one of the founders because he came in a few months later. Well, I gather ... Well, I've talked a bit with Isabelle about a variety of things. Her husband was a writer.

BM: Yes, political. He was, he wrote for the old *Call* or *CAL Bulletin*, Fremont Older's paper. He was highly regarded and she got to know many interesting people through his contacts, too, as well as her own.

HF: do you recall his first name?

BM: Fremont Older? Or her husband? George P. West. Yes.

HF: Yes – George P. West. Well, I got that impression and I remember the first time I visited her over there and she proudly showed me the bathroom that had been papered by John Steinbeck, you know. And evidently they were very good friends.

BM: Yes. He wrote her nice letters. She wrote him after he received, what was it, the Nobel Prize for literature, was it?

HF: Yes.

BM: And he wrote back a very nice letter. You know. I really don't have anything from Isabelle. It seems strange. Of course, we always got a kick out of something: she had a gorgeous Tiffany lamp: you may remember it - it had jonquils, daffodils – beautiful –and I think she told half a dozen people that our names were written on the bottom, but I never expected it because obviously it should go to the family, along with some of her other treasures, but I think there were about six of us that were promised that lamp (chuckles)!

HF: Well, it wouldn't be the first time that that's ...

BM: No- those things happen! I don't mean that she wasn't generous. But she didn't specifically leave anything to me, but she had been very generous in the past; she had given us pastel paintings and the color lithographs, yes, she was more than generous. But, of course, I would have like to have had a bequest from her, but she was pretty sick at the end. Yes.

HF: she did give us two or three very nice prints that she had done while she was studying in Europe.

BM: were they from Spain?

HF: Yes. They were really very nice.

BM: color lithographs.

HF: Yes, that's true. Yes, well, when she talked to me she usually referred to 'the school,' she called it the school.

BM: Yes. Well it was.

HF: as being something 'other.' She really didn't sound to me as though she felt she was really a part of it.

BM: Well, you see, of course, obviously personnel changed almost completely: there were very few links, I mean, as time went by; she kept saying 'It isn't our school.' Well, no! That's alright! You know.

HF: So she seems to have identified with that very first group, and then after that she kind of lost contact.

BM: Well, I would say, after WWII. She came back, was kind and good of her to come back and teach a bit, when we needed someone so badly when we didn't have instructors – you know they were doing war work - jobs. And she came back and taught: she was an awfully good design teacher. Glen Wessels (1895-1982) said that throughout his career he continued to use her – the basis of a great deal of his work was her general introductory design course which she, in turn, had gotten from Arthur Wesley Dow.

HF: Well, perhaps Nahl was about the same age as your father?

BM: Yes. My father was born in 1872. I don't know what year Mr. Nahl was – we can look that up, I suppose.

HF: Yes. We have that record somewhere. I think he may have been 1875. I had talked with his son not so long ago, and also with his daughter, Rusty.

BM: Well, I've lost track of her and I'm sorry.

HF: She still lives here in Oakland.

BM: I don't think she is listed in the 'phone book.

HF: that may not be. We just had her number in the file. She was saying that he was quite a character. He used to entertain them doing acrobatics.

BM: Ooh. He would pose. Those Nahl men would pose! They would gild themselves and pose as Roman gods.

HF: OH, really? For pageants and things like that?

BM: it was a performance, yes. I guess not when he became a teacher, I guess not, but before that, it was quite a thing.

HF: Well Rusty said that she remembered, as a child, when he was coming home after a day's work, as he approached the house he would start walking on his hands so that all the change would fall out of his pockets, and she would run around gathering up all the stuff, and that was her reward for the day.

BM: Well, I hope she will come to some of our events occasionally.

HF: Yes. I would hope so, too. Because I don't remember seeing her on campus since when we dedicated the building.

BM: Well. We must try the next time we have something.

HF: Well, she felt that he was really, had a lot of interest in Japan.

BM: Oh yes. My goodness, yes! He had a Japanese costume and we had a nice little snapshot of him in it. I don't know whether the college has that or whether it has been lost. Or, it may be in all the junk that is in Beacon's warehouse. You see, this is one great mess. Some here and some there. But I guess it is getting cleared up a little. I am very much handicapped by not having, by first of all, by having all this stuff dumped on me, and, second, not having a place to work as it were. But, it's all right, I've survived.

HF: Well is anybody taking care of that stuff for you? Sorting it out in any way?

BM: No, but I can do it. No one else really could. After a while, I have about half a dozen pictures that I just discovered the other day – photographs.

HF: You are still working on it?

BM: Oh yes! I'm still working on it. (Laughs) My health hasn't been of the best. I've been kind of annoyed at one of the girls I have working at present. She works hard but she goes her own way. She wants the place to look neat and clean, and that is commendable, and laudable, but sometimes she undoes work that I am doing and of course that wouldn't happen if I had a desk. Oh. What I'm going to do is get my bookcase, which is very lovely. That will be quite a help. And I'm going to have a very good moving company bring it to me, because I don't want anything to happen to it – it's beautiful. It was made by Bill Smith who Wessels says was just a genius. One of these people who trained 7 years to be a cabinet maker. And Dad designed it and Smith made it. And Schmidt (Smith?) made it. And it used to stand in the entry way to the financial secretary's office up in my old room: you know that little passage way as you go in? And that's where it stood, and it's a beautiful little bookcase. So I'm going to get it. And what is the name of the young man and his helper. I think it is Buzz? Do you have somebody named Buzz?

HF: Yes, Buzz Ward.

BM: Is he still here?

HF: Yes.

BM: He was very nice. He brought something here one day, which a lady refused and sent back, I remember. But he has always been very nice to work with. Yes. I might want to ask him something on the 'phone sometime. O.K.

HF: Well, let's see. We were talking about Perham Nahl and about Rusty.

BM: Yes.

HF: And about his interest in Japan.

BM: Oh, Yes. Yes. Of course, Dad was awfully interested in Japan.

HF: I remember he had quite an interesting collection of things. He showed them to me once.

BM: Yes. And by golly, like a fool I sold them. And I just feel terrible. But I did. Some of them were my own, too. But anyhow, that's that. You, one doesn't know what to do.

HF: That's right. You never know. But there are stock brokers who feel that way too. A lot them have regrets I suppose.

BM: Yes. Mr. Nahl was very interested in Japan. I don't remember how long he was there but I'm sure he visited Japan.

HF: Well, one of the things that I'm hoping we can get done, maybe next year – is to - you know the Japanese garden that was done in his memory? ...

BM: Yes.

HF: that is in very bad need of restoration. I was thinking that might be an appropriate thing to do. Do you recall – do you remember when that was done? Was it in the Thirties, sometime?

BM: The picture appears in this book which came out in '36. I'm pretty sure it is in there. There were 3 beautiful things printed by Taylor and Taylor from 1936. This is one of them. (They are looking at a book)

HF: Yes. There is the garden.

