

TAPED INTERVIEW WITH MARK JOSLIN AND JOHN SNOW

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MJ When was the earliest you felt any international influences?

JS When I was very young I spent the first world war in England/ I had an aunt, Margaret Thompson. A very good watercolour painter. I was interested. On my Dad's side I had another aunt, Liza Snow, who was also an artist. During the Second World War I met the two ladies again. At that time I spent my leaves in London. I saw Henry Moore works – his underground drawings, figures, sculptures at Battersea Park. I was very struck with the strength of his work, the solidity of his forms. At the same time I was very impressed with my aunt's work. When I came back from overseas, I decided to take two years and see what I could do. I went to the art college in Calgary in March and April and then in the fall [1947], I went up again in September. Here was this short, stocky little man with beetling brows, and he looked up at me and said "Do you do much drawing?" This was Max Bates. I met Max Bates you see, and of course he'd been in London before the war, painting. So I learnt a lot about figure work from Max [1947 – 1949]. He felt the same thing about figurative work, but in the

college in the spring the instructor said “we’ll just do a bit with hands and feet like in fashion drawings,” and I thought “Oh!”. Max said hand and feet are what you do things with and they have to be solid and firm. [Later in the interview: Max said hands and feet were something you did things with. You had to be able to stand on your feet and march. They should be really important. I remember him saying, of course, the figure isn’t just a curve. There are straightness, then a curve. The straightness gives you the strength.] Internationally, I guess Henry Moore was the first I really knew a bit about. After that I was always interested in Matisse and Picasso, Braque and Modigliani. I liked Morandi, the Italian’s work very well. I think especially his still life. I was just in the Tate Gallery two weeks ago and saw this little painting... silvery grey jars and a table. Simple – I mean you just remember it – that simplicity is very important.

MJ When did you actually see these works or did you see them in journals?

JS At first, I saw them really in journals but then I saw quite a few. I had been to New York in 1950 and had been to the Museum of Modern Art and saw Paul Klee, an exhibition of his work. A lot of all the galleries. I saw a lot of original work of all the people at that time.

MJ What did you see in London in 1959?

JS I went to the Tate gallery. Turner watercolours – which were down in the basement at the time. They've got everything – Picasso, Matisse and really all the well know artists are represented in their modern collection. I think I saw a selection of Picasso's work at the Tate; a special exhibition of his figurative works. Later on we saw one at the I.C.A. (Institute of Contemporary Art) which was dealing with man (the obsessive image). Picasso and all painters and sculptors who were interested in figurative work.

MJ Do you remember an overall feeling from that – that was in 1959 as well? What stood out for you?

JS I can't remember the artist's name [Cesar]. There was a figure and a dog as though they were walking though a doorway in bronze...

MJ Did that actually affect your imagery directly when you came back to Canada?

JS I don't think so. I have always been interested in things that I could see or touch or knew about. My figures in my earlier – in my woodblocks (1949 and 1950) about a dozen or thirteen, are nearly all figurative in some way or another. Ideas I got from still life, they are all that sort of scene I was looking at – just glancing around the table or something like that. They aren't what I saw then; same with my sculptures. While none of them are

portraits of people – the turn of the head or sometimes the set of the shoulders – a certain something I have seen.

MJ When did you get the lithography press?

JS 1953

MJ So you had already been pulling off the lithos by the time that you went to London. How would you describe your imagery before you went to London?

JS I don't think it's changed. In fact, when I look through the lithographs I've done in the past thirty some odd years, I don't think my imagery has changed at all really. I was so interested in people and common things, I think. I spent some [time] in the war in North Africa, Sicily and Italy and I was out to India. Since then, we've been to Greece and traveled quite a lot. My use of rich vibrant colour was maybe influenced by the Mediterranean. My old aunt, Margaret Thompson, used to say "if you've got a good thing, make the most of it."...

MJ How would you describe the art scene, the paintings around Calgary between 1953 and 1959, around the time you got the lithography press?

JS I think the public attitude towards paintings was pretty plebian, you know, it had to be landscapes you recognized. I don't think anybody was really interested in still life...

