

A TEI Project

Interview of Vance Gerry

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1. Transcript

1.1. TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE ONE

April 20, 1989)

ZIEGLER:

I'm sitting here in Powell Library in Lawrence Clark Powell's former office and I'm interviewing Vance Gerry. So are we ready to begin?

GERRY:

Yes, indeed we are.

ZIEGLER:

First, could you tell me a little bit about when and where you were born and where you grew up?

GERRY:

Yes. I was born in Pasadena--I still live there-- almost sixty years ago.

ZIEGLER:

Have you lived there all your life?

GERRY:

Off and on for most of my life, yes, I've lived in Pasadena.

ZIEGLER:

What schools did you attend?

GERRY:

I went to Luther Burbank Grammar School, Thomas Jefferson Grammar School, and then we moved to Altadena from Pasadena. We lived there for the next twenty years, I guess. And I went to Elliot Junior High School, Charles W. Elliot Junior High School in Altadena. And then — I was a very bad student — a very poor student — and I went through high school at a little school for those who weren't smart enough to make it through public school called University School, which was in Pasadena. That's how I managed to get through high school .

ZIEGLER:

Where did you go then?

GERRY:

Well, as I said, I was a pretty bad student, and the only thing I'd ever shown any talent in was a little bit of artwork. Teachers usually liked my artwork in grammar school, watercolors and crayons and so on. So I had sort of always thought that I would be a commercial artist. So when it came time to go to college--which my father [Francis B. Gerry], of course, wanted me to do although I was ill-prepared—I chose art school, because I thought it would be easy and because I could qualify and get in, whereas in a regular college I probably could never have gotten in. But he went along with that, and I went to a place that's still going called Woodbury College. This was right about at the end of the war and it was filled with GI students, and they had expanded their facilities to accommodate them.

ZIEGLER:

Where's that located?

GERRY:

It was on Wilshire Boulevard near Figueroa [Street] at that time. I don't know where it is now. It may still be there. And they had a commercial art department, which was not very good I don't think at that time. But I was pretty young. I wasn't twenty years old when I started at Woodbury. And it was probably- -because I was so young- - better to go there than one of the better art schools when I was only that age. Later on I went to Art Center [School], which was then way out on Third Street. An old girls school. I went there for a semester and I was drafted. After the Korean War I went to Chouinard [Art Institute] , and that was the best school. I went there when they were at the very peak of their ability as an art school, I would say. The teachers and Mrs. [Nelbert Murphy] Chouinard, who had made the school, were still all there and in their prime, and I was lucky enough to be there. Although, at the time, I didn't really realize-- It was later on, when I look back. So I got a pretty good art school education, if not any other kind.

ZIEGLER:

Well, later on we'd like to talk a little more about Chouinard, but could you just mention some of the teachers you had there?

GERRY:

Yes. I think the most influential teacher I had was a man named Don [Donald W.] Graham, who taught drawing and composition. He taught from an entirely different point of view than most other teachers. He always talked about something you didn't understand. And he would either drive you nuts or you fell in love with him. He really went after the very hard, difficult things of art — if you want to say art--and to get students to do these difficult things rather than just copying or whatever, which most of the teachers would settle for. And he was a very-- I never saw any of the artwork he'd ever done himself, but he was. I guess, a man who was born to be teacher. He knew art very well, backwards and forwards, and he could teach it. So I learned a lot from him. Then there was a man named William Moore, who was — I think he was an interior designer by profession, but he taught color and design and he was a magnificent teacher. He had a system that was sort of based on cubism, although he never used the word nor did he want you to use the word. But a lot of it was based on cubism, and he had a system of understanding colors and making designs. He never wanted you to draw with the pencil. You always had to paint the color you wanted on a piece of paper and then cut it out and paste these pieces of paper into some sort of design. It was really very, very instructional. I learned a great deal from him.

ZIEGLER:

So that was good training for a book layout.

GERRY:

I suppose so, yes. Of course, I had had some interest all the time in art school in layout and advertising, but I never took that. I wanted to be an illustrator, a magazine illustrator. So I wasn't really ever-- Although I was still interested in printing and designing and that sort of thing--and I did take some advertising courses--my prime interest was illustration.

ZIEGLER:

I was wondering-- The name Don Graham rings a bell in something I was reading about [Walt] Disney [Studio], Didn't he give classes at Disney later on?

GERRY:

Right. Not later on — I think it was earlier. I think when Walt Disney wanted to do *Snow White*, he felt that his people were not adequately schooled in drawing. They were more like people who had come along and picked up animation, and were not really very good draftsmen. They could move things around and be funny, but they couldn't draw very well. And he felt that they weren't going to be able to make *Snow White* unless he had some of his artists better trained. So he hired Don Graham from the Chouinard Art School to teach

his people part-time. This was, I think, in the early thirties. This might have been as early as 1931 or '32, I believe. And Don Graham himself told me that it was an amazing thing for him to be thrown into this cartoon world. He himself had been steeped in the traditions of the Renaissance. That's what he loved, the Renaissance masters--at that time, anyway--and here he was in the world of animated cartoons! And he said he had learned more from them, probably, than they learned from him. [laughter]

ZIEGLER:

What would you say was his influence on the style of Disney Studios?

Actually, we're sort of skipping all over the place, but--

GERRY:

I really don't know because I was never in one of his classes at Disney. When I arrived at Disney in 1955 he was writing a book, which later came out much edited, was writing a book, which later came out much edited, called *The Art of Animation*. That came out around '57 or '58, and he was at the studio at that time part-time, working on the book in a room he had there where he had access to all of the Disney material. What was the rest of that question?

ZIEGLER:

Well, I was saying we're sort of jumping ahead, and maybe we can go back to your childhood and growing up years and so forth, and then talk more about Don Graham and Chouinard later.

GERRY:

Okay.

ZEIGLER:

Could you tell me some about your early experiences with books? Maybe things that first got you interested in books as works of art, and considerations of illustration, layout, design, all that.

GERRY:

I can't remember that I-- We always read. My mother [Clella White Gerry] always took me to the library. She always read; I always read. Although mostly always just novels. She liked movies and novels, and we were always at the library. But more, like I say, for purposes of entertainment. So the library was not a mystery to me. I was never frightened. In fact, I still feel more comfortable in a library than perhaps anywhere else. [laughter]

ZIEGLER:

Well, I'm delighted to hear that.

GERRY:

I learned to read in spite of being a bad student, but I had no interest in a book as a manufactured object of art. It wasn't until I worked for Grant Dahlstrom that I began to see-- He would point out things about books. And even though I wasn't interested in printing a book at the time I worked for him, I think his

influences were probably all stored away in my mind, and when I did get interested I could draw on those experiences and what he had taught me-- I mean, without teaching. It was a work situation; he was not a teacher. It was just what you picked up. He was a book-oriented printer, I would say. Even though he would do a lot of commercial work, his printing instincts were from the book rather than from the advertising world.

ZIEGLER:

Do you remember some specific instances when he showed you about layout? Or when he was working on something and it struck you, and you think in retrospect that it influenced you?

GERRY:

Well, I got to be interested in printing when I worked for him. Although I had gone to work for him because I needed some money. This was during the war, and young people could get jobs because everybody was off fighting the war. The men weren't home, so boys could get jobs. And I could have the money which my father wasn't going to give me. I mean, no one's father gave them money in those days. The only way you got money was by working for it. So I got a job with Grant because I'd had a little printing experience. I had a friend in junior high school who worked in a local print shop, and he said, "Well, you could make money. You could make \$8 or \$10 a week in your part-time." That sounded very good to me, because there were a number of things I wanted. There was a certain kind of toy that I was trying to collect, and they were all terribly expensive and I never had any money. So when I went to work for Grant-- I mean, when I took my first paycheck I was so excited I took it to the store to buy this object I'd wanted. I can't remember what happened right now-- it was either sold or it was broken or something had happened. But I had the money, so I had to spend it. So I bought a little toy printing press which I took back and showed to Grant.

ZIEGLER:

Did it actually work? Could you print things on it?

GERRY:

Oh, yes, it was a real printing press. It had metal type and it was a small platen press.

ZIEGLER:

About how big was it?

GERRY:

I guess the inside of the chase was 3" X 5". And I think he was a little astounded that he had so influenced me in a couple of weeks that I'd gone out and bought a printing press. But, anyway, I took it home and I began to — He was throwing out a lot of type that he had inherited from the previous owners that he didn't like, and he would sell it to me for the scrap metal price. So I was

busily getting some after-hours, setting up some type that he didn't want. And I took it home. I was printing at home in my bedroom. Scott [E.] Haselton, a publisher who shared the building with Grant, used to call me the "bedroom printer, " and he thought that was terribly amusing. I guess I was about fourteen, fifteen years old. And so whatever I printed, of course, I would bring it in and show Grant, and he would criticize it. So that was the way-- Probably his criticism of my work is the only example I can think of--

ZIEGLER:

What were some of those early things you printed?

GERRY:

Oh, I suppose some silly, ephemeral things. I can't even remember. But he would always say, "Don't use so many kinds of type. Don't put so much ink on. Try not to have it going all over." The standard things that a person would tell you. I mean, they weren't standard--they were better than standard. That was the only time I could think of where he directly influenced the way I would work. Because in the shop the boys were not in any creative capacity. We swept the floor or we washed the presses, or we might run the little jobbing press and print business cards and things like that, that he didn't want to waste anybody else's time doing.

ZIEGLER:

And also distributing type. You have an amusing little essay on that.

GERRY:

Oh, yes. I also was distributing type, right. That was a long and arduous job, getting rid of all the type that had been set and used. It had to be all put back in the cases, and it was very tedious and tiring. Actually, anything I did that was creative from Grant Dahlstrom was kind of picked up on the sidelines. Because I didn't do creative work for him. So it was just sort of like he would say, "Here's an example of something that looks pretty good." Or "Why did they ruin this? Look what this guy did to this! He put all these ornaments on here, and he didn't need those." But, like I say, I must have picked this up indirectly, because I wasn't that interested in printing. I was going to go to art school I kept telling everybody, which of course I later on did.

ZIEGLER:

So you didn't think at that time you might be a printer yourself eventually?

GERRY:

No, no. It wasn't going to be my employment when I grew up. I was not going to be a printer, no. I mean, it was terrible. It was a lot of work, and it was dirty, [laughter] But I guess I did learn, because from then on, after I left Grant-- And, of course, we had contact until he died. For the next thirty years, I suppose, we got together and I would show him things I did. He kind of came to appreciate me as a printer. I mean, for a long time he thought I was just, you

know, doing terrible things. But later on, from listening to him and taking his comments, I got to where he almost liked some of my things! [laughter]

ZIEGLER:

Well, you may be overstating the case, but could you tell me about some of his early criticisms of your printing? And then some of the things he really liked?

GERRY:

Well, I don't think he ever came out and said he really liked anything. But he did compliment my presswork on a cookbook I did.

ZIEGLER:

Which was that?

GERRY:

That was called *Recipes for* - - Gosh, I can't remember. It was by-- I can't even remember the author.

ZIEGLER:

Special Recipes for Special People.

GERRY:

It was a little recipe book I printed out. I printed it out on a hand cylinder press, and it was very good presswork. I did a lot of tedious make-ready and it came out pretty good. Vera Ricci was the author.

ZIEGLER:

Yes, I saw it at the Clark Library.

GERRY:

Maybe it wasn't really praise. It was just that he didn't throw it all out or tear it up or jump all over it for being wrong that I took to be praise. [laughter] But most of his criticisms were "Don't use so many kinds of type." Also, very frequently he would point to others of his contemporaries and he would say, "Look at what he did! He did this wrong." Or "Why did he do this?" Or "Why did he put this type down here? Why did he use such small type?" Things that he personally didn't like as far as design goes.

ZIEGLER:

So his style was very simple and elegant?

GERRY:

Yeah. I don't know elegant, but it was simple. He went for simplicity and underplayed everything pretty much. That was the sort of man he was. He dressed in a very underplayed sort of way and was a very modest man, with modified speech. He very properly and carefully learned the English language and was a big stickler for the English language in terms of printing, how it applied, and had all sorts of various books on the subject. Well, I can't think right off of everything about Grant.

ZIEGLER:

We'll maybe talk more about him later, and of course anything that you think of along the way we'd be glad to have here on the tape. Who were some of the other people that worked at the Castle Press while you were there?

GERRY:

I mentioned Scott Haselton, who had quite a history in printing. There's a book on him published by Dawson's [Book Shop], I think, and printed by Pat [Patrick] Reagh, I believe, which is a little short biography [*Scott E. Haselton and His Abbey Garden Press* by David W. Davies]. He owned the building. He had his own plant there. He and Grant shared the building, and they each had their own printing plant within the building. And they shared each other's equipment, also. Haselton printed the *Cactus and Succulent Journal*. In fact, he may have founded the magazine. He had lived in the desert, because he had been gassed in the First World War and he had come to the desert to live. The doctors thought that would be better for him. And that's where he got interested in cactus and succulents. So he got into printing and moved out of the desert into L.A. , and by various means he learned to be a printer and got interested in publishing. He published quite a number of books on the subject of cactus and succulents. He'd been associated with the early printer in Garvanza [area of Los Angeles] , whose name I should remember- -Clyde Browne. He had worked with Browne and another woman who worked there by the name of Helen Sloan. She had worked for Clyde Browne. She'd done her apprenticeship with him in Clyde Browne's Abbey of San Encino Press. I believe that's what it was called. She'd learned Linotype from him, and she was primarily a Linotype operator. But she did a lot of makeup, and she did some small platen press work. I learned all the particulars of printing from her. You know, the actual setting and distributing of it. The tedious tasks of printing I learned from her, whereas Grant spent most of his time setting the type by hand. Hand-setting the type or in his office or out selling. He never went out and ran a press or anything like that.

ZIEGLER:

How much of what they did at Castle Press was hand-set and how much was done on the Linotype?

GERRY:

I'd say anything that had more than two or three lines was set on a Linotype. Mostly just the display type was set by hand and headings and that sort of thing. But never any text. That was all done on the Linotype. Either by their own machine, which belonged to Scott and Grant merely rented time on it, or whether it was done by a trade typesetter. It was mostly all done on Linotype.

ZIEGLER:

Would you like to say more about how Scott Haselton and Helen Sloan and these other people influenced you, then, in how you eventually became a printer yourself?

GERRY:

Well, I would guess it would be more like I didn't know I was being taught. I didn't know I was learning anything while I was there. It was just a job. But then later on when I wanted to print myself, I followed how they did it. That was the way I'd learned, and I suppose someone else would do it a different way. But I pretty much started printing the way we had done it at the Castle Press. And the way Haselton had done it. I wanted to get a Linotype and press like his, because I always thought he had a really good thing going for him. Not that he made any money, but he had this magazine, plus his other books he published, and he did everything except the press and the typesetting. Helen would set the type, and then he would make up the pages on the stone himself and get it all locked up and in the press. The pressman would run off the magazine. Then Scott would run it through the folder. He'd trim it, he'd stitch it, he'd package it, and then he'd mail it, all there in his shirt and tie. And I thought, "What a nice job. What a nice man. What a nice way to live your life." But I never achieved that.

ZIEGLER:

Yeah, that was entirely his own product.

GERRY:

Right. Grant always said that he made a lot of money, but I can't believe it.

ZIEGLER:

Do you happen to know what the circulation was of the *Cactus and Succulent Journal*? Or approximately?

GERRY:

Well, I'm just trying to remember the piles of the magazines. I suppose it was probably a little more than a thousand worldwide. But that's a guess. I think it's still being published in Santa Barbara.

ZIEGLER:

Was it mainly about raising cacti? Or was it, I don't know, about seeing cacti in the desert?

GERRY:

It had photographs in it. I was not at any time interested in cactus, so I can't say that I ever read it. But there were articles by different people, and I think Scott himself wrote some articles. In fact, he had a little cactus garden next door in another building. When he moved next door, it had a little patio and he had his own cactus garden there. So he wasn't just a guy that published the magazine. He really was interested in cactus and succulents. And then I guess he sold it. I can't remember when. He may still be alive. He moved to Vermont. Last

time I talked to him he was in his eighties and he was living in Vermont, where apparently he came from. So for a man who was gassed in the First World War and wasn't expected to live very long--was told to live in the desert--he lasted a pretty long time!

ZIEGLER:

Yes. [laughter]

GERRY:

Let's see if there are any other people that worked there. House Olson came in once. He had been one of the original founders of the Castle Press. Before Grant Dahlstrom bought it, it was founded by Roscoe Thomas and House Olson. Roscoe put up the money and the selling ability and the editorial ability, and House Olson was the printer. He was a typographer. He also had worked for Browne, although I think he came from the East. He had worked for Browne too. But they started the shop and then in 1942 or '43 Grant bought it from him. It never was very successful. It always operated in the red. They did some very nice work. But it was in the middle of the Depression when they started, and the war ended when they broke up. Thomas went away to be a manager at a department store, Nash's Department Store in Pasadena. Olson went off somewhere to manage a maritime-- For survivors of wrecked ships somewhere in South America. Which seems very improbable, but it didn't last too long, and he came back and he worked for Grant for about two weeks. That's where I met him. He ran the vertical presses there for Grant for about two weeks, and then they had a falling-out or something and he went on to do something-- Oh, no, he didn't go do something else. He was a printer until the end of his life. But he moved from print shop to print shop, I understand. David W. Davies wrote a book on him called House Olson, Printer.

ZIEGLER:

Yes, I saw that. Could you say some about House Olson's style as a typographer?

GERRY:

Well, he was very much a contemporary typographer of his day, of his time. He didn't hark back to the old stuff, the old style, or try to imitate some ancient thing like Elbert Hubbard. Even Clyde Browne was very much a sort of the old printer trying to revive the ancient William Morris-type stuff. Olson was a contemporary typographer working in his own time. That's about all I can say. He was good. They did a few books at the Castle Press when Thomas and Olson owned it, and they're very nice.

ZIEGLER:

Several of these people you've mentioned had worked with Clyde Browne. Could you say some about his style and the products of the Abbey of San Encino Press?

GERRY:

Well, let's see. Browne started as a printer much earlier than these others I mentioned.

ZIEGLER:

Did you ever meet Clyde Browne?

GERRY:

No, he died in 1942. He had been printing since probably around the turn of the century, and then into the teens he was a Linotype operator. He worked for the [Los Angeles] Times, I think, for a long time. Then he started his own shop in Garvanza, which is near Highland Park, near Los Angeles. The old abbey he built with his own hands out of stone. As I say, he was what you call an antiquarian. He liked the past. He used great flowery language in his writing, and his colophons would be two pages long with heavy purple prose. And he called it the Abbey of San Encino. He fancied himself, I guess, as a monkish sort of printer, although he certainly wasn't a monkish sort of man. He did many, many things other than printing. It's amazing, when you read the book about his life [*Clyde Browne and the Abbey San Encino* by David W. Davies], the many things he did do. But the old building he built is still down there at Figueroa and York [Boulevard], or in that vicinity. It was his home and his print shop. His kind of printing was, I would say, in the style of Elbert Hubbard, that school of printing where they revived a lot of old typefaces. Although some of Browne's things were very nice. He was interested in the antiquity of printing. Oh, he did lots of contemporary printing. That wasn't where his fancy lay, I don't think.

ZIEGLER:

Can you name some of what you consider his best work?

GERRY:

You know, I can't. I saw a display of his only once in my life that I think Ed [Edwin H.] Carpenter had put together. They had it in a bookshop in Laguna [Beach]. And one time the Rounce and Coffin Club was down there and they visited this bookshop and saw this display of Clyde Browne's material. It was all very nice, but I can't tell you that I remember any one particular piece.

ZIEGLER:

Okay. Well, maybe at this point we can quickly summarize the things that happened to you up until the time you started printing again on your own. Some of these things we'll come back to a little later. But maybe a quick biography of your life from the time you left the Castle Press to the time you began printing again.

GERRY:

Well, let's see. I left the Castle Press and the war was still on. They had a plan called the "four-four plan" for young people so that they could work at various

defense factories or wherever they needed. I worked at the Castle Press. So I worked four hours and went to school four hours. But then, clever lad that I was, I quit Grant Dahlstrom and went home. And for some reason-- I don't know why my mother went along with this, but instead of telling the school that I was no longer working, I continued to go to school only four hours a day. The other four hours I took off and went to movies and such as that. Until finally one day they called Grant to find out what was going on, and I was called into the principal's office to find out what I had been doing since I wasn't working there. [laughter] But, anyway, I worked for Grant again many times, off and on. On summers or at nights, they'd have me come down and do some work. Of course, it was a nice source of income when I was going to school. Like I say, I went to Woodbury, and that wasn't too successful. Then I got to Art Center, which was a very good school. We were drafted, a friend of mine [John Hoernle] and I were drafted, out of Art Center before we even had finished a semester. And then we came back after the Korean War. He went back to the Art Center, and I went to Art Center and said, "Well, can you give me credit for this partial semester I put in before we went into the army?" And they said no, they wouldn't do that. So that, in combination with the fact that it was a terribly long way away from home-- Way out in Los Angeles, way out beyond La Brea [Avenue], on Third [Street] I think, and I lived in Altadena. I decided I'd go to school closer, which was the Chouinard school. It was on Grand View [Street] between Seventh [Street] and Eighth [Street] near MacArthur Park. I went there, and fortunately-- It wasn't a studied choice, but it was certainly a lucky choice. Because I was about twenty- four years old, and I was old enough to understand some things I probably wouldn't have otherwise, because I'm very slow to catch on to things anyway. So I went there for about two years on the GI Bill. Oh, maybe-- It was about two years, two and a half years, and I began to realize that I wasn't going to be an illustrator. It required a lot of talent. Once the famous illustrator Andrew Loomis had come from somewhere and given this talk to aspiring young artists, and he said, "You have as much of a chance to be a magazine illustrator as you do to be a movie star!"

ZEIGLER:

Oh, how depressing.

GERRY:

Yeah, it was. It wasn't until I was about twenty- six that I decided I wasn't going to be able to do it. So what was I going to do? I could keep on going to school. I still had some GI Bill left. So I was talking to Grant again, and he said, "Why don't you come work for me and be a salesman? A salesman meets the customers and he designs all the jobs, so you'll use your art school training and you'll have a job." Well, the idea of a salesman was absolutely the last

thing I wanted to do. I mean, one reason a person likes to be an artist is because they're by themselves. They don't ever have to talk to anybody.

ZEIGLER:

Yeah. [laughter]

GERRY:

And to be a salesman was really — I mean, I just couldn't conceive of it. But he made it sound very good. He would help me, and he said, "There's nothing to selling. All you have to do is have confidence in your product." Well, I could do that. And he said, "Selling is just a matter of making a continual appearance in front of your public. Why, I used to know a salesman who was the most socially obnoxious person you would ever come across, that was always coming into our office, always hanging around. Nobody liked him, but he always got the printing job. They always gave him the work." So I said, "Okay. I'll do that. Grant." I went back to school and I told Don Graham, "I'm going to quit school and I'm going to work. A man has offered me a job. I'm grown up. I'm an adult now, and I'm going to go to work." And he said, "Oh, you can't do that, because you have spent all this time in art school." And, I suppose in parentheses, "I have spent all this time trying to teach you something." I don't know if he thought that or not, but he didn't want me to do it. He wanted me to go on and be an artist, which was the first time he had ever even indicated that I should even be an artist. [laughter] But, anyway, he said, "You go out to the Disney Studios. They're hiring some people out there because of television. Here's this person. You call him up and go out there." So I called this person, and they said-- I mean, Disney was not the place necessarily I wanted to have a job. I hadn't thought about Disney since I was about ten years old. I put together a portfolio that night and took it out the next day, and they looked at it. And here I was. I walked into this huge-- It was like a campus. They had lawns and trees and people roaming around. It looked like a school .

ZEIGLER:

Where was the Disney Studio?

GERRY:

This was the Disney Studio on Buena Vista Street in Burbank. There were all these people. I must have come there just at break time. So I was kind of, you know, "Is this a place where people really work?" I was used to dingy old places with machinery and so-- They looked at my portfolio, and they called me back and said, "Yes, you can start at so-and-so a date." So I told Grant, "I'm not going to be a salesman after all. I'm going out to Disney." Well, his only comment was, "Well, I sure don't approve of what he did to *Alice In Wonderland*." So I said, "Oh? Well, gee." So I went out to work with the man who ruined *Alice in Wonderland*.

ZIEGLER:

[laughter] Do you have any general comments on that? I mean, Disney has taken a lot of illustrated children's classics and redone the pictures.

GERRY:

Oh, sure. Well, that's what he was good at, redoing them, putting some entertainment into them and making them reach a large audience. I worked at Disney for quite a while. But it was a very-- It is a very collaborative sort of work. All motion picture work is. There wasn't really much room for one's own ego to show through. You could never say, "I did this or I did that," because somebody else had already worked on it or you'd worked on somebody else's efforts. So, for some reason, I got back to thinking about printing, and it's something that I can do at home. I kept looking in the Los Angeles type founders catalog. And I was telling my wife [Mary Palmer Gerry] about what fun it would be. We would have a little press in the basement and all. So one Christmas my foolish wife bought me a font of type. Her brother [Russell Palmer], who was in the magazine business, got from his printer a case and a stick. And they gave it to me for Christmas. Well, I started to put the type in the case. I guess this would be in the early sixties. And I could even remember almost the whole lay of the case, of the California job case, and which compartment which letter went into. So I was all excited.

ZIEGLER:

That's quite an accomplishment, having tried some printing myself last quarter. I didn't learn the case.

GERRY:

Well, remember I had worked at it over and over and over.

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ZIEGLER:

Okay. You were telling about how your wife gave you a font of type and your brother-in-law found a type case for you, and you remembered the lay of the case.

GERRY:

So I had to get a printing press. I went down to a man named Harry Lincoln, who was down on Kingsley [Drive] , right near Beverly [Boulevard] and Ardmore [Avenue] . Just off of Beverly. And he had in his garage-- He catered to amateur printers. He had little hand printing presses and he had used type. Everything for the lovely amateur printer. It was great. It was fun to go there. I'd go on a Saturday and buy this, and then I bought the press.

ZIEGLER:

How much did presses cost then?

GERRY:

This was a 5" X 8" Kelsey, and it cost \$65, I think. It was either brand-new or it was practically new. I don't know what they cost today, but probably considerably more. Then I would buy some type from Mr. Lincoln and the leads and the slugs and the cases. A used case ran about \$3 to \$4 in those days. I built a little print shop down in the basement of our house. And it was fun. We did little ephemeral things--I can't remember any of them now--and we did a couple of books. A little book [*Some Epigrammatical Notes*] by a fellow at work who used to write little sayings down and leave them on your desk when you weren't looking.

ZIEGLER:

A fellow worker at Disney?

GERRY:

This was a fellow named Tony [Anthony] Rizzo. He was a background painter. This was at the Disney Studio. So that was probably the first book I did, a book of his sayings. Little things he had written and left on my desk. I did it one page at a time. And a man who was an animator named Lou [Louis] Appet--he later became the business agent for the cartoonist local [Screen Cartoonists Guild]. He taught me how to bind my first book. It was printed one sheet at a time on both sides and then it was perfect-bound. The edges of the pages were all glued together, glued to a piece of super, and then it was put in a case. If you pulled the pages good and hard, they would come right out, but it was done. It was my very first book.

ZIEGLER:

The librarian's joke that perfect-bound is far from perfect. [laughter]

GERRY:

Right. And I guess I did maybe ten copies of that. Then later on-- I'm sorry, I bound ten copies. Then later on I issued some more with a wrapper. Then I think I did another book--and this is all on the little 5" X 8" Kelsey--called *The Night before Christmas*. Everybody does that. And bound it in red. By this time, I'd bought some nice type. I bought Bembo narrow italic, and that's what I set *The Night before Christmas* in.

ZIEGLER:

What was the font that your wife gave you?

GERRY:

Oh, she gave a font of 18-point Ultra Bodoni. It's a very black face. It's very thick Bodoni. It wasn't very practical, but I think I may still have it and may still be using it. For certain things it's good. So the Christmas book I did and bound in green enamel paper, and it had a multicolored title page. I think I did ten of those. I bound them on the dining room table. We didn't have a--

ZIEGLER:

You wrote the forward for it?

GERRY:

I think so, yes. I guess I was getting into--

ZIEGLER:

I remember reading an amusing forward at the Clark about how Clement [C.] Moore wanted to be remembered as a theologian and ended up being remembered for *The Night before Christmas*.

GERRY:

Yes, I guess that must have been the first time I did that. Because almost everything afterwards I had to make some comment on. I did not think of myself as a writer at all. But then that didn't seem enough. Now, I was interested in book printing and I got a larger press. I got a Chandler 8" X 12". Some friends helped me move it, and I put some concrete piers in the basement and built the printshop around it. Our house was on the side of a hill, so there was room to expand underneath the house, because the house was empty below where the hill sloped. And so I built — That would be the second printshop, because I had the bigger press and then I got a proof press, a little Hoe or Miles. A little cast-iron drum-cylinder press, the crudest kind of press, for proofs only. And I had some more cases of type and I bought some more type, and I was pretty much fixed on printing at this time. So I worked in that little shop for quite a while. I took the press apart completely and cleaned it all up and painted it. I may have done some other books, and then I did one about the platen press, which was the kind of press I had, which was a little jobbing press.

ZIEGLER:

Is that the one with the ground plate that inks?

GERRY:

Right. And opens and closes on your hand, or not, hopefully. That would be my second serious printshop. I was getting a little more serious now. Around 1965, we would visit Laguna Beach frequently. In the window of the newspaper when you would walk by, there was an old Linotype there, and I got intrigued. I wanted to get a Linotype. Because as a kid working for Dahlstrom, I had been interested in this fascinating machine that did these things. But, you know, I was never allowed to get near it, because it was a very sensitive, very touchy machine. Boys were not supposed to ever get near it. I mean, if Helen Sloan ever caught you anywhere near the vicinity of it, she would really give you a good chewing out. So I wanted-- I was really interested in the mechanics of it, I would guess, equally as much as in the ability to set type. So as time progressed, I became more and more obsessed with this idea of getting a machine. It was coincidental with the time when most printers were going over to offset and getting rid of their hot metal equipment. I found a dealer by the

name of Nate Freeman, who had a printing metal service where they serviced hot metal people by re-melting their metal type for them and cleaning it up and putting it back into bars that could be made into more type. That was the service they offered. But on the side, he was also a dealer in used machinery. So I bought my first Linotype from him for \$600, I think. It was a terrible lot of money. And I also bought from him a Miehle vertical, which could print four pages up and feed itself. It was an automatic job cylinder press. And I bought a paper cutter, and I moved it all into a building in South Laguna. My intention was eventually to move down there and have this shop. So this was my third shop. Now it was serious business. I invested probably \$3,000 in all this stuff. I don't know how my wife went along with it, but she seemed to, for a while anyway. So that's when I started the Weather Bird Press. We would drive down every weekend. We had a house there, and we would go down every weekend and slave away in the print shop. I'd print anything anybody wanted me to print to sort of help pay for it.

ZIEGLER:

For a while you called your press the Peach Pit Press.

GERRY:

Right. I think when I first started printing, I'd read or seen a number of articles about a guy in the East named Morris or "Moe" Liebowitz, who was the champion of — What do you want to say? Bedroom printers, backroom printers, amateur printers. And he had gathered all sorts of material from people who were changing their technology. He had a lot of fun with it, did amazing things with old type and old wooden type that people had given him. I forget what his press was called. I think it was the Bluegrass Press or something. But people had funny names for their presses--they all tried to be amusing and say amusing things. So I thought Peach Pit Press was very-- what? -alliterative.

ZEIGLER: Yeah. I like it. I like both your names.

GERRY:

But then when I went to Laguna, or when I got the Linotype and the bigger and larger press, I thought, "No, this is too serious." So we tried out all sorts of names. My wife came up with Weather Bird.

ZIEGLER:

How did you come upon that?