BM: Yes. We had a good landscape designer. We had a very nice list of what graduates were doing. And I had three copies of mine, which I gave to various presidents and then Mary Jo gave me her copy and I in turn finally gave it to either your office or your predecessor, I forget which; so, I don't have one now but it was nice, and then the catalogue for that year was Taylor and Taylor, yes.

HF: We made a poster of this one.

BM: Oh, you did? Yes. And it's on the postal card, too. Yes. There is a sweet one in there of old Mr. Garbero who did those gorgeous walls.

HF: Oh? Is he posing?

BM: Not posing exactly. Yes! You are right! He is posing. You are right.

HF: Because I know we have some paintings that were done by students of Mr. Garbero, posing for the class.

BM: He didn't like to!

HF: He didn't (chuckles). He would rather work in the garden.

BM: Oh Yes.

BM: Yes, there he is. He was a sweet old man.

HF: Oh Yes. And I think we have a drawing of him, in that pose.

BM: Probably do. Good.

HF: That's great.

BM: Ok. Well, Mr. Nahl was a wonderful teacher. He was very dramatic, you know. He was very different from Marty. They were extremely different in their approach, as you can well imagine. But he was highly dramatic and in that series of postcards you have a picture of him conducting a class in life drawing in the early days of the school.

HF: I understand he was also a magician. Did he do any drama work, or stage work, that you know of outside of his art?

BM: Well, he and his brothers did those ...

HF: those gilded figures – Roman poses. How many brothers did he have?

BM: at least one. That information I imagine would be available

HF: Oh, yes. Well, there's a lot that we can get from his son.

BM: where is he now?

HF: Well, he lives in Lafayette.

BM: What's his name? Perham, Junior?

HF: Yes. Perham Junior. I met with him and Rusty and Mr. and Mrs. Bloss, Peter Bloss, some time ago to talk about him because it seems we don't have an awful lot of information about him in our files. So I thought it would be good to talk with him and see what we could put together.

BM: Yes.

HF: So they gave me quite a bit of information and I am going to get some more when I interview them in about a week or so. Well then, Xavier Martinez, of course, was probably the most colorful of the artists who were in that original group because I know that even today I see pictures of him at the Bohemian Club, he was very active there, and of course, the museum did a retrospective show of his work some years ago.

BM: About 5 years ago, wasn't it?

HF: Yes. He was a highly respected artist.

BM: Oh yes. The picture of that lady in Piedmont in the afternoon sunlight is his wife, Elsie. She just died February 3<sup>rd</sup>.

HF: Yes. I had a chance to meet her a couple of times. Once at the museum, and I went down to Carmel. I think she had a birthday party and Michaela threw it, and we all went down and celebrated her birthday with her. She seemed like a very jolly person ...

BM: Oh I think so, yes. Michaela is quite happy, I understand. Her friend. They live together: Marion Grant Smith Siminell. I've talked with her, although not so much with Michaela, although she sends me greeting cards and 'phones occasionally. But I'm a little bit – I see a little bit more of Marion. Anyhow, she says that Michaela is very happy: she is handling a retreat and she just likes that, once a week. At least she was, about 6 months ago, and then she had a lovely trip to Japan. Yes. I haven't seen her since.

HF: Well she is another person I have to talk to.

BM: Yes. Well, she is so distinguished. Yes. I think you will enjoy talking with her. And then a wonderful thing happened, too. Mrs. Martinez and her friend had saw to it that a Nahl history report was taken for the University of California Bancroft library; they got everything together and either they assembled it all, or were interviewed – I don't know which – anyhow – it's there. And, so I'm glad of that, because that tells a lot about Marty.

HF: that's good to know. Yes. There seems to be a lot of documentation on Marty's life. And on his work.

BM: Yes.

HF: because I thought that museum catalogue was quite well done, the one by George Newberg (sp?).

BM: I didn't see it. I'd like to see it.

HF: You didn't see it? I'll have to get you a copy of that. I thought you might have that.

BM: I don't think so. There again, I don't have it here. I have glanced through the books and it's not here. But it might be in the other place.

HF: Well, I saw at least in one old photograph a picture of you modeling for the class.

BM: could be.

HF: All dressed up with a big ribbon in your hair, as I recall. I don't remember if they were working in clay or sketching.

BM: It's quite possible.

HF: You did a lot of that, then?

BM: Yes, Lucy Pierce did an awfully nice picture of me: I was pouting and the reason I was unhappy was that I had a new pair of brown shoes and I felt she wasn't giving enough attention to the shoes! Lucy was a dear and such a lively person when she was young and, well, just so full of pep.

HF: I can imagine. When did she come onto the scene?

BM: 1907.

HF: She was there in 1907?

BM: In that collection of historical postcards there is a nice picture of her. The girls are up on the roof.

HF: oh yes.

BM: And she is more or less in the center. It's a nice picture of her.

HF: Oh, that is Lucy?

BM: Yes. That's Lucy.

HF: Well I gather that a lot of people who were around the college, the 'school' as it was called, did work as models, the gardener – the fellow who laid the stone walls and yourself.

BM: Yes, but not exclusively, the kids liked to do it, too, because it gave them a little money: for the so-called sketch class that Mr. Wolff used to conduct, draped model, why, the students all posed for that and also for portrait painting with Marty.

HF: I understand that you were at the studio building for just one year ...

BM: Correct.

HF: and then you moved over to Center Street.

BM: correct.

HF: and you were there about how long?

BM: Well, that is all in the little history. I think you can get it more accurately from that. I think we were there about a couple of years, and then we moved to Allston Way.

HF: Yes. And that Center Street place was that on the second floor?

BM: Yes. Glen Wessels makes the point that it was over a pool room, well, it was a perfectly respectable, legitimate building: there were all kinds of professional people in it, but there was a pool room underneath. Also, Mr. Winston's bakery, that years later was the Piedmont Bakery, and a very fine bakery, so it was entirely reputable.

HF: Yes. I remember him making a point of that a couple of times.

BM: Yes, and he made the point that the guildhall was built out of old street lumber. Well, that wasn't the case at all. In Oakland, we had the old St. Mary's there at the foot of pill hill, where the automobiles are now being sold, it was where the old brick pile was, and those timbers were the most unbelievable things I ever saw in all my life. You know what we see at the lumber yards today: it doesn't amount to much. But those timbers were just absolutely unbelievable, just gorgeous.

HF: Were they from St. Mary's?

BM: Yes. St. Mary's.

HF: Had they demolished the buildings there?

BM: Yes. The old brick pile. It was taken down and Dad got stuff from there including to be sure old bedsteads for the college and they did go into the foundation, I'm sure, but the building itself was built from awfully good lumber and the auditorium in its heyday was very nice.

HF: Yes. I've seen pictures of it. Well, that is very interesting. Because I'd heard that story before. Was that also the studio building, it must have been built about the same time as the auditorium? You know the one where Corky (Vernon Corkendall ) used to have his ceramics classes.