MJ So what else helped to influence your art around 1953? Paintings – not just the visual things but also literature.

JS Oh yes, I've always read quite a lot – Herbert Read's *Meaning of Art*, Roger Fry...I used to get *Canadian Art* magazine: I subscribed to that right after the war...

MJ What stands out in terms of things they would discuss over the years?

JS They always had quite a lot of illustrations, you know, down east people mostly although Max Bates had several articles in the fifties and Buck Kerr, of course, wrote. They had illustrations and writings. Max did one on Spickett.

MJ Around the time you got the lithograph press was there a very strong artists' community?

JS There was the Calgary Sketch Club and the Alberta Society of Artists. Those were the two main groups.

MJ What kind of work were they producing?

JS Most of it was landscapes. I don't remember much else. Of course, Max was showing figurative work, but they often turned him down. I remember getting into the Alberta Society of Artists. I had to submit and then they, two or three years later, turned my stuff down which had been accepted in Toronto and Montreal exhibitions. Of course, that was just the jury they

happened to have at the time. Just the way things go. Very tight and unimaginative generally speaking, but there were exceptions like Max, and of course, Buck arrived, more imaginative.

MJ When did he arrive?

JS In 1947. Ron Spickett, Ted Godwin, Ed Drahanchuk, his brother [Ed Drohan] – all students. Frank Palmer, he was in the life class Max taught for a while...Max taught two years, at nights...

MJ So really when you look back you were all involved in fairly different types of art work, different types of approach.

JS Yes, generally.

MJ Buck Kerr was quite landscape orientated.

JS Yes, mostly landscapes I think...

MJ And Marion Nicoll around that time was doing some abstract work?

JS No, she was doing some landscape first and then she went to Emma Lake and came back and started doing abstracts...She told me once that she was doing a painting and cut it down the center and moved one up and the other down and that started her doing abstracts. You can see that in a lot of her things now.

MJ Very interesting.

JS Just cut it down the middle – A release from a very representational thing to her abstracts...

MJ Did you get together with people like Spickett and Palmer and Marion Nicoll and Max Bates and critique each others works?

JS No. When I got the litho presses, Max was coming over all the time. I did a lot of lithos for him. We did sixty or so altogether. He would come over and we would work on Max's and sometimes Stevenson's, and we did a few for Buck Kerr. Quite a few people came over and used the facilities on their own, I sort of showed them how. We had been doing some woodblocks and lino blocks and he was saying one day if we could get some method of being able to use so really rich colour. I was down in Seattle and I went to see Glen Alps, the printmaker. Before that – we had got this little press at the Coste House – we were doing small etchings; Bert Earle, Herbert Earle showed us how. We got this press by raffling off some paintings and set it up there and did six or eight at that time and have printed them up since then. So, I went to see Glen Alps [Head, Printmaking Department, School of Art, University of Washington] to see if he any suggestions. He was really top-notch and I had a lot of nerve going to see him. He looked at my work and said if you get a chance do some lithographs. So when I came back, Friday and Saturday, I had a real urge to

go down to Western Printing and ask Mr. Maxie, whom I knew. He told me they had just tossed out two presses last week down there at Paragon Machines, two blocks this way and three blocks that. So I literally ran and found the presses all dismantled in the ice and snow in the back alley. I got a truck and picked up every nut and bolt and brought them all back and an old chap named Mr. Loney came and showed me it goes like this. I'd never seen a press of that sort. They gave me nine or ten, a dozen stones and a roller and I went to the library and got a book on how to make lithographs. Then it was trial and error. That was in 1953 and by 1956, Max had an exhibition at the Alberta College of lithographs. Then we had a full blown two man show at the New Design Gallery in North Vancouver (December 1957), all lithographs. I think we were the first people doing lithographs west of Toronto at that time – fine art lithographs...

MJ Is there anyone in Calgary or Western Canada who was working on art similar to yours, who influenced you a lot or had discussions with those people who influenced you a lot?