GERRY:

Well, I think — We were trying to think of names like the "Tide Pool," something to do with the beach. Then, also, I had learned that Gerald Murphy, who was an expatriate of the twenties and a friend of Hemingway and Picasso, lived in the south of France and in Paris-- He had a yacht. And in his yacht he put Louis Armstrong's record of "Weatherbird [Rag]." He put this record in his yacht, the keel of his yacht--he so much liked the record. It felt like it gave him

good luck or something. So when I remembered that, I thought, "Yeah, 'Weather Bird.' That sounds good. If Gerald Murphy would do that, that sounds good enough for me." I mean, I didn't do it because of Louie. I mean, I'm a great fan of Louie Armstrong, but that isn't why I did it. Because "Weather Bird" sounded like something to do with the beach. See the birds sitting out there .

ZIEGLER:

Yeah, it ' s a great name, and you have a beautiful logo of the weather bird.

GERRY:

I never did come up with a logo.

ZIEGLER:

Oh, I thought it was sort of acting as a logo, just a single bird.

GERRY:

I used like a little sandpiper for a while. But I really don't have a logo. I keep thinking I'm going to design one, but I never have. Now, where did that get us? Up to the Weather Bird Press, right?

ZIEGLER:

Yes.

GERRY:

Shall I go on with that?

ZIEGLER:

Yes.

GERRY:

In about 1968 I went to — I talked my wife into going down-- I wanted to live at the beach, and I was going to quit my job and I was going to make a successful printing company out of this. So every Wednesday I'd go out and sell, which I had no idea how to do. I would just go visit people. I did have one pretty good account from a friend who had a company that made heart valves [Hancock Laboratories], and he gave me a lot of business. But what I wanted to do was be like-- I had seen Grant and Ward [Ritchie] and Haselton-- They had supported their book printing by commercial printing. So I was going to not only do the commercial printing to pay for the whole thing, I was going to be able to do some books along with that. And I did. I printed more and more books. And the publications that I did were money-making, commercial printing. So, really, it lasted about six months. The studio called me and they said, "If you come back, we'll do this and that and make these concessions, " and so on and so forth. My wife didn't like Laguna, or didn't like the beach, and I was naturally worried that I wasn't going to be able to keep this thing going. So I said, "Okay, we'll go back, and I'll go back to work. But we're going to buy a house and it's going to have room so that I can have all this equipment and have this shop in the backyard. Now, that's my deal." Okay. So we looked

around until we found the house which you saw the other day. That was 1969 or '70. I moved in and I had a garage built and had all my equipment moved up from Laguna, and the press stayed there for another ten years. And I did it on my spare time, just about like today. So I worked there for quite a while in the shop in the backyard, which was about six hundred square feet. So there was room for everything. I even had a small horizontal cylinder press that would print a sheet 22" X 28". I used that for a while, but it wasn't very good. Finally I got rid of it and got a large Vandercook that would print about a 19" X 25" sheet. That was my best press. It was a hand-operated, but it would still-- Got some of my best work out of that. Then in about 1977, I moved to Fallbrook and I built a house. It was a very small house with an eight-hundred- square-foot shop. At that time I had just retired from work, and I felt I had enough to just barely get by on. I could run my shop and do what I wanted to do! Which I did for about two years, and those were a good two years. Did a lot of work. Then I went into partnership with Patrick Reagh in 1980. He talked me into becoming his partner. Meanwhile, I had gone back to the studio a couple of times to pick up another grubstake. They were very good about taking me back on projects they had. So Pat and I became partners--that lasted about a year. And so now all my equipment was divided up between Pat's and what was left down in Fallbrook. So I guess I rearranged another shop down in Fallbrook, but I remodeled the house so the shop was much smaller now. What had been a shop, I turned into bedrooms. Then, two or three years ago, I decided I didn't want to live in the country anymore. I hadn't done all the things I had thought I was going to do with the house and the property. So I gave all my equipment to Ray Ballish, who is a collector out at the Orange Empire [Railway] Museum. He came and picked it all up, the machinery and so on I had, and took it to a storage in Paris. He one day hoped to have a museum building there. So that's where the stuff is. I mean my equipment. I was going to give it up and be a painter of watercolors and not be bothered with machinery and printing. So that lasted about two years, two or three years. Ray had set it up so we could work in Paris. He had a little operating print shop there. Paris, California, down by Riverside. In case you were thinking it was Paris, France. ZEIGLER: Yeah, I was wondering.

GERRY:

So that lasted about two years, I guess. Recently, I built a shop again in the backyard.

ZIEGLER:

So you found you missed printing?

GERRY:

Right. I wanted to get another Linotype and a press. There were some manuscripts that came my way that I was interested in. Although I haven't done

them. So here I am again, back with a little print shop. I have a Washington handpress that I borrowed, and I have a C4 typesetting machine and a few cases of type and a board shear and a table, and that's about it. And a large cabinet to hold all the miscellaneous junk.

ZIEGLER:

What are the manuscripts?

GERRY:

Well, the first thing that got me interested--and made me want to be a printer again--was Jane Apostol's manuscript for the biography of Olive Percival, who was an interesting California book woman, who died, I guess, in the forties. She [wrote] a very interesting story about this very amazing woman, very creative and loved books. Spent her whole life--or I think most of her whole life--taking care of her mother. She built a little house over in Highland Park. She worked for an insurance company all of her life--or the latter part of her life, thirty years I think--and financed all her book collecting and her house on her small salary. Anyway, so that was interesting and I wanted to do that. But then, of course, I didn't have a shop. There was an ad in the paper for a Colt's Armory press, which was the kind of press I had tried to get when I very first started and instead I had to buy a Miehle vertical. But the Colt's Armory press is like a heavy-duty platen press, like a job press. It has a tremendous amount of strength. You could print four pages on it at four pages up and have some kind of control over it. But I could never find one. So that was the other thing that made me want to start printing again. A guy had one for sale, although I didn't get it. I kept thinking I would get one, so I was tricked back into printing.

ZIEGLER:

[laughter] Well, it sounds like it really was hard to give it up.

GERRY:

Yeah. Well, as Mr. Haselton always used to say, "You know, printing gets in your blood and you never get it out! Ha-ha-ha, you're going to get it in your blood one of these days and it will never get out." And, you know, he was just joking around, but he was sort of right. People who have ever fooled around with printing always either remember it with fondness or keep going back to it.

ZIEGLER:

Yes, I had a lot of fun printing here at the library school.

GERRY:

Oh, with Diana [Thomas]? ZEIGLER: Yeah.

GERRY:

They have that press, the Harmar? What's it called? Is it the Harmar press?

ZIEGLER:

I'm afraid I'm bad at remembering names.

GERRY:

It was a handpress, wasn't it? Like this?

ZIEGLER:

I had some unpleasant experiences with the platen press. I had a terrible time getting that to work right for me. I remember reading something you wrote about. In South Laguna you could take a break from kicking the platen jobber and go out and watch the whales migrate. I really identified with the feeling!

GERRY:

Well, by kicking I meant-- It was a treadle press. It operated like a sewing machine; that's why they called that kicking. But they probably kick it for other reasons, too.

ZIEGLER:

The one I used didn't actually have to be treadled. But I felt the urge to kick it for other reasons at times! [laughter]

GERRY:

Well, printing is terribly frustrating. Like I say, I was ready to give it all up and get away from it. Just do something simple where what you needed you could carry in a little package in your car: some pieces of paper and some paints. But in order to print you have to have this machinery that costs a fortune to move and then is impossible to get rid of because nobody wants it anymore when you have to get rid of it. So there I am, trapped back into it! I've got the shop so it operates now. Tomorrow I'm going to start setting type on the first project, which is a supplement to the book I printed called *The San Pasqual Press*; [A *Dream Nearly Realized*], about the San Pasqual Press. Since I printed the book I found out more information, and I'm going to do this supplement.

ZIEGLER:

So you've really gotten to know a lot about the history of printing in the Los Angeles area, haven't you? You did the book on the San Pasqual Press, and you did a book on House Olson.

GERRY:

Yeah, right. I guess so, but I also think I'm probably more interested because of all the writing Ward Ritchie did about the printers of Los Angeles. If I got interested in it, it was because of his writing about the printers of Los Angeles as well as the other bookmen of Los Angeles .

ZIEGLER:

Well, I'd like to talk a little more later on about the whole Los Angeles book scene, but I wonder if now we could talk some about the books you've printed. How do you choose what books to print?

GERRY:

Oh, let's see. When I first started I could never find anything to print. I know it sounds strange but I really couldn't, other than reprinting Gray's "Elegy" or something like that. I mean, that was what was available. And so Pall [W.]

Bohne--who you've probably heard of as a printer, although he hasn't printed anything for a long time--said, "Oh, you have to write your own stuff." I said, "What! Wait a minute, I don't know how to write." "Well, I just wrote my book on whaling in one evening." And he made it sound very easy. So I forget what I wrote. Maybe that's when I wrote-- No. I guess the first thing I wrote was my experiences as a boy printer with Grant Dahlstrom [*Some Fond Remembrances of a Boy Printer at the Castle Press*]. So that was one that I wrote. He wanted me to write other things, but I can't remember right offhand any others that I wrote. I should have a list of the books here. When I choose a book, it's usually a subject I like. I kind of like to do cookbooks and books on printing. Or original things, like Jane's. I did a little booklet, *Will Bradley*, that Jane Apostol had written. I did that. That was original, and I would really much rather do original things. Then I did that M. F. K. Fisher story, *The Standing and the Waiting*, because it was a story I very much liked. I fantasized me illustrating it for years. It took years to get the rights to do it, although Mrs. Fisher wanted me to do it. But she had no control over the rights, and it was impossible to find out who had the rights. Then to have them sell you the rights is even another problem, because there is not enough money in it for them.

ZIEGLER:

Yes, I saw some of your correspondence in your papers at the Clark. You were having trouble finding out who had the rights to it.

GERRY:

But Susan King helped me on that. She said, "You've got to get a hold of her agent and force him. You've got to be aggressive." Well, I don't think I'd ever called New York in my life, but she said, "You've got to call him and tell him. You've just got to be aggressive, or he'll just avoid you." So I finally got this guy on the phone. I couldn't believe it! It's like being in the Powell Library and also knowing a guy named Larry Powell. [laughter] Susan was right. I had to get the guy and twist his arm, and he finally said, "No, I don't know who the heck's got them, but you might try Macmillan [Publishing Company]." So then I finally called Macmillan, and once you get somebody's name, you've got half a chance of getting through. I learned that. So I got some help from Susan--and also from Herb Yellin--on how to get rights to publish things. Herb Yellin and the Lord John Press. He does nothing but reprinting of American authors' work.

ZIEGLER:

Could you talk a little about your collaboration with Herb Yellin? You did three or four different books for the Lord John Press, didn't you?

GERRY:

Yeah. I think one of the best books I have ever done was one for Herb. It was when I was in Laguna. No, no, I was in Fallbrook. I had my ideal shop attached to my house, and he called me. He was interested in getting different California

printers to do work for him, and he had--he still has--a very extensive publishing list. Every year, he does three or four books. So I said, "Yes, indeed. I will do a book for you." And that was John Cheever's book, a reprint of a story in the New Yorker called "The Day the Pig Fell in the Well." That was the most extensive typesetting I had done up to that time, also the most careful. I was very careful to make sure it was tightly spaced and to make the lines as tight as I possibly could, which doesn't give you much speed on a Linotype or any other way. But I think it was my best job of typesetting, and the whole book turned out very well. I bound about fourteen of those--they were special copies-- and Bela Blau bound the rest. That was my first experience. We had a lot of fun, and he liked the work very well. It's nice to be liked, and we didn't have any arguments or fights or lawsuits or anything. He had another book later on that he wanted me to do-- oh, I guess it was by James Purdy--called *Proud Flesh*. It was about six plays that Purdy had written. I think maybe one of them had never been performed. That's when I would go up to Herb's house and we would lie around the living room. He had another fellow who worked there named Bruce Francis, and we'd talk about this. Herb liked that, to lie back and we'd talk about how we were going to make the book. It was very nice, pleasant.

ZIEGLER:

Yes, I saw a lot of your sketches for these at the Clark.

GERRY:

Oh, yeah. Well, we made the book, and I did a terrible title page, which I apologized to him for later on. I said, "I owe you a title page." But it was one of those title pages that I had fantasized, and drew and sketched and fooled around and fooled around till I completely ruined it. And in the end I didn't approve of it, although Herb didn't seem to mind it.

ZIEGLER:

What was it like?

GERRY:

Oh, it was some sort of floating drapes. Sort of Bermanesque drapes floating around a couple of poles that might suggest a theater stage or something, and then the type was set in the center of it. It just didn't come off too well. But then I did another book for him called *Out of the West*: [*Poems by William Everson, Gary Snyder, Philip Levine, Clayton Eshleman and Jerome Rothenberg*]. It was California poets. The endpapers were going to be a map of California, and it showed where every poet was. It also showed where the publisher was and the printer was. He kept wanting me to put my name on there, and I said, "I'm not a poet. You didn't put your name under publisher. I'm just going to have it say 'printer,' that's all." There was this map in the endpapers where the different poets and the publisher and the printer were located. It was sort of cute. And

the poems were very, very nice. That's when I-- Probably some of the first known California poets that I'd ever read. Set all in Janson. That turned out pretty good, a pretty nice job. I think those were the only three. Then when I was with Pat Reagh, Pat Reagh and I did a number of things for Herb together. There was one we did-- Oh, a lot of things, broadsides too. One broadside I think is really very good by Ursula [K.] LeGuin called *Torrey Pine Reserve*. I think it really turned out very well. I had been up to see a friend in Idyllwild, and I had my sketchbook out and I was drawing the pine trees. And I said, "I have this job that has something to do with Torrey pines." So my friend, wiser than I, said, "Those aren't Torrey pines! Torrey pines don't look like that at all!" I said, "Really? Heck. " So the next thing I did was go to Torrey Pines, which was really not too far from Fallbrook, down in Del Mar. I went to Torrey Pines and it was revealed to me what a beautiful place Torrey Pines was as I hiked through there and saw what the real pines looked like. So from that I made a linoleum cut that may or may not look like Torrey pines, but it looked pretty good. And that was a nice job. When it turns out well, you're pleased.

ZIEGLER:

How did Herb Yellin get started with the Lord John Press? How did he get the idea?

GERRY:

I really don't know. He was in love with [John] Updike. And there were so many writers named John that he wanted to call his press the Lord John Press for the best writer named John. He had published a newsletter about Updike for quite a while. He's a book dealer too, Herb. He sells books through the mail. Antiquarian and first editions stuff mostly. He's a great first edition collector. So I guess somewhere along the line, he decided he wanted to do some publishing. For a while he was just doing that, but I think most of the time he has to subsidize by working like the rest of us. He enjoyed meeting the authors, because he usually talks to them in person. He says he doesn't, but that must be something to have contact with them. Of course, he was a good friend of Updike's, who was his absolutely favorite writer. He has an extensive publication policy for, you know, a guy who was doing it for a sideline. So he must know every living American author.

ZIEGLER:

Yeah, it sounds like it would be thrilling.

GERRY:

Pat and I did a number of books for [Ralph] Sylvester and [Stathis] Orphanos. They're Los Angeles publishers who also are book dealers. They also publish the same sort of thing that Herb does, which is usually something like a reprint of a well-known author. Although they don't limit themselves to American authors. They have a lot of English authors, too. We did quite a few books for

them; Pat still does books for them. In fact, I'm doing some illustrations for one of their books right now.

ZIEGLER:

What is it?

GERRY:

I can't remember what it's called, but it's a little travelogue by Graham Greene about his visit to China. Darn, I can't remember the title. It's going to be a miniature book.

ZIEGLER:

I wanted to ask you to describe the books that were the greatest pleasure for you to work on and that you're most pleased with.

GERRY:

I think probably the one I'm most pleased with was also my most successful book, as far as sales go, *A Treatise on the Art and Antiquity of Cookery in the Middle Ages*.

ZIEGLER:

Yes, that is very handsome.

GERRY:

Because it was all original. It was written by a gal [Rochelle Lucky] who was married to a fellow I worked with, and we got together. It was all original material that she'd done for a master's thesis. So she rewrote it for me to publish it, as we did in the little two-volume book. We worked a long time on it, because first of all she had to rewrite it, and I kept thinking, "Well, she won't do it. People say they'll do it, but they won't." But not her. She really did it. But then halfway through she had a baby, and that held her up for some time. So the book was actually in the works for years before it was finally finished. Everybody liked it, and it sold very well. I forget how many we did, maybe 150 or 200. It's all out of print now. That was, I guess, my favorite one.

ZIEGLER:

What were some of your other favorites?

GERRY:

The one I did for Herb by John Cheever, *The Day the Pig Fell in the Well*. That, I think, came out very well. I think I have it written down here. Then I did a little book called *Topography of the Castle Press, [circa 1943, and Other Dim Recollections]*. I wrote that and I drew this map. I mean, I say I wrote it-- there's probably three pages of type. But there was this map of how I remembered the Castle Press. At the time I thought it was very original, but I must have gotten the idea from this fellow who'd worked for the Woolfs, Virginia and Leonard Woolf, and their Hogarth Press. Because if you look-- His name was [Richard] Kennedy I believe. In his book of remembrances, he draws a map of the Hogarth Press. So that might be where I got the idea. I get

all these ideas that I think are so original and discover that I've seen them somewhere else. So it was a big foldout map. I was over to see Grant one day, and I said, "What was this part? What was here?" He couldn't remember. And he said, "That's kind of interesting. I'll tell you what, I'll print that map for you." Because it was so long, we figured out how wide his biggest press was, and it was like thirty-six inches or something, so I drew it to fit that size. He offered to print it for me, which was-- I don't know how else I would have done it. I would have had to pay somebody, which is all right too. I didn't mind that, but it was nice. It showed that he liked the project. He didn't think it was silly. He wasn't ashamed to be associated with me and this book, thin book-- all my books are very thin. So the night they were-- He had sold the press. They had an open house and they had all the presses going, and the largest press was printing these maps. They decided to do them that night, and it just coincidentally worked out. So they were printing all these maps of the old Castle Press down on Union Street, and, of course, this was the new Castle Press, which was up on Fair Oaks [Avenue] and was very modern and up-to-date. It had fancy presses and clean rooms and well-dressed employees! [laughter] So they must have run off thousands and thousands of that map that night. And people were coming around and asking me to sign it, and it was kind of impressive. Anyway, I think that turned out typographically to be one of the best books. And also as a book of remembrances, I like it. And the fact that it has more-- I like books that have little extra things in them like foldouts or tipped-in pictures, that aren't just all type. And let's see, what else do I have here? You know, we should do this again when I have a list of books in front of me.

ZIEGLER:

Well, as a matter of fact, I have a stack of cards here .

GERRY:

Oh, really!

1.3. TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE ONE

April 20, 1989)

ZIEGLER:

So you're looking at the list I compiled of the books that you've printed. I know that this list isn't complete, so any that you want to add-- I'd be delighted to hear your comments on any of these and your memories of working on them.

GERRY:

Well, you've done really a lot of work to round these all up. I mean, I often think of doing this myself, and I never have. We talked about the topography, and you said that we should keep in-- I thought we should never talk about

[Sheikh Nefzawi's] *Bahloul and Hamdouna*, which is an excerpt from *The Perfumed Garden*, which was a pornographic, or whatever, erotic tale printed by the Weather Bird Press for a while, for what reason I can't remember now. I guess I saw it as a vehicle for some illustrations. It was like a onetime experience. I have no inclination to print any more pornographic books!

ZIEGLER:

Well, but I thought it was a beautifully designed book. The choice of colors, the sort of glaring purple and the flesh-colored pink, was absolutely perfect for the subject! And the way you designed the letters they looked very-- Well, you know, they looked like what the book was about !

GERRY:

Right. Well, I did enjoy doing that. The sort of interesting way I did the cover. I covered papers. I just sort of took a screwdriver and just bashed a design into a block of pine, and then I put that in the press--type high-- and printed the cover papers from that. It was rather crude, but it made sort of an Eastern design on it.

ZIEGLER:

As I remember, the cover is sort of a floral design, which at the same time suggest genitals.

GERRY:

Oh, I don't know if I did that on the cover. But in the title page I did a design that sort of suggested that. And what else was I going to say about the book? Um, yes, the illustrations were all cut linoleum. Well, I guess that's about enough for that one. Oh, I know what I was about to say. This was one of the first books I sent to the private press people, Roderick Cave, in England. They put out a catalog every year of the work of private presses, and I sent them a copy of this. And they, lo and behold, published the title page in their catalog, which I am really more impressed with each time I see the fact that they did that . Because now I don ' t know how I would ever get them to print a title page of mine. There's so much competition. So it was a nice title page, even I'll admit that. Just the subject was questionable. I did want them-- I wrote a book under the pseudonym of Bunston Quayles.

ZIEGLER:

Oh, that's interesting to know. I was very impressed with that book. Did you also do the takeoffs on the styles of the different artists in there?

GERRY:

Right, right. I don't know how I got this idea, because this was another book that was in the works for a very long, long time off and on. It was called *Miniatures on Modern Artists:[Some Notes]* . I made interpretations of these famous artist's works. There was Modigliani, Matisse, Bonnard, and others.

ZIEGLER:

Right on the mark I thought. You really got the essentials of the different styles.

GERRY:

Yeah, and I did it without actually reproducing any of the real pictures, so there were no problems with copyright. I discovered to do other than the modern artists was much too difficult to do in a line technique, which most of those works-- Some of them are halftones, but most of them are done in a line technique. So I finally got rid of Rembrandt and some of the other older artists and stuck strictly with the modern artists, because it was easier to reproduce pictures that represented them. So that little book I thought was kind of cute. It was a miniature coffee table book. But, oddly enough, it's never sold very well.

ZIEGLER:

What's it like printing miniature books? Is it harder than printing regular books?

GERRY:

Yes, miniatures are a terrible pain. Everyone hates them who has to print them, except maybe those people who are attuned. That's all they do is miniature books. But if you are a large printer and do large printing, to go down and do miniature books is difficult. Because the smaller you make it, the more critical everything is, and the binding is the worst part. It only has to be off the width of a pen line and it is noticeable to the person who looks at the book. Where a larger book can be off an eighth of an inch and nobody's going to notice. So it's all critical and it all takes little tiny fingers and patience. But it can be done on the kitchen table. So in that respect the miniatures are okay.

ZIEGLER:

Then there was another book by Bunston Quayles, who I now know is you, about miniature books. Printed for Dawson's Book Shop, I think.

GERRY:

Oh, yes, I remember that. *A Picture Book of Chickens* is a miniature book. The reason that was printed was because a friend of mine, who was a machinery dealer named Ernie [Ernest A.] Lindner, had bought a print shop that had belonged to a man who had published *The Poultry Journal*. I think that's what it was. And this man had for years and years set the type by hand and printed this little paper for poultry people. Finally he was too old to do that anymore, so he gave up the paper and he sold all the stuff to Ernie. And Ernie had this huge box of chicken cuts, and by "cuts" I mean photo engravings of chickens that were all type high that this man had used over the years to print *The Poultry Journal*. So I said, "Hey, let me borrow this." And I picked through and got out the smallest and nicest ones I could. I said, "I'll make a little book of chickens out of this." Then in the library I tried to identify which kind of chicken was which. I'm not sure I was too successful in identifying the chickens, but it made a cute little book, now out of print. ZEIGLER: It did.

GERRY:

This was one Dawson's had me do, the *Bibliography of Cheney Miniatures*. William Cheney is himself a printer of miniature books in Los Angeles, and Glen [Dawson] had me do this. I think it came out pretty good. Carey [S.] Bliss was the one who put it all together. It was set in 6-point Falcon on the Linotype. Setting miniatures on a Linotype is pretty hard because of the spacing, but it came out pretty well. *Flowers on a Table: [A Study of an Imprudent Wood Engraving]*, that was a silly thing. It was one of my first wood engravings. I just kept cutting away at this wood engraving till I finally ruined it, so I just kept cutting it away until it finally disappeared, and the last page is blank. So you could see it deteriorate before your eyes.

ZIEGLER:

Yes, I enjoyed that book. It was fun.

GERRY:

This was Ernest Lindner again [*The Ernest A. Lindner Collection of Antique Printing Machinery*]. He had done some work for me as a dealer. I'd bought some things from him and he had rebuilt some matrices for me, and so on. So I knew him. And then in his shop in downtown L.A., he had this vast collection of antique printing machinery that he had assembled. So I said, "Say, Ernie, we ought to make a book about this." So in 1971 this was, I got a friend of mine and we got together and Ernie helped us and we photographed--in a number of lengthy sessions — all these presses and the other equipment he had and made this book, which I had printed offset by a trade printer. I set the type for it and laid it out. I think I bound most of them myself. And Rochelle Lucky, *A Treatise on the Art and Antiquity of Cookery in the Middle Ages*. We discussed that earlier, but that was one of my better efforts I think. Some of them I bound, and then later on I was rich enough to have Earl Gray Bindery do them. Louise Seymour Jones, *A Tussle Mussie*. This was an excerpt from a book that Ward [Ritchie] had printed called *Who Loves a Garden*. I just loved the way this woman wrote about gardens and about anything, so I got permission from Ward and Jake [Zeitlin], who had published it. I think it was a Primavera Press book printed sometime in the thirties. So Jake said, "Well, I think it's only decent of you to get permission." I said, "But she's been long dead!" He said, "Well, here's the name of her son." So I talked to her son and he was very glad to let me do it if I would give him a few copies. And that was a nice little book. I did a wood engraving for that and bound it in cloth, a little flowered cloth I got from the yardage store.

ZIEGLER:

Yeah, I remember seeing where you had tried out different patterns of cloth to see which worked best.

GERRY:

The San Pasqual Press; [A Dream Nearly Realized]. I wrote this book because David W. Davies was writing a number of books about Los Angeles printers and mostly published by Dawson's. I wanted him to do it and he died before I could really get him interested in it. So then I thought Ward should write it because he had written a little bit about the press earlier, and no, he wouldn't do it. So I kept asking around, and finally I ended up doing it, because I became very interested in the San Pasqual Press. And, like I've said earlier, the first project of my new press is to print a supplement to this, since I found out only after I printed the book that there's more information, which I'll include myself.

ZIEGLER:

I think all authors find that out.

GERRY:

John Gerry and His Descendants, I just did this. My father [Francis B. Gerry] and I did this as a family tree, and that's about that. *The Standing and the Waiting* was a book I dreamed about for a long time written by M. F. K. Fisher, one of my favorite authors. I fantasized for years about the illustrations I was going to make for it. They were going to be pochoir stencil illustrations I'd do in watercolor. I made sketches and made sketches and designed the book over and over. Finally I talked to Herb [Yellin] and said, "How am I going to get permission to do this?" And so he was the one who introduced me to getting permissions. So I began to write to Mrs. Fisher, and she was enthusiastic and she sent me an enthusiastic letter. So I included these letters that she sent me, with her hearty approval of me doing the book, to the publishers and to the agents, and they did nothing. And she said, "I called the agent, I talked to the agent, my agent, and he would do nothing for me." She would tell him to do something but he wouldn't. There was no money involved, and I think that the final rights cost \$600 to do the book. I finally got a hold of a person at Macmillan, sent them a sample of what I intended to do and \$600, and they said okay.

ZIEGLER:

Is that a fairly common problem for small presses? Difficulty in getting permission because maybe it's not a big, money-making project?

GERRY:

I think maybe that's the reason. But they would never answer my letters. I had to finally get them on the phone. I wanted to do another story of hers called "Feminine Ending, " which is really a beautiful sort of love story. So I started out again — now knowing how to get permission--to do this book with her letter of approval, and I gave up. They finally traced the people who I thought had the permission, but they didn't have the record of it. I gave up. A. J. Corrigan, *A Sharp Criticism [of Nineteenth Century Letter-Forms]*, that was another little booklet that I did. I had just got my first decent Linotype face

called Fairfield, and I tried it out on that. That's still in print. Sam Davis, *The Typographical Howitzer*. Everybody does *The Typographical Howitzer*. It was one of my first books; it wasn't very good.

ZIEGLER:

That was a fun story to read.

GERRY:

Yeah. It wasn't a very good book. I bound it myself. The covers were much too thick, they were like plywood. Jane Apostol and I did this [*Will Bradley*]. I met her through her sister and I said, "You know, I'm looking for things that people have written." She said, "Well, I wrote this thing about Will Bradley." And since then she's written quite a few other things and been published all over. So we did this little Will Bradley booklet. Grant Dahlstrom knew Will Bradley when he was out here — he lived in California at the end of his life and frequented Grant's shop--and Grant loaned me a number of cuts that I could use that Bradley had done for him. *The Everyday Gourmet* was a little cookbook I did for some friends of mine [Daniel and Betty Bailey] when I was going around seeking material for people to give me to print. I would ask everybody I knew, and they said, "Well, we'll do a cookbook for you." So they did.

ZIEGLER:

Did you do the illustrations for that?

GERRY:

Yes, and those were pen drawings. Usually I illustrate them myself, because, after all, I went to art school and why should I waste my free talent? I would like to have other artists sometimes, but usually when I try to get somebody to do it, they have so many reasons why they can't or they don't do it the way I want that I end up doing it myself, which is just laziness and ego probably.

ZIEGLER:

You should give yourself credit in the books though.

GERRY:

Oh, I think I do.

ZIEGLER:

As I looked at them, often it looked like your style and I thought you had probably illustrated it, but I couldn't find where it said.

GERRY:

"Written, directed, and produced by" is sort of annoying. I mean, my name's in there once already. [laughter] Pall [W.] Bohne, *A Unique 1824 Columbian Press*. This was a press that Ernie Lindner got, and we had it at a bookfair at the Ambassador [Hotel]. Ernie was showing it off. It has some unique thing about it which I can't remember, and Pall wrote a little article and we printed it. That was just an eight-page booklet. Walt [Walter] Stanchfield is an artist I worked with.

ZIEGLER:

At [Walt] Disney Studio?

GERRY:

Yes, he's been at Disney even longer than I have. He moved away to the Santa Ynez Valley and did a lot of woodcuts. And I said, "Well, woodcuts are my medium. I print woodcuts. Let's do a book." Oh, I know. Then he said, "I have these poems I've written." And I said, "Oh, really. That's good." So in order to get around him and his poetry, I said, "Make me some woodcuts to go with the poetry and I'll print the book," thinking I wouldn't hear from him for a couple of years, if ever. And in about a month all the woodcuts arrived plus the poetry. I printed this on a handpress. It was the first time that I had used an Albion hand-held press that Lindner loaned me. It was a terrible job. It took me a whole month working about eight to twelve hours a day every day of the week to do that, to print that book. I don't know about handpresses. I've got another one now.

ZIEGLER:

Is it pretty hard to print woodcuts on any kind of press?

GERRY:

I was very lucky with Walt's. Both books of his I did were woodcuts that printed very well. That was just luck. Usually they would be — Of course, I used lots of ink. *The Black Cat*, Edgar Allan Poe. This was one where I tried to encourage another illustrator to do the illustration for me. It was another Disney artist. He did the illustrations; I had to do the linoleum cutting from his drawings.

ZIEGLER:

And who was that?

GERRY:

Alfred [W.] Wilson. He's now retired in Santa Barbara. *Out of the West: [Poems by William Everson, Gary Snyder, Philip Levine, Clayton Eshleman, and Jerome Rothenberg]*. This was of California poets, published by the Lord John Press. I think we talked a little bit about that before. Here's another Bunston Quayles, *Under Three Inches*. That was a little — When I was working with Pat [Patrick Reagh] and they had a little open house at Dawson's [Bookshop], I just kind of whipped that out for the people that were going to attend this miniature bookfair. Glen thought it was so nice he wanted me to reprint the darn thing. And, of course, the type had all been distributed on it. I really did it against my will.

ZIEGLER:

I saw a drawing that I think you did for, I believe, a catalog of Dawson's that showed the big fat man relaxing in his easy chair with the little tiny miniature book that he was examining.

GERRY:

Right. So far I've done quite a number of their miniature-book catalogs. In fact I'm working on one right now. [Edmund Routledge's] *Boy's Book of Fireworks* was just kind of a silly idea of something that was in the public domain.

