

## A TEI Project

# Interview of Richard Hoffman

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## 1. Transcript

### 1.1. TAPE NUMBER: I, Side One (March 30, 1982)

DOCTER

Okay. Maybe you could tell us where you were born.

HOFFMAN

I was born on July 25, 1912, in East Los Angeles, a section which was then called Belvedere.

DOCTER

All right then, very good. Do you know much about your parents in terms of occupation or their background?

HOFFMAN

My father was a machinist and millwright and was one of the very early workers in fruit canning in California. He started in the fruit-canning business when they were soldering the lids on the cans by hand. During his many years working in the fruit-canning business, he developed quite a few machines for the canning of fruit—notably a grader, a device for grading the fruit in various sizes, and some very ingenious devices for transporting the empty cans from the freight cars to the workers, who were busy filling the cans with the fruit.

DOCTER

I see—kind of an industrial engineering application.

HOFFMAN

Yes, he was, as I said, a millwright and a machinist, and when I was a boy one of the many pleasures I had was turning the forge for him to heat up the iron, which he then made into various workable forms.

DOCTER

You mentioned the area called Belvedere. Exactly what kind of cross streets are we talking about here?

HOFFMAN

We're talking about the Los Angeles County area immediately adjacent to the city of Los Angeles, which then, as now, stopped at Indiana Street. And Belvedere was the unincorporated area immediately east of Indiana. This was long before Belvedere Gardens was developed by the Janss Investment Company—which is now the great section called East Los Angeles. When I was a boy, the Los Angeles Creamery Company had the vast undeveloped area immediately east of Eastern Avenue, which was the boundary line for the Calvary Cemetery.

DOCTER

Can you remember a very early address where you lived?

HOFFMAN

I lived at 225 South Herbert Street.

DOCTER

Herbert Street. I'm going to write down these proper names on a separate sheet so that when these are typed it's much easier for them to figure it out, as many proper names, like Janss and Herbert, as I can remember to put down.

HOFFMAN

Janss is the great investment company that made their money in Belvedere, Belvedere Gardens, and then went out to Westwood and developed Westwood and gave the large acreage to UCLA.

DOCTER

Yes, in between times they may have developed Burbank also, or maybe that was earlier. I know they were responsible for the subdivision of Burbank. All right, now, in growing up did you attend public schools or—?

HOFFMAN

Of course. Let me tell you about my mother first. My mother's maiden name is Martha Bohmke. She came to the United States from Germany when she was sixteen years old, not knowing the language and just coming to stay with an older sister in Chicago.

DOCTER

This makes you the first generation of native-born Americans in that family, that side of the family.

HOFFMAN

That particular family. My father [Charles J. Hoffman] was an old Pennsylvanian who was brought to California by his uncle when he was still a boy. We don't know exactly how old he was, but we assume that he was under ten years of age, and his uncle and his father lived in Stockton. His father was a doctor.

DOCTER

Then your mother, Martha Bohmke, if that's pronounced anywhere near right—I'm interested to know if you could give us just a personal comment or two. Was she primarily a homemaker?

HOFFMAN

Entirely, yes.

DOCTER

And what brothers or sisters did you have?

HOFFMAN

I have three brothers, two older and one younger.

DOCTER

What are their names?

HOFFMAN

The oldest is Robert [Hoffman] , the second oldest is Theodore [Hoffman] — named after Theodore Roosevelt, who was president when he was born- -then I come along, and my younger brother, Carl [Hoffman]. My oldest brother, Robert, died of the flu when he was nine years old.

DOCTER

Can you tell us what schools you attended?

HOFFMAN

I attended Belvedere Elementary School on the corner of First and Rowan avenues from the first through the eighth grade. Charles J. Fox was the principal of Belvedere Elementary. Upon graduation from Belvedere Elementary in the eighth grade, I went over to the new Belvedere Junior High School, which had just opened, and Fox was also appointed principal of Belvedere Junior High School. I attended Belvedere Junior High School for only one year, the ninth grade. During that time, I was president of the student body and very much interested in the junior high school printshop. Chester L. Bond was my printing teacher, and it was due to his interest that I became so firmly attached to printing. He was an interesting man, a Seventh-Day Adventist who had worked up at the great Adventist publishing plant [Pacific Press Publishing Association] in Mountain View, up near Palo Alto, and was an excellent printer.

DOCTER

While you were growing up, and before having your first printing experience, did you have any particular consciousness of striving toward a particular goal or professional objective?

HOFFMAN

No. I knew I had no vocational choice, but my mother, coming as she did from a society that made great emphasis upon learning a trade, was very much interested when I found printing, and encouraged me very much to follow it.

DOCTER

Now, this would have been in the ninth grade.

HOFFMAN

In the ninth grade, yeah.

DOCTER

We'll come back—

HOFFMAN

In 1925.

DOCTER

All right, we'll come back to that, but let's continue with the biographical format if we can here, just a little.

HOFFMAN

After I graduated from Belvedere Junior High School, I went out to East Los Angeles, to Garfield High School which had just opened up. So it was an interesting experience to be in the first group of students to a new school. I did three years at Garfield High School, graduating in the summer of 1928. At Garfield High School, I elected what we called the vocational course in printing. There, I worked under Harry G. Rogers.

DOCTER

Now, what kind of a student were you in high school?

HOFFMAN

I'm a good strong A and B student in everything.

DOCTER

Did you have any college aspirations at that time?

HOFFMAN

Not particularly, although interestingly enough, I had been counseled into the algebra, geometry, chemistry line, so that I was prepared for college even though I had spent most of my time printing.

DOCTER

Did any of your brothers particularly push or not push for a college education?

HOFFMAN

No. My older brother, Ted, was a graduate of Lincoln High School, which he attended before they had opened Garfield. Ted was a mechanical draftsman at Lincoln and since followed that and ended his career as an engineer with the Shell Oil Company.

DOCTER

Well now, let's talk in terms of what happened to you as you were going through high school, taking some additional printing but a lot of academic work too. And I take it that you had in mind becoming a printer.

HOFFMAN

I intended to get a job printing, which, upon graduation from high school, I did. But all during the time that I was in high school I worked Saturdays for George Hillenbrand, a commercial printer in Monterey Park, so that I had three years of experience on the weekends working for Mr. Hillenbrand. He was an interesting man. He published the *San Gabriel Valley Monthly* and was active in trying to form a corporation to put a—what do you call it, the things they got down at Palm Springs—an aerial tramway up Mount San Antonio, Old Baldy. He had done all of the research and had even, I think, gotten permits from the federal government to do that.

DOCTER

I see, but it was never built?

HOFFMAN

Nothing ever came of it.

DOCTER

Now, when did your thoughts of devoting your career, your vocational career, to printing become crystallized? Was it something that emerged—?

HOFFMAN

I think during my high school experience, since I was already working on the weekends. I think it had just become assumed that I would as quickly as possible get a job.

DOCTER

After graduating from high school, what in fact did you do?

HOFFMAN

I went and lived with my father, who was operating a fruit cannery in Visalia, California. And I spent a year with my dad, and while I was there I attended Visalia Junior College, which was, interestingly enough, a well-established junior college long before Los Angeles had ever contemplated one.

DOCTER

I think Visalia is kind of unusual. Isn't it true that Visalia is one of two communities—think that Chino was the other—in which there was kind of an agricultural experiment, state agricultural experiment on horticulture, and they planted all kinds of trees?

HOFFMAN

It was a very interesting old-line town in the San Joaquin Valley. Originally you went from Bakersfield to Visalia to Stockton, or Fresno and then Stockton, but the city fathers in Visalia were reluctant to give the Southern Pacific [Railroad Company] any right-of-way rights. So SP bypassed them and went down through Tulare and thus left Visalia, about fifteen or twenty miles east of Tulare, out in the cold.

DOCTER

Yes. Now, you spent about a year with your dad, then, in Visalia. Were you printing at all that year?

HOFFMAN

I printed a little bit in the high school printshop but I didn't do any commercial printing.

DOCTER

And then you returned to Southern California?

HOFFMAN

I came back to Los Angeles. [I've] got to see what happened then. [pause] Oh, that was the summer session that I went to Frank Wiggins Trade School. I went to Frank Wiggins in the summer and there I met John M. \ Murray, who was probably as influential in my printing career as any one single man. John Murray was a typographic craftsman and had the very highest standards.

DOCTER

Where had he been trained?

HOFFMAN

He was originally from Toronto and had worked in many of the big shops. [He] was one of the original instructors. He first taught at Belmont High School and then went to the Grand Avenue Trade School, which when they built the new structure was renamed Frank Wiggins. 8

DOCTER

The original structure is not there, is it?

HOFFMAN

Grand Avenue Trade School, no.

DOCTER

And we're now talking about what became Trade Tech [Los Angeles Trade-Technical College] , which is part of the old Polytechnic High School.

HOFFMAN

Yeah.

DOCTER

You often have referred, in the past, to Murray as the man having the greatest influence on you. What made him so special?

HOFFMAN

I think, first of all, his interest in fine printing and his encouragement that he gave me when I tried to do typography in a better- than-average way.

DOCTER

He was a person of some taste and standards?

HOFFMAN

Very much so. I have in my files quite a collection of work that John Murray did.

DOCTER

And you were with him, then, just for the summer?

HOFFMAN

Just one summer.

DOCTER

One summer!

HOFFMAN

During that time the Sterling Press, a good-sized commercial shop in Los Angeles, called the trade school for an apprentice, and Mr. Murray sent me over. And it was through his good offices that I got the job as an apprentice in a very fine, high-grade printing office.

DOCTER

And where was it and what made it different?

HOFFMAN

Sterling Press was on Eleventh and Santee streets.

DOCTER

This is the heart of the old printing—

HOFFMAN

That's right. The president was Robert A. Heffner, who was a buddy-buddy with most of the big shots in Los Angeles, the mayor, the city councilmen. He was a member of the—I've forgotten the name of the club, but the —

DOCTER

Jonathan Club?

HOFFMAN

Jonathan Club, yes. Every morning Mr. Heffner would come in freshly shaved and shorn by the barber at the Jonathan Club. F. [Fred] A. Young, who had been a partner in Young and McCallister [Southwest Lithograph Company], was vice president of the Sterling Press. Fred A. Baumstark was the superintendent, and he was probably the best-known printing superintendent in Los Angeles in his capacity for getting work through the plant and having it of uniformly high standards.

DOCTER

Was this a large printing plant with big presses?

HOFFMAN

Yes. And it was a combination printing and lithographic shop, so that early on I learned about lithography. The composing room was relatively small because Typographic Service [Company, known as Typo] had been established just a few years before and they had taken the Linotype machines from a dozen or so plants that had 10 operated single machines [and] put them all together into one typesetting service. And so, it being only a block and a half away, we used Typo for most of our composition. Many a time during my period at Sterling I had to go over to Typo and pick up corrections and changes.

DOCTER

This would have been about 1930?

HOFFMAN

Yeah. No, earlier, '29, because the stock market crash occurred while I was there.

DOCTER

What was the social environment, the external appearance of that district like at that time? It certainly has become somewhat run-down over the years.

HOFFMAN

It was the printing center of Los Angeles. There were two big buildings, the Bendix Building and the Printing Center Building, that had ten or twelve stories. All the printers, photoengravers, bookbinders—Fraze Electrotypes was there, for one. I remember going to Electro quite a few times. I don't suppose there's an electrotypist still in business now in Los Angeles. At that time, when we used a lot of type in letterpress printing, if the runs were considerable we would lock the forms up [and] send them to the electrotypists, thus preserving our good foundry type.

DOCTER

And they then would essentially make a matrix and cast an electrotype?

HOFFMAN

The matrix was made of beeswax, and the plating on the beeswax surface was done by process of electrolysis, where the copper was deposited on the face of the beeswax.

DOCTER

And you would print from that?

HOFFMAN

That we would print from, yes. With the process of electrotyping we could make electros of halftones with a 133-line screen and get a perfect reproduction.

DOCTER

Is that right?

HOFFMAN

Yeah. Electrotyping was very, very widely used throughout the industry at that particular time.

DOCTER

For long runs?

HOFFMAN

Yeah, or even for short runs where you didn't want to use your good foundry type. For instance. Typo would let us use their very fancy and imported foundry type up to the proof stage, after which we had to electrotype the form because Typo would not let us use their good foundry type on the press.

DOCTER

Now, when you refer to Typo, what do you mean?

HOFFMAN

Typographic Service Company, where we got most of our typesetting done.

DOCTER

Did that company merge into some other company? I've never heard of it.

HOFFMAN

Oh, no. It was the big typesetting company and still exists.

DOCTER

It does?

HOFFMAN

Yeah. 12

DOCTER

Under the same name?

HOFFMAN

I think so.

DOCTER

I see. Okay. This brings us up to roughly the time of the stock market crash and you're now an apprentice in a large, well-established printing house in downtown Los Angeles. What happened next?

HOFFMAN

Well, along came the crash, and everybody started having hard times with employment, and notably was the nephew of Mr. Young, who was about my age. They decided that the nephew needed my job more than I did, so I got notice. Mr. Baumstark let me have every afternoon off for two or three weeks, during which time I called on every printing office of any consequence in downtown Los Angeles. And I couldn't get a job. So I heard that just the year before, 1928, they had opened up Los Angeles Junior College [now Los Angeles City College] , so I went out to Los Angeles Junior College and indicated that, if I were a student, would it be possible for me to get employment in their printshop, and they agreed to hire me because of my technical background. In February 1930 I started at Los Angeles Junior College.

DOCTER

Now, they agreed to take you on as an employee to do printing, or to do teaching?

HOFFMAN

To do printing.

DOCTER

This was on the Vermont Avenue campus.

HOFFMAN

That's right.

DOCTER

And the president was William Henry Snyder.

HOFFMAN

That's right.

DOCTER

Did you interview with him?

HOFFMAN

No, I talked to Marshall Green.

DOCTER

Marshall Green.

HOFFMAN

Yeah. And he was in charge of the printshop. Mr. Green hired me, and the understanding was, of course, that he was hiring me as a student in order to help me get through college, which I did. I took a full course and, working afternoons and evenings and Saturdays, I got in about thirty hours a week at the junior college printing shop.

DOCTER

How was that shop equipped?

HOFFMAN

When I started it was very modestly equipped, but during the time that I was there we got an additional Linotype, we got a Goss newspaper press, a flatbed web-perfecting newspaper press, and a good deal of other machinery. The web is the roll of paper passing through the press.

DOCTER

And it's called a web-perfecting?

HOFFMAN

It means it prints on both sides of the sheet. And we printed from type resting on a flatbed.

DOCTER

Right. So this was primarily to support the instruction of students who were going to receive vocational training.

HOFFMAN

Actually, no, it was not a vocational printing school at all, because that would conflict with Frank Wiggins. It was a journalism program that aimed to supply the needs of the community newspapers in Southern California. And as such we tried to build a typical community newspaper printing office, where our

students not only got the experience of writing for a newspaper, but also had the experience of designing it [and] putting the pages together, the page makeup and this kind of thing. And so the print shop was an adjunct to the journalism department, and as such hired the Linotyping and typesetting and the page makeup and the press work, all done by either professional printers or by students.

DOCTER

Now, what would be the next major landmark along your biographical journey?

