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Mr. Bayard Taylor Berndt

This is an interview with Bayard Taylor Berndt. Long time native of Wilmington and operator of Hardcastle's art supply and picture frame store in Wilmington on Shipley street. The interview is now happening at the store on Sept 2nd, 1976.

Mr. Berndt, could you tell us about the Wilmington Art School and your early life in Wilmington, your career as an artist?

I was born in June 13, 1908 in Wilmington. I'm married to Rita Plats also born in Wilmington. I graduated from the Wilmington High School in 1927. I attended the School of Industrial Art, now the Prolific College of Art in Philadelphia day school for two years and became interested in illustration under Thorton Oakley a Howard Pyle student.

After two years of commuting, I changed to the Wilmington Academy of Art. This young school on the third floor of 8th Market Street, studied in 1927 with Mrs. Morris Whiteside as director.

It was small and had Gayle Hoskins teaching figure drawing and Frank Schoonover custom, model and composition classes. Both were Howard Pyle students and practicing illustrators.

Referring to Howard Pyle who was considered the Dean of American Illustrators specializing in American subject matters; it attracted several hundred talented students. Many were outstanding.

Pyle started teaching at age 40 at the Drexel Institute of Philadelphia, one day a week, then two days a week and by demand. Then it became so busy into painting illustrations that he said some of the students who wanted more training could come to Wilmington and have the studio next to his. And he would criticize them from 8:00 to 9:00 in the morning. But he had to paint on his own commissions and his own studio the rest of the day.

He was an inspiration to his students and charges them no tuition. He died in 1914 in Clarence on his first trip abroad. It follow that his students such as Harvey Dunn, who married a local cribs girl, thought illustration at the Arts Students League in New York. He influence
students like Mead Schaeffer and Norman Rockwell and these two men visited our art school and Rockwell told me that he always stop in Wilmington to see the Pyle collection when he was within 30 miles of it, he copy those file paintings to learn how to finish a painting.

Now, many of those students were friends of Hoskins and Schoonover and they would stop by to visit their old school friends. The two who were instructors, our instructors would bring them to the academy to give us a critique and talk at no fee trying to help young students just as Mr. Pyle that helped them.

N.C. Wyeth around 1930 was in great demand and he too wanted to carry on this tradition. And we were invited to visit his studio at Chadds Ford in 1930 to bring compositions and to view the mural sections for the one he was painting for the Wilmington Savings Fund Society at 19th Market Street here in Wilmington. It was 20 feet high and 60 feet long. It took a year to paint. And Mr. Wyeth received $40,000 for it.

We came away from this dynamic man whose talks were inspiring to do better work. So to Mr. Pyle inspired his students. There was a terrific sincerity and drive to N.C. Wyeth and he was a super salesman. Anyone that could convinced a Stolid Quaker Bank [phonetic] [0:04:31] to allow practically nude figures such as in his Apotheosis of man mural, he had to be a super salesman.

Interviewer: Did you use nude models for your figure drawing in the old Wilmington Art School?

Mr. Berndt: Oh, of course, we had this with traders or life joint classes.

[0:05:00]

And when we had it on our school which I mean to talk about a little bit. The Wilmington Academy faculty tries to have four-year training as a professional art program. Edward Grant received a European scholarship in 1930 and I received it 1931 when the depression was severely on us.

The school had depended on contributions from some wealthy local contributors. Well, it was Mrs. Morris Wheelright and her secretary Gertrude Brinckle who used to be Howard Pyle's secretary. And Mrs. Anaya DuPont [phonetic] [0:05:42] and one of her daughters Mrs. Rust, Mrs. Harry Longer. They had the Worth steel Company of Mrs. Worth [phonetic] [0:05:57] and couple of men from the DuPont Company, Mr. Lila Verdict and Mr. Willard Crydents [phonetic] [0:06:05].
Well, they ordered the school closed in the depression. And I just returned from this European scholarship and I visited museum and observed masterpieces. And then they showed me that I was really just starting to paint. And I developed a real interest in the continuation of the school. Most of the instructors except Schoonover were willing to continue to teach with or without pay. And as we could hardly expect much in contributions.

We located at the Old Lea Mills building at 18th Market Street, we white wash the walls and we continued the school. The depression dragged on and with only old instructors where the acceptance has gone over.

And well, we putted a brochure we put out, I didn't bring one with me but it had examples of the kind of work we did and a big list of the teachers and what they had accomplished and so on. And Willard Stewart took a lot of the photographs back in those days because he was working for Schoonover [phonetic] [0:07:22].

While the depression dragged on and we had fund raising, card parties et cetera, the old Drama League rented the third floor of the Mill. They put in seats and stage and they run shows of local talent. I was in the [inaudible] [0:07:42] in high school and was called on to play the same role that Brandywine's first musical in this theatre Mr. WW Layered as the Mosotho [phonetic] [0:07:51].

His uncle Mr. Pier [phonetic] [0:07:55] gave him along with gardens open air theatre to Brandywiners and ever since it become an annual performance even to this day. I didn't mean to catch up on Frank.

