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Interviewer: MARY EMMA HARRIS
Location: Berkeley, CA
Date: February 27, 2002
Media: DV cassette 2
Interview no.: 325
Transcription: Ellen Dissanayake, June 27-29, 2002; corrected by Mary Emma Harris, January 2003. Converted from Word Perfect by MEH, November 2015.

[BEGINNING OF SIDE 1, TAPE 1]

MEH: [GIVES IDENTIFICATION] Claude, as you know,– I've interviewed you before, but the Black Mountain College Project now has this grant from the Graham Foundation, and so I'm doing some follow-up with people who became architects or worked in the field. Let's just start today sort of talking about the progression of your work from the time you left Black Mountain. You went to study at – From Black Mountain, where did you go?

CS: Well, I went into the army, of course, and during my time in the army I went to army engineering school. Then when that closed up, I was sent overseas. When I came back, I applied to Harvard Graduate School and started at Harvard in February of '46, I guess. And graduated in '49. Then I started working for architectural firms to get enough experience so that I could become registered. I took the registration exam – Oh, actually then I worked for firms in the Boston area for awhile and then got a job at Washington University in St. Louis, teaching architecture. I was registered in Missouri and then became registered in Iowa because I wanted to get national certification. I taught at St. Louis for two years and in the summer between I came out to San Francisco

with my family – a wife and three kids at that point – and worked with Bob Marquis, who was the brother of Lucian Marquis, my Black Mountain classmate.

MEH: Now was Bob Marquis already working here as an architect at that point? Did he already have an architectural practice?

CS: He was just starting. He had had a practice in partnership with somebody else. He wasn't yet a registered architect, but he had some small work and the summer of I guess '55, we worked together and decided we'd – After finishing my other year in St. Louis, I'd move out here and join him in a practice. We set up a firm called Marquis and Stoller which lasted for about twenty years or so.

MEH: That was here in Berkeley?

CS: No, it was in San Francisco. I was living in Mill Valley, and about the second year of our practice I was approached by Bill Wurster, who was the dean here, and asked if I still wanted to teach. The reason he said that was because I had tried – asked him for a job before that. I said, yes, I did. As a matter of fact, we were – our practice was very slim. [LAUGHS] It was very important. So I started teaching in 1957 at Berkeley, and carried on simultaneously the practice in San Francisco. The practice grew, and I guess my teaching position grew – that is to say, I was promoted. Finally – Bob and I did quite well. I think we did good work, and we won awards and things like that. Both of us were active in the AIA and so on, and we were published frequently. After about twenty years we decided to part and go our different ways. We had a small office in New York at that time, a branch office, and I took that over and then closed it and came back

here to teach again. Started my own practice in Berkeley, which I called Stoller Partners originally. I had a few partners at one time. At the present time, I'm retired although I do various kinds of consulting things, and my last partner is now my son-in-law. He married my daughter. Their child is one of my two grandchildren in Berkeley, which is a very important part of my life. What else can I tell you?

MEH: Okay, that really is a very nice chronology to work with. Going – Let's go back to the beginning. You had worked with the building program at Black Mountain. I think you've talked about the things that you did before working with Kocher and building the Studies Building and whatever. Then you went to Harvard.

CS: That's right.

MEH: Obviously very different situations. But how would you just generally compare the two programs. Is there any comparison?

CS: Well, Harvard was a professional school, and so it had a very directed program towards architecture. Black Mountain was a liberal arts college when I was there, and the most exciting kind of liberal arts college you can imagine. The architecture program was centered on Larry Kocher, and so the important thing is that we were immersed in the liberal arts and studying architecture at the same time. Most architecture programs, at that time – not Harvard, Harvard was a graduate school – most architecture programs were five-year programs with very, very little liberal arts. Almost from the very beginning you started doing professional work.

MEH: Even undergraduates had a limited amount of liberal arts at the time.

CS: That's right. Yeah. In the architecture programs there was a very limited amount and It made a big difference.

MEH: What difference did it make, the fact that instead of going through this program with a lot of architecture very early you entered with really – in fact you didn't have your bachelor's degree, did you? Did you start from the beginning at Harvard?

CS: No. I didn't have a bachelor's degree, and I didn't graduate from Black Mountain because I was drafted. I couldn't graduate. But Harvard accepted Black Mountain credits very eagerly. As a matter of fact, I had advanced standing in the graduate school when I started. Chuck Forberg and Don Page and I all started together, and we all had the same thing. I know Chuck didn't graduate. Don may have graduated from Black Mountain. Did he?

MEH: Yes, he did.

CS: He did. Did Chuck?

MEH: No.

CS: No. Okay. So, we were all in the same boat. We were all [INAUDIBLE]. Both of them were marvelous students – much better than I was, at Harvard. I would say the interesting thing is that the other people in our class were all people who'd been through undergraduate architectural programs and had learned very many of the skills of drafting and drawing and so on. I was very – what shall I say – I was very shy about my drafting ability. I didn't have very good drafting ability. So, I was envious of these people who could jump right in and produce creditable drawings. It wasn't too long before I realized, and I guess

Chuck realized and Don realized, that we kind of knew what we were drawing. I mean, we'd had so much experience with building materials and electrical and plumbing and stuff like that it wasn't so – [LAUGHS] well, it wasn't an abstraction, it wasn't something that you drew it that way because you know it was supposed to look that way. You drew it that way because you knew – you were building it on paper, in a sense. The other thing was that I remember that in engineering – well, of course I'd had a program in the army too – but I had a wonderful physics course at Black Mountain which really prepared me very well for technical –

MEH: Who was teaching that?

CS: Peter Bergman. You met him at the reunion, I think.

MEH: Yes.

CS: Peter was – He'd come from the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton. He was one of Einstein's –

MEH: Right. So looking back, how, how do you evaluate the value of the sort of preparation that you had at Black Mountain as a way of studying as an undergraduate? Positive or negative?