HOFFMAN

Well, after a couple of years, I had taken all of the courses at the junior college that I could, and so they offered me a full-time job as assistant manager of the college press. Mr. Green held the title of manager. So I graduated from the junior college and stayed on as a full-time professional printer. During this time, the president of the typographical union got elected to the school board [Los Angeles Unified School District Board of Education], and as a member of the school board, it was discreetly indicated to those of us working in the shop that it would be a good idea if we joined the typographical union. So, in about 1936 or so, I joined the International Typographical Union [Local] 174. And at that particular time it was decided that I had qualified as a journeyman printer.

DOCTER

So they issued you a card, as they say.

HOFFMAN

That's right.

DOCTER

Based on your years of experience and training. At what stage of the game did you meet Mrs. [Ruth Lofthouse] Hoffman?

HOFFMAN

This goes clear back to our Belvedere experience. During my growing up period in Belvedere, I was a member and a regular attendant of the Trinity

Baptist Church on the corner of First and Hicks streets. And during the time that I attended Sunday school there, Ruth came to California with her parents from Toronto, Canada. So we met when we were in what we called the "junior department." And from there on in, when she was nine years old, I got hold of her and I've never let her go.

DOCTER

You met when she was nine?

HOFFMAN

Yeah. Only took me ten years to convince her that she ought to get married.

DOCTER

You were married, then, soon after high school.

HOFFMAN

We got married in 1934 when I was a full-time employee at the junior college. Ruth graduated from Garfield High School and went out to UCLA for one year. But because the transportation from East L.A. to UCLA took her two hours each way, she realized that that was silly, and so she attended L.A. Junior College the same time that I did, so that we ran around together in college. And as soon as she graduated from L.A. Junior College, we got married. That was on March 24, 1934.

DOCTER

And where were you married?

HOFFMAN

At Trinity Baptist Church, of course.

DOCTER

Right. Okay. We're now up to about 1936, and you are married and you have a full-time job as the assistant manager of the printshop at what became Los Angeles City College. When did they change the name from the junior college to the city college? Do you remember?

HOFFMAN

That was quite a political upheaval, and I don't remember. But it was probably in 1938 or thereabouts.

DOCTER

Did you have much to do with the founder. Dr. Snyder?

HOFFMAN

I knew him. In my last year as a student at the junior college, I was editor of the college yearbook, the *Junior Campus*, and as editor of the yearbook, I got to know all the officers of the administration quite well. Let me say something else. All during the time that Ruth and I were running around together at Trinity Baptist Church, we got active in the Baptist Young People's work, called the BYPU, Baptist Young People's Union. And I was editor of the Southern California publication called the *Signpost* for about three years, after which time I was elected as president of the Southern California Baptist Young People's Union. And then we went to the national convention in 1934, I guess it was, with Wilbur and Louise Stuart, and later on I was elected vice president of the Baptist Young People's Union of America.

DOCTER

National?

HOFFMAN

National, yeah.

DOCTER

What happened after 1936? Of course, you started to have some children along the line here somewhere.

HOFFMAN

In 1936 we went east to the Lakeside convention, which was an interdenominational meeting of young people from all over the country. We stopped in at Detroit and bought a new Ford, our first automobile, and went all over. From Lakeside, Ohio, we went up to Detroit, got the Ford, went to Toronto, got Ruth's grandparents, drove down to New York City, and had quite a lot of fun. Coming back from Toronto, where we dropped Ruth's grandparents off, when we got about as far as Salt Lake City, Ruthie started

developing some interesting symptoms, and we discovered that she was pregnant. And our first child, Judy [Judith Ann Hoffman], was born on February 24, 1937.

DOCTER

Now, it seems trivial, but do you remember what that car cost?

HOFFMAN

Seven hundred and fifty dollars, one third of my yearly income.

DOCTER

Was it?

HOFFMAN

Yeah. I was making \$27.50 a week when we got married, and we never had had so much money. We got married in March. The junior college let out in the end of June. We went up to Santa Barbara, and Ruth and I went to Santa Barbara State College [now University of California, Santa Barbara] for the summer session of 1936.

DOCTER

That was on the so-called—

HOFFMAN

Riviera campus.

DOCTER

Riviera campus, where the photographic school [Brooks Institute of Photography] is now.

HOFFMAN

During the time that I was there, I stopped in at the *Santa Barbara News Press*, and they offered me a job. So I worked every afternoon for six weeks in Santa Barbara. We paid fifteen dollars a month rent, and for five dollars we could get all the groceries we needed for an entire week. So, as we often say, we've never been as financially free as we were when we were first married. We had no dependents, very little expenses, never remotely was eligible to pay an

income tax. I rode the streetcar to and from work—we didn't have an automobile. So we had everything our own way.

DOCTER

Where were you living at the time?

HOFFMAN

We were living in Belvedere. I lived at 225 South Herbert Street. Ruth lived up on the hill at 904 North Herbert Street. And when we got married, we found a half of a duplex at 212 North Herbert Street.

DOCTER

All on Herbert Street.

HOFFMAN

All on Herbert Street.

DOCTER

All right, this takes us up to the time you got your automobile. Incidentally, did it perform well on its tour to Canada?

HOFFMAN

Beautifully. It was a 1936 Ford, and I kept it for fifteen years.

DOCTER

You did!

HOFFMAN

Yeah.

DOCTER

Until after World War II, well after. Up until about '51. That's remarkable. Now, would you like to take us on forward then?

HOFFMAN

During my time at L.A. City College, Harry Koblik of the art department—Koblik and I became good friends, and he encouraged me in my printing. And I in

turn helped him in his, in the printing of the announcements for the art department. Koblik scheduled a series of lectures on architecture, and I went to them and there came across a young man who was working in Richard Neutra's architectural office, a man by the name of Gregory Ain. I was very much impressed with his approach to architecture, and so soon thereafter I called on him in his office and commissioned him to design a house for us. In order to do so, I had to have a lot. Several of my friends in the college faculty. Dr. Edmund Cykler and Dr. Donald Alden, were living in the San Fernando Valley. And so on a Sunday afternoon Ruth and I would drive out to the Valley and visit the Cyklers or the Aldens, and in so doing we discovered a very good-sized lot just down the street from the Cyklers. So we bought the lot, and it was this piece of property that I commissioned Ain to design a house for. Interestingly enough, we were in a very experimental period in Ain's development. And the first house he designed for us was on his new modular construction system, whereby he was building 4' x 8' panels in a factory, which could then be assembled on the job. He had done one experimental building in Beverly Hills that way, and it looked good to me, so I told him to go ahead. Well, when the plans came out, it was far too expensive. He had designed much more house than we could build, [than] we could afford. So he did several preliminary plans, and finally we got one that we liked very much and we applied for an FHA [Federal Housing Administration] loan. The FHA people turned the loan down because they felt that in San Fernando you should build Monterey-style houses and not modern houses. This made Ain furious because just a month before the national FHA office had written him a letter asking him for plans and photographs of houses that he had completed, which they were putting in a national show. So the national people liked his work, but the local fatheads couldn't take it. So, finally, after meeting with the guy who had turned it down, he said, "Well, if you had had a slanting roof, it would have been acceptable." So, Ain did another plan with a roof that slants to the street and the back portion being flat—which is the one we built.

DOCTER

And that's the house we're in tonight?

HOFFMAN

Yeah.

DOCTER

And the address of this house is what?

HOFFMAN

It's 5732 Buffalo Avenue.

DOCTER

You mentioned the names of two people who used to live out here. One was Cykler.

HOFFMAN

Edmund Cykler.

DOCTER

Edmund Cykler. And who was the other man?

HOFFMAN

Cyklar was chairman of the music department. And the other man was Dr. Donald Alden. He was in the English department. And just down the street from us is Vernon King, also in the English department. So, when I moved here, that made four of us within a two-block radius.

DOCTER

Would you mind telling us what the lot cost and what the house cost?

HOFFMAN

The lot cost \$750.

DOCTER

Was it a time-payment thing or did you have to buy outright?

HOFFMAN

I bought it outright. I borrowed a little bit of money from one of my relatives so I could pay cash for the lot, and the lot is 60 feet by 270 feet. It faces two streets. The back street, at that time, was a dirt road, undeveloped. It has later

been developed, and so my two pieces of property are really two lots, back to back. I can get \$24,000 for the back half of my property.

DOCTER

Perhaps much more, nowadays.

HOFFMAN

The house cost about \$6,000.

## **1.2. TAPE NUMBER: I, Side Two ( March 30, 1982)**

DOCTER

We had just commented that [your] house had cost about \$6,000 to build. What year was that, Richard?

HOFFMAN

That was in 1939, 1940.

DOCTER

And would you like to continue with this biographical thing? What was happening in the Hoffman family then?

HOFFMAN

Well, we had had a second daughter, Susan [Hoffman Harris-Sharpies] , who was born while we were still living in Belvedere. We moved when she was just a babe to our new house in Van Nuys. Let me tell you some interesting things about the Van Nuys house. It was built by Mr. Nordquist, who was a prominent Pasadena builder and at that time was president of the Pasadena Elks Club. He put his father and brother to work on our house, and they built it, each piece, almost by hand. The living room called for some very careful carpentry work. The senior Mr. Nordquist, the contractor's father, was an old Swedish carpenter who was a master craftsman, and he built the house so well and so strong that even though in the intervening forty years we've had several major earthquakes, we haven't had a single crack due to earthquake damage.

DOCTER

I think you once mentioned that the architect, Aja, had been influenced by Neutra.

HOFFMAN

He worked in Neutra's office before he branched out for himself.

DOCTER

Richard Neutra.

HOFFMAN

Yeah. I was Aja's about fifth or sixth client, and I think we came in the picture very early in the game.

DOCTER

What became of Aja and his architectural works?

HOFFMAN

Aja is now an old man, but about a year ago he came by and visited this house again and was very pleased that we were still living in it. The house has been two different times in the *Los Angeles Times* "Home" section, one time taking a double spread. It also had a major write-up in *California Arts and Architecture* magazine. So it has received a good deal of recognition for its design. The Helms man, the bakery man, was our daily connection with the outside world. Every day the Helms man would come up the street, and all of the neighbors would buy their baked goods from him. One day the Helms man said that during the course of the construction of our house, the neighbors were quite disturbed by the fact that the entire north wall is a twenty-four-foot wall of glass. And they were commenting to him about it and wondering what kind of people it would be who were going to move in here. And he said, "I told them that a person had a right to build any kind of house that he wanted to."

DOCTER

Good for him. Well, this was one that would certainly cause many people to stop and ask questions even today, because it's an outstanding design.

HOFFMAN

When we moved in, we had five walnut trees on the two lots. All the other planting, all the brick paving, the outside cement walls, and all this kind of thing, I put up myself. During the time that we were in the house early in the game, I was president of the Faculty Association of L.A. City College. And, as such, we were having a good deal of difficulty trying to adjust to the [members of the] new state college on the campus [Los Angeles State College of Applied Arts and Sciences, now California State University, Los Angeles] that were also on the faculty. And so I would come home distressed quite a bit. Every night when I came home, I would mix up a wheelbarrow full of cement mortar and I would lay as many cement blocks as the mortar would stand before I went in for supper, that way working off my frustration. So, I have around the front of my house a substantial brick wall, due to my presidency of the L.A. City College Faculty [Association].

DOCTER

Now, if I am correct, I think that was quite a number of years in the future. Wasn't that in the neighborhood of 1948, '49?

HOFFMAN

Must have been, yeah. All I can remember is that that was the reason we had the brick wall. Prior to that time, we had had a pyracantha hedge giving us protection from the street.

DOCTER

I believe that the state college came into existence in September of 1949.

HOFFMAN

Well, then it would be probably in 1950 that I was president of the faculty association.

DOCTER

Curiously, it was in that year that I was the president of the student body at Los Angeles City College.

HOFFMAN

Isn't that amazing?

DOCTER

Now, you mentioned earlier, when we were changing the tape, that it was on your summer visit with Ruth to what was then the state college at Santa Barbara (it ultimately became Santa Barbara [State] College and then later the University of California, Santa Barbara) up on the Riviera campus that you first became interested in becoming a teacher.

HOFFMAN

Yes. While I was there I met Emmanuel Ericson, who was head of the industrial arts department at Santa Barbara State, and Ericson encouraged me to consider teaching. And so the six units of credit that I took in the summer session were my first professional courses in education.

DOCTER

And how did that culminate in your taking on teaching as an added assignment?

HOFFMAN

Well, I was interested in moving ahead at the city college. I had become manager of the shop [Los Angeles City College Press]. Mr. Green bowed out, and I took over full control of the shop. And it was during the war, when there was a desperate need for teachers. Many of the L.A. City College faculty had volunteered, enlisted, and so in addition to managing the printing office full-time, I took on a half-time assignment teaching the newspaper-typography classes. After the war was over, they indicated to me that they would be willing to put me on full time. Prior to this time, the L.A. city schools had had a competitive examination for the teaching position at Frank Wiggins Trade School. I took this examination and came out number one. So when I discussed this with Dr. Rosco Ingalls, who was then director of the city college, he suggested that maybe instead of taking the Frank Wiggins job, I would like to work full time for the L.A. City College. So the junior college set up a competitive examination for the junior college position, and I came out number one on that. And so I was hired as a full-time instructor.

DOCTER

What kind of money were you making then?

HOFFMAN

I made \$2,100 a year.

DOCTER

So it was not much different from the salary in the mid-thirties, really.

HOFFMAN

No. And then in addition to a full-time teaching job, I also spent half of my time, or the equivalent of half time, managing the college press. So I was really doing a job and a half.

DOCTER

But you only got one salary?

HOFFMAN

Of course.

DOCTER

Quite a demanding assignment, to say the least. Now, this again sounds like a very minor point, but at that time that I first visited the printshop at Los Angeles City College in 1946, it was located in a building that was housing engineering as well as journalism, I think. And that is the same facility and location where the shop had always been?

HOFFMAN

Yeah, it was always there.

DOCTER

Is that building still there?

HOFFMAN

No, that building has since been demolished.

DOCTER

It was one of the old normal-school brick buildings.

HOFFMAN

That's right.

DOCTER

What was it originally built for? Do you know?

HOFFMAN

I really don't know.

DOCTER

In any case, it had for many years been the printshop.

HOFFMAN

It shared the engineering building.

DOCTER

Now, this brings us up to the war years. You started in part-time teaching, and then finally after the war you got into full-time teaching. Meanwhile, you had had a third—

HOFFMAN

I think the full-time teaching occurred during the war years, because we had a lot of the young college trainees there on the campus.

DOCTER

Military personnel. Now, meanwhile, you had a third daughter. When was she born?

HOFFMAN

Ruthie, when was Hil born?

RUTH HOFFMAN

You were thirty years old. Nineteen—

DOCTER

'Forty-two?

RUTH HOFFMAN

There's thirty years between you.

DOCTER

What was her birth date and her full name?

HOFFMAN

Her name is Hilary Janet [Hoffman], and she was born on, what, October 10?

RUTH HOFFMAN

July 1.

HOFFMAN

July 1; October 10 is Susy. Yeah, July 1.

RUTH HOFFMAN

Nineteen forty-two.

DOCTER

Well, now, just for the record let's summarize the birth dates and the full names of the girls. The first girl's full proper name is what?