Well, it was tough carrying on the school. I was the only full time person as the Executive Secretary for five years at the 18th in Market Street. In 1935, this is Wilmington Society of Fine Arts who had head quarters and a gallery on the second floor of the Wilmington Public Library, they were offered the John Bancroft collection of Pre-Raphaelite paintings, and considerable land, and would eventually get $400,000 from his family for endowment purposes.

A drive was started, still in the depression with a goal of $350,000 for the building. When more than half of this was collected, along came Mr. Fletcher Brown a director of the DuPont Company. He said that he would double the money collected if they would put the building at 14th in Market Street. Where he was convinced by expert advice that it would be better for the community, this statement turned the meeting into a
brawl. And as he had raised more than one half of the money to accept the Bancroft offer, it was turned down.

Mr. Fletcher Brown built the Trade School some 10 years later and gave it to the city. Miss. Lucile Howard, arts illustrator, she was an instructor of Custom Design at the Moore Institute. Her father lived in Wilmington and she came down on weekends and on Monday morning she would come to the Art School and she took over the job of Mrs. Whiteside as director.

Now, her Aunt was Mrs. John Bancroft and we were to be in the first five rooms of the basement of the grand floor of the new building. Samuel Holmes [phonetic] [0:10:14] designed the new art center building and we moved in with our own Board of Director, great, we did not had to pay for heat, light or rent. And the depression was winding up and the school had a good new start. We had many students and a variety of classes in sculpture, bookbinding, frame carving, as well as water color painting and illustration.

The school returned to us and I was the secretary teaching in academy in drawing and painting and hiring the models and pausing them. In charge of the school store, arranging parties and locking the doors, which was called the art center.

In 1942 the war started. Another advance male student was drafted. The girls got defense jobs and to build telephone hired a group of them to do drafting because they thought they could handle a pencil. The rationing of gas and oil for the building depleted our efforts. And the directors turned it over to the museum and closed the school. I was in the shipyard for three years [inaudible] [0:11:26].

The museum with [inaudible] [0:11:29] Moore director continued to run the children's classes with Mrs. Marian Johnson teaching. And when Mr. Fletcher Brown died, Mrs. Fletcher Brown died, she gave $350,000 through Miss. Moore the director who was a relative and built the education wing where they continue to have extra hobby classes in ceramics, painting, sculpture, jewelry, jewelry making and weaving in day and evening classes with many students.

But they do not have a full time four-year art school of the type we had offered. Some of the outstanding students from their old school in Wilmington Academy of Art deserved to be named. We have Edward Grant, who's the assistant director of advertising for Hercules Company
for 25 years. He's now retired at Eastern Shore and continues to paint at countryside and he also painted some murals.

John Moll of arts with Maryland, painter and illustrator, he was very successful and he also painted murals. George Gray fellow student mural painter of historic murals for a hotel chain, he specialized during the war and even now as a Navy Combat Artist supplying artist for the Navy's illustrations.

And Lesley MacLean, a later student in the end of the academy days at the 18th Market Street, he's painting mural paintings all over Florida. Worked with an architect and when they open a shopping center while he does a big 60 foot long mural with all of the Aztec team or something of that nature.

Francis Cane, great friend of MacLean's who has he own advertising agency in San Francisco. Well, these boys are in the war and came back and have made good. And Frank Della Dana who was a local teacher and an excellent painter. [inaudible] [0:13:51] Stewart, local teacher and has painted murals. And Milford Lee who specialized – he's an architect and specialized in early American. He worked on some of those things with restoring the Whitehouse, you know, moving it back in the old soft walls.

Some of these artists painted murals during the WPA days. And I painted Scenery in several summers at the Arden Theatre.

Interviewer: Tell us about the WPA project about how long it was and duration and kind of things that were done under the WPA or was it called Artist Project? What was it?

Mr. Berndt: Works for project administration.

Interviewer: But what was the artist's part of it called or it didn't have a name?

Mr. Berndt: Well, they have a mural [inaudible] [0:14:42] project that were employed artist. And some of our students in the school went up there and got jobs, painting murals and MacLean was one of them.

Interviewer: What were these years in the late '30s was that?

Mr. Berndt: Yeah. I think around...
...No, in 1934 around in there. It was before we went to the art center at Bancroft Poker [phonetic] [0:15:07].

So Edward Grant was in charge of the mural project and Walter Pyle was his assistant. And if anyone could raise the money for the materials for a public building, for a school or a hospital and so on. Well, the WPA would supply the artists and they paid the artists but all of the school would have to pay WPA for the materials.

Interviewer: Were many Delaware artists able to become employed in this way?

Mr. Berndt: Well, that’s five or six or seven [inaudible] [0:15:44]. And yes, you could them added [inaudible] [0:15:50] but it was great to paint the murals with not a whole lot of pressure on you. And they did a good job. They have some – and they painted one down in Smyrna. And the MacLean's and John Moll painted once in the Forest Industrial School around the dining room there big long things.

And this WPA project was headed up by Miss. Jane Aikman who was kind of an historian and a history student. And...