BM: No. I'll tell you. That was built somewhere around 1926 because Mrs. Percy lent us \$5,000.00. Let's see how that goes. I guess Dad constructed the building out of wood and then Mrs. Percy, Isabelle's mother, saw it and was upset and unhappy over the fact that we were operating classes in an ugly, old wooden building, so she lent Dad \$5,000.00 to stucco it, and that made it better. Years later, she fell a little bit on evil days and wanted it back, and I don't know if Dad was in a position to give it to her at once – I don't know how it was worked out – but anyhow, it was very kind and generous of her to give it at the time – I certainly know that. It meant a lot.

HF: I can imagine that \$5,000.00 in those days was quite a bit.

BM: Yes I'm sure.

HF: Well, this place on Center Street. Did you have more space there than you had in the studio building?

BM: Oh yes. Because in the studio building we had one floor on the top floor. And I remember, years later in 1921 when I was leaving high school, I saw Mr. McCullough, (sp?) the photographer, and he said in one of the store rooms there was still areas marked 'easels'. So that was the top floor that we had. Then on Center Street we had more room, Yes. Definitely.

HF: Is that the reason why your Dad moved?

BM: Well, they raised the rent. That was one thing. And then there was this, and that was a rather interesting unit that developed between the Center Street and the Allston Way location, the old Berkeley High School on Allston Way, because the Berkeley Board of Education had an office on Allston Way and there was an area behind the Center Street building where we first were, and the old Berkeley High School building on Allston Way where we later were and then the Board of Education: the large open area which provided a nice space for open air gardening – WWI was on – Dad liked to Victory- garden,

and the students liked to sit in the sun and then we created a little modeling building where Bufano taught for a year or 6 months or something and there was a modeling studio and a metals studio where Harry Dickson taught, and that was quite pleasant: it was a nice open area there, enclosed and quiet. Very nice.

HF: Was that about the time ... trying to think of the name of the sculptor.

BM: Benny Bufano taught for us one semester. He was awfully – He was not an awfully good teacher, but he was a great inspiration. Yes.

HF: It seems to me Glen Wessels told me a story about somebody putting a dead cat in the kiln – upsetting!

BM: terrible!

HF: So he was there for just one semester.

BM: I think so. That's my impression. He always remained a good friend.

HF: The building on Allston Way, that was formerly the old Berkeley High School?

BM : Carol Purdie always makes the point that it had originally been another school. But when we took it over, it was the Berkeley High School and then I met a lady at Grand Lake Gardens, when I was there for a brief time, who was a high school graduate of Berkeley High but of their commercial division. She was, I think, an earlier graduate than I. And she told me that in her day the academic division of Berkeley High was on the first floor and the top floor, the second story, was the commercial. So that's possible but when we took it over, it was called Berkeley High School, although it may have been something else to start with.

HF: Had it been vacant for a while before you moved in there?

BM: That, I don't know.

HF: Well, that must have added quite a bit of space. Because the model I've seen of that – it was quite extensive.

BM: Oh yes. It was a big building. And then we had this lovely area – this court-like thing – that had the two little studios in it: the modeling and the clay studio and the metal shop and the woodworking shop. In the early days, we had several, very fine workmen. Finally, in the end, it just ended up with just one. We don't get them anymore. They are so marvelous.

HF: You must have been at Allston Way during WWI. And, as I recall from what I've been told, those were very difficult times, because the men were gone to the war.

BM: You see, we are indebted to the United States government and to the people who served, and followed with their education, we got the money to buy the Treadwell property from the First World War, we had the veterans then, trainees, and Dad was about desperate because the government owed him thousands of dollars – they were slow in paying – and then they were very generous with supplying the students with all kinds of paper and paint, any amount, and we had to make the billing in 13 copies. In those days we had no duplicators, you had to use carbon paper and be careful as all get out. And so here we had for instruction tuition, that was a big sum and a huge sum for supplies, and Dad was absolutely desperate. He knew Mr. Wolder, (sp?) who later was a trustee, and Mr. Wolder's partner was a member of the House of Representatives in Washington, for the moment, I've forgotten his name, so Mr. Wolder introduced him to his partner, and Dad begged him to see if he wouldn't get us some money. So, by golly, finally a nice big, fat check arrived, and I think with that Dad made the \$20,000 deposit. And you know he got that for \$60,000 at 5%.

HF: Yes, I heard that. Fantastic! Were these American soldiers who were studying there during the war?

BM: After. They were veterans.

HF: Sort of like the G.I. Bill –

BM: Oh yes. On a small scale. Yes . You know some unfortunately took advantage of the government's generosity and one fellow bought a whole big trunkful of Whatman (?) paper, you know that is kind of expensive; so what he would do would be to sell it cheap. (Laughs) That's a racket. So anyhow Dad finally

convinced them that there should be some limitation on what they got. I believe there was an amount stated that they could not exceed. But they were good students on the whole. A few of them were too nervous to be there. They weren't as well screened as later. But an old army nurse used to come around at least once a week and saw them, advised them and helped them. In the main, they were all right. There were one or two that got kind of upset.

HF: was this a kind of rehabilitation program?

BM: Yes it was. It was training, preparing them, presumably, to carry on and I think quite a few of them did. Remember Miss Hartman? (Yes) She was an army nurse.

HF: Were these just regular veterans or ones who had been wounded.

BM: They were regular veterans. I think they had to be able to come to school and in reasonably good health.

HF: They were almost identical to what we had in the G. I. Bill during WWII.

BM: Yes. Just on a smaller scale.

HF: Well, that's amazing because I had always thought that the G.I. Bill thing was a brand new idea. Evidently, it wasn't. Well that's interesting. Well, the Allston Way location must have been there about 7 or 8 years. There again, that is something I can look up.

BM: We left - we went to the Oakland Broadway location in 1926.

HF: 1926.

BM: I think the dates in the little book – was it Marney that wrote that little book? (HF: Yes) I think the dates are exact – I think they are quite right.

HF: I remember Glen Wessels telling me a story about how they would move things from the Allston Way location to the Broadway college on the trolley. Take things with them on the trolley. He said at one time you were holding classes in both places. And used to run back and forth between the two campuses.

BM: Could be. That's correct. You know, in the early days between 1923 and 1926, Dad said that there were vegetable gardens between Berkeley and 5212 Broadway and then I talked with George Treadwell while they were still about, and he told me that he, when he and his brother James were growing up, they used to go down to Mosswood Park and shoot Tech (?) rabbits.

HF: Well, that's possible. Now Jim was born at the house, wasn't he?

BM: Now that, I don't know.

HF: That's what I have read.

BM: George, I think was younger than Jim. In my bedroom, the boys had a physical punching bag. And also there were séances held up there by the ladies. There were stars.

HF: Do you have any idea why they decided to sell that property.