CS: Well, the school at Harvard said they weren't going to waste time with stuff that we already were supposed to know, so we were supposed to know how to draw – I mean, draw perspectives and things like that, which I didn't really get very much of at Black Mountain. As a matter of fact, I think Larry Kocher's first class, first architecture class, we had a space in the Studies Building, and we had to build our drafting room. We had to build tables and stools, [LAUGHS] put the

lights in, and so on, and that was our first class. Well, it isn't as trade school as it sounds, because Larry was a very interesting person, and we talked about the theories of everything that we were doing. But to answer your question, I think that – I think that the kind of immersion in the liberal arts was very important, a very important background for an architect. It seems to me that – Because architecture in the best, in the best sense, is very broad. It seems to me that if you didn't have it, that you would get it later. I mean, you would have to sort of run to catch up. I think I may have told you before, the most impressive statement I've heard at reunions was one that Mort Steinau said. He said that he felt that what Black Mountain was doing was producing educable people. It wasn't so much a question of being educated, but educable. That really sticks in my mind because, you know, gosh, we sort of developed a kind of curiosity – I don't know – intellectual curiosity, which really carries you. Architecture specifically. I guess, the experience of building, of digging in the ground and cutting down trees and milling lumber and actually doing construction and learning a few construction skills was terrific. After having envied my classmates at Harvard at first, I later thought that I could criticize their work very well because they didn't seem to me to know how to build. [LAUGHS] Anyway, that's something that I've been concerned about teaching here.

MEH: Go ahead. The fact that you were concerned about –

CS: I've always wanted my students to know what – to take responsibility for what they were drawing. That is to say, to really understand what it is they were

indicating, and what implications it had. So, I spent a lot of time trying to get my students out of building onto the land, or get them into the workshop and using materials, giving them projects where they had to use tools and sort of get – To give them the sense that it was not anti-intellectual to be doing that, that really it was – for architects – architecture was the bridge between this kind of understanding of materials and construction and intellectual and aesthetic ideas, ideals.

MEH: Do you feel that part of that came from being at Black Mountain?

CS: Yes. I think so.

MEH: Did students at Harvard have any practical experience in building as part of your program?

CS: Well, Gropius, having been involved in Black Mountain – he wasn't teaching there or anything like that, but he was on the advisory board. Gropius insisted that before graduation every student spend one summer on a construction job. Every student at Harvard. We did. I can't remember – I guess it was considered that I already had it. But even if you were just a water boy or something like, just your presence on the job. Gropius had a very reverent attitude towards construction – the means of building. Wonderful.

MEH: Was Gropius teaching at that point?

CS: Gropius was teaching. He was Chairman of the department.

MEH: And teaching also.

CS: He was teaching, yeah. He taught the graduate studio – the most advanced studio.

MEH: What was he like at that time? How do you remember Gropius?

CS: Gropius was interesting. He seemed, in his demeanor, sort of stern and unapproachable. But when you talked to him and got to know him, he wasn't that at all. He was delightful. He was charming and friendly and understanding. He gave a lecture for the new students every year. They all got to have this feeling about it, that they were welcome and that this was a real – I told that to Albers one time, about how wonderful Gropius's lecture was. "Ja," he said, "he did that at the Bauhaus every year." [LAUGHS] No, he was a wonderful guy. He was very warm. We knew him fairly well because Chuck and Ati were getting together, and so we'd be invited for dinner there and so on. Nan and Ati were good friends at that time.

MEH: Did you feel that having been to Black Mountain and having studied with Albers and knowing Ati and Chuck, that sort of personal connection that you had sort of set those of you at Black Mountain apart from the other students or gave you a little sense of a different sort of relationship to Harvard?

CS: That's hard to say. [LAUGHS] I don't know. I mean certainly some of the people that were closest to Gropius were not Black Mountain people. He was friendly. But I don't know about setting us apart.

MEH: Was there any course – were there basic courses being taught at Harvard for the architecture students that were comparable to Albers's classes?

CS: No. I don't – There was one – I don't remember his name – there was one guy who attempted a foundation course, sort of similar course. But it sort of – it became a kind of an intellectual thing. It was very wordy. I remember he set a

problem once for the whole school, a sketch problem. It was one of his, you know, Basic Design or Foundation Design things. The statement of the problem was so complicated and so full of terminology that I didn't understand it. I went to Gropius and I said, "I don't understand what I'm supposed to do. I'm very confused." Gropius looked out the window. He said, "It's such a nice day. Why don't you go down to the river and lie on the bank there and think about it?" [LAUGHS] That was very nice. But he didn't – What he actually thought about this wordy program I don't know, but he may have felt a little critical of it himself. I hope so.

MEH: He was using good discretion in not responding.

CS: After all, chairman of the department. But – yeah.

MEH: In your later architectural practice you've had quite a few commissions and very varied commissions.

CS: Yes.

MEH: Do you feel that there's any particular philosophy or point of view that has informed what you've done?

CS: Well, I think the result of the Black Mountain experience tied together with the construction experience tied together with the design experience made me – it freed me from a certain kind of phobia that I've noticed in some of the Harvard students. They were scared of construction because they really, you know, they realized that they didn't really know a great deal about it and didn't have a self-confidence about it. I think that what it gave me was a kind of joy of building. A kind of a building joy [LAUGHS]. I don't know how else to put it. But

I've always – In my practice I've always loved to be directly involved in the construction – go out on the jobs, as they were building, get together with the craftsmen, sometimes even lift a hand myself. That, for me, is just a great deal of fun. I mean, I have been critical of architects – some of them very successful – who really don't build. Who do beautiful graphic work, but don't have a sense of construction. They just sort of say "Well, okay" – they hand it off and say "Okay, you build this." I never felt that way. I always felt that in the construction – construction world, there were marvelous people that you could spot – or also in the profession. There were marvelous people that you could spot that shared this kind of joy. You could have a good dialogue with them. I found that there were salesmen who had it, salesmen who were selling building materials. Most of them know how to sell but don't know very much about what they're selling, but a few of the people – You establish a kind of a rapport that's very nice on the basis of the joy of building. Gropius used to like to go out on jobs, and he would use terminology that people on the job didn't understand. He'd talk about ferro-concrete. Well [LAUGHS] none of the laborers on the job knew what ferro-concrete was. But Gropius always felt, he felt that construction was – it was somehow a sainted thing. I mean it was a very important thing to him. He knew things about it that just amazed me. I mean, he knew details. I was working in their office and I was drawing a full-scale section through a brick wall, and the brick joints were what we call weather joints. They just – the mortar is sloped back from the bottom brick under the upper brick in a straight line going all the way across. Gropius came and I was drawing, and he stood

behind me with his cigar and looked at what I was drawing and didn't say anything for awhile. I was getting kind of nervous. Then he said, "What is this angle?" he said. He wanted to know what the angle of the mortar was. Well [LAUGHS], all I knew was that you raked it back at some angle, I didn't know – but he knew. He knew exactly what the angle should be [LAUGHS] and I was amazed.

