

Muralist Eric J Bransby – Interview Transcript

Interviewer: Glenda L. Carne, PhD

Interviewee: Dr. Eric J. Bransby

Interview Setting: The interview was conducted in the home of Dr. Eric J. Bransby, American Muralist. We were in his living room. The interview took place on Thursday, April 12, 2018, from 10:30 am – 1:30 pm.

Dr. Bransby is 101 years old. He will 102 years old in late October, 2018.

Affiliation with interviewee: Interview was conducted at the request of Dr. John Charlot of the Jean Charlot Foundation and the University of Hawaii. Dr. Glenda Carne is STEM Transfer/Case Manager at New Mexico State University Carlsbad and former Anthropology Faculty Member at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs.

(Start of Interview)

BRANSBY: We could go out there if you are going to be warmer there. Do you mean before I took this position or in this position?

CARNE: I'm fine. Are you comfortable, Michelle?

BRANSBY: So, anyway. We, I had been studying with Benton before the Way. We were at the Kansas City Art Institute under Benton. She said, Mary Ann said, you're eligible for the G.I. Bill. Where do you think you would like to go? Well, we both love Colorado because we were Midwesterners and she said when we came here, then I'm going to get off of, when she said where would you like to go and I said I'd like to find one of the best figurative persons in the country and that's when Colorado Springs, Boardman Robinson, who was a muralist...they were all muralists, and I had been on the WPA my senior year, and I painted my first mural on the WPA, we were all very tight with Tom Benton, and she had taught out here a couple of summers and she said she would love that, and so we headed out here and we went to work under Robinson at the Fine Arts Center. Anyway, after our first year her she said, art is a very precarious profession and we need to have a little place of our own. It's feast or famine, and when that happened, why she said, and my wife was a pretty determined woman, whatever she decided we would go an so we came out here and she said we need a place of our own. We came along the line of the Front Range and we found this place, and we persuaded her mother and father to come out. Her mother and father were in Oklahoma, retired. And, she said I'm sure you'd like to come out to Colorado. Why don't we get a place together and her Dad said find a place that has a stream on it, as though a stream came out of every gulley around. You had to get Fort Carson to approve of anybody living in this particular area and you had to have at least ten acres and that you did not run a business from here. Too Many Army towns, and so we found this place and we had no electricity for five months and I'd go into school and work with Robinson. Well Robinson had a stroke and Jean was recommended for the job here and came out here and he loved it here.

CARNE: Were you present when he had his interview?

BRANSBY: Let me turn these up. I'm turning the wrong way (adjusting his hearing aids). Okay.

CARNE: Do you want me to go get Valerie (Bransby's morning assistant)? Did you see him interview for the position: Did Jean Charlot have an open interview?

BRANSBY: Here? Well I think somebody was familiar with him in Georgia.

CARNE: Oh, yes.

BRANSBY: And, incidentally, I've had a show down there and they have several murals by Jean on Campus there anyway that was a connection. It was a personal contact. I guess when he came he just loved it here, but he bemoaned to me that he never did a mural.

CARNE: I know. It's the only place that he didn't do a mural.

BRANSBY: When I've seen, because he's done them all over the place, which I've seen. I've seen them down there because they are going to give me another show there too, I think. It's always fun to see the Charlot's (works) down there.

CARNE: Yes, I actually have a book in my library at home that shows those murals.

BRANSBY: I guess that's right. Yeah.

CARNE: So, he was recommended from someone. Would it have been the Tilley's, Lew Tilley?

BRANSBY: Yes. I think so. Lew Tilley was a Georgia native. He went to the University of Georgia. He took classes here.

CARNE: Yes. I know that they remained friends, in contact. I interviewed Martha Tilley. Oh, I don't know, maybe 15 years ago, and Lew was ill so Martha told me everything she could remember. Lew was still alive, but he was not able to be interviewed.

BRANSBY: Yes. That would have been a natural...

CARNE: Yes. Martha knew a lot about what was going on, too.

BRANSBY: I'm not sure whether she's still alive or not.

CARNE: I think she passed away. About...

BRANSBY: We went away to teach and go to Yale. Jean was responsible for it. and he felt. I did my Colorado College (CC) thesis in a mural at CC. That was my first conversation with Jean. Robinson was out, having been here for 30 years. and they messed around with his contract (not sure if he's meaning Robinson or Charlot here). Private organization not responsible to the State and so forth. So, anyway the first conversation I had with Jean was walking over from the Art Center to CC and Jean said to me he had so much of a backlash from the Robinson period and he said, you know Eric, I'm your teacher now. Robinson is ill and I've been invited to be in charge here. And he reminds me of... Oh, I've lost it. Anyway he END (IMG_0887.MOV)

BEGIN (IMG_0888.MOV) that was the first time that I had had any real contact with him (Charlot). That hadn't bothered me so much because I was doing most of my work on murals which was wonderful to have Jean come here. You know, one of those things in life you don't expect. Well anyway

in connection with a (inaudible cough) Jean would let you have it one way or another. He was a gentleman and extremely gentle.

CARNE: Brilliant. brilliant.

BRANSBY: Any way he came over to our work on the ceiling over there (Colorado College). I had no degree at that point. Art schools didn't give degrees. Prior to that at a little church school in Iowa, I had a year and a half of liberal arts, and I was going through the halls on CC campus and there was a Jewish Momma there from New York there, very forceful, trying to get the cure for tuberculosis. She saw me wandering in the hall and she dragged me by the ear and she said young man you are out of your mind. You've got seven and a half years in art school and you don't have address. Well there were two programs there. One was to provide CC with an art department and accept the G.I. Bill and the other was strictly professional. She said you're gonna (sic) come over her and take seven hours of American History and you've got a BA. Not a BFA, but a BA. I had all that art, and I said okay, I guess I didn't see any need for it. If I'd have to teach, I'd have to have it, the BA. Charlot comes in at that point because in order to get there.... There's a little black book on my table.

CARNE: Do you remember that black leather. Yes.

BRANSBY: If you'll get that I'll stay on track better. So, he looked at me, and he said, oh I had a student up there helping me, he said Eric, Ann is beginning to draw like you. You're a bone and joint man. You're off the scaffold. Thank you, very much. (Michelle brings him the leather day timer). And I am under care, but I am on my on property, and I have round-the-clock.

CARNE: Do you need me to turn the pages...today is the 12th. That's May, so we need to go to April, Okay five. There you go. All your notes. So you were talking about getting your BA with your History.

BRANSBY: Hands Carne the notebook. Why don't you keep me on track?

CARNE: Sure. I'd be happy to do that.

BRANSBY: Make sure we've covered the whole page. So anyway, then CC offered me. They don't give a graduate degree. They didn't have Master's. I thought to myself, being quite naive, well if they're handing them out, I'll take one! Laughing!

CARNE: That's what I would have done. Laughing!

BRANSBY: Of course, that made me eligible, eventually, for Yale, and Jean went there to check on his book, the Mexican Mural Renaissance, and Jean was a real linguist.

CARNE: He mastered as many (at least) as six languages.

BRANSBY: Polynesian.

CARNE: And Nahuatl, a native Mexican Language. And he wrote books about them when he was in Mexico.

BRANSBY: Very Urbane.

CARNE: Incredible.

BRANSBY: We were lucky to get him. We fought hard, the students did, to try to retain him. I was working on a mural at Saint Francis Hospital here, and he would come out here (the house) and we would have “bake outs.”

CARNE: Cookouts?

BRANSBY: And Jean would say, have you ever eaten dog? Laughing. In Mexico that’s part of the fare. Anyway, I thought Hawaii was a perfect choice, but you know, Zohmah thought they were minorities.

CARNE: In Hawaii?

BRANSBY: Yes. Japanese, (mostly) I guess, and lots of people. She was worried about the education of here children in that sense.

CARNE: So they really liked it here? They really liked Colorado Springs, the family.

BRANSBY: Oh, they loved it, and they couldn’t explain...

CARNE: I think even today, it is a very, very sensitive time. It was for Zohmah before she died, and it was for Dr. Charlot, John, his son, because they really felt, wanted to make a life here.

BRANSBY: Yes.

CARNE: And were forced out. They almost bought a house. They were this close (hand gesture) to purchasing a house, and...

BRANSBY: I guess they were just renting the one on Crescent Circle.

CARNE: Yes. On Boulder Crescent. And you know, I went to that house and I saw the little fresco that he painted and I photographed it and wrote about it, and sent photos to the collection, to Hawaii, so they would have the photos. But John, Dr. Charlot, helped me find that fresco and that was over 20 years ago.