JS Max Bates was the only one I really talked much about. Roy Stevenson a bit, but he wasn't there at the early part. I had the Montreal Spring show in 1956 and the Winnipeg show in 1955, that was watercolours; Allied Arts,

1953; Canadian Society of Graphic Art , 1953 to 1960 inclusive. So it didn't take long to get them out and around.

MJ Now those first lithographs that you were doing between 1953 and 1957, were any of those landscapes or were they all still life and figurative?

JS There were some landscapes and some figures.

MJ How did you go about choosing your subject matter?

JS I used to go out and make a few notes about colour and density and come back and do it. I had a very strong visual memory and I practiced it so that I could look and see if I could remember what I wanted to put down...

MJ And you were painting in 1953?

JS Yes, I was doing watercolours mostly.

MJ Were those landscapes or mostly figures?

JS Some landscapes and some figures...

MJ Are there themes that go back and forth through your landscapes and figurative work?

JS Yes. I would do some landscapes and figurative work and still life and one thing leads to another. I start and I see something that seems to work and I use that idea in the next piece if I need something.

MJ Do you ever consciously bring things back and forth from your figurative and landscape works?

JS I don't think so. I worked in the bank soon after; eight in the morning until sometimes six o'clock at night – busy all the time. When I got back at night, it was nice to be able to think I would do a drawing or work on a print. Sort of shake off the bank. At the same time, I didn't have much time. I didn't have time to dilly-dally or wonder what I was going to do, or think "I don't feel like doing it now." I only had very limited time so I really got as much done as a lot of people who were painting full time, and just as much as those who were teaching painting or printmaking at a university or college, because their creative energy has been spent...

MJ Getting back to the international influences versus the regional western Canadian painting, how do you see your work fitting in? Is there something in your work that is particular to western Canada?

JS I guess landscapes are all what I've seen around Calgary, Priddis and that area.

On making lithographs

MJ Was a lot of the process finding the imagery which reflects you? That would really reflect you? How did you find that imagery? How did you know what to experiment with?

JS The ideas just were there. I have never really had any trouble with ideas. And often in lithograph I start without an idea, just activating the surface – a pattern or some sort of design and work into it. Applied textures. Quite a lot of applied textures like a piece of lace on the stone and house paint with a little axle grease, roll it on a piece of wax paper and blot it with another piece of wax paper and it seems to separate. Put that on the stone and that would make a wonderful start. You get a face without pockmarks...By printing over top of that - it has a sort of texture underneath – it can be very satisfactory. It looks as it just happened, that it hadn't been made. The old masters would do every stitch in the embroidery and the dew drop on the rose that you admired but this other gave you some thing of the same sort of idea. It came through.

MJ What was it in Moore's work that influenced you?...

JS I liked his solidity and his imagery, his marvelous imagery. I saw a short film of his years and years ago where he was picking up little pebbles on the beach. He said, of course, I got my idea of structure from that. And here it turned out to be a figure, this little lump of whatever it was. One thing that disturbed me in Henry Moore's work was here was this marvelously nearly abstract figure and then he puts in little eyes and little hands and feet and

scratched in – no need – or little nipples on the breast – no need for it at all – the thing was all there...

MJ Why do you suppose you like the solidity of those figures?

JS Well, it is a matter of strength, the muscle tone and ability to do things...I liked...the honesty of the work. I liked the shapes...

MJ ...How would you describe yourself if you had to do it in a few sentence right now?

JS I think I have been true to my imagery as I see it.

MJ Would you call yourself a Western Canadian man, a rural man or an urban man?

JS I've lived here [in Calgary] nearly all my life except for the first seven years.

MJ Do you think the imagery is tied in very closely to those experiences?

JS The landscapes, at least the ones I did around here...

MJ Do you feel any particular prairie-like nature? Do you think there is such a thing?

JS Yes, I think the environment influences a person's life certainly, has a bearing on what you are and how you think. It almost has to. I think your work in visual sense like painting or sculpture...It's the things that you see that influence you in the long run.

MJ ...Do you have any overall philosophies about art?

JS I don't really think so except...to be true to yourself and don't be too influenced. The colour has got to be right and the shapes have got to be right. It has got to have a unity, that must be there. The central idea has to be fairly stated, I think.