ZIEGLER:

And you did the illustrations there?

GERRY:

Yes. [Roy Williams's] *Vaporisms*, that was the first book I printed in Laguna [Beach] using modern machinery, using a Linotype and the vertical press. Roy Williams was a Walt Disney story man, and he wrote all these two-liners about death and he-- Humorous two-line what? Couplets. And he would leave them on my desk. So I decided to print them and pass it around to the people. *Special Recipes for Special People*. That was the cookbook I couldn't remember by Vera Ricci . There's another person who wanted to do a miniature book. I met her through Pall Bohne, and they could never quite get around to it. She couldn't do it herself, so I said, "I'm interested in doing a book." She said, "Oh, good." She sent me about fifteen hundred recipes for a recipe book. I said, "I cannot do fifteen hundred recipes." Try to whip it down to ten or twelve." Or how many are in the book. So she did that and she was really nice to work with. Wore her out doing the proofreading. Carey Bliss called me when I was in Fallbrook to do some books for the Zamorano [Club] get-together in '78. One of them was *I Remember Robinson Jeffers* by Ward Ritchie. That was done in my shop in Fallbrook, and I think they were all sewn by hand. Could I have sewn them all by hand? I think I did. I did it in Electra type, which is one of the types Ward had used. I tried to force a certain design I liked. I tried to force it on this job over and over. I tried to force this design I'd seen in this book I thought was so swell, and it wouldn't fit. So I ended up with what I got. *Grant Dahlstrom, Master Printer: A Tribute on His Seventy-fifth Birthday*. This was a secret book that Jake didn't want anybody to know about .

ZIEGLER:

As a surprise for Grant?

GERRY:

As a surprise. I printed it in secret in Fallbrook. I was on the spot. I really felt that I was on the spot, because I was the one who had once been Grant's apprentice. His printer's devil was now going to print this book as tribute to him on his seventy-fifth birthday. I really felt on the spot. But by restraining myself and not putting in all the different types that I had, as he had told me not to, and not putting too much ink on the type, as he had told me not to, it came out pretty well. I think he was pleased.

ZIEGLER:

Did you do the patterned paper for the cover of that?

GERRY:

Right. I did that on a linoleum cut, and then I repeated it and pasted it up and I had a local printer print the covers offset. Mel Kavin bound it at Kater Crafts. *Grant Dahlstrom at Seventy-five; More Tributes*. Jake Zeitlin claimed that the article Ward had given me for *Grant Dahlstrom, Master Printer: A Tribute at Seventy-five* was not the article that he had intended him to give me. So for the Zamorano get-together, Jake printed this, which he said was the correct article that Ward should have given me. It was printed by the New Ampersand Press. It was a booklet that Dawson's and Jake, I think, contributed towards .

ZIEGLER:

Tell me about the New Ampersand Press.

GERRY:

That was a joke of Jake's, because Grant had had his private press called the Ampersand Press for years, and one day Grant discovered somebody else had an Ampersand Press. So whether there was a battle or whether Grant just dropped out and didn't have the Ampersand Press anymore, I don't know. But Jake thought that that would be a joke. And the book *Grant Dahlstrom, Master Printer; A Tribute on His Seventy-fifth Birthday* was also by the New Ampersand Press. It was an inside joke of Jake's.

ZIEGLER:

And somewhere I saw a logo for that, a very elegant ampersand. Did you do that logo?

GERRY:

Was it on the title page? Did it have a little border around it?

ZIEGLER:

I don't actually remember now.

GERRY:

I know I had one on the title page. *Helen [Slater] Dahlstrom [1905-1985: Memorial Addresses Given August 30, 1985]* . This was a memorial that they asked me to print. I printed it damp on very thin paper, and it didn't back up very well. It was what various people had said. Jake had said something at her funeral, and Mrs. [Helen Carter] Brown had said something. There were a few other people there, and it was just their tributes to her. Mark Nicoll- Johnson, he's a poet and a distant relative of mine. So I printed a poetry book for him [*3 X 3; Nine Poems from Los Angeles*]. I published it. Marion Kronfeld, *Designs Cut for Plantin Press Calendars, 1941 to 1946*. This also is what I figure is one of my major publishing efforts. How it came about-- Oh, I met her through Mrs. Ricci and I went to visit her. She showed me some of the work she'd done for the Plantin Press without me even asking. I don't know why. Then I talked

to Mrs. Marks, Lillian Marks of the Plantin Press, and she said that she still had a lot of good cuts that Marion had cut in linoleum and had cut in wood. So I got the idea for the book, and I got Mrs. Marks to approve and got Marion to approve all the cuts. Marion Kronfeld still had the original calendars. You know, calendars are the first things you throw away, right? On January 1. But she still had kept them because she had done the artwork for them. So I was able to reproduce from those the cuts that had been lost. And I did this book of her artwork. It's still in print. It never sold very well. I thought that if anybody had been interested in the Plantin Press they'd want that book. Still have quite a few for sale. I thought it was one of my best efforts. Gladys Taber, *Stillmeadow Christmas*. She was a woman's magazine writer. My wife [Mary Palmer Gerry] liked cocker spaniels and Christmas, so it was like a Christmas card.

ZIEGLER:

Did you do the illustrations for that?

GERRY:

Yes. I think there was a dog running in that with a piece of ribbon in its mouth. I think it was a wood engraving .

ZIEGLER:

I really liked that.

GERRY:

Type. Vance Gerry, the Weather Bird Press. That was from part of my selling efforts of making the press a commercial enterprise by having a type book, which I took around and gave to various advertising people in Laguna. Nobody was ever interested. *Restful Reading [for Young and Old, Designed to Banish Care and Alleviate Cynicism, Decorously Illustrated with Cuts]*. That was just a sort of foolish bunch of linoleum cuts I did of some nineteenth-century poems for kids. Like taking excerpts from nineteenth-century kids' books, children's books. *Distributing Type or the Just Art of Throwing In*. We talked about that when I worked as an apprentice. The tedious time I'd spent distributing type. I printed that for the Rounce and Coffin Club in 1975. And it had some drawings. I'd seen a lot of-- At that time I first became interested in Edward Ardizzone, the English illustrator. I was trying to emulate him. It's best to try to be yourself, because I couldn't! No matter how hard I tried I couldn't be like Edward Ardizzone. So they ended up the way they are . That's [J. P. Devine's] *Gatsby, No Show Dog, Found a Home in Hollywood Anyway*. Jake kept saying that this was his last publication, and it may well have been. It was for the Zamorano or Roxburghe Club meeting. It was a story that appeared in the newspaper about this dog that roamed on La Cienega Boulevard, I think.

ZIEGLER:

Who did this silhouette of the dog behind the — ?

GERRY:

I'm trying to think if I did it, but I don't — I think Jake had that from somewhere. We had an offset printer print that, overprint that. No, he printed it first, then Pat printed the type on top of that, I think. *A Letter from Mark Twain concerning the Paige Compositor*. A fellow I worked with was nuts about Mark Twain. He showed me a book of his letters. And in this book I found this one about how Twain was enthusiastic about this typesetting machine he had been investigating for years and years.

ZIEGLER:

He went broke on that didn't he?

GERRY:

Right.

ZIEGLER:

Because that was the new technology that didn't take off.

GERRY:

Right, right. I had some new type called De Roos I'd purchased, and I wanted to try it out. So I did this for the Rounce and Coffin Club, and it was not too bad. *The English Box Hose Common Press* was something that I'd printed for Ernie Lindner to have at a bookfair where he was showing off a facsimile press he had had made out of wood. I think it had been made in England. It was a wooden press that would really print. This was just telling something about his press. I had poison oak all over me when I did that job, and it was very difficult. Sydney Smith, *A Recipe for Salad*; [*A Rhyme*]. This was the poem Sydney Smith wrote about salad. I did my first food and drink-- And I got the idea to do a whole series. The whole series has only gone up to six.

ZIEGLER:

I wasn't sure if I'd seen the whole series. Could you just briefly name the items?

GERRY:

Oh, let's see. There was salad. And then I did one which was by Ford Madox Ford. A little excerpt from one of his books about eating a sandwich in the front lines in World War I [*Sandwiches and Coffee*]. And then I did two on wine, California wines [*Mission Grapes and Zinfandel Grapes*]. Elva Marshall did some etchings which are pasted in. The sandwiches has a pochoir illustration. And then I did two others by Dela Lutes--Dela Lutes was a food writer. One was called *Vegetable Soup* and one was called *Plum Pudding*. And it had the recipe and told you a little something about it. So that's all I can remember.

ZIEGLER:

What about the one on chili [*Chile: Being a Texas Recipe*]? And there was one on borscht [*Borscht: Being a Russian Recipe*].

GERRY:

Oh, I keep thinking I'll do another one on chili. But those were done much before, just sort of ephemeral stuff to hand to your friends. [William

Bradford's] *The First Thanksgiving*, that was just something to hand out to my friends at Thanksgiving. Just a project for printing a piece of ephemera.

ZIEGLER:

Did you do the illustration there?

GERRY:

Yes.

ZIEGLER:

Was that a linoleum cut?

GERRY:

Right, linoleum. Of the pilgrim with the cornstalk. I may have had some new type I had wanted to try out too, I'm not sure. *Chile: Being a Texas Recipe*, that was a piece of ephemera. There was a fellow [Danny Alguire] I worked with who was a Texan. He and his brother would continue to write back and forth to each other about how to make chili. And my friend that I worked with named Vasily Davidovich told me about borscht and how borscht was, you know, Russian. Borscht was not like Jewish borscht--this was different. It was Russian borscht! And he had to keep emphasizing it. So all right, give me the recipe! So I took it home. I said, "Well, it's just vegetable soup." But it was good vegetable soup. *Selected War Poems of Wilfred Owen*. This is where I had a friend [Dale Barnhart] of mine, an artist, and I said we should do something. He had been away and came back and we made contact. And I said, "We should do something together." He was a good artist. He could do linoleum cuts, and he had done a lot of prints just with linoleum. So I said, "What should we do?" And he said, "Remember all those drawings I did about Wilfred Owen during the Vietnam War?" He had made a lot of drawings illustrating the poems of Wilfred Owen. I said, "Oh, sure, but we've got to have them on linoleum. I can't reproduce the drawings." "Okay, I'll cut them." So he adapted these drawings that he'd made to linoleum, and I set the poems. I got the permission from whoever has the permission to do Owen's poems, and Pat Reagh printed it for me. A large- format, expensive book sells for \$135. A tour de force, bound by Bela Blau, and I have lots of them left if anybody is interested.

ZIEGLER:

The printing of the illustrations looks like it must have been very complicated, because it's in several colors, and so they have to go through the press several times and be lined up each time.

GERRY:

Yes, and the amount of ink it took was amazing. They had to slip-sheet them.

1.4. TAPE NUMBER: III, SIDE ONE
May 4, 1989)

ZIEGLER:

Okay, it's May 4, and we're here for the second interview with Vance Gerry. He has before him the list that we've put together of the books he's printed. And I wonder if you could go on commenting on the books there.

GERRY:

Sure. This is Izaak Walton. It's a poem from Walton's *The Complete Angler*, "Piscator, and the Angler's Wish." It was just a small, little tiny pamphlet I hand set in Deepdene one time. I was waiting for an electrician to come, and he never came. I got this done, as a matter of fact, because of that. That was in '67. It was just a very small pamphlet.

ZIEGLER:

Is that typical of the way you do printing projects? That you sort of do it when you're waiting for something or have some spare time like that?

GERRY:

Yes. But I think that particular one was just to fill the time while I was waiting around for him.

ZIEGLER:

Are you especially fond of fishing yourself?

GERRY:

No, I was just interested in the book, because people had talked so much about Walton's book. And I had read it, and it was sort of a peaceful thing. But I don't know anything about fishing, nor do I fish.

ZIEGLER:

I've never read it, but I've heard that it's a lot of fun to read.

GERRY:

It's sort of a peaceful book. Or, as it says in its title, a contemplative book. Now, this Housman was another little poem that I set, probably hand set, just for fun. *With Rue My Heart Is Laden*, by A. E. Housman. And it was not much of anything. Fiona Macleod in *The Hour of the Rose* was taken from-- William Sharp was the author, who could apparently only write under the name of Fiona Macleod and wrote very colorful nature things. This was actually pointed out to me in a book by Clifton Fadiman [*Reading I've Liked: A Personal Selection Drawn from Two Decades of Reading and Reviewing*], the excerpts from his [Sharp's] writings. And I did that one printed in large Janson, 24- point Janson. I barely had enough to print one page at a time. And it only had three pages, I think. I did it in Pasadena in 1973. I bound it in sort of a plaid, a gray plaid cloth.

ZIEGLER:

Yeah, that was very nice.

GERRY:

I thought it was kind of a nice little thing, but not of much importance. Walt [Walter] Stanchfield was a fellow artist that I worked with at the [Walt] Disney Studio. He did a lot of woodcuts. I mean real woodcuts on the side of a pine board, not to be confused with wood engravings . These were genuine woodcuts . He was a darn good artist. So I said, "Give me some cuts, and we'll make a book out of them." And so I did. I think we only did thirty- five copies. I did it on a Vandercook proof press. He was at that time retired from the studio. So I went up to see him at his studio in Solvang, and he signed all the books for me. There were, I think, thirty- five copies. It was a large format. It was the very first book I ever got into the Western Books [Exhibition]. And it was argued that it wasn't really a book; it was only a portfolio--even though it was bound- -because it didn't have any text. But Saul Marks stood up for me, and I got the book in after all.

ZIEGLER:

It seems that they define books even much more loosely than that nowadays. I saw the recent Western Book show on display here, and there was quite a variety of things, portfolio-type things and almost sculptural bindings. There were one or two examples that were like that.

GERRY:

Yeah. Even school catalogs can qualify, or have at one time or another. But this was an example of how I tried to do something original by an original artist. And I printed directly from the blocks he cut. Now, let's see. *Some Fond Remembrances of a Boy Printer at the Castle Press*, written by myself. This was kind of the first experience I'd ever had of trying to write something. And I wrote my memoirs of working with Grant Dahlstrom in 1943 at the Castle Press. I tried to remember the people who worked there and what they had done. It's mostly little anecdotes about things that happened, what I could remember. I printed it in 1968. I set it in Caslon on the Linotype and took it to show Grant one day after I ' d finished. I think I'd done about twenty-five, maybe fifty, copies. I don't know if I'd done that many. I showed it to Grant, and he sort of approved of it. He thought it was kind of good, but he kept trying to read it while I was there. So I could tell he must have at least been interested in what I was going to say.

ZIEGLER:

Yeah. [laughter]

GERRY:

So he talked apparently to Glen Dawson, and Dawson called me up. He said, "Do you have any more of those books? I want to sell some." So I was actually a printer who was going to sell something he'd printed. I was really quite honored.

ZIEGLER:

So, then, this is the first book that you sold and the first contact that you had with Dawson's [Book Shop]?

GERRY:

Right, this was the first contact that I had with Dawson's. And I've worked with them ever since. Very good to printers, the Dawsons [Glen and Muir] . And some few months later Peggy Christian — she was a book dealer- -wrote to me and she said, "Are there any more of those books available? I've heard about them." I said, "No, but if I printed a second edition, would you be interested?" And she said, "Oh, sure." So I printed a second edition of about fifty copies. So it exists in two ways.

ZIEGLER:

What changes did you make in the second edition?

GERRY:

I think I added the story of Grant Dahlstrom and his big green Packard car. And I tried to correct my misspellings and so on. You can tell where the corrections are because I had monkeyed around on the machine, and so the corrected lines, set on the Linotype, are a little narrower than the existing lines. So that's a dead giveaway. And I didn't make all the corrections I should have anyway .

ZIEGLER:

Who's Peggy Christian?

GERRY:

She was a well-known Los Angeles book dealer. A friend of Jake [Zeitlin]'s, a friend of the Dawson's. I didn't know her very well. I don't think I'd ever been to her shop, but she was very respected.

ZIEGLER:

Is her bookshop still in existence?

GERRY:

No, she died a couple of years ago. [looks at list] Oh, these were just proofs you saw.

ZIEGLER:

Yes. For these I didn't actually see the printed book. It wasn't at the Clark [Library]. All I saw was the proofs or the layout. But I'd like to have you talk some about the completed book.

GERRY:

Sure. Okay, this was called *Poems*, by Teri Ryland. She was the girlfriend of a man who I worked with at the studio. He talked me into doing it, and I did it. It was a very small, little pamphlet of some poems. Very insignificant. I did it because I was trying to make my own shop pay for itself. H. Richard Archer, secretary-- This was called, *A Glimpse of the Past from the Minutes of the Rounce and Coffin Club*, printed for members on the club's fiftieth anniversary. Ty [Tyus] Harmsen of Occidental [College] had-- Ty Harmsen got the book of

minutes written by Richard Archer and culled out some of the most amusing things. Archer was a very amusing minute keeper of the Rounce and Coffin Club. And I printed those up for the fiftieth anniversary. I did this while I was with Pat [Patrick] Reagh in 1981, and I think it was printed on the vertical. I set it on the Linotype machine-- Janson.

ZIEGLER:

I've read some wonderful anecdotes about the Rounce and Coffin Club. It sounds like that group has so much fun together!

GERRY:

Yeah. Well, Ward [Ritchie] has written a lot of things that make it seem like that. Certainly in their day, when Ward and Grant and the big three were all going, they had a lot of fun. The minutes that Archer kept are very amusing. The times, the good times that they had. We don't do much anymore, in that way, at the Rounce and Coffin.

ZIEGLER:

Oh, well, that's too bad.

GERRY:

To concentrate on the Western Books Exhibition is our main function now. A *Visit from Saint Nicholas* by Clement [C.] Moore. I did that as a little Christmas booklet. It was done in 1966, hand set in Bembo narrow. I think I did seven or eight copies for it, just to be printing something. I did that in Pasadena, in the print shop I had in the basement.

ZIEGLER:

So this is a real bibliographic rarity!

GERRY:

Oh, I guess so. I don't — It wasn't — It's hard to say. I'll leave that to the bibliographers. Mary Elizabeth, this was a little thing I did for the relatives of my niece when she was just a little kid. It was just this silly thing, but the relatives loved it. *Christmas at Manor Farm*, excerpted from *The Pickwick Papers*. Yeah, that was a Christmas card done in the form of a small, little book.

ZIEGLER:

As I remember, there was a delightful drawing in that of a thin man and a fat man standing by the fireplace holding glasses of some sort of liquor.

GERRY:

Right, right.

ZIEGLER:

You did that?

GERRY:

I did the illustrations. They were line drawings made into photo engravings. And I suppose-- No, I think that was before I discovered [Edward] Ardizzone.

But I was doing the Crosshatch pen-and-ink-type drawings. And that little drawing came out pretty good.

ZIEGLER:

Yeah. I seem to remember seeing the same drawing in some Rounce and Coffin Club stuff. Do you remember it being used by the Rounce and Coffin Club later?

GERRY:

Yeah, we used it for an announcement of some event that we were going to do. I can't remember which one. And somehow I got the assignment to print the announcement. I did it at Pat's. And, of course, Pat had all those cuts stored and cataloged. So it was very easy to find, and it seemed to fit the occasion. Now, *A Book of Poems; Cruachan* by Baxter Sperry. Baxter Sperry was a woman I'd known in the army, and she was a writer. She contacted me many years later and wanted to do some printing of her own, and so I sort of helped her a little bit. Only by mail. I never actually saw her print shop, I don't believe.

ZIEGLER:

She has her own press, the Laurel Hill Press, doesn't she?

GERRY:

Right. And she, just a few years ago, was instrumental in getting the two of us a joint show at the [California] State Library of our work. She apparently pestered them into showing us off. And there she showed some of her better works. She never became a very good printer, but she — The best things she did were the drawings she made of old buildings around Sacramento and that area, with the history of them. Then she hand-colored them and put them in books or sold them separately as prints. They were really very beautiful. I mean, they were kind of naive, but when you saw them all together in the show, they were terribly impressive. So this was a book I'd done for her in 1966 of her poems. I can't remember why I did it. Or maybe she paid me for it. I don't think there were too many, maybe thirty copies, maybe less than that. And it was bound in a cloth which I got at the yardage store and set in narrow Bembo. Not a bad job. A perfect job of perfect binding, and the pages are probably all falling out by now! Bela Thandar, that was an anagram. And the title of the book was *The Last Time I Dined with the King*. It was a book of limericks that we'd found in *Playboy*. And one of the artists at the studio, whose anagram was Bela Thandar- -

ZIEGLER:

Who was Bela Thander?

GERRY:

Bela Thandar was Dale Barnhart. He had made these illustrations for these filthy limericks. I cut them in linoleum. I think we sold it to a few members of the studio, probably did twenty copies or twenty- five copies.

ZIEGLER:

Oh! I never got to see the completed one of that. I just saw the proofs of the limericks. I never saw any illustrations.

GERRY:

I wonder if I even have a copy myself. But I think it was limited to about twenty-five copies. I was still doing everything on the kitchen table then. *[Some] English Christmas Customs* by Dorothy Spicer. Another excerpt from some writings of Dorothy Spicer. It was a Christmas card for 1979. Yeah, that one you have there. It has a linoleum cut and two wood engravings, all of which I thought were fairly successful.

ZIEGLER:

Yeah, they are. I'm looking at the book right now. Could you tell me which is the linoleum cut and which are the wood engravings?

GERRY:

The birds in the middle of the book eating the seed--that was a linoleum cut. And then the bundle of twigs on the title page was a wood engraving. It was set in Granjon--small Granjon, 8 to 10 point. I can't remember.

ZIEGLER:

And then, also, this of the cake and--

GERRY:

That was a wood engraving. It was primarily a Christmas card. It exists today because I must have thought I had more friends than I did, because I still have about twenty- five of them.

ZIEGLER:

How did you do the cover paper for this? Is it type ornaments of a Christmas bell, and then you just repeated the design?

GERRY:

Yeah, I think I'd actually cast those types on my Thompson typesetter myself. So I was able to cast enough to fill enough paper to make a cover.

ZIEGLER:

Do you often cast type ornaments for yourself?

GERRY:

No. I had always thought I would someday design my own typeface and cut it and cast it. And I bought an old Thompson with that in mind. The most I've ever done with it is to cast some Linotype decorative material from Linotype matrices. I really haven't used it very much.

ZIEGLER:

What are some of the ornaments that you have cast? I might have seen them.

GERRY:

Well, they were all from Linotype matrices, so they ' re in the Linotype catalog . I think I bought some directly from Linotype, and then a lot of them sort of came

with the machine. The machine had been owned by some Los Angeles typesetter who cast nothing but Linotype material, including type from Linotype galleys. So I really haven't done much with it. I gave up trying to be a typesetter because I was unsuccessful in making the punches. I couldn't quite figure out how to do that correctly.

ZIEGLER:

Do you ever think you might try it again sometime?

GERRY:

No, I've discovered a cutter, a matrix engraver in India called Experto. They sent letters around to everyone they knew who had a typesetting machine. They would be glad to make the galleys from your drawing. So that is kind of a cop-out, but it's much easier to make the drawing from which they will make me a matrix than for me to try and file out a punch and press it into an aluminum matrix. So you see, I've sort of become lazy.

ZIEGLER:

Did you say in India?

GERRY:

Yes.

ZIEGLER:

Do they do a lot of that in India? I never quite realized--

GERRY:

I guess some of the technology of the West that we no longer use is sort of passed into the hands of the Third World, and in the Third World they do a lot of it. I guess India's part of the Third World. They still do a number of technologies which we don't do here anymore. That just happens to be one of them. But they still use a great deal of letterpress printing in India and Africa. Audrey Arellanes, a keepsake for the Bookplate Collectors Society. That was a commercial job I did for Audrey, who is president of the Bookplate Collectors Society. I can't remember much about it unless that was the one that had greetings in many different languages. I can't remember. I did a couple of things for her.

ZIEGLER:

Yeah, I remember seeing keepsakes for several different years for that society. I don't know if I got them all in the stack of cards. There were quite a few things I didn't realize I had missed in making the cards. Could you tell me a little bit more about the society?

GERRY:

Apparently it goes back to the twenties, or maybe earlier. Audrey took over managing the club, which is an international club--I hope I'm getting this right--for book collectors. It's for people who make bookplates as well as for people who collect bookplates. Their subject is bookplates, period. She puts out a

yearly book which is a beautiful job, in which she tips in herself many examples of bookplates. It's sort of really an annual. Then she does a newsletter that comes out I think once a month, or maybe quarterly--I'm not sure--concerning bookplates. *Bookplates in the News* this book is called. And she still runs the society from her kitchen table. I've seen her working there many times, tipping in those bookplates. I'm not sure what the membership is. Five hundred people or more. You'd have to ask her .

ZIEGLER:

Is she one of your neighbors in Pasadena?

GERRY:

I think she lives in San Gabriel, but she's a member of the Rounce and Coffin Club. She's had me do work for her off and on for many years now. Whenever I have a print shop and she and the society have some money, then we get together. *Four Common Plants: Linoleum Cuts and the Text Describing Oleander, Plumbago, Wild Cucumber, and Yarrow*. I printed that in 1978, and it was my first herbal, would you call it? I engraved these plants I found in the backyard and cut them into linoleum and printed them. It took me a number of years just to do four of them.

ZIEGLER:

I'm sorry I didn't see the completed book. It looked like they were beautiful engravings of the plants, judging from the prints.

GERRY:

One I tried to do in two colors didn't come out too well. The others, just printed in black, are not too bad. I'm kind of proud of them. It took a great deal of time to get it done. And I bound it in wrappers, and probably only fifty copies, I think.

ZIEGLER:

I forget. Did you write the text on that, also?

GERRY:

The text I borrowed from different sources. I confess, I didn't write it, no.

ZIEGLER:

How many herbals would you say you've done? I've seen several. There was *Four Weeds*. And then you mentioned that you're going to work on one soon called *Seaside Plants*.

GERRY:

Yes. And my *Seaside Plants* book will be more ambitious. I hope to do about sixteen plants and cut them in linoleum. First I was going to try lithography, and I couldn't get that to work. I had already done the etchings of *Four Weeds*. So I thought, "Well, I'll go back to linoleum, because I feel more secure with linoleum. And maybe kind of take some cues from Henry Evans and how he is able to get the plant without a lot of-- Within two colors, or so, he could get the

whole thing. And I was hoping I could discipline myself enough to do something similar. Evans can capture the plant, and you can say the plant is authentic — it's just not an artist's dream. He can do it in two colors. So that's pretty ambitious of me to think I can do that, but I'm going to try. And in this case, I don't think I'll write it. I think I'll get the botanist Charles Leland Richardson, who wrote *Four Weeds* for me. Richardson is a botanist, but he has always worked in the motion picture business because he hopes to get rich enough to afford to become a botanist. But he's very good. He likes the subject, and he's just right for my sort of work. So I think he'll do this *Seaside Plant* book for me. I'll do the cuts. And then we have Edward Ardizzone, *On the Illustrating of Books*. That was one of my more recent books. It was an article printed in [*The*] *Private Library* journal. It was a small article, and Ardizzone talked about himself as an illustrator. And I thought, "I like Ardizzone. This is just the right size for me to make a small book." Tricking myself by believing the job is going to be easy because it's going to be small. I'm always a sucker for taking on projects because I think they're going to be easy, and they never are. Anyway, it turned out to be a very successful book. I got permission from Ardizzone's agent for the article as well as the drawings. One of my better books, I think.

ZIEGLER:

And you were saying you especially admire Ardizzone as an illustrator.

GERRY:

Right. Yes. I have many times tried to copy Ardizzone's style. Unsuccessfully, but I've tried. So yes, I do admire him a lot.

ZIEGLER:

When did you first discover Ardizzone?

GERRY:

Oh, I suppose I had always seen his work. But one time at a bookfair, I think in '74, one of the dealers had a complete set of Ardizzone's illustrations for the Cambridge [University Press] book called *A Stickful of Nonpareil* [by George Scurfield] about the adventures of a young man, the remembrances of a young man, at the Cambridge press. He'd done the illustrations. They were all concerning the printshop and the young fellows working at the printshop. I thought I would like to have them, but they were too expensive, I thought, then. But, anyway, that's when I really became interested in Ardizzone, at that point. Pasadena centennial map, that was done for the Pasadena centennial. I think that was a Junior League job. The Junior League had me do the map because somehow I had gotten a reputation as a mapmaker because of the little book I'd done called *Topography of the Castle Press, circa 1943, [and Other Dim Recollections]*. Now everyone came to me thinking I was a map drawer. I wasn't really. I just learned by doing.

ZIEGLER:

Yeah, well, you do do wonderful maps. You say on them they're not navigational maps, they're not to scale. But they're beautiful and they're entertaining. I saw a map that you did, "A Bibliophile's Map to Los Angeles" or something like that.

GERRY:

Yes, I did that with John Bidwell, who probably was the one who said, "Oh, you know how to draw maps because you did the topography map of the Castle Press." So I said okay. Then we decided which items we should put in. Like, for instance, UCLA ought to be in there because that would be of interest to international bibliophiles. And we put in museums and colleges. Anything we thought might be of interest. Also places where the international bibliophiles were going to, such as the ranch up there up near Ojai [Rancho Mi Solar] --they were going to visit this ranch for a barbecue-- and this hotel they stayed in. So it came out pretty good. Although Pat always complained that I hadn't drawn it to the right shape and he had to fold it in an awkward way to go into the book. I think I've done a couple of other maps besides that.

ZIEGLER:

There was a map that you did for the endpapers of the Lord John Press book *Out of the West*; [Poems by William Everson, Gary Snyder, Philip Levine, Clayton Eshleman, and Jerome Rothenberg].

GERRY:

Oh, yeah. I'm thinking more of a pictorial. I know I did another one. I can't think of it right now. Let's see, William H. Butler, *Nothing To Wear*. This was a poem about this poor — It was a nineteenth-century poem about this poor girl who didn't have enough to wear. And, of course, she had closets full of clothes, but not just the right thing that she wanted. It was published by Lorson's bookshop [Lorson's Books and Prints] in Fullerton.

ZIEGLER:

Could you tell me a little more about Lorson's Book Shop?

GERRY:

[James E.] Lorson started his bookshop in Orange County, in Fullerton. Oh, I would say he first contacted me back in the early seventies because he heard I was a printer and he wanted to handle some of my books. He's been very good about that to all of us since then. And he had to-- He ran his bookshop part-time in Fullerton for a number of years. He himself was employed in the electronics business. He was always looking forward to his retirement. Fortunately, he was laid off and he decided to do the bookshop full-time. His wife [Joan Lorson] runs the half that handles modern--I don't want to say contemporary--children's books and some gift items. He runs the part of the bookshop which is the antiquarian department. And they've made a success of it. He one time said he

wanted to be the best antiquarian book dealer in Fullerton, and I think he finally got it. He also handles work by artists. He handles the work of an etching artist named Scott Fitzgerald and some watercolors by other artists. He's very helpful. Nice book dealer. This was a book I did for them, and we struggled along. It was printed while I worked with Pat Reagh. I think it was set — I think Pat set it on the Monotype, and we had some trouble with getting the right colored paper for the covering. In some ways it's very successful. I did two wood engravings for it that came out pretty good for a miniature book. It is a miniature book.

ZIEGLER:

We're still talking about *Nothing To Wear*?

GERRY:

Nothing To Wear. I think that its cover was somehow not too satisfactory, but it's not a bad-looking book, not a bad-looking miniature. A lot of people don't like miniatures. I don't like miniatures. But every once in a while I'll do one, in spite of it. [laughter]

ZIEGLER:

You say you don't like them. Why not?

GERRY:

Oh, because they're small and hard to do, and it's very hard to set the type. The only way you can do it right is to set the type by hand. And I always try to force it on the Linotype. At that narrow a measure it's very difficult to get any decent spacing. A miniature book should really be set by hand, in 4-point type or — And nobody wants to set anything in 4-point type.

ZIEGLER:

Yeah, I can imagine! [laughter] Having struggled with those little tiny pieces of type myself in the printshop downstairs. And, of course, that wasn't that small. Some people solve the problem by doing miniature books with, like, four letters to a page, and that sort of thing.