BRANSBY: Oh, he did? That was marvelous.

CARNE: Yes. I walked around and put notes in mail boxes.

BRANSBY: Beg your pardon?

CARNE: I put notes in peoples' mailboxes. Do you have a painting on your wall? Laughing.

BRANSBY: Wonderful

CARNE: Now the house is gone. The woman who it, Helen Michaelson, she donated three houses to the City and the City moved them and used it for park space. So now the mural that was in the house is supposedly in the Fine Arts Center in the basement, I hope, we hope, laughing.

BRANSBY: What Benton said was a museum is a mortuary for art.

CARNE: Laughing.

BRANSBY: He had an ulterior motive for that. He had a nude that he painted, a very spectacular one, of Persephone and the old man peaking around the bushes. They are old Missourians and he was trying to sell that mural to Billie ????? in New York. Persephone belongs in the biggest and best night club in New York. I'll get back on topic here.

CARNE: So, at Saint Francis Hospital you painted "Faces of the Saints?"

BRANSBY: Yes. There's the book which he loaned me so that I would have an accurate, contemporary drawing of Saint Francis, he went to Saint Mary's. He was very devout, and actually tried to bring the Pope up to date to Modern Art. Jean was so open to other art forms.

CARNE: Do you believe that The Fine Arts Center, his sort of open- mindedness about different cultures and religions worked against him at The Fine Arts Center at that time.

BRANSBY: I think so. You know The Fine Arts Center, was largely supported by a number of people from the Broadmoor.

CARNE: Julie Penrose?

BRANSBY: Lew told me that he was over there at some affair at the Charlot house and they had invited Mrs. Penrose to come to the affair and Lew said you know he didn't cultivate the social trends here in Colorado Springs.

CARNE: No, he wouldn't have. And you know he also was very tuned in to people who were pretentious, he preferred not to feed that ego.

BRANSBY: Well that would be, he confided in me that this town gave him no opportunity to paint a mural.

CARNE: Do you know that he planned one? Have you seen, did you know? I have a photo of the cartoons. He had planned an outdoor mural. That was to be like a public art space, with Pikes Peak in the Background with all the Wagons moving west.

BRANSBY: Is that so?

CARNE: And all the animals, people, and the wagons, and of course because he had mastered the fresco, it would still be here.

BRANSBY: My experience says you have to fight, if no one is responsible then the whole thing is precarious.

CARNE: Right.

BRANSBY: Now Henry Adams felt, that um that he was interested in me, I told him to come over from the Nelson and watch us paint fresco underground, along the Missouri River and he, anyway, there's that problem and I had to go back about 23 years ago, they are trying to make a documentary, financial organizations like El Pomar and so forth had put money into it and we went back with Jay, who is a documentary person and I had to educate him, he could do it for financial organizations and non-profits, and we went back to Kansas City, Missouri, and we found one that was in trouble, and I'm straying here, and he saw hours and hours and I was beyond at that point of actively trying to. another

one and anyway he avoided that and Henry Adams, is, incidentally, he's very, Henry is educated enough, he's an art historian with two doctorates, one from Yale and one from Harvard.

CARNE: Doesn't get much better than that.

BRANSBY: He brought Benton to life and I think he might be a person who would be willing to write or correspond with John.

CARNE: You talked to John about a couple of weeks ago on the phone. Did you tell him that? Because, if not, I'll tell him, I'll mention that he should do that.

BRANSBY: If he wants any comments from the outside because Henry sees that whole period as active and we taught him a whole lot about mural making.

CARNE: Did you know, before Jean Charlot came to Colorado Springs were you aware that there were any problems at the Fine Arts Center before he came to Colorado?

BRANSBY: Oh yes. There were lots of problems.

CARNE: Lots of problems???

BRANSBY: Can you maybe mention a couple of those.

CARNE: Administrative type problems?

BRANSBY: Well the Bauhaus was beginning to move in and that was one reason that the Director of the Fine Arts Center decided that Jean didn't represent that period. Every art studio/art department was wanting a Bauhaus man. That is why Jean thought he said you needed this Bauhaus. He said that, who was it, who would have been here? They brought in a Bauhaus man, that's why they handled Jean, there was no money for retirement or anything. Nothing.

CARNE: Nothing. They just said "see ya."

BRANSBY: Yeah.

CARNE: I have a couple of questions from Dr. Charlot and he says that Sid Stallings met Jean Charlot in Mexico City prior to him being hired, John (Dr. Charlot) said Sid Stallings met with Charlot in Mexico City prior to hiring him and after Stallings death, I guess Dr. Charlot. After Stallings' death they auctioned off. He had quite a collection of Charlot's work. Do you know? Were you aware that he had quite a collection of Charlot's work?

BRANSBY: I guess I don't know what he knew. How old would John (Dr. Charlot) be?

CARNE: John is when he was here? Maybe nine or ten. He has very strong memories of Colorado Springs probably because of what happened and they were uprooted so quickly.

BRANSBY: Yeah Zohmah was.

CARNE: She was upset. In my working with John for over 20 years, he very much feels like there are gaps in Charlot's history about what happened at the Fine Art Center. He also wants to know how you felt about Jean Charlot as a teacher.

BRANSBY: By that time Robinson, he was like Moses, we did worship him, students, as you know get attached, and what he said to me was very necessary. He said, they did have that problem and Zohmah asked me if I could answer that question.

CARNE: Oh.

BRANSBY: We were in Honolulu on an elder hostel, and we went up to the big Island, up to the volcano, and we stayed up there and Peter was up there and he was writing a book on volcanology and he had a little Volkswagen from, what was the town?

CARNE: Hilo, Manoa?

BRANSBY: Yeah Manoa, yes. And we went up at night, after dark.

CARNE: Did you visit their home? Did you go to their home? That home is something special.

BRANSBY: Beautiful! We made a point of it that we would go to visit Zohmah in Honolulu. They have. You've been there so you know.

CARNE: No, I haven't. I only study. Someday I will go.

BRANSBY: I think he had a connection. Jean when he was here, with and at one point when I go through with my MA. Where do you go now? Jean had just been to Yale to check on his book and the Dean there, Dean Sawyer, asked me...I'm going to have to back off of that. Jean knew that he had gone to Yale and the Dean had just reorganized their program. Art schools all were in a revolution. The Dean asked Jean, while he was at Yale, would you look at my new graduate program. We're bringing Joseph Albert here. He said well he looked it over. Look you're giving all of our jobs to undergraduate Yalies, Jean said. And, the dean said, who do you advise? And, I was one of them. They brought in two from California.

CARNE: So, you attribute your being selected at Yale to Charlot.

BRANSBY: I got my MFA from Yale and my thesis was a mural in IL, which is still there and they were about to destroy the building and so I talked to them and Jay also, by then he was beginning to see the larger picture, having shot all this.

CARNE: This is your videographer. This is the photographer.

BRANSBY: Yes, he did the documentary.

CARNE: Do you know what Jay's last name is?

BRANSBY: Jay Kriss. He did a video in Colorado, PBS, on the dust bowl. Jay had some personal. We went back to IL. He went to look at it and to photograph it and he any way we got a call. There's a member of the Kriss family here in town. He died mysteriously, I don't know if it was suicide. Jay had mentioned he had mental periods. My alter ego. We got along beautifully.

CARNE: Do you know what they did with the mural at the Fine Art Center? John has in his notes here, what happened to the fresco done with students? He mentions, JC painted woman with cradle.

BRANSBY: Yes. Well they printed it. We had one of the three top printers here at The Fine Arts Center with Lawrence Barrett.

CARNE: I know what you're talking about. I own a copy. Was there a mural of that?

BRANSBY: No mural.

CARNE: Just the print?

BRANSBY: No. There could have at least been a small mural. I saw in the press they had found this little fresco stashed behind the refrigerator on the rear of a house.

CARNE: Yes. I saw that too. But I had photographed it years before that. Yes, I had quite a discussion with the people that said they found it. That is the one I found behind, like in a mud room off the kitchen. They had it in the Newspaper (Gazette Telegraph) they discovered this mural and I went, Excuse me? I photographed that mural several years ago and I called and brought that to their attention, and of course since I had worked with John, Dr. Charlot, he said what do you mean? You had already sent me a photo of that mural? I don't know, 3 x 5 feet.

BRANSBY: Size? Portable?

CARNE: No, it was on the wall, but small enough,

BRANSBY: Did they remove the wall?

CARNE: They did. They cut it out. Thank goodness they didn't just demolish it.

BRANSBY: In Honolulu Zohmah took us to see a mural that they had sawn off the wall in Honolulu.