HOFFMAN

Judith Ann Hoffman.

DOCTER

Judith Ann, and she was born what date?

HOFFMAN

February 24, 1937.

DOCTER

February 24. And where was she born, in a hospital or at home?

HOFFMAN

In a hospital in East Los Angeles.

DOCTER

What hospital was it?

HOFFMAN

Lincoln Hospital.

RUTH HOFFMAN

Lincoln Hospital on Soto Street.

DOCTER

On Soto Street. And the second girl—

HOFFMAN

Susan Ruth.

DOCTER

Susan Ruth.

HOFFMAN

She was born October 10, what, 1938?

RUTH HOFFMAN

Yes.

HOFFMAN

The evening before, Ruth and I had been down in Long Beach at a football game where L.A. City College was playing Long Beach City College. So she was almost born in the grandstands.

DOCTER

And was she born in the same hospital, Lincoln Hospital?

RUTH HOFFMAN

Yes.

DOCTER

And then the third daughter, we gave her name once, was Hilary?

HOFFMAN

Hilary Janet.

DOCTER

And let's just give her date again if you don't mind.

RUTH HOFFMAN

July 1, 1942.

DOCTER

July 1, 1942. This lady who has just come in is Mrs. Hoffman, Ruth Hoffman.  
Ruth, what's your maiden name?

RUTH HOFFMAN

Lofthouse.

DOCTER

Oh, yes.

RUTH HOFFMAN

Ruth Janet.

DOCTER

But your maiden name is Lofthouse?

RUTH HOFFMAN

It's like the loft of a house.

DOCTER

Good. Now we're going to continue with this little biographical account here on your husband. We're now up to just after the war years. You were teaching full-time and managing the shop half-time, and you had of course been in this lovely home here for about a decade by that time. What transpired as the forties unfolded?

HOFFMAN

Well, after Dr. Ingalls went off to found East Los Angeles Junior College, a man named Jacobson became president of the city and the state college together.

And Jakey—I did some work for him, and he was so impressed with it that when we needed a new chairman of the journalism department, he created the job for me by calling it the journalism and graphic arts department. And I became chairman of the department. So I took that one on along with my other jobs.

DOCTER

What was Dr. Jacobson's full name?

HOFFMAN

Einar. He later left the college and became superintendent of schools in Santa Barbara when Dr. [Howard] McDonald came in as president of the city and state colleges.

DOCTER

Which I believe was about 1949 or 1950. Now, at that time there was a great time of transition for the city college and the state college because they ultimately divided. But the original concept was to have them together, was it not?

HOFFMAN

That's right. The idea was to put an upper division on the Vermont campus.

DOCTER

And I believe that the original designation of that—which is still the proper name perhaps, at least the historic name of L.A. State—was the Los Angeles State College of Applied Arts and Sciences.

HOFFMAN

It was first the Los Angeles State College, and then a year later a legislator added "of Applied Arts and Sciences."

DOCTER

I see.

HOFFMAN

And the college has desperately tried ever since to forget the "Applied Arts and Sciences."

DOCTER

Yes. Now, it was not the happiest of times, in terms of having a single administration and effectively two faculties, and I think there was considerable minor conspiracy, or whatever one might call it, to see to it that the two groups actually didn't get together and cooperate very much.

HOFFMAN

Yeah, it was a very definite effort made to separate the two campuses.

DOCTER

Which, in fact, frustrated the legislative intent. to be sure. So as a consequence, could you tell us what ultimately happened and what your role was in trying to urge the selection of some of the alternative campus locations which were proposed at the time?

HOFFMAN

I really didn't have any definite role, except as during my time as president of the city college faculty we had one or two little flare-ups that I had to take care of.

DOCTER

What I was thinking of was the story that you've often told me about efforts to encourage the selection of a campus site that would be big enough to do the job.

HOFFMAN

Oh, yeah. [The] first president of the state college as a separate officer, the chemistry man from San Jose State—Anyway, he later went down and founded Long Beach State College [P. Victor Peterson].

DOCTER

Is that right?

HOFFMAN

I'll remember his name pretty soon. He and I became quite friendly, and one afternoon I drove him out to the Providencia Rancho, which is on the north side of the Hollywood Hills and very close to Burbank. And we looked at that beautiful big expanse of rolling hills, which would have made a perfectly magnificent campus, but Forest Lawn [Mortuaries] beat us to it. Forest Lawn bought the property and interred a body on the grounds immediately after they got title. And there's apparently some obscure law that says that the state cannot exercise eminent domain over a cemetery. So that perfectly magnificent site, which would have settled the problem of both the San Fernando Valley and of the East Los Angeles, was lost to us. Subsequently the state purchased the [California State University] Northridge campus and also a set of almost uninhabitable hills from the state road department, who had purchased the property in East Los Angeles.

DOCTER

And what you referred to here as "uninhabitable hills," of course, became the heavily graded, I think it's something like ninety-or hundred-acre campus of Los Angeles State College.

HOFFMAN

They took off eighty feet off of the top of two hills and filled in two gullies in order to get a level spot big enough to put in just a minimum campus.

DOCTER

Would it be an overstatement to say that the selection of that site was perhaps one of the most ill-advised selections of a college campus in the history of California?

HOFFMAN

I would think so.

DOCTER

Foolishness.

HOFFMAN

Actually, they took it from the state highway department as a gesture, I guess, of governmental cooperation, because it certainly was not an adequate site for a campus.

DOCTER

Do you recall if they had in mind a target enrollment at that time that would—

HOFFMAN

I think they were talking about five thousand as the maximum.

DOCTER

It's interesting that the same figure was the original planning target for full-time-equivalent enrollments, as they are called—the number of students who are enrolled in fifteen units on the average. The same was used at Northridge, an estimate of five thousand.

HOFFMAN

Actually, that wouldn't have been a bad figure if the college had stayed with its original intent, which was to offer only the junior and senior year. But because they wanted to establish an athletic program, they needed freshmen and sophomores. So, despite a good deal of discussion on the part of the faculty, they established a full four-year program where for the first two or three years out on the Ramona campus they had only the junior and senior year.

DOCTER

The Ramona campus is of course the one we're referring to now as L.A. State, actually Cal State L.A.

HOFFMAN

During the formative years of L.A. State College, when they were on the Vermont campus, we had a program of what we called "lend-lease." That is, the junior college faculty could teach for the state college and they would adjust the financial problems in the finance office. And it was during that period that I first taught for the L.A. state College. So that in 1958, when they moved off of the Vermont Avenue campus out to the Ramona campus, I stayed with L.A. City College. It was a year later that they offered me a

position, and I transferred in September of 1959 to L.A. State on the Ramona campus.

DOCTER

And you stayed as a full-time faculty until when?

HOFFMAN

Nineteen seventy-nine, yeah.

DOCTER

June of '79. So it was a twenty-year span.

HOFFMAN

Twenty-year period.

DOCTER

After you'd already completed a career, really.

HOFFMAN

Of almost twenty years at L.A. City. You'll be interested in knowing that when I left the city college they hired a man as a graphic arts teacher, they hired another person to be chairman of the department, they hired still another person to manage the college press, and one of the journalism faculty members took over the chore of faculty adviser of the student newspaper. So that when I left there, I was holding down three and a half jobs. The first time that L.A. State offered me a job they offered me the rank of associate professor. Well, when I saw the pay schedule, that didn't remotely compare to what I was making at the city college. So one day I had gone to the secretary's office and picked up my paycheck, and as I was walking down the hall I bumped into Dr. McDonald, who was president of both schools. I showed him my paycheck and I said, "This is the reason I can't go out to the Ramona campus." And he looked at the paycheck, went into his office, got out a salary scale, and saw that if he offered me a full professorship it would match what I was making. So they wrote me a letter, offered me a full professorship, and I accepted. I had said that I was in a rut so deep at the city college I couldn't look out over the sides. I thought the challenge of a new job would be fun. Adam Diehl, who was a very influential man in the development of both

schools, took me aside and indicated that he would recommend very highly that I take the state college job. He said, "One thing you can be sure of, you'll have an opportunity to build because money is no object." So when I got over to the state college I found that money was indeed an object. It was the biggest problem I had in trying to build a strong program.

DOCTER

Who was he?

HOFFMAN

Adam was dean of instruction for L.A. City College and very influential in planning the programs for L.A. State College. He could have been president of L.A. City College anytime he wanted to. They'd offered him the job, and he ended up over at L.A. State College as director of the audiovisual program.

DOCTER

Oh, yes, that's where I remember his name. Do you remember Ruth Clark very well?

HOFFMAN

Not Ruth. Edith Clark. Edith Clark. She was interim president between the time Jacobson left and McDonald came.

DOCTER

And I think she had been the president of L.A. City College for a while.

HOFFMAN

A good friend of mine.

DOCTER

How would you like to continue? Would you like to tell basically what you tried to do as you built this program at L.A. State?

HOFFMAN

In the last few years at L.A. City College as chairman of the journalism and graphic arts department, I had expanded the graphic arts offerings. Originally we taught just newspaper typography, but I discovered that there was a

demand for additional training in printing. And so I took a program that had been discussed largely in the national press but had never been put into effect at any place except Carnegie Tech [Carnegie Institute of Technology] in Pittsburgh. And I started developing what we call the Graphic Arts Printing Management Program. We got together an advisory committee of leading printers in Los Angeles—chief among them was Gordon Holmquist—and we had several meetings on the campus deciding what would make an adequate printing management program. He was president of the Cole-Holmquist Press [and] past president of the International Club of Printing House Craftsmen. A very influential printer in this city. So I roughed out a program, a four-year degree-granting program for printing management, and we got it approved. And it was one of the first innovative programs at L.A. State College. So when the L.A. State College moved off of the Vermont Avenue campus, why, the printing management program was sort of lost in the shuffle, and so they asked me to come to the L.A. State College to make sure that the program got underway. And so it was probably the most constructive educational thing that I did during my career.

DOCTER

Did the program stay intact?

HOFFMAN

Very much so. It grew and became a very respectable program. Many of the industry leaders today are graduates of the printing management program. Donald Male is now the printer for the state of California and runs the biggest printing office west of Chicago. Chief among [the graduates of the program], probably, is Don [Donald] Roland, who graduated in our printing management program and is now the vice president in charge of the Times Mirror printing department [Times Mirror Press]. Half of my job at L.A. State College was in teacher preparation for the industrial-arts teacher program, and the other half was the printing management. And of the two I would think that the printing management graduated more people and has had a greater influence. We had a very enviable record. I think in the ten or twelve years that I had the printing management, graduates we had had 100 percent placement. We never graduated a man that didn't get a job in the industry.

DOCTER

Are there any particular landmarks in connection with the L.A. State experience, Cal State L.A., that we should touch upon? I hate to skip ahead across twenty years.

HOFFMAN

Well, probably the one thing that I neglected to mention early in the talk was the fact that in my education when I first started teaching at L.A. City College, I taught under a Smith-Hughes vocational credential and a limited industrial-arts credential, which I got through UCLA. In order to qualify for these credentials, I took about four summer sessions at UCLA, and upon the establishment of L.A. State College, I got the registrar of the state college—He and I went over my records, and he said, "My goodness, you've accumulated enough college units to have a degree." And so at the first graduation of L.A. State College, there were seven candidates for the bachelor's degree, and I was one of the seven. So that upon my retirement thirty years later [from] L.A. State College, the president of the state college during the commencement exercises called me up, and as one of the first graduates of the college and a member of the faculty for twenty years, I was awarded my emeritus citation in a public ceremony. You might get a kick out of what happened during the commencement. Mayor [Thomas] Bradley was making the commencement address, and this was out on the athletic field at night.

DOCTER

At Cal State L.A.?

HOFFMAN

At Cal State L.A. , yeah. And overhead there was an airplane flying with the advertising lights under the bottom wings flashing on and off, flashing a message. The first time it flew over, I didn't pay any attention to it. The second time it flew over, I read the message. The third time it flew over, I kind of shrunk down in my seat. And the fourth time it flew over, I was crawling under the chairs, because it said, "Congratulations, Professor Hoffman, Happy Retirement."

DOCTER

That's great. That was in 1979, I think you said. Right?

HOFFMAN

Yeah.

DOCTER

You know, flashing back to when you were awarded your degree, your bachelor's degree, in the first graduating class at what became Cal State L.A., when was that? It would have been June of '48 or '49.

HOFFMAN

'Forty-eight.

DOCTER

Isn't it ironic? I was present at that ceremony that day.

HOFFMAN

Can you remember the seven of us getting up?

DOCTER

Yes. I was there. Because it was at that same ceremony that I got an A. A. degree, from L.A. City College, and I stayed on. I was there that day. I was pretty sure that I was. And that's the same ceremony at which my wife graduated from L.A. City College, June of '48. [It] was a vintage year. We were all around there. [laughter]

HOFFMAN

After I had been teaching at L.A. City College for a while, I started working on my master's program. I took graduate courses at L.A. State. I took a series of graduate courses in the graduate Department of Journalism at UCLA, and later I finished my program at USC [University of Southern California]. So I have my master's degree from USC, and since that time I've completed all the course work for the doctorate at 'SC. But I chickened out when it came to writing a dissertation in higher education, when my interests really were in the printing field. If I had been able to find a committee chairman who would have let me work in the field of printing, I would have been happy to have completed the degree. But since it made no difference to me in terms of promotion, since I was not eligible for any more promotion and it wouldn't make any difference

in pay since I was at the top of the pay scale, I just passed up the academic distinction of having a doctor's degree—which I guess I should have done, for the dignity of the department.

DOCTER

Oh, yes, I'm looking here at the congratulatory message: "California State University of Los Angeles sends cordial greetings to Richard J. Hoffman and presents its sincere message of congratulations on the occasion of his being elected professor emeritus. With all good wishes for continued achievement and academic success. September, 1978." So this was when you retired, then? Am I right, September of 1978?

HOFFMAN

Yeah-

DOCTER

Not '79?

HOFFMAN

'Seventy-eight, yeah.

DOCTER

And I suspect that this attractive certificate, which appears to be set in New Times Roman, is a Hoffman product. Am I right?

HOFFMAN

That's right.

DOCTER

Is the typography in New Times Roman?

HOFFMAN

That's right.

DOCTER

Very nice, Dick. Very beautiful. And here we have some pictures which Mrs. Hoffman has brought us showing the ceremony that night out on the football

field with Mayor Bradley. Thank you, Ruth, very much. Well now, I wonder if you'd like to continue on. What have you done since you retired? What has your principal activity been?

HOFFMAN

For the last thirty years I have been gradually accumulating a small hobby printshop, which is housed in a little guesthouse in the backyard. I started first with an 8' X 12' Chandler and Price platen press and two banks of type cases. Little by little I have added to that equipment, and now I have a fairly good-sized printing office out in the back, which houses a Linotype, a Miehle vertical, a Colts Armory press, and a 8' x 12' platen, along with a very large supply of foundry type. Since my retirement I have been working almost every day for several hours in that shop doing hobby printing, doing small jobs for my friends and later on taking on several fair-sized books as projects to be printed.

DOCTER

These have included books for the Book Club of California, commissions by Dawson's Book Shop and others, private individuals?

HOFFMAN

Like Larry [Lawrence Clark] Powell.