MEH: So you then drew it at that angle?

CS: Well yeah, I mean – So he knew theoretical things that just amazed me. I can't remember some of the others about – Well, anyway, I remember other things that he – We used to have brown bag lunches once a week at the Architects Collaborative, and Gropius would talk, and [LAUGHS] these things would come out, these wonderful statements of his.

MEH: Do you feel – through Albers and having gone to Harvard where Gropius was, do you feel a sense of continuity with the Bauhaus? Do you feel that you're –

CS: No, that would be hard to say. I don't think so, really. Albers – His Werklehre course, his foundation course was nothing like what was going on at Harvard, and I think Gropius didn't really have full control. He was chairman, but he wasn't dean. But the Bauhaus, of course, wasn't an architecture school, so it's kind of hard to say what they would have done. Certainly Mies van der Rohe's school was selected – the kind of architecture that Mies was doing in Germany.

MEH: Are there certain people – certain architects – that through the years you've considered to be sort of people you especially respected and tried to adopt or were influenced by?

CS: Well, I very much liked Breuer, and I very much liked Aalto, and I very much – who else? Yes, there were people. They don't come to mind immediately. But at first I sort of was fairly narrowly interested in what– in the Bauhaus and the kind of people who came out of the Bauhaus and practiced. Oh, I guess people like Neutra and Schindler and these were very, all very good people. I didn't – for a long time I didn't think I liked Frank Lloyd Wright. It wasn't till years later that I began to think there was something wonderful about Frank Lloyd Wright, too, although I didn't particularly want to design under his influence, which some of my [LAUGHS] some of my friends did. Let's see, you were asking –

MEH: We're fine. Looking at the architectural things, your commissions such as you've done, it seems that whether it was a public housing project or a commercial building or a university-type building or a community building or whatever, that you have been concerned that the appearance in terms of material and form be satisfying in any case.

CS: Yeah. We, we – Mies is famous for the expression – I don't know if it's correctly attributed to him – but "God is in the details." I've always been very interested in details, how things come together. It's always been very important to me that it just not be left – I remember one particularly infuriating student of mine. I asked him how he intended to build this thing he was showing me. He said "Oh, you know, plain old, plain old type-five wood construction." It infuriated me. I said "You'll show me (UNINTEL) what do you have in mind." No, I was always very interested in – It seems to me that Breuer and Neutra were wonderful that they could come to this country, into a totally new kind of structural construction

that they were unfamiliar with and be so creative and at home with it. So – I liked that a lot.

MEH: Do you feel that your experience at Black Mountain in any way influenced your teaching of architecture?

CS: Oh yeah. Very much.

MEH: [OVERTALK] How would that be?

CS: Well, I've always had the feeling that I had to get the students out into the community, out into the world. Experience – to see the world through the eyes of an architect. I mean what kinds of differences you can make as an architect, but also I was always interested in materials and what's the stuff that the buildings are made out of. I used to take my students to factories, where – I felt that the highest standard of materials handling was done in factories. Wood in cabinet shops, and concrete mixing in concrete precasting plants. Oh, I just took them into all kinds of things. I took them to foundries and forges and potteries and so on. I think that the kind of – it's kind of like a showman's trick to take them to things like that. You know that it's going to be very exciting and so on, and then to nudge them and try to get them to understand what it actually means, what these materials are capable of and why they're being held in that particular way, and so on. Anyway, that – it was fun. I always wanted to do that with my teaching. I did set up a workshop, a studio, in San Francisco, which we called Wurster West Workshop. What we did was we got into some of the poor neighborhoods and did some – Well, we did a project that we defined for ourselves. We proposed moving some old buildings into a kind of a little square

and made a kind of a housing, a little commercial group, out of it. We worked with the government, with the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency. One of my former students was the head of the Rehabilitation Office, and the city gave us a space, which was a condemned old building, and we had great fun there. We did it for a semester or two semesters, and then when the Free Speech Movement happened here in Berkeley, there was a great impulse on the part of the faculty to do something about it, the students – Do something about the students' concerns. So I talked to groups of students and said, "You know, you have special capabilities which are very, very important in the poor community." We were interested in the poor community. "And if we could set up a kind of a workshop in the city where your skills – or the skills of young graduates" – I was talking to them too – "could be made available to the poor community on some basis, then it would be – you would get terrific experience and the poor community which doesn't have funds for this kind of thing would be able to develop rival schemes to redevelopment schemes, or would be able to produce plans to remodel their houses." The city had programs offering people money to do remodeling, offering materials and money if they would go about it, but who was going to design it? There wasn't anybody. So this was a role – So we started a thing called a Community Design Center. I think I showed you a blurb for that. I got some money to do that from University Extension here, and then eventually the city came forth with some fund. We set up an office in the city where interns could come after work and work on these projects for <u>real</u> clients. I mean, they were contributing their time, but they were working for real clients,

which was very exciting for them, and for the folks that needed help it was great. At least, that's the theory. It was not always smooth. But anyway, I set that up about 1964 or '65, and it's still running.

MEH: This does hark back to Black Mountain in the sense that students were having practical experience and real experiences. It was not just theoretical.

CS: Yeah. That's right. That's exactly – there were other things like that. I mean I always would – I would try to get in writing design problems for studio. I would try to write a problem with a specific piece of land and with specific people in mind which, you know, that's reason-, everybody does something like that. But then I would take the students out to the site and we would – with whatever crew and instruments we had, we'd measure the site. I wanted them not to have it on paper but to have a feeling that it was there, it was a place, and to have – use all the criteria that you would use for putting a building up there. What would it look like? How would it work with the sun and the wind and so on. So [LAUGHS] I was always trying to get the students out. Mostly they responded very well. Mostly they liked it. The students that didn't like it I guess just didn't choose my studios. [LAUGHS] It was –

MEH: I'm going way back – let's go way back, briefly. How do you remember Lawrence Kocher? What was he like?