CARNE: And you know, Martha Tilley had one. Martha Tilley had a mural.

BRANSBY: She had what?

CARNE: Martha Tilley had one in her home and it was on Celotex. Portable.

BRANSBY: Oh really? Yeah.

CARNE: It was pretty big, probably 5' x 7' and it was of a Mexican maid. We believe it was the Nahuatl linguist. I photographed that one probably ten years ago and it was just given, "Here, welcome to your new home. He was very generous.

BRANSBY: He was very generous.

CARNE: He also, Dr. Charlot, asked me to ask you about Mitch Wilder.

BRANSBY: You know what we finally came to say about Mitch Wilder? "Mitch, Mitch, the Son of a Bitch." (Laughing)

CARNE: Laughing. That's enough (Jokingly, scolding Bransby)! (Laughing) you don't have to say anything else.

BRANSBY: Still laughing.

CARNE: Dr. Charlot believe that Mitch Wilder had a lot to do with Jean Charlot being released.

BRANSBY: Furor. Is that so? Well Wilder was finally moved on. We caused such a...

CARNE: As students?

BRANSBY: We were all attached to Jean by then, as students. I was doing a mural for Saint Francis Hospital which I think is gone now, when he leant me the faces of the saints.

CARNE: Did you ever go to Hawaii to teach? Did Jean invite you?

BRANSBY: To Hawaii to teach? We came back here, the Eastern Climate. Our daughter was about five and she was in the hospital at Grace, New Haven, and we came back here for the summer, which we would do, and she, then we go down to Illinois and the first fall there, she became sick with asthma. It was in the 50s I guess and Jean got in touch with me and he told me that Zohmah wanted to leave Honolulu because she felt like a minority.

CARNE: The family is beloved in Hawaii.

BRANSBY: Jean worked for the East/West, and he brought out Chinese for supper. Anyway, we were staying with the...END 0888

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CARNE: The home is preserved, now.

BRANSBY: Does it have a mural?

CARNE: Oh yes, and he carved beams.

BRANSBY: Beautiful. We were a week with her and you could tell she was kind of at loose ends and she asked me if I'd do the driving, her German antique car. I don't know which way, for the first time ever, I found my mother's family name on a street sign in Hawaii.

CARNE: And you remember that, 70 years ago?

BRANSBY: Smiles. So, I looked in the telephone book and there were five Dowsetts. The name was originally French. Mother was, originally on her French side, her family were farmers in northern France and they were when Marie di Medici drove out the Huguenots, Protestants, and they fled to France in an open boat across the channel. And, ah there are five of them (Dowsetts in the phone listings) and I called one of the five and he said his ancestors came over with the Portuguese back in the 18th century.

CARNE: To Hawaii. Wow. It's a small world.

BRANSBY: We had no relatives. Both parents were English/Scotch-English, and we had no cousins. They came over on the year Lindbergh made the crossing.

CARNE: Where did you family originally settle?

BRANSBY: Dad was on a boat in 27. They settled in the south of England. The smallest distance on the channel about 25 miles.

CARNE: My family is from Cornwall, England, a place called Carne Beach.

BRANSBY: Oh really.

CARNE: Oh yes, my great-grandfather on my Dad's side.

BRANSBY: Oh, you were one generation removed. My family is from Pittsburgh, Dad was a minister.

CARNE: My family is from Hanover Township near Nanticoke.

BRANSBY: Oh really.

CARNE: Oh yes. They were miners.

BRANSBY: Oh yes, I guess on the coast there.

CARNE: They were mining in England and they were mining in Wales. The other side is Welsh. Welsh and Cornish.

BRANSBY: Oh, I see. For heaven's sake.

CARNE: They were all miners.

BRANSBY: Mother had a very hard time adjusting to America. She had a very difficult time. The Edwardian era in England. Her father was quite wealthy. We were going to inherit a house over there.

CARNE: Dr. Charlot wanted you to talk about Lawrence Barrett.

BRANSBY: Oh yes, Lawrence. He was one of the top three printers in the United States.

CARNE: Another was Lynton Kistler.

BRANSBY: Kistler? Also printed for Charlot. He got in touch with me, his dealer in New York and said I could take one thing from the collection, if I would take care of the renting for the transportation if I would take care of the storage. And, we came back, Fredericka was just skin and bones, we brought her here, somebody brought a horse here. It was an old clunker of a horse, and we saw her smile for the first time in months. The horse and she looked at each other and they were in love. Marianne said if that is the way it is then we need to have a horse. We got into horses.

CARNE: In the 50s 60s?

BRANSBY: I worked for the Air Force Academy, then.

CARNE: What did you do at the Air Force Academy?

BRANSBY: Well I went on Civil Service, I had to have an income and two or three days a month she would be in the hospital. I had to get, as they put it, a regular job.

CARNE: A real job.

BRANSBY: (Laughing) A real job.

CARNE: Because Art's not a REAL JOB.

BRANSBY: For me, it turned out to be a very good job because anything that had to do with Art they would assign me on it at the Academy, I designed a display, among others. They have a mural out there.

CARNE: I didn't know.

BRANSBY: Planetarium, it's in storage. I couldn't figure out why it was in storage.

CARNE: I walked by that planetarium every day. I did a consulting job there, and I walked by that planetarium every day during that job.

BRANSBY: It was open to the public. When they closed it down, it was the history of navigation, they closed it down because the public was no longer being served, but I read recently that the new Superintendent was going to put it open to the public, but he didn't say anything about the murals. But they are in storage, the city borrowed them, we put the little panels for show with a NASA show. The Government had them restored.

CARNE: Did you ever do any prints with Barrett?

BRANSBY: I did.

CARNE: I know Charlot did several.

BRANSBY: I know he did. He thought very highly of Lawrence. Lawrence was tossed out of his job there at The Fine Arts Center

CARNE: At about the same time as Charlot? So, one of the best printers in the country and one of the most famous muralists in the country were just let go?

BRANSBY: It was a whole revolution for the generation ahead of us and was handled so badly.

CARNE: Don't you think that once that happened, it was the end.

BRANSBY: Nothing else went on. It was operational (CSFAC), but there were no exciting developments at the Fine Arts Center.

CARNE: Did you study under Julio de Diego?

BRANSBY: No, I didn't study under Kuniyoshi.

CARNE: No, Julio de Diego.

BRANSBY: There was an organization called Artists Equity and Kuniyoshi came out here at that time and he was trying to get a job here.

CARNE: There is a Mexican Artist, Julio de Diego.

BRANSBY: Yes, Emilio Amero.

CARNE: Emilio Amero. Did you ever study with him? He was a friend of Charlot. Charlot brought him here.

BRANSBY: He went to the University of Oklahoma. We needed a lithographer so I called up Emilio, was the University of Oklahoma, and I was going to ask him if he knew anybody in the photographic

world. He built a little house here, up by Penrose. Emilio Amero lived here. He said it looks like Mexico down here. (Laughing).

CARNE: Good for him.

BRANSBY: So, I said Emilio, do you have any names of lithographers that we could contact. He said, "Bransby, how about me?"

CARNE: Very Good.

BRANSBY: Which reminds me of another thing. Bauhaus man. It was about going to a...

CARNE: What about Cornelis Ruhtenberg?

BRANSBY: The architect. I worked with Ruhtenberg briefly. They were trying to get a, and I knew his daughter, they were working to try to get a, he wanted some drawings for a possible memorial to Roosevelt when they built the memorial in Washington. It was that I guess. He said would you work me out some drawings that we could it would be a memorial, represent a memorial to Roosevelt. Which I did. Of course. We didn't win it. Somebody else got it.

CARNE: Somebody else go the commission. What about John Ormai?

BRANSBY: I haven't heard that name for years. Yale. I'm not sure. And anyway. I believe he came from...

CARNE: You have something in your notes about seeing Jean Charlot on a ladder on the scaffolding.

BRANSBY: He's come up to the rotunda and look up and yell up instructions to us and one day he climbed up the ladder. It was a little eight-foot square that we'd move around the rotunda, but it had an inclination to want to fall into the stairwell and we'd...

CARNE: And this was at The Fine Arts Center or at CC?

BRANSBY: There was a big skylight (means FAC or CC?).

CARNE: Well now there's a big chandelier by Chihuly.

BRANSBY: I guess so, but any way, Jean would skinny up that ladder, and we had little bars around where he would climb off the ladder to the scaffolding, and Jean would climb up there and just would lean back and we'd go and crouch on the other side (in fear).

CARNE: Because he was used to being on those things, when he was in Mexico, he was on those all the time, I'm sure. He was on the scaffolds with Rivera. The Great Rivera.