DOCTER

I think it's fair to say without perhaps being too grandiose that you may be the most active and productive letterpress printer in Southern California today.

HOFFMAN

Well, not in terms of volume, because I'm sure there are a lot of commercial plants employing letterpress processes doing straight commercial printing. But in the category of what we call fine printing, I don't imagine there's anybody else doing any more than I do.

DOCTER

In terms of variety of work and quantity of work. Surely not on the basis of something that grew out of both a vocation and a hobby, because you really never [had] the intention of setting up a commercial enterprise here, did you?

HOFFMAN

No. It grew out of a hobby shop.

DOCTER

As you look back across these years, are there any major disappointments in your own life that you have felt strongly about?

HOFFMAN

Well, I felt somewhat cheated at L.A. State College in their not allowing me to build as large and dynamic a printing program as I felt we should have. I think the size of the program that is at Cal Poly of San Luis Obispo [California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo] belongs in Los Angeles because this is the logical printing center. But because they had state agricultural fund money up there to spend, they were able to grow, and additionally, because they had dormitories they were able to attract a group of young people that our streetcar college never could get. So that I feel that the printing management program would have been doubly effective if I had been allowed to build the kind of program that I had envisioned when I moved over there.

DOCTER

Why was the lid held on?

HOFFMAN

Finances. They didn't have any money. They were grind-poor all the time.

DOCTER

What about personal disappointments? Any big personal disappointments?

HOFFMAN

No, personally life has been very good to me.

DOCTER

You're a pretty happy man.

HOFFMAN

I'm a pretty happy man. I've received a tremendous amount of recognition for the work that I've done. I've got a wall full of awards and plaques and things like that. I've had lots of national magazine [and] newspaper coverage. I've done all kinds of things like that.

DOCTER

I think on that happy note we're going to stop this first hour and a half of recording, and we'll pick up on this on our next session. Is there any more to add, Dick?

HOFFMAN

When we pick up, let me tell you about the Victor Carter Citizenship Award that I won and the essay that I wrote, "I Believe in the United States of America," an essay that has at least five million copies printed at this particular time. And I want to tell you about the sabbatical year that Ruth and I had when we took off and went around the world.

### **1.3. TAPE NUMBER: II, Side One (April 14, 1982)**

DOCTER

When we stopped last time, we'd talked about some of your early history. Now I wonder if we could continue by talking about the printing program at what was then called Los Angeles Junior College [now Los Angeles City College] , and particularly we want to be sure to touch on this Victor Carter Citizenship Award which you indicated you would be telling us about.

HOFFMAN

Yeah, well, let's start with my printing experience.

DOCTER

Fine.

HOFFMAN

I think I told you that I started out at Belvedere Junior High School and then I went to Garfield High School. All the time that I was at Garfield High School, I worked Saturdays with George Hillenbrand in Monterey Park. During the week I assisted Charles Lofthouse at our church's printing plant. Lofty had purchased

a 10' x 15' press and some type and was busily engaged in producing the weekly bulletin for Trinity Baptist Church. He invited me up to help him set the type, and I did so with a great deal of pleasure, because after we had worked in the evenings, he would drive me home. And I had the privilege of sitting in the back seat of his car and holding hands with his daughter. This started a romance that ended up by our getting married in 1934.

DOCTER

This is of course Ruth Lofthouse, who became Mrs. Hoffman in 1934, right?

HOFFMAN

That's right. Lofty was an excellent printer. He had learned his trade in Toronto, Canada, and came down to Los Angeles and held several responsible jobs as the stoneman at—Mack Printing Company is the one I remember best. He got interested in teaching school, and after completing his vocational education training, he got a position at Luther Burbank Junior High School in Highland Park. And I owe a great deal of my fundamental training to having worked with Lofty at the church shop. When he retired from that, I took on the running of the church shop and did it for about six years. After I graduated from high school, I spent a year with my father at Visalia and attended Visalia Junior College. Upon returning home, I visited my friend John Murray at Frank Wiggins Trade School, and he recommended me to the Sterling Press, which was at Eleventh and Santee streets, a very fine, high-quality combination letterpress and photo-offset printing shop. There I worked under Mr. Albert Henney, who was foreman of the composing room. I worked with Mrs. Cornelia Schup, who later became Mrs. Cornelia Schup-Cook, who later became Mrs. Cornelia Schup-Cook-Gregory and who, at ninety-one years of age, is still an active person and one of my dear friends. Mrs. Cook was the proofreader, and I assisted her occasionally by holding copy and learned a great deal about proofreading by that activity. The superintendent of the plant was Mr. F. [Fred] A. Baumstark. He was probably the finest printing superintendent in Los Angeles, having come over to Sterling from Young and McCallister [Southwest Lithograph Company], where he had made a national reputation for himself. He was a peppery little man, and I learned a good deal by watching him. Gene Ivanette was the stoneman at Sterling, and since I had to help him out occasionally, I learned lockup for cylinder presses and

multiple-page forms from Gene. I think I told you last time that the reason I left Sterling was because of the Depression, and I went to L.A. Junior College first as a student, and after graduating from the junior college I stayed on as a full-time employee of the print shop. We were working for the student body, and we were not part of the board of education operation.

DOCTER

This is because they were printing the newspaper there, I take it.

HOFFMAN

That's right. During the years that I was at the city college I progressively became the manager and later the department chairman of the journalism and graphic arts department. During the years that I was at the junior college, the city college, I was responsible for the design and production of all of the printing done for the various student activities. We had five full-time employees in the printshop, and so my job was primarily design and some typesetting and supervision of the production. We were especially interested in producing programs for the little theater program, which had won national recognition under the leadership of Mr. Harold Turney. He encouraged me to experiment, and so I made a different approach to each play program. I submitted these to the "Specimen Review" department of the *Inland Printer* magazine, based in Chicago. The *Inland Printer* was the leading trade journal. At that time Mr. J. L. Frazier was editor and conducted the "Specimen Review," and he showed samples of my work in many, many issues. I would say that probably in the period 1936-46 I was in the "Specimen Review" maybe every third month. The *American Printer*, which was the *Inland Printer's* chief competitor, also showed my work, and one issue had a two-page spread telling about me and even including my picture. The *Pacific Printer and Publisher*, printed in San Francisco, frequently showed examples of our work, so that at that particular time by submitting samples to the various magazines, we got a great deal of national recognition. During this time the *Inland Printer* magazine sponsored several typographical design contests. They would provide the copy, indicate the size, limit the designer to two colors, and they would then gather in from printers all over the world solutions to the design problem. The very first one was a letterhead, and I ended up in about twelfth or thirteenth place. The next one was a business

card, which I won, and then later on there was a motto card for which I also received first place, so that in these international design contests I showed up quite well. All this [was] due to the fact that at the city college, by virtue of being in charge of the operation, I had freedom to experiment and time in which to do these various things.

DOCTER

You're pointing this out in contrast to what it would have been like if you had been working in a commercial shop. You simply wouldn't have had the time.

HOFFMAN

If I had been in a strictly commercial shop I would have probably had time to do these after working hours, which I had to do oftentimes at the city college, because we were running a very high-gear program. And I was charged with making sure that the operation was self-supporting. One of the joys of the city college was that we were able to purchase many of the new contemporary type designs that were being issued by the American Type Founders Company and some of the new type designs being brought to Los Angeles by the L.A. Type and Rule Company [now Los Angeles Type Founders, Inc.]. Walt [Walter] Gebhard, who was the owner- founder of the L.A. Type and Rule, asked me to take care of his advertising, which I did. I prepared the half -page ads for the *Graphic Arts Monthly* and many single-sheet type specimens. I was responsible for encouraging Walt to bring the Perpetua series to Los Angeles, and I'm especially happy to say that the Perpetua titling has been one of the most distinguished typefaces available to Los Angeles printers. So we were active on all fronts. I became acquainted with Paul Bennett at this time, and Paul encouraged us to buy some Linotype fonts, which I did. We purchased the entire Janson series, and I enjoyed a great deal printing with that very fine typeface.

DOCTER

Do they still have those matrices over at city college?

HOFFMAN

The city college plant was discontinued two years ago for reasons of economy, and all of the mats, all of the equipment that I so laboriously gathered together, were sold.

DOCTER

At auction or what disposition was it?

HOFFMAN

E. F. Ritchie, the machinery dealer in Los Angeles, got the bulk of them.

DOCTER

I see. Well, now this relationship continued on through the 1940s, and I believe it was in the period of about 1948 when the state legislature decided to add a program at the campus of Los Angeles City College which was effectively the upper-division years. And at one time it was thought they might actually have a four-year college there which would be jointly administered by the city and the state. That was never to really work out very well, was it?

HOFFMAN

No. They were reluctant to build the multistory buildings that a campus limited to twenty-seven acres would have to have. So the school actually broke up into three parts, the city college remaining on North Vermont [Avenue] , Los Angeles State College going out to what we call the Ramona campus, east of the [Los Angeles] County hospital, and the other division ending up in Northridge, which became Cal[ifornia] State University, Northridge.

DOCTER

Yes. Well now, could you review with us once again the main points that involved your transition from Los Angeles City College over to the state college, and what your goal was in setting up the printing program at the state college.

HOFFMAN

I was active in the group of Los Angeles City College faculty that sent representatives to Sacramento and created the upper division of the school which became L.A. State College, later to become California State University at

Los Angeles. During this period. Dr. Howard MacDonald came as the president of the college. Dr. Mac and I became fast friends, and it was due to his efforts that I made the transfer from L.A. City to L.A. State.

DOCTER

Essentially he recruited you to go over and set up the printing program?

HOFFMAN

That's right. I had taught for them on the lend-lease basis as an industrial-arts-department printing teacher. So they knew my work.

DOCTER

What was your principal objective in setting up this program of training for individuals at the college level? Was it primarily to train teachers of printing, or how would you put it?

HOFFMAN

At the city college we were requested not to do vocational training because that would be the same area that Frank Wiggins Trade School used. But there was no provision for a four-year degree program in printing management. And so working with Dr. Adam Diehl and Mr. Gordon Holmquist of the Cole-Holmquist Press of Los Angeles, we got together an industry committee, discussed the courses that would be necessary for a good printing manager to have taken, and devised the program, so that while still on the junior college campus we set up the four-year degree-granting program in printing management [Graphic Arts Printing Management Program]. Interestingly enough, this was the second program of this type in the United States.

DOCTER

Where was the first?

HOFFMAN

The first was at Carnegie Tech [Carnegie Institute of Technology]. South Dakota State College at Brookings had a vocational program with a four-year emphasis, but it was not in printing management. Our program, when it was sent out nationally by the International Graphic Arts Education Association, was copied by a large number of schools across the country.

DOCTER

Now, as you look back across the thirty years or so that have passed since that program was initiated, what's your own evaluation of it and is there a continuing need for that kind of higher education?

HOFFMAN

We are most happy with the results of the program, which, as it developed, became largely one-third general education, one-third business administration courses, and one-third technical courses that would supplement the business administration courses. Our graduates, I think I can safely say, almost 100 percent were placed in positions of responsibility, and today some of the general managers of the larger plants are graduates of our department. And I think I may have mentioned Don [Donald] Roland last time, who is now general manager of the Times Mirror printing department [Times Mirror Press] , which is probably as prestigious a job as we have in any of our graduates.

DOCTER

Perhaps as demanding a job.

HOFFMAN

Yeah.

DOCTER

Now, I wonder if this would be a good time to try to reflect on the history of your own printing products, your own printing style, within that framework of years that we have talked about. We have talked about your being at Los Angeles Junior College from the early thirties onward, and—

HOFFMAN

I was greatly influenced by my association with Mr. John Murray, who was at the L.A. Trade Tech [Los Angeles Trade-Technical College] , then Frank Wiggins Trade School. Frequently, I would gather a batch of samples and take them down and show them to Mr. Murray and we discussed them, and in so doing I sharpened up my typographical skills. During this time I started the collection of my books on printing. I read thoroughly and deeply and often in the field. I

read all of the trade journals and did my best to keep abreast of the typographic trends. And as it later turned out, I discovered I was responsible in some small measure through the samples in the Inland Printer and the American Printer in setting some of these typographical trends, so that always I was experimenting. I got interested in the modern approach to typography, asymmetrical layout and that sort of thing, the use of the sans serif types, the use of the extremely black types, the use of the script types, and that sort of thing, so that I had quite an eclectic style of my own. During this time I produced a large number of pieces for the Rounce and Coffin Club [and] a large number of certificates, that sort of thing, for the International Graphic Arts Education Association. I was editor of the Los Angeles Club of Printing House Craftsmen's bulletin called *Craft-o-Grafts*. And during my terms as editor we won the national bulletin contest for typographical design. So all along I was working not only for the college but using my spare time, oftentimes Saturdays and Sundays, producing work for the various organizations to which I belong.

DOCTER

Was this work always joyful for you, or did you sometimes have periods of dry spells or feeling burned out in printing?

HOFFMAN

Oh, no. I always enjoyed it and I never lacked for an approach to a job. I had a desire, a motto of "never to do the same job the same way twice." So that all during the years that I was doing these various jobs, I would always come up with a fresh approach to each one.

DOCTER

And that involves many, many thousands of jobs, doesn't it?

HOFFMAN

Oh, I would say, offhand, that I've been responsible for over ten thousand jobs.

DOCTER

Now, if we were to consider just book printing for a moment, could you give us a brief rundown on the evolution of your handling of different hardbound-

book-printing assignments that you've had taken on, because this [is] one area in which you surely have distinguished yourself.

HOFFMAN

During the years that I was member of the Rounce and Coffin Club (and I am still a member) we originated the Western Books Exhibition. Of course, being interested in book design and production, I studied the entries very carefully, and I think I was very largely influenced by the type of fine book that was submitted to the Western Book Show. And of course during this time I bought my examples of fine-press printing—the Updikes, the John Henry Nashes, the Bruce Rogers books, as well as a large number of books like *The Colophon* [a magazine]. *The Dolphin*, and the like, that showed examples of the fine printing. So that I was assimilating the traditional style as well as the contemporary style. So when I first started printing books, because I felt that the subject matter was such that one shouldn't be too experimental with it, I was very conservative and did traditional books. For instance, in 1933 I did my first hardbound book, a book of poems. *Thirty Pieces*, by one of the city college graduates. Cornel Lengyel, who has since become rather well known as a poet. I still enjoy looking at it today as a very representative book of its type. We did books of poetry of various members of the faculty, W. [William] W. Lyman and Vernon King, Otis Richardson, men of that type, so that I was able to squeeze a book in every now and then along with our other work.

DOCTER

Would this have been at the rate of perhaps one book every two years or three years? Or how many books would you have been printing at that time, say in the thirties?

HOFFMAN

I think we did about one book a year, yeah.

DOCTER

Now, as your career has changed, the production of books has become increasingly significant, has it not?