CS: He was a charming man. He was modest. Very approachable, very easy to talk to, and imaginative. Courageous. I mean the courage to undertake a thing like that Studies Building [LAUGHS] I realize now was enormous courage. He was so personable and likable. Everybody liked him, including all the workmen and

all – you know – Charlie Godfrey and all his people that made it work very well. Now, here's a guy who's a real intellectual. He'd been editor of the Architectural Record, and he was no slouch at the intellectual stuff but he was very, also very interested in materials and took us over to Swannanoa and watched them saw the big logs and kiln dry them and so on and so forth. Wonderful. I think that he was just the right kind of person for Black Mountain because – I think everybody liked him. All the various factions on the faculty, all the students, respected him. Everybody liked him. I think he was great. I mean – His teaching was really not so much classroom teaching as teaching by example, and by sort of encouragement and stimulation and so on. It was nice. [LAUGHS]

MEH: Looking at the various projects that you've done over the years, are there particular ones that really stand out that you think were key projects, or that you did something that was particularly satisfying or innovative in?

CS: Well, it's interesting because what you're always trying to do, as an architect, is to design something which is significant aesthetically. I mean, really is a beautiful object and has beautiful spaces and so on. In a way, I guess, well, it's kind of hard to say. I was going to say I think some of the housing projects are very important thing to me because of what they contributed to people's lives. I mean, I could see directly that it was, gone back to visit and seen what's going – But I think some of the houses that I've done are – I especially liked – well usually where we'd have kind of an interesting problem, a very steep slope, or something. Oh, I liked that laboratory. It's – You know, it's hard to say. It's like asking you which of my kids do I prefer. I don't know. I like them all. Almost all.

MEH: Do you think that there are questions related to Black Mountain and architecture in your work that I haven't asked that are relative issues that haven't been discussed?

CS: I'm trying to think. No, Mary, I can't think of anything at this moment. I'll wake up in the middle of the night and think of something, but I can't think now.

MEH: [DISCUSSION OF PHOTOGRAPHS] Claude, can you tell me about this photograph?

CS: during the War, in Germany. She was a weaving student of Albers. She came from Montgomery, Alabama. I believe she was at Black Mountain for one year or two years.

I think that's probably 1941. It's me being tackled by Eva Zhitlowsky, now known as Eve Milton, and I think that's the Dining Hall in the background.

That's me pouring concrete in probably 1940, I would think, at the Studies Building. We had a – Charlie Godfrey had a big cement mixer going, and we wheeled wheelbarrows full of concrete up a ramp.

MEH: Do you know who made the photograph?

CS: Hmmm. I'm sorry I don't know.

MEH: Okay.

CS: Isn't it too dark for the camera?

MEH: No. The camera adapts.

CS: Okay. That's probably – That's probably 1941, also. From left to right that's Will Hamlin holding, I think, a camera, so he must have taken that other picture of me. That's Dodie Harrison, I think Dora Weston now. That's Eva Zhitlowsky or Eve Milton now, and that's me.

MEH: Okay.

CS: I don't know, that, that could be 1940 also. I think it's Connie Spencer, and she's working it looks like on the Studies Building. Connie –

MEH: [UNINTEL] that concrete there?

CS: Yeah, They're probably pouring concrete.

MEH: They let the girls do that sort of thing too.

CS: Oh yeah.

MEH: Okay. This photo?

CS: This is at Blue Ridge. It's on the front steps of Robert E. Lee Hall, and I would guess it's taken either 1939 or 1940. I'm trying to see if I can recognize anybody's car. I think that's Dick Carpenter's car in the front. Evarts had a car and Jimmie Jamison had a car, but I can't – I don't see Jimmie's. [LAUGHS] I can't tell whose they are.

That's the stool I designed, probably 1940, and it's bent electrical tubing. I was very proud. I turned the top out of a gum log that I cut in the woods, and I stretched canvas over it and I turned birch inserts into the legs on the bottom. I showed it very proudly to Breuer, who wasn't too impressed with it, I don't think.

MEH: Would this have been done under the supervision of Larry Kocher as part of your –

CS: No.

MEH: You just did this independently?

CS: Yeah. No, it was just a thing I did. We had time. I have a couple of big Polaroid plates which you could –

MEH: Yeah. This is working. That's very good. Now do you want to tell me about this?

CS: Is that good? Yeah. It's Molly Gregory, a little coffee table or cocktail table, that she did. I'm not sure what the year is. I would think probably '41.

MEH: This was your photograph?

CS: Maybe '42. Yes. Yeah. Maybe '42. I'm not sure.

That's a Molly Gregory desk, which looks like it's either Douglas fir or Southern yellow pine, which she made, probably in 1942, I would think. It's my photo, yeah.

MEH: Okay. [HIGH PITCHED BACKGROUND SOUNDS]

CS That's the same Molly Gregory desk that's in the previous photo

MEH: It's your photograph also?

CS: Yes.

MEH: Do you know who the desk was built for? For whom?

CS: I wish I knew. I can't think. I don't know. [UNINTEL]

MEH: Okay. Ready.

CS: Okay, this is a collage, erroneously attributed to Albers. I think it could be as early as 1939, no later than 1949, because Hope Stevens is still there and I have, as you know, I have a complete identification of all the people.

MEH: Right. So we won't do that now. I'll match it up. [OVERTALK] Who do you think did it?

CS: Well, I think there are only three possibilities. One is possibly Freddie, Fred Stone did it, although I don't think so. The other two possibilities are John Stix, that you mentioned, and Will Hamlin.

MEH: I'll find out. Okay.

CS: That's the Dining Hall at Lake Eden.

MEH: This was a postcard.

CS: It was a postcard and I don't know when it was taken. F.S. Lincoln was one of my brother's chief competitors. He was an architectural photographer. He was a very gentlemanly guy. He came into our darkroom and made some, demonstrated making a print for us, showing us how it should be done. He was very nice.

MEH: You mean at Black Mountain?

CS: At Black Mountain, yeah. He came – It was at Blue Ridge. We were still at Blue Ridge. I guess Larry must have had the model by then. I don't – No, that can't be right. Anyway, F.S. Lincoln photographed the model. I don't know when.

MEH: And so this is on the –

CS: (OVERTALK) This is – Yeah. This is an aerial view of the building, the model, and what was built was the long wing –

MEH: Actually I think it was this long wing.

CS: Oh.

MEH: That goes out over the lake?

CS: That's correct. I'm sorry. You're absolutely correct. The little hexagonal central point from which all the other wings were going to spring, but never did. You know the stories about building the building over the swamp and so forth.

MEH: Right.

CS: Jean Charlot.

MEH: Mural beneath the Studies Building.

CS: Mural.

MEH: This is a photo of the murals, but it is not the postcard. It's just a photo building. Memories?