BM: Oh, they had to. They were absolutely wiped out. Yes. There was this terrible mine disaster. The water came in on the mine and the men were all killed. And one day they were millionaires and the next day they were paupers, and then poor Mr. Treadwell had to go to prison. But I don't think it was his fault in a sense. He was of course guilty. He was, of course, the head person, and it happened. But I think it was more like an act of God. I don't know that there was anything wrong. Maybe the mine wasn't fully protected, I don't know. Because we had a real estate dealer in Oakland who was a wonderful historian – his name eludes me but it will come back – and he told me a lot about our property at 1635 East 22<sup>nd</sup> Street, which I have written down some place and he told me about our property. He called Mr. Treadwell a jailbird. But they were lovely people. I just think that some of those awful things just happen.

HF: Well, you read about it all the time. Mine disasters are nothing new. It's a dangerous thing to be doing in any case.

BM: Yes, there was water above.

HF: Were these the mines out in Contra Costa County?

BM: No. That was separate. They had a little railroad out there in Contra Costa County.

FIRST SIDE OF TAPE ENDS HERE

SIDE 2: June 25<sup>th</sup> continued and July 2, 1984 by Harry X. Ford

HF: Well, as you know, those Carnegie bricks, a group of our schools received a gift from the Carnegie Foundation and one of their staff was visiting the college and she noticed one of these bricks with the word "Carnegie" in it, and she said "I have to have one of those bricks," so we mailed one to her. And she says she has it on her desk in New York.

BM: That's nice; that's very nice.

HF: So, they were in brick-making and mining and that was coal, I suppose, that they were mining?

BM: low grade, yes, and a little railroad.

HF: Was the railroad a commercial railroad.

BM: No. Just for the plant or works.

HF: Do you know what they did with their coal?

BM: No, I'm sorry, I don't. I wonder would Mr. James Treadwell. Would he talk with you?

HF: Oh, yes. We've chatted before.

BM: Would be interesting to find out.

HF: I've heard one story that they used to haul it down to what is now called Jack London Square and it was picked up there by the ships either as cargo or fuel, or maybe as both.

BM: Well, that's possible. I just don't know.

HF: Well that's too bad I never knew about that mining tragedy.

BM: Yes. Their friend let them stay on at the property for several years and then eventually sold it.

HF: So there were 2 major disasters that caused the college to have good fortune: one was the earthquake in San Francisco and the other was a mining disaster. It's amazing how those things happen that way: some good can come out of misfortune.

BM: My hip is beginning to hurt! OK, why don't we stop for a while now. I think that's enough!

Slight gap in the tape which then resumes:

BM: .... wanted to resign, as you know. He wanted one more year. But it always would have been one more year after that. We know that. It was his baby and he just couldn't conceive, you know, of anyone else running it quite as well as he did, but it was essential that we get off on a different foot because it was awfully hard to administer a small, independent college, when we had nothing except tuitions and then, naturally, he was then an older man and I think you do need new blood. So the trustees felt that the time had come for a successor. And it made him unhappy, but I think he adjusted pretty well after he finally accepted it to a degree. He had in Oakland the Rotary Club which he had belonged to for years and years. In fact, way back, even when we were in Berkeley. He was one of the charter members of the Rotary Club in Oakland, and he went to that every Thursday and there was a Mr. Willie Brown who was the public relations manager for the *Tribune* who was a dear: he always saw to getting Dad safely to his seat and back to the car, so it made it very pleasant. And Dr. Frank Baxter (Daxter?) who had been president of our board of trustees was also there at the meetings; he was an older man and there were people his age and a lot that were younger. And on Friday, that was every Thursday, on Friday I took him to the Business Men's Garden Club and that was always interesting because they had a good speaker every week – a specialist – so he had belonged to that for a long time. And then for annual activities that he looked forward to there was the big birthday party for him, usually in a private home – you were there at John Kofskies' (sp?) -

HF: I remember.

BM: And he enjoyed that. That was the last birthday party. It was very nice. And, after that he got sick.

But he was happy that day and we have a lovely book of pictures that Hugo (Steccati?) took.

HF: That was about his 83<sup>rd</sup> birthday, wasn't it?

BM: 81<sup>st</sup>. No, 88<sup>th</sup>!

HF: Was it the 88<sup>th</sup>?

BM: I think so.

HF: I'll have to go back and check.

BM: '72 he was born in 1872. I am mistaken.

HF: He was about 88 when he died, wasn't he?

BM: Yes. That's where I'm getting confused.

HF: Yes, well, you know, that is interesting because Spencer Macky was then hired as president and I don't think he was, he wasn't much younger than your father, was he?

BM: I think about 10 years. Yes. I think so. Well I think Mr. Macky tried very hard but he wasn't an administrator, that wasn't his line but Napoki (sp?) was a wonderful help: he really I think kinda pulled things together and he was marvelous under Dr. Dow (Dahl?) who was a great mistake I'm sorry to say. He wanted to convert the school into an ordinary college. He didn't want it to be just arts and crafts.

HF: Dr. Dahl?

BM: Dr. Dahl. Dr. Orville Dahl (sp?) But Nipoti told me after having worked with him for the better part of a year that he was a little mentally imbalanced. His wife was dying of cancer. And, we were his employees, all of us, of course, and he would have us in for conferences and instead of getting our work done we spent the morning talking. And he never wore a watch – that was a little affectation – and here the whole morning would go by and our work would be undone and Orville was presiding. So nobody was too thrilled about him, I think, although I suppose he had his points and I think he got a good job afterwards but in, you know, a less specialized college. He was from Minnesota.

HF: What was he – the Dean, then?

BM: He was the president.

HF: Orville Dahl was?

BM: Yes he was.

HF: I see. And what was Spencer Macky?

BM: Well Spencer came later didn't he?

HF: I see.

BM: I think so. That must be all down in the books.

HF: Yes. I'll check it.

BM: You see, I get all mixed up, too. I think he was there about a year or two.

HF: And Alex. Was he the Dean?

BM: I think so. And he was tremendously helpful, both to Orville Dahl, both to smooth things over and help him and guide him a little bit, as far as he could be guided, and I'm sure he was helpful to Mr. Macky.

HF: Well, at the time your father left the college, I've read that that - WWII was going on and there were virtually no students – everybody was off to the War –

BM: And Mayorick (?) for one, I remember, one of our last teachers, to go to work at the shipyards – we had a hard time getting teachers - and Isabelle came back and taught for a semester because the design teacher I guess was at the shipyards. They were tough times.

HF: They were tough times and financially difficult. I'm surprised the Board would not have gone for somebody with more skill in business and finance considering the ...

BM: Yes. Well, you see, I think Mr. Logan was rather looked up to, on the board, and, of course, Spencer was a great friend of his and I guess Logan thought that Spencer would be good. But as you say, there should have been an emphasis on finance. Yes. That's right.

HF: As, as you mentioned, your only source of income was from tuition, and there were no students, so there was virtually no income. Well, as I remember now, when your father – did he retire or resign? Do you recall?