GERRY:

Or else they'll set it large and then have it reduced by photoengraving. But in the miniature book field, that's considered cheating.

ZIEGLER:

Oh! Yeah, I would tend to think so, too.

GERRY:

Also, when you're set up to print large books, you don't want to fool with small books. Really a person that does miniature books is usually set up to do-- He has a small press, a small paper cutter, a small little bindery. Everything is small. Somehow when you try to force it through a shop that is equipped [to do] a 6" X 9" book, it's sort of difficult.

ZIEGLER:

William Cheney did a lot of miniatures. Was he really pretty much exclusively a miniature printer?

GERRY:

No, Will did a lot of printing that was not miniature. He tended to be on the small side. Small pamphlets, small booklets, like 4 1/2" X 6". But he did larger things. But mostly he was on the small things. He did do many miniatures--I mean, small miniatures that were 1" X 3/4" — or did a nice — They were all set with type. A beautiful one he did of bookplates all set in tiny, tiny little ornaments in a very small format. He was a real miniature guy. Miniature book printer.

ZIEGLER:

I think a miniature book is like an adult toy. It has some of that same appeal.

GERRY:

Yeah. When you see them all on display, it's like looking at a dollhouse, and you're fascinated by miniatures.

ZIEGLER:

I bet it must be fascinating, for the same reason, to see a printshop set up for printing miniatures with little tiny presses.

GERRY:

By little, I mean the Pilot press. Or maybe a 5" X 8", which would be a little bit smaller. That's about a 7" X 9", 6" X 9", isn't it?

ZIEGLER:

You mean that one that I had so much trouble with?

GERRY:

Yeah, that's a 6" X 9". You could print four pages of a miniature very comfortably on that, and you might even stretch it out to eight. But four would go very comfortably on that. I think a lot of miniature people do two pages at a time.

ZIEGLER:

These were some things that I didn't manage to see, but I saw listings of them in your catalogs.

GERRY:

Okay, these were probably books I proposed to do and announced that I would do, but then never did.

ZIEGLER:

Well, maybe you can tell me which you did do and which never got done.

GERRY:

Okay. I always wanted to do a miniature book on bibliographic abbreviations. I consulted with Ed [Edwin H.] Carpenter and with Jim Lorson about which bibliographic abbreviations it should include, and I had a pretty good list. And I even sent a couple of sample pages, but then somehow I lost interest. I may get

interested again, but I just sort of got off on some other project. And nobody was banging on the door saying, "Quick, quick, when are you going to get it done?" Nobody ever begged me to do it.

ZIEGLER:

Well, I think it might be worth finishing sometime. Maybe reference librarians would use it.

GERRY:

Carry it in their pocket.

ZIEGLER:

This is The Day the Pig Fell in the Well by John Cheever--we talked about that before--for the Lord John Press.

GERRY:

That we did in two versions, the deluxe and the regular. And I bound twenty-six of them, I think, that were lettered. Each one had a different letter designating it, and they were bound and put in slipcases, which I believe I made. It was very ambitious. That was when I had a printshop full-time and I could do that sort of thing. In 1978. The book turned out very well. Some of my very best typesetting for a very good author. And I think Herb [Yellin] always liked that book, too.

ZIEGLER:

I remember seeing some sketches for that. As I said, that one I didn't see the completed book, but a latticework design- -

GERRY:

It has a latticework design on the title page. Then one of the versions — I think the inexpensive version-- had a drawing of this old house where the story took place on the cover. I think that whole cover was sort of latticework, if I recall. But I remember drawing that house. You may have seen the drawings. I must have drawn it a thousand times, and then probably picked the wrong one. *Proud Flesh* by James Purdy was another Lord John Press I did in 1980. I had set the chapter headings, the heading of the plays, very low on the page. And after it was all printed, it looked blank. So I proposed to Herb Yellin that I put in some illustrations in these blank openings to the plays. There were about four or six plays. So he said okay. Then I wore myself out trying to come up with the right drawings. Then I had to run the sheets through the press again to imprint those on. And as I look back, sometimes I think, "Gee, maybe it wasn't so bad if they were left blank."

ZIEGLER:

In any case, I imagine it was a lot of work just lining them up to get the illustration placed right where the type is.

GERRY:

Actually, that part wasn't too bad. [It wasn't] too hard to do that . Since I ' d proposed the idea to Herb and he'd accepted it, then I had to come up with the drawings, and I learned-- They came out very well. Actually, it was a pretty nice job. *Four Common Plants*, we talked about that, didn't we? The linoleum cuts?

ZIEGLER:

Yeah, I think we did.

GERRY:

Anthony Rizzo, *Some Epigrammatical Notes*. This was a background painter at the Disney Studio. He often left notes on my desk of his own composition, which were a little obscure.

ZIEGLER:

I think you mentioned that was the first thing you ever printed. Is that right?

GERRY:

It was the first book I ever printed. I just kept collecting these little notes. I printed them one page at a time and perfect-bound them. The man [Louis Appet] who later became the business agent for the cartoonists local union [Screen Cartoonists Guild] taught me how to bind the book. That was my first experiment with binding. *To a Mouse*, Robert Burns, Peach Pit Press. That would be around the early sixties when I had the Peach Pit Press in the basement. I think I'd gotten an 8" X 12" Challenge Gordon platen press, and I printed this on that. And it was an 8 1/2" X 11" format set in large Janson, 24-point Janson, with some linoleum cuts that I did. It was just a little book of the poem "To a Mouse." I put a little glossary in the back of what some of Burns ' s Scottish words were.

ZIEGLER:

I saw where you had done different sketches for that, one of the mouse in its burrow and one of the plow. But I don't think I saw the completed one of that, so I never saw which drawings you used. You cut them in linoleum, then?

GERRY:

You really dug into all that stuff.

ZIEGLER:

Well, I looked through your papers at the Clark and the books of yours that we have there.

GERRY:

Plum Pudding by Delia Lutes. This was taken from one of her books. That was Weather Bird Press Food and Drink number six. These were small little booklet formats I decided to do a series on, and I think six was as far as I got. I have a few waiting to be printed. It's another one of those projects where I sort of lost interest. Although they are fairly popular--people like them. Delia Lutes's *Vegetable Soup*, same thing. That's Food and Drink number

five. *Sandwiches and Coffee* was a very much edited excerpt from one of Ford Madox Ford's World War I books. That had a pochoir illustration. That was Food and Drink number four. *Mission Grapes*, Food and Drink number two. This I tried to get my friend David Hitchcock to write. I thought in his retirement he'd be interested in researching grapes because he liked wine and had been to wine school. Well, I had a hard time trying to pry *Mission Grapes* out of him, which he wrote. And Elva Marshall did the etching, which I had Tony Kroll print.

ZIEGLER:

You did several things for David Hitchcock, didn't you?

GERRY:

Well, he did this for me. I just tried to get him to write it. Yes, David Hitchcock once ran for a public office, and I was his printer.

ZIEGLER:

Yes, I saw the campaign letter. And then was he connected with the Hancock Laboratories, that heart valve place? Or was — ?

GERRY:

No, no. They had nothing in common. That was Warren Hancock who started that company making porcine heart valves, and also bandages made from pig skin for burn patients.

ZIEGLER:

You also then did some wine bottle labels for David Hitchcock, didn't you?

GERRY:

Yeah, but that was just sort of as a present, just sort of fun. He's a fellow I've known a long time. But he knows nothing of printing, and he was not interested in writing really. It was my imagination that thought he might like to research this stuff. But he also did *Mission* and he did *Zinfandel Grapes* for me for the Food and Drink series.

ZIEGLER:

And tell me a little bit about the artist. Let me look up her name again, the artist who did the engravings for that.

GERRY:

Oh, Elva Marshall--who has been a longtime editor at the Castle Press--is an artist, and she made the etchings for me of the *Zinfandel* and the *Mission Grapes*. I remember we went out to a vineyard out on Foothill Boulevard and we looked at grapes and we looked at leaves and we started a little collection of wine grape leaves, and so on. We did a lot of research. She made these for me and she was good, and, of course, couldn't run off as many as I needed on her etching press. I think these were like two hundred copies. Tony Droll, a commercial engraver, he ran them off for me, and they're all tipped in.

1.5. TAPE NUMBER: III, SIDE TWO
May 4, 1989)

GERRY:

These are *Letters concerning D. H. Lawrence*. I may have talked about this before. My aunt, Margaret Fay, her husband [Eliot Fay] had been a teacher of Romance languages in a number of different colleges--well, from Northwestern [University] down to the Citadel in the South — and he was very fond of Lawrence. He decided he would write a book on Lawrence, all from the existing written material. This was published by the Bookman Press, which means — I think — Fay may have had to pay for part of it himself to be published. He sent the book off to Dorothy Brett, Mabel Dodge Luhan, Frieda Lawrence, and one other who had been friends of Lawrence. This was in the early fifties and they were all still alive, and they wrote back to him. My aunt still had these letters in her possession, and I thought, "Hey, I'll publish some Lawrence stuff!" I mean, it's very distant, very fringy Lawrence stuff. I published the letters. I guess there were maybe ten letters.

ZIEGLER:

Well, it still should be of considerable interest to anyone doing a Lawrence biography.

GERRY:

Yeah. The letters were written by these friends and by Lawrence's wife to Fay. So that was about that.

ZIEGLER:

I saw where you'd been sketching a portrait of Lawrence, looking at different photographs of him.

GERRY:

Oh, in the frontispiece. I had other people draw it for me too, and I finally ended up doing a Lawrence that wasn't too good, but it was sort of a fairly effective title page. I felt very good about publishing that because it was like new material. It wasn't just a reprint. Here we have *Four Weeds*, written by Charles Leland Richardson. This was my experience with etchings, the first time I'd ever done any etching or intaglio work. I had bought an intaglio press from an artist who was moving and didn't need it anymore. It was just the right size. A strong man can lift it or a weak man can take it apart and move it. And it will do a twelve-inch-wide plate. So I fooled around, and I talked to Richardson. I talked to him and he said, "Well, we'll do it on weeds." So I said, "Well, make it simple. Do four weeds." Well, to do four-- I did fifty copies, so that makes two hundred etchings. It was incredibly tiring to do fifty etchings of each plant.

ZIEGLER:

And etchings you can't put through the press at the same time as type, can you?

GERRY:

No, the type was fairly easy to print. But I printed the book first, and then I imprinted the etchings onto the sheets. Because obviously there was more a possibility of going wrong on the etching than there was on the type. So actually it came out pretty good. And Chuck Richardson wrote some nice, lighthearted little pieces about the weeds. So that was another herbal book. Like I say, I don't think I want to do production etching again.

ZIEGLER:

You say this is the first time you did it?

GERRY:

Right.

ZIEGLER:

I would imagine it's very hard. I've never tried it — just reading descriptions.

GERRY:

The difficult part is wiping the plate off. And even though these were not big plates, it took a lot of time. Then the plate has to be put in the press every time, taken out every time. The ink has to be worked into the intaglio. The surface has to be wiped clean and then it has to be put back in the press. I'd worked out a way so I could register each page, which worked satisfactorily. And then you have to crank it by hand through the press. So each plate, each impression, takes quite a while. Probably I was doing six an hour. ZEIGLER: Yeah, that is slow going.

GERRY:

I don't know, maybe I could do twelve an hour, but that's really bearing down.

ZIEGLER:

Since you're printing intaglio, it must be very hard to be sure that you're getting a good impression. Because you have to be sure that the ink is in all the indentations, and then you have to be sure that the paper is pressed down enough to get into the indentations.

GERRY:

Right, right. Of course, that's what —

ZIEGLER:

Without having so much ink that it spills over into the parts that aren't indented.

GERRY:

Yeah. It's amazing. Sometimes it works, and sometimes it doesn't. Usually, the beginning part--like you say — the ink doesn't get all the way in the bottom of the grooves. It takes quite a while to work it in there. And then how much of the surface you want to wipe off is up to the person that 's doing the wiping . You might want to leave a little tone on there. There's one I did-- One of the weeds was morning glories. So where the actual flower was, I wiped it out

more than I did the background, so that the flower sort of glowed through a little lighter than the background. But that was something that just came to me while I was doing it. I didn't intend to do it that way when I started. Now, let's see, David W. Davies, *House Olson, Printer*. Davies was a librarian at the Honnald Library in Claremont. He retired and began to write histories of local printers. Originally for the Castle Press, he wrote the story of the Castle Press in Pasadena. And he wrote a number of other stories I can't remember right now. This particular one was about House Olson, who was a very convivial printer and had been one of the founders of the Castle Press. This was just concerning his own life; it was a short book. I got the opportunity to print it and publish it.

ZIEGLER:

Did you print any others for David Davies?

GERRY:

We were going to, but then he died. I think this was the only one I did. I set the type, and I had Pat do the presswork for me. I bound it in paper, stiff wrappers. Also, some were bound in boards. I still have some sheets of it that I may bind up in the future. It turned out to be a book I was proud of because it was original. Let's see. It had a tipped-in picture of Olson, and it had a hand-colored initial and lots of letterpress examples--linecut examples--of work he did, the typography he'd done. So that's part of a-- Glen Dawson called it a series of books about Los Angeles printers.

ZIEGLER:

Is linecut the same as zinc cut?

GERRY:

Uh-huh [affirmative]. It just means it doesn't have a halftone screen. It's not a photograph or a painting--a continuous tone process--it 's just black or white, period. There are no dot patterns in it. Miriam Bragdon, *Through the Garden Gate*. Now, here's a typical example of a relative getting through to you. It was some poems of a very distant relative of mine. She was eighty years old and she kept saying, "Hurry up! Hurry up! I want this done before I die." So I kept-- And, of course, I think she may still be alive! This was done in 1975. She was pretty strict. I had made a little typographical error on the last page, and I kept explaining to her how this happened and not to worry about it, that it was perfectly all right. But she insisted that I do something about it, and I couldn't figure out what to do. I kept saying, "That's all right. You know, it's just what happens in printing." No, I was to do something about it! She kept on the phone to me from Chicago. Finally — and I was mad enough about taking on the job in the first place— I took a razor blade, cut the back page off, reprinted it, and tipped it on in the little booklet. It was kind of a cute little book of her poems.

ZIEGLER:

I think you drew a garden gate for the cover or the title page or something.

GERRY:

Yeah, yeah. I did a nice little gate for her. It wasn't printed very-- Could have been printed in a darker color so it was a little more visible. But it was a garden gate. It had a little pansy peeking around the corner of the half -open gate, which I thought she would love. I thought it would be perfect for her book. But she never commented. Even when I pointed it out to her, she wasn't very impressed. She was impressed with her own poems, however! Speaking of poems--

ZIEGLER:

Which, as I remember, were sort of lifted from *Oklahoma* and all sorts of other places.

GERRY:

Oh, really? Did you read some of the poems?

ZIEGLER:

Yeah.

GERRY:

Oh, yeah. [laughter] Well, here's poems--these were a little better — by Walt Stanchfield, who I'd done a book of woodcuts for before [*Walt Stanchfield: A Series of Wood Cuts*]. And I told him — He had his poems, and he wanted to publish them. I said, "Well, I don't do poetry, but if you give me some small woodcuts — " All his woodcuts had been very large before. "If you give me some small woodcuts, I can print a small book, a 6" X 9" book. I'll do the poems . " I thought that that would keep him away for years, in fact perhaps forever. But it was only about a month later that a box full of cuts arrived, all to illustrate the poems. So I was obliged to do it. Wait a minute, I'm talking about the wrong book. *Summer Impressions [and Other Poems]*-- I'm sorry, cancel everything I said about *Summer Impressions*. *Summer Impressions* was a book of poetry I published for Walt Stanchfield. I did that down at Laguna [Beach] in 1968, and it was strictly poems. And there's nothing I can say that's memorable about the book at all. Even the title page I can't remember. Which may be good, because that emphasizes the poetry. So that was that experience.

ZIEGLER:

I remember that the woodcuts were very attractive.

GERRY:

Well, that was another book. That was another one called *Spring* --

ZIEGLER:

Oh. Yeah, I guess I'm probably mixing up the three or four Walt Stanchfield books. Yeah, *Spring Barley: [Poems of the Santa Ynez Valley]* was the one that had such nice woodcuts and a beautiful barley design on the cover.

GERRY:

Yeah, that book came out very well.

ZIEGLER:

Did we talk about *Spring Barley*?

GERRY:

I think we did. That was in the Western Books Exhibition. That turned out to be a very good book. I'd done it on a handpress. It took me a whole solid month, working six, seven days a week. So even though I have a handpress now-- It was a terrible lot of work for some reason. I think I tried to do a hundred copies. And there were multicolored cuts. I mean, the cuts were not all printed in black; they were printed in several colors. That took a lot of careful inking, because I wanted to do it in the same impression. I did it on damp paper.

That's *Spring Barley* I'm talking about. *The Marvelous Platen Jobber of George Phineas Gordon*. I had bought a little press in about '66, maybe '67. It was an 8' X 12' Challenge Gordon. I took it all apart, cleaned it all up, and painted it. Made it all pretty like new. And that became my press. But while I'm taking it apart, I got very interested in the Gordon press. And I bought a book at Dawson's called *The Platen Jobber* by Ralph Green. This man had written about the platen jobbers, because they had all gone out of style and he was sorry to see that happen. He felt there should be something to remember the platen jobbers, which had been so popular for almost a hundred years. So I decided I would write my own little bit. I made an exploded view of the platen press, the Gordon jobber. I made an exploded view of all the parts and cut it in linoleum. Then there were a couple of other little illustrations I had. I wrote a little bit of text and put it all together in a broadsheet, which I still have some of. And it turned out to be pretty successful--I can't say that I'm not proud of it. I also redid this broadside later on in a different kind of type, using the same cuts, and printed it better. I did a better job of printing it. And also used the type and the cuts again to make a little booklet about the platen jobber.

ZIEGLER:

Well, here are some things that I saw listed as things that you were proposing to do. And I wonder which of these were actually done. Also, if you see any that are missing from this list, if you could mention them and talk about them.

GERRY:

Marion [A.] Baker. I met her. She's an artist. I met her here at UCLA. A bunch of us had come to some-- Not a convention, but it was a three-day meeting.

People spoke and it was--

ZIEGLER:

Conference?

GERRY:

Conference, that's what it was. That's why I met her. She was interested in wood engraving, and she wanted to learn wood engraving. She had this idea,

and she liked these spice boxes that she collected. I said, "You make the wood engravings and write me the text, and we'll do a little book on it." Of course, she never got around to it. So that was the end of that. Another one was *Forgotten California Wineries* by David Hitchcock. I was trying to inspire my friend in his retirement to write me something about wine that would be of interest to him to research, because he liked to travel around California. Well, as I told you before, he wasn't interested in doing that much work. It didn't appeal to him, so he didn't do it. Dan [Daniel] Bailey did write me something about a Bloody Mary, but I didn't think he really had done satisfactory research as to the origins of the Bloody Mary drink. Because I was going to do it for the Food and Drink series. So it's sort of lying around. I edited it a couple of times and had him rewrite it a couple of times, and it's just sort of lying there. It may be done some day. *Square-Back Binding for the Small Printer*. I had written a manuscript with all the drawings for how to bind your own book at home. [It was for] a small-time printer. But I never-- Who could care? I mean, there are so many bookbinding classes around, I don't think-- It was for edition binding for a small printer. It was some sort of dream that I just never got around to doing.

ZIEGLER:

Well, I think there would be people interested in it.

GERRY:

Yeah, could be. But then I began to realize my own system of binding was kind of unorthodox, and maybe I'd be spreading the wrong word to people about how to bind.

ZIEGLER:

Is there an orthodoxy of binding?

GERRY:

Oh, yes. ZEIGLER: Anything that works I think would be acceptable.

GERRY:

Well, that is sort of my theory, but I think a person who is a real binder would probably find fault with some of the things I've invented myself. I mean the process I do, which may be very wrong according to a real bookbinder, because I more or less taught it to myself.

ZIEGLER:

What do you do? Could you describe it?

GERRY:

Well, maybe the way I glue the papers on or the way I sew it. Or the way — When you look at the book, you'd probably say, "Well, yeah, it looks just like any square- back book." But I'm sure a binder or a connoisseur could find some fault with it. And I sort of thought maybe I was passing on some information that people would have to unlearn at a later date. *Gentleman's Cooking Book*, I

still want to do that. A male chauvinist pig's cookbook, but I wouldn't call it that.

ZIEGLER:

[laughter] What makes it a male chauvinist pig's cookbook?

GERRY:

Oh, it would have recipes of things that men like to eat.

ZIEGLER:

Such as?

GERRY:

Corned beef hash and-- What else? Things like that, that a man cooks when he's home and he's "baching" it. When his wife's away or--

ZIEGLER:

Real men eat corned beef hash!

GERRY:

Right, real men's food. I fiddled around with it for a long time, and I keep thinking, you know, it's one of those things that I'll do someday. I met a fellow who's a writer and also interested in food. I may say, "Hey, how about you writing it for me?" But I don't know. It's just kind of hard to-- I just have to sit down and work at it for a long time. I have thousands of recipes, and I have to beat it down to a reasonable number. A reasonable number of foods that only men eat!

ZIEGLER:

[laughter] What are some of the others?

GERRY:

Well, I wish I could remember to tell you now. Oh, I suppose chili--there would be a lot of chili recipes. What else was there? Corned beef hash. Seems like I could remember. Oh, just things here and there that I — Oh, beef bourguignon, and things that are fairly easy to make. The recipes are just written in prose. There's not a big list of ingredients or how much of each ingredient. It's sort of up to the man to throw it in the pot.

ZIEGLER:

Well, in fact, I think women will enjoy your cookbook, too.

GERRY:

Oh, sure

ZIEGLER:

And I must say, I once made beef bourguignon over a camp fire.

GERRY:

Oh, really? ZEIGLER: Yes.

GERRY:

That sounds great. [laughter] No kidding! Where was that?

ZIEGLER:

Well, I was camping up at Santa Barbara, out in the mountains behind Santa Barbara, at a place I really love called Los Osos.

GERRY:

Oh, yeah.

ZIEGLER:

Upper Oso is the name of it.

GERRY:

Oh, Oso, okay.

ZIEGLER:

You marinate the beef in red wine, you know. So what I did was marinate the beef and all the spices in the wine and then just freeze it. I took this solid block of stuff with me. And then, on the first night out, I had a big heavy iron pot, and I just stuck the big heavy iron pot right down in the campfire, with this mixture in it, and cooked it up.

GERRY:

Oh, golly. That sounds great!

ZIEGLER:

It was. Anyway, could you tell me some about doing *Weather Bird*? Your little magazine or newsletter that you put out and designed very attractively each time.

GERRY:

Yes, *Weather Bird*. One time at Dawson's Book Store, I ran across a portfolio that said "newsletter of the Curwen Press." It had, oh, say, six newsletters in there. And it was very reasonably priced. I mean, it was \$5 or something like this. I thought, "Gee, this looks sort of interesting." I knew nothing about the Curwen Press. I suppose I'd heard of it, but I knew nothing about it. These little newsletters were about printing, so I just bought them for the fun of it and because they were cheap. I'd read them over and over, and they were very intriguing, how they had foldouts and they had used mostly material that they had already printed. This was just like an advertising thing they sent out to their customers. I thought, "I'll do one. I'll just use old paper and I'll use cuts that are already done, and I'll print samples of title pages I may still have standing around. Just to show what the Weather Bird press has done. I thought I'd do it every quarter, I suppose. I was very, very hard-pressed to do it once a year. But the first one came out-- I can't remember what year, I tried to keep it lighthearted in a light, more of an amusing sort of way. This sort of writing. Comments on whatever I was showing. I tried to keep it lighthearted. So I did the first one, and I didn't promise myself anything, like I'd do another one. But the second year was coming around, and I thought, "Well, I'll do one more." And after ten years I couldn't believe it, I'd done ten of them. I mean, maybe that's not much of an accomplishment. But it's an accomplishment for me,

because it's amazing that I was able to do it for ten years. But it was really started because of those Curwen Press newsletters. Since then, I've tried to get a complete collection, and no matter how much money it might cost, I still can't get a complete collection of the Curwen letters. There's one I have that's missing, and I think they only did twelve. I don't know. Somewhere around twelve or fifteen. That's how that came about. I may do it again someday, I don't know. It was very enjoyable, in spite of the fact that I was always pressed to get material for it. There was only an eight-page booklet.

ZIEGLER:

Also very informative. You have little essays on, well, for instance, Herb Yellin and Lord John Press. I remember really enjoying one essay with samples about how you do different cover patterns for binding, things like that.

GERRY:

The ideas mostly came from the Curwen Press newsletters, I think. That was my inspiration for doing that. I did keep some. I kept twenty-five of every copy, and then I issued a collection in a portfolio. Not unlike the Curwen Press portfolio. I think I had some paste paper covers on it tied together with a string. They sold right away. Everybody wanted one, and they were gone. I think I just have one copy now. [tape recorder off]

ZIEGLER:

Can you think of any other books?

GERRY:

I can't, Rebecca, I haven't made a list of all the books I've done for a long time. When I only had three or four books, I was always making lists of all of my publications. But I haven't for a long time. It seems like you've covered a great many, if not every one of them. I guess I said I was working right now on a supplement to *The San Pasqual Press: [A Dream Nearly Realized]*. I think we covered the San Pasqual Press earlier, in last session. That's the most recent book I've done, I think. The story of the San Pasqual Press. And I guess recently I got some more information. I was able to talk directly with Val Trefz, who was one of the founders. I discovered he's still living down in Orange County .

ZIEGLER:

What's he doing now?

GERRY:

He's retired, but his press is still going--called the Trefz Press--and his son [Steve Trefz] is managing it now. So that little bit of extra information, plus some other San Pasqual Press books I found through Val Trefz, caused me to print the supplement. Ed [Edwin H.] Carpenter is looking at the proofs right now, to make sure that I do the bibliography — that is one of his specialties--that I do the bibliography right. Then I plan to do books I have-- I'm guilty of

announcing books I'm going to do and then not doing them, but I'll tell you anyway. The book of *Southern California Seaside Plants*, which will be done on linoleum cuts, and I hope that [Charles Leland] Richardson will write it for me. That will probably be the biggest, most difficult of books I'll ever do. I will probably do it on a handpress. And the cuts will be multicolored. I don't know how many I'll do--maybe fifty copies will be about all I can do on a handpress. And I'll probably bind it myself. Then one that's been in work for a long time called *The Butterfly's Ball and the Grasshopper's Feast*. A very early children's poem. ZEIGLER: Oh, that sounds like fun.

GERRY:

It's supposedly the first children's poem that didn't have a lesson or a moral to it.

ZIEGLER:

Sounds like it would be fun to illustrate. Are you going to illustrate it?

GERRY:

I've worked out almost all the illustrations on that. Again, to be cut in linoleum, but to be printed only in one color, probably in black. And then we mentioned *The Gentleman's Cooking Book*, which is still fairly vague. I should have brought my list of things I want to do. I can't remember any others right now.

ZIEGLER:

Let's see, I know of a few that I somehow didn't make slips for. There was *Dibden's Ghost* that you did for Lorson's bookshop.

GERRY:

That was a Christmas giveaway, I think. I don't know, maybe he did sell them. I did quite a few I think. There were five hundred, and I think his [James E. Lorson's] wife [Joan Lorson] offered to sell them. She's probably still selling them.

ZIEGLER:

I enjoyed that so much that I xeroxed a copy of your proofs for myself. Because we learned about Thomas Frognall Dibden in my analytical bibliography course last quarter, and I found it entertaining.

GERRY:

I confess that when Jim brought me the poem, I said, "Who the heck is this Dibden?" He said, "You ought to know. He was a great bookman." That was my introduction to Dibden, although I know a little bit about him. If I find a copy, I'll send it to you. But you'll probably be gone to Arizona by then.

ZIEGLER:

Very likely.

GERRY:

I'm sure Jim's got plenty of them.

ZIEGLER:

And there was also — I don't know why I didn't get a card made for this either — T. H. White's *Christmas at Forest Sauvage*.

GERRY:

That was excerpted from *The Sword and the Stone*. I always loved that Christmas section of the book, so I did it without getting permission. I figured I wasn't going to make any money on it, maybe they wouldn't prosecute me. I was only going to give it to my friends. I did some little wood engravings that weren't too good.

ZIEGLER:

I think that would fall within the doctrine of fair use, as they say in the copyright law. I wonder if you could talk a little more about your partnership with Pat Reagh.

GERRY:

I was in Fallbrook and I had my shop going. I had come up to Los Angeles a couple of times, and I'd heard about Pat Reagh and I'd seen some of his work. I was very impressed. I think Bill [William] Dailey of Dailey's book- shop [William and Victoria Dailey Rare Books and Fine Prints] had discovered Pat and was using him to print something. The first thing I saw was the *Southern California Book Dealers Association Directory*. It's probably the wrong title, but it was a beautiful job Pat had done. So one time over at the Castle Press, there was some event there, and Pall [W.] Bohne introduced me to Pat. We talked, and I told him how much I liked his things and so on. He may have even said then, "Maybe we should go in and be partners." I don't know why he wanted to be partners, to tell you the truth. He liked the kind of work I did. So I can't really tell you how. I guess I probably had a fantasy of us having this printshop that would really satisfy all of my dreams. So I finally agreed with Pat. I said, "Okay, let's be partners." And we went over our equipment and said, "We'll keep this, and we'll get rid of that, and we're going to get this." And he was going to buy Lillian Marks's Heidelberg cylinder press. That was the biggest move of all for him, and for me too. So we had looked around, and I found a place in Glendale right near the train station which seemed to be the right place for us. It was a kind of an industrial neighborhood, and it wasn't too run-down but it wasn't too expensive. We were going to try to be cheap. It had enough square feet. We figured how many square feet we needed. I can't remember, two thousand or something like that we needed. So we moved in there around '80 or '81, I can't remember for sure. And here was all this stuff, all of our equipment. I brought everything I could from Fallbrook that would fit on a truck. Everything we had moved ourselves, plus what the movers had moved, was heaped in the middle of the shop. We must have spent two months trying to put it all together, arranging it and sorting it out and trying to get an

electrician. We had difficulty. No electrician would touch the job because the building was so old. Finally we complained to the landlord. I mean, here we were stuck with this — You know, it had cost us thousands of dollars in professional fees to have this equipment moved. We were stuck. So we were kind of panicked, and I thought I might even have to go back to work until we got some of the problems straightened out. Finally we talked to the landlord, and he got someone to bootleg in the wiring for us. We were all wired up and pretty soon ready to go, and eventually jobs that had been waiting, you know, couldn't wait any longer. We had to get on them. It sort of overlapped, the arranging of the shop and getting some work done. In fact some work we had to have at one time done on the outside for one client. We didn't even have a printing press that would work. But eventually it really got going. I think that first year I stayed with Pat, we did more books than he may have ever done in any one year since. Now, it may have been a good year for books. Everybody wanted to publish. Publishing was still profitable. I think a lot of the publishers, like Yellin and [Ralph] Sylvester and [Stathis] Orphanos, had to cut back in later years. We worked a long time. I tell you, we just worked all the time. That's about all we did was work. I think all the things we did turned out very well. I'm surprised at some of the incidental things we had time to do. I can't think how we did it. And Pat bought a house near the area and he moved in there, right near his shop. He's still in the same shop. And it's still essentially the same equipment. After I left I took out the Linotype, which he wasn't too fond of. I think we made a mistake by keeping-- We had two vertical presses, and we kept his and not mine. I think we should have kept mine. His was cleaner, but mine was easier to operate. But then the Heidelberg was such a marvelous press that we eventually didn't even use the vertical, and Pat finally got rid of it. I moved the Linotype out. As a matter of fact, I had to junk it, because I couldn't sell it to anybody. Nobody would even take it off my hands, so I had to junk it. And I took out some other things there when we broke up the partnership.

ZIEGLER:

Why did you decide to discontinue it?

