INTERVIEW WITH CHUCK CSURI

JUNE 10, 2003

Q. This is the Ohio State University Oral History Project. This is the Charles Csuri summary deposition, recorded on Tuesday, June 10, 2002. I'm Robert Butche, Principal Historian of the Csuri research, and with me is Charles Csuri. Good morning, Chuck.

A. Good morning.

Q. I want to start this conversation we're going to have today with your youth. When were you born?

A. I was born July 4, 1922.

Q. And the world's been celebrating ever since?

A. Oh yes.

Q. Where?

A. In Grantown, West Virginia, a small coal mining town.

Q. And that was where your father was working as a miner at the time?

A. That's right.

Q. And what other members of your family existed when you came along?

A. When I came along, my brother Frank, and my brother Steve, were around.

Q. And how much older were they?

A. Frank was 11 years older and Steve 9 years older than I am.

Q. What was life like in Grantown, Virginia in your youth?

A. Grantown, West Virginia, small coaling mining town. There was no entertainment. Whatever you could do as a youngster was entertainment. And when you're young like that I suppose you don't notice the degree of poverty, the hardship, as much perhaps as one might when they're older, looking back, especially when I think in terms of what my parents had to endure. We rented a house. The toilet was outside. There was no indoor toilets. There was no indoor plumbing. It simply was very difficult. One of my fond memories was the honeydippers. The honeydippers was this tank, horse drawn tank, that came along in back of the outhouses to dip out the human feces. As youngsters we thought that was kind of crazy and interesting.

Q. Did you have icemen in the neighborhood that brought ice to refrigerate food?

A. I don't recall. We might have. We might have.

Q. Did you feel deprived?

A. No, I didn't feel deprived, strangely enough. I might have if I'd stayed there longer. You have to remember, that's where I was born, three, four, five, six, up until the age of 10 I lived in Grantown.

Q. Do you think life was hard on your parents?

A. It had to be brutal on my parents, because money was short, they didn't have enough food. They didn't have the conveniences the rest of us have today, such as indoor plumbing. And this had to be especially difficult for my mother, and certainly for my father who was a coalminer. With very low wages.

Q. Tell us about your mom.

A. Well, I wish I could remember more. I remember her caring, her loving. I remember how hard she worked, just to do the laundry, to do the cooking, for three boys and her husband. And really not having enough of the right kind of food.

Q. What was her name and her maiden name, if you recall, and where had she come from?

A. She came from Hungary.

Q. Was there a town or region that she was from?

A. I don't remember, I don't remember, I don't remember.

Q. And Hungarian was spoken in the house.

A. Yes, that was the first language and we all spoke Hungarian.

Q. And your mom's family name?

A. I don't know, I think it's Matrona, something like that. It's all very vague at this point.

Q. It's been a few years ago.

A. Yes, it has.

Q. Quite a few years ago. And your dad, where was he from?

A. He was from Hungary. Again, I don't remember the region of Hungary.

Q. Do you know, did they meet here, Chuck, or were they married when they came?

A. No, they were married in Europe, they were married in Hungary. My father was in World War I. He was a prisoner of war, captured by the Russians, and it was very difficult. He was in an internment camp for many years.

Q. What do you remember of your brothers? Were they good to you, being the littlest kid in the family?

A. My brother Frank was especially good to me. My brother Steve tolerated me. It turned out I probably, maybe because I was quite a bit younger than they were, that I somehow became the favorite I think. And I got a lot of attention, more so than perhaps they did.

Q. And Steve was sometimes jealous of that perhaps, is why he tolerated you?

A. I think so. I think for some reason resentful. It was harder on him. My brother Frank, this was not a problem for him.

Q. Your brother Frank, how old was he when you were born? Was it 8?

A. He was 11 years of age. And Frank at a very early age developed an interest in magic and decided that he wanted to be a professional magician. And by the time he was 16, he was doing all kinds of magic tricks, card tricks, all sorts of disappearing acts, and slight of hands with cards in particular. Tricks with cigarettes and so on. And I was his audience for the most part, especially when he was testing a new trick, to see if he could deceive me. I would be the audience for him to decide whether or not the trick really worked, if he was ready to reveal it to the rest of the world. So I liked that very much and I enjoyed the kind of mystery, the aura of magic.

Q. That was probably the best entertainment in town.

A. You've got it, that's right. I remember some movies I went to. I remember some silent pictures, a few silent pictures. I remember Hoot Gibson. Hoot Gibson, a cowboy, probably nobody in the world knows who Hoot Gibson is. But these

were cowboys and Indians kinds of things. As a youngster we really enjoyed that. But there was no sound. Just strange, just black and white, no sound.