BM: I guess he resigned.

HF: Then after he resigned I understand the family remained on the campus.

BM: Yes. For about a year.

HF: About a year. Then you moved -

BM: To East Oakland.

HF: Was it during that time that Xavier Martinez died? Do you recall? I have a vague recollection that it was while Spencer Macky was still president that Xavier Martinez died. We did a cactus garden in his memory I think in the back – we still have some of that cacti in pots, although the garden – the building - his building is now over where his garden used to be.

BM: Yes. I was reverting for a moment to Dad's later years. I told you what he did at Noon. And as to annual events, he had been a Charter member of the University of California Faculty Club, which Mr. Maybeck designed, and oversaw: Dad assisted with some of the interior – the furniture. Dad went to their annual Christmas dinner. That was a great joy to him. He liked to go. He knew some of the older professors who would still come and he knew some of the younger ones, too. He always enjoyed that. I remember Professor Norhaus (sp?) was with us one semester – at least one semester – maybe longer – there at Broadway and College in the early years after Dad's retirement. I'm trying to think - there was something that he told me that was awfully funny about Dad. I'll get to that later. It doesn't come to my mind now, but I just remember Mr. Norhaus telling me. Isn't that stupid. These things are buried in one's mind and you haven't thought about them for years.

HF: It will come to you later. We'll get it then.

BM: Yes. Because it was kinda cute. Well, anyhow, that was the UC Faculty Club – that was one thing; and then there was a rather interesting organization that may be extinct now – I don't know – called the California School Masters Club. That consisted largely of superintendents of city schools and county schools all over the state and they met at conventions, usually. And the text book people were very active and there was a very interesting counter-play between the text book people and the superintendents of schools and some of those superintendents became very friendly to Arts and Crafts. There was one Mr. Rebock and Ethel Percey Andrews who founded the retirement program – you know – what's that called – the big program we have ...

HF: for schools?

BM: No, a big program for people all over the United States. They named a building after her down at USC – Gerontology – American Association of Retired Persons. She was a school superintendent. Well those were the people of that caliber and the local ones around the Bay and some out of town would come together annually for that, and Dad enjoyed that because that went back to the early days when he had begun teaching, you see, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> c. up in Stockton. I think about 1898. Let's see: then, of course, I guess those were the 2 evening events he looked forward to annually, and then of course the Rotary Club and the Business Men's Garden Club, they had a Christmas party, too, so he had a pretty good time around the Holidays.

HF: Well, I remember touring the gardens there in Oakland, Lake Merritt, with the two of you one Sunday. That's when I got an appreciation for his love of plants.

BM: Yes. You see, he had worked under the founder of the Wente (?) tribe in this country. He had worked in Niles during the summer vacation, I guess, or when he first came here. When he first came to the country he came to Fresno and stayed and worked for a while. There was an uncle in Fresno, and then he went to San Jose Normal for a bit and at some time he worked for California Nursery. Wente was one, California Nursery – there was a young lady who came to Arts and Crafts – not while we were there – but she was the daughter of the California Nursery people – what's their name? There again, I don't remember: it's been so long. Quite a prominent family. Yes.

HF: It's probably in the records.

BM: Yes. It's kind of interesting how some of these important people send their children to Arts and Crafts. Yes. I think right from the first, we were very fortunate to be there in Berkeley because for that

first summer and first year and thereafter there were an awful lot of the professors' children who came which – it lifted the standards – you know it made for interest. They had a good background.

HF: When did that first class graduate. The Echo Makes (?) - the 5 girls?

BM: That first class graduated in 1908. Mr. Defenbacher said that it was impossible. I said "No, Mr. Defenbacher, it was entirely possible." I said most of those people had had 3 years training at the San Francisco Art Institute, the Mark Hopkins Institute of Art, they were ready for a fourth year and would have been graduated there, but the school closed after the fire. That's when we began.

HF: So they started in 1907 and graduated in 1908?

BM: Yes. No that consisted of 2 semesters of 20 weeks each. 40 weeks plus one summer session of 6 weeks. So they had excellent instructors. Even though it was a small faculty they were all top notch people able to adjust to any situation. And we were able to graduate our little class of 5 after one year.

HF: So 1908 was your first Commencement!

BM: That's right. Mr. Defenbacher to the contrary!

HF: (laughs) OK.

BM: And they were well educated people. One of the ladies went right into teaching in the public schools and Echo became – Echo Makes – became interested in art in Nevada in women's clubs, quite active. And Tessie Sweet, who we went to visit sometime, I think she just went ahead with art on her own up in Petaluma. Lucy Pierce did not graduate then, nor did she graduate later, but she was a very fine student.

HF: Yes.

BM: So I think that first group of 5 all did very well.

HF: Yes. We have a painting of Lucy's. A nice figure painting that she gave us some years before she died. We have it in our archives.

BM: Yes. I'm glad. I have an awfully sweet little sketch that she did of me: a little oil sketch: done quickly but very nice, but I don't know where it is. You see, some things disappeared, but it still could come to light. By the way, I want very much to have my book case, which is a very lovely book case that Dad designed, and Mr. Bill Smith made, he was a wonderful cabinet maker – Wessels thought the world of him – said he was a true artist and craftsman – 7 years of training – it's in storage at Beacons out at San Leandro and I told the lady Mrs. Mayfield, our head nurse here, TAPE BREAKS OFF HERE.

BM: You know, speaking about finish, that bookcase is so lovely – any spot you touch bottom or top, or inside or outside, is really beautiful. Now this is really nice from Sears Roebuck – everybody likes it – but you just put your hand behind there and it's all rough. (Laughs)

HF: (Laughs) Yes!

BM: My cousin bought 2 things when I came here to Piedmont Gardens. He bought that for me and it's been wonderful because it's given me exercise: when I couldn't do anything, I could cling to it. I've really kept my muscle tone a lot better than I would have on a couch, I must say.

HF: That's terrific.

BM: It's very nice. And then he bought this. This is pretty good. I don't like it. I wouldn't have selected it, and I have a nice chair out at Beacons, but it's good, but I think the springs need to be fixed. I think that could be done, of course I may ultimately get rid of it, but for now it's pretty good because it's good support.

HF: Well that's important. You have to have things to hang on to.

BM: Yes. That's right. But that's a wonderful training that those older cabinet makers had. We had Smith and we had William Tie (sp?) and we had his son Ted who almost graduated and was a successful person and in one of the magazines, the *Reviews*, there was a notice about his wife's death. She was an Arts and Crafts girl. I tried to get in touch with Ted, the son, then, but I couldn't. I guess he had moved away or died. I don't know. But those cabinet makers were wonderful. They had trained I think 6 years under a master and then become a journeyman and worked under blank blank (couldn't decipher). Beautiful, unbelievable work. Yes, just gorgeous.

HF: They are a very rare breed today.