HOFFMAN

Yeah. I realized that my reputation was based upon ephemera—drama programs, business announcements, and that sort of thing. Wanting to leave a permanent record of some kind, I went out of my way to find books to print, and I [am] happy to report that several of the books that I have done have received national recognition. The first one was the *Diary of Titian Ramsey Peale* that I did for Dawson's Book Shop and [which] was accepted in the American Institute of Graphic Arts *Fifty Books of the Year*. The year that I was president of the Los Angeles Club of Printing House Craftsmen, we had the international association meeting here in Los Angeles at the Biltmore Hotel. In our desire to provide a keepsake for the people attending from all over the United States, Gordon Holmquist, Roby Wentz, and I got the bright idea of producing a book. Roby had been doing research on the first printing press in the western states, and so starting in about April, Roby would knock out a chapter, give me the manuscript, I would set the type, and by June we had the thing pretty well under control. Gordon was responsible for the press work being done at his shop downtown. Weber- McCrae bound it, and we had the books finished by August. And that year that book, *Eleven Western Presses*, was also selected as one of the *Fifty Books of the Year*. In recent years I have not submitted any to the *Fifty Book* show, feeling that it was enough to be represented in the Western Books Exhibition, which I think I have been in pretty well every year since the first few years the show was opened.

DOCTER

That most certainly is a unique record in terms of overall production, and certainly perhaps one of the things you might want to comment on is the enormous diversity of what you have been responsible for printing during the course of your career. Isn't this perhaps one of the distinguishing characteristics of your work compared to others who are regarded as distinguished or fine printers?

HOFFMAN

Well, I've been responsible for the design of several of the books in Glen Dawson's *Early Travel Series*. I've been responsible for the design and production of all of the books in the *Famous Trial Series* and all of the books in the *Miscellany Series*. I have tried to make each one different. I have experimented with color, with decoration, with margins, with types, and I

think I have achieved a rather interesting series of books, no two of them alike.

DOCTER

Among those books do you have personal favorites that stand out as pinnacles of special joy for you, as you look back across that series?

HOFFMAN

Not really, I enjoy them all.

DOCTER

It seems to me that the book that you printed fifty copies of on handmade paper, as a special keepsake, was a very unusual book. Could you just say a little about that?

HOFFMAN

Well, for myself I have printed several small editions. During our sabbatical year Ruth kept notes of various places we had been, and we produced the book *Purely Personal* in fifty copies. Then, celebrating my fiftieth year earning money as a printer, I produced a book called *Jubilee* in fifty copies on our handmade paper. And since then I have produced two type-specimen books, one on types and one on borders, both in very limited editions, which I have been very pleased with.

DOCTER

Of these which is the rarest?

HOFFMAN

Probably the *Purely Personal*.

DOCTER

The story of the sabbatical?

HOFFMAN

Yeah. Although the *Jubilee* is not found too often.

DOCTER

Yes. Now, I'm wondering how we might best proceed here. One of the things I wanted to ask you about would be how you would characterize your own style? It's been many styles but is there such a thing as a Hoffman style? Would people recognize your work?

HOFFMAN

I think they could. Basically it's the thing that I tried desperately to teach all of my students, which is that printing design is not getting a bright idea out of the air and shaping your copy to the design, but just the opposite. I try to get them to analyze what the problem is—what the piece of printing is supposed to accomplish, what is its purpose. And then after deciding that, you choose the format, the size, and shape that best suits the purpose, and you design the typography in view of the way in which the material is to be used. For instance, an advertising piece could be much more vigorous than a traditional-subject-matter book, so that size, shape, type choice, paper choice, color choice, all have to further the function of the printed piece. And so if I were going to look in my work, I would say that it probably indicates an organized approach to the material, the material allowing the function of the printed piece to determine all of these other characteristics.

DOCTER

Among the types that you have worked with, do you have a particular family of Roman types or of display types that you tend to favor or fall back on, old favorites? Are there any particular sets of—?

HOFFMAN

I am a Caslon buff. I enjoy Caslon and its rather associated Dutch type, the Janson. I like those two very much. For my display types, for advertising and programs and that sort of thing, I have long enjoyed using the Garamond, the American Type Founders' Garamond, which has a beautiful italic, excellent small capitals, and makes a very sharp and distinguished piece of printing. And then since my retirement, I have gathered together a great many other typefaces, and so I tend to experiment with them. I am using a lot more different types now than I did originally.

DOCTER

I wonder if this would be a good time to bring up the topic of your papermaking activities along with Dr. John Urabec. Would it be appropriate to interject that as a kind of little break in the action here?

HOFFMAN

Yes. I can't remember the exact date. I must look it up, but it's been twelve or fourteen years ago that I met Dr. Urabec, a fellow member of the Zamorano Club, and discovered his interest in papermaking. I had been experimenting with papermaking ever since I was twelve years old, so that I had some very rudimentary papermaking equipment at the college which I used to demonstrate to my classes. But this would be a one-day activity each semester, so that I made paper only once or twice a year. Dr. Urabec came over to the college, and we got to talking about it. He indicated that he would like to make paper, so I invited him over, and the next thing we knew we had embarked on a program where he came one afternoon a week. In so doing, we felt the need for additional equipment, so the technicians at the college built a small laboratory-size Hollander beater for me [and] Dr. Urabec purchased an old English mold. We got some felts, we got a small letterpress, a bookbinder's piece of equipment to press down our felts, and we started in—and had some magnificent failures. We had all kinds of trouble, but we learned a great deal by our mistakes, and after a year or two we were making pretty good paper. We'd been making paper for maybe three or four years when Howard and Katherine Clark got interested in papermaking in San Francisco. Howie and Katherine came down, and John and I taught them all we knew and got them nicely embarked on their career, which has now developed to the place where they are acknowledged as the best hand papermakers in the United States.

DOCTER

What is the name of their papermaking activity?

HOFFMAN

They call themselves the Twin Rocker Mill.

DOCTER

At one time there were a pair of twins involved, were there not?

HOFFMAN

Yeah, Katherine and her sister were twins.

DOCTER

I think that has split.

HOFFMAN

Yeah.

DOCTER

But they still have the name Twin Rocker. Well, this has produced, then, a kind of sideline wherein you have your own brand, or certainly watermarked stock, of very unique fine papers that have been used in some of your books.

HOFFMAN

John and I will not make paper out of anything except rags. We do not use any wood pulp, and we beat our rags ourselves. We do not use any half stuff, which a lot of the youngsters are using today.

DOCTER

Any "half stuff" —what do you mean?

HOFFMAN

Material that has the preliminary beating done by a commercial paper house. You can buy it from the paper mill and finish the beating yourself.

DOCTER

I see.

HOFFMAN

Katherine and Howie do quite a bit of that now, because they're making paper in such quantity they haven't time to dig up the rags.

#### **1.4. TAPE NUMBER: II, Side Two ( April 14, 1982)**

DOCTER

I wonder if we could pick up with a little discussion of some of the trips that [you] have taken, so that we can work in some of these things we wanted to be sure to bring out.

#### HOFFMAN

Okay, I wanted to talk about the Victor Carter Citizenship Award. Victor Carter was a businessman owning Builders Emporium in Van Nuys. He took a full-page ad in the [San Fernando] Valley Times and Green Sheet announcing an essay contest. Ruth clipped it out of the newspaper and hung it up in my shop where I could see it. So one day I got interested in working on the problem, and I proceeded to think through what it meant when I tried to evaluate what Victor Carter wanted in terms—The title for his essay was "I Believe in the United States." And you had to do that in a hundred words or less. So I sat down and wrote out the various things that I felt were reasons why I was happy to be an American, and they came out in the form of an unrhyming poem. And I wrote it out, submitted it, and it was awarded the first prize. Fred Fox, who was dean of the evening division at the city college, heard about it, got excited about it, and started promoting it. And before we were done it had hit every newspaper in Southern California, about half of the magazines, and two or three of the national magazines. I lost count of the number of copies that had been printed after it had gotten over several million. So this one piece of writing, a hundred words, has been one of the happiest things that I have written. The first prize was a trip to Washington, D.C., all expenses paid, for Ruth and myself. We flew to Washington on the American Airlines nonstop, and we made it in ten hours, which was an unheard-of speed at that time. We stayed at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington. We were entertained by Joe [Joseph H.] Holt, who was the congressman for our district, and we got passes to the Senate and to the House sessions. We went and saw all of the important historical and monumental buildings in Washington, and we were given a special trip through the [United States] Government Printing Office. Starting at the eighth floor and working on down, we went through the entire place. What happened was that we had a letter of introduction to the public printer, who turned us over to his assistant. He brought out of his pocket an Intertype photosetter mat, which was brand-new at the time, handed it to me, and asked me if I knew what it was. When I explained to him what it was, he said, "Well, I see you are no amateur. You know what it's all about." So he

took us up on the eighth floor and we walked. The government printing office is about three blocks long. We walked three blocks on the eighth floor, and then back down on the seventh floor, and so on. It was the first time in my life that I ever saw one hundred big cylinder presses all in a row. Tremendous experience. Another thing that Joe Holt, our congressman, did for us was to give us a special trip through the Bureau of • Printing and Engraving. Where all of the other visitors had to stand in long queues waiting to get in, and then when they were in, had to walk around a catwalk up around the edge of the building, we were able to bypass the lines, were met by a guide, taken in, and we were down on the main floor amidst all the machinery and the big stacks of money in process. Our guide asked me if I would like to see the \$100,000 exhibit, and I said, "Why, of course." So she walked over and had a gentleman bring out the \$100,000 exhibit, which was in a box, and it had a glass cover on it, and in there were a hundred sheets of \$100,000 bank notes, twenty bank notes on a sheet. So in my hot little hands I held many million dollars' worth of currency. That was a big thrill.

DOCTER

How about some of the other trips that you've taken?

HOFFMAN

For thirty-five years Ruth and I—sometimes I had to go by myself—have attended the International Graphic Arts Education Association annual conference in the summertime. We meet for a week at various college and university campuses, live in the dormitories, and have our sessions there. And where they have printing equipment we also get to participate somewhat in that. We have been all over the United States and Canada and have been to a great many colleges from Florida; Montreal; New York; Pittsburgh at Carnegie Tech; Boulder, Colorado; up in Bellingham, Washington. We even had the conference at Santa Barbara, where I was a participant in the program. One year I was in charge of the entire program when we met at Boulder, Colorado. There I gave a series of talks on printing design. So that has been great fun. One year when we were in Trenton, New Jersey, as a postconference trip, thirty of the graphic-arts teachers went off on a graphic-arts tour of Europe. I was one of the members in charge of the tour. At that time I was on the payroll of the school in New Jersey, and I was responsible for one group of the

members on the tour. When we got to Geneva, Switzerland, our hotel reservations broke down, and we had to break up into two groups. And I was in charge of one group in a particularly "fleabagish" type of hotel. Wes Parker and I went out in the evening down to the lakeside to hear the band concert. When we came back, four of the young men that were in my group were at a sidewalk cafe across the street from the hotel and said, "Gee, Mr. Hoffman, are you in trouble!" And I said, "What's the matter?" He said, "We got to horsing around in our hotel room, and we were throwing pillows and we broke a light fixture." I said, "Well, that's all right, I can take care of that." And he said, "Not only that, but when we broke the light fixture we shorted out all of the lights in the entire hotel." I got the guys up at five thirty the next morning, and at six o'clock we were out on the sidewalk waiting for the bus, and I never did see the hotel manager.

DOCTER

That's called a fast getaway, isn't it? [laughter]

HOFFMAN

You bet it is. On our sabbatical year, 1966-67—Did I cover this somewhat before?

DOCTER

No, not really.

HOFFMAN

We went on our trip to Mexico City.

DOCTER

Yes, you just barely touched those highlights.

HOFFMAN

And then from there we came back in time to drive to the graphic arts conference, and then from the graphic arts conference we went to Attleboro. From Attleboro we went to New York, took a plane and ended up in Luxembourg, took the train from there to Augsburg, where we got a VW. We drove up into the northern part of Germany, drove to Denmark, took the ferry over to Sweden, stayed for a week in Stockholm, stayed for three or four days

in Uppsala, drove across Sweden to Goteborg, stayed there for a week, where I met a chap who had done a very outstanding job of providing three volumes in typography. When we were in Sweden we went to the various technical schools and saw their printing equipment, as we did in Denmark, in Copenhagen, and as we did in Goteborg. From there we drove down into Holland and Belgium, did the Plantin-Moretus Museum, took the ferry over to England, and stayed for six weeks in London—at which time I went up to Cambridge [University] at the University Press, went down to Oxford [University], spent a day there with Vivian Ridler, the university printer, did all the bookshops, did the exhibits, the museums and all. The Wynken De Worde Society, which is about the equivalent of our Zamorano, had a meeting on the American Thanksgiving Day. I was the guest of Beatrice Ward, and so I was sitting at the head table. The chairman of the day introduced me, and then with his idea of humor said, "Today is Thanksgiving Day in the United States, but Mr. Hoffman will have to eat English roast beef instead of turkey." So I had made a lot of very interesting connections in London, visited with a lot of important people. Went out to Redhill, Surrey, to the Monotype [Corporation] company and went through the Monotype works. Was entertained by the British Linotype manager and met the designer of the queen's printing—I've forgotten his exact title. He had us to his home. We had an evening meal with Beatrice Ward. So that all the way through it was a very busy, very entertaining six weeks. Then we took the channel crossing over to Paris, stayed a week in Paris, went to Geneva, where I had been before with the printing teachers. I wanted to show Ruth all of the sights, but we got there after everything had been closed down. A great fountain that spurted out of the middle of the lake stopped the week before. It was cold, everything—But we enjoyed Geneva, and Ruth was especially impressed with the great Reformation Wall, which is a wall wherein the figures prominent in the Protestant Reformation, which was centralized in Geneva—After that we drove through the Mont Blanc tunnel in the middle of winter. Mont Blanc tunnel is about seven miles long, and our car got frozen with the ice and snow and it shorted out the lights, but when we came out on the Italian side and got down into Milano—when everything, all the moisture and everything else, melted away—why, everything was working okay. So we went down the autostrada in Italy, feeling at long last as though we were home. The freeway felt like you were driving through the San Joaquin Valley. The planting, the

grapevines and all, looked familiar, the mountains were on the right side of you. So I realized then why the Italian immigrants to California felt so much at home and settled in the San Joaquin Valley, because it was just like Italy. We got to Rome. [We] stayed in Rome for three weeks, met our daughter Susan [Harris-Sharpies] , granddaughter Vinita, Sue's husband Bill [William Harris]. They suggested that instead of staying in Europe, which was our plan—We were going to stay in southern Europe until the springtime and then drive north again and go to the DRUPA, the great printing exhibit. But when I realized how long it would be before spring came, I succumbed to Susan's invitation. She said, "Daddy, why don't you come home with us to Pakistan? This is the best time of the year in Pakistan." So we gave our Volkswagen to the Automobile Club, who then shipped it home for us, got on the airplane and flew to Karachi, Pakistan. We stayed a month in Pakistan, one week of which we used to go up to India and see the Taj Mahal and the great sights. When I looked at the map I realized that Karachi, Pakistan, was nineteen miles closer to Los Angeles by way of the Pacific than it was by way of the Atlantic. So we boarded a boat, an Italian ship, the Asia, and for fifteen days we lived it up first-class—four, five meals a day, all kinds of beautiful things.

DOCTER

Oh my.