GERRY:

I think I was probably too old. I was about fifty- one when we started. Pat was only about thirty I think. I was not professionally trained as a printer. I was doing things in an amateur way, and Pat kind of didn't like that, naturally. He wanted things done more professionally. And he was right. If it was a business, we couldn't fool around like amateurs. I had made a lot of mistakes that made me unhappy about being in the business. So much depended on accuracy, and I had made mistakes which cost us money. So I, you know, I just told Pat, "I can't do the partnership deal anymore. I want to get out of it." "Fine." It was

okay with him. He always asked me to come back to work, but I think I wasn't prepared to work all that hard all that time. So I went back to the Disney Studio for the easy money. And I might add, we made very little money at the business. Pat does all right now, but the first year is probably the toughest. Pat has a reputation, and rightly so, of being the best printer in Southern California as far as the bookwork goes and letterpress. He's since come onto some later-model typesetting equipment. So it's been almost ten years now that he's been in the larger shop situation. So it's well seasoned. He is doing work for the Book Club of California right at this minute, and he's made a good success of it. Whether I was there or not, I'm sure he would have anyway. It probably took two people to have enough money and enough energy to get it that step up from where he was on Ninth Street. So that's about what I contributed then, that one step up. It was quite an experience, I'll tell you, that year that we worked together. Somewhere in one of my newsletters I published a list of books we did that year.

ZIEGLER:

Yeah, I saw that. That was a pretty impressive turnout. I'm just looking here to see what other questions I had written down. Okay, I wonder if we could move to some of the questions about design of printed matter and books in general. First of all, maybe we can talk about different typefaces and how you go about choosing a typeface. I have here a xerox of your sample of the typefaces of the Weather Bird Press. It might be a good way to approach this if you want to look at it and just comment on each typeface and in what circumstances you would use that typeface and what connotations it has, what impression it gives, and things like that.

GERRY:

Well, the first one we've got here is Helvetica. And I bought that strictly for commercial work. When I had my shop and I was going to try to make it successful and make it support itself, I figured I needed an up-to-date type, which was Helvetica. It was a very popular face at that time for commercial work. I don't think I ever used it very much, and it was the first thing I sold when I left that situation.

ZIEGLER:

And that's a sans serif type. Could you talk a little about using sans serif types and what you think they could [inaudible].

GERRY:

I'm not fond of sans serif types. Like I said, I only got this because of its appeal to customers who wanted to be up-to-date. I am not a fan of these faces. I don't know why they even came up with Helvetica. They've been through so many sans serif types in the advertising typography in such a short time. I mean, what was wrong with Futura? It was excellent. One of the first sans serif faces was

Futura, and it is just as good as any of them. Unfortunately, it was a victim of fashion. And they came up and they had Venus; they all wanted to use Venus. There were a couple of other-- Franklin Gothic was revived. Not bad at all, Franklin Gothic. Then they came to Universe and Helvetica, and they were all types that did not interest me personally, although I could certainly see their use in the commercial world. I much prefer the older types, the faces with serifs on them. The first type that I ever got that was worth a darn for the machine was a Fairfield, which was Rudolf Ruzicka's Linotype face. I had that in two sizes, and I used that quite a bit. I don't think I particularly-- Every printer falls in love with a type at one time and then falls out of love later on. The one type that I will probably never tire of is Linotype Janson. And, of course, they have foundry Janson and Monotype Janson. But the Janson type for typesetting machines is the one I will never tire of. I think I like the Linotype — With the exception of the Linotype italic Janson, I like it maybe better than the Monotype Janson, which is a little lighter weight.

ZIEGLER:

Can I take a look at the sample of the Janson?

GERRY:

I don't think I had Janson when I did this catalog. It was something I always wanted, but it was never for sale used. All my Linotype faces I bought used, except for the Helvetica, at this period when I had the little shop in Laguna.

ZIEGLER:

Where do you buy used types or how do you find out about used types?

GERRY:

Oh, there were lots of dealers in Los Angeles who were selling used Linotype matrices, because the technology was changing around the late sixties. More and more printers were getting rid of their hot metals, and the dealers were loaded up with it. You could get it at a very reasonable price sometimes. I got matrices at nine cents apiece, and they were selling them new at thirty- five cents apiece. You took your chances. When you bought it used, you might end up not having all the characters if you bought used fonts from questionable sources. Some dealers, like Mid-West Matrix, would send you a proof and they were very careful to make sure their fonts were operable. Other people who sold things cheaper- -

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ZIEGLER:

Okay. I don't know all of the typefaces. And I don't know much about Janson. Could you describe it? Is it an old style or a modern style?

GERRY:

Janson was, I think, a Dutch face that preceded Caslon. And [William] Caslon when he cut his famous face — named Caslon- -he may have been influenced by the Dutch types. Janson was one of them. It has many similarities to Caslon. However, to me, it's a little closer set, and the width of the letters-- You get more letters per line than you can with Caslon.

ZIEGLER:

So it gives a denser, darker look to the type block?

GERRY:

It doesn't call attention to itself as much as Caslon does. Every time you see Caslon, you go, "Bingo! Caslon." But people, most people, when you see Janson you don't think about it. I like Janson, because it was a very uneven type. Almost crude in some respects, but crude in a very nice way. Another face I liked, which I always thought would be an excellent contrast to Janson, if you could have two faces on a machine, would be Electra. It was [William] Dwiggins's face, his masterpiece of typesetting machine face. I had some Electra for quite a while, but not anymore. I don't know, I'm just telling you my own personal taste in type. I don't know if that's exactly what I should be telling you. Or was that what you asked?

ZIEGLER:

Well, it's all interesting. I wonder if you could talk some more about maybe the sort of artistic connotations of typefaces or what sorts of material you would consider different typefaces especially appropriate for, just in looking right for the material.

GERRY:

Oh, my own personal feeling is that, yes, typefaces are sometimes more appropriate for one thing than another. But for the most part, I think a printer gets a new typeface because he likes the type and he's never had it before. He uses it for whatever job comes up first and tells himself that it's appropriate for that particular job, that particular book, that particular text. I think that there's an awfully broad range of types which are appropriate.

ZIEGLER:

I saw, though, that you had done some interesting things with some things that were sort of nineteenth century. And, in the impression you were trying to give, you did use some of those highly ornamented typefaces that [A. J.] Corrigan made such fun of. I thought that was great, because it gave that nineteenth-century look to it. I remember one case-- I'm afraid I don't remember which book, but you had chosen a "modern style" typeface in the old meaning of "modern style," which was modern in the eighteenth century. I thought it looked especially appropriate, because it was something with a sort of journalistic, nineteenth-century slant.

GERRY:

Oh. I can't remember that. I can't remember which one that would be. I think that to do what they call allusive typography is always entertaining to the one person trying to do it. To try to imitate a period of typography. Or suggest- - better if you suggest a period of typography. It's an intriguing thing to do for a printer, for a designer. [Grant] Dahlstrom was certainly excellent at that. And he--

ZIEGLER:

Would he ever give you any advice, like saying, "This typeface is not really appropriate for what you're printing" or--?

GERRY:

Oh, sure, yes. Definitely. And typefaces that he just didn't like period, he had plenty of comment on. A lot of [Frederic] Goudy's faces he didn't like. But most of the printers that have influenced me have always gone more for the book types--book faces--like Bembo and Janson. Those are the two really nice ones. Then there are more Monotype faces, Fournier and Bembo narrow italic. Gosh, I can't think of them right offhand. Monotype was the one that made the most influential contribution to types of our time under [Stanley] Morison and the English Monotype Company. The American Monotype Company I don't think did very much in the way of contributing types. Perhaps in the linecasting machines, like the Linotype and the intertype. [C. H.] Griffith with the Linotype Company came up with some very good types, Janson for one. And then Dwiggins's Electra, I thought, was a good face. Some of his other more-- Caledonia, Dwiggins's Caledonia, which I don't particularly like, but that was very popular for a while. But the real classical-- The faces that alluded to classic types were really revived by the English Monotype Company. The typefounders themselves, I think, like American typefounders, didn't contribute much to book types. Of course, that wasn't their business by then. Nobody was going to set a book by hand anyway. They contributed more in the advertising field. And then most of the little local typefounders were casting from Monotype matrices. So Monotype had a large influence, because the typefounder could just buy the Monotype mattes and a Thompson machine and be in the typefounding business. He didn't have to design or cut or have the expensive problems of designing his own type. So what else am I supposed to -- ? I can't think of anything.

ZIEGLER:

Well, would you like to look over this and see if there are any other typefaces there that you'd like to comment on?

GERRY:

Well, the Monotype Bembo is about the nicest face done in our time, and it's a revival of a Venetian sort of face. It's not really Venetian, but it's a type that

comes from quite a long time ago. I'd say it's the best, most long-lasting of our twentieth-century book-face revivals. And John Bell, that's another great revival of a nineteenth-century type, but which was sort of the predecessor to moderns. The Scotch Roman probably followed this. I say nineteenth century, but I see the date here is actually 1788. So it's just before the turn of the century. The Monotype people revived John Bell in their version. Linotype did something vaguely similar in their Monticello, but it was too soft. Janson, of course, the original Janson, was around in 1690. Of course, we're looking at a book of types that I had in my printshop. Then there were some decorative faces here which I — And then in the fifties, the 1950s, there was a revival of nineteenth-century Victorian faces. The founders dug into their files and cast up a lot of these faces which they'd had since the nineteenth century- -since Victorian times. They cast those up, and people were very fond of using those.

ZIEGLER:

They could do a lot of--

GERRY:

And I think used the way they were later on, with maybe just one word, one letter, one line or so of a Victorian type set against a standard sort of Roman-- book Roman--made a very nice contrast. A lot of people did very nice things with that, including Grant and Saul [Marks] and Ward [Ritchie]. I think Ward did a little more — There's some. ZEIGLER: Yes.

GERRY:

What was that? It was called Jim Crow- -a sort of shaded type, shaded at the top. These are names I invented. Woodcraft, like Fantastic, but the Woodcraft looked like it was made out of logs. Very Victorian.

ZIEGLER:

Could you mention some books that are examples of that use of a Victorian typeface in contrast with a regular typeface?

GERRY:

Oh, I can't really. Grant did that a lot. And I think the Grabhorns even did it somewhat. Ward's typography was a little more--and only by comparison--a little more contemporary. He'd spent a lot of time in the advertising business. I don't want this to sound derogatory, because I've sort of been saying derogatory things about advertising typography. But I think Ward was always very contemporary in his typography. I mean, in comparison to Grant and Saul- Saul continually referred to past classic examples, I think.

ZIEGLER:

Well, we've sort of covered it, but I wonder if you-- Are there typeface designers that you especially admire?

GERRY:

Well, first we start with the local three that influenced me. That was Ward and Grant and Saul. And I pretty much follow all that they set up--set down. I never questioned them anyway. Whether these were particularly Californian or not, I can't judge. Some say they are more Californian than others, but I don't know. Then I would go to some English typographers. Certainly [Francis] Meynell and the Nonesuch Press. A lot of the Curwen Press things appeal to me, a lot of their booklets, and their books; they did a lot of nice books. Curwen and Meynell and the Golden Cockerel Press. I always admired the wood engravings, but the typography was not always something I admired or tried to follow. Other influences would be-- Well, not Goudy. I didn't particularly like Goudy's work, although I liked his type Californian. Cooper didn't do much for me, although a very interesting, historic person--Oswald Cooper--and the things he did. I think maybe Elmer Adler might have, somehow, with some of his things he did with the *Colophon*. Peter Bielensohn did things that appealed to me. Even his little books that he used to sell in the stores for a dollar always were very entertaining and very up-front graphically. You felt that he'd almost printed them with his own hands. You don't see books like that around anymore, not for a dollar anyway, or at all, for any price. Some of his better, more expensive books that Bielensohn did at the Peter Pauper Press I think were-- I liked them. So I guess if you like them, they're going to influence you. You want to imitate them. I'm very imitative. If I see something I like I try to force it on whatever particular job I'm doing at the time, and that's usually unsuccessful. Of course, I like graphic. The involvement of pictorial matter with type, if it's very graphic, like linoleum cuts or wood engravings.

ZIEGLER:

And which do you think are some of the most successful examples of that?

GERRY:

I can't say right offhand. I think a lot of the illustrated books that the Curwen Press did were very good along those lines. And Meynell, the Nonesuch Press. Gosh, his *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, there are some great drawings in there that are very well integrated with the type. There should be some example I could cite, but I can't.

ZIEGLER:

[inaudible]

GERRY:

I didn't do my homework, you see. [laughter]

ZIEGLER:

Well, I don't want to give you that impression. I mean, the amount that you do know is amazing. Could you talk a little about choosing the paper when you print something?

GERRY:

Paper's always been a terrible problem for me. I don't know why. But other people seem to not be able to find-- They suffer from the same problem, not being able to find the paper that they think they want. Now, there was a paper that I-- It was so hard to get paper. The handmade papers were so expensive and were so few when I first started printing in the sixties that I didn't pay any attention. All I wanted was a good commercial paper. But all of the good commercial papers were going to offset, and they were very hard to print on by letterpress. So I was continually going through the catalogs of Blake Moffat and the commercial paper people, looking for the ideal paper to print on letterpress. And I was wringing my hands because I could never find it. But, lo and behold, I look back on some packages of paper that I still have from those days, and I think, "I had it. It was right there and I didn't know it. Look at this beautiful paper!" But at the time I thought, "It's only a substitute for what I really want."

ZIEGLER:

You mean just because it's so much better than what's available now?

GERRY:

Partially that, but partially because I couldn't see it at the time. I thought, "It's just a compromise. It's just a compromise for what I really want."

ZIEGLER:

You really wanted to be printing on handmade paper?

GERRY:

No, not really. But I wanted to be printing on a paper that would decently accept the letterpress. And here I had it all the time, I just didn't know it. So paper is a tricky thing. Then you think, well, certain papers are for certain things. If you want to print something that's very fine, you're going to need a smooth paper, if you're going to not print it damp. That's about the only requirement, I would say. I think you take a paper because you like it. Or because you're tired of the one you've been using. I think Mohawk superfine is very good for anything. It's a cheap commercial paper, but it works very good for letterpress, and it looks good. You can hardly fault it. Ragston's another one that's hard to fault. They're getting a little harder to print on, or at least the Ragston's a little harder printing on than it once was letterpress.

ZIEGLER:

Have you ever printed on handmade paper?

GERRY:

Yes. I do it more so all the time now.

ZIEGLER:

I imagine sometimes it's hard, because handmade paper is by nature irregular.

GERRY:

You usually do it damp--it's going to be damp. I would say I more and more go to the paper catalog of-- I won't say handmade, because very little of the paper is handmade. But the--what do you want to say? --the less commercial papers that are handled by Nelson Whitehead and the Paper Source and some of the art supply houses like Daniel Smith. I'll go to those papers because now there's a big selection and they're also priced within reason. So you can afford them. And maybe now, in my later years, I don't mind paying a dollar a sheet, whereas that would have killed me to have to do that ten years ago or fifteen years ago. But like cheap wines at Trader Joe's for \$1.99, I seldom buy any other kind. [laughter] So I usually buy-- A dollar a sheet is about my tops, unless it's for something very special. And I think printing, no matter-- Whether you're printing damp on handmade paper, or any kind of paper, it's very hard for anybody to get a good impression. Pat [Patrick Reagh] will tell you that the Heidelberg cylinder press will get you a good impression every time. And he's right. But the rest of us, who don't have Heidelberg cylinder presses, are going to be fighting to get a good sharp image no matter what kind of press, what kind of ink, or what kind of paper we've got to work with. ZEIGLER: Yeah.

GERRY:

I think it's just part of letterpress printing. And offset printing has the same problem, but in a different way.

ZIEGLER:

Yeah, of course, I discovered some of that in the printing class last quarter. Could you describe the process of laying something out, working out the layout for a book or broadsheet or whatever?

GERRY:

More and more, what I do is just write out the title by hand with a pen, if I want to, say, work on the title page. I try to save the title page of the book till the last, because that's sort of the dessert. And I think the rest of the book may suggest to you a title page. After you've been through the manuscript, after you've been through how you're going to plan all the other pages of the book, the information you've gathered will help you with the title page. The title page is your tour de force. Title pages are what we always remember. However, I must say that as time goes on I'm less interested in making the title page that's going to knock out the eyes of the world than I once was.

ZIEGLER:

Why is that?

GERRY:

I don't know. I guess because I know I'm not going to do it. I've seen so many other title pages that other people have done that you realize, well, just do a good one and be glad to get that.

ZIEGLER:

Wasn't it Beatrice Warde who said that the layout and all that shouldn't call attention to itself but call attention to its content? So you don't want a title page that is just so striking that that's all you think about.

GERRY:

She's right, very right. Like Diana [Thomas] said in the printshop, "It's hard to keep the students from using every type we've got on each page!" And so I think it's sort of the same system. It works in your mind that eventually, yes, you're less interested in showing off what you can do and more interested in showing-- You're interested in not distracting the viewer. This is true of the motion picture business. This is true of probably any art or any sort of show business. To try to point the public's eye to what you want them to see. Printing is no different. But like I say, if I'm designing something, I generally just sit down with a pen or a pencil and write it out by hand. You can see where it can break, or where it might break, and you try it that way. As opposed to going with a layout pencil, trying to lay it out full-size with a T square, and so on, I would just fiddle around, writing it out with a ballpoint or a pencil. That will suggest things to you, to the layout person. That's about all I can say for that.

ZIEGLER:

Well, I wonder if you could talk more about illustrations and how you go about marrying illustrations to the text--deciding maybe what to illustrate, what technique is most appropriate for this and so on.

GERRY:

Well, I would say in my case, because the illustration is going to be printed letterpress and maybe not necessarily along with the type-- Because it may require a lot more ink than the type, you may have to print it separately. With drawings it's going to be the same process. So I'm limited to a photo plate, what I can have made by photo engraving. It can't be a halftone plate because I don't want to print halftones and I can't print halftones. So it's going to be a line drawing, now. A line resolution, shall we say. So it's going to be a linoleum cut or a wood engraving or a photo engraving. So that's what I am limited to. Those are fairly graphic. I think I like illustrations which are graphic. What do I mean "graphic"? Two-dimensional I guess would be graphic. Would that be? Something that is not particularly attempting to be a three-dimensional image, like a lot of Italian perspective.

ZIEGLER:

Something that works as more of a design.

GERRY:

More of a design. And I think certain things vibrate. Certain old woodcuts and wood engravings vibrate because of the juxtaposition of the little white lines together. That is sort of the same way that type does. When you're not reading it you just see it, and it vibrates because of the little black and white pattern that

you see. Vibrates your eyes and it's sort of pleasing. A person might try to work something into their illustrations that has a little vibrant quality like the type does. I don't really have any theory about what should be illustrated. We were talking about the [Edward] Ardizzone book that I printed where he tells about book illustrating [*On the Illustrating of Books*] . He has very definite views of what should and should not be illustrated. I don't think I have worked out a system. I just probably pick something I like in the story that I think should be illustrated, and I do it by whim, not by intellect. Just by what appeals to me.

ZIEGLER:

I noticed that you often would draw things again and again and maybe draw a variety of different things for the same work, and then you would choose only some of them.

GERRY:

Years ago I would.

ZIEGLER:

In any case, it looked to me like you do it by sort of drawing out the possibilities and then choosing among them .

GERRY:

Yeah, I think you should explore the possibilities. Like Ward describes when he started-- It was early typographic expressions. He would proof the title page and then he would pin it on the wall until he had a hundred versions of some slight change on the wall. He said it was a matter of not being able to decide what he really wanted. And I think that's true of-- I do draw things out too much to the point where I miss-- I look back at some of the drawings for illustrations and I think, "Why didn't I use that? That's much better than what I finally did use."

ZIEGLER:

I was reading some about the [Walt] Disney Studio, and I sort of gathered that Disney works the same way, that people are encouraged to draw and draw and draw all sorts of different possibilities and many of them never get used finally. In fact, many of maybe the best ones never get used.

GERRY:

Well, yeah, there's always that feeling.

ZIEGLER:

Putting all the possibilities out on the board to choose from.

GERRY:

There's always that feeling that, well, maybe some of the best stuff doesn't get used. Yeah, I think book printing is very much like movie making. Although I didn't realize until later on that there are all these possibilities that are available to you and you have to-- In the motion picture business, as opposed to, say, printing a few hundred copies of a book, it's a lot different. I mean, you're

trying to appeal to a very large audience, and the larger the audience you appeal to, the harder it is to get the material and develop it so that the audience likes it. Anybody can make a picture that will appeal to their relatives or their buddy across the table from them. I mean, you can make a motion picture, one that will appeal to yourself. But to make something that appeals to a lot of people, it takes a lot of--I hate to say it--a lot of effort. You have to try a number of different things, and somebody has to pick from all these to try and make them say, "Yes, this is what we want to use." And you hear all these stories about "Well, we had to hire some more writers." "They had ten writers and they fired that writer." "They got this writer to rewrite this writer's rewriting." It sounds ridiculous when somebody tells you this is what they do in Hollywood, but every picture I have ever worked on, we have done it exactly that way. Nobody seems to know why.

ZIEGLER:

I gather, though, that it's not that the things that didn't get used were not good, but maybe they didn't fit in with the story. Maybe there was some really great scene, well drawn and very comical in itself, but once it was put together it sort of disrupted the story line.

GERRY:

Right, that's usually what happens.

ZIEGLER:

I would imagine that something like that happens in book illustrations. Maybe you've done some drawings, some great drawings. They just don't quite complement the layout of the page in the way you want it exactly. Or maybe they would be too distracting on the page.

GERRY:

Exactly. That's where the similarity comes in. You try to make the book seem, you know, as a whole thing that kind of fits all together. So a lot of the ideas that you get, typographic ideas as well as illustrative ideas, might stand very well on their own, but when it all goes together in one book it might be distracting. All the other elements might fight together. You don't want that, because you want the person to read the book and not —

ZIEGLER:

Can you think of some cases where you had some great illustrations that you were just dying to use but had to give up on them because they didn't all work together well in the book?

GERRY:

No, unless it would probably be every book, every time I tried to illustrate anything. No. Sometimes the author has a hand in selecting the illustrations, or the publisher, and sometimes that goes against your grain. But in the long run-- I mean, after all, they have the right to do it.

ZIEGLER:

Could you say a little more about that?

GERRY:

Pat and I did a book for [Ralph] Sylvester and [Stathis] Orphanos that was a Tennessee Williams book. Tennessee Williams had a friend who had made this woodcut, and he wanted to use it. Well, I think they were obliged to accommodate Tennessee Williams on this matter because they had gotten the rights to do this book from him. It was a book, but it was this short story. In the end we used the illustration that-- I won't speak for Sylvester and Orphanos, but Pat and I didn't like it. We didn't think it was all that appropriate or good. So that was an incident where the author had the power to force his ideas onto us. But it's not a big deal.

ZIEGLER:

You've done quite a bit of job printing, and I would imagine that occurs even more with job printing than it does with book printing. That the client has his or her own ideas and that you really have to work around them, whether you like it best or not. Is that true?

GERRY:

Oh, especially in commercial printing, yes. I think you're supposed to guide the client along the right path, and when he gets too far off you just kind of bring him back. I think you don't have to force your ideas, you don't have to make him be the best typographer in the world. You just have to make him look pretty good- And if he wants to do something terribly ridiculous, that's when you argue. But you can't argue every point because you personally feel you've got a better idea.

ZIEGLER:

Are you willing to talk about any particular examples?

GERRY:

I haven't done that much commercial work, really. I know Pat's experience with it is you don't regard it the same way you regard your bookwork or your bookish printing. It's like something you do-- It comes from the outsider. It's brought in by the outsider, and they already have a preconceived idea of how they want it. They seldom come to you as a printer anymore and say, "Do this for me." "We have this idea. Our artists did it, and this is what we want." As far as commercial printing goes, the printers themselves may encourage that. I know the Castle Press, George Kinney, says that they do more-- They welcome camera-ready copy. They welcome it.

ZIEGLER:

Yeah, it certainly cuts down on their work a lot. I wanted to ask you what illustrators you particularly admire. You mentioned Ardizzone. Are there some others?

GERRY:

Oh, yeah, Ardizzone. Of course, in the area of wood engravers, I like [Eric] Ravilious. Ravilious, Eric Ravilious. He's been dead a long time, but I especially admire him. And a number of those illustrators that worked for the Golden Cockerel Press. I can't remember all their names offhand. Edward Bawden, an English illustrator, who doesn't do wood engravings. I admire his work very much. He did a tremendous amount of illustrating over the years, and then largely bookwork. I don't know. I have an awful lot of artists that I like and admire. Somehow I can't remember them now. In the painting-- Of the California watercolorists, I like Rex Brandt and that school that's almost gone now. Milfred Zornes on the very wall out here, I like those, the California school of watercolor painting. Illustrators, illustrators. Yeah, there's a lot of them. American illustrators I like a lot. Damned if I can remember them though! I should go home and write all these things down and come back prepared.

ZIEGLER:

I don't know if we'll have another session after today, although it seems like we have enough material to keep talking. Maybe if we have another session, if you can think of some, you can mention them next time. Could you talk a little about choosing the binding for a book and deciding how to bind it? What kind of cover, what cover paper design?

GERRY:

Well, a lot of times it's going to be "What does the customer want to pay?" In my own case, it's "How lazy am I? How much labor do I want to put into it if I'm going to bind it myself?" If you have a cloth spine and paper-covered boards and a round back, there's a lot of labor involved. More so than a square back, which is full cloth. So you say, "Well, how much labor do I want to do?" That is largely the deciding factor. And then one example I can point out, and others are fairly arbitrary decisions about binding. "Oh, look, here's a nice paper. Let's use that. I'll make a nice paste paper." Maybe I'm in a paste paper mood. That will probably determine what I was going to use as a binding. If there was something else I was fond of at the time--

ZIEGLER:

I don't know quite what you mean by paste paper.

GERRY:

Well, you take some color, like some watercolors and some acrylics, and you mix it with paste. It gives it a thickness, and you can brush it on and it stays wet. And you can scrape designs in it with a comb or just the brush itself.

ZEIGLER: Oh, yeah, I've seen examples of that.

GERRY:

It's a fairly fast way of making individual papers. Or you might want to print a printed pattern paper, like the little Christmas book. Then you say, "Am I going to spend that much? How much labor do I want to do?" Or "Is the customer going to pay for that?" Then you go to a round back or a straight back. And binders will say, "I'll do it for the same price. I'll do your round back just as easy as a square back." But it isn't true — a round back usually costs more. And the thinner a book, the harder it is to make it round. One book I'll say, the book I did of Wilfred Owen's, *War Poems*, illustrated by Dale Barnhart. I carefully selected a cloth which seemed to me the kind of military color of a soldier's outfit—an olive drab. The bindery happened to have this particular cloth on hand. It looked kind of like the color, an olive drab color, of a World War I outfit. Then I used a plastic spine which was imitation leather. But, please, it doesn't look as bad as it sounds. It looks very good,

ZIEGLER:

Well, I saw the book.

GERRY:

That was supposed to be the leather of the soldier's belt or the officer's belt, and then that combination of the cloth and the leather was reflecting the soldier's uniform. Then I gold-stamped the spine. You could say, "Well, that's the officer's brass insignia." Then I stamped in a darker brown, which could be the mud of Flanders, the picture on the cover, which I think was a soldier's face, as I recall. That was all done to reflect what was inside the book. Other times I haven't been that-- Well let's see, the book on *Miniatures on Modern Artists*;[*Some Notes*] — Well, let's see, that was a different paper. That was a compromise paper I had to use later. Because I ran out of the stuff I'd actually printed. But I tried to make something that looked modern. It had an Art Deco look to it. It was done with typographical ornaments for the miniatures on modern artists, but not always do I really try to make a big deal out of reflecting what's inside the book in what's on the binding.

ZIEGLER:

You have done some very successful examples of doing that, though. *Spring Barley, Castle and Peacocks* on the Castle Press.

GERRY:

Yeah, yeah, that's right. That was an Italian paper that I had adapted to look like the Castle Press, and I put the castle in there. John Randle of *Matrix* magazine liked that paper, and he wanted me to do a paper for *Matrix* magazine, a cover paper. So I kept sending him designs. He says, "No, no. It's more like that other one that you did for the Dahlstrom book." And finally he said, "No, just like the one you did for the Dahlstrom book!" So that's what he finally used.

ZIEGLER:

Did you have any of the paper left?

GERRY:

No, he was going to have to print it. After all those-- That's the one he really wanted all along.

ZIEGLER:

Well, you mentioned that you do do a lot of binding yourself, but then you've also mentioned that you have other people bind your things sometimes. Bela Blau is one person who I saw mentioned frequently.

GERRY:

I like Bela to do my books or my customers' books, mainly because I have a working relation with him. I mean, I know him and I can talk to him and we're friends. But the most important thing about Bela is I know that he will watch-- Whether he does it himself or not, he will watch my book all the way through the plant. I don't know any other binders who I can count on to do that. I did have a book done by Earl Grey. Now, see, Lillian Marks always used Earl Grey. They had a rapport. I didn't particularly like what Earl Grey had done for me.

ZIEGLER:

Which one did he do?

GERRY:

He made the boxes, [which] were not very well made, I don't think, for a medieval book on medieval cookery. *A Treatise on the Art and Antiquity of Cookery in the Middle Ages*. But, see, it's probably 80 percent that I know Bela will watch my book all the way through. He won't just say, "Here, go do it" to somebody. He'll be doing it himself. Then it's another 20 percent that I know him and I can talk to him. We have a common language. Even though he speaks with a very heavy Hungarian accent, we have a common language. [laughter]

1.7. TAPE NUMBER: IV, SIDE TWO

May 4, 1989)

ZIEGLER:

I wonder if you could just repeat a little of what you were saying about why you liked to work with Bela Blau, because we may have missed it at the end of the tape.

GERRY:

Oh, okay. I like Bela as a binder for my own books as well as customers' books because I can work with him. I can understand him. We talk together, we're friends. But most important of all with Bela Blau and A-1 Bookbinders is Bela will watch the job. If he's not working on it himself, he keeps an eye on it all

the way through the shop, because he runs a fairly small operation. There's nothing that goes by him that he doesn't see or keep a hand on or do himself. The other binders are large and fast. They get the job, and the man you talk to about the job is not the man that's going to work on it. It's going to go through a plant, done by people who more or less don't care, and it's going to look that way. It's perfectly all right for certain things. But if you're picky and you don't want to be embarrassed when your client says, "Look, the book is all stuck together--" "They won't open." "The glue is squirting out." The this, the that. "They're upside down." Whatever. You want to avoid that embarrassment, I always go to have Bela do it. If you can afford it. He's more expensive, naturally, but not terribly.

ZIEGLER:

How big a business does he do? Does he do mostly small press books, or does he do real large printing?

GERRY:

Bela does every kind of binding. He does commercial hardware catalogs, portfolios. Anything he'll do. He does a lot of miniature books. He's a specialist in miniature books.

ZIEGLER:

They must be harder to bind as well as to print, aren't they?

GERRY:

Oh, yeah. You have to have the right temperament to bind miniature books. He does. That's one of his main specialties. But I'm sure that's not what he makes his living on. He makes his living on doing catalog covers. You know, gold-stamping material and embossing and heavy-duty catalogs. Any kind of commercial binding he does. But he also does good bookbinding.

ZIEGLER:

Do you ever use Kater Craft binders?

GERRY:

I have in the past. I know Mel [Kavin] . But, now, there's an example. For all of Mel's caring about it and all of his knowledge of binding, when it goes to Mel's it's a big plant. It's got forty people, sixty people in there. He cannot possibly watch everything. They do excellent library binders, and their fine book department is really special. But I think it's too expensive for me to go to the fine book department.

ZIEGLER:

The Clark [Library] uses them a lot.

GERRY:

They do a lot of restoration work. Excellent, excellent. There are certain things I would be glad to send to Mel and Kater Crafts.

ZIEGLER:

What's Mel's full name? GERRY : Mel Kavin . I don't know whether he's a Melvin or what. I never found that out. I always knew him as Mel. And Mel is a real friend of the printing business. Mel is very interested in the subject and very active and has a marvelous little library in history down at the plant--I think they take students through there sometimes- -the history of binding and printing.