BRANSBY: Didn't Jean and Orozco go to New York together?

CARNE: Yes.

BRANSBY: I was very fond of Orozco.

CARNE: You know, in Mexico they consider Charlot the fourth muralist.

BRANSBY: I've always considered that.

CARNE: No quatro. Four. I see these people saying tres.

BRANSBY: Quatro. I feel he was that important. I feel he did introduce them to...

CARNE: And the Mexicans recognize that. When you go to Mexico, the Mexicans know Jean Charlot. They consider him the fourth.

BRANSBY: Oh, is that so? Isn't that wonderful.

CARNE: And, you see a lot of his work. I've seen his work in Mexico. I spent a lot of time in Mexico at one point.

BRANSBY: I've seen his education panel in Mexico. At one point, Rivera gave him. Rivera felt he was kind of above, the top dog.

CARNE: Rivera was about twice the size of Charlot, too. Take two Charlot's to get to Rivera because he was a very, very tall big man.

BRANSBY: I'd drive in to town to go to school, and I'd see Jean walking along Cascade (Avenue) he'd have a little bear cap like you'd wear in Russia, I guess. (Laughing)

CARNE: The house on Boulder Crescent was very close to The Fine Arts Center and that's why he chose that area. He could walk.

CARNE: Well he did.

BRANSBY: I think he was driving near the end of his life. But that's why he chose that area, he could walk to work. Oh My.

CARNE: So, I went in the house, before it was torn down.

BRANSBY: I remember meeting Peter at the door, just a perfect little pixie, and he'd have a mouth open from side to side (making a smile with his hand on his face). And out here he would shimmy up the pine trees and he was um apparently having a hard time fitting in. He was such a free kid, they were putting on shows all the time.

CARNE: Did you ever work with Charlot at The Fountain Valley School?

BRANSBY: Ah, no. But, I had him tell me though, "Eric you're going over to Fountain Valley School." When I got back teaching, at the end of the week, I forget I think he was going someplace. And at the end of the week I came back and he said, he offered me money, and he said "Nobody teaches at Fountain Valley for nothin." (Laughing)

CARNE: Yes, he was teaching there to make extra money,

BRANSBY: He had us make a...now that her father (Mary Ann) was a carpenter and that we could make a little frame for him to go to Fountain Valley School and that they would. They had to give them something to do (Students at Fountain Valley), the kids, and they would fire ceramic tiles.

CARNE: Yes. Some of them are still there. They are not in very good condition, but table tops with the tiles. So, you knew about that. (Fountain Valley School representatives told me they were damaged by years and years of ski boots.)

BRANSBY: We did the framework for those.

CARNE: Oh, you made the frames, beautiful.

BRANSBY: Nobody teaches at Fountain Valley for Nothing. (Laughing). Those kids were pretty well off. It was only a few times.

CARNE: Just a few times. Do you remember any other projects that Charlot worked on at Fountain Valley?

BRANSBY: He told me one day he couldn't keep them under control and he whipped out a bunch of cards and set them all up so they could play cards. No, I don't, I don't know. Both Robinson and Charlot. Robinson came out to a friend at Fountain Valley when his Newspaper folded in New York and you know he was in the movie "Reds." The war in Eastern Europe, we have copies of that (the video Reds). For Metropolitan Magazine and he drew also for the Old Masses.

CARNE: Did you ever make a trip to New Mexico with Charlot and Wilder when they went to see the churches in the little villages and the Santos and the retablos the New Mexican Santos.

BRANSBY: No, but I can understand his interest in folk art.

CARNE: Because Charlot actually, and he did a cover of a book for important New Mexican Catholics. He was always doing projects for companies. He did some prints of some of the Retablos. Fray Angelico Chavez who is a very well-known. Charlot always had his Catholic faith so Catholic periodicals and publishing

BRANSBY: Well he did a little book called "Picture Book."

CARNE: Yes, I have it.

BRANSBY: I had it and I got to thinking with all the Charlot murals on the campus at Georgia, that...

CARNE: You donated it?

BRANSBY: I donated it to them, I felt it should be in their hands, but you have a copy?

CARNE: I have a copy from 1933.

BRANSBY: It was Kistler who printed it in Los Angeles.

CARNE: Yes. He also did a second Picture Book in the 70s, Picture Book II, in Hawaii. It is mostly Hawaii, it is not as valuable as the first. That first picture book is very, very valuable.

BRANSBY: Oh, you do? And there's a poet.

CARNE: Claudel. Yes. I was just enamored. Before I became a researcher, I loved Charlot's work and then the fact that he had been here in Colorado, and I said, "Why don't people know this?" It is and so

important that you carry those memories and it is so important that we get these memories recorded for history.

BRANSBY: Yes. You want to cover what else?

CARNE: I think you've covered most everything in your notes. Now, let's see what else we have from Dr. Charlot. He's very much focused on the attitude of the administrators at The Fine Arts Center, because that is a soft, sore spot for the Charlot family. Is there anything else you can remember that was happening when Charlot was released?

BRANSBY: Well, during those first two years, he ah, I got the Master's from CC and I had to pass a French test. I had one year of College French from a small school in Iowa, and I hadn't touched French since then and he said (Charlot), "I am French." (Gesturing with his hand open.)

CARNE: He was French, always to the core.

BRANSBY: Nobody could challenge him, you see. Mitch was suspicious because Charlot was French. He figured.

CARNE: Because he was French or because he was working with those Mexican Marxists? (Laughing.)

BRANSBY: He figured we were going to "fox" this, you see. He said, get a book on Cezanne and translate. He's say go to page 30 or whatever it was and then I'd get stalled and he'd say quickly let's move to page 48. A woman walks into the interview. This is Peggy.

PEGGY: (Bransby's home care-taker). I just grabbed lunch, so I'm going to put it together.

CARNE: Hi Peggy. Nice to meet you. He's about ready for a break? His memory is incredible.

BRANSBY: It's a kind of a reverse Alzheimer's.

CARNE: You can remember the things you did in your sleep now? Oh, my goodness. He does have. The Fine Arts Center is a big, big topic for Dr. Charlot and also the works that Jean Charlot did while at The Fine Arts Center seem to not exist anymore. John thinks they are gone.

BRANSBY: Well, they did come out of the basement, there was a work that he did do in Hawaii. It is hard to tell the Mexican from Hawaiian.

CARNE: You know how I tell. The Colors. The color palette changes. Because when he goes to Hawaii he uses the brighter more jewel tones.

BRANSBY: They have a different light.

CARNE: Yes. Exactly.

BRANSBY: You're surrounded by, I don't how many different miles, of water. I noticed the color was different. You know the color was different when we moved from Kansas City to the mountains.

CARNE: Yes. The light is different in New Mexico.

BRANSBY: The light is wonderful in New Mexico.

CARNE: And when you go where I am, the sky is lavender.

BRANSBY: Oh.

CARNE: It's very interesting to me as I've been in Colorado all my life. Now I'm in New Mexico I find myself looking up at the sky because it is very different. I tell the difference (in Charlot) between Mexico and Hawaii by looking at the color palette. Even if he does a Mexican subject while he's in Hawaii, it's the color.

BRANSBY: It's the color that changes.

CARNE: So, the color changes. He's had such an affinity for indigenous populations that he focused.

BRANSBY: That's partly a French characteristic. When the French were working their way West, French trappers and traders, through Kansas, which they were, which was greatly alarming the Spanish out here.

CARNE: Raton Pass. That's French, not Spanish.

BRANSBY: Oh, I guess it is a French name. French would marry an Indian squaw. That's what they were very effective with the beaver trade. That's why you have scattered about the Front Range here...

CARNE: Is that what Charlot was wearing, when you saw him with the hat. It might have been a beaver hat, rather than Russian.

BRANSBY: Laughing. I don't know. He was Parisian wasn't he?

CARNE: To the core. He was French and Mexican. That's how he ended up in Mexico. Because he went with his mother to Mexico, originally, after the war. Her father was Mexican.

BRANSBY: Oh, is that so.

CARNE: Charlot's mother's father was a Mexican. He traded in antiquities.

BRANSBY: I remember in the 19th century the French occupied Mexico.

CARNE: There's that connection. Then he went back to Mexico after the War, he was in the War, that's where he perfected the fresco.

BRANSBY: Jean was ahhhhhhh, what is it (searching for words)? I just knew that the French, for whatever reason, took over the Government there and there was some kind of blood connection.

CARNE: So, Cinco de Mayo is a celebration of pushing the French out of Mexico, we think of it as a different kind of holiday in this culture, but Cinco de Mayo is the anniversary of the ousting of the French from Mexico.