BM: Yes, when Mr. Clye (?) came to see us one time after we went to East Oakland and he was doing a little work – retired – but doing a little work, and he went to the Union Hall and applied for a job and the man asked him “Can you hang windows?” And he said “Yes.” They were unable to get anyone. So he did that for a while.

HF: You met Mr. Rossi?

BM: Yes. I looked him up in the ‘phone book. But I guess maybe Evie (Evelyn Johnson?) has his address.

HF: He’s up in St. Helena. And he was telling me that recently he saw an exhibit at the Exploratorium in which there were some pieces of architectural decoration that was attributed to your father. They were details of some of the buildings in the Exposition. Do you recall him ever having worked on anything like that?

BM: It’s entirely possible. I think earlier than the Exposition there was F. H. Maar, the architect, in San Francisco

HF: Oh, that’s it.

BM: Dad was active in the Exposition but I just wouldn’t know. It’s possible.

HF: Now he did some work with Julia Morgan?

BM: I know he knew and respected her. He did work with Maybeck and he may have done work with Morgan. He did quite a bit with Maybeck.

HF: I got the impression that he did some furniture for the buildings she designed.

BM: Quite possible. Dad was not a good publicist. And I feel very bad about something. I really do feel bad about it. There’s this wonderful catalogue the Pasadena Art Museum got out, dealing with design in California, a really marvelous book as far as our early years are concerned – and up a bit to – the later years, too, - but still the relatively speaking the early years of the college. It’s a wonderful, wonderful book. Anyhow, there is nothing about him in there as a designer. They say the school is his monument. Which is fine, but I gave to the Oakland Museum during the very last days of my residence in East Oakland, I asked Tasa Brey (??) to come to the house, which she did, and I had in my living room which we were not using, it was just for storage, I had the settle that had been designed for the Barr residence. A very handsome Genusira (?) wood settle, and I asked her if the Museum would like to have it, and she said “By all Means.” So I said “All Right.” So they came and got it and Mrs. Bray had it reupholstered. Now one thing I was sorry about. I had a marvelous big square. More like a William Morris design, that was the original tapestry, upholstery, and I was hoping they could approximate that, but I guess it probably would have taken a lot of time and money to get a substitute, so they used just a very nice piece of beige. But of course, the other was richer, because it had color in it, and the Genusira wood is so beautiful. So that is there at the museum in addition to the pieces you lent them. (Helen says, presumably the pieces lent to the museum by Harry Ford were the Margery Wheelock ensemble still on loan to this day.)

HF: Yes.

BM: So they have that. And at the time I gave them the Barr settle I gave them a whole lot of pages that had once been a book that Dad had unfortunately taken apart, but Ms. Bray and I spent a whole afternoon putting it back together again – between the two of us I think we did pretty well as to secrets (?) and in that book were things that he had designed and made and, also, furniture from nice homes that he had re-done for them.

HF: And that’s at the museum?

BM: Yes. And, when the first edition of *Design in California* 1910 came out, I had it, someone gave it to me very kindly, because I couldn’t buy a copy, but they gave it to me, and I wrote to the person at the Museum that I thought I should write to after consulting the index, or table, the introduction, rather, and told them that the Oakland Museum had this rather large collection of photographs of furniture my father designed, and they never responded, and I don’t know if there is any mention of it in the second

edition, which Louis Malthorp (?) bought the second edition and he said it's better: it's indexed. I have never taken the trouble to go to the library and look and see, but I was rather hoping that they would put a little mention about his furniture design. But, as I say, they never responded, - but that's really quite a rich collection. Because it was an album, the old fashioned type of album, about this high and that long, black paper and all these nice photographs of his work. So if anyone was ever doing a study of Dad, the person ought to go down to the Oakland Museum and ask to see those pictures.

HF: I'll put that information in our files.

BM: Would you do that because that's really important.

HF: Because I'm doing a file on your father and on your mother and all the references.

BM: I think that that is something that is rather rich, in a way. Now, you see anything done before the fire in San Francisco, that's gone. But there's quite a lot in that old album.

HF: I'm going to go down and take a look at it myself. I'll give Hazel a call and see if she can get it out for me.

BM: She's no longer there.

HF: Oh, that's right. She retired a year or two ago, didn't she.

BM: She's a dear. I like her very much. I'm very fond of her.

HF: She's been good to us. Good to the college over the years.

BM: Yes. And the other lady is nice. She came to your dinner at the old school at Shattuck and Addison. She's very nice. I worked with her, too. But more with Hazel. But no, both: worked with both of them. They shared desks, side by side.

HF: I gather your mother was quite a bit older than your father.

BM: Yes. I have the dates of her - I have it here somewhere - it isn't lost - but I have such poor accommodations for keeping things and I have a girl that is a great one to throw things away, and I have to keep them hidden. (Harry laughs) I really do. If she sees something - of course the room isn't tidy, I know that - she is apt to throw anything away. So I kind of hide things sometimes. But I have the dates on her. I know Dad was born in 1872. My mother was born earlier. I have that - I'll get it for you.

HF: Good. Well that's alright. We would have a record somewhere. We can look up the dates. So she must have been teaching for some time by the time she met your father.

BM: Yes. I guess when he was there she was an 8<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at the El Dorado (two words) grade school in Stockton, upper grade school, I think 4<sup>th</sup> through the 8<sup>th</sup> grades. The schools were on that basis then. She was 8<sup>th</sup> grade teacher in the El Dorado school, which was the best grammar school in town, I think. But she was a very good teacher. She was good. But before that she had been supervisor of penmanship and she could do anything; she could do cupids and everything under the sun, swirls, yes, beautiful!

HF: Well, that was a very highly regarded skill in those days, penmanship.

BM: Oh yes. But my cousin Margery, whom you met, she lived with us. She said that my mother was extremely capable. She said every Saturday morning for a time Mr. Coulter would come up from up from San Francisco on the boat, the boat plied back and forth between San Francisco and Stockton, and give Saturday morning classes to the school teachers, and she said the other ladies turned out these doves and she said your mother made this beautiful copy which Mr. Frankel, was that his name?, a really very, very nice copy I'm sure of Mr. Coulter's painting of the Stockton slough. Very nice. Historic! It was a bit down from Stockton looking towards Stockton and you could see the spires of the different, the court house and St. James Episcopal church and the various old buildings - the old court house was lovely - I'm so sorry they tore it down. That was a replica of Sacramento, and they could have made that into some kind of museum or something. A nice old building.

HF: Well, thank goodness they don't do quite as much of that any more. I belong to the Historical Preservation Society. I don't have much impact, but I do have an interest in it, and I like to keep up on what's going on in the way of preservation of these fine, old buildings.