ZIEGLER:

Where is his plant located?

GERRY:

Pico Rivera, just north of Whittier Boulevard, I believe.

ZIEGLER:

I wonder if we could talk a little more about commercial printing. You have done a fair amount, judging from the things I saw at the Clark. Well, I don't quite know by what measure you would say what is a fair amount, but I noticed you have done quite a few jobs. Some of the things I saw were Christmas cards and stationery, catalogs, gallery announcements, wine and food labels, advertisements, campaign literature for David Hitchcock. Are there others?

GERRY:

No, that sounds about it. A lot of it was done for friends. Or people would say, "Oh, you're a printer! I want you to do a letterhead for me." Well, usually when I did most of those things, it was because I was trying to make the shop pay for itself, so I wouldn't turn down anything. But nowadays I don't worry about that, and if people want letterheads done, they really have to twist my arm or catch me off guard. In fact, I can't do them because I don't even have a press to do them on anymore.

ZIEGLER:

It looked to me like you did a fair amount of commercial printing for people at the Disney Studios.

GERRY:

Yes, there was one customer I had who was very helpful in helping to support the press. He would do a lot of joking. He was a writer, a screenwriter, and he was constantly playing practical jokes on his friends.

ZIEGLER:

Who was that?

GERRY:

His name was Larry Clemmons. He wrote a lot of cartoons, and he used to begin-- He had worked at the studio in the early thirties, and then he left the studio and came back in the fifties I think. He was primarily writing Walt [Disney]'s introductions to the television shows, and then he got into the cartoon department and was our chief writer for years. So he was always coming to me because he wanted to play this joke on somebody. They were

usually very inside jokes that required a special letterhead, and he would write up this letter and then mail it to this particular person. In one instance, we actually faked a column in the *Hollywood Reporter*. I printed it on a piece of coated paper, and we tore it and we imitated their style of printing just as much as I could and everything just as much as we could. We did a lot of that. Larry did a lot of that stuff. Sometimes I'd make linoleum cuts for the letterheads. He got a great deal of enjoyment out of that, and he always paid me to do it. I mean, I can't think that it was that much money, but we did a lot of that sort of thing. I can't remember any particular one. There was one from the Lompoc Jail. The letterhead said Lompoc Jail, so-and-so street. And it had some device on there that was like a jail.

ZIEGLER:

That must have been a bit of a shock for the person who got it. These elaborate practical jokes happened every so often around the Disney Studios, didn't they? I read somewhere- -

GERRY:

Yeah, I think they did. I think all the studios — Everybody jokes around wherever they work, I think. But these were somewhat more elaborate. Maybe because the group of guys he was with were always doing that, making jokes about whatever picture they were working on or whatever pictures they were rumored to be working on. Whatever would come up to suggest a joke. I really didn't do too much-- I was intrigued with designing commercial printing for quite a while. When I was in art school, I think I did some. In advertising-design classes, I did some typography for commercial work. Until I got interested in books, that's about all I was interested in, an advertising sort of typography.

ZIEGLER:

And what would you say the main considerations are for commercial printing? I would guess that they're different from the considerations for books.

GERRY:

Well, probably the tyranny of the times, of the fashion, is probably what leads you in that kind of printing. Everybody is following the lead guy, whoever everybody admires, because that is what the customers want. So I think that would probably be the foremost, and then I think you probably want to have-- Whereas in the case of the book you are trying not to divert the person away, not trying to catch the person's eye with the typography, you are trying to in advertising. You are trying to compete with everybody else around there. You want something that's going to catch the person's eye. I think they're all designed to reach the audience they're looking for. Mail-order ads don't look that way because the designer didn't know any better; they look that way

because that's what the people they're trying to reach expect a mail-order ad to look like. I learned that in advertising school. [laughter] Advertising art.

1.8. TAPE NUMBER: V, SIDE ONE

May 18, 1989)

ZIEGLER:

Our last interview we talked some about different book designers and illustrators that you particularly admired, but you were going to think of some more and we were going to talk some more about that this time.

GERRY:

Okay. I think the ones I admire the most are the ones that probably everyone else does. We may have already mentioned them, but certainly [William A.] Dwiggins and Bruce Rogers and [Peter] Bienson of the Peter Pauper Press are who I admire. And I have probably stolen from them as much as anybody else. Of course there is Oliver Simon of the Curwen Press. I very much admire the work that the Curwen Press did, as well as some other English presses. But mostly the Curwen Press. Then also another one would be the Nonesuch Press, with Francis Meynell as the designer, I'm not saying they've really-- They've influenced me indirectly.

ZIEGLER:

You've learned from them, yeah.

GERRY:

They've given me good examples. Then I think I should probably also mention Stanley Morison, who initiated the types that we like the best, that have stood up the longest in the twentieth century, that he had made for the Monotype [Corporation] in England. Those are types we all know and admire the most. So I think I should give him a line of credit as someone establishing something to look up to.

ZIEGLER:

Could you say a little more about the style that you especially admire at the Curwen Press and the Nonesuch Press?

GERRY:

I guess you'd have to say it was twentieth-century style, probably, with a little modern art influence in it. The combination of type and decoration, or type and pictorial matter, appeals to me. And Curwen did a lot of that. I think those are the most influential. Now, I didn't mention--but, of course, I have mentioned also before--the local people. They probably directly influenced my work more because we work with the same kind of materials. They would be Ward Ritchie and Grant Dahlstrom and even Saul Marks to a good extent--although I always felt that Saul Marks was a little bit beyond reach. But Ward and Grant had--

They were more like real printers. There was something there that was tangible that I might achieve. I might do something like they did, although I never did, but at least I thought I could. The use of the Linotype machine and the small caps and the italic in roman and one single face. It was what these three men did. I mean, not that other people didn't do it also, but that was the book-oriented influence they had on California printers. Southern California printers. I think I should mention those.

ZIEGLER:

Why do you describe Saul Marks as beyond reach? What do you mean by that?

GERRY:

He was just so good, such a great printer, such a perfect printer, that I would tend to back off and say, "Gee, that's nice, but I would never be able to do anything like that." It's perfect presswork, much better presswork than the other two fellows, Ritchie and Dahlstrom. But, of course, Saul did everything himself. Whereas Ritchie and Dahlstrom had employees to do the work, and they turned out a larger volume of work than Saul ever did. Saul's work was practically hand printed. He also took advantage of using the Monotype machine to set the type, which gave him the faces and a much better-- The machine had much less limitations than the Linotype machine. It took a lot more work, but he was willing to do that to get the better looking printing. And he had access, of course, to the faces. I mention that Morison had supervised the designing. That would be Bembo, Arrighi, Poliphilus. I guess Times roman. I'm sure I'm leaving out some. Fournier. All Monotype faces. I'm sure I've left some out. I guess I've explained why.

ZIEGLER:

How well did you know Saul Marks? Did you even work with him?

GERRY:

I didn't know Saul Marks. I don't think he would ever remember my name. I talked to him. He was a member of the Rounce and Coffin Club. I did talk to him a couple of times. I went to his shop once to get some advice on a printing press. And like I said before, he once defended one of my books at the Western Books Exhibition.

ZIEGLER:

Yeah, you mentioned that, that he convinced them that it was a book.

GERRY:

But I didn't know him. He died in '74, about the time I was just getting started.

ZIEGLER:

You've had more contact with Lillian Marks, though, haven't you? I think you mentioned that.

GERRY:

No, not really so much. She went out of business about the time Pat [Patrick Reagh] and I started. We bought her press, the Heidelberg cylinder press, and then she stayed in business for a while doing small-order things. I think she wanted to retire. Eventually, she sold off her shop.

ZIEGLER:

Could you say a little more about your contact with Ward Ritchie? Have you ever done any joint projects with him?

GERRY:

No, I never really worked with Ward. He was a guy I had never met. I had sent out a brochure for a book I'd done. The [Ernest A.] Lindner Collection of Antique [Printing] Machinery. Ward was on one of the mailing lists. And, lo and behold, one day this man comes up the driveway of my house. I was just about to go off on a bicycle ride. This man came up the driveway and he said, "I'm Ward Ritchie." I'd never met him; I'd always heard about him. I was really astounded, so I took him in and showed him my shop. He was going to buy the book and he didn't have any change, so I said, "Well, just take it and pay me some other time." He said, "I'll send you some books." So he sent me a book that he did called *Influences on California Printing*, or something like that, that he printed. It was a couple of-- One of the papers that he read and then one that James D. Hart read. And in it he had the bibliography of the Primavera Press, which was a press that Jake [Zeitlin] had started. They'd had a little partnership.

ZIEGLER:

Who was Jake's printer? Who was the printer for the Primavera Press? Did he print himself at all?

GERRY:

No. Jake never printed. I don't think Jake was at all handy with his hands. He was a poet and a book salesman, I mean a bookseller. I don't think he was much on handiwork. As far as the Primavera Press goes, I think Ward printed some of them but not all of them. They were, as I understand it, always looking for a cheaper printer. They even got the Business Printers in Pasadena, which later was the home office of the San Pasqual Press, to do some work for Primavera. Two or three books they did. *China Boy* was one. But I think Ward was likely to be in charge of the design of the books for Primavera. Besides the Primavera Press, which finally went under around 1939, Jake published a lot of books, and he used the local printers. He was very good to printers, and when Pat and I started in '80 or '81, he had a large book for us to do. *Letters of Saint Jerome*, which was a leaf book. He spent a lot of money on that, and he had a lot of trouble with that, too, in that he had Max Adjarian bind it and they had some kind of terrible fight over the quality of the binding.

ZIEGLER:

Who were the binders?

GERRY:

Max Adjarian. He lives up in middle California somewhere. Then after the book was all set and corrected, we found it had never been edited, so it had to go through and be edited. There were a lot of problems, for Jake as well as for everyone else, but he was the one who had to pay for them. He was good to everybody. Grant printed books for him. Ward printed books for him, and of course Saul printed books for him, as well as others.

ZIEGLER:

For the tape, let's say what a leaf book is. I think I understand. It's a leaf from an old book, and then a commentary has been written on it and it gets like a folder containing that leaf plus the commentary. Is that right?

GERRY:

Yes, that's right. This particular book had three essays on the letters of Saint Jerome. And the printed sheet that was included-- I remember going to Jake's when they tore this book apart that was printed in 1468, I believe, very soon after the beginnings of printing. He was pulling the book apart to get the leaves out of it. It was not often-- Probably never in my life will I ever sit down again with someone and pull apart a fifteenth-century book.

ZIEGLER:

Yeah. Was it an incomplete copy?

GERRY:

Yes.

ZIEGLER:

That's sort of understandable, then, if you don't have a complete copy.

GERRY:

Right, right. I don't mean tearing, ripping. I just mean pulling it apart carefully. And Jake said, "Go through here and pick out the leaf you would like to have." I picked out one that had three hand- lettered initials on it, which I thought was very generous of him.

ZIEGLER:

Yes. So you got an original leaf from this. So in a leaf book, each copy of the book has a different leaf.

GERRY:

Yes, each has one leaf from the book, one page from the book. It's a common way of passing on-- People can get a taste of a famous book, or an old book from the incunabula, without having to afford the full book. I think, for instance, the Gutenberg Bible, they're selling it by the word.

ZIEGLER:

[laughter] Not by the letter yet?

GERRY:

[laughter] No, but possibly that's the next thing.

ZIEGLER:

I think it was last interview you were talking about the Rounce and Coffin Club and the old days, and you spoke of "the big three." I wondered who you meant by that?

GERRY:

I guess I mean now Ward Ritchie and Saul Marks and Grant Dahlstrom. And of course Jake Zeitlin was someone, so it should be "the big four" I guess. But then Larry [Lawrence Clark] Powell had something to do with it. He was one of the earlier members, and so was Paul Landacre. I wasn't in on that. That was long before I started. I didn't get into the club until the seventies, I think.

ZIEGLER:

Well, maybe we can talk a little more about the Rounce and Coffin Club. What has it been doing in the time that you've been a member?

GERRY:

We used to do more. We used to have more meetings and get-togethers, and people would give a little talk or we'd have a dinner. But mostly what the Rounce and Coffin Club does is sponsor and arrange and put together the Western Books Exhibition, which is an exhibition of books made in the West. More and more books are being made all over the world. You might have the typesetting done in Texas and the printing done in Tennessee and the binding done in Korea, or vice versa.

ZIEGLER:

So it's complicated to define a western book now?

GERRY:

So the Western Book group has argued back and forth as to maybe we should expand the entrance requirements so you can have the book printed anywhere in the world or bound anywhere in the world, but it has to originate in these western states.

ZIEGLER:

What do they think of as the cutoff point for the western states?

GERRY:

I wish I could tell you.

ZIEGLER:

The Mississippi? They just sort of leave it, so they can include what they like?

GERRY:

Maybe to New Mexico and Nevada, around those states. Then it goes out to, I think, Alaska and the Hawaiian Islands. I think that's all. I forget what I was saying.

ZIEGLER:

Well, you were saying how books are done all over the world now, so it becomes a problem to say what's a western book.

GERRY:

Oh, yeah. When the Western Books Exhibition started in 1938, the books printed in the West were not all that common, and they were trying to promote themselves and to show that, yes, the West could make books just as well as they could in the East. The East was, and still is, the big book-manufacturing part of the country. So, anyway, recently the Western Books [Exhibition] has come to kind of an unwritten agreement that we're going back to the old-- Definitely the book has to be made and manufactured, designed and published in the western states. And that limits us in some respects, but also I think it may attract more local people.

ZIEGLER:

Yeah.

GERRY:

And smaller printers and limited edition printers, if we do that.

ZIEGLER:

Is there some sort of similar contest for the eastern states or for the whole United States? I'm new to the whole area.

GERRY:

I think that the IAGA, the International Alliance of Graphic Artists, has a show every year of books for the book show. They also do a lot of advertising-art shows. They are interested in graphic arts, but they also have a book show. To be in that is always prestigious. I guess not quite so much as it once was. But I remember a piece of ephemera that Gregg Anderson had printed, that they were going to kick Grant Dahlstrom out of the Rounce and Coffin Club because his books had appeared too frequently in the IAGA show and they were jealous. They were going to kick him out.

ZIEGLER:

[laughter] Seriously?

GERRY:

It was just a joke. It was like a broadside he had printed announcing Grant Dahlstrom would be kicked out.

ZIEGLER:

I thought it sounded like a typical Rounce and Coffin Club joke.

GERRY:

Well, they don't do too much joking anymore. Not like they once did.

ZIEGLER:

Is there any worldwide organization that chooses the best books printed?

GERRY:

I'm sure there is, but I couldn't tell you which one. I couldn't tell you the name of it, but I'm sure there must be an international show somewhere.

ZIEGLER:

Could you tell me a little more about judging the Western Books Exhibition?
Are the judges generally members of the Rounce and Coffin Club?

GERRY:

Judges are always members. Well, no, I won't say always. Sometimes there are guests invited to be judges, but largely they're from the Rounce and Coffin Club. And I think they generally try to have a printer and a librarian. You know, a rounded-out group, not just all printers or all binders or all collectors.

ZIEGLER:

Have you been a judge yourself?

GERRY:

Yeah, I've been a judge a couple of times. I like it especially because you can see firsthand every book that's been submitted. And then as far as the judging goes, I think everybody has their own criteria, what they like and what they don't like. Naturally, anything that's offensive to the eye of the book lover is questioned and pretty much follows the traditional lines of book-printing design. It's not a contest; it's merely a contest to get in the show. There's no first, second, or third place. You either get in the show or you don't. So there are usually around fifty books from the West that make it. And out of those I'd say, depending on the year-- There are not that many rejects, I don't think. Out of fifty books, there might be ten rejects. If there are fifty books that are going to be in the show, there might be ten on the other table that have been rejected. And you can argue these books as many times as you want with the other members if you feel they should be in. So it's a pretty good system. Sometimes you vote by a one to ten, or you just vote in and out. It depends on whoever is running the judging that year. They usually set up the criteria, how to judge it. But in the end, it's pretty much up to each individual's taste. What he thinks is right.

ZIEGLER:

Yeah. What do you mean when you say offensive to the eye of a book lover?

GERRY:

Well, as in the margins are not traditional or the margins are distracting. If the pages bounce up and down because the book wasn't folded right or wasn't printed exactly right. Or oddities of lettering. Or peculiar uses of type, I suppose.

ZIEGLER:

I'd like to have you look at the printing of the [UCLA] library school students and tell us which would get in and which wouldn't. [laughter]

GERRY:

I liked all those examples I saw in the hallway. Those were very good. A lot of times judges tend to reject books because they're ordinary, and then you have to argue the book in. So ordinary is not a reason to reject a book. Dahlstrom said,

"If the book meets its typographical responsibilities, it's a successful book." And so just because a book doesn't knock your eyes out--like a Saul Marks book or a Bruce Rogers book--doesn't mean it should be rejected just because it's not as breathtaking.

ZIEGLER:

By "meets its typographical responsibilities," you mean essentially what Beatrice Warde said, that it conveys the content without distracting from the content.

GERRY:

Yes. I've seen books rejected that had a very difficult subject matter with thousands of pictures with many notations. The judge tends to look at this book and think, "This is a boring book." But the man who designed it put in a great deal of effort to make you be able to even comprehend what he's got in there. Like, say, for instance, if it's a book on seashells or something of that nature, well, you've got thousands and thousands of shells that all have to be arranged with notes and text and figures on every one. It's a very difficult book to design, but it's never going to look as good as — It's never going to make you say, "Wow, what a title page! It looks just like a Bruce Rogers. It's a beautiful thing." But it has lived up to its typographical responsibilities. Judges want every book to look like a Grabhorn [Press] or a Saul Marks. There aren't that many that look that way.

ZIEGLER:

As you say, a lot of them have no particular reason to look that way. But what about something that really, maybe, offends the canons of how you make a book, but seems to be doing it for a deliberate artistic reason? I mean, say it has very narrow margins because for some reason the printer thought it would convey the idea that he wanted to have a very solidly printed page with no white on it.

GERRY:

I think more and more books are being accepted that wouldn't have been accepted in the past, that are innovative. We may have been more cautious in the past. We do accept-- I think the judges accept books that are more on the bizarre side, with plastic covers and spiral- bound and with a multitude of different mediums, silk- screening and hand stenciling. And picture books, maybe, that might not qualify.

ZIEGLER:

What about the whole realm of artists' books? You get some really weird things in that because it's not really a book so much as it is a sculpture.

GERRY:

I think we're going to see--I hope to see--more of those come the way of the Western Books. I guess the main reason they won't is because a lot of those are only one copy. They are one-of-a-kind books; they're not really published.

ZIEGLER:

Do you have a rule that it has to have been produced in multiple copies?

GERRY:

It's an unwritten rule, I think. I tend to think of books that are published in a number. I mean, the number could be twenty- five, but one book I think falls into the realm of an object of art rather than a book.

ZIEGLER:

What are some of the most outstanding books or books that you especially remember from either the years you were judging or from any other Western Books Exhibitions?

GERRY:

Gosh, I don't think I could-- There were so many of them. I really couldn't say. I'd have to have a list or go through the collection. I'm sure there's one that I could mention, but I can't right offhand.

ZIEGLER:

Yeah, I didn't give you forewarning about this question. Los Angeles is really a pretty major center of printing in the United States now, isn't it? Of fine printing or limited edition printing, isn't it?

GERRY:

Well, yes. I think there are a lot of people who do hand printing that do fine hand printing and fine hand binding here in Los Angeles. But it's usually very, very limited work. I mean limited production. The fine printers that do books, with the exception of Pat Reagh, are all offset printers, which is not to say that is wrong. It's just a different technology than we are used to. There are very few books printed letterpress anymore. So we're just waiting for some innovator, I think, to come along and exploit the offset process and make it really work in the book field and amaze us. Well, like some of the people doing letterpress had in the past. At least that's what I'm waiting for. I often think I'll try it myself, but I haven't. There are lots of binders around here that are really terrific binders and a lot of really terrific printers. Most of the fine printers do not turn out that much work. Pat Reagh 's the only one I can think of. He has to do, like I guess they all had to do, a volume of commercial work to support themselves. The books just don't come around that often to be printed.

ZIEGLER:

Can you form some sense of what other areas in the West are major printing centers on the basis of your involvement with the Western Books Exhibition?

GERRY:

Well, San Francisco for sure. They have always been tops in fine printing in California and I think in even the western states. They don't seem to be doing quite as much as they had in the past, yet they still are going. The Arion Press and Wesley Tanner and Jack [W.] Stauffacher. Jack Stauffacher probably isn't as active as he once was, but certainly Wesley Tanner and a number of others whose names I can't remember are active in San Francisco.

ZIEGLER:

Have you met some of these San Francisco printers?

GERRY:

Yes, Wesley Tanner I've met. I knew Adrian Wilson for a little bit. I don't think he knew my name, but we had talked together a couple of times. Right in the middle of the Grabhorns? That's about all.

ZIEGLER:

Let's see, I had here a list of printers in the Los Angeles area that I was going to ask about. And some of these may be, sort of, before your time, but-- Well, we've already talked about a lot of them too, but did you ever know Gregg Anderson?

GERRY:

No, Gregg I didn't know. I just knew of him. See, he was killed in the war.

ZIEGLER:

Yeah, he died pretty young, didn't he?

GERRY:

He was maybe not forty yet when he died in World War II.

ZIEGLER:

And that was just about the time you were starting out as an apprentice with Grant, wasn't it?

GERRY:

Yeah, I guess so. He died in the D day landing, so he was in the army when I started with Grant. I don't know, I guess it was a patriotic thing, because he was not a young man. He was younger than Grant, but he was probably in his late thirties when he went into the army on a volunteer basis. And he seemed to enjoy it from the letters I've read. But I didn't know him, just knew of him.

ZIEGLER:

Did you know Alvin Lustig?

GERRY:

No, Alvin was before my time. By the time I became aware of Alvin, he was a top designer in New York and one that our advertising-design teachers would often refer to when I was in school at the Chouinard school [Chouinard Art Institute] . Lustig was kind of a real hot-dog designer then.

ZIEGLER:

What about Merle Armitage?

GERRY:

No, Armitage I never knew either.

ZIEGLER:

He tended to do very melodramatic things, didn't he?

GERRY:

Well, he tended to do what he called modern books, design modern books. He liked to use sans serif types in his books. Although Grant claims that Armitage in the late twenties had given a lecture called "The Heritage of Modern Art" or something-- forgive me on the title--and had decided to have it printed. Grant Dahlstrom designed it, and it was designed-- What Merle wanted was something very modern, and Grant designed this. Grant always claimed that's where Merle got all of his ideas for how he would design the rest of his books, from this thing that Grant had done. But I don't know how true that is or not. It was called-- What was it? *The Heritage of Art* or something. Grant designed it, and I think they printed it at [Bruce] McCallister 's.

ZIEGLER:

I may have seen it at the Clark, but I don't remember the title.

GERRY:

It's all in black with a little white pasted label on the cover. It's a black paper cover with a little white pasted label done by Grace Marion Brown, some design she did.

ZIEGLER:

I haven't heard of her. Could you tell me a little about her?

GERRY:

I know absolutely nothing about her, I'm sorry. I just associate her name with that particular book, which is really a booklet or a pamphlet. I think she designed a cricket or a grasshopper, some sort of bug, for Jake Zeitlin. And he used it as his trademark off and on. That's all I know of her.

ZIEGLER:

Let's see, would you have known Bruce McCallister, or was he too early for you?

GERRY:

He may have come into the shop there when I was working for Grant in the forties, but I don't remember him. I just, you know, know of him. Grant used to talk very highly of him. Grant had spent a large part of his career in conjunction with Bruce McCallister. I think from '27 to '43, they worked together off and on. ZIEGLER Do you have some sense of what his influence was on Los Angeles printing?

GERRY:

Yeah, he was a promoter of fine printing, and at every opportunity he produced fine printing, but he was himself not so much a printer as he was a good

businessman. But what he knew, he knew good printing when he saw it. That's why he latched onto Grant when Grant came to California, and forever after whatever McCallister did that stands out was designed by Grant for him.

ZIEGLER:

Well, first of all, something I've been kind of curious about is it seems that within the Los Angeles area, Pasadena is really a center for printers. Why do you think that is?

GERRY:

I'd never thought of that. Well, there was the first Castle Press with Roscoe Thomas and House Olson-- Olson was a darned good typographer--and then Grant took that over. Then there was [Scott E.] Haselton. He's the only other printer who did books that I know of in Pasadena.

ZIEGLER:

Well, and then there's you.

GERRY:

Yeah, but I was a lot later. See, they'd all-- Well, no. Grant was printing. The Castle Press is still going with its third set of owners--and very successfully, I might add--up in Altadena. I guess it's still Pasadena.

ZIEGLER:

Has the Castle Press maintained any continuity of style through its different owners, or has it really sort of become a different press with each different set of owners?

GERRY:

I think it's really become a very expanded press. They do a lot more color work and less bookwork. But whenever they do books, they do-- If there's any continuity, I think it goes through George Kinney. He's fond of fine printing. Although he is more of a commercial printer, he's very fond of fine printing. He's had his hand in fine printing, having apprenticed, I think, somewhat with Paul Bailey of the Western Lore Press. But Elva Marshall is usually the designer. She's been with the Castle Press quite a number of years and was a long time with Grant. She does most of the designing when it comes to books, I don't think that George seeks out books to do like, say, for instance. Grant did. But as for printers of Pasadena, I don't know. Other than Haselton--

ZIEGLER:

It's also been a center for bibliophiles, too, hasn't it?

GERRY:

Well, the Huntington Library.

ZIEGLER:

Lawrence Clark Powell was there. And the Huntington and Occidental College have been a center for interest.

GERRY:

Well, I guess you could say Clyde Browne [Abbey of San Encino Press] was pretty close to Pasadena, being in Garvanza, which is like on the outskirts of Pasadena near Highland Park, adjacent to Pasadena. Then I guess there were some printers out by Claremont, the Saunders Studio Press, and Thomas Williams and the Fine Arts Press was in Santa Ana. I guess it was. But that's all I can think of in Pasadena.

ZIEGLER:

Well, could you talk a little about some of the booksellers you've known? We've already mentioned quite a few of them, Jake Zeitlin and Glen Dawson and Jim [James E.] Lorson. Could you maybe tell a little more about them and any others and sort of what you think their influence is on printing in Los Angeles?

GERRY:

Oh, certainly the Dawsons are very influential in that they do-- I don't mean to say that they influence the way printing looks, but they publish quite a bit of material and they use local printers, Los Angeles and Pasadena printers. They're the friends of printers. The bookshop itself is a friend. It has a fine printing department, books about printing, books about books. And like I say, they sent a lot of printing work out in terms of books like-- The Baja California travel series is going on and on. I can't remember how many of them there are. There might be sixty of them. Then there are a number of informal series on Los Angeles artists. Somebody local will print those. I've printed one. Dick [Richard] Hoffman prints an awful lot of books where they--

ZIEGLER:

Which is the one you printed?

GERRY:

I did one called *House Olson*, [Printer].

ZIEGLER:

Oh, yeah.

GERRY:

That David W. Davies wrote. And I designed one about Ward Ritchie that Pat Reagh printed and Davies wrote. There may be another one I was involved with. I can't remember right off. And also Dawson's easily handles the kinds of books I like to buy. So I think they're very influential. Now Jake is gone and the store is gone. But he was the same way. He was very friendly to local printers, printers who did good work. He always tried to help them by giving them jobs or giving them books to do.

ZIEGLER:

Would it be fair to say that Dawson's and Jake Zeitlin's, between them, have done a lot to teach Los Angeles printers about the whole tradition of printing?

GERRY:

Right. By making books available for sale that are on the subject and by having people give talks at the bookstore. I mean, I'm sure that's good business, but it's also very promotional of good printing.

ZIEGLER:

Yes.

GERRY:

I think Jim [James E.] Lorson to a certain extent does the same thing, although he's a newer book dealer. He's in Fullerton, but he sought me out and bought books from me and is still trying to sell some of them. He has had a few things published. We did a leaf book for him. I designed it and Pat printed it. It was an extensive leaf book. I mean, it might have been rather a large, inexpensive book on Mercator, and it had a map as a leaf.

ZIEGLER:

That was a famous early atlas, wasn't it?

GERRY:

Right. And other things Jim has published and had other local printers do for him.

ZIEGLER:

Is there any other bookseller around who is sort of playing the same role that Jim Lorson is playing?

GERRY:

Well, Bill [William] Dailey, I think, has the kind of shop that has the books in it. He's just so far away that I hardly ever go there. I mean, to me far away is way out on Melrose [Avenue] .

ZIEGLER:

Yeah, I go to Dailey 's [William and Victoria Dailey Rare Books and Fine Prints] quite a bit.

GERRY:

Dailey encourages printers. He did a lot of stuff to get Pat going.

ZIEGLER:

Last time I was there, he had a beautiful bag that had a print of a mountain scene on it. I wondered who printed that. I wonder if you happen to know.

GERRY:

A bag? You mean like a paper bag?

ZIEGLER:

Just a paper bag to put your purchase in, but it was so beautifully printed that I asked for an extra one.

GERRY:

He might have done it himself. He has his own printshop.

ZIEGLER:

Oh, I didn't know that.

GERRY:

I suppose there are others around. I can't--

ZIEGLER:

What about the — ? There's a collection of bookstores in Santa Monica now. Do they get involved at all in printing activities or encouraging printing?

GERRY:

Kenneth Karmiole has printed a number of leaf books, and I think Pat has printed at least two of them, Pat Reagh. And George [J.] Houle sometimes publishes something. I can't really say much more than that.

ZIEGLER:

Would you say there is anyone who looks like being the successor to Jake Zeitlin? Sort of stepping into the enormous role that he played in the book world in Los Angeles?

GERRY:

Oh, I don't know. I guess the closest thing would be Jeff Weber, who worked for Jake for so many years. He now has his own bookshop. Now, whether he aspires to be like Jake or not, I don't know. I know he has some nice books like Jake used to have. He doesn't have a junky stock. I shouldn't say junky. His books tend to be the higher-priced books, like Jake often had.

ZIEGLER:

Does he have printing done for him? I've seen a few of his catalogs at the Clark. They're very handsomely produced catalogs.

GERRY:

Oh, I think he tends to go to offset printers for a catalog, naturally. Yes, he's given me work designing some things for him.

ZIEGLER:

What are some of the things?

GERRY:

Well, I did a little map of how to get to his house where he has his bookshop. I can't remember. Odds and ends of things for him.

ZIEGLER:

Could you tell me--

GERRY:

But whether he wants to be like Jake or not, I don't know. I'm just saying that he learned his trade from Jake, but he did not buy any of the stock or get any breaks from Jake's estate. He started from scratch himself.

ZIEGLER:

I guess there are quite a few people about whom you could say they learned their trade from Jake, aren't there? With the San Pasqual Press, Laura Dorothy Bevis--

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ZIEGLER:

Okay, I mistakenly said that Laura Dorothy Bevis worked for Zeitlin, and you pointed out that she worked for Dawson's. Well, maybe you can think of other people that have worked for either Zeitlin or Dawson's or any of these other booksellers.

GERRY:

Well, Jake seems to have made more book dealers than anybody else, at least to my knowledge. Now, Gary Steiger worked for Jake for a while. Then he left for the East — I wish I could say where, Iowa or something like that- -where he has a bookstore. Then Michael Thompson apprenticed with Jake, and he has a store on Melrose [Avenue], a bookstore. And Jeff Weber. And there were a couple of others who worked with Jake and went off and started their own bookstores. So he must have made it seem like it's fun to have a bookstore.

ZIEGLER:

[laughter] I never met him. I gather he was a very enthusiastic and fun-loving man. Was he?