CS: [LAUGHS] Too many to – Yeah, it's the Dining Hall, which of course was also our playhouse and our concert hall and our community meeting hall.

The little portion of the building on the right is the kitchen, where Jack Lipsey and Rubye held forth – king and queen. Yeah.

MEH: It's really nicely photographed, the way the haze is behind the (OVERTALK).

CS: Isn't it nice, yes? It's very nice.

This is taken in the shop at Blue Ridge, and I'm not sure whose hands are there but it could be Ed Dupuy, who was sort of running the shop and giving us whatever instruction we needed on the tools.

MEH: Did you like go into his shop for –

CS: Never.

MEH: So this was at Black Mountain. He came up to give you instructions?

CS: Yes. Unfortunately, the wheel doesn't have a guard, or something, which I wouldn't let my students work on such a thing now, but [LAUGHS] –

MEH: This is your photo?

CS: Yes.

MEH: And it's at Blue Ridge.

CS: Yeah.

MEH: So this is a seed?

CS: Yeah.

MEH: It's incredible.

CS: It's a seed, fell off a tree.

MEH: I don't know. Hm.

CS: Well anyway, it's a photo experiment, putting a little, a little seed into the enlarger and blowing it up.

MEH: Would this have been – So is this like a photogram that you [STRANGE SOUNDS OF RECORDING]

CS: Oh no, I just put this little seed on the plate in the enlarger and blew it up. These were experiments which Albers very much approved of and stimulated, but they were not part of the class.

MEH: For the photography, was anyone really supervising the class?

CS: Photography? No, I'd had some experience and so I ran the darkroom, and got Fred Stone started. That's where he first started dabbling in photography. [OVERTALK]

MEH: Who were students who were doing photography then seriously? Was Stix there then?

CS: Yeah. Stix was there, but he didn't do anything in the darkroom. I think he probably – whatever photos he took he sent out to be processed. I think the same with Will Hamlin. There were a few cameras around, as I remember, but Freddy and I were the only ones in the darkroom.

MEH: And this was at Lee Hall.

CS: Yes. Lee Hall, in the basement. That's the Studies Building. It would have just been finished. I notice that the pile driver that we built is still in the foreground. It hadn't been dismantled yet.

MEH: The pile driver was used for – ?

CS: Well, the building stood on a swamp, and the piles were driven under the footings for the building supports.

This is the Studies Building near completion. Some of the transite panels, asbestos net panels, haven't yet been put on the upper level above the deck. I guess there's still some construction debris around under the building.

MEH: [ROSEMARY RAYMOND STOLLER JOINS THE INTERVIEW] I'm just letting you all record memories, comments. Either one. Both. Rosemary Raymond Stoller has joined us.

CS: Yes, I think that's a little cement mixer in the foreground, and I think the building is finished, or just about finished at this point.

MEH: I don't think – This is not your photograph.

CS: No, I don't think so. I don't know whose it is though.

MEH: We'll just go through these so I'll have a record of what's –

RRS: That looks more familiar.

MEH: How is that, Rosemary?

RRS: Well, I had a studio there the summer I was there, and that is the study hall, isn't it, Claude?

[OVERTALK]

CS: Studies Building.

RRS: From – the entrance?

CS: No, it's from across the lake, from out at the edge of the lake.

RRS: Yes.

MEH: Right, does this, does this cause you to recall any additional memories in terms of construction? Do you think there is some detail there that's significant?

CS: Yeah. Well, I remember we had a redwood – we put a redwood deck on it, because redwood was resistant to rot somewhat. Redwood. It came tongue in groove, came dried all the way from somewhere – California, I guess, and it was very precious. We laid it. Then we had some redwood left over, and I made a

table with a redwood top. I remember that. [LAUGHS] I can't remember who it was for. It was probably for one of the faculty cottages or something. I remember it was my first encounter with redwood. Oh, yes, something else is that I took all the scraps and cut them into little three-quarter inch lengths. They were tongue-in-groove so I could fit them together, and I filled them together on a board and made a bulletin board out of it, sort of end-grain redwood. I think there's a photo somewhere that shows that. It was in my study.

MEH: Okay.

CS: That's a student's study.

MEH: Do you know whose?

CS: Could it be Renate's? I don't know. The studies were all eight feet by ten feet, because eight foot was a module of the 4x8 plywood panels, naturally. The floor is the oak, red oak, that we cut in the woods and had milled and kiln dried at Swannanoa, and we laid the floor ourselves – with cut nails. I'll never forget it.

MEH: What do you mean by "cut nails"?

CS: Oh, sort of like blacksmith's nails. Square in section, and –

MEH: And the floors were laid green?

CS: Oh no.

RRS: [UNINTEL] and dried it.

CS: Oh yeah, it was kiln-dried at Swannanoa. They sawed up the logs, milled them – kiln-dried it, milled them, and then we got them back and laid the floors ourselves.

MEH: We're on.

CS: Yeah, where are we? That's the –

MEH: This was against the wall of the Studies Building and I had known what it was for, but I can't remember.

CS: I can't either. It's up against the masonry octagon.

MEH: I have it recorded somewhere, and it is a question that I really have is: Is this your photo?

CS: No.

MEH: Okay.

CS: Okay? This is the Studies Building at night, looking up from the ground at the windows, which are lighted from the lights inside the studies themselves. It's at night, of course.

[END OF RECORDING ON TAPE 1; TAPE BEGINS]

[TECHNICAL REMARKS NOT TRANSCRIBED]

MEH: Okay, Claude.

CS: Yeah, this is the – room at the lowest level of the hexagon of the Studies Building, masonry room. It has two chairs that Larry designed and he had the bentwood – I think they were standard bent shapes that they were making church pews out of in Swannanoa, and the legs I guess we made in the shop or maybe Molly made them for him. The little table on the left is a typical student project

MEH: No, I think that's a Kocher, I think Larry Kocher made that table.

CS: Oh, Larry made that too?

MEH: I think so. I'd have to check to be sure.

CS: Right.

MEH: Did you ever actually use his area with the fireplace for gatherings?

CS: No. [LAUGHS] Not in my memory.

MEH: Did you?

RRS: No I don't think we did either.

CS: But it's a room where Rudy and I kept two fires going all night one night when the concrete was curing up above, because we thought it would freeze. It turns out it probably wouldn't have, anyway, but it was a nice experience.

MEH: You said you had to go up in the woods to get the firewood?