Q. Working in the mines was horrible. The pay was low, miners often worked seven day weeks, twelve hour shifts.

A. Right.

Q. Was that hard on your dad?

A. Oh, it had to be, had to be just brutal on my dad. Even though my dad was physically very strong, it was very, very hard.

Q. Was he a big man like you?

A. A what now?

Q. A big man?

A. No, I think he was a couple of inches shorter, but he was physically very strong. And he was in very good physical condition at the time.

Q. Well Chuck one day there was terrible news There was an accident in the mine. Where were you when you heard about it?

A. I don't remember at this point. But I remember that my father was severely injured. He lost a leg. The leg he lost was cut off, and they had to cut it off above the knee.

Q. Was that to get him out of the mine or was that later do you know?

A. I think it was later. And as you can imagine, that was a devastating experience. I mean, coalmining was his livelihood and he took a great deal of pride in his physical ability, and then suddenly that was gone. And he went through a terrible, terrible time psychologically.

Q. Were there schools in West Virginia that you attended as a youngster that you recall?

A. Oh yes, I went to some kind of an elementary school.

Q. Was this a mining town, where it was owned by the mining company, or did you live in a real village?

A. I don't know, I wouldn't be a bit surprised if it was owned by the company.

Q. And there was a school, you went to elementary school.

A. Uh-huh. Yes, I did.

Q. Did you do well in school?

A. I don't remember, I really don't remember what kind of a student I was in elementary school. I must have done alright. They moved me forward. They passed me somehow.

Q. Well after the accident, things changed in the Csuri household. Your dad was hospitalized for some time?

A. Yes.

Q. And there was no income and things were really tough. What happened when you were 11 years old?

A. Well, by the time I was 11 we moved to Cleveland, Ohio. And my family, my father moved to a section of Cleveland where there were other Hungarians or middle Europeans, and I have no idea how they made contact. But there was support from friends, from other people around. And then my brother Frank had to go to work at a very early age. And I don't recall, it was a menial kind of job that he had, to bring in some kind of income.

Q. Frank would have been near 20 when you moved to Cleveland.

A. Right.

Q. Frank didn't go on to any other school. Did he graduate from high school?

A. He graduated from high school. Frank was a good student. And my father went through a terrible time. He became an alcoholic for a time. He used to drink whiskey all the time. He just had a terrible time recovering. And then one day, almost overnight, he must have made some kind of decision to move on, and to change his life, which he did. And I don't know how the contacts were made, but he decided that he could do something that didn't require a great deal of physical movement. And he decided to become a shoemaker in Cleveland. And slowly but surely he built up a shoemaker business on the west side.

Q. How about your other brother in Cleveland. What did he do?

A. My brother Steve went to high school as well and graduated, and he eventually became a machinist, working in machine shop.

Q. The school that you went to in Cleveland, was it in the Hungarian ghetto?

A. No, I wouldn't say there was a Hungarian ghetto as such. It was called West Technical High School. It's since been closed. But the focus in the high school was upon vocational type education. Machine shop, pattern making, woodworking of one kind of another. And most of the students, or the boys at least, went on to become craftsmen of one kind or another.

Q. Well your brother Frank took a particular interest in you.

A. Yes.

Q. In some ways it was a kind of interest that a boy might get from his father. That is, an interest in seeing him do things or expand his horizons. And your dad, for a number of reasons, couldn't do that. And Frank stepped in and gave you a hand in several areas, one of which you have told me about, is that Frank encouraged you with your drawing.

Q. Yes, it became evident that I had a great deal of interest in drawing and painting, art activity. And at a very early age, I don't remember exactly when, 10, 11 years of age, shortly after we moved to Cleveland, Frank made arrangements for me to attend Saturday morning art classes at the Cleveland Museum of Art. Now we lived on the west side, West 73rd. As I recall, the art museum was on East 101st. And this meant he would put me on a street car, and the street car would work its way through the west side, through the downtown Cleveland area, and then all the way out to the east side, and then I would get off and attend the class. And I had to be on the street car for over an hour. On the other hand, I enjoyed it, because it was a form of travel and so on. And I went to the Saturday morning art classes and it was a wonderful experience for me. There was also the opportunity for me to wander through the museum to look at paintings, sculpture. I probably had very little guidance in that regard, but at least I could look and absorb something. It had meaning for me. And I kept this up for several years.

Q. What was Frank's role in getting you into that? Did he help you figure out the travel? Did he encourage you to go?

A. No, Frank, he figured it all out for me. He knew exactly how much the street car fare was, he made sure I had the tickets, and I got on, and gave me clear directions

on where to get off, and when to get on, at what time to get on, and so on and so forth. He watched out for my welfare.