Interviewer: Was she in the library, at the Wilmington Library?

Mr. Berndt: She may have started there but she became the head of this project and they had an Index of Design Department. Now, that was to take something from the old town hall like a baby carriage or a uniform or something like that that has historical business. And it would be photographed and then it would be rendered in full color. And some of the boys spent three weeks on one of these renderings and it would look better than the photograph because it could get almost the three dimensional deflector.

The best one of those employed there at his work was Gordon Salter who is sent to work but went in to museum floor for some years.

Interviewer: Is that S-A-L-T-E-R?

Mr. Berndt: S-A-L-T-E-R, yes. And he went on to the school in New York City and went abroad for a short time but he was from in Luis, Delaware. And they had an architectural project. At the war architect ion believed there was not much building gone on, they went to this project and they were busy working on historical buildings. They measured the old town hall from every inch and try to find out where additions have been made. And the New Castle Court House was I think a big project for them. And when the
Court House in recent years they knocked all the plaster off the outside and came down to the original brick. And it took the inside and found the original pink color and made it in to a new state museum. While all this old we'll say, observations of that time which were very thorough helped them to restore this building to its present day which is supposedly the way the reason it was.

They had a theatre project. Before this time they were bridal houses here in Wilmington and all have made and orchestra and the play house set an orchestra. Well, they had a band and WPA had a band. And to out to work musicians and out of work actors and there I saw so many actors around.

When I went up there I thought I was going to get a job – wanted a job to help paint murals because the art school was paying very little. And I thought maybe a couple of days a week. When I got there, there were no more murals to paint. And they gave me a job of painting Scenery for the theatre who was run by Ed Mores and Bob Snitcher [phonetic] [0:19:19], who also run the Arden Summer Theatre in the summer for the previous half a dozen years, so.

Interviewer: Was that one theatre dry service there?

Mr. Berndt: They had their own writers. The historical thing is that they tried like Henry Hudson coming up from Delaware River and so on. And I played Henry Hudson with the big head on. And I think the only line I had was boy hand me my telescope.

[Laughter]

Interviewer: You have tried to repeat that for the Bison Daniel?

Mr. Berndt: No. There was some of those men – Higgins, what's his name? Tony Higgins, he was a writer.

[0:20:00]

And the cost in the segment had charges this whole thing and then they finally put a book out on New Castle through those efforts. And the historical end was pretty well done by Mr. Higgins and Miss. Aikman.

Interviewer: It really was a same bed for Delaware artists and writers.
Mr. Berndt: It was the same bed. We didn't have enough White artists. I mean, we didn't have enough Black artists until Edward Loper came in. As a beginning student he had done little work in high school but never had any formal training. And he barely got a training by some of those men like Grant and Taylor who he worked with in the art project in WPA. That was the beginning of Loper's basic training because he was with some artist who had some previous training.

Interviewer: So what did he do?

Mr. Berndt: Well, Loper begun and painting and he's instructors became his fellow workers. And he painted local landscapes. He has a good sense of design and in the last 25 years he's on his living doing. And he went to the Barns Foundation and studied and he's well-thought of teacher. And still teaches at the art center and around in some WMCAs and so on.

Interviewer: What about the Howard Pyle School and the kind of training that came from Schoonover and some of the people how continued on the Delaware art scene or who still are continuing? For example of course you need to talk about Wyeth's and the Wyeth's influence in this area.

Mr. Berndt: Well, you see that Howard Pyle had a school in Wilmington at Franklin Street, which later became [inaudible] studio and now belongs to the Studio Girl. It's a women's group of about 50 artists who are members. And they uses his studio the whole classes and lectures and make pictures. And Mr. Pyle is called like the Father of American Illustration because he was so busy. He was like Norman Rockwell booked up for two years ahead.

So N.C. Wyeth was one of his prior students. And he went to Chadds Ford to live and he married a local girl. And going to raise his children, four children at Chadds Ford. Well, he came to Hardcastle to buy an artist materials. And he would buy a case of Lenin canvas I am told. Belgian mini canvas it was at least 12 rolls in a case and brushes by the handful because he was prolific. He like to paint on a better 30 by 40 inch of canvas for [inaudible] it was going to reduced maybe to 5 by 6 inches or something like that.

And his some Andrew was being trained as an artist. And the most interesting young man came to Hardcastle with his father. And when we took over Hardcastle 30 years ago, Mr. Cane who was here for 60 years in this room was old friends because he's done such nice work for him over the years. And Andy never came in the [inaudible] to Mr. Cane who might remember this from being a young boy.
Well, Andrew, you know, painted a lot of water colors and he was got so good, it look like he was such good to me as Winslow Homer. He had his first one man show up here on Shipley Street, in the Boland book store which was up in the 900 block on Shipley Street. And Mr. Boland and the recent conversation with him he said, did I remembered it and I said, yes, sir, I remember it. And he says, well, we had one – we sent out some invitations and we had one [inaudible] I think that offer to the guess. And he says hardly anybody came, the show was a flap, never saw one picture during the whole show. Now...