GERRY:

Yeah. Of course, when I knew him he was in his later years. But he loved a good joke, and he was very generous and warm. And I was always amazed that he knew almost everybody in the world, but in a very unimpressive way. I mean to say he was not a name-dropper or anything. He seemed to know everybody and to treat everybody equally, no matter what their status. I remember Dreyfus had come to town for some reason, John Dreyfus, and Jake- -this was soon after Grant died — wanted to have a breakfast in his honor. So he invited Pat and myself down to the Scandia restaurant for breakfast with John Dreyfus. I guess it would be a brunch. They had a number of people there. I brought along Mrs. Dahlstrom, who was a friend of Dreyfus and she wanted to see him. Grant had died maybe only months before. So I brought her along. He was generous in that sort of way, getting people together. But I'll tell you, he was a shrewd book dealer. I always love to tell the story that he had contacted me to do a compliment card with a little envelope. It was a very simple job, but we hashed it over a couple of times and I was in the mood one gets in- -no matter what business they're in--that they're not going to be taken for a ride on this job. They're going to charge what the job is worth. Occasionally it comes across, for instance in mine, that they've been cheating themselves. So I'm going to charge Jake what this job was worth. And it's a very insignificant job. These little cards with his name on it and "the compliments of" and an envelope with his name printed on it. It was in two

colors. So I said, "Jake, this is \$45." And he said, "Oh? Well, hmm. Okay." So later on I was out in the shop-- No, I guess I had been waiting for him. He was busy. I was looking around the shop and I found a stack of three magazines. They were French magazines on books called *The Garden of Books*, something like that. I said, "Jake, look at these magazines. These are really nice, but there's no price on them. What are they going to cost me?" He said, "Let me look at those. Oh, I think \$45." [laughter]

ZIEGLER:

So you just traded.

GERRY:

It was the only thing in the bookstore that didn't have a price on it, and I picked it. But then I said, "Jake, what should I do with these? I think I'll rebind these." "No, don't do that. Just make a slipcase for them." So that's what I did. So he gave me \$45 worth of advice.

ZIEGLER:

You've done several printing jobs for Jake. I think there was a brochure on Paul Landacre, was it?

GERRY:

Right, I also did a Piranesi catalog for him. That was done when I was in Fallbrook, and Pall [W.] Bohne did all the photography work. I remember these Piranesi etchings were lying around-- Not lying around, but they were in Pall's shop for months. And I kept asking the girl that was doing the catalog for Jake, Carolyn Bullard, "Don't you think we should get those out of there? Don't you think you should get them back to the shop?" "No, they're okay, they're okay." Well, it turns out they were, but there were thousands of dollars' worth of these prints just stored in his office there. So anyway, there was no problem. I worked with a local printer in Fallbrook, an offset printer. I set the type, printed it, pasted it up, and then they stripped in photographs of the prints. Then they printed, trimmed, and shipped the whole catalog for me. I think I did that on both the Landacre and the Piranesi catalog. And Carol had the idea for the cover of it. There was a Piranesi print that covered the whole cover, and then I superimposed the title.

ZIEGLER:

Yeah, I remember the cover was very nice.

GERRY:

But all the typesetting, that I did. I suppose I did a few other things. I never did a book for him. Usually when somebody comes to me and asks for a book, I don't have the equipment or the time. Something gets in the way.

ZIEGLER:

Could you say some about the role of different institutions in the Los Angeles area and encouraging printers and encouraging interest in fine books? Maybe

the Clark Library, the Huntington Library, Occidental College, and any others you can think of.

GERRY:

Well, certainly the Clark. I mean, they have a big collection of material. Like even some of the job envelopes from my press they've got. I mean, they're that detailed in their collection of Los Angeles printers, as well as other printers. I think that [William Andrews] Clark [Jr.] himself was interested in fine printing, having had John Henry Nash do a lot of printing for him.

ZIEGLER:

Yeah.

GERRY:

So I think the tradition that he established has carried on, and a lot of fine-print, bookish events take place at the Clark. And they have a lecture series. As far as the Huntington goes, I don't really know. The Huntington to me is much more of a corporation.

ZIEGLER:

How so?

GERRY:

Well, maybe it's because I don't know so many people there, but it seems like--

ZIEGLER:

Is Ed [Edwin H.] Carpenter there?

GERRY:

Ed's there, yeah. But I think he's retired. I mean, he is retired, but he does some things on a retainer basis of some kind. He also gives lectures for the Huntington. He is also very big on the history of the Huntingtons, and he gives talks on that for which he is paid. Or the Huntington pays him to give the talks, I don't know.

ZIEGLER:

He's been very interested in your printing, hasn't he?

GERRY:

He has been more interested than anybody. I mean, he came to my place one time and he wanted some ephemera. So I said, "Here's this, here's that. Oh, look, there's this whole drawer full of stuff here. Take this, take that." And his eyes lighted up and he wanted to pay me for it. I said, "Well, no, this is just ephemeral stuff I give away." Well, he insisted on paying for it. So he's interested in the littlest details about ephemera printing, when it was done or who did it. And he has a tremendous collection. In his house is a library.

ZIEGLER:

Well, just because it's ephemera doesn't mean that it's not good printing. Often it's some of the best printing, don't you think?

GERRY:

Oh, definitely. But I certainly didn't intend it to be paid for. So he asked me a curious question the other day. I'm starting another little press in the backyard. I had fooled around trying to get this press working. I printed up a sample of ornaments I had designed, and Ed said to me the other day, "Was that the first imprint of this particular Weather Bird Press?" And I never thought of it. Yes, it was.

ZIEGLER:

[laughter] Yeah, bibliophiles expend great effort trying to find out that sort of thing. Printers ought to record it for them.

GERRY:

Yeah, they love to do that sleuthing. So yes, it was.

ZIEGLER:

Going back to the Clark--which, of course, especially interests me — you've done some work for the Clark. I know you did the owl, didn't you?

GERRY:

Oh, yes, John Bidwell — I can't remember when he started, but it was just around the time that Pat and I got together in the early eighties — '80 or '81 — John contacted me to do wood engraving for the Clark. It was sort of a rush. No, it wasn't a rush. I just didn't feel I had time. But, nevertheless, I did two of them that were the owl, but kind of untraditional sort of. In one the owl was being squashed by books .

ZIEGLER:

Yeah. [laughter]

GERRY:

Then I can't remember what the other one was, but it said Clark Library on it. So they accepted the wood engravings. He wanted something a little more light- hearted and less nineteenth century than the design they have. But this is not to replace; it's just to supplement it. So they used it on lighter things.

ZIEGLER:

Yeah, I know we use it on our pads of paper.

GERRY:

Oh, really?

ZIEGLER:

It looks cute with books falling on the owl. Has John Bidwell encouraged you to do a lot of other work? I think you mentioned that he talked you into doing the map for the Bibliophiles Association ["A Bibliophile's Map of Los Angeles"] .

GERRY:

Yeah, John's the guy who promotes. He usually has some things printed by Patrick. I mean, his own personal Christmas cards he has printed by Pat Reagh. John encourages printers. John I don't think is much interested in printing

himself. I don't mean to say that he has to have his own printshop in his backyard or anything like that. He's got too many business-- Or not business, but-- He's the editor of some nineteenth-century works on printing that are done by the Garland Press. He has plenty and plenty, more than enough bibliography work without trying to print it also. So that's really his field. But he does like fine printing. He promoted some printing that Patrick and I did for the Clark. Patrick still prints for the Clark, largely due to John's influence I think. His high recommendation.

ZIEGLER:

Yeah. Well, librarians have taken quite a bit of interest in printing and encouraged it. What about Lawrence Clark Powell? He was really a friend and promoter of Los Angeles printers.

GERRY:

Oh, yeah. And he's still-- I did a job for him not too long ago.

ZIEGLER:

What was that?

GERRY:

It was something for the Zamorano [Club] and Roxburghe [Club] meeting last year called *Trans-Pacific*. It was out of his diary about flying across the Pacific in 1966, a booklet that Patrick and I printed for him. And he's after me to do a book of a chapter from *The Blue Train*, which was a novel he wrote as a young man in Dijon. And I told him to be cautious. I have so many other things to do before I can get to it. He was one of the founders of the Rounce and Coffin Club, one of the supporters and the voice of printers. You know, he is constantly writing. I mean, he has written so many things that have indirectly to do with printers and printing.

ZIEGLER:

I sort of have the impression that he's another reason why Pasadena has been a center of printing. Because he grew up in Pasadena, didn't he? And encouraged printers there .

GERRY:

Well, I think he left Pasadena in his twenties. I don't think he came back to Pasadena-- Well, maybe he lived there. But I don't know that he encouraged any Pasadena printers, except for Ward. Yeah, Ward was a Pasadena printer for a while, in his backyard. Then he moved over to Los Angeles. I think he lived in Pasadena, though, or at least part of his life.

ZIEGLER:

What about Occidental College? Have some people at Occidental College played a role in encouraging printers?

GERRY:

Tyrus Harmsen has always been a member of the Rounce and Coffin Club, and he wrote the first book about- - *The Plantin Press of Saul and Lillian Marks*. I can't remember who printed it. Grant, or maybe Saul printed it, I can't remember. And he's written about the Castle Press, and he now has the Book Arts Print Shop at Occidental, which comes from Andy [Andrew] Horn's equipment and some type he bought from Lillian Marks when she sold out her shop. I haven't seen any of the students' work, but I understand it's pretty good. A smaller-scale shop, I think, than you have here.

ZIEGLER:

Have you done any printing for him?

GERRY:

No, Ty started his own press, the Tiger Press, not too long ago, not too many years ago. And he does most of his own printing. As far as Occidental printing goes, I think Grant used to do some and Ward did some. I think that's all done by more commercial printers now.

ZIEGLER:

Well, moving into the area of bookmen's clubs, we talked a lot about the Rounce and Coffin Club. What about the Zamorano Club? Are you involved in that?

GERRY:

I'm not a member and I really don't know much about it, except that it was the first Los Angeles book club, I understand.

ZIEGLER:

Are there other bookmen's clubs in the area?

GERRY:

Yeah, but I'll probably give you the wrong names. I think there is a Book Collectors Society, and maybe one other. And there is the Abracadabra . That's the name of their publication. I don't know what the official name of their group is [Alliance for Contemporary Book Arts], but Pat ' s a member of that and Susan King and I think Bonnie Thompson Norman. Sorry, these names don't come to me. Gloria-- The movie actress. [Gloria Stewart] She has a printshop. And I think Joe [Joseph] D'Ambrosio is also in that group. I've been invited, but somehow I just never get around to joining. One club is all I can handle.

ZIEGLER:

Yeah, especially when you get called upon to be a judge for the book contest every once in a while. It must take up a fair amount of time.

GERRY:

Or when somebody wants something printed for the club.

ZIEGLER:

Yeah, I guess that really keeps its members busy, printing all those keepsakes and announcements and things. Do they still print keepsakes, the Rounce and Coffin Club?

GERRY:

Yes, a few keepsakes come out, but not as many as there were at one time. Most of the printing that is involved is for the Western Books Exhibition. The chairman has to wheedle these printers into doing this every year: the case cards, the case, the poster, the catalog, the call for books, and two or three other items. She--she being Elva Marshall, or whoever it might be; Elva has been the chairman for two or three years now--has to twist everybody's arm to get them to do these things. Oh, the award certificates too.

ZIEGLER:

Have you done a lot of that printing for the Western Books Exhibition?

GERRY:

Yeah. Oh, I wouldn't say a lot. I try to do my share, I guess I should say that.

ZIEGLER:

Let's see, maybe we could talk a little bit more about the economics of presses such as yours. Do you think that small presses and presses that try to do fine printing have a particular niche in the publishing world? I'm not sure if I phrased that question exactly right.

GERRY:

They certainly have a niche, you know, to publish things that might not otherwise be published. It usually always comes down to poetry. There are other things. That's their niche. And also to keep good taste in printing alive. And also innovation. But economically I don't think it's-- I would say ideally it would be more like Saul or Ward or Grant sets the example. The press functions as a commercial press, so it can sustain itself financially. The owner is a book-oriented printer, and he can run a book through his shop using his employees and do it economically because he can offset the costs against his other printing that he does. He has the trained employees to do the work, and they can do it in a fairly fast way, as opposed to doing a book and having to hire the person or people or the trade work to be done individually. In other words-- I guess I don't know what I'm trying to say. But it seems to me that Grant and Ward had the ideal situation where they could- -

ZIEGLER:

Yeah, they could oversee the whole process.

GERRY:

They can oversee the whole process, but financially--if you want to talk about economics --they can run things through their shop more economically than some small little printer like myself, or say even Pat Reagh. Because they had a shop that was working eight hours every day. They could run it through in slow

times when they might have had to pay the employees anyway. But I don't think anybody, any private press, is going to get rich. You can see the prices of some of the books and you think, "Gee, maybe they are going to get rich." But I doubt it. I think that the more higher-priced books are just more reasonably charged than the ones, say, that are practically given away. You give away your labor. You don't charge nearly as much as they should cost because you can't believe a book that small would cost so much.

ZIEGLER:

I guess the costs really mount up with buying all the paper and supplies and the amount of work you put into it.

GERRY:

The smaller shop like mine or I would say like Joe D'Ambrosio or Eric Voss-- People that work on that scale generally do almost all the labor themselves, and that's free--practically — because they're all giving it away. I don't want to say Joe's giving it away. You're practically giving it away. You have to do it because you love to do it. You're not ever going to make any money at it. Now, then there are exceptions. On the outer margins there are people like Andrew Hoyem [of Arion Press] who apparently do pretty well. I mean, he's able to afford to keep going. He was able to buy out Mackensie and Harris, Typesetters, that were threatening to go under. That's at one end. But there aren't very many people like that. Also, I think selling and promoting is like anything, whether it's for Simon and Schuster or the Weather Bird Press. It's the same thing; you've got to sell it. And I think that Hoyem does a very good job at that. He's not only a great printer, he's a darned good salesman. Those are the more successful, to have those two abilities in one person.

ZIEGLER:

And of course selling costs you money in itself, just printing the prospectuses and distributing them and sending them out and so on.

GERRY:

And the public appearances. Is that what you meant by economics?

ZIEGLER:

Yes. Could you say how you go about promoting your books?

GERRY:

I try to send out a catalog and — I'm very poor at this, at keeping a good list of people who have bought from me before: book dealers, libraries. I don't do a very good job of it. I like to just send out a catalog. I used to send out *Weather Bird* to people who have bought from me during the year and I would send out maybe postcards. Personal calls, very few. It's because I don't like to do it that I don't do it. Personal calls do more for selling a book than anything else, but I just never do it. And if you could carry a bundle of your books into a book

dealer who might be sympathetic, chances are you will sell one. But then, who is interested in selling? It isn't that much fun. [laughter]

ZIEGLER:

The fun is in the making.

GERRY:

Yeah. But to be successful, you've got to do both. I should do more. I often thought I would go once a year up and down the coast of California and hit all the bookshops that might be interested. Make a real trip out of it, a real selling tour. But I never do it. Because that could be fun also, you know. But I never get around to doing it.

ZIEGLER:

For instance, if it were me doing it, I would probably come home more broke than when I started because I'd buy things in each of those bookshops.

GERRY:

That's the danger of being a collector and a printer. I seldom go to Dawson's, to sell them a book, that I don't buy one which is usually more expensive.

ZIEGLER:

Yeah, well, that has its dangers. Being a book lover is an expensive proposition.

GERRY:

Right. That's why I guess I have always had to work in some other field to pay for it.

ZIEGLER:

Yeah. Who would you say your customers are? I mean, what groups of people are customers?

GERRY:

Libraries. I used to have a list I'd send out of who were pretty good buyers. Libraries change back and forth from one policy to another. Year to year they change. You try to find a library that's assembling a collection of private printing and then that does pretty well for you. So naturally the local libraries, like the Clark-- I don't know about Occidental, but the Clark for sure collects some things, my things--my printing. And there may be somebody else. Like I say, I can't remember. I'm very poor at doing this. An organized system of selling I don't have. So then there would be some private customers who say, you know, "Send me anything you print." A standing order. But the trouble with a standing order is I never remember. Again, I don't have an organized system for standing orders. Then, on the other hand, you send somebody something on a standing order and they say, "Gee, why did you send me this? I don't want this!" So I just sort of forget about standing orders and let the book collector work it out for himself. Then I think book dealers buy from me. Lorson's [Books and Prints]-- There are a few of them around, but it would

generally be Dawson's and Lorson's. Sometimes up in Sacramento Barry Cassidy buys from me. And again, it's a matter of getting out there and finding people like Barry Cassidy who are interested in them. Then there is the Califia Bookstore. She sometimes will sell books of mine, but she is interested in more artier books generally than I do.

ZIEGLER:

Where's that?

GERRY:

Edwina Leggett in San Francisco. I would say infrequently I'll get a call from out of nowhere. Somebody called me from New York about the [Edward] Ardizzone book. I have no idea how they even found out about it. It was a library. No, I think it was a book dealer. You wonder, how did they ever hear about it?

ZIEGLER:

Well —

GERRY:

Then there are some private collectors. John Class collects some of my things.

ZIEGLER:

Very likely one of those private collectors showed his collection to another book lover and said, "Hey, I like this" and sent an order to you.

GERRY:

Could be.

ZIEGLER:

Do you think that the small fine printers have had any influence on the style of the large commercial printing houses?

GERRY:

I think they probably did at one time. I'm not so sure now. I think there is a much larger separation between a modern and up-to-date technical print job and the small fine printer than there was in the past. Mainly because, I guess, they are using two different technologies. Whereas before, their technologies were the same. So people that have become printers now are less book oriented than they might have been in the past, or at least during the revival period, which was from the time of William Morris until now, or a few years ago. Nowadays a person tends to want to be a printer to print color pictures and be successful like any other business. I don't think that's any great revelation; it's probably always been that way. But I don't see printers nowadays who are anything other than commercial, color printers. At least out here.

ZIEGLER:

How do you go about determining what to charge for a book? What do you take into consideration?

GERRY:

Ideally, you keep a chart of your costs and your labor, and you keep time. Ideally, I'm speaking. You have an hourly rate which you charge, and you add up all your expenses and you take your hourly rate. And when you're all done with the book and you say, "This is what it costs to make it," then you double the price and add the markup on. That's the way I understand business is supposed to work. But when the fine printer who has printed up this little book adds up his costs and the book comes out to be \$95 apiece and it looks like it's worth fifty cents, you have got to make some kind of compromise or else be very hardheaded about it. And when you double the price, then that's almost \$200. You add the 40 percent on, and it's just unbelievable. I think the small printer makes a compromise. Largely what I do, many times, is ask Dawson--Glen or Muir [Dawson] --or Jim Lorson even, "What do you think we could sell this book for?" It isn't a matter of what it costs; it's what do you think the market will bear for this kind of a book that's this thick and has this many pages. And usually they're pretty generous about it, much more so than I would be. That would be how I would determine it; that's how I personally determine the price. It's not a very businesslike way. I do the book the way I want to do it. I have a general idea what it cost and get somebody's idea of what it will sell for. And I'm not in a rush to sell the books, my books. I'm not in a rush to recover my costs, and that's to my advantage, because then I can keep my book list a fatter list than only just having one book on it. I like to be able to put out a catalog now and then that has six, seven, ten items in it. So it's far more just playing the game of publisher than actually being one.

ZIEGLER:

What future do you think there is for letterpress printing with the technology being so different now? Do you think there will be people still continuing to do it?

GERRY:

I think it's going to be much more handwork, and then the few people who have Linotypes or Monotypes will have to give them up because nobody will know how to operate them. The next generation will not know how to operate them, and the machinery will-- Even though there are lots of parts and people with the skills to repair these machines around, there won't be for too long. And the matrices will wear out. Even though there are large stocks of matrices held by major dealers around, when nobody wants them anymore, they'll be junked, turned back into brass stock. So if it does survive, it will be by hand setting, and you still have to have some typefounders around. Now, there's quite a group of typefounders that has developed over that last twenty years. In this country it is the American Typefounders Fellowship. A man named Richard Hopkins and a man named Paul [H.] Duensing. Duensing is probably the foremost amateur typefounder in the world.

ZIEGLER:

And he designed several faces, didn't he?

GERRY:

Yes. So I don't know quite how it will work. That's the one thing. I think the typesetting machines will be gone and it will have to be done by hand, which is okay. But most of the printers you see in the San Francisco area have their type set by a typesetting house, Mackensie and Harris. They don't set their type themselves. So what are they going to do when Mackensie and Harris, now saved at the last minute by Andrew Hoyem from bankruptcy--? What's going to happen when they go out of business? Well, you can't really set large books by hand now, even though I know Andrew Hoyem does some. But it's pretty economically crazy. My other scenario for what will happen is that people will more and more go to offset lithography and do more hand lettering, use the phototype more and do more like-- I want to say hand-drawn books--that is what I would like to see. Or phototypeset books that are decorated by hand. Maybe a little more direct lithography, where they draw directly on the plates, instead of photo lithography. And as far as binding goes, I see it just going along right like this. They may come up soon with some new and less expensive way to bind a book, but I think there will still always be people who like to sell and do craftwork with books that will be binding.

ZIEGLER:

Yeah, and it's very satisfying to make it yourself that way.

GERRY:

Yeah. And I think printers like to do — some printers--their own binding. I know I did.

ZIEGLER:

You mentioned that there would be maybe more hand-drawn, hand- lettered, and photo-offset books. Do you think there is a revival of interesting calligraphy?

GERRY:

Oh, I think there has been. That would be nice to have. Where did I see a very handsomely hand- lettered book recently? It might have been done by Warren Chappell, and it was beautiful. There is that. There is calligraphy, almost like a manuscript, that could be done. I see that as a possibility for doing it for lithography. And then also, like I said before, I'm waiting for this innovative person. This new Bruce Rogers who is going to come along and exploit the technology in some way that we haven't thought of that will really be an eye-opener, like [William A.] Dwiggins and Rogers did in the early part of the century. And most trade books are really awful looking nowadays. Somebody, somewhere should be coming along to make them look good.

ZIEGLER:

Get the idea that they don't have to look awful.

GERRY:

It's the same old argument that has been going on, off and on. I think once you get letterpress way under the boards and beyond it and the remnants of what's left of metal type and the printing machinery has disappeared, because nobody will know what it is after a while, then I think we will be free to adopt the going technology, whatever it may be. There is always some new thing coming along. But offset lithography I think is the one. I mean, you can buy an offset press as cheap as you can buy a letterpress, an old, used letterpress. I'm sure you can buy an old, used offset press cheap. I've almost talked myself into it.

ZIEGLER:

Hermann Zapf has been working on designing good typefaces for computer printouts, hasn't he? So I guess that's one direction that you could go. Computer printing still looks pretty bad, but it doesn't have to. You can have a well-printed--

GERRY:

Right, it doesn't have to. They have some nice, very nice, excellent photo types.

ZIEGLER:

I was sort of interested in this idea of hand-drawing and then reproducing it, because I've been writing a paper myself on the lettering that Eric Gill did for the Cranach Press and Weimar and also for Insel-Verlag in Germany. And there, I think, the best technology they could do back then was that Eric Gill drew these letters and then they cut them into wood, and so they were really wood-engraved letters. Anyway, let's see, where do we want to go from here? I had a few odds and ends of questions that sort of didn't get asked in the appropriate place.

GERRY:

Oh, sure.

ZIEGLER:

Who has worked with you in your printing activities? Have you had some other person or persons helping you?

GERRY:

My wife [Mary Palmer Gerry] used to sew sometimes, sew booklets, but she is not really very interested in it. Other than that I haven't really had anybody.

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ZIEGLER:

I saw in some of your job sheets that it said "Mary's binding time." Is that your wife [Mary Palmer Gerry]?

GERRY:

Oh, yeah, right. I guess that was an attempt at watching my expenses, to keep a cost accounting. I think I later on gave that up.

ZIEGLER:

Also, I wanted to ask you where you learned to do binding.

GERRY:

I think I learned a lot from Pall [W.] Bohne. And, like I say, the original man at the [Walt] Disney Studio, named Lou Appet, who later became the business agent for Local 839, taught me. Also, Nevins had an amateur bookbinders shop on Seventh Street until sometime in the seventies. He was very helpful to us all. I had printed a little book, and Appet showed me how to sew it and how to make the covers and how to glue it together. From then on I just kept trying to do it-- I would sometimes do ten copies on the dining room table. Then I think I met Pall, and Pall showed me some things I was doing wrong--or maybe I read some books--and I got some ideas from Pall, who was a very excellent craftsman. Then I got a sewing machine and a standing press and I was able to bind editions of a hundred or so without going crazy. I mean, it was boring enough, but the sewing machine made a really big difference, because you could sew through the spine of the signatures with this machine. I don't want to say quite rapidly, but certainly faster than you could do it by hand.

ZIEGLER:

Excuse my ignorance. This is a special sewing machine for bookbinding?

GERRY:

Yes, it's called a Smythe sewing machine.

ZIEGLER:

You can't do it on a regular sewing machine?

GERRY:

No, it has a whole row of needles and loopers in it that push the needle through the spine of the signature and the loopers pick it up and the hook needles pull it through back out and it keeps going. You just sew all the books together in one long row and then later on cut them apart into individual books. Then a standing press had all the boards with ridges on it that you put in the grooves of the spine. You know what I mean? The long way, where the spine separates from the cover boards. These edged boards. You lay the books- -like, say, four books- -with their spines on these brass edges that are raised like a sixteenth of an inch. Then on top of that you put another edged board, and then you lay four books on top of that. You put another edged board on top of that. You are doing this one at a time, though. I mean, you can only glue one book at a time. You can't glue four. You put the books together one at a time.

ZIEGLER:

So the other four books are just for weight to hold it down?

GERRY:

No, you put them down after you have four boards laid out — four books laid out on these edged boards. Then you put another edged board on top of that. Now, the grooves and the spine are being taken care of by the top board and the bottom board, and you keep stacking these up on the standing press. In a commercial shop, where you've got two or three people working on a binding- -gluing and casing in, you know--they can fill one of these presses in half a day. Well, I had my press cut down because it was too tall. I couldn't fill it! [laughter] In a day's work I could do fifty, twenty- five books. Now, you put the squeeze to these books that are in between the boards. They're in the standing press, and you squeeze the boards down as hard as you can. And then you have this lever that you stick into the screw of the press. It gives you so much leverage that with hardly any effort at all, you can squeeze the glue right through the paper. So you have to be a little careful there, because I've done that before. You leave the books in this press--that ' s why it's called a standing press. The books stand there for twenty-four hours or however long you want them to. They dry in there . And when you take them out , they ' re squeezed so nice and tightly together that they don't warp like they would if you just tossed them on a table. Anyway, it's a finished book that comes out of there. So that's when I was doing-- I got to that point where I was doing generally pretty much edition binding. Whenever I could afford it, I would usually have somebody else do it. I would have another binder do it, a commercial binder.

ZIEGLER:

Where do you buy this binding equipment?

GERRY:

This equipment? I got the sewing machine and the standing press from the Self -Realization Fellowship. They had expanded their press that was on Mount Washington--then in Highland Park- -so much that they were doing so many volumes that they could no longer-- They were producing so much work that they could no longer do it themselves . They had to send the binding out. The equipment I bought from them was not enough for them, but it was enough for me. That's how I bought that. There's a company called Gayne Brothers and Lane who specialize in selling binding machinery and binding supplies here in Los Angeles.

ZIEGLER:

Well, could we move on now and talk about some of your activities as an artist? Do you remember being interested in art as a child and how you first started thinking you wanted to be an artist?

GERRY:

I think it was probably the only thing I ever did in class that the teacher liked. I was sort of a poor student. My grandmother [Lula Baxter White] had done a

little oil painting and she encouraged me, although she said, "You should never be an artist because artists are always poor." She wanted me to be successful. Yes, I think so. I think when I got out of high school I was unqualified for any college. So the registrar said, "What are you going to do?" I said, "I don't know." I guess I was about eighteen. She said, "What are you interested in?" I said, "Art." She said, "Here's this school over here in L.A. You can go to them and you could study art there if you want to be a commercial artist." So I went to Woodbury [College]. I think we've gone through this before. Then after Woodbury I went to Art Center [School] . And then after I was in the army I went to Chouinard [Art Institute] and ended up at Disney. Been there ever since, off and on, for more than thirty years. ZEIGLER: I wonder if you could comment on the different art media that you work in. I've seen samples of your pen and ink and your watercolors and pochoir and linoleum cuts and woodcuts--are there any that I've left out?

GERRY:

No, I think that's them. I think I feel more comfortable with a linoleum cut than a wood engraving. This book that I am going to do. *Seashore Plants of Southern California*--tentative title--I'm going to do in linoleum cuts. Pen and ink drawing, I guess it would be sort of in the style of [Edward] Ardizzone. I've probably been influenced by him, cross-hatching and so on. The pochoir just kind of grew. I think after I had seen the book *Elsie and the Child* that was published by Cassell and Company [Ltd.] in England and was stenciled and finally printed by the Curwen Press, I think that's when I thought I should try that on one of my books.

ZIEGLER:

And you've gotten some great results with it in the M. F. K. Fisher, *The Standing and the Waiting*, for instance.

GERRY:

Yeah, that was the one I ultimately did. It didn't turn out like I wanted it to, but it didn't turn out too bad. I mean, it's acceptable. I guess what I dreamed in my mind was something quite a bit different than what I turned out. Let's see, and I do watercolors. I try to do watercolors. Oil painting I don't do. Sometimes I use pastels in studio work, but most often in my studio work I use a china marker and watercolors. That's very quick.

ZIEGLER:

What's a china marker?

GERRY:

It's so you can mark the price on a piece of china. It's a grease pencil, very greasy. But it's very clean. It's much cleaner than a charcoal pencil. And when you paint watercolor over it, it resists the watercolor, and it won't run or smudge like charcoal.

ZIEGLER:

I wanted to ask you, pochoir is very painstaking in the sense that you have to do each one individually, isn't it? And for illustrating a book it's the same thing as etching: each copy has to be done separately.

GERRY:

It's like binding; it's very monotonous.

ZIEGLER:

Also, probably no two copies are exactly identical because you 're not going to be brushing exactly the same amount of paint on the stencil in each one.

GERRY:

Right, and as you go, the more bored you get, the more innovative you get on how you can treat this simple stencil. You know, you might want to soften one edge or stipple it with a brush or paint it a different direction or put a texture into it. These things come to you as you're doing it.

ZIEGLER:

Could you describe the process for the tape?

GERRY:

I'll describe the way I do it. You work out of your drawing with the idea that it's going to be in how many colors. The more colors, the more work for you; the more colors, the more your reader is going to like it. And you can trick things by transparencies. You can set three colors out of two. So you can let that play in your mind.

ZIEGLER:

By transparencies, in this case, you mean brushing a wash of one color across what you've already put down.

GERRY:

Right. This is going to be a transparent watercolor, or a semi-transparent anyway. Enough so you can't do it with opaque watercolors. But watercolor seems to be the best thing. Then over this drawing that you figure out in your mind, or you might have outlined it on the drawing in different color pencils, you take a piece of celluloid-- No, not celluloid. Mylar. Celluloid probably doesn't exist anymore. It's about three thousandths to five thousandths of an inch thick. You can cut it with a knife, but it's very hard with an X-acto or a frisket knife or something like that. I use what they call a stencil burner. It's like the little woodburning set you had when you were a kid, and it burns right through the plastic. As in needlepoint, you can just follow your drawing, which is under the plastic, and cut the outline. And because it's a stencil there are all sorts of qualifications, as you can imagine, that come with a stencil. You can't have things existing in midair. It's got to be tied to something to keep the stencil. The more complicated the stencil, the harder it is to brush. All right, so you've cut your color. And now you make some sort of a guide so that the

stencil will always be in the same place every time on every sheet of paper, and that's easier than it sounds. The most difficult thing is to get the right consistency of color. If it's too wet, it's going to run underneath the stencil, and if it's too dry it takes forever to brush it on. But I would much prefer it to be on the drier side.

ZIEGLER:

Which gives it sort of a powdery, grainy look, which is often very nice for the effect you want in the picture.

GERRY:

Yeah. So then you start doing your addition. You just do it sheet by sheet. A lot of times things will occur to you that didn't occur to you until you actually start stenciling it. Then [when] the sheets dry, you cut the second color and you repeat the process with a stencil brush on a plate. You work the paint out and keep the brush dry. You might keep two brushes so if one is too wet, you can rub the brushes together. That's what I do. Then you use the drier of the two. And you run through your addition that way. Now, this can be done over an existing printed drawing or like in the case of the M. F. K. Fisher book I did, there was no printed key drawing. I just did it all with stencils, which is fine.