HOFFMAN

We sailed down through the Indian Ocean. We saw flying fish. We got to Djakarta and we took a bus trip around, and they were demonstrating then, the first signs of what later turned into a full-scale revolution. We stayed a day in Bombay. When we got to Singapore, the boat crew went on strike, so they let us sleep on the boat, but they wouldn't feed us. So the boat company put us in a bus and took us to the famous Raffles Hotel in Singapore, where we had all our meals. We were in Singapore for three days before they settled the boat strike. After that the boat ended up in Hong Kong. We were going to be the American visitors that went to Hong Kong and never spent any money. We did that for two days, and then on the third day we lost control, and I had two suits tailor-made for me, two pair of shoes custom-made. I bought a watch, Ruth bought a lot of things, and we just had a whale of a time. After we left Hong Kong we went to Tokyo, stayed a week in Tokyo, and then flew from

Tokyo to Hawaii. We entered the United States through the back door. All of the time that we were on our way to Hawaii, Ruth had been corresponding with one of our Van Nuys friends, so when we got to Hawaii, lo and behold they were there to meet us. So we got the great welcome, complete with leis and everything. And they in turn had made it possible for us to be invited to the home of a Hawaiian couple, Becky and Richard Ling. Becky was old Hawaiian family, and Richard was Chinese. So they entertained us in Hawaii for three weeks, one week of which we and our Van Nuys friends took a trip to the outer islands. When we were on the large island of Hawaii and up at the volcano, I came across a book about the volcano written by Gordon McDonald, who was a high school friend of mine. He and I had graduated in the same class in high school, and he was a professor at the University in Hawaii. So I made a point of visiting him, and I have a couple of rather good books on volcanos inscribed to me by my high school friend.

DOCTER

That was quite a trip.

HOFFMAN

So, after three weeks in Hawaii we flew home to Los Angeles, and things started settling back to normal. We'd been gone for nine months.

DOCTER

My, that truly is a sabbatical. I wonder if we could talk a little about the view of printing in Southern California that you have come to hold. I know this is now a complete shift in topics, but you're always included among the first-rate fine printers of Southern California. As you look upon that landscape of individuals, who would you particularly look toward as examples of fine printers?

HOFFMAN

When I was a boy and first interested in printing, Los Angeles was definitely a second-rate printing city. The fine printers in California were based in San Francisco, and notably John Henry Nash. So much so that when Ruth and I were married, we went to San Francisco on our honeymoon, and one of the places we had to visit was Nash's library, where I met Miss Nell O'Day. We

thought we were a very sophisticated young couple, but we must have been awfully naive looking, because she quickly spotted that we were honeymooners. When we arrived home she sent me a large package of Nash printing, and I have some Nash broadsides that I have never seen anywhere else. So that was one of the things—The great printers in California were in San Francisco. Los Angeles had only one or two shops—well, maybe three. Young and McCallister, the Times Mirror, and George Rice were probably the best printers in Los Angeles. Charles Stovel, who worked at the Typographic Service Company, was a great typographer, and he did a lot of interesting work. But since they had to farm their printing out to various trade plants, he doesn't come to mind quickly when you talk about great printers. So it was always my ambition to go to San Francisco and work for John Henry Nash, but when it came down to the nitty-gritty, I was never able, financially, to take the risk of going off, because the Depression was on and we had to be very careful of our money. The same is true of my college education. I wanted desperately to go to Carnegie Tech, which was the only degree-granting college in the United States offering printing, but in 1929-30 one didn't pick up and go off to Pittsburgh even if I could have afforded it, because there would be no employment there to support me. I had a job in Los Angeles and I stayed put, so that by staying put, pretty soon I became established enough so that I got married and gave up these ideas of going off to San Francisco or to Pittsburgh. About the time that I got interested in fine printing, the Rounce and Coffin Club was formed. Very early I became a member, and there I met Ward Ritchie, Grant Dahlstrom, and Saul Marks, who were probably as instrumental in creating a school of fine printing in Los Angeles as any of the individuals. We didn't have a solid bookish-type printing group in Los Angeles.

DOCTER

In the early years?

HOFFMAN

In the early years. But quickly enough, with the formation of the Zamorano Club and the Rounce and Coffin Club and, in some small measure, the Los Angeles Club of Printing House Craftsmen, an emphasis on fine printing was developed.

DOCTER

I wonder if we could talk just a little about those individuals. First, just to set the record straight, how old was the Rounce and Coffin Club when you first became a member?

HOFFMAN

I think I joined in either the first or the second year, I'm not sure.

DOCTER

And could you say just a word or two about the style and the character of the printing that has been done by some of the individuals who you have mentioned. And perhaps I can even mention some others. Where would you begin?

HOFFMAN

Oh, you have to begin with Ward Ritchie, because he was the most flamboyant of the group. Ward was a real good promoter, and he made sure that people knew that he was in the printing business and that he was trying to do fine printing. Saul Marks was probably the finest printer that Los Angeles has ever produced—probably, along with Giovanni Mardersteig in Italy, one of the two or three great printers in the world. Saul had a long series of very difficult financial problems. He couldn't sell his printing well enough to become financially comfortable. He was always in moderate circumstances. Grant Dahlstrom had started in Utah, went to Carnegie Tech, and came from Carnegie to Young and McAllister in Los Angeles, where he designed some outstanding books. After flitting around with two or three Los Angeles shops. Grant bought the Castle Press on Union Avenue in Pasadena, which was a very modest, small printing operation. By dint of hard work and good business. Grant built it up until it became a very successful business. Grant was not only a solid printer but was a pretty good businessman, and so was able to establish himself and do some outstanding work for the [Henry E.] Huntington Library and some of the colleges in the area. Of the three I would rank Saul as technically the most competent in the field of traditional fine printing. I would put Grant next in terms of design and solid production of a large amount of work, and then Ward Ritchie was much more versatile and—I don't know quite how to say it. His work always had more flair. You could tell a book designed by Ward, you could tell a book designed by Saul, you could tell a

book designed by Grant, because each of the three men had developed very specific styles.

DOCTER

Is it fair to say that Grant Dahlstrom had a somewhat more Spartan style? He certainly was not heavy in the use of ornamentation, was he not?

HOFFMAN

Saul was great for the manipulation of typographic ornament and very conservative typography. Grant was more venturesome in his use of display types than Saul, but still a very solid type of work. Ward liked strong effects and would use large sizes of type and color. An interesting thing: Ward, I think, was influenced by his brief stay with [Frangois-Louis] Schmied in Paris.

DOCTER

Where would you put Will [William M.] Cheney within this framework of printers in Los Angeles?

HOFFMAN

Will Cheney was a solitary little one-man job printer who did fascinating work, but completely offbeat and made little or no impact on the California school. I don't think anybody writing about that period would even realize that Will was printing.

DOCTER

He was almost at the level of a hobby printer?

HOFFMAN

Quite so, yeah.

DOCTER

In fact, I think it is fair to say that he was not a trained printer. He had not ever had an apprenticeship, I think. He was almost self-taught.

HOFFMAN

Yeah. You can tell that from reading his letters.

DOCTER

When did you first meet Cheney?

HOFFMAN

Cheney joined the Rounce and Coffin Club in about its fifth or sixth year, and I met him there.

DOCTER

Was he an active member?

HOFFMAN

Never. Always quiet, reticent. He did an occasional membership card or something like that for the Rounce and Coffin Club, but never made any major contribution.

DOCTER

Have you been impressed with any of his miniature books or with his unique printing style?

HOFFMAN

Oh, I enjoy Cheney's work because he is as whimsical typographically as he is in his writing.

DOCTER

This, perhaps, is the unique flavor that he brings to the printing scene.

HOFFMAN

Yeah. Nobody else that I know would ever use pink ink.

DOCTER

No, I think no. None of the other three that you mentioned would, I'm quite sure of that. Now, on the scene today there are people like Patrick Reagh and Vance Gerry, who are working together in a shop in Glendale. How do you see their work? How does it compare with some of the finest that's been around?

HOFFMAN

Well, Patrick Reagh worked with Saul Marks and Lillian [Marks] and, as such, picked up a great deal of Saul's style, so that he is probably the best printer in the typographical tradition that Marks made prominent. Vance is an interesting printer. Again, he spent time working with Grant Dahlstrom as a boy and then became a commercial artist at Disney [Walt Disney Productions], and really is noteworthy because of the beautiful artwork that he contributes to his books rather than the typography.

DOCTER

Now, one other name that I'm sure deserves to be brought into the picture is Pall Bohne, who has produced a few books and a good deal of very beautiful printing.

HOFFMAN

A very interesting young man. Basically, he earned his living as a surveyor and printed only as a hobby. He has since gone into photoengraving and printing and promises, as soon as he gets his house built, to produce some rather good work.

DOCTER

He certainly is a very talented gentleman.

HOFFMAN

Very versatile person.

DOCTER

Are there any other printers along the line, living or gone, that you would think could possibly be ranked with men of the caliber of Ritchie, Dahlstrom, and Marks?

HOFFMAN

Well, Bruce McCallister was the senior printer in Los Angeles. He was a mature businessman who had established a reputation for fine printing when he hired Grant fresh out of college, so that will give you an idea of their relative ages. He was doing good solid work but not particularly inspired. When Gordon Holmquist graduated from UCLA, he went to work for the Times Mirror printing and binding house as a salesman. As such, he developed a following in

terms of advertising printing and noticed that the Times Mirror, off and on over the years, printed some rather nice books. So that when he and Cole—I've forgotten Cole's first name—formed the Cole-Holmquist Press, Gordon went after the book printing along with his regular commercial advertising printing. They bought out Carl A. Bundy Quill and Press, which was an advertising-printing organization that endeavored to do nice work but had no one with real taste. So when Gordon took over there, he went into book printing and was developing, but he never had an opportunity really to become a fine printer in the truest sense of the word. He did some nice work, but his untimely death, I think, came before he had reached full maturity.

#### DOCTER

In your shop here in Van Nuys at your home, I wonder if you would give a rundown on the major equipment that you have in the shop and the number of fonts of type approximately and just how this is equipped at the present time.

#### HOFFMAN

About thirty years ago I bought an 8' x 12' printing press and a couple of stands of type at an auction. I intended to amplify the foundry type with the idea, on my retirement, of setting all of my type by hand. One day I attended an auction sale at the Central Typesetting Company in Los Angeles, who were converting to photographic typesetting. I stood by a Linotype machine, and when the bidding had reached \$350 it stopped. So I nodded my head, and the next thing I knew I owned a Linotype machine for \$375. It was a newer machine, better equipped than the ones we had paid \$11,000 apiece for at the university. It took quite a bit of maneuvering and a lot of money to get it moved out to Van Nuys into a room in our guest house, but with the advent of the Linotype machine I was able to do work that I wouldn't have attempted to do by setting it by hand, that of necessity I had to buy an automatic press. I bought a Miehle vertical-cylinder press, and then later Dr. Ed [Edward] Petko purchased a Colts Armory press, which is housed in my shop. So along with the modern printing machinery—and it's no longer modern because it's all outmoded by photographic typesetting and photo-offset printing—I have, in addition to that, two antique handpresses, a small Imperial hand press made in 1841 and a large Columbian press, number 415, made in 1829. So we have

the antique equipment and the middle-aged equipment, but none of the contemporary equipment.

DOCTER

How many fonts of type are here?

HOFFMAN

It's pretty hard to say, but I have about six hundred cases of type.

DOCTER

And how much Linotype?

HOFFMAN

I've got about fifty magazines of Linotype mats.

DOCTER

So within this shop you can do everything except bind the books?

HOFFMAN

Yes. We design, set the type, print them. The editions, if they are small enough, are hand-folded, and if they need a hard cover I send them down to my Hungarian bookbinder friend, Bela Blau. If they need a soft cover, why, we sew them here.

### **1.5. TAPE NUMBER: III, Side One (April 20, 1982)**

DOCTER

I wonder if we could begin tonight by asking you a question of how you go about laying out a book and designing a book. What are some of the practical steps that you usually go through in trying to formulate a solution to a given design problem?

HOFFMAN

The first thing you must look at is the subject of the book and what your design can do to amplify the subject. Your first consideration is size. Coming as I have out of the Great Depression and being relatively frugal, I allow the full size of the paper sheet to determine to a large extent the size of the book. I

try to get a book size that cuts economically out of the full sheet. I just can't bring myself to be wasteful of paper, even though it doesn't represent such a great cost in the small runs which I normally do. I'm a great believer in trying to analyze the function of a printed piece. I want to know what it's supposed to do. In ephemeral printing this is very critical; in book printing it's almost assumed that the function of a book is to be read. If this is so, much of the modern experimental typography that I have been seeing lately falls far short of the mark, because they have taken the book as an experimental object and have subordinated the reading to the artistic effect that they wish to achieve. Now, I start with a normal-size book. I like the 6" x 9" size because it cuts so conveniently out of the standard 25" X 38" paper. I then look at the subject and try to determine which of the many types that I have available is best for the subject. Having chosen a type that I feel harmonizes with the subject matter, I then set enough type to make a single page. This helps me analyze whether my choice of line length and my margins are going to be adequate. At this time I can also experiment with the leading of the type lines and determine whether the type should be set solidly, one point, two point, or even greater leading. After I have satisfied myself on the choice of type, the line length, and the space between the lines, I then set enough type to make a pair of pages. At this time I experiment with the running head and the folio. Having satisfied myself on those two scores, I then move to the first chapter of the book and decide then how I want the chapter opening to look. Do I want to use an initial letter? Do I want to use some other opening device? Does the chapter heading call for the use of a display type? If so, what display type? Do I want to experiment with ornamental headbands made up of typographic units, or would I be satisfied with just the normal sinkage—that is, the white space that you use at the start of a chapter? Having determined those items, I then move on to the preliminaries, which include as the piece de resistance the title page. I try to make the title page in keeping with the chapter opening and with the pair of facing pages, where I have determined the margins and the running head. By working backwards like this, I am held in check and do not do a wild title page and then not be able to make the pages of the text correspond. So, working backwards, I find that my title pages tend to harmonize better with the text pages than it would be if I had worked the other way. The other preliminary pages, the half title, the contents, a foreword and such, then can be worked out sympathetically with the others.

Finally, after the book is pretty well under control, I consider the cover, and I try to make the cover indicate in some way the content of the book and relate it to the typography of the book by the choice of types used on the cover and the choice of ornamentation and that sort of thing. I enjoy doing a paper-over-boards cover with the cloth spine. The cloth spine gives the book the strength on the hinges for opening, which an all-over paper cover would lack. Paper sides give me an opportunity to decorate the cover sympathetically with the typography of the book. The tendency in modern trade books is to put as utilitarian a cover as one can find on the book and then cover it with a paper book jacket, where the artist in full color tries to sell his wares. I appreciate this problem that they have in selling a trade book on the book counter in a bookstore, but since few, if any, of my books ever have this problem, I forgo the book jacket and put all of the ornamentation on the cover itself.

DOCTER

Would you be able to comment on what you see as any unique or identifiable features of the Hoffman style, as represented in books? I'm thinking, for example, on the use of ornaments in association with page numeration, and this kind of thing.

HOFFMAN

It's a never-ending problem for me to try to introduce some variety into the text pages. The only opportunity you have is in the running head and the folio—the page number of the book. So I experimented and have done many—I imagine you'd call them different—things, trying to introduce this variety. I'm always reminded of Stanley Morison, the British typographical expert who made a study of this problem. [He] decided that small caps of the text, letter-spaced one point, was the ideal running head, and having solved that problem he never deviated. This gives his books a sameness. I try to do just the opposite. I try to make each one different, because I think that experimentation is still the order of the day. And I enjoy fiddling around trying to do something that adds a little life and a little sparkle to the text pages, that otherwise would just be several hundred pages of routine stuff.