CS: Well, to get additional firewood. We ran out of firewood in the middle of the night, and had to – had to replenish it.

MEH: Is this your photo?

CS: I think so, yes. Well, this is an old broom with fungus growing on it. It was sort of a Werklehre project, the kinds of things we looked for, and – I can't remember whether I actually used this in a class or just did it because –

MEH: Now is this your photograph?

CS: Yes. Anyway, when we finished our first design project and we had drawings and models, we sort of made a presentation to the whole community so they could see what we were doing. So we somewhat pompously said architecture was the setting for life and – it's okay [LAUGHS].

MEH: Well, maybe it's the case. One setting.

CS: Well, that was what we were learning.

MEH: The three stools there are curious, because they all look like the Kocher stool, the former stool.

CS: They could be Larry's. Yeah.

MEH: Or Molly's. I'm not sure. These – what were the photos?

CS: You know what I think? I think they were the drafting stools that we made for the class.

MEH: I bet that's true.

CS: Because we made our stools and we made our tables. That was our first job is to build the room. We put up the walls [LAUGHS], made the stools and the tables. Yeah, I think that's what it was.

MEH: Okay.

CS: These were the plan drawings for the houses, little houses that we designed for that project.

MEH: Do you remember which students were involved in this?

CS Bliss, Rudy Haase, oh I can't remember his name – tall, blond guy. Dick Wyke? Does that ring at all?

MEH: There was a Dick Wyke.

CS: Dick Wyke. That may be all. Maybe there were just four of us. I'm not sure.

MEH: This is your house, you designed.

CS: [LAUGHS] First thing I ever designed. First house I ever designed.

MEH: So what do you think? I mean here you are, you know, an undergraduate designing a house.

CS: Well, I'll tell you one thing, I knew how it was going to be built. [LAUGHS] Which I don't think –

MEH: Do you remember what your objective was in this class? What the goal was in building a house?

CS: Yeah. We were all doing modular houses. They were all based on a four-foot module, and they were minimal. The idea was to make a house that people could afford. It doesn't have a garage – it has a carport.

MEH: It looks like –

CS: Now this is showing how two houses would go together – the two carports right next to each other. The plans are flipped.

MEH: Like mirror images.

CS: Exactly. Yeah. I don't know whose this was. It was somebody in the class. Couldn't have been Bob's – Bob Bliss.

MEH: Look at the car model.

CS: Yeah. Neat. I love the trees. [LAUGHS] Like ice cream cones.

MEH: It looks like the same car.

CS: Yeah, we probably all used it. Could be Rudy's. I just don't know. Yeah, that's another one in the class. Dick Wyke had a little bit of experience, and this may be Dick Wyke. What's happened to him, do you know?

MEH: [NEGATIVE]

CS: Well this is a different project, and I don't know. I really don't remember it. It's something that Larry gave us to do. These are all my photos, but I just don't remember what.

Mary, this was a building we weren't using. It's below Lee Hall –

MEH: If your back is to Lee Hall, it's this building to the right?

CS: On the right.

MEH: Okay. You really didn't use that for anything?

CS: I don't think we ever used that.

MEH: This would be the view from the porch?

CS: Yeah. Yeah.

MEH: Are these your photographs, this group?

CS: I think so. Yes.

MEH: So you were using a 4x5 format camera and a 2-1/4?

CS: Yeah. I'm trying to think. I had a 4x5, and I don't remember what the two and a quarter was. But they're my photos. Gee, I don't remember. I didn't have a Rolliflex.

MEH: So these were both – there were two buildings to the right of Lee Hall.

CS: Yeah, I think so.

MEH: Did you use either of them?

CS: Never. No.

MEH: It's amazing to have too much space on a college campus.

CS: [LAUGHS] Okay. That's our building. That's Robert E. Lee Hall.

MEH: Okay. Were these fire escapes, or an exit [OVERTALK]

CS: Yeah, fire escapes, yeah.

MEH: That was strange with the ramp going up there. Why would that ramp have been there? It's almost like a wheelchair ramp.

CS: Yeah, it went – On that side of the building, it went to the Dining Hall. I remember there was a ramp. Well, it went part – it went to the path that went up to the Dining Hall.

MEH: Okay.

CS: That's light patterns on the wall under the stairwell.

MEH: Of?

CS: At Robert E. Lee Hall.

MEH: Was this an outdoor stairwell?

CS: Yeah, it's an outdoor stairwell.

MEH: Okay.

CS: This is the one that what's-her-name – Barbara – at N.C. State, at the State Archive.

MEH: Barbara Kane?

CS: Barbara Kane thought it was a Weizenblatt house, but it's not. It's under the stairway at –

MEH: At Lee Hall?

CS: At Lee Hall, yeah.

MEH: Where would this outside stairway have been? Would it have been on the back of the building?

CS: Well the faculty, the faculty and students all had bedrooms in that building.

MEH: No, no. But where would the stairwell have been?

CS: At both ends.

MEH: At both ends, okay. So that was really the same stairwell that we saw – Okay

.**CS**: That's Bill Reed, at the loom.

MEH: How do you remember Bill Reed as a person?

CS: Oh, he was very soft-spoken and modest. Very, very sensitive visually. I mean, it's unbelievable [LAUGHS], and it was really quite exciting to go for a walk with him and see the things he would see. He always spoke very softly. No, he was a good friend, a very good friend, and Alex, as you know, he was –

MEH: I'm sorry, I keep thinking you're finished. You said he's –

CS: Well he was very close to the Albers. He was really like their son. I think he [LAUGHS] – As I remember, Alex didn't have very much to do with his father. He loved his mother, but the Albers were really surrogate parents.

MEH: Now is this your photo?

CS: I can't remember. Ask Stix if he took it. I mean, I don't remember. It certainly could be. I was down there taking pictures. These are some textural experiments from – .

MEH: I think these actually were weaving experiments from Anni Albers' weaving class.

CS: [AFFIRMATIVE] Yeah.

MEH: Now is this your photo? Do you recall?

CS: Yes.

MEH: Okay. [OVERTALK] This also is a weaving –

CS: It's wea- – Yeah.

MEH: Study, when she was trying to get them to, without weaving, to create the image, the texture, of weaving.

CS: Right. Go back –

MEH: This also I know is a weaving study.

CS: Yeah.

MEH: And these are all your photos?