MJ Now in terms of this central idea...

JS If it's a figure, you know it's got to be a figurative kind of makeup...

MJ Now there has to be a central statement and the works they are all essentially true to yourself and they attempt to communicate something to someone else I imagine or are they intended to be poetically evocative?

JS I think that the figurative things generally reflect perhaps the philosophical or the emotional condition or thought whatever it is I'm doing. I wouldn't like to think my figurative work is just a plain figure without any sort of guts behind them. There has to be some sort of feeling in a contemplative way....Whatever it is probably reflects in some ways what I am thinking about – the figure or whatever I am doing at that time is thinking about or being at that time. I am not very good at expressing these things. It is very difficult. Of course, if I wanted to talk about it, I would be writing rather than....

MJ Quite understandable....

JS ...they [my artworks] do communicate and they are invocative.

MJ I've always felt your work ever since I was a little boy very poetic.

Something I was always able to do was to look at all the different kinds, just right across and get a very strong feeling. There was a consistent feeling.

JS I would hope so, you know.

MJ You must be tired. This has really been most interesting.

JS This room [Snow's studio] was designed by Max Bates for me , high lofty ceiling, you want most of the light from the east. Lots of wall space. Window like a church window...That bird - I had seen it in New York at the Cloisters. One day I was walking to the bank by Bashfords [antique store on 17th Ave. S.W. close to 7 St.] and here was a reproduction of the same Italian 13th century falcon. So I told Bashford to hold it for me. Max said I will make you a niche for the bird. Quite interesting. I had just got back from New York and see it. Thought it was a marvelous bird and there it was. So how lucky can you get.

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JS Of course I've done some pub scenes in London, the Thames and things like that when I've been traveling and the odd thing – Dubrovnik, an old wall...but the figurative things were all imaginary, really. None of them have ever been of actual people that I've seen or had them sit. I've never

done that. The still – life – I may have done some forms or actual cups or jugs or bottles or whatever it is. I don't set things up and so that I get started and it comes along. For a lot of the work I have a sheet of paper and put an abstract design on the lithograph stone and prints that on 50 sheets of paper, then I grind that down and I look at it and then I put another colour on top. I probably started out with a grey really all over, a pattern, and then print into it, you see and as I work it becomes apparent what the thing is going to be.

MJ Oh, so your image emerges.

JS Emerges yes, yes, in many cases I've got a still life and some of the figurative start that way too.

MJ Is that so.

JS Yes, I see a face, then I work out from there.

MJ That's very interesting. Did Max Bates work a lot that way? A lot of the monoprints seem to be sort of arbitrary.

JS He just draws them on the back. They are all done. I don't think he ever did a sketch first. They are all done free hand. As he was going along his imagination carries him so he did a bit more here.

MJ If your lithos start with a n abstract base like that, it must be very complex to figure out the colour. Do you generally start with one colour?

JS I start with any sort of any colour but often it is sort of a modest [colour]. I don't often start with a brilliant red, for instance. Maybe a brownish grey or yellow or something like that.

MJ I had no idea.

JS The most of them – I can show you – quite apparent underneath.

MJ ...There is a lot of consistency for me, from litho to litho and also from painting to painting in terms of mood and I don't know, it can be sort of a direct statement but sometimes in the still life I find them very somber, not serious in a dismal kind of way but serious in a contemplative kind of way and I wonder why.

JS I don't think I know.

MJ Do you feel that way about them?

JS Well, I haven't really thought. Really I am always so interested in what I am doing. No, I think it just happens that way...In many cases there is a shape that fits an image I've seen, a couple of jugs and I think well something in back. I like the idea of looking through to a painting or the outside. Then I will need something to lead in. So it develops. Hopefully it ends up all right.

MJ ...So if you had to describe the evolution of your work, its searching for that vehicle....

JS You've got to be absolutely honest with yourself, stay true to your, to whatever you are, as a painter, writer or whatever – and things influence you.

Interview, December 18, 1987

Exhibition at the New Design Gallery, North Vancouver, 1957

MJ Now, in 1957, you had an exhibition at the New Design in Vancouver with Max.