BRANSBY: I knew among the upper crust in Mexico, there was French blood.

CARNE: I know that Charlot's grandfather was Mexican.

BRANSBY: I knew he had a relative that he would go to stay with.

CARNE: That's why he took his mother with him. I found all of the photographs of Charlot with Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo, Siqueiros and Orozco. He was active. At one point I had heard that one of the problems with Charlot in Colorado, with Julie Penrose and then with someone named Percy?

BRANSBY: Percy Hagerman?

CARNE: Had problems with Charlot because of his Mexican connection, to those Mexican Marxists? Do you remember anything?

BRANSBY: I remember Percy because Percy came in and worked in Lawrence's studio. People sat side by side with instructors who were having something printed. He was like an atelier. I knew that Percy was also on the Board at CC, he had to look at my graduate thesis. He was living alone in the El Paso Club.

CARNE: Oh, of course (Laughing).

BRANSBY: I have a Hagerman, print. He did. This was from Northern New Mexico, a landscape, he liked my gold trade, so we swapped prints.

CARNE: But, you don't remember how you got the little Charlot print that's in the other room there, (pointing to the little print in the photograph in the other room).

BRANSBY: The only way he could have got a Charlot print I think would be that The Fine Arts Center was trying to publish some, trying to make money from them.

CARNE: Yes. There's where my woman with the baby print, 1947.

BRANSBY: We have a copy of that print, I think.

CARNE: Yes, I have one in my living room. What about Francis Froelicher?

BRANSBY: He was a headmaster at Fountain Valley School. They were in Connecticut and they lifted that up entirely and moved it from Connecticut. They were what they called a progressive school and they were having trouble in Connecticut. I'm trying to think of the lady whose son was a well-known sculptor. That's why Robinson, he was a political cartoonist at the time, came.

CARNE: Fountain Valley and Boardman Robinson were connected before they came here. Did they have polo horses? Did they bring their polo horses? I think they kept their horses for polo matches. I really do Thank you your time and your memories.

BRANSBY: It is a real pleasure to try to get more notoriety for Charlot.

CARNE: It is important, it is important. He really didn't have the personality to be tooting his own horn.

BRANSBY: He was really a very intellectual man.

CARNE: It is incredible when you see all the work he produced and the books and articles.

BRANSBY: We were in the Foundation at University of Hawaii, when we went through there, Zohmah took us there. His output was tremendous.

CARNE: And he kept diaries every day. He wrote what he did and sometimes even wrote what he ate. When he ate roasted chicken, he kept incredible notes. He wouldn't have been a person that would say, "Look at me, look what I did." He wasn't that kind of person.

BRANSBY: Which truly made him a great teacher in many ways and I knew he had gone to Yale for some lectures but he looked at what the Dean told him he was going to do and did he need to change anything and he said.

CARNE: You need Bransby. How do you think the other students felt about Charlot?

BRANSBY: Well I was out working on murals, I launched a number of murals in this town, and so I didn't have that close a contact with my fellow students and so you know I can't speak to that, but I don't know about the others.

CARNE: Were you pretty close to Lew Tilley.

BRANSBY: Well I had double feelings about Lew. Lew wanted to be admired very badly and I refused to stand in line with that. He was a kid who had a wonderful opportunity to learn at the high museum in Atlanta, but Lew wanted to be top dog and Robinson loved him much, at his wedding and so forth. The other thing that was really hard for me at the time, I'd go to school and tired and we would have to take the truck and move rocks and stuff, you know, Pioneer here. We had a little house with no plumbing (or electricity). Lew could talk art all day long and sort of live the art dream in a way. I was not going to worship him. We did form a little organization when I came back and had no job. I had started forming this. Coming from, we formed another organization, Inger (inaudible), another faculty member, called Design Associates, we would get a man, who was retired, and he would represent us, and then we realized he didn't know a damn thing about art. We would go up to Denver periodically to go around to the architects up there and we were able to offer different kinds of things, as a group, that lasted perhaps about maybe doing what I did prior to that. I still would not worship Lew and everybody was so enchanted by Lew, I just felt I didn't have any kind of time for that kind of stuff.

It wasn't just...he was like what I called a remittance man, that was like your folks are in Georgia and they are wealthy, and I don't know what they worked at. The Tilley name was well-known in Georgia, and he knew quite a few and he had been here before or was still in the service before he came here and Robinson had felt a lot about Lew. They had lost a daughter before in New York and the Fine Arts Center had approached at that time, I think it was before Mitch's time, and I guess, well anyway, I just refuse to worship Lew, he had a lot of talent, he wasn't really making use of it in many ways and we were spending the weekends here. This was virgin territory. We had a fire, we didn't have pumps or anything like that because we didn't have any electricity. One Sunday morning, Mary Ann's father, he had bought a little gasoline pump. One Sunday morning he got us both up, her dad did, and she was in her bathrobe, and to put two planks over the well. If you dig one it's going to be irregular with rocks coming out. He had this huge gas engine with a pump, cast iron job, and he had a belt between the two and he got it to go on, but the water wasn't coming up and he said well Eric, you need to go down, which is only about maybe 15 feet. And he says, pull up the valve so we can get the water to come up the right way and we went down there and the belt slipped off the wheel and it raveled (wound) around the pump. So I went down there and it pulled the cast iron pump down and the hot water on top, came down on my back and I the rocks came out, so I ducked under a rock and the next thing I

know all three of us were in the well. (Laughing). It is a very shallow well. You can put your foot on a rock here and a rock there. Any way, it stripped Mary Ann's robe off. She was down there just in her stockings you know. (Laughing). Her dad said anybody hurt. He had a little gash on his leg and I thought, I'm never gonna work on Sunday again! We did it the hard way. We have the property now. We have a neighbor here. We split up the property. Her parents took one side and built the little gray shack down there and we had the beginnings of this here, not this room. These rooms were built by a regular contractor. Everything you see there, outside that doorway, was the outside of the house and every year we would come back, we'd add a room year by year, etc. Mary Ann who was a frustrated architect just wanted to really build the ideal house and one day when we came back from the University of Missouri after 20 years she anyway, lost my training of thought. We all struggled back to the house and he said I'm never going to work on Sunday again.

CARNE: Thought that was your punishment, ah ha?

BRANSBY: He knew how to witch water.

CARNE: When did you first buy this property?

BRANSBY: 46, during my week, during spring break. Robinson had that first little room there on Wood Avenue. He helped us get the commandant at Fort Carson to approve us. It was like Moses yelling up to. And he said the guy they're not going to do business.

CARNE: I grew up as an Army Brat. What service were you in.?

BRANSBY: The war was on. The end of my senior year in Kansas City, we got married two weeks before Pearl Harbor.

CARNE: A lot of people went in the service at that time.

BRANSBY: We were at war. Now the Man who went to FDR was classmate, (inaudible) from a wealthy family. These big drawings, gesturing to drawings in the dining room, she wanted to try everything.

CARNE: And she was a frustrated architect.

BRANSBY: Yes. She left, as she always did, in the fall, she'd leave early for Kansas City when we were teaching there. She packed everything from as she always did and in New Haven, the car broke down. It threw a rod. It was a 1930 (XXXXXX) wagon made for the tourist trade here. We got it for \$350. It was a big car. I mean a monster Cadillac. I would go through the streets of New Haven and that car would barely make the curves. It had a canvas roof on top of it. We'd go down to New York on the weekends, she (Mary Ann) had friends at Columbia.

CARNE: It was a convertible!! Did you join the Army?

BRANSBY: I joined the Army so I went to Fort Leavenworth to the Command General's staff. Well I found by the time I was through painting this mural for the auditorium there, Induction Center. I was able during that period to paint at night and walk around the day time, I could. I found the Command General's staff and they had an art department. When I go through the Chaplain said, they have a hard time placing artists, and the Chaplain said where do you want to go? I said there is an art department

up at the command school and I'd like to go there if I could. Then wondering around the post, I found them.

BEGIN 08890

I did the Command school as a Sad Sack Corporal.

CARNE: Michelle was born in Kansas.

BRANSBY: Where?

MICHELLE: In Hayes, Kansas.

BRANSBY: I have a mural at Kansas State University at Manhattan. What they call the Little Apple. They were advertising for somebody. There's a building there.

CARNE: Was that WPA?

BRANSBY: I did one WPA mural there at Paseo High School. It showed the early days there between Kansas City and the steamboats.

CARNE: Are the murals still there? At Paseo High School.