Q. You come out of what we would describe today as a very underprivileged family life, social life.

A. Right.

Q. Was this event with Frank in your life in encouraging your art, was it a pivotal change in your life, or did that come later?

A. I think that came later. I think I had a great interest in art but when it came to high school, there was an art program at West Technical High School, but then since there was no expectation that I would go to college, they thought the practical thing to do was for me to become a pattern maker or a machinist. And so I began taking classes in high school in those kinds of activities.

Q. And did you keep up the drawing classes for many years?

A. No, I didn't. No, I did not. No, that was simply set aside.

Q. Clearly, there were no other poor kids in that drawing class. You were on the east side of town; the money side of town, this is in the Depression, tough times, for everyone.

A. Yes, it had to be.

Q. But you were probably the only kid making this long street car sojourn from the far west side.

A. That's probably the case, yes.

Q. How about your teachers? Was there more than one, and do you remember what kinds of things they taught?

A. No, I don’t. I wish I did.

Q. Did it have to do with drawing, do you recall, or did it have to do with art appreciation?

A. No, it had to do with art activity. It had to do with drawing and painting. It was kind of hands-on experience with guidance and direction, I’m sure. What that might have been, I have no idea at this point.

Q. Was that something you did daily or once a week, or occasionally, or how was it done?

A. No, I think I did that occasionally during the week, and especially when I was going to the Cleveland art classes. There was a great deal of stimulation and so I continued that when I was very young. But by the time I reached high school age, what 14, 15, something like that, why that was set aside.

Q. What kind of a life did Frank have?

A. Well, Frank, it had to be very difficult for him. I don’t remember exactly what job he had but it had to do with something like machine shop or pattern making.

Q. Being a magician and being in the big time was not in his life?

A. No, he tried to be a professional magician. But it was not the kind of thing where you could expect a continuing income. And I’m sure that what he did was, he would try to set up an opportunity for a performance at some night club or at some event where he would be the entertainment, and would pick up extra money that way. But it was not something where that’s all Frank did. He just couldn’t afford to do that.

Q. Researchers who are coming across in the future will not know some things we need to tell them, one of which was, West Virginia was principally a soft coal mining state in the period up to around 1960. And most of the major enterprise in West Virginia in that period related to mining in one way or another. When your family moved to northeast Ohio they moved into a different economic structure. Cleveland, Akron, Canton, Youngstown, that part of Ohio, was very big in manufacturing. Steel mills and a lot of machining operations. Hence, the interest in your technical high school in machining. Is that the kind of career that Steve ended up in as well?

A. Yes, Steve spent his entire life as a machinist, as a professional skilled machinist, yes.

Q. Well you were the least likely to go on to the University.

A. Yes.

Q. Your family thought. And in fact you were the only one who did. How come?

A. Well, it turned out that my brothers were very interested in sports. They both participated in high school football and so I developed an interest in athletics. And I decided to go out for football my sophomore year, but I was cut from the squad because I was too small.

Q. And you would have been about what? Six feet at the time and 180 pounds or so?

A. No, no, no, no. I was probably more like 140 pounds. And between my sophomore and junior year, I probably gained 20-25 pounds, and I might have even grown a bit on height, I'm not sure. But I certainly gained more weight and I was much stronger. So my junior year, I made the team. And I did fairly well in

football. And then my senior year, I was even stronger, and then I weighed about 190 pounds, six feet in height. And I played end in football. And it turns out that my high school coach, his brother was the assistant football coach at Ohio State University. And there were occasions when he came up to see his brother, high school coach, to see his team play. And he saw me play football. And he saw me play a few times, and at the end of the season, he encouraged me to attend Ohio State University. He thought that I could make the team, which seemed like an outrageous idea, but what's to lose, why not go. And my brother Frank encouraged me to follow through with that. And that's how I got into the University. It was almost by accident. If he had not seen me play football, I might have gone to a smaller college, because I was a pretty good football player. I was not one of the outstanding players in the city at the time. I was a very late bloomer, so to speak.

Q. Would it be true to say that Frank really played an important role in your life for all of those Cleveland years, of encouraging you in many things?

A. There is no question about it. That he functioned very much like a father figure, there's no question about it.

Q. And how about your dad? How did he relate to you during that period?

A. Well, my dad and I had a good relationship, in that when he became a shoemaker, I became his assistant. And on Saturdays I would go in and help him with his shoe repair business. I would shine shoes. I would clean the place and take care of a lot of etcetera kinds of things for him. And so I observed my father repairing shoes. I would watch him. And watch and heard the dialogue between my father

and customers, just the way that people would relate. And how my father would develop different strategies to deal with customers and so on and so forth. And so I went through a period of several years being my father's assistant.