Interviewer: Why when N.C. Wyeth have had such a reputation in Wilmington nobody...

Mr. Berndt: N.C., I'm talking about Andrew now.

Interviewer: But why would no one come to his son's first show?

Mr. Berndt: Well, he was young and unknown. I mean, but he's doing top professional work when he was about 16 to 17 and bought his own car and so on.

[0:25:00]

And anyway around the time he got married he wasn't that well-known, he was just beginning. And the next show he has was in New York City at Macbeth Gallery who handle only American work, young American artist who were so called coming artist. And his whole show was a sellout. And this was back in depression. Now, I'm talking early depression.

And his show was a sellout and I've heard since that the gallery bought most of them because they knew he was a comer. And then they would save his pictures and when he had his next show or other people come in during the year when the show was none, they would have his work over there.

And he was Macbeth until Macbeth quit and then he went to [inaudible] gallery. And they really put him on the map at a first class publicity always at sympathetic stuff for all the school children in Texas and putting necklace and time just to buy this $80,000 picture. And then Macbeth comes out with the little node in the time magazine if Mr. Wyeth had known that this was going to be contributed to by so many school children down there that he felt little shame that he would take
the money. Not always publicity, you see just builds him up to be a lovely character which he really is but it's publicity.

Well, his sister Carolyn has continued to have students at their father's studio. And she continues to buy a little bit her supply at Hardcastle but she's not as prolific as Andy.

Interviewer: She does more sound birthing too, doesn't she?

Mr. Berndt: Yeah. So she's painting three or four pictures a year. And Andy paints every day, you know what I mean? And you got to turn out more than that.

Interviewer: Is he still painting at the old studio?

Mr. Berndt: Well, the old studio is closed to the Wyeth home there. Dr. Andy builds a house just behind it. And it was a school at one time and when his sister and Henriette married Peter Hurd where they lived in that school house and used it as a studio.

Interviewer: How did Peter Hurd happen to come to Chadds Ford?

Mr. Berndt: Well, Peter Hurd met his Mr. Hurd at the Pennsylvania academy. Henriette Wyeth is an excellent painter of portraits. She has painted a lot of local portraits. She was very good with the children and that sort of thing.

And, you know, when a family, when a well to do family gets a couple of good portraits in their family, well, then they tell their friends and the first thing you know, you got a little circle of things going. And you're sort of in demand.

Well, Henriette was — her father finally sends her to Pennsylvania academy in Philadelphia. And there she met Peter Hurd, who was from New Mexico, and they married and they had children since and so on. And they come back in Wilmington once in awhile. And I think...

Interviewer: They lived in the west, didn't they?

Mr. Berndt: Well, yes, in Russell, New Mexico. We have sent things to them like when Mrs. Wyeth Sr. died a few years ago, we sent some of the personal paintings of the little girls and so on that created them and send them down to New Mexico.
And I went out there and there were a lot of Peter Hurd's things there, up over a second floor of a barn. And it looked like they were maybe high school studies but there were a lot of studies in New Mexican type of men with some barrels on this kind of thing. And Mr. Hurd had been up and she'd clean the house and there was this pilot paintings to be burned. She didn't want them to go out. Well, that's one of the ways that Wyeth have kept up the quality. They only left the good ones out. And there's a lot of bad ones that they do or [inaudible] [0:29:16] they're not proud off and they don't let them go out. And that's why that quality has remained top notch.

Andy used to bring back 150 water colors from me, bring them into us and have mounted them. And then we did out you know what I mean? He might give a few way defense but that takes long past. I have one that he gave to me and Mr. Cane who work here that long, I gave it to him.

And I don't think my work of art is one of his best. But I love it with some picture of [inaudible] [0:29:55] head quarters at Chadds Ford. And...

[0:30:00]

Interviewer: What about Jamie? Did he work in with his grandfather's studio? Or Piece of...

Mr. Berndt: Well, Jamie too did not go to public school. He studied in with the correspondence school. I forget the name of the service but he had to go to school in the morning and then he painted the whole afternoon.

Interviewer: As a young child?

Mr. Berndt: As a young man, yes. And so, Jamie's schooling – anyway he's a very intelligent young man.

Interviewer: But he learned under his father in the studio?

Mr. Berndt: Oh, he learned under his father and he was kept on it. And when he was about 18, Andy Wyeth came in here with Peter Hurd. And they were laughing to each other and I said, "What's the joke?" He said, "Well, we're just going to have to drown him." He knows everything right now. That was about age 18.

Well, Jamie hasn't continued too much with water color, he's gone into oil painting but his father is a water color painting. And Jamie can do a
beautiful water color but maybe he'll come back to it but that's the way you distinguish the two works now.

Interviewer: Well, is he working in New York now, Jamie Wyeth or just showing in New York?

Mr. Berndt: Well, Jamie Wyeth has married to a girl lived about here in Brandywine around Coaches [phonetic] [0:31:29] Bridge or something like that. And he was very much interested in the horses. Mrs. Wyeth has a couple of very fine horses.

Interviewer: Is she at DuPont?