ZIEGLER:

How did you first discover pochoir?

GERRY:

Oh, probably in some example books where Curwen Press examples were shown. And, like I say, I got this copy of *Elsie and the Child* by Arnold Bennett and I could see-- I mean, I could see that it was a beautiful thing, but I also could see that it was a thing you could do yourself. I mean, after all, I had some kind of artistic ability and I had been trained as a kind of an artist, so it was a possibility. And here it was combined with print. So naturally it would appeal to me. Then I think I saw some French examples. Then there were a couple of shows out here, which I didn't get to, but I got their catalogs and it talked about pochoir. And then I looked up some things Curwen had written about stenciling at the Curwen. He wrote an article somewhere called "Stenciling at the Curwen Press." Then I tried to do it, and unsuccessfully quite a bit of the time. Usually the brush was too wet or the design wasn't worked out very well. By the time I got to Mrs. Fisher's book, I had done a couple of things not too well. But I started out on her book and just kept going. I really learned most of everything I know about it from her book. If I do one for a Lawrence Clark Powell, for his *The Blue Train*, he wants me to do stencil illustrations, so I would do that again, probably simpler with the printed key. Not that a printed key is at all necessary. I did some stenciling designs and cut the stencils for John Handle's *Matrix* magazine.

ZIEGLER:

Oh, yeah. I saw an article on that.

GERRY:

He wanted to do this and have a little article on stenciling and also some examples. I said he was crazy, because he wanted to do nine hundred copies . Probably a thousand.

ZIEGLER:

I think he talks in there about what a time- consuming process it was to stencil each copy.

GERRY:

Oh, right. I said, "I'm not sure you really want to do this." Well, he wrote back from England that he had assembled this group of people that were all ready to go in this. I said, "Well, okay." So I wrote a little article and I illustrated it with the stencils. These all had key-- There were keys that would be printed, that he would print. And then his slaves, as he called them, would stencil over these. I tried to work them out in two colors, and one was three colors. He called me one time from England and he said, "The stencils keep breaking, they keep breaking." I said, "Well, you have to stick them back together with Scotch tape. They are stenciling too hard or rubbing too hard." So I cut him some more stencils on a thicker Mylar. I didn't have to do it, but I could tell that they were killing themselves. [laughter] So I think that will be one of the most prized of all the *Matrix* magazines for the sheer labor that went into the stenciling. It's a very nice medium.

ZIEGLER:

Yeah, it does achieve beautiful results.

GERRY:

And it gets much cleaner and nicer colors than if they're printed. The thing is to do, say, twenty- five copies or something.

ZIEGLER:

Yeah, a real limited edition. Do linoleum cuts and woodcuts, then, just go right into the press along with the type? Or do they have to be printed separately?

GERRY:

Yes, that's the great advantage. However, in most cases--even if you're printing in black--unless it's a very light-complexioned cut, you're going to have to print it separately, because the type is going to take less ink than the cut. Now, if you're doing a handpress, you can kind of get around this by having two different rollers, one with more ink for the cut--if you can get it in there without hitting the type--and one with a little less ink for the type. But if you ink the cut so it will print the type, you will have too much ink on it.

ZIEGLER:

It will be clogged in there. Yeah, I've once or twice tried doing linoleum cuts, and I had a problem getting a solid block of black on the black spaces, because I wasn't inking enough. I can see it would take a lot of ink.

GERRY:

So generally you have to do it separately. The illustrations are printed separately. This is really a different medium. I mean, in commercial printing in the past they were done at the same time.

ZIEGLER:

I understood that what was partly responsible for the wonderful efflorescence of woodcuts in Renaissance Germany was that they could go together into the press with newly discovered type printing and print at the same time.

GERRY:

Well, even in [Thomas] Bewick's time they printed the things together. I think that's one reason why Bewick complained that they lost so much, because they were kind of sloppy printers. But those German woodcuts, the ones I think you're talking about, were fairly light. They were not a lot of solids. They were mostly a lot of line work. Yeah, line work instead and lots of open spaces rather than solid black.

ZIEGLER:

Have you done art in other contexts besides your books that you've printed and your work at Disney? Have you displayed as an artist at galleries?

GERRY:

No, not really. I'm still working up a painting that I can take to a gallery. I had shows done with some of the other fellows at the studio. You would have a little watercolor show in the library or something, but never professionally.

ZIEGLER:

Where have some of those shows been?

GERRY:

At the Disney Studio in one of the large rooms like this room, a meeting room. We might have put some up in there, just unofficial stuff. I did have some for sale at Jim [James E.] Lorson's for a while, but I only sold one. I took the others back, and Jim has not been pounding on my door to get me to send more.

ZIEGLER:

So your favorite art medium is watercolor when you're not doing something to include in a book, when it's just a single copy.

GERRY:

I was very much influenced as a young guy-- And then later on when I went to the studio, I worked with these California watercolorists. Most of the background painters who worked in the studios in those days were the California watercolorists.

ZIEGLER:

Who were some of them?

GERRY:

Well, there was Art Riley, there was Ralph Hulett, Claude Coats, Preston Blair, Herb Ryman, Ken Anderson. So not only had I seen these when I was a kid, the great California watercolor style, but — Emil Kosa and Rex Brandt-- Oh, another one at Disney, although I didn't know him, was-- Darn it! I can't remember these people's names. Phil Dike. A great California watercolorist. So I think that not only did I love them before, but when I got to know some of the guys I loved them even more. Although, at the time I knew them, I wasn't doing any watercolor. It's only like in the last ten or fifteen years I have thought about seriously trying to do something.

ZIEGLER:

Could you tell me a little bit more about the school of California watercolorists? I don't know much about them.

GERRY:

Well, it ' s a style of painting that sort of developed around Los Angeles, where things were very direct. You might even say tricky. The techniques were very sophisticated in that they were very direct, in that nobody niggled around with little brushstrokes. They were all big brushstrokes, and they were all done with one or two washes--very seldom three--and the colors were bright. The subject matter was local. Millard Sheets, there's the one that was the kingpin of the California style. He started it really. I don't want to say he started it, but he was very influential in its beginnings in the twenties and all the way up until-- Well, he's still alive. He's still influential. He's still doing watercolors. And then there were a number of people in the San Francisco area. So that's what I call the California style. Milford Zornes we saw. Milford Zornes ' s paintings we saw down in the library science room [at UCLA] . Is that where we were?

ZIEGLER:

Yeah.

GERRY:

I would love to have one of those. That's the California style.

ZIEGLER:

Could you say some about learning to do watercolor? I think I mentioned to you that it struck me as a very hard medium to control when I tried it back in high school art class, and I imagine it's really a tough skill to learn.

GERRY:

I think to do it, you get some big full sheets and you cut them up into quarters, you might even cut them into eighths. You do a hundred of them, a hundred watercolors, and then you'll begin to catch on.

ZIEGLER:

Yeah, just see what works through trial and error.

GERRY:

Yes. And also if you can go to a class where a watercolor painter is going to do a demonstration, you'll learn a lot of how to do it. It's really a matter of just-- I mean, I think if you do an oil painting, you can fool around on one oil painting forever and ever, but a watercolor you've got to do fairly fast.

ZIEGLER:

Yeah, and if it's not right the first time, there's not a whole lot you can do to correct it, whereas with an oil painting you can change it.

GERRY:

So I think you want to do, say, a hundred quarter sheets. I mean eighth sheets, and then maybe a hundred quarter sheets. And then if you're really ambitious you can try a half. But a full sheet is a monster painting. It's a tour de force. Although, most of the well-known watercolor painters usually do full sheets.

ZIEGLER:

Yeah, and not only is it expensive paper if you're just learning, but even just controlling these runny colors over that large a surface.

GERRY:

The paints are expensive and the brushes are expensive; it's a very expensive medium. But you can use student brushes and student watercolors to get started, and then when you're really good you can buy. That was my theory. I think the important thing is to spend the money on the paper. You can get it on sale somewhere. After all, if it costs you \$1.50 a sheet for Arches watercolor paper and you cut it four ways, that's not much per sheet, is it? You cut it eight ways, it's really cheap.

ZIEGLER:

Yeah.

GERRY:

And you can use student colors and student brushes, and then when you feel like you're really good, you can buy a Windsor Newton for \$300, a Windsor Newton brush. Or \$200 or \$100, depending on what size. And Windsor Newton colors.

ZIEGLER:

They're the best.

GERRY:

That's what they say. [laughter] I learned water coloring mostly by myself, or looking at other watercolors. I took it at school, but I don't think I ever even showed the teacher, Rex Brandt, one of my paintings. They were so bad.

ZIEGLER:

Yeah. Well, it probably is something that you learn just by trying over and over again. Could you talk some about artists you admire? Artists or styles or periods that you admire.

GERRY:

Well, I guess in general --

ZIEGLER:

I certainly know that in your incarnation as Bunston Quayles you are familiar with art history.

GERRY:

Yeah, well, I do like-- I guess I like the modern art period. I mean, those are the ones I like. The cubists and everybody that was influenced by cubism. So that is sort of the period that I always fall back on as far as my interests go. I don't go — I certainly admire paintings before the twentieth century, but I don't get all excited about them. I'm mostly a twentieth-century painter. Or the ones that influenced me. So who is that? Picasso, Matisse. And then I like the surrealist [Giorgio de] Chirico. And the Belgian [Rene] Magritte and-- Oh, [Balthasar] Balthus is another one I like a lot. Now, as far as the more commercial artists that I admire-- Edward Bawden of England. I mean, a great watercolorist, but he also did a lot of work for the Curwen Press and a lot of more commercial drawings for commercial advertising that I think were really knockouts. Oh, he did a lot of drawings for illustration also. And also Eric Ravilious was my favorite wood engraver, followed by his student, John O'Connor.

ZIEGLER:

Who was his student?

GERRY:

John O'Connor. In his early days he was my favorite wood engraver. David Jones is another one who I can't help but be impressed by as an illustrator and as a wood engraver. And then Gus [Gustave] Bofa, a French artist. Charles Laborde, another French illustrator I'm much impressed with. And Ardizzone, Edward Ardizzone, the English illustrator. And McKnight Kauffer, who did *Elsie and the Child*, made the drawings from which they made the stencils. And then the American illustrators would be Gilbert Bundy and Carl Erickson. In the kids' book illustrations, [Feodor] Rojankovsky. And Gus [Gustaf] Tenggren, who did work at the Disney Studios before my time. And maybe Floyd Davis, too, I think, as a magazine illustrator. And in the fifties, of course, I was terribly impressed by all the glamorous magazine illustrators. But I have since lost interest.

ZIEGLER:

Who were some of those?

GERRY:

Oh, no, I want to mention one other artist who worked in printing and the book world, Barnett Freedman. He was another one, a contemporary of Bawden and Ravilious, who did some really swell drawings for printing. He didn't do engravings; he always did lithographs. Now, some of the fifties illustrators that

I used to think were the cat's pajamas, or whatever you want to say, were Joe De Mers and Coby Whitmore. And to some extent-- I can't remember his name. He taught at Chouinard; I took a class with him. He'd been a great illustrator. He was older than most of them at that time, yet he had changed his style and had not become passe. That was Pruett Carter. Those were the glamorous ones. Jon Whitcomb was another glamorous illustrator that we tried to emulate. And then when television came along, they all went out of style. Magazines were no longer illustrated. People didn't read stories, I guess. They didn't need them. They went more into photography. And I think most of those illustrators that were still alive went into western painting to stay alive. [laughter] I think that's about all the artists. People who probably influenced me the most directly would be Don [Donald W.] Graham--the teacher at Chouinard — and William Moore, a Chouinard teacher. And the Chouinard school itself. I think when I got to Disney, the Disney artists that influenced me and I felt strongly about were Bill Peet and Joe Rinaldi. And a man named J. P. [John Parr] Miller, who I never met, but his drawings were tremendous. A lot of the Disney artists there. In terms of entertainment and the making of the pictures, I think Frank Thomas and certainly "Woolie" [Wolfgang] Reitherman, who I worked with for many years. He was the director. And Ken Anderson, who was like an art director, he had tremendous influence on the things that — To try to teach me, without telling me exactly, the important things about the entertainment business and what made things entertaining. How to get those things on the screen or how to draw them.

ZIEGLER:

Could you maybe give some examples of what you learned from him?

GERRY:

Well, Ken-- Frank didn't draw much. He was an animator, but he often came to work on the story in the early part of a picture. He had a real canny eye for trying to get something that's entertaining, something the audience likes. And he, unlike most of the fellows, could articulate it. He could tell you what he was thinking about it. In that way he was very helpful, and I was very lucky to get to work with him as often as I did. But his drawing was animation drawing, which was not the kind of drawing that you said, "Oh, gosh, wasn't that beautiful!" Animation drawing is sort of something else. The drawings don't exist by themselves; they only exist when you see them on the screen. By themselves they don't stand up particularly well. And Woolie would-- Woolie Reitherman was the director, and he'd been an animator. He was constantly after me to make things understandable, to make things so the audience gets it. Not just you, but that the audience sees what you're trying to tell them. We spent more time trying to communicate to the audience than we spent on anything else.

ZIEGLER:

And how would you go about doing that? Can you think of an example?

GERRY:

Well, it's like trying to be very obvious. Much more obvious than you wanted to be, especially if you were a young man with lots of obscure likes and art films in your head. You didn't want to be obvious. But eventually I learned that you've got to be or you lose the audience and they'll never come back.

ZIEGLER:

Yeah.

GERRY:

So it was more in the staging of ideas, that you communicated it in an obvious way so the audience did not miss at all what you were trying to tell them. And Ken Anderson was a fantastic artist who had the ability in one drawing to suggest a whole sequence for a picture, by not only making it a drawing that was appealing, tremendously appealing, but it would have an idea in it or a piece of humor in it that would make you want to expand the story. And that's what he did so well for us, getting the story started by kind of leading the way with these sort of "setups," they were called, or "atmosphere drawings" or any number of words that they call them.

ZIEGLER:

Could you give an example, maybe think of an example from some specific film that people might have seen?

GERRY:

I can't really. I know he did-- Usually on every picture, he would start out by making these setups of the characters and then their situations, situations that were suggested either by an outline or by the book we were taking it from or by something in Ken's head. There might be fifteen or twenty of them, and then we'd get together and talk about the story and what was going to happen and these things that he would suggest ideas for that we could evolve into something. I will tell you — Ken didn't do this, but another artist named Mel Shaw — We were working on a picture called *Basil of Baker Street*, which later was titled *The Great Mouse Detective*. Mel had drawn this picture of Big Ben in England and it was like a down shot--you were way up in the sky and looking down on it. But you were close enough to see that the two mice, Basil and his archenemy, Rattigan, were having a fight to the end. Much like Sherlock Holmes had a fight with Moriarty at the falls. Here were these two mice at the very tip end of one of the hands of Big Ben. Now, that picture was so powerful and suggested such an image that you couldn't do anything but keep that in the movie. It was such a powerful image. And it stayed in the movie. That was done very early. That is when he was just exploring possibilities for what could happen. I don't think it was in the book, it was just

something that occurred to him. This took place in England. The mouse was like Sherlock Holmes, only he was called Basil, and wore a little hat like Sherlock Holmes. In fact, he lived in Sherlock Holmes's flat. In the wall. And that's one example I can remember of where one drawing suggested a whole sequence.

ZIEGLER:

I was looking at a book about Disney [*Disney Animation: The Illusion of Life*, Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston] , and it had a sequence of drawings that you did for *The Rescuers*, which unfortunately I've never seen. But it was pointing out how in those drawings, you were trying to convey the loneliness of the little orphan girl by showing her with her back to the audience and her shoulders slumped. And the focus of interest was the cat that was brushing against her back. Could you maybe use that as an example and talk about how you would make the drawing so that it communicates clearly and unambiguously to the audience?

GERRY:

Well, I think in that case, the director wanted to make sure that everybody would feel sorry for this little girl. Our heroine. I guess she wasn't a heroine, but she was the subject of the picture. So we fabricated this orphanage, what an orphanage looked like, because the librarian at the studio had found out that there were no more orphanages, orphanages no longer existed. There were only foster homes. Well, but the director said, "Phoo, phoo. I don't care. I want an orphanage." So we did the orphanage. So then we thought, well, maybe there would be this long row of beds. And I drew the long row of beds. And way down at the end-- All the other kids had gone, and there was little Penny sitting way down at the end, kind of silhouetted in the window on her little bed. And I drew army beds that I remembered so well. Plain pipe beds. It was a pretty bare place. And then I think the animator-- They were talking about what would the girl do. And I think we had some dialogue written in. It was a problem of what was the animator going to do with this girl to not only put over the dialogue but to make the audience feel really sorry for her and want her to be adopted and not want her to be kidnapped by the cruel lady and all that. So that's when I started drawing all-- "Well, what can the cat do? What does the girl do?" And you just keep asking these questions.

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ZIEGLER:

Sorry I had to interrupt you. You were describing what you could have the girl do and what you could have the cat do to show the pathos of the situation.

GERRY:

So I, as a story artist, was looking for material to give the animator some suggestions as to what he would do with the little girl. So we'd have meetings and talk about it, and I began to make these drawings of-- What would I do with the cat? What would the cat do? How would the girl treat the cat? Would the cat go behind her? Would he sneak up on her? Would he jump into her lap? Would he sit on the chair? We just tried everything that would come to mind. And then I had a drawing that I thought was terribly amusing about when she decided she was going to go have lunch, she took the cat with her. But she carried it like a little kid. Sort of with it hanging down, dragging on the floor. So I think maybe-- Ollie Johnston, one of the authors of that book, was the animator. And so I think that when they wrote the book, he remembered that. Also, he remembered it because it wasn't so long ago. It would only have been a couple of years when he wrote the book. So that is probably one of the reasons he-- Also, maybe he felt that there was really something there that helped him in his animation. And maybe the sketches were available — they hadn't been lost or thrown away or buried in the archives or something.

ZIEGLER:

I gathered from that book that they usually do that at Disney, that they have the story sketched out and then discuss these sketches and get ideas for how you can animate them, what sort of action, from looking at the series of sketches.

GERRY:

A lot of exploration. Lots and lots of exploration. "What are the possibilities of the situation?" You try to explore them visually. That is the story of the animation-story game. The exploration of the possibilities .

ZIEGLER:

Yeah.

GERRY:

And that's one advantage that the Disney Studio is able to do, to take advantage of doing that. Many more studios cannot afford to do that. I mean, they just have to make it right the first time. Bang, that's it. You never look back, you just keep going. And even the animators never look at their work. Or care about it. Oh, I won't say they don't care about it — they never look back and say, "Was this a good scene, or was that a bad scene?" They just keep going straight ahead. So we can have the luxury, if you want to call it, of the agony of exploration .

ZIEGLER:

Is that just because Disney can better afford the time to be spent than the other studios?

GERRY:

Yeah, and that was the tradition. I mean, that was what Walt Disney always did himself--or got people to do-- "Find out what we can do with this."

ZIEGLER:

What have you mainly done at Disney? Have you been an animator mostly? Have you been a story man doing stories?

GERRY:

I started out, as everybody did in those days, as an apprentice in-betweener . That was the job. I mean, the lowest job in animation. You put the drawings in between other drawings.

ZIEGLER:

So you'll have one person do an action at one point and then an action at another point several seconds later. And then someone has to draw all the intermediate stages?

GERRY:

It would be more like a fraction of a second later.

ZIEGLER:

Ah.

GERRY:

The animator and his assistant generally get the thing all animated, and then they decide where they want to put the in-betweens which will smooth out the action. And an in-between requires no effort or talent. I mean, of course, it requires a great deal of effort. It's one of the very difficult things to have to do. But it doesn't require much creativity. You've just got to get that drawing right in the middle so the animator likes it and says, "Yes, that's in the middle." It's a good way to begin to learn all about animation, because you're working with an animator, you're working with exposure sheets, you're working with the drawings, and you are a part of this team. I mean, you're working with the animator and his assistant, and there might even be a fourth person involved.

ZIEGLER:

How do you go about learning what the action in the middle would be? Like, say, just me as a lay person, if I move my hand, I am not really aware of where it is between the time it ' s here and the time I finish my movement .

GERRY:

You've got a light board. So the light's coming up, and you have the two drawings, one on top of the other. You can see both drawings. And on top of that you have a drawing paper. They are all on pegs so they won't move. They're keyed to each other. Then you begin to draw--over the two drawings — the one that's in between. Now, you don't just draw it, you kind of flip these papers. These three drawings, you flip them--it is called "flipping." You flip the papers in such a way that you can actually see it move. And that is the real test.

I mean, you can say, "Well, I drew it in the middle." But if it doesn't flip, in other words if it doesn't move smoothly —

ZIEGLER:

If it does a funny jump in the middle?

GERRY:

Exactly. If it does a funny jump, you're doing it wrong. So that's how. I did that for a while. But soon, like I say, because there was a demand for people because of the new television-- Because Walt had gone into television. So I was taken out and put into a layout department where you plan the scenes, you plan the backgrounds, and you plan where the animation is going to take place. You provide the animator with this plan via the director. I worked in that most of the time. And the director, whenever he would get a storyboard, would have to plan how he was going to make that and put that on the film. So he always called his layout man. "Come in here and let's talk about how we're going to put this on film." And so then the layout man tends to redraw the storyboards to the director's specifications. So from that it led to situations where the director was asked to produce a story- -he would say, "Hey, layout man, come in here and start making these sketches." So I gradually got so I was doing nothing but sketching. I kept wanting to go back to layout, and I kept saying, "When am I going back to layout?" "No, you're too valuable doing this." So I never did get to go back. I stayed on doing story work most of the rest of my career. For about twenty years. Twenty- five years.

ZIEGLER:

The story that we were talking about, where you do the still drawings of the sequence of action and people discussed them to get some of the ideas?

GERRY:

Yeah. Sort of a suggestion of what can happen. But not necessarily a cinematic scheme that their director is going to follow. It is really mostly to show the story and the possibilities of the situations and the characters. The director, he is the one who is going to make it. He is going to put it on film, and he is going to decide where the close-ups are and the long shots and the pans and the length of the scene and so on. That's not really the story man's province.

ZIEGLER:

How is the work of the story man similar to illustrating books? Do you feel like you've learned something from doing story work that has helped you in illustrating books? Or vice versa?

GERRY:

Oh, sure. I think in making things clear and understandable and in remembering that you're making the picture for an audience, not just for yourself. And the most successful illustrators are ones who appeal to the audience and make the audience like them, make them like the drawing or the illustration.

ZIEGLER:

And maybe picking out what part of the story is the best to illustrate?

GERRY:

Yeah, I think that, too. But I would say making a motion picture is very much like making a book. There are all these elements that have to go together, and in the movies it's done by many, many different people. You can make a movie by yourself and you can make a book by yourself. But there are all these decisions. There are all these problems that have to be faced that evolve in much the same way, from one state to the next to the next to the next. A lot of times, for one reason or another, I had to work on a book for a longer period of time than I anticipated. And generally, the book would have improved from my original idea. Given the extra time, something would occur to me to do that hadn't before. If I had just rushed right through it —

ZIEGLER:

What films have you worked on from the Disney Studios?

GERRY:

When I started, they were doing *Sleeping Beauty*. And I can't remember-- We went from *Sleeping Beauty* to *101 Dalmatians*. And I was still in layout on that, although I did do some story work. From *101 Dalmatians* we went to *The Sword in the Stone*. I didn't do any story work on that. Then we went to *The Aristocats*. No, no. Then we went to *Jungle Book*. I started to do a lot more story work. I did some art direction on that, too, though not too successfully. But by the end of that picture, I was doing almost exclusively story work. Then we went from *Jungle Book* to *The Sword in the Stone*. No, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I should remember this, shouldn't I? We went from *Jungle Book* to *Aristocats*. Right. *Aristocats*.

ZIEGLER:

Well, anyhow, the sequence doesn't matter if you don't remember it. We can even look that up somewhere.

GERRY:

Okay. So we worked on *Aristocats*. Walt Disney had died during *Jungle Book*. We worked on *Aristocats*. I went to work for another man named Winston Hibler, who was supervising the story of *The Aristocats*. I worked for him for quite a while. But then as the material began to filter back down to the director, I went back with the director to help him develop the boards for filming. This was the same director, Wolfgang Reitherman.

ZIEGLER:

Also knows as "Woolie" that we mentioned earlier.

GERRY:

Right. Right. He was a very strong director. Relentless in searching out the better way to do something. See, that was *Aristocats*. Then we went to *The*

Rescuers, I think. Worked on *Rescuers* — No, worked on *Robin Hood*. Then we went to *Rescuers*. And from *Rescuers* we went to *The Fox and the Hound*, which I only worked on very briefly. I did go back to layout on *The Rescuers*. At the last part of it I went to work on that and did some layout for a director named Art Stevens. I left the studio to start my own printshop in 1977. That was right at the end of *The Rescuers*, the beginning of *The Fox and the Hound*. Then I came back to work on *The Black Cauldron* for Ron Miller, the producer. I was about the fiftieth person who had ever worked on it. But I did my version, which I thought was pretty good. Then I left the studio and came back again to work on Basil, the mouse detective who I told you was on the clock tower of Big Ben. Then I worked on a picture called *Oliver*, which was a recent success. Now I'm working on some stories that they're going to use in their plant [Disney-MGM Studio Tour at Disney World] down in Florida. Some Mickey Mouse stories to bring back the old characters. Mickey, Donald, and Goofy. And I'll probably work on one more feature, I hope, before finally retiring.

ZIEGLER:

I saw that Disney version of *Winnie-the-Pooh*, and I saw your name in the credits on that. I wonder if you could talk some about what it is like when there's a classic illustrator, like the Ernest Shepherd illustrations for the A. A. Milne books, and then you have to animate that. Are there any problems? Or maybe any particular challenges working around these illustrations that everyone associates with the story?

GERRY:

We had a very difficult time with that story. And when I look back, I wonder why. But it was. I think it was because nothing happened. It wasn't a real cartoon story. There was no violent cartoon action that we could depend on for laughs or-- It was very whimsical. And we were not suited--

ZIEGLER:

Yeah, and so much of the humor--that 's one of my favorite books — is so verbal, I think.

GERRY:

Right. I always think of it as literature and not cartoons. But Walt decided he wanted to make it. So we struggled with the story. But meanwhile, they were talking about the artwork, and a woman named Sylvia Romer got a book. She bought a *Winnie-the-Pooh* book at the bookstore and she colored the drawings that were in the book. And the director was so impressed with these drawings that he decided that was the style we were going to use and everybody should draw like Shepherd. [laughter] So there was an attempt to get some of that Shepherdesque texture in drawing in there. It certainly was a long way from Shepherd, but the attempt was there. That was the style, and it all came because Sylvia had done a job of tinting these drawings that were in the book. The

director was just sold on that idea. So at least we had the style, but we still didn't have the story, because we were not whimsical people. But eventually, it seems to me, we went back more and more to the book, rather than trying to invent cartoon funny business for these characters. We went back to the book more frequently until finally-- I can't believe how much of a struggle it was to get that first one done, *Winnie-the-Pooh and the Honey Tree*. And it was very successful. But it didn't have any of the things in it that we could do best. You know? That was why it was such a struggle. But we went back and actually used the dialogue right out of the book and actually played it in more of a whimsical sort of tongue-in-cheek way. And, of course, the Sherman brothers [Bob and Dick Sherman], their songs did an awful lot, too, to make that picture come off. When it was finally animated, it seemed very much like the book to me. But we had gone a very circuitous route to get there. Then we did it and it was popular. It became a fairly big success. And it was tied in with some merchandising that made it affordable to do it, because we couldn't afford to do anything but a feature then. Anything less than a feature we couldn't afford to do. So then we did a third one, and the idea was eventually to-- I mean, we did a second one and we were going to do a third one, and then they could put it together in a theatrical release and recoup all losses, and maybe make some money, I don't know. So I worked on the second one. The second one was *Winnie-the-Pooh and the Blustery Day*. And for that one, we employed some of the top animators. The first one was made with-- I don't want to say second-stringers, but we were all pretty much second-stringers on that first *Winnie-the-Pooh*. And then the second one, we got some of the top animators. Milt Kahl, Frank Thomas, Ollie Johnston, and some others. Then on the third one, I don't think I was-- I wasn't involved with the third one at all, so I can't tell you how that was finally done. So that was my *Winnie-the-Pooh* experience.

ZIEGLER:

Ernest Shepherd's drawings are sort of sketchy, and apparently animation has hard outlines. And I think even though I could see you were taking the shapes of Winnie-the-Pooh and Eeyore and the other characters from the book, the picture still looked very different in the end.

GERRY:

Yeah, well, that just happens as the nature of animation.

ZIEGLER:

Yeah, that is inevitable in the medium.

GERRY:

His pictures were, of course, still pictures.

ZIEGLER:

Yeah. It's bound to be different.

GERRY:

Once you start to move them, then there are lots of problems that are not in a still picture. And, of course, the animators have to have a certain way to draw that's comfortable for them that they can get the character in, you know, every conceivable position. Where Shepherd wasn't faced with that problem. So they might have to draw some of them a little different. Well, by using the xerox process, you see, we could sort of hint at the Shepherd style, in the background at least.

ZIEGLER:

Okay. Well, now, I have just sort of a whole grab bag of things, of questions that were raised by previous interviews that I just want to clear up.

GERRY:

Okay. God, this has been a lot of work for you!

ZIEGLER:

Things like just verifying names and things like that.

GERRY:

Oh, okay.

ZIEGLER:

But one maybe more substantial question. How did you come up with the pseudonym Bunston Quayles?

GERRY:

Oh, I-- Bunny Quayles. A frightened little rabbit hiding in the bushes would be a bunny quailing under the bushes. Because I was a coward to write it in my own name. [laughter] And I had met a guy named Dunston, and they all called him "Dunny." Maybe that was where I got it. And me being a chicken, a coward, not to write it under my own name. ZEIGLER: Well, can you think of any topics we haven't covered or anything else that you'd like to say here?

GERRY:

Well, I think if you-- The Disney story and the story of me as a printer overlap. But the Disney story would be another book in itself, really. If the library was interested, there are other people who are still alive who know a lot more than I do. But it's another whole story. We haven't really touched on it, just a little bit here.

ZIEGLER:

Well, would you like to say some more about it?

GERRY:

No. I don't think so.

ZIEGLER:

Well, maybe the Disney archive will interview you about that some day.

GERRY:

Right. That's right. I'm sure Dave [David R. Smith] 's gotten a lot of those people--you know, that are still around who were there at the beginning--to talk.

ZIEGLER:

Well, I'd just like to say I have really enjoyed this. I really had a lot of fun looking at your printing at the Clark [Library] and I really enjoyed talking to you.

GERRY:

I surely saved every paper, didn't I? Every scrap of paper. Yeah, I did that for my own amusement really, because I thought, "Well, someday I'll just go through these things and look at each piece of paper for remembering. And then I will throw it away." But then I thought maybe Ed [Edwin H. Carpenter] could-- "It may be of some benefit to Ed if he would like to have it." And then he gave it to the Clark. I didn't have any idea they would have ever wanted it.

ZIEGLER:

Well, of course we want it! And it's too late to throw it away now. [laughter] We're guarding it carefully down at the Clark. But we would love to have you come down to the Clark and look at it whenever you feel like it.

GERRY:

Well, I hope they were able to get some similar material from Grant Dahlstrom's Castle Press. I will have to ask John [Bidwell] sometime.

ZIEGLER:

I haven't checked into what we have in the way of archival material on the Castle Press. We have a large collection of the books printed, and we have a lot about Grant Dahlstrom.

GERRY:

Well, I meant specifically job envelopes or something that--

ZIEGLER:

Yeah, I don't know. I haven't checked into that. But we do try to collect that sort of thing when we can get it down at the Clark. Because, of course, that really tells the whole story. I mean, it's great to see the stages of the job, and not just the finished product.

GERRY:

Yeah. Brings back a lot of memories.