Q. Researchers who have looked at the Csuri DVD set prior to hearing this discussion, will already be aware that there are some works you did early in your traditional art career that represented your father in one way or another. And they would come away from that with the feeling that you had a deep affection for your dad, a deep respect for him. But that doesn't mean that he understood you. It doesn't mean that his position in life and what he had been through made it possible for him to understand you. Did he? Did you feel he was as supporting as Frank? Or was he distant?

A. No, my father was not distant. He was very supportive. It's hard to know what he understood. I think he understood that there was an opportunity for me to make a better life for myself. And so he encouraged me. But in terms of a dialogue that one might have with their father about career opportunities and what did you do today, my father's life was very hard. And we didn't have as much of an intimate relationship I wish we might have.

Q. The kind of experience he had been through might have made it difficult for him to understand the artistic interests that you had. And it might have made it even more difficult for him to understand the athletic interest, because those didn't have to do with survival, in what was a very tough world. You dad saw the very tough side of the world in his life.

A. Yes, he had been through a devastating experience in World War I, and then his personal experience in the coal mines.

Q. When did he pass away?

A. In 1960.

Q. So he got to see some of your great success. He saw your football success in high school and here at Ohio State.

A. Yes.

Q. And he saw you graduate?

A. He didn't see me graduate but he knew I did. But one of the experiences that I treasure is, when I was playing football there were other teammates. One was Jean Feccady, whose father and he was Hungarian, and Leslie Horvath, who were Hungarians. And arrangements were made for my father to attend an Ohio State football game. You must realize my father had never seen a football game. He had no …

Q. And Ohio Stadium must have been quite a surprise.

A. Yeah. He had no idea as to why these people were hitting each other. And doing what they did. But in any event, arrangements were made for my father, Jean Feccady's father and Leslie Horvath, to sit on the sidelines of the Ohio State football team. And we were playing the University of Pittsburgh. The parents were sitting on the sidelines, speaking in Hungarian, about this activity going on on the field, smoking cigars, having a wonderful time. I had no idea, I wish I knew what they were saying at the time, their perceptions. It probably would have been a great comedy routine. But in any event, I will never forget Jean Feccady

yelling to our parents in Hungarian, "Watch this one. We're going to go all the way." And sure enough, the next play we scored a touchdown.

Q. That's a great story. And it's one that you tell with great emotion, of your father's mystical wonderment of what it was you were doing. And it's somewhat of a surprise with three sons that played high school football, that he was seeing his first football game. But his life was very closed and very difficult.

A. Right. It was very difficult for him to travel.

Q. Yes, I'll bet it was.

A. Anywhere he went, he had to be taken. And I remember we had a Model A Ford, and if my father had to go to the doctor, then my brother Frank or my brother Steve, had to arrange that he get into the car. And it was very difficult for him to even get into the car, because the kind of prosthesis device was really clumsy, heavy and awkward.

Q. Well Jean Feccady was more than just a great Ohio State football player. He was a coach on Woody Hayes' staff when I was playing ball in the mid-60's, and he was quite a colorful and interesting person. And a quiet strength I think I would describe him as having. So, I take great joy in you telling the story about him shouting in Hungarian, "Watch this one, we're going to go all the way." It must have been great fun for everyone, especially when you then went and accomplished that. How about your mother? When did she pass on?

A. She passed away in 1960.

Q. Same year as your dad, is that correct.

A. No, wait a minute, wait a minute. I'm sorry. It had to be before that. I don't remember exactly what year.

Q. She went first.

A. Yeah, my father went in 1960. She went two or three years preceding him.

Q. Was it the hard life that got to her?

A. The knowledge in medicine where she had, I think it was a gallbladder operation, and in those days you just stayed in bed. You didn't get up, you didn't move around. And a blood clot hit her heart. If they had known more about the advantage of keeping people moving around, she would have lived much longer.

Q. How old might she have been?

A. Probably 60, mid-50's, somewhere in there.

Q. And her life never got easy I would imagine.

A. Never did and one of my regrets is that I didn't really know my mother. That I didn't really know very much about what she thought, what she valued.

Q. Well she was probably consumed all of her time just making the home and a place for you to live and take care.

A. That's right. I remember my mother would spend a day making a dozen lemon pies. And those pies would be gone in a week with four boys, and my father around. And then neighbors. My mother was a very generous person.

Q. You never knew your