Mr. Berndt: Yes. And...

Interviewer: Which one – which family have DuPont was sharing?

Mr. Berndt: Well, I can't describe it. I mean, I don't know the details. But Jamie goes to New York frequently and has a summer home and studio in Mohegan Island that's 10 miles off the coast of Maine.

Interviewer: Is that near where his father did his work with Christina painting? Where is that in Maine?

Mr. Berndt: Well, it's up near Port Clyde, Maine, where the Wyeth's had a family home. It's also near – what's the name of the museum? The Farnsworth Gallery which is [inaudible] [0:32:28] Port Clyde isn't it, around there? Farnsworth Gallery.

Now, as far as Farnsworth Gallery on it's an awful lot of Andy Wyeth's work. And one of the most interesting thing is that I can think of right now is that this [inaudible] [0:32:44] museum in New York is going to have a big one man show of Andy Wyeth this September I heard. I haven't seen it in the paper yet but we're into September.

Interviewer: By Centennial.

Mr. Berndt: And since the cities at this time have been so hard pressed for finances, they're cutting down on museums hours and things like that. But there's a man who's a movie producer and owns a lot of real estate in New York who has became one of Andrew's – well, he owns 30 of Andy Wyeth's work, his name Mr. Levin.
And there's a lot of work that's never been seen around Wilmington that will be in the show. And Mr. Levin is going to put the entire bill for this Wyeth show that's coming in the [inaudible] [0:33:35]. And he is the man that bought the Christina world house and fixed it up in his museum and then the town people didn't like it because of the tourist. And that's the Mr. Levin I'm talking about.

Interviewer: Did they stop the museum then? Was it successfully stopped?

Mr. Berndt: Well, they threat it to move it down – Mr. Levin threatened to move it down in New Jersey but everything was calm down and it's still worried.

Interviewer: What has Jamie Wyeth painting right now, do you know? The thing I noticed that the Brandywine River Museum was his black jacketed motor cycle man which made it the subject was so different from anything his father had ever done. I was wondering if he still doing work in temporary stopped or not?

Mr. Berndt: Well, I supposed he's trying to lead himself down put the lanes in his father because Andrew goes out in the woods and paints a real dramatic landscape put some lot of realism in it. And then nature and he says his favorite time in the year to paint is in February when things are brown and mud and so on.

[0:35:00]

And so, he also likes to have the idea that he works with earth colors instead of [inaudible] [0:35:06] and that sort of thing because he hope that his work is going to last longer because the cadmiums and other colors are going to fade. Well, Andy is thinking and has always tried to do things that would last.

Interviewer: Uh huh. And doesn't he have – does he or does he not have a special tempera mixture?

Mr. Berndt: Nothing, nothing is special that I know of, it's the yellow of the egg mix with the dry color and you grind it up every day. And the average artist does not want to get involved in that, it's just too much trouble.

[Cross talk]

Well, many of his finest pictures a larger, more ambitious pictures that bring the most money are done in the egg tempera on a [inaudible] [0:35:47] board. It's a piece of mason egg coated with a gesso quite a few
times and it looks like a piece of plaster. And he works on it with a water
color technique because the medium is water with the white of the egg
and...

Interviewer: And then it's quicker than the oil on canvas too? He has to work quicker
doesn't he? Faster with the water color technique?

Mr. Berndt: Well, I don't know if it's quicker. But he has a wonderful eye. I mean, he's
– you can put a magnifying glass on someone and you hardly believe that
they don't almost makes you [inaudible] [0:36:14].

We had a painting here where we were framing of the hound dog was in
an old oil drum outside the Mill. And it was a close up of the dog. And
while it was here I went over and put a magnifying glass on that dog's
eye. And it really gave me the shivers because I felt like I was looking into
the dog's eye. Super realistic in that time but still with the brilliance.

Most artists can over do it. I mean, they can kill a piece of work. But Andy
seemed to have a spark, even on a detailed piece of work.

Interviewer: Interesting that he could keep his young son the same way his father kept
him at the shop constantly learning?

Mr. Berndt: Well, you see the Wyeth name was big when Jamie became a young
man. And even N.C. Wyeth's painting who were illustration, especially
American Scene illustrations, they were for sale and then he died I guess
for about $1,000 a piece. Now, they're $15,000.

And so, the Wyeth name has build up this thing and Andrew gets high
prices for his work before. They say he's one of the highest paid living
American artists but he's good.

Interviewer: Probably, yeah.

Mr. Berndt: He's good. I mean, there's nobody in his class. I mean...

Interviewer: What about this [inaudible] [0:37:49] over illustrations? For example
how would you compare them with the N.C. Wyeth work, in terms of
technique or quality?

Mr. Berndt: Well, when you look into things, Schoonover was a good painter and
studied with Mr. Pyle for eight years and so to Mr. Wyeth. But the end of
those eight years, you know, they went to – they were getting
permissions. They were doing some covers for [inaudible] [0:38:21]
magazines and so on. And they were meetings through Mr. Pyle good context of art editors and book writers and so on. And you see when we'll say when N.C. Wyeth was doing yearly, what was the name? Margaret [inaudible] [0:38:40]. He would come to his house and they would talk over to just what particular point would be the most interesting to make a picture of to make this book of Scene.