JS With Max, that is right. And I think that was really the first – wasn't quite the first – but we had a joint exhibition at the Alberta College [today's Alberta College of Art and Design] but that was 1959. But at the New Design it was the first exhibition in Western Canada of all lithographs.

There were a few lithographers in Ontario but I don't think there was anyone west of Winnipeg. In a way we sort of pioneered it because there wasn't anyone to show us or to teach us or anything. It shows that if you can read a bit...

MJ Did you ever go out painting with Stevenson [William Roy Stevenson]?

JS Yes, a few times. We went out to Okotoks between 1957 to 1960.

MJ ...Did Stevenson ever mention anything that influenced him in that exhibition at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1929 [the Helen Birch-Bartlett Memorial Collection] or thereafter?

JS Segonzac. Roy was very keen on Segonzac [Dunoyer de Segonzac 1884-1974, second generation Synthetist, Post Impressionist, French] and at some auction in Vancouver he bought this painting which he was absolutely dead certain was Segonzac. I think it may well have been – I have a book – there was a lot in that painting you could see – shapes and things. And Roy sent a photograph. And they sent it back saying “No, it wasn’t” but I think it was Segonzac. Anyway he was very influenced. He would say “Segonzac is the man.”

MJ ...That Kokoschka show [in San Francisco] that you saw was prior to the litho press 1949. Did that have any impact on your work?

JS Oh, yes...I was certainly very impressed...

MJ Do you have any other reminiscences of the Coste House before you got the litho presses?

JS Well, I think that really, when the Coste House started, the level of interest and appreciation in Calgary in paintings was really limited to very representational landscapes. After they got the picture loan going – it was based on one out in Vancouver, Max had some figurative things and I had

some figurative things I was doing and Stevenson had some figurative.

When they could rent them for a dollar and hang them on the wall...they got to like it. I think the Women's Committee had a tremendous influence on the appreciation of paintings generally. I think the same thing in Edmonton. They gave the public the chance to try something that – without any responsibility.

MJ ...Did you go regularly then to the Canadian Art Galleries [owned by John Tavenall Turner]? ...

JS Quite often, yes...They had a great influence in the City. It was the only real art gallery that had anything more than just framing and the occasional painting exhibitions. They showed the Group of Seven and A.Y. Jackson; Jackson used to come through here...

MJ When did you start having your work in Canadian?

JS Soon after I started doing the lithographs. They always had a few...

MJ ...Do you remember any exhibitions that influenced you other than Bates that stand out in your mind?

JS I think I saw the David Milne, I remember quite well...

MJ ...your earlier periods

JS I was born in Vancouver [in 1911]. When my brother and I were two and one-half years old, my parents took us to England to show us off so we lived in Hereford where my Mother's family lived and my Aunt Margaret, a very good watercolour painter, was. When the war came, Dad enlisted so we were there from 1913 to 1919 during the First World War. So I grew up there until I was seven...I...watched while Aunt Margaret painted, I was very fond of her...Then towards the end of the war, we went to Bournemouth where my other Aunt Liza who was also a painter lived...Now when you went overseas for the Second World War, you mentioned to me that you had been to India and you had been with people from North Africa.

JS I went attached to the Royal Air force after three or four months training in England to get used to navigation difficulties and procedures. I was attached to the RAF Airborne so I was attached to a squadron as navigator, training gliders and paratroopers we took supplies and more paratroopers to France – all over Europe really – supplies and materials – a single aircraft, one aircraft at a time. Then we moved to North Africa and trained people there, moved to Tunisia with paratroopers and gliders for the invasion of Sicily and Italy. Meanwhile we supplied the underground in Italy with supplies, some men too, and dropped supplies where they were needed.

MJ And that would be in about 1943?

JS Yes, 1943, 1944. Then we went back to England after Sicily was invaded. We took paratroopers and gliders on “D” Day and the Arnheim Lift. By that time I had been on ops [operations] for three years which was the maximum time they would let you do operations. So all of a sudden I was whipped off to India at Baae Headquarters in Delhi so it was terribly interesting...I got to Delhi, Bangalore, Poona and down to Ceylon, saw the Taj Mahal and the Red Fort in Delhi....Then I came back to Canada in 1945...