BRANSBY: Those murals we've established. And the one there's a Jesuit University in Kansas City, Rockhurst. You know you rank in your mind what you thought was the most successful and I rank that one there. I like less the one at (Says Colorado State, but means Kansas State) at Manhattan. Do they call that Colorado State at Manhattan? Not Missouri State, that's where Tom Benton worked.

CARNE: Charlot did some work in Kansas.

BRANSBY: Yes. Up the River at Atchison.

CARNE: At the Monastery there.

BRANSBY: Is it still there?

CARNE: They gave him Benedictine Robes when he did the work and he was buried in that robe. It was very important to him.

BRANSBY: Up on Diamond Head.

CARNE: The robe and then the cloth. The Hawaiian cloth. It was something he wanted. I can't thank you enough. For the record, can you tell me who you are? A little bit about yourself for the end of the tape here.

BRANSBY: My father was an English clergyman. Not in the beginning. He was orphaned early and his mother who was part-Scotch she went back to the little town, Manchester. He went to Manchester Tech and his parents took him to Scotland to a tiny little town on the Irish Sea. He didn't meet mother that way, she was born in New Zealand. My grandfather was in the real estate business. My grandfather was in the Estate business and they had offices in London, and his grandfather took him back to Manchester in the North of England and he went to work for Westinghouse. Apparently their original location, they are all over the world, was in Manchester and they were about to send him to

Indian. He was free to go where they sent him, and that fell through and instead he was sent to America. To a suburb of Pittsburgh as an Engineer and he was in America now and he was talking about. I am first generation American. I was born in Auburn, NY and my brother was born in the Catskill Mountains and for mother coming from a mansion in Birmingham, she didn't become a naturalized citizen until World War II. I can see her in church singing "My Country Tis of Thee..." but she was singing "God Save the Queen."

CARNE: She had to change the words, that's all.

BRANSBY: My Dad had, a church finally he went to Princeton. He saved money. They made a hard-core Presbyterian out of him. Anyhow when we were growing up we couldn't do anything on Sunday. We could read.

CARNE: The Well? What drew you to art?

BRANSBY: I liked to work by myself and drawing just came naturally. I had a playmate and we saw a marionette show and we just went wild about these little critters on the end of strings, and we were in high school, and we didn't participate in anything else socially, and we built ourselves, we found a book where we could build ourselves a marionette show, and we used Christmas tree lights for the proceeding marks, and we built the dolls ourselves, we were male kids playing with dolls. And, once we got it out of our system. But, Henry Adams thinks my figures are balletic. And he thinks that has great influence. We had a lot of stress in the family because mother was not university trained, she was in finishing school in France, and so she only knew that side of Edwardian society, so then, but we had this experience with the little stage and so forth and we got it out of our system and by the senior year, we had to indulge in some of the other requirements, it was a little backward town to come of age in, but the tensions in the family, a little Iowa town, everybody is watching, you don't make a mistake so I was running into all kinds of tummy problems, they wanted to make a singer out of me. I had the voice but not the build. So, I've got to use my hands you see and I thought the only way to go is to go full blast into the art world. What we didn't know in the art

World, like in France you go up and shack with a model for the next four years and you know.

CARNE: Then you go and paint murals for the night clubs. (Laughing)

BRANSBY: I think Peggy has a little something for us to eat.

CARNE: You didn't have to do that.

BRANSBY: We just feel it is nice to um (end of tape).

We enjoyed Dickey's Barbecue at the table with Bransby. At that time, I discovered Bransby wanted to keep talking. He didn't eat much. Below is an informal record of what he said at lunch. For example, we discussed murals in SE New Mexico. He told me he didn't care of Tom Lea, he was too full of himself. He did, however, like Peter Hurd, and his horses. I told him Tom Lea was from a wealthy background. He said that explains his behavior...

BEGIN 0913

BRANSBY: So how far from Old Mexico is it?

CARNE: Thirty miles.

BRANSBY: Thirty miles. Wow.

CARNE: It is not really a typical border area. It's very...well there are people who have been in that area for many, many, many years. Both Hispano people and Anglo people. There's a mixture of Anglo and Hispano culture. It's like no other place I've been in New Mexico. Let's just call it unique. I just bought a little house, built in 1949. Pueblo Revival style. Beautiful hardwood floors and but needed some help. It's there when I get old and I'm cold....Go to Carlsbad and warm up...which isn't very far away.

BRANSBY: Yeah (Laughing). Mary Ann passed away about 11 years ago. She had Alzheimer's and for 10 years she had me and one of these gals (referring to the home care assistants he currently has), helped me take care of her. She's the person who felt that this property was necessary for our lives and um about the last years back in Kansas City she kept wanting to retire. I said look, since I came to the job late, I needed at least 20 years to make a retirement. So she did finally at the University of Missouri, she taught metalsmithing.

CARNE: Knocks over the iPhone recording the session. Oh, she's hearing us...

BRANSBY: Ah ha. She loved the dance. She was a dancer herself. So that's her work. They are what we call, "Body Armor." After that she dropped the metalsmithing because it is too labor intensive.

CARNE: So it has agate? Is that agate rock?

BRANSBY: Yes. She cut and polished stones for a while. We have lots of stones that we collected, semiprecious, for this kind of thing. She's got a case out there that is just full of cut and polished stones.

CARNE: Moves the recorder to the corner of the room to record the mask. Beautiful. This is a beautiful location.

BRANSBY: So I put her in the mural here.

CARNE: Oh you did.

BRANSBY: As she was in about her late 20s and so forth.

CARNE: So she's there forever.

BRANSBY: They had a hard time during the depression. She's was born in Oklahoma City, oil money was rolling (romancing) around like...

CARNE: Oil money is...I don't like it because of Carlsbad.

BRANSBY: What that does to the landscape is just horrendous.

CARNE: I feel like Carlsbad is a paradox because you have this beautiful pristine Chihuahuan desert, and it really is a beautiful area, the plants and the landscape and the sky. And then you have the oil. It's such a disposable way of life. It's not sustainable. I feel like people come in and pillage the town.

BRANSBY: Yes. Yes. Total disregard for the landscape.

CARNE: I don't know...I feel like "Why Carlsbad?" Because they offered me the job, I was available, I was ready to do something. I have worked with some wonderful students who haven't had a lot of opportunity. Being isolated in a rural area. So I'm working specifically with students who hope to be Engineers. So we take them, we travel to other colleges and they do internships. It's a federal grant and the grant is designed to promote the number of graduates in the Science Technology Engineering and Math areas. So I'm working closely with a really small number of student. I think it's really effective to be able to give that kind of attention and assistance. So I don't know how long I'll be there. We'll see. The Grant is until 2021. So at least until then, maybe, or until my son finishes college.

BRANSBY: Yeah. I left Illinois, I needed to retire. I hated that flat land. I dreamt one night that Cheyenne Mountain was sitting out there. (Laughing).

CARNE: So you knew that was a sign you needed to go back to Colorado. You know I feel it's interesting I really love my home here. I live in the Cheyenne Canon area.

BRANSBY: That's what I was thinking...

CARNE: I live in an old house that was built in 1928, I love my house. I feel like I'll die in that house.

BRANSBY: Yeah. Yeah.

CARNE: But right now, I've got a really different thing going. The architecture is significant. The town is desert, and I don't know. Michelle was worried when I left. She said, I don't want you to leave. So we find ways to come back and forth. She and her husband came. When where you guys there?

MICHELLE: End of March

CARNE: End of March they came down there and stayed with me for a few days. And my son is there with me, going to school. It is very inexpensive. With tuition. I get tuition benefits with my tuition. It's about um, 20% of the cost of tuition in Colorado. So that's a reason to say there.

BRANSBY: Oh, is that so. He can come back here and ski.

CARNE: My son doesn't ski. But tuition is low, so I'm hoping he's going to figure out what he is doing, and he can experiment, because it is inexpensive, and he's very interested in film and theatre. New Mexico State University in Las Cruces has a very recognized theatre program and also a film program.

BRANSBY: Really?

CARNE: Eventually I hope he'll end up in Las Cruces. He's young, he's 18. He won't be 19 until August. He graduated from Cheyenne Mountain High School.

BRANSBY: Oh did he? What better place could he graduate from?

CARNE: Well, Michelle graduated from Cheyenne Mountain. It's a good school, it has some cultural challenges.

BRANSBY: We tried, Fredericka had not been in school. She was born in Kansas City during the war....well I just wanted to tell you a little anecdote about Charlot. Just a little humor. He, in Hawaii, a friend of ours, he ran the town of Golden, he ran the arts center, Charlot said to her, you might flunk.