And it's gone over, Wyeth was successful painter. He had double paid the spreads and the ladies own journal and doing the First World War period. And then they're known for a type of thing like Schoonover was known for his North Witch Mountain [phonetic] [0:39:13]. And he would took a trip to Madison Bay at one point, when he was a young man and brought back Indian artifacts and the canoe and so on in his studio. And then a lot of atmosphere and he became known as the specialist in the Canadian Mountain in [inaudible] [0:39:30].

Interviewer: What about his teaching career of Wilmington or local artist?

Mr. Berndt: His teaching career?

Interviewer: Of Schoonover.

Mr. Berndt: Well, I remember Mr. Schoonover this way. He could tell a story and a tale and he would look at your picture and if he saw house there on the side of a hill and it had stone fire place and chimney that you could see.

[0:40:01]

He could talk about the smell of bacon in the inside and there was this smoke coming up from the chimney make you feel like you’re there. He was a great spinner of tales. Now, some of us got tired of doing pictures of that little house with the chimney.

And at one day he sat down at my chair while I was sitting in the custom auto flash as a student. And he picked up my palette and he picked up a brush and I had been painting pretty well under this picture. He picked up the brush and put in the paint and he put one stroke on my picture. And he says, "There nobody but a genius could have done that." Well, I never quite understood Mr. Schoonover’s very sincerely. I mean, and my father said, "You got two good teachers down there, if you can sell pictures like Schoonover and paint him like Hoskins, you got to make..."

[Laughter]
Interviewer: What about Gayle Hoskins as you remember him and his work?

Mr. Berndt: Well, Gayle was excellent. Gayle was a very loved by all the students. And he of course timed in many thing to him. And we had this class going three days a week in the last model and Gayle would arrived well, say on Thursday when it had a couple of days at the work and then he would go around and criticized. But good lord the class was from 9:00 to 12:00 and Gayle might arrived there a quarter after 11:00 but he stayed until 1:00 or 2:00 and he gathered his students around him and they would get a terrific lesson. But you had to take the man as he was. I mean...

Interviewer: Did he live right in Wilmington then?

Mr. Berndt: Oh, yes, he lived many years in Wilmington. And he became interested in his later life in the Drama League. He was the president of it and when they were at 18th Market over the Old Mill, he was going strong there and he spent many days down there with a great detail. They put on George Arlosos [phonetic] [0:42:12] – what is that very famous picture thing?

Interviewer: Victory of Virginia [phonetic] [0:42:18]?

Mr. Berndt: No, George Arlosos [phonetic] [0:42:21] was an actor wasn't he?

Interviewer: No.

Mr. Berndt: Scenery, they had a waterfall which was like four or five sheets tight to get – sound together, one ruler. And if somebody had to be up top rolling this thing someone does say it looked like the waterfall. In 20 changes in of Scenery in one show, and little bears and all of the stuff you wouldn't believe it, they all had to be custom and letters had to be made. And it was really terrific the amount of energy it took. I wondered when Gayle had time to do his illustrations.

Interviewer: Well, now what did he will illustrate for?

Mr. Berndt: Oh, he illustrated a lot of western stories. That was his 40th, the Saddles and the Guns that came from the west, he came from Indiana. And he was a cowboy at one time where [inaudible] [0:43:09].

Interviewer: How did he come to Wilmington? How did he happen to come?

Mr. Berndt: He came to Wilmington to study with Mr. Pyle. He went to Chicago worked in a department store there. I think it was Marshal Pills...
He was doing some display work in the windows; I suppose he's an assistant. And he was going to the Chicago Art Institute where he's studying under Evander Paul [phonetic] [0:43:28] who was a good – an academy man. Then he came on to Wilmington, he want to get in to illustration. And he did a lot of good western illustration.

Interviewer: And also some Delaware his traded didn't he?

Mr. Berndt: Well, his several painting throughout University of Delaware that he did there, fairly recent before he died.

Interviewer: When did he die?

Mr. Berndt: Well, I guess he's been dead almost 10 years. Mrs. Hoskins still lives in the old home. I still has some of his paintings for sale.

Interviewer: Where does she live?

Mr. Berndt: She lives 16th, 25 Rodney Street. Right across from where Schoonover and [inaudible] [0:44:14] had studios here.

Interviewer: Why does the -- they'll coming Wilmington mayor for art do you see? Do you see a tradition coming still maintaining itself in Wilmington now?

Mr. Berndt: Well, when you hear a people from other vicinities talked about what sells in Wilmington? I Varsey [phonetic] [0:44:44] a young student who's, you know, I had maybe had one year at art school or something like that. And he wants to earn some money, he'd better go out and paint some of the local scene because I've known artists from Wilmington who have gone abroad and brought back very nice water color of Florence, Italy but it didn't sell.