CS: [AFFIRMATIVE] I think so. Anni. She's – She's putting thread on a bobbin through a little hand-crank machine, and that's in the – That's in the Studies Building. That's on a lower spa-, lower level, where Anni's –

MEH: Did you ever take weaving?

CS: Yes.

MEH: Okay. You took weaving in Lee Hall?

CS: Lee Hall, yeah. [BREAK IN RECORDING] Yeah, those are Anni's hands on a piece of weaving, and I think it's my photo but again I don't know. I'm not sure.

It's Bill Reed's hands.

MEH: I think so too. Do you know if this is your photo?

CS: I don't know.

MEH: We could check the negatives also. Okay.

CS: No, I think this is Anni's – a weaving of Anni's. It's a design for industrial production, and that's my photo.

MEH: This is an Anni Albers weaving, and I think this is your photo.

CS: Yeah. But I don't know whose weaving it is.

MEH: It's Anni's, I think.

CS: Do you think it's Anni?

MEH: I'm pretty sure.

CS: Hah.

MEH: Is this your photo? Do you remember?

CS: I think it is, yeah. I, you know, I don't know why I would have these little prints if it weren't my photos, because I wouldn't – But, you know, I can't say for sure. Is that one of the prints that I had?

MEH: Yes. It's your print. I think it may be your photo. I'm going to look more carefully at the negatives there. This here again is a textile from Anni's class.

CS: Yeah.

MEH: Whether it's hers or not I don't know.

CS: Yeah.

MEH: Okay. This is your photograph?

CS: Yeah. That's my photo, and I'm pretty sure it's Anni.

MEH: I think it's cellophane. It's interesting how you use the dark and the light to show the different – the transparency and the reflective qualities.

CS: Yeah, but that was the whole idea.

MEH: Yeah, but it worked beautifully. Okay this is a larger print, about 8x10, of the same image with the contact.

CS: Yeah.

MEH: That's nice if you just zoom in like the weaving by Eva Zhitlowsky, probably Claude Stoller's photograph.

This is another weaving by Eva Zhitlowsky, also probably Claude's.

Do you know if this is your photograph or not?

CS: I think so. But –

This is a snow scene, very close to the Studies Building, a very rare snow [LAUGHS], occasion.

MEH: That bridge. Is that the bridge going over to the library, or do you know?

CS: Yeah, it must be. I think so, yeah. Copy negative.

MEH: A copy negative.

CS: That's all right.

MEH: Okay, tell me about this photo.

CS: Well, it was snowing and I didn't know the snow was going to last till the morning, and so I took a chance and ran out there with a view camera at night and stood in the – It was quite cold, and stood in the cold and made a long exposure, and got it.

MEH: It's particularly nice because, you know, people didn't have the photo equipment we have today, and it's the only photo I know of at night which shows what the Studies Building would have looked like at night, with all the studies lit with people in them.

CS: We had – In the DIning Hall there was a bulletin board, which had a big sign on top that said Opinions. People used to pin a piece of paper on there with things,

their opinions. Well, I pinned this photo up there, and Albers was overjoyed. He said that was such a nice opinion. [LAUGHS]

MEH: That's great.

CS: That's Carlos Merida, a Mexican painter who was visiting Albers from Mexico. Albers had met him – both Albers had met him on their trip to Mexico the summer before, and he came to visit them, and they certainly liked each other very much. They sat on the, they sat on the deck together, on this – and Albers didn't speak a word of Spanish and Merida didn't speak a word of English or German, and so they had a big pad of newsprint and two soft pencils and they just drew pictures on the newsprint and passed it back and forth. I can still hear them roaring with laughter as they passed these back and forth with perfect communication. Now the background of this is a kind of a typical Saturday evening scene just before dinner. Everybody got cleaned up and got – the girls wore long dresses and we wore jackets and ties, and we had a dance after dinner. It was kind of a tradition. Very nice. [LAUGHS]

MEH: Just a different photo in a different space.

CS: [AFFIRMATIVE]. That's Carlos Merida, again. It's taken pretty much at the same time but with a – looking over towards the reservoir.

That's a picture of the Jalowetz cottage, and the same corrugated transite that we used on the Studies Building and it has 4x8 plywood panels and wood sash. It was built by Chuck Forberg and me, but with of course a lot of help from Charlie Godfrey and his crew.

MEH: It was designed by Kocher?

CS: Yeah. Designed by Larry Kocher, and it was for the Jalowetzes, Heinrich and his wife and their daughter, Lisa.

MEH: What was the story of the roofing?

CS: Oh, the roofing. Well, it was – Don Page told you that, I know. The roof was roll roofing. That's heavy asphalt paper with gravel on it. What you did was you rolled it out and glued it to the roof with tar. I got into the materials shed and got

a tub of what I thought was tar and started to roof the building with it, and it was grease for the tractor, which had about the same consistency as tar. [LAUGHS] Everybody in the community had a good laugh at me.

MEH: Start over, at the front.

CS: Front door of the Jalowetz cottage at night, and I took this picture because I wanted to show the, two of the uses of transite. One is the siding on the building and the other is the facing on the fireplace. Actually, a third use you can't see in the picture, but it was dividers in the concrete hearth that they poured and used this, pieces of this squiggly stuff to make a pattern. [LAUGHS]

MEH: [UNINTEL]

CS: It's a framing photo of the Jalowetz' house. The sub-floor is down, we're starting to frame the walls.

Framing photo. Jalowetz' house – a little further along than the previous photo.

That's the Jalowetz' cottage, where – It's a framing photo and I was very pleased that something that I had built made nice light patterns too, so –

MEH: How did things work" Like when you got to a certain stage, Kocher or Charlie Godfrey would come and say "Okay, this is how you do it"?

CS: Well, we'd always have to lean on Charlie, I mean, as things – Bliss was much more experienced than I was. He didn't have to lean on Charlie as much as I did. But – Charlie was, was always around if you needed him.

MEH: This really gave you a real sense – I mean, having done something like this, you had a real sense that you could actually build something, and that was a lot of responsibility – to build a house.

CS: Yeah. But it's incredible how we, how we were. I mean, it just – everything seemed possible to us [LAUGHS] and we did it. But it's sort of – Part of my feeling about my fellow students at Harvard was that they [LAUGHS] that they didn't have this kind of –

MEH: Okay.

CS: There's the fireplace and the hearth, and unfortunately you can't see the pattern in the hearth, which was made with little pieces of transite.

MEH: The Kocher chair on the left.