DOCTER

What papers have you selected for use in most books?

HOFFMAN

Again, my frugal background makes it difficult for me to go out and buy the most expensive papers. I wish I could overcome this tendency and really splurge. But it is really the type of books that I print—which are not deluxe collector's items, but rather bits of California history and the like in limited editions. I do not buy the imported handmade papers, but I have discovered that an American-made paper, Warren's Olde Style, has a texture and a feel and an off-white color that gives me a great deal of pleasure. So I buy Warren's Olde Style in what they call the natural color, smooth finish, and I buy it in four-carton lots, that way economizing on the paper. And I use it pretty largely for all of my work. I enjoy Curtis Colophon which I have used several times. I like Mohawk Superfine very much, and I have used some Curtis All Rag several times. I think if I had my druthers, I would probably use the Curtis papers on all of my work. But since they are about 50 percent higher than the Warren's Olde Style, again my sense of fitness doesn't allow me to use a better paper than the subject really calls for.

DOCTER

What is the weight of Warren's Olde Style?

HOFFMAN

I use the seventy pound.

DOCTER

Warren's Olde Style natural, seventy pound.

HOFFMAN

Yeah. It has a surface texture that is rough enough to give the old-style types a little bit of extra squeeze and give them a little more weight than you'd get if you printed on, say, a smooth enamel-surface paper. And yet it is smooth enough so that the necessary illustrations that seem to be part of all of the copy I get, photographs that must be reproduced in halftone, can be done so by the photo-offset process, thus eliminating the necessity of having two different surface textures in one book—which we used to have to do before the photo-offset process became so widespread.

DOCTER

What is the essential technical difference between printing on a soft paper (perhaps Warren's Olde Style might not be a perfect example, but perhaps even a paper like Reeves that is quite soft or your own handmade papers) and a very hard bond paper?

HOFFMAN

Well, a bond paper is not a good example—you have to hit the type too hard—but if you contrasted the difference between printing on an antique-surface paper such as Warren's and a coated paper such as the enamel-coated, you could see very quickly the difference. On the enamel-coated every detail of the type is very sharply and very clearly printed. The serifs show up there, lines show up. The thick strokes carry the difference, and you get the contrast between the thick and thin stroke. On a type like Caslon Old Style, for example, the type appears very weak and emaciated on a smooth-finish paper. Use the same type on an antique paper, where the surface of the paper tends to thicken the hairline strokes and the serifs, then the type takes on an added weight, which makes it much more legible. Interestingly enough, you get a reverse reaction when you use a modern type such as the Bodoni type. If you print Bodoni on an antique surface, it looks kind of "blah, " whereas if you printed on a smooth surface, then the sharpness of its cut brings out the typography that the designer [Giambattista] Bodoni had in mind when he and the Didots in France at about the turn of the 1800s first devised what we today call the modern type.

DOCTER

With very distinctive thick and thin differences of a regular and predictable type.

HOFFMAN

Very sharply distinguished, yes.

DOCTER

Could you comment on the problem of adjusting the pressure of the rollers—that is, of changing the diameter of the roller trucks in their rubber covering-tire? Could you comment on the technique of getting the roller pressure just right in a platen press?

HOFFMAN

It's a matter of mechanics. The whole secret of good presswork depends on having an ink that is stiff enough to print sharply and not a watery, runny ink, and then getting the ink transferred onto the type form by the printing rollers. This is done by adjusting the pressure of the rollers against the type. What we try to do is have the rollers so that they make about a twelve-point stripe, which is one-sixth of an inch, across the type. If they press down more than that, it has a tendency to press the ink into the counters and on the shoulders of the type, and this leads to sloppy printing. On a cylinder press this can be done very easily because they have an ink plate that is type high, and you can adjust rollers so that you can visually see the twelve-point stripe on the ink plate. On a platen press I do it by using a piece of type-high rule. By pulling the saddle out, I lift the rollers away from the type form, and drop them back on and then pull them up again. And I can read on the type-high rule the stripe. If it's too much, you build the bearers up. I use electrician's friction tape to build the bearers up. If it's not enough, then you have to get a new set of roller trucks, which are called gudgeons in the technical term.

DOCTER

Now, when you suggest putting a piece of type-high rule, you would actually lock that up in the chase and put it on the press, and then you would force the rollers out away from the rule mechanically just by pulling them.

HOFFMAN

Pulling them, yes.

DOCTER

And then just let them touch in one place. Otherwise, of course, you would ink the whole rule. So you let them touch in one place and see how wide it is.

HOFFMAN

That's it.

DOCTER

You want twelve points.

HOFFMAN

You can do the same thing by locking up a good-sized cut in there. But you have to be sure that your cut is type high—otherwise you'll get a false reading.

DOCTER

Well, any form would do as long as there's enough material in it.

HOFFMAN

Yeah. They make a set of roller trucks called Morgan expansion trucks which have a rubber center, and by tightening or loosening a nut as part of it you can cause the roller trucks to be bigger or smaller. These are very useful on a platen press. As an aside, and [to] get it down so that the record is available, I might say that the Morgan expansion trucks were invented here in Los Angeles in the early 1900s, and when the inventor died, he left his business to Miss Amy Williams, who operated the Morgan expansion trucks and several other inventions that she had inherited. And when Amy Williams died, she left her entire estate to the Los Angeles Club of Printing House Craftsmen to be used for scholarships. And so we are busy now administering about \$60,000 worth of scholarship money called the Amy Williams Fund.

DOCTER

How interesting. And although platen presses are perhaps seldom seen today, I know these Morgan expansion trucks are still sold, aren't they?

HOFFMAN

Oh, you can't say that platen presses are seldom seen. Every printing office has one platen press to do jobs that call for striking on with pressure, which you can't do in an offset house. For numbering, for perforating, scoring, die cutting, all of this, the platen press is very much with us today, and I predict it will continue to be so for years to come.

DOCTER

When you first started printing, the standard press that might have been seen in most small shops would have probably been something like a 10' x 15' Chandler and Price, maybe a 12' x 18'.

HOFFMAN

Yeah. Those two were very popular. And then the first model of the Miehle vertical had been developed by then, and it was sweeping the country and became the standard job printing press.

DOCTER

Now, what feeders came into prominent use to replace hand labor in the early years of the century?

HOFFMAN

When I was a young fellow we had the Miller feeder, and American Type Founders made one called the Climax. And then Brantjen and Kluge came out with the Kluge automatic press, which became very much the standard single-sheet platen-press feeder, and a great number of Kluges are still in use today.

DOCTER

Where? You mean in small shops?

HOFFMAN

In small shops, commercial shops all over the country, and the company has continued manufacturing this press, making it heavier, and it is widely used for die cutting and for foil stamping.

DOCTER

The Kluge as a standard production press was somewhat chased out just after World War II by the Heidelberg series, wasn't it?

HOFFMAN

Yes. Even today it is making a gallant stand against the Heidelberg, but the German Heidelberg with its windmill-arm feeding system has become the universal platen printing press all over the world. On our trip around the world we could hear the Heidelberg platen. I would look in at the printshops, and I saw them all over India, Pakistan, in the [Hawaiian] Islands, in Singapore, Hong Kong.

DOCTER

The windmill feeding system refers to a four-arm, fanlike feeder. How did it work?

HOFFMAN

It's only two arms.

DOCTER

How did it work?

HOFFMAN

One time at the printing cycle one arm is holding the sheet while it's being printed. As the platen opens up, the arm swings around to delivery, at which time its opposite member has picked up a sheet and is ready to swing it into printing position.

DOCTER

All right. I wonder if we can move on to a somewhat more personal question here. I wonder if you could comment on what you regard as some of the main personal or professional successes in your own life that you are especially happy with in the way of landmarks as you look back—things that you feel worked out well, that you are proud of, that you are happy to put your stamp on.

HOFFMAN

I feel that I've had a relatively uneventful life. I have stayed in one place quite a long time and have achieved modest success wherever I have had opportunity. I would guess maybe the experience at L.A. City College is the best example of that. By staying on one job, preparing for the next, I was able to move into management, and then from management to the instructional level, and maintain that. And then from the instructional level I became a minor administrator, so that all the while I was doing that, I was staying with my first love, which of course is typography.

DOCTER

Was there ever a time when you were not printing regularly, other than for temporary health reasons?

HOFFMAN

I can't think of it. I started when I was twelve years old, and I can't remember ever having a time when I didn't have access to some printing equipment somehow.

DOCTER

As you look back across your life, are there any particular disappointments, concerns that you might have as you look back and say, "If only I had taken this path or done this a little differently or chosen a somewhat different goal"? Are you a person who has any nagging disappointments as you look back?

HOFFMAN

No. I operate under the philosophy that once you've made a choice you don't worry about the other alternative. I do wish that I had been able to attend a four-year college that had a degree course in printing. My academic degrees are with an English major and my master's degree is in higher education, so that I have no formal college training in printing, although I have taught it for all these many years. The only school at the time I was interested was Carnegie Tech [Carnegie Institute of Technology] in Pittsburgh. The Depression was on, I had a job: I couldn't see leaving Los Angeles. So I never went to Carnegie. The other thing that I've often speculated upon was whether I wouldn't have made a much greater national reputation if I had been employed as a book designer by one of the New York large publishers. I think I could have held the job down very nicely, and that being the focal point of book publishing, I probably would have been given greater recognition than I have as a minor printer in the Far West.

DOCTER

I commented earlier just briefly on the matter of health. You've had a serious health problem for the last number of years. Could you briefly tell us about that?

HOFFMAN

All the time that I was teaching I apparently was forcing my voice, and I developed nodules on the vocal cords. I went to Dr. Alden Miller, who is a noted throat man in Hollywood, and he removed the growths from my vocal cords several times, but apparently my speaking habits were such that they

continued to develop. So finally, after three or four minor surgeries. Miller had to go in and actually cut my throat open from the outside and remove what developed at the biopsy to be a cancerous growth on one of the vocal cords. He sewed me up, did a reconstruction job on the vocal cord, and I came out of that quite well. It knocked me for a loop, of course, because having your throat cut whether in fun or in seriousness is not a minor matter. But Miller was not satisfied that he had gotten all of the cancerous tissue, so he suggested that I have a series of X-ray treatments where the X-rays could be localized around the cancerous tissue. So that I had a series of forty of them only about two minutes apiece, but the impact of the total was such that I reacted very negatively. The X-ray treatment was so strong that it killed all of the good tissue as well as the cancerous tissue, if there was cancerous tissue, and one night I discovered that the impact was such that my throat was closing up and I was suffocating. So I was rushed to the Hollywood Presbyterian Hospital and there had a tracheotomy performed, which leaves me with a permanent breathing hole in my throat.

DOCTER

And this, of course, has great impact on the difficulty with which you project your voice. Is there any difficulty, in the sense of it being a hard-work job for you?

HOFFMAN

Yes, I have to push much harder in order to get the false vocal cord that Dr. Miller constructed to vibrate, so that each word calls for a conscious pushing effort. The sound doesn't flow naturally the way it does for normal speakers.

DOCTER

But in a sense, what you have traded off is the great risk of the cancer with a bit of inconvenience. But you've adapted to it, and you've gotten a stronger and stronger voice, have you not, over the past several years?

HOFFMAN

Last time I saw Miller he was very happy, because, according to his thinking, I've had twelve years more of longevity than I would have had if he hadn't gotten the cancer.

DOCTER

Good. How do you see the future of fine printing. high-quality printing, in Southern California?

HOFFMAN

I think there is always going to be a market for fine printing. I think that when a market exists there will be someone alert enough and skillful enough to satisfy the market, so that while it will never be in dollar volume or in number of impressions a great market, there will always be a group of people who desire to have something printed, printed well, and who will support shops such as Ward Ritchie, Grant Dahlstrom, Saul Marks had in their heyday.

DOCTER

Is it fair to say that those were the three shops? Were there not others that never were heralded who could have been thought of in the same league?

HOFFMAN

Well, I mentioned Young and McCallister [Southwest Lithograph Company].

DOCTER

Yes.

HOFFMAN

The Times Mirror Printing and Binding House did a good job. George Rice and Son were quality printers.

DOCTER

But it would only be a handful.

HOFFMAN

Just a handful, yeah.

DOCTER

Do you see letterpress printing as we have known it through 1982) gradually becoming restricted to hobby processes, to backyard and garage printing for fun?

HOFFMAN

I think that the letterpress printer has practically disappeared from the commercial scene. I think the hobby printers are the ones using type now. I would hazard a guess that no commercial shop would be doing much letterpress printing in the near future. [tape recorder off]

DOCTER

I wonder if I could ask you to tell us a little bit about bookbinding in Los Angeles, the people, the technology.

HOFFMAN

Early in the 1920s the Times Mirror Printing and Binding House, a part of the *Los Angeles Times* operation, had a department of special hand binding where they did beautiful leather bindings to order. They were the premier source of binding at that particular time. Other binders were Isaac Brothers down on Wall Street and Earle Gray and Weber McCrea. I met Earle Gray early in the game when he was the binder for our college yearbook that I edited in 1932. He was a splendid binder, an excellent salesman, and built a fine business, which his son Jack Gray is continuing to this day very successfully. Weber-McCrae was two old gentlemen who did fine-edition binding and did a lot of work. Gordon Holmquist used Weber-McCrae almost exclusively. About twelve or fifteen years ago a little Hungarian refugee opened his bookbinding shop in Los Angeles. His name was Bela Blau, and upon discovering Bela I have used him almost exclusively since that time. He is a very conscientious craftsman and does his work well. He has problems getting along with people and has had off-and-on relationships with some of the other printers in Los Angeles, but I enjoy his work and he and I see eye to eye, so we have no problems. With the advent of all of the photo-offset printers, the lithographers, in Los Angeles a trade bindery operation has evolved where the trade binders will fold, stitch, and trim booklets for commercial printers, so that what used to be a normal part of the printing operation after you print the job—to fold it, stitch it, and trim it in your own shop—is now being done very largely by the commercial trade binderies such as Betty Hart's.

DOCTER

Specialists?

HOFFMAN

Specialists, yeah.

DOCTER

I wonder if we could talk about those who have attempted to make type in Los Angeles, or Monotype for that matter. Can you recall an actual type foundry that was making foundry type in Los Angeles? Was that still going on in your day?

HOFFMAN

Oh, yeah. When I was a young man at the Sterling Press, down the street on Twelfth [Street] and San Pedro [Street], the California Composition Company was in business, and they were providing type for most of the printers in Los Angeles. And then after a while Walt [Walter] Gebhard established the Los Angeles Type Founders, Inc., and became dominant in the field. He had competition from the Bell Type [and Rule] Company. They were all manufacturing Monotype, single types to be put in your case. Gebhard went a step or two further and imported quite a few English typefaces that were not available from any other foundry in the United States, and as such, I think, could be considered a legitimate type founder, as opposed to a Monotype composition house. MacKenzie and Harris [Inc.] in San Francisco has done much the same as Gebhard did in Los Angeles, and they provide type for printers all over the United States.