[0:45:04]

They want [inaudible] [0:45:05] in nova and this area is full of good painting subject matter. They got hills and valleys. And we've got flat beach land and pine woods and what do you call it? Zipper swamps and everything else.

Interviewer: And what are – your paintings have been local and landscape, how would you characterize your own work?

Mr. Berndt: Well, I'm a landscape painter. And...
Interviewer: What are some of your favorite subjects for painting locally?

Mr. Berndt: Yeah. Well...

Interviewer: Are you still continuing to paint now, Mr. Berndt?

Mr. Berndt: Oh, yes. But I've entered a business of restoring pictures now. And it's taking considerable time. But some I used to had in the evening on my day off I plan I've got to work on the customer's paintings which is a necessary part of the store's activities.

But I've served on a lot of committees and I've spent many times hanging exhibitions. And I've tried over the years to develop art interest in the community. I helped start the close line fair in the spring in the Brandywine festival in the fall.

I've gathered Brandywine paintings for the opening of the [inaudible] museum and helped it found the religious show. I'm a historian; I'm the historian of the Sons of the Revolution. I belong to most Arts Societies; I've painted many historical paintings of Henry Clay, New Castle in Wilmington, even Delaware, including two recently of 1776 as a bicentenial effort. And I was honored as artist of the year by the Brandywine festival last year, with a painting on display of the Delaware troops crossing the Brandywine going to join in Washington. Now, it's about it.

Interviewer: What about your early influences? You said that your mother is – your name was – your mother's maiden name was Taylor and her father had worked as a painter for Pullman [phonetic] Company?

Mr. Berndt: Yes. The Pullman [phonetic] company was big in Wilmington and employed a lot of men. They did a lot of private cars like the days of campaigning for the past presidents, they always had the private cars which are very beautifully decorated and then some millionaires would have their own private car when they would go in traveling throughout the country.

And I don't have any artist in the family background, except his father before him was a coach painter. And to be a coach painter back in the 1830 you had to be apprentice for seven years and at that time they give you $100 dollars and that was it. You live with the family.

Well, anyway, my family came through Philadelphia some few of them were Quakers but...
Interviewer: Were you related to the Bayard's?

Mr. Berndt: No, I'm not related to Bayard's but my grandfather was appointed the post master under the McKinley was the president. And this Tom Bayard was the outstanding Delawarean who was the secretary of state in United States. And he became Ambassador to England. And he was an outstanding Delawarean. And there's a lots of young men around Delaware who were named by their parents the name Bayard as their first name. And that's how I got mine. And the Taylor has nothing to do with the [inaudible] Bayard-Taylor kind of square. But – well, I don't know. You asked me questions.

Interviewer: Well, the Wilmington Art Scene now, you said you would tell young painters to paint local subjects, well, what about the revival of the four-year school?

Mr. Berndt: You see the...

Interviewer: You think there's any help for Wilmington revival of what we need in art school?

Mr. Berndt: Oh, no, no.

Interviewer: Is the University of Delaware taking up some of that?

Mr. Berndt: Yes. The university is – when we had art school, we were not accredited. And that was the beginning of the downfall of our present arts – of our art school because when we had some people come in – I'm on the Board of Directors who wanted to get this art school accredited. And there wasn't one teacher in the whole lot of us who were college graduates, who could get in to this credit system. And you see it why us couldn't teach in the kindergarten to get an – because it wasn't accredited. Andy Wyeth couldn't.

I mean, this is – we went to a professional art school where this was actually necessary.

Interviewer: And it's not today.

Mr. Berndt: Well, I don't know if it's necessary but you see when you got out of art school you took your work around to the art to introduce and they were
judging you and they would give you a job or not. You didn't walk in with a diploma. They don't want to see a diploma.

Interviewer: They want to see the art?

Mr. Berndt: Oh, of course. So a lot of men who got in the door with not much training but a great facility to do art work.

Interviewer: Well, does Andy Wyeth do any teaching?

Mr. Berndt: No. Well, he is kind enough. And I have known of him – I have a dozen of young men who were on the way and so on. And they've requested some bit of his time to have him look at their work and he's done it. And in this way he can judge what do you think their capabilities are by looking at the work. And point out of avenues of future development that they should get into to improve their work. And I've known of half a dozen cases of that. Well, I didn't see why I did that too.

Interviewer: You mentioned that Mrs. Mores Whiteside was the director of the Wilmington Academy of Art when it begun. But was she the only founder of the school?

Mr. Berndt: Well, it's got to be Hoskins I see had a few classes going on at some group out here in the studio at 1616 Rodney. They called it the Phoenix Art Institute and it was founded with Charlie Ryan that was the secretary. And they charged a little tuition and they had art critics and classes there not the full time art school but the maybe once every three weeks or something.

Well, that kind of dwindled this Mr. Phoenix who run this Phoenix Art School and he pulled out a picture and some students still wanted to come and so on. And so, Mrs. Whiteside was a painter, a fine arts painter. She studied in the Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts under Cecilia Bowe, and Chase and her name was Stadelman. And she came from Dover, her sister I think is still in New Castle.