BM: Yes, indeed. It's very important. They had a marvelous picture on Channel 9 called, it's a series called *The Nature of Things*. They tackle everything under the sun. This last one was just so gorgeous, I could see it a hundred times. I saw it twice. It dealt with what they call the New Headland in Toronto. They have made some change in the harbor whereby this has become a beautiful, natural development for ducks and geese, and Terns, and all kinds of wild flowers. Absolutely beautiful. Nature has created this. Now the people of Toronto are trying to decide what to do with this. They have all kinds of ideas, but I think it would be just marvelous if they could just leave it the way it is because it is so beautiful. And in the background - of course, the feature was this beautiful natural development there - awfully ugly buildings in Toronto. Everything the same. Horrible! Just boxes!

HF: Very cold looking.

BM: Yes. But that is unbelievably beautiful and of course someone with great sensitivity took those pictures: they were so lovely. But that's a program worth watching because you never know what you will encounter.

HF: I've seen it a few times.

BM: Yes. I haven't seen it very often but I'm certainly going to watch for it. The other day they dealt with artificial kidneys. You never know what they are going to talk about.

HF: Well, that's what makes it interesting.

BM: OK, so far. We are digressing.

HF: Well, let's see, I think I've just about ...

BM: Well, I'll get you that information about the dates about my mother. I know I have that.

HF: Well, don't worry too much about it because they are easy enough to look up.

BM: Well, whether you have it or not, I don't know. Margery may have supplied that.

HF: Well, we have some historical data, you know; there was the work that Penny Daimers did, that we have in the library and I'm sure it might be in there.

BM: And, then, speaking of the Treadwell, that Rosemary Regan Jensen did a nice study of the old building.

HF: Yes, that's good, too. Maybe we could spend about the last few minutes, I don't think we should ever speak more than an hour ...

BM: Yes. Last week I was very tired.

HF: But an hour is usually enough time anyway. Do you have any recollection of what went on at the school at the time of the Pan Pacific Exposition? That was a time of great excitement in the Bay Area.

BM: Well, I was still in Stockton, but, of course, I came down to the Exposition, and Dad was all wound-up in it and Mr. Farr had a very good position there, getting conventions to there and exhibitors. He had done all that and kept things running. It was a fine time for the school I'm sure, yes.

HF: I notice that there was one special year book that was published that was directed almost exclusively to the Fair and the effect that it had on the school. Well, San Francisco had recovered from the earthquake and it was still, WWII hadn't broken out yet, so it must have been a high time just before the great fall, ...

BM: I think so, too. And it was so colorful. And it was so beautiful. And I think it was so wonderful that Mr. Johnson gave those millions of dollars to restore the Palace of Fine Arts. I think it was the Lyons Club had an international convention and that was the only place in the city where everybody could sit down at the same time for breakfast: that was the only area they could all sit down together, which was kinda nice. No other area could accommodate them. It's a lovely old building.

HF: Have you ever seen that movie "The Innocent Fair?"

BM: I don't think so.

HF: Well, it was done by one of our graduates, his name escapes me for the moment, - and it will come back to me in a moment. He has a film company in Washington, D.C. , but he was working for KPIX at the

time, and he got together with Mr. Johnson and they put together all of these old films. And it is now in the California Historical Society, has it.

BM: I used to belong to that. I gave them a Bufano statuette of a Chinaman and I think they have it in one of the director's offices, or something.

HF: I've seen it. I've seen that.

BM: They've created a lovely - when I had it it did not have a good base, but they got a nice base on it so I'm glad I gave it to them.

HF: They are a good organization. Judge Quail, I don't know if you know him or not, but he is a member. Judge Quail, used to be on our board; he retired just a year or so ago.

BM: Did you know that my mother saved Mr. Bufano's young son from extinction? Well, I'll tell you about it. Mr. Bufano taught for us, I think one semester. We had a little studio, that was when we were in the Allston Way building but in the area behind and to the east of the old school building there were these little shops: there was a metal shop and a clay shop and a woodworking shop - and Benny came on a Sunday morning and he had been entrusted with the new baby: girl or boy, I'm not quite sure; boy, I think. And there had been a new batch of baby rabbits and, of course, it seems that the baby rabbits - the planes are very wonderful on their faces, and he was enchanted with these baby rabbits: not soft, but definite lines, angular, and he was busying himself, all aglow, with these baby rabbits, so the little child crawled away. And my mother was working in her tiny office, which was on the east side of the old Allston Way school building and she just happened, Sunday morning, as usual, she was putting in some time, and she just happened to glance out the window and she saw this little creature gradually crawling toward Allston Way. And, while there weren't so many cars as we have now, there still were cars so of course she went out to rescue the young creature; took him back to Benny and told him to take care of him. But that's how his life was made secure! Mrs. Meyer!

HF: It must have been a boy because I've met his son. I'll have to tell him that story some time. He looks a lot like his father, by the way.

BM: Is that so.

HF: We did a memorial for him - well, not exactly a memorial - a memorial exhibit was held at the Kaiser Center during our 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and so we had a reception there and gave a scholarship in his name at that time. And his son is head of a foundation now that works with his pieces, getting them installed, and they are trying to get a museum started.

BM: That would be fine. There were those beautiful murals that were made for cafeteria - Moore's cafeteria I think they might have been in Modesto for a time and then - Oh, so many things he designed: that lovely bear with the twin cubs at the museum, all that. And we had. Mr. Bragdon had worked with Benny firing the Chinaman that's at the Historical Society. He was a very inspirational teacher. Not orthodox, but very, very good.

HF: OK, well I think that's about enough for ...

BREAK IN THE TAPE, WHICH THEN CONTINUES.

Hugo Steccati took some lovely pictures of Dad at the Richmond showing of those Japanese prints and things. And they are very nice. And I guess they are probably out at Beacon's. But it's a nice set: they're lovely.

HF: I gather from things I've heard that Hugo and perhaps Dean have quite a collection of photographs of the college at various times.

BM: I imagine so. Yes, I think so.

HF: He's somebody I ought to talk to some time about just what it is that he has so it could be a matter of record.

BM: This, of course, is just for you to know, Alba and to an extent, Hugo, are awfully unhappy because it seems they don't get on the preferred list of graduates to be invited to things. I don't know why. Something just got off the track.

HF: I'll check into that.

BM: Yes, would you. Evelyn would want to know, I'm sure. I really have meant to talk to her. I don't think they wanted to be invited to anything private or special but evidently they are not, or have not in the past, and it has happened more than once, gotten invitations that the run of alumni have gotten. So it is just one of those queer things that happens.

HF: Yes. It's probably something in the mailing system that's broken down and hasn't been corrected.

BM: But Alva loves to go to things. Hugo's so busy, I don't know about him, but he'd take her! He'd take her.

HF: I think he gets about as much of that as he wants.

BM: He'd take her. No. He loves the Arts and Crafts people. He came to Evelyn's gathering.

HF: Well, they usually show up at a lot of the functions.

BM: Yes, well it seems that there was one function – Alva likes to 'doll-up' – she's very exotic and all – it was some event that she didn't get an invitation to and she said it wasn't the first time! But this was about a year ago she told me. Maybe things have been righted. I don't know. Evelyn can check it or someone can.