CARNE: In Hawaii.

BRANSBY: In Hawaii, you might flunk (Laughing).

CARNE: He was, of course I never met him, but I read everything he wrote and I read his diaries, and he writes things in his diaries about having “social props.” He calls people his “social props.” You know when he was in Arizona, because he did a mural at ASU.

BRANSBY: Was that in Tempe?

CARNE: Yes. So in Arizona he’s writing down what he had for dinner and where he eats, and he called this social person, a person who was introducing him, his “social prop.” Because she would take him to meet people and they would feed him and...give him dinner. He talk about, he did a small mural. And what’s ironic is because my grandparents, my grandmother and grandfather on my Dad’s size, the ones that were in Pennsylvania, they settled, they retired in Tempe.

BRANSBY: Oh did they?

CARNE: And so he talks about this mural and it’s just four streets away from my grandparents’ where I was a child. It’s a small world. He talks about this mural. The woman that commissioned him for the mural paid him by giving him a squash blossom necklace for the mural. Then he sent the necklace to Zohmah as a gift and he has it all in his journal.

BRANSBY: Oh My.

CARNE: They made a trade. So I feel like in some ways I know a little bit of his personality. He would just kind of watch people and then make some comment. If he thought people were pretentious or they were too full of themselves...is that a correct?

BRANSBY: Nodding and eating. Yeah.

CARNE: He was incredibly intelligent and had been around the world and would look at people like, you’re too self-important.

BRANSBY: Yeah. Yeah.

CARNE: He had been with all of the important people in art during that time from about 1920 to 1950. Edward Weston, photographer, Edward Weston took his honeymoon photos in Carmel by the Sea and if you look in books about Edward Weston, you’ll see photos of Zohmah.

BRANSBY: There’s a photo of Edward Weston’s in a photo magazine. That was by Weston.

CARNE: Thank you. It was delicious. (Peggy is taking the plates). You did a great job with that barbecue.

PEGGY: Well, we have some experience in impromptu parties here. (Laughing). We have impromptu parties...he tells us, well we’re going to have this tonight.

CARNE: He knew everyone, Frida Kahlo. I see photos of him and Frida.

BRANSBY: Oh, he knew Frida Kahlo? He was an international...

CARNE: Exactly. So, through those connections that he had in Mexico, he met a lot of those Ex-patriots from Europe. During the wars they left Europe and came over and lived in Mexico City and Cuernavaca Mexico. I kinda feel like I know his personality. He was a little bit sarcastic, but not blatantly sarcastic.

BRANSBY: I knew of two murals, when Fredericka got sick and we came back here....what was I after here? Um, Charlot would never put you down. Never.

CARNE: No I can't see that. But he would make a comment, sort of underneath...

BRANSBY: Very dry.

CARNE: You would have to see something in his eyes or something.

BRANSBY: You'd have to be smart enough.

CARNE: Exactly. So that is the impression I get of him. It is interesting, I was teaching a class, I've always enjoyed art, but I was teaching a class and a student said to me, do you know this person. I said, well I've seen the name. He said, well you know he lived here in Colorado Springs. This was someone that knew Hunter Frost from Fountain Valley School.

BRANSBY: Did Hunter Frost die?

CARNE: Yeah he did.

BRANSBY: He lived over near....

CARNE: Skyway. He lived in the newer area kind of where I lived. I went over and talk to Hunter Frost about Charlot before he died.

BRANSBY: Oh, is that so.

CARNE: Yeah, but I didn't tape it! I just took notes. This was in the way back before we had these little magic machines that sort of do everything for you. He had quite a collection.

BRANSBY: Of Charlot?

CARNE: They had oil paintingss, and drawings, and quite a collection.

BRANSBY: I think I had heard that.

CARNE: He died, he had problems breathing. I want to say he had emphysema or COPD. Was he a smoker do you know?

BRANSBY: Yeah.

CARNE: That makes sense. He was a smoker. I think he was in his late 70s or early 80s. He was on oxygen.

BRANSBY: Jean never smoked.

CARNE: He was too religious. He was extremely devout. Do you know much about Zohmah?

BRANSBY: I know she grew up in Salt Lake City.

CARNE: She was quite the bohemian. She was a little bit of a rebel. Zohmah is not her name.

BRANSBY: I was told she went down to city hall or whatever as a teenager and said I want to change my name.

CARNE: She was pretty rebellious. I think she introduced the Westons. She had somehow worked as a secretary. I want to say for Edward Weston's wife or the woman that he married? That's how that connection and then of course the Mexico connection with Edward.

BRANSBY: Now they got married in Mexico, didn't they?

CARNE: I can't be sure. I don't know, but I know that the Charlot's and the Weston's were very close for quite some time. He took their honeymoon photos. And he actually took portraits of the Charlot children. Can you imagine having your portrait, your school photos taken by Edward Weston? Probably about six or seven years ago, I saw an Edward Weston Photo of Jean Charlot for sale somewhere. I think they wanted \$55,000 for it.

BRANSBY: Woo (Laughing). Well you know. I have long learned to forget finances if you're going to stay in this field. I have a very Bentonesque painting of an old fiddler. When we came back from Illinois I had this painting of a fiddler and left over from the Benton days, egg tempera, as Benton taught all of us, anyhow, I had the fiddler and we were back here and we needed cash. I couldn't sell it. So, I had a friend who had studied art in Michigan and he was a salesman. I just couldn't get rid of that painting. I knew I would have a little money to make it. He came to me and he said to me. I have this liquor dealer in town here, he'll give you two years of free liquor for the fiddler. So I went for it. Not that I'm a lush or whatever. Then I heard he had retired and gone to California. He was in retirement. I had a nephew in the Los Angeles area and I asked him if he could make contact. Now I could do something with that thing, the fiddler, egg tempera. So, anyway, there was a collector here, a developer. A lot of developers watch the obits, and if the artist dies they can get whatever they want.

CARNE: Here in Colorado Springs? Well the town is run by developers.

BRANSBY: Well there was a guy here, very much, like Shakespeare's the Merchant of Venice, what you'd visually expect. He said, his taste was as we'd say very much in his mouth, I'm selling he didn't recognize what he had. So anyway he got this thing from the widow of the liquor store. Knowing it was out of my hands. I couldn't buy it back. We did borrow it for the.

CARNE: You couldn't trade it for liquor?

BRANSBY: No. It ought to be in a collection somewhere. So anyway,

PEGGY: Would you like me to wrap this for you for later. He talks too much.

CARNE: He's on a roll. He might keep his fruit, though.

BRANSBY: He was moving to South Carolina for retirement. Well Cook (David Cook Galleries) saw an image of it and Cook decided he wanted that painting. And so, he called up the man in North (He means South) Carolina and said refused to sell. Cook called him every day for a couple of weeks.

CARNE: I'll bet he got it then.

BRANSBY: I got it for the Georgia show. It goes by special van. It is insured. They picked it up and they dumped it in the warehouse in Wilmington. Well it don't know where it was. So I told him the circumstances and Cook as determined he was going to get it and so he wouldn't be obligated to me for it. I just wanted it in a museum somewhere. So finally the guy caved in and he said what's it worth? So I said it's probably insured for \$20,000. And he picked it up for \$20,000.

CARNE: Oh he did.

BRANSBY: Cook got it and he put it in a show with my stuff. It was nice to have it.

CARNE: And he will eventually put it in a museum collection?

BRANSBY: The last price I heard on it was \$34,000. Something I was willing to give up for two years of liquor. Pretty expensive.

CARNE: That was some expensive booze (Laughing).

BRANSBY: The art world has been so topsy turvey. That was one thing I knew about Jean. He knew enough about the art movements, even the abstract. He wanted me to go and study with an abstract person at Yale, but he knew that discipline...what that was.

CARNE: He had to work, to do what he did, to make a living to support his family. They had four children. They had four children. Why did I say five?

BRANSBY: Peter, John, Ann, ? (Martin) Peter took us to all the spots in Hawaii that other people didn't go to, in his little Volkswagen, and coming up from Hilo at night, you could see the Lava going down the hill.

CARNE: Oh, you could see the glow? Well, fortunately, they do know Charlot in Hawaii. They do respect and preserve the home, the murals. The foundation is in charge. There is work going on in Fiji right now. So they do know that. And I think that one of the reasons that John, Dr. Charlot, wanted me to come and talk to you today is because Colorado Springs is the one place that no one ever seems to ever acknowledge that Charlot was here.

BRANSBY: Yes. It was not...they loved it here and

CARNE: It is such a loss. For this community it was a huge loss. And the fact that there's no mural here.