And she married Morris Whiteside, the architect at the local architectural firm. And in 1931 when we had the art school, George Whiteside who is now a present member of the Whiteside carbonyl and nickel firm, George is there, taking his father's place in that firm at local institution.

And they're very successful. And when you look around and see what building is going on and who's doing it, well, it's of course for an architect they're office to be busy in these days but they are busy. One of the few,
Blueprint Company told me that. You can tell who's doing the building by the Blueprint Company.

Interviewer: Uh huh. Well, and that – so it was very exciting event?

Mr. Berndt: So Mrs. Whiteside had a couple of good friends that she have like Mrs. Wheelright, Mores Coleman to find Stellar and she was a multi-millionaire. He lived on a home [inaudible] [0:53:43] at Pennsylvania avenue, Greenhill which like a farm house, a former farm house but the Wheelright had developed it. So they had an art gallery in the center of this place but it still look a farm house like, it doesn't look like a terrific matching. But it was labyrinth anterior and a lot of fine furniture and Mrs. Wheelright had about four daughters and beautiful gardens and then, of course had gardeners and the studio.

And Mrs. Wheelright and Mrs. Whiteside used to go around this...

Interviewer: She was Mrs. Needstien [phonetic] [0:54:15]? Wasn't she Mrs. Needs at the time of the art – Mrs. Howell [inaudible] [0:54:21]?

Mr. Berndt: Yes. Mrs. Wheelright was Mrs. Holiday Meads, Meads [phonetic] [0:54:28] dropped out somehow and she married to Wheelright, Robby Wheelright. He was a teacher in Landscape Architecture in the University of Pennsylvania. And they've beautiful grounds and Mrs. Wheelright, when they build the valley gardens which out near the [inaudible] [0:54:44], they had a home their [inaudible] [0:54:50] had a home.

And the gardens where the old family gardens where in the valley that is covered over the water...

[0:55:00]

...they brought all those daffodils, the hillside is filled with daffodils up and planted them and they gave this to the city, Valley Garden. This nature study center that's out to near Rockland belong to the Wheelright's they gave it to the stage of the city, I forget who's running it now.

And they – not only that they gave it, they left them some money to help run it. [inaudible] [0:55:23] Britney was the secretary of Mrs. Wheelright. And she was Mrs. Whiteside's good friend. And they were always doing things and Mrs. Wheelright was putting the bell like when they had a show of this tube and glass at the old Wilmington Society of Fine Arts, Exhibition Gallery in the second floor of the library, they – it cost them a
lot of money to build the mechanical things to display these things on because it had round glass with lights coming through and you just the beautiful light on the top edge of this goblet.

And Mrs. Wheelright funded the bill for many shows like that. And Mrs. Wheelright funded a lot of bills over the years for art.

Interviewer: Did she put the original bill to start the Wilmington Academy of Fine Arts?

Mr. Berndt: Well, she may have probably encouraged her friend and said she would help financed it. But Mrs. Whiteside was an unusual woman that she held Schoonover and Hoskins together. Separately, there was a fight going on. But she was the only one that ever came along to get these two men in position. So she was a great influence one of the top person that...

Interviewer: What are the differences between the Hoskins and Schoonover?

Mr. Berndt: Well, that gets into character assassination and I just don’t think I had preferred to do that. I know that the students enjoyed Mr. Hoskins so much more than to Schoonover, especially after school. Nobody have ever visited – well, I shouldn’t say nobody to Schoonover but they always looked up Hoskins when they came back because he was such fun and had a good time with them.

It was that way. I've heard lots of tales by people that know him, back in Mr. Howard Pyle when he had those students. Schoonover had a custom; he wouldn't let you have it. He'd rented to you. He was a good businessman.

[Laughter]

Interviewer: Oh, God.

Mr. Berndt: Edward tales of Harvey Dunn, taking in my word I’m just pumping him down in the bushes and they were even the fellow students.

Interviewer: What kind of work are you now doing? And about how much time can you spent on your paintings?

Mr. Berndt: Well, I only paint on my day off and on a vacation. But I’ll go out and get a descent start on the painting and it takes about three hours. And then if it needs a lot more detail and the picture has some size, well, I have to go back and work on it the second time. And if I really wanted to do a real
good job, I might go back the third time. But I sort of feel by that time you're getting three pictures into this thing.

And a quite interesting well-done sketch is suitable to me in most cases because you get the time of the day and the time of the season. And if you're painting in the fall and you don't get back till the next week, while you got to compromise here. You got to remember as it was because some of the leaves will be off and the colors have changed.

But I go enjoy painting outdoors. And I naturally I don't go away very far from here. So I'm sketching and do about – I don't know, about 15 or 20 pictures a year. And some of those are big compositions of these historical scenes which I have always been interested in and they had done it in the studio.

Perhaps I'll use the sketch to give me the time and the way the shadows are and so on at something because some of these sketches are more useful to me than they are a sales pieces because they have some studies of how does the light goes and so on in the certain time of the year.

Well, my business of art supplies and framing has kept me in touch with the local artist and many businesses, banks and corporations seemed to prefer old Scenes of this...