DOCTER

The distinction being, of course, I think that Monotype casting simply produces a radically different letter in terms of hardness as compared to foundry type.

HOFFMAN

Actually, the degree of hardness can be controlled by the type founder. Normally, Monotype uses a modestly hard type because after it's been printed from, it is thrown back into the metal pot, but when type is made for composition out of the cases, they can use a harder formula and make pretty good type. The main distinction, as I see it, had to do with the mats from which the type is cast. The Lanston Monotype [Machine] Company in

Philadelphia had a mat-rental library, and so every person in the United States that had a Monotype could rent the mats, and thus the designs were very widely used. It was only when a company would import mats, or have them made specially, did the Monotype become a typefounder in the same sense as American Type [Founders].

DOCTER

Could we comment on the demise of the American Type Founders? I believe it was in the year 1953 or '54 that the—

### **1.6. TAPE NUMBER: III, Side Two (April 20, 1982)**

DOCTER

As we were running out of tape there, I was just asking if you would refresh my memory. Wasn't it 1953 or '54 when American Type Founders explained that they were essentially going out of the type-founding and type-distribution business?

HOFFMAN

They never announced that they were going out of business, but they did recognize that the photographic composition had made tremendous inroads on their business. And of course, earlier Linotype and Monotype had eliminated their body-type business, so that they cut down very largely on the number of faces that they were casting and maintained a very much reduced program in terms of total volume. When I started printing, the American Type Founders had combined all of the type foundries in the United States, with the exception of Barhard Brothers and Spindler, a major Chicago firm. But in about 1928 or thereabouts they also took over BB&S, so it left them alone in the field. They had several very good years when they introduced many distinctive typefaces and sold a lot of type. But today, while they are still casting type, they do so very slowly. What happens is that you order a font of type, and when the foundry gets enough orders to justify casting, they make a casting of this particular face. So you may have to wait as long as six months or a year for your order to be filled.

DOCTER

But could you order most any face and expect to get it, say, in a year?

HOFFMAN

You can order most any face, but unless there are enough other orders for that same face in that same size from other parts of the United States, you may or may not get it.

DOCTER

So you better pick a popular one.

HOFFMAN

That's right. The advertising agencies and the advertising typographers are still setting a lot of type by hand and are still using a lot of the traditional ATF faces, so even though the commercial printers have given up hot metal, some of the advertising typographers still have a hot-metal department.

DOCTER

This is the last great repository of real type remaining in the United States, then?

HOFFMAN

I think so.

DOCTER

I wonder if we could talk just a little about some of the people in the Rounce and Coffin Club for a minute. How well did you know Lawrence Clark Powell?

HOFFMAN

Well, I knew Larry when he was a clerk at the UCLA library. I would go and visit him long before he had achieved any administrative status, so I guess I've known him quite well for a large number of years.

DOCTER

What kind of person is he?

HOFFMAN

Very dynamic, very energetic. He tends to be quite extrovertish.

DOCTER

Is he a person whose lasting qualities, talents, abilities, creativity are likely to be remembered? Or is he simply a person who is a good salesman?

HOFFMAN

He was an excellent library administrator. He sold Robert Gordon Sproul on his capacity, and Sproul gave him practically unlimited funds, with which he built the UCLA library from a very ordinary, mediocre state college library into one of the great libraries in the academic circles.

DOCTER

What's he like personally?

HOFFMAN

Very friendly, very nice, very thoughtful. He has a good opinion of himself, but I think he is justified in that because he has made substantial achievements, which the university recognizes because they have named their major library building after him. It's now called the Powell Library.

DOCTER

How well did you know Gregg Anderson?

HOFFMAN

Gregg Anderson and I were good friends. We worked together on the early plans for the Western Book Show [Western Books Exhibition]. Gregg and I shared many of those early plans. I remember one interesting experience. He and I were riding out to the University of Redlands, where our show was on and we wanted to check some of the details. During the course of the conversation we got to talking about what it would take to make us financially happy, and I thought I would be happy, as I mentioned to him, if I could make \$3,000 a year. And he sort of shocked me when he said he thought he would like to make \$3,600 a year—\$300 a month. So we were on terms where we could joke about matters of that nature.

DOCTER

What was he like personally? What was his personality?

HOFFMAN

A very reserved, austere person who was not the least bit extrovertish. He was serious, and while he had a wry sense of humor, it seldom showed up. Life was a serious business to Gregg.

DOCTER

What accounts for the fact that Gregg Anderson occupies such a remarkable position in the memory of the Rounce and Coffin Club founders? Of course, he was among the founding members, was he not?

HOFFMAN

Yes. He wasn't there quite at the start, but quickly enough when he came back to Los Angeles and joined up with Ward [Ritchie] , why, he was in the middle of the Rounce and Coffin. We remember him because he was such a methodical and thorough person. Given a job, he saw that it was done, and he had very high standards of craftsmanship. We admired him for that, so that all the way through he was a very staunch friend and one that you could count on for whatever problem you had.

DOCTER

You surely knew Ward Ritchie very well and still do. How would you characterize Ward Ritchie?

HOFFMAN

Ward is, without question, the most outgoing person amongst the printing circles that I have met. Ward is universally friendly. He is quite knowledgeable. He's a spectacular designer in that he is not afraid of being experimental, and also he is a good scholar. In the field of printing he has done his homework. He writes well and he speaks well and altogether is a very admirable person.

DOCTER

Did you ever have an argument with him?

HOFFMAN

Not that I know of.

DOCTER

Is he the kind of person who would get into anything like a continuing battle with others? Or is he just always friendly and outgoing?

HOFFMAN

I don't know of anybody that's ever crossed swords with Ward.

DOCTER

What accounts for the rapid financial failure of Anderson, Ritchie, and Simon after Ward Ritchie left the business?

HOFFMAN

I don't know that it was a rapid failure. I think that during their plush years they expanded too much. I think Joe [Joseph] Simon, who was the production partner, overbought in terms of equipment. They were experimenting with phototypesetting and things like that, and I have a feeling that they were overextended, and when times got a little bit tough they had difficulty in surviving,

DOCTER

I see. You worked closely with Grant Dahlstrom. How would you characterize Grant?

HOFFMAN

Grant was an interesting fellow in terms of becoming friendly. He was quite reserved, had a very wry sense of humor, an excellent printer and a good businessman. So all the way through I had a great deal of admiration for Grant.

DOCTER

Grant had all the necessary know-how, skills, and daily practical experience to do any kind of letterpress printing, did he not?

HOFFMAN

Yes.

DOCTER

An interesting example of his leg-pulling style is that when I interviewed him he tried to convince me—and I think he did convince me—that he really didn't know how to lock up a job and get it on the press, [that] he would have to direct other people to do it.

HOFFMAN

Oh, I'm sure that Grant was a competent printer long before he went to Carnegie Tech. And there, of course, in order to complete his work he had to do a certain amount of mechanical work.

DOCTER

How about Saul and Lillian Marks? Perhaps you could comment on each of them? They certainly had a remarkable partnership.

HOFFMAN

Saul was very difficult to know. I had a good working acquaintance with Saul but never one that you could call personal. He was very reserved, very quiet, and was somewhat reluctant to share what he knew with others. Lillian was Saul's greatest admirer, and she was constantly concerned that Saul was not getting the recognition that she felt he should have had. In addition to that, she was a better business person than Saul, and it was only [when] she got active in the business that they started to get their heads above water.

DOCTER

Are you in any way surprised at some of the designs that Lillian has turned out on her own?

HOFFMAN

Well, it's very evident, of course, that while she has been greatly influenced by working with Saul these many years, she just doesn't quite have the flair that he had for typography.

DOCTER

Do you think that some of that flair might be evidenced in the work that 's now being turned out by Pat [Patrick] Reagh?

HOFFMAN

Very much so. I think that Patrick's work is very imitative of Saul at his best.

DOCTER

Could you comment on the origin of the Western Books Exhibition? I believe Grant Dahlstrom is usually attributed with responsibility for the suggestion. How did it get put into motion so that the exhibit actually came off? Could you comment on what you see, perhaps, as the future of this activity? Does it have a future?

HOFFMAN

To your last question, I have some reservations. But going back to the start, we were sitting around at a Rounce and Coffin meeting. I believe it was at the Constance Hotel in Pasadena. We met every month very regularly on the first or second Tuesday of the month, and we often, after having had a speaker or some type of program, would sit around and worry some of the subjects. Grant was very much distressed that the American Institute of Graphic Arts in New York were not recognizing western printers—only a few of the big-name printers, the Grabhorns [Edwin and Robert], John Henry Nash, and people of that nature were being shown as California printers. And so he thought that perhaps we ought to organize a regional show. This idea was bandied about for a while, and then it was decided that maybe if a committee headed up by Gregg Anderson would go to work on it, maybe we would have some pattern on which to work, while this was the type of thing that Gregg Anderson did so well. So that he organized the show, wrote the call for books, set up the standards for judging, and provided the committee leadership for all of the details. And so what one month was an idea, the next month became a reality. They had issued the call for books, and they selected a judge from the Roxburghe Club in San Francisco, from the Zamorano Club in Los Angeles, and one member of the Rounce and Coffin. I remember this because it was my job on the first exhibition to write to the various libraries and arrange for the showing and plan the itinerary. So I did this and got a suitable container for the books and shipped them off, and followed them around that first year and had quite a chore getting various libraries to, first, respond and then, secondly, to put the show on and then, third, to move it on to the next showing place.

DOCTER

Now, the Western Books has the complication that many books are in part produced in the West, but fewer and fewer books perhaps are completely produced in the western states. Similarly, the design and production of fine books is less than it once was.

HOFFMAN

The initial aim of the show, I am sure, was not to show off publishers but to show off printers. It was a show aimed at showing the best work that printers were doing, and by showing it off to perhaps elevate the standards of western printers. Obviously, those people that entered books that were publishers were looking at it from a different standpoint. They thought that books selected for exhibition would probably also stimulate sales. So it became a dual function, and in recent years I have a feeling that the publishers are beginning to become more important than the printers.

DOCTER

What do you see as the future of Western Books? Will there be a Western Books Exhibit when it reaches the year fifty? I think this is the forty-first.

HOFFMAN

Unless the younger members of the Rounce and Coffin Club can be stimulated to be more interested in the Western Book show, I have a feeling that as the old-timers slacken off on their responsibilities to the show, it will become increasingly difficult for the spadework to be done. Several times in the last ten years we have faltered and have had to practically talk ourselves into putting the show on, so that I have a feeling that we need to generate a fresh group of enthusiasts in order to ensure the continuance of the show.

DOCTER

I wonder if you could tell us, Dick, about ephemera, the place of ephemera in printing and what it is.

HOFFMAN

This is printing designed for usage at one particular occasion and then not having any real lasting value and often spoken of as ephemeral pieces of printing. Interestingly enough, I think if I were to evaluate my own work, I would say that the ephemeral pieces that I have done show the greatest

ingenuity and interest. I have done certificates for almost every organization to which I've belonged. I've done booklets, pamphlets, programs, announcements, so that probably I have done maybe more than ten thousand pieces of ephemeral printing. This—when I dig it out of the drawers in which it has been carelessly stored—still gives me quite a great deal of satisfaction. Because I was employed in a public institution and my salary was pretty well not dependent upon whether the business was profitable or not, I was able to do a lot more of what we call the government work—the freebies. So that for almost every organization to which I belonged—the Bounce and Coffin, the Los Angeles Club of Printing House Craftsmen, the Comma Club, the Zamorano Club, just name them—I have done a large number of jobs. I did a lot of work for the International Graphic Arts Education Association and the Education Council for the Graphic Arts Industry [Inc.]. I did a lot of interesting pieces for my church group. And of course I did a lot of interesting things for myself. I have a rather interesting collection of Christmas cards for the last thirty or forty years that show some rather choice pieces of typography—at least I think they're choice.

DOCTER

I do too. And you've maintained in a very orderly way, I think, a vast collection of this ephemera, have you not? Both your own and others?

HOFFMAN

No, not a very orderly way. I have a couple of drawers where this stuff has been dumped in, and only recently have I had occasion to try to organize it into scrapbooks.

DOCTER

I wonder if we could conclude, Dick, with a little description of your printing chapel [Columbian 415 Chapel], which meets in what used to be the garage of this house—now a very beautiful room on the front of the house—with your Columbian hand-press in there. And I believe this may be the only printing group that's named after a handpress.

HOFFMAN

I think so. During my last few years at Cal[ifornia] State University, Los Angeles, we were given the use of a Columbian handpress, number 415. Five of the young men at the college stripped it down to the bare metal, researched the problem, repainted it, and restored it into working condition. And at the bicentennial anniversary of the country, we printed a copy of the Declaration of Independence on our handmade paper. It is interesting to note that our handmade paper and the original declaration are only one-fourth of an inch different in size, so that our reproduction was literally size for size and line for line with the original. After I retired, my successor did not particularly enjoy having the press at the university. He wanted the room for other equipment, so we moved it to my home. The young men who had spent so much time refurbishing the press wanted to continue using it, so I invited them to come on the first Sunday of every month to use the press and other equipment that I have. And from this, they quickly formed a group which they called the Columbian 415 Chapel, and the group has now grown to about fifteen or sixteen membership—all but two or three of them are graduates of the department at Cal State, L.A. We meet sometimes as a seminar group when I discuss with them the problems inherent in designing a book and the approach. And from this we issued our first book, written by Roby Wentz, a book about Haywood [H.] Hunt [*Haywood Hunt and Hunt Towers: A Reminiscence*], a very prominent San Francisco printer. We got the manuscript. I helped the young men discuss its purpose. We talked about format size, we talked about type style, and then after having done that, we proceeded to set the type, print it, and fold it. The illustrations were done by members of the chapel and photo-offset. The cover was silk-screened here in the backyard. And the whole production, with the exception of the final binding, was work of the chapel members. This so excited them that they wanted to produce another one. This time they produced a miniature. Dr. Ed [Edward] Petko's *Introduction to the Western Book* catalog, which became a very good item in terms of being desired by others. So it quickly went out of print. Right now, they've got two or three other projects under way. In addition, using the Columbian press, we have printed a half dozen or so broadsides on the press, broadsides that I have set up and designed, but the actual presswork being done by members of the chapel.

DOCTER

Do you recall who came up with the name Chapel 415? [laughter]

HOFFMAN

I don't know. It was probably Ethan. He's responsible for much of the creative work.

DOCTER

Ethan Lipton?

HOFFMAN

Ethan Lipton, yeah.

DOCTER

Sometimes when these interviews are all typed up and they're ready to bind them, it's a challenge to find an interesting title. I wonder what you think of this title, Richard J. Hoffman: Some Impressions of a Printer.

HOFFMAN

It's got some interesting play on words. [laughter]

DOCTER

Do you think more than anything else that you will be remembered as a printer or as a teacher of printing?

HOFFMAN

Well, I kind of hope as both because I have pursued both careers very actively.

DOCTER

Yes, but I think it's fair to say that as a first love the last thing that you'd want to give up is printing every day.

HOFFMAN

Oh, I find it a great deal of satisfaction.

DOCTER

Thanks very much for this interview. We appreciate it. And we certainly hope those who read it will find it of interest.

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