CS: I cut these things with a handsaw, and I had to stop every foot or so and re-file the saw and set the saw. [OVERTALK]

MEH: Hard material to saw.

CS: Well, it's very abrasive, so it dulls the saw very rapidly. Nowadays it's cut with power tools, discs, and everybody wears gasmasks and so on, which we didn't do.

I think this was an interlude, a weekend, and Fred Stone knew about some caves in the ground near Nashville. Swackhamer and I and Freddy and, I think, Jane Slater and Nan Oldenburg, who became my wife, went along. Freddy had a little Ford convertible [LAUGHS]. We piled into it. This is us – this is the three boys after we climbed up out of the cave, and at one point I wasn't sure I was going to make it out of there, but [LAUGHS] – So we were kind of proud to be out.

MEH: This is –

CS: This is Paul Radin, the anthropologist, who was teaching with us for, I think, a year or a year and a half or so. He was [LAUGHS] quite a – how do I say – abrasive character in some ways, raised a lot of hackles. He was a mentor of Roman Maciejczyk. Roman was his – well, he was Roman's god, really, and Roman just hung around him and worked for him.

Now I'm not sure who took this picture. I don't think I did, but on the left hand side is the back of Fred Mangold's head, and then just above him is Dick Carpenter, a biology teacher, and then, of course, in the middle with his finger to his lips is Bob Wunsch. Behind Bob is Trudi Straus – Trudi Straus. Erwin Straus's wife. This is on the lawn between the Robert E. Lee Hall and the Dining Hall.

MEH: If I move this up, you can see some student in the window. Up at the top.

CS: Yeah. This is Eva Zhitlowsky, and I believe the picture was taken before she was at Black Mountain. I don't think the picture was taken there.

MEH: Did you take the pictur – You wouldn't have taken the picture [OVERTALK]

CS: No, I didn't know her. I didn't take this one.

That's Eva Zhitlowsky in the workshop at – I think it was in the building below Robert E. Lee Hall and, anyway, and she's working at the drill press and I took this picture.

MEH: That's where there woodworking shop was?

CS: Yeah. I think it was, I think it was in a little – Ah, somehow I have a feeling it was not in Lee Hall itself. It was in –

You know, this is Eva Zhitlowsky in the shop again.

This is me in the Studies Building. You can see a typical plywood wall. I think I was working on a window, but I'm not sure what I was doing. I don't know who took the picture – maybe Stix.

This is Albers and Eddie Dreier, and it's probably 1941, and Eddie was ADD the youngest of the Dreiers children, and as you can see [LAUGHS] was quite a favorite of the –

MEH: You took this picture?

CS: Yes, I took the picture.

MEH: I can't see what Eddie has in his hand. He has something he's showing Albers.

CS: I don't know what it is.

MEH: Okay, this is the same photo that hasn't been cropped.

CS: Yeah.

MEH: And this was taken in front of Lee Hall. The porch.

CS: Is that – ? It looks like Albers has got a, some kind of a box.

MEH: It's a cigarette in his hand.

CS: He's got a – Oh well, always.

MEH: So you were saying the car in the upper right hand corner –

CS: The right-hand car, the wood-paneled station wagon, is Jimmy Jamison's car, which Jimmy was always a faithful chauffeur for anybody who needed to get somewhere.

MEH: There are a lot of tales of his driving – every time he went from Boston to Black Mountain he loaded it with people who needed a ride.

MEH: Now start over.

CS: The guy in the center is Jerry Wolpert, who is one of the most brilliant of Straus's students, and we're sort of making a spoof with Jerry as The Great Dictator, and we're [LAUGHS] loyal slaves or something.

Shall I identify the people? The girl on the left is Jane Slater, and just above her is Jack Swackhamer, and then in the white shirt is Morris Simon, then Jerry Wolpert, then me, then up above on the right is Will Hamlin, and down below him is Nan Oldenburg.

MEH: And you see this wreath you have in front of you, so you're creating a monument. But I think maybe there was a monument that's very similar to this that you may have been imitating. I'm not sure.

CS: I can't remember that. It could be.

MEH: It's a great photo. You said you think Fred Stone took it?

CS: I think Fred Stone took it. He's not in the photo. But I –

MEH: It's taken somewhere in the area.

CS: Oh yeah, it's, yeah, this is – I can't remember exactly where, but this kind of stone bench thing, and –
That's Kenneth Ayres. That's a kind of a funny portrait I took of him. What happened to him?

MEH: I don't know. But the shadow in the background, you know, the reflection of his head?

CS: Yeah. I was interested in fooling around with portraits.

This is either Outward Bound or an Ibsen play.

MEH: Who are the people?

CS: Sue Spayth is the woman, and Bernard Malek is the man.

That's Alex Reed, and I'm not sure I took that. Maybe I did.

MEH: We might be able to tell from the negatives. Do you have that negative?

CS: Maybe.

That's Alex in his study in Lee Hall. He had those kind of, those bamboo shades, and I thought it would be fun to have some verticals against the horizontals.

[LAUGHS]

MEH: Looks like that'd be a Mexican shirt?

CS: Yeah, it's a Mexican shirt.

This is another one of Alex Reed in his study at Blue Hill. I took it –

MEH: Blue Ridge.

CS: Blue Ridge, I'm sorry. Emil Willimetz borrowed these. I think he wants to put them in his book. I'm not sure, because –

That's Alex Reed. Again this is in his study at Blue Ridge, and I took it.

This is Walter Gropius. Marvelous portrait by Fred Stone. I very much, very much admire this. This was taken not at Black Mountain but in Cambridge.

That's – On the left is Tommy Brooks. Next to him I think is Dick Wyke and standing over him is Renate Benfey, then is that Betty Kelly?

MEH: Looks like her.

CS: Then Larry Kocher. Above him is Mimi French, and I can't tell – move it away a little bit. I can't tell who that it. I don't remember who that is. Then in the foreground is –

MEH: Danny Deaver?

CS: Yes. This is Jack French's wife, Sophie French. I don't think I took this picture.

MEH: On the tractor?

CS: On the tractor. It's on a Farmall 20 tractor, which we used to drive piles and we used, oh we used it on the farm, we used it for all kinds of stuff.

MEH: There's stuff on the ground around there. Garbage.

CS: Oh, I don't know what that is. It looks like wood scraps. Carpentry.

[END OF TRANSCRIPT. END OF INTERVIEW.]