MJ ...Where did you live when you came back [the first time] at the age of eight?

JS We lived in Olds for three years and then through the Soldiers Settlement Board, we got a farm west of Innisfail. So I went to a country school at Innisfail...until I was 17 when I joined the bank [the Royal Bank]...

MJ ...When did you first move to Calgary? ...

JS 1931 ... When I got to Calgary I started to do some music so I took some violin lessons and I did cello lessons, theory and harmony...I might well have become a composer...

On his figurative work

JS ...I use a posture or a shape or a sort of psychological feeling in nearly all my figurative work but it isn't specifically a portrait of a person.

[on source for inspiration for a work of art]...On first street west between 10th and 11th Avenues there used to be a Chinese laundry on the east side and behind that you could see the old...smokestack from the CPR...

MJ ...Now around this period the American Regionalists were becoming very popular. Did you see any of their work at all?

JS American Regionalists is a term that really I haven't heard until you mentioned it...

Interview, February 5, 1988

Discussion of *Refugee*

MJ ...I notice that you've on, two or three lithos that were called *Refugee*. I don't know if they were called the same but they seem to be on the same theme.

JS I did a refugee, a watercolour and a lithograph of it.

MJ I remember the watercolour and I certainly remember the lithograph, one with people coming in on a boat.

JS That's a lithograph too. What did I call that? *Way* I think. They didn't know which way they were going, towards or away from civilization. There were some large building in the background. That's a refugee situation.

MJ Now how did that come to be an interest to you? ...

JS Well, I did another lithograph in 1956: the Hungarians had so much trouble. *Theatre* and there were sort of strange figures in a theatre box...

MJ ...Was that derived from an actual experience that you had?

JS No, just what happened in the world around us such as refugee centres, difficult times in eastern countries, Hungary.

MJ Were there a lot of Hungarian refugees?

JS No, not that I know of. I didn't know any personally. I suppose when you are doing a subject, you do what interest you at the time really even though you don't think refugee. Maybe that's your main interest. Your work might tend to look a bit like refugees. People, troubles perhaps.

MJ Did you read about the refugees coming to North America in magazines or actually see them when you were in New York or London?

JS No, I just read about them. I didn't actually see them coming off the boats.

MJ Are there any other large themes like that going through your work? ...

JS ...*Armenian Refugee* (1956 or 1957) in a Calgary sale show in 1957...I've done lot of figurative work – work, women with child, family, situations, still-life, jugs and wine, some bottles, tables, chairs. I like doing an interior with table, a chair and some flowers and either a window or painting looking out to a landscape so it has a little bit of all my interests in

one thing. **I like the ambiguity of the feeling...** I did eight etchings and thirteen [later corrected to twelve] woodblocks.

Discussion of his woodblocks

Gardening (1950) was the end of an old prune box...

MJ Where did you derive your imagery?

JS Oh, things I had seen.

MJ ...Had you seen any printmaking before or anything like that?

JS I had seen some, I guess, not a lot...This [*Suzanne*] was an apple box.

There was a little knot hole right almost in the centre so I used that and the grain of the wood to make the woman's dress. I printed with red over green.

MJ So, you used two blocks there, did you?

JS Two blocks.

MJ And the red block has the knot hole.

JS The green block has. The red goes underneath, the green on top.

MJ This is a beautiful print.

JS ...This was *Penny Pitch*. I did down at the Stampede, you know where they throw balls and get a prize... With *Garden* I just used a piece of plywood...I used one of these electric pens you use for doing leather work, burnt leather work. By letting it get nice and hot, you are able to cut a line across the grain of this cheap wood, quite a nice line. Then I had a flat print

and sort of burnt it out. So most of this is done with that tool. Not the usual way of doing a woodblock.

MJ No.

JS But you get a nice sensitive line. Really I think more sensitive perhaps than if you tried to cut it out because you couldn't use that rough kind of wood.

MJ ... So you were very motivated to use a lot of colour.