HF: Well, the last time we were talking about the college when it was on Allston Way and we were talking about Benny Bufano and his brief experience there. I heard an – well you told me an interesting story him - about saving the baby – and then I think I told you the story about someone, Glen Wessels I think told to me, that someone pulled a prank on Benny by stuffing a dead cat in the kiln, and getting him very upset.

BM: I would imagine it would.

HF: Well, those early years of the college when it was partly on Allston Way and partly in Oakland must have been a trying time because there was a period of time when you were located in both campuses.

BM: Well, the property was bought in 1923 and it seems to me we began developing it in 1924 or thereabout and made the final move in January '26. I think I referred you to the year books and the fact that places and dates are right towards the back, possibly the last issue in the book. That's an awfully good reference book. And, at some time, it would be nice if some of it could be zeroxed because it would be helpful to me, too, because I remember things in a general way. Evelyn once spoke about that but we never pursued it.

HF: OK.

BM: I ought to talk to her sometime about what she wants, what she needs, what we might both want and need, because it seems to me that everybody that is working on this thing, and she always would be to a degree, I think we ought to, well, know what the other is doing in a general way.

HF: I had a good visit with Louis Malthrop on the 'phone.

BM: Good.

HF: In response to your request to give him the information he needed and I think that's all taken care of now. And I also made a date to go down and meet with him. I thought perhaps one of the things I could do is find out exactly what it is that he's doing and then coordinate it with what I'm doing and what Evelyn's doing.

BM: Yes. I know that her work deals with the present. But she's been with the school a long time, with the college, a long time. This, (rustle of papers) by the way, is gotten out by the Educational TV station in Fresno where Kathy his daughter works and I think, again, Evelyn, in particular, might like to know about it, there's her position and she, I'm sure if there ever came a time she would give us some publicity she would. Just take that with you, yes. You've met her at the Jennings. She's very –

HF: It's called Tune in 18 it's KM – program guide.

NM: It's like KQED.

HF: It's a public television. Yes. I'm sure that there are some things ...

BM: It just might be, you know. She is very interested in the college.

HF: And she's the editor of this document (?)

BM: Yes. It's been nice for Louis. She and her husband were working in a little town called Fowler, and she was working in a newspaper doing very well, but she had the chance to work for the TV in Fresno and that brings her into town and they can see one another, which is very nice.

HF: What would you say were the most glorious days of the college?

BM: I think one very definite high spot was the 1915 Exposition. We had a good show there.

HF: I recall seeing the Year Book from that period – the entire Year Book was devoted to the Exposition. I guess that was a high spot for everyone because that was 9 years after the fire, San Francisco was getting back on its feet again, Oakland was growing and the war had not started yet, so it must have been a very high time in everybody's life.

BM: Now, we can come back to that again, but one other high spot I would say was around 1936. We had some, that was I believe when we became a college, changed the name. We had good attendance, good staff, good spirit and all, and we got out some very nice publicity that year. A man who had been the director of public relations at Williamsburg was at Mills doing a big job for Mills and he was here in California and to us the large sum of \$5,000.00 he did a lot of very nice work. Those pictures, those handsome pictures were taken under his direction. You know, you've seen some of them, that we reproduced.

HF: Yes, you've showed me.

TAPES ENDS

Potential Follow-up from Harry Ford's  
Interview with Babs Meyer, June/July 1984

Does the CCA library have Harry Ford's archives? If not, CCA could inquire with Harry's son who lives in Reno, Nevada.

Eve Staccati and Arlene Streich spent a fair amount of time organizing the historical archives and may be able to advise whether Harry Ford's archives are included.

What happened to Babs Meyer's memorabilia? She makes frequent reference to items in storage at Beacon's in San Leandro.

The first year founding class (1908 – Page 14 refers to the first commencement in this year) were mostly from SFAI? Does the college's pending unification in San Francisco in 2020/21 academic year symbolize a closing of the circle from Frederick Meyer's departure from San Francisco?

Harry Ford refers to artwork (e.g. by former student Lucy Pierce) in the college's collection. Where is this? Is there still artwork in the closet in the Textiles facility and in storage in downtown Oakland?

Page 6: 1936 book by Taylor and Taylor and catalog. Perham Nahl's Japanese garden In Memory.

Page 6: Harry Ford acquiring information on Perham Nahl. Ford speaks of (Oakland?) museum exhibition retrospective of Xavier Martinez, in approximately 1979, with museum catalog by George Newberg (sp?).

Page 7: Ford wants to talk to Michaela Martinez.

Page 7: Babs says Mrs. Elsie Martinez gave a Nahl history report to the Bancroft Library which includes information on Martinez.

Page 10: Babs refers to interesting school dates in a little book.

Page 10: Ford refers to transporting goods on the trolley between the Berkeley and Broadway campuses.

Page 11: Bricks from the Carnegie Foundation.

Page 12: Babs mentions Hugo Steccati taking pictures of Frederick Meyer's 83<sup>rd</sup> (last) birthday party. Will be important to talk to Eve Steccati about what is included in Hugo's archives.

Page 13: Frederick Meyer worked with the architect Maybeck on the UC Berkeley Faculty Club furniture.

Page 14: 1908 = first Commencement.

Page 14: Ford refers to painting by Lucy Pierce in the CCA archives and a sketch of Babs Meyer by Pierce.

Page 15: Babs refers to the "Reviews" as a source of information on the college's history.

Page 15: Ford says he has heard that the Exploratorium has some of Frederick Meyer's work and that Mr. Meyer had done work for Julia Morgan's buildings.

Page 15: Babs describes giving the Frederick Meyer "Barr" (family) settle to the Oakland museum.

Pages 15/16: Babs refers to a book on Meyer's furniture that she gave to the Oakland museum.

Page 16: Ford says he is doing a file on Babs' mother and father. Does CCA have this?

Page 17: Babs says that Rosemary did a study of Treadwell.

Page 17: Mention of Frederick Meyer's involvement in the Pan Pacific Exposition and Year Book devoted to that topic.

Page 17/18: Babs and Ford make reference to an alumnus (no name) who made a collection of old films with a Mr. Johnson (who funded restoration of the Palace of Fine Arts) which are in the collection of the California Historical Society.

Page 18: Babs refers to Hugo Steccati's nice photographs of Frederick Meyer at a showing of the Japanese prints at the Richmond (presuming Art Center).

Pages 18/19: reference to Hugo Steccati's and possibly his son, Dean's, collection of photographs of the college at various times.

Page 19: Babs refers to coping with two campuses (during the move from Berkeley between 1923-6).

Page 19: Babs refers to a collective effort (including Evelyn Johnson) to document the college's history at the time of this interview. This possibly involved Louis Malthrop (sp?).

Page 20: Babs refers to a public relations man who was paid \$5K and took excellent photographs of the college in 1936 when the school changed its name and became a college.

CCABabsMeyerFollow-up2019