BRANSBY: It's groundbreaking. (Groundshaking?).

CARNE: Doesn't make sense.

BRANSBY: I remember those detached walls. They towed a wall on an 18 wheeler setting up on edge of Jean's.

CARNE: Muralism is not for the faint of heart. But there's a kind of passion that goes along with that. I'm not an artist. I do my own little things, I'm more of a craftsman. But I just think, gosh frescos

they become, and maybe this is why your wife was enamored with architecture, and you're a muralist, because it is part of the building. A true fresco can last thousands of years.

BRANSBY: I never thought of it that way. People are coming into the rotunda in four places. You don't paint murals for an audience that isn't there.

CARNE: Yeah. And that's why there's no Charlot mural in Colorado Springs. Colorado Springs has neglected the arts, they have. Since the mid-century, they have neglected the arts. That's why we don't have a mural. I mean we have our pieces, we have Boardman Robinson pieces. We have neglected it. I want people to remember. This was a thriving, there was an artist's colony in this area.

BRANSBY: They are working on it now. I have a friend very close. It is natural. It existed before and can exist again.

CARNE: Perhaps what you are describing that was going on in the 40s at the Fine Arts Center, it was the end of an era and I think maybe it's been sitting there waiting for something to happen.

BRANSBY: This city, with an Army, people who have been all over the world, it goes way beyond itself now. These people you were waiting for it to change that much.

CARNE: The town is growing so much. Just crazy growth. Maybe it's time that this community invests again in an artistic tradition to revitalize. We were talking about on the way over here, the buildings downtown that were just destroyed.

BRANSBY: Oh, the old Antler's Hotel with the pink, that just hurt. That's one reason I was willing to spend that much time on the Pioneer Museum murals. The history is there um, you can't paint books on walls. You have to be very careful what symbols you put up there for people to see. I spent some time in Italy looking at Italian Renaissance murals and there are writers that list them as the Bible of the poor.

CARNE: The Bible of the Poor? Murals tell stories.

BRANSBY: They are in the walls.

CARNE: People forget and things get moved around, but a mural that is there. Stays there and tells the story.

BRANSBY: Oh yeah.

CARNE: The mural that Charlot wanted to do in Colorado Springs, was one of the things, you know the story of the pioneers moving West. So benevolent. And often I think about what it would have been like to have seen that huge...three panels, he did it in a curve. There were places to sit so you could walk along and see the wagon train. The mural was to be placed so that in a way that behind the mural there were the peaks.

BRANSBY: Yeah. Time is involved in drawing a mural or any work of art. I ended up doing a study in a town called Arezzo, Italy. I stayed in Florence for eight weeks and I commuted out to this little town and Piero was very, like Jean. He was an intellectual, and like Jean he was one of the guys who started to develop perspective in Italy. He did some in the Vatican. Raphael painted over them. They were kinda savage. They were a little like the 20th Century, they were a little like that.

CARNE: Maybe by the time I'm back here in Colorado Springs permanently, there will be some different efforts taking place here. Murals can be communal. They can create community. Especially the kinds of murals that Charlot worked with where he had other people come in and work with him and he did the cartoons and the designs and then he brought students in to teach and other artists and specialists. Who knows? Maybe it will change. I am optimistic. I tend to want to be optimistic.

PEGGY: I am too. I prefer it that way.

CARNE: The world is much easier to deal with.

PEGGY: People are going to be people regardless of where you go. As long as you stay optimistic, you can get through anything.

BRANSBY: She comes out of the Appalachian Mountains.

PEGGY: No the Adirondacks. I'm from upstate New York, a little town called Westport.

CARNE: I have cousins who live in Vestal and Binghamton.

PEGGY: They are down south. They are on the south border. We were right about in the middle in the mountains and right of Lake Champlain.

CARNE: Thank you for arranging this. I told Dr. Charlot that I don't know if I'll be able to do it this time. He'll be so happy. He is the greatest champion of his father. He'll be thrilled. I've never met him in person, but I've known him for 20 years. We communicate with one another. Jean Charlot did his own cards every year. Do you have some of those?

BRANSBY: Oh yes beautiful little folk art.

CARNE: So I thank you so much. It's a pleasure and I know Dr. Charlot will be thrilled that we got over here. Your hospitality was wonderful, Peggy. Thank you so much.

PEGGY: We like to keep him happy.

BRANSBY: Would he know where Peter is now?

CARNE: Yes, absolutely. He'll talk to you again. Do you want me to tell him to contact you again?

BRANSBY: Yes.

PEGGY: Yes. I think the last time he caught him it was nap time.

END 0913

BEGIN 0914

CARNE: If you do any work for the Catholics, do it for the Benedictines. That's what he said?

BRANSBY: Yes. Yes.

CARNE: I found a Peter Hurd print at this antique gallery. It was in a folio of several other prints that was produced by the University of Texas, El Paso. There was a signed Peter Hurd print in it.

BRANSBY: If nobody knows what they have, why?

PEGGY: Mary Ann had a knack for finding things that people didn't know what they had and getting it really cheap at the Ross Auction.

BRANSBY: Laughing.

CARNE: That's the way to do it.

PEGGY: Had her hand all over town.

CARNE: Sounds like my mother. Sounds like Gladys.

BRANSBY: At least I got two years of liquor out of mine.

CARNE: Got two years of liquor. That was some very expensive liquor, though. Was it good liquor though?

BRANSBY: I drank so little.

CARNE: But you had parties, so you could serve it.

BRANSBY: This Merchant of Venice, on the fiddler, it had a place on the sleeve where it was done by some kid that had very thick smeared. Egg Tempera films are so thin and delicate. So, I hope Cook gives it to the right place. I told him when I saw it, "I see you have mice."

CARNE: I can't thank you enough. I'm not going to tell Dr. Charlot until Monday. I'm going to say, look what I have for you.

BRANSBY: Well I was looking forward to it.

CARNE: Everybody I talk to about the Charlot family, they just have the best things to say about everybody. Good people.

BRANSBY: He was too religious to be otherwise. He was just around the corner from St. Mary's. That's probably one of the reasons he chose that place.

CARNE: Yes. Zohmah, not so much, but it sounds like they were just a perfect match.

BRANSBY: She guided us over the mountain there in Hawaii and Martin, he was doing a mural for McDonald's. Last I heard he was going to Los Angeles.

CARNE: I wonder if they traded hamburgers for that mural, like you got the booze? You can have McDonald's hamburgers for the rest of your life if you paint a mural. I don't know if I'd want...

BRANSBY: Mary Ann's idea of going to a restaurant was to go to McDonald's.

CARNE: Is she from Southeastern New Mexico? That's what the people do in Southeastern NM.... They get in their big trucks and they go to the drive up. Lines of pickup trucks in the drive up window at the McDonald's.

PEGGY: It kind of looks like that in Oklahoma. She was from Oklahoma.

CARNE: Probably similar. They have oil in Oklahoma, right?

BRANSBY: I haven't been in a McDonald's since then.

CARNE: He needs a cheeseburger.

PEGGY: He's very dairy intolerant.

CARNE: If you go to McDonald's get a Big Mac.

PEGGY: Tell them to leave the cheese off the Big Mac.

BRANSBY: Oh the Big Mac. Yes. (Laughing). Where are you in Cheyenne Canon?

CARNE: It's on Wolfe Avenue. Just two roads west of 8th Street. You know where the Junior High School is? I'm just east of the Junior High. There are some older houses there. There's Cheyenne Road on one side and Cheyenne Boulevard on the other. It's Wolfe and O'Malley and Mesita. Mesita, Wolfe, O'Malley then you get to Cresta.

PEGGY: I know Wolfe. I used to work for that school district.

BRANSBY: In her late life, Mary Ann used to go up and draw in North Cheyenne. So, I've drawn that waterfall I don't know how many times.

PEGGY: Every which way.

CARNE: It gets a little crazy up there on the weekends. People go up and do their picnicking and there are cars everywhere. There's loud music.

MICHELLE: Do you know they want to put in parking lots in Cheyenne Canon?

PEGGY: Are you serious?

MICHELLE: I am serious.

CARNE: They could put a big picture frame there, too. A big blue picture frame.

PEGGY: You like that Garden of the Gods one?

MICHELLE: Thank you Mayor Suthers.

PEGGY: That came down as soon as somebody brought it to the attention. When you went up there it didn't say anything about it.

CARNE: Who came up with that idea? They're an idiot.

PEGGY: Someone from the City.

MICHELLE: Wasn't it John Suthers' wife?

CARNE: Well, she married well.

Glenda L. Carne, PhD.
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