JS Yes, I have always been interested in colour...

MJ And yet no one was using or seemed to use colour like that in Alberta.

JS No, not a lot. I think Max Bates... There were a few people using good strong colour. Generally speaking it was Leighton – Gissing school – and, of course, ...Walter Phillips... Most of the work I remember in Calgary at that time was based on portraying landscape almost exclusively. There may be the odd portrait but you know, they weren't using the figure as something to put on to design or make a painting of, to reproduce the figure to look like the figure. So you didn't get distortion. Wasn't the type of thing that was going on here at that time...

**On meeting Glen Alps in Seattle and securing a discarded press in
Calgary in 1953**

JS In early March 1953 I saw Glen Alps, the printmaker at the University in Seattle. I showed him some work....He said: "... If you get a chance to do lithography, don't hesitate." I came back [to Calgary]... I woke up with a real urge to go down and see Mr. Maxie at Western Printing in Calgary just down on 2nd Avenue and 6th or 7th street. So I saw Maxie and he said: "Oh, I think we just tossed out two old presses." So he got Mr. Loney...He said: "oh, yes, we tossed those two old transfer presses for scrap and they are down at Paragon Machine Shop two blocks this way and three that and Maxie said: "Well, if they haven't been destroyed, you can have the two of them for \$15." So I literally ran and here they were. I had never seen a transfer press, no idea of what it looked like at all. Here all this stuff in the back alley, snow and ice. So I got a truck and I picked up every nut and bolt, brought them back here and Mr. Loney came over and said: "Well, this goes here and that there... The Western Printing gave me at least a dozen lithograph stones 14" x 18" most of them and an old roller. So then I went to the Library and got a book on how to do lithography [translation of book by Senefelder] ... I sent away to Winnipeg for ink and had to get some nitric acid and gum Arabic, all the materials you need to work...Laurie Duff ...[who first worked at] Western Printing came over and gave me some advice...So we worked away. The next spring [1954] I went down to

Seattle and saw Glen Alps again. So he let me do a couple of stones on a corner of his class ... and he said: “You can get a mixture of gum arabic....”

[Later: I learned quite a bit from Glen Alps...applied textures]...I got my papers from local supply houses...Now I use mostly J. Greene from Barcham Greene, London, England. I got 2000 sheets of double elephant...

MJ One of the things I notice you do with some of the lithographs is sandwich very bright colour between darker colours and that is probably what makes them glow. Something I’ve always found about your work.

JS Oh, yes. I think in all of them, you will see that there is some over printing. I always leave a little of the first colour to come through and then you get a really strong colour. I do it all the time purposely...

MJ What were the first prints that you did?

JS ...I think *Summer Scene* was the first colour lithograph. That was in the Winnipeg Sale Show in 1956 and the Canadian Society of Painter-Etchers in 1956 and Montreal Fine Art in 1956....*Edge of Town* was after [next]...*Red Hen* was an early one too – [in] the Calgary Graphic Arts Society, Canadian Society of Graphic Arts [in] 1955, Calgary Sale Show [in] 1956....*Theatre* 1956 [was in the] First International Biennale of Prints in Tokyo in 1957, National Gallery of Canada in 1957, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts in

1957 and the Adrian Seguin Award in 1957... *Woman and Child* was in the Fifth International Biennial of Colour Lithography in Cincinnati in 1958 ... *Orange Flowers in a Red Vase* was in the 3rd Biennale in 1959, the Winnipeg Show of 1958, ... *A Woman in a Green Dress* won the Adrian Seguin Award of the Canadian Society of Graphic Art in 1959, Montreal Spring Show and the Royal British Academy in London, England in 1960.
Clown 1959

MJ Now where did you get the imagery for the clown? ...

JS Yes, I've done several, you know.

MJ Yes, and Kings and Queens and that kind of thing...?

JS I guess you are interested in people and in society. Clowns are sort of [at] the edge of society. They represent the down and out in a way and the pathetic and yet they've had – in the old days – a lot of influence with kings, you know. In Shakespeare the clowns have an enormously influential part in a lot of his plays. Yes, I guess you are interested in the edge of society and you are interested in, I am interested in the psychological feeling of a Woman and her Child or a family and you know, their sort of possible problems and well I don't paint the problems but I sometimes I think I get through the felling of tension.

Makes you think that things are not quite easy or that they are really interested in what they are doing, that sort of thing, you know.

MJ What would have made you think of clowns and jesters? ...Would you have seen it in other paintings....?

JS Oh, probably in books you know (on the Stampede). I guess we used to talk about... You know Max used [to be] always interested in that aspect and I suppose, you know I got interested in it from, maybe from him... Dwarfs, people on the edge of society.

...Of course, it is the unusual that's interesting visually, you know...If you are going to do figurative work, you are not going to do someone who is just complacent unless you do them as a complacent housewife you know which is a different aspect of it. It's on the edge too because you wouldn't do one that was just ordinary. She would have to be engaged in something or she would have to be thinking about something, wishing she was elsewhere or there would be some sort of psychological feeling, maybe in the way her glance was going or her hands were held or whatever...

MJ What type of material were you reading at this time? I remember you mentioning to me that Max Bates read a lot of the existentialists or the

JS Beckman [sic]

MJ Asseritists [sic] Playwrights.

JS Yes, Joyce. Ionesco...

MJ Do you remember anything particularly affecting you? In your reading?

JS "Waiting For Godot" [by Samuel Beckett] I thought it was a very serious play...

MJ Was there any drama happening in Calgary in the 1950s?

JS Oh, yes. There was Workshop 14: Dr. Betty Mitchell had a theatre group mostly advanced students but they were doing some excellent, very good things. Joyce Doolittle came in 1960 and she started doing some experimental plays. Krapps' "Last Tape," she did...

MJ ...When did Marmie Hess open Calgary Galleries?

JS In the late 1960s because I retired in 1971 January and then I had my first one-man show about three weeks after I retired from the bank. I didn't have any one-man shows in Calgary when I was in the Bank....

MJ ...Were there any general aesthetic things you were looking for in making a print?

JS Colour was one, a rich colour surface with lots of texture generally speaking is what I was after. And the actual print technique as apart from the drawing and the shapes, the lines and the space.

MJ Now did those things build into moods. I guess they would have for each individual piece.

JS I would start without any preconceived idea of what I wanted to do and would activate the surface and think about what I was doing with quite an abstract pattern of some sort with textures. I would print that. It would be suitable to overprint. Quite often a gray or a brown or in some cases...bright red...Then once you got the first image then, if I get an idea of what the end result might be then I might put another, block out some areas and put a colour on top and then I would nearly always see something to do with it. Even if I somehow turned it round...

MJ ...Did you ever do four colours?

JS Yes, I have done some...by just using one stone. Then I could go on and do five or six colours on the same print... [Compared to working on a zinc plate] it isn't nearly as much fun as working on, as a stone and doing one colour and then grinding it off and doing another colour...**It's the excitement of the chase."**

MJ ...Some of the still lifes I've seen are very somber and very contemplative and thoughtful and the yellow still life we looked at is the most optimistic still life I've ever seen in my whole life.

JS ...At home when I was a kid we had a very nice wedgewood green wedgewood vase, I used that for quite a while...and also we had some

decanter which had quite nice design, cut glass and I've used that.

Thinking back may not be just the same but the feel....

MJ So memory is very important in the [sic]

JS Oh, yes, I think so. Often I've done a figure and then I think, I wonder where that came from. I remember seeing some woman, maybe across the aisle in the bank, you know sitting somewhere waiting. And something about the turn of her head...It has come out not purposely but I didn't realize but it just happened to turn out that way. I think this happens all the time.

MJ I think that's one thing that I have always really liked about your prints is that looking at some of them is like looking at a memory, you get a sense [sic]

JS Oh, yes, I think that's right because I like to do that...If you have something really away [sic] out don't cut that down. Bring everything else up to it...I think that is what I subconsciously try to do, quite often.

MJ I guess that is what gives them a sort of edge...Well, I think we should finish off for the day but I want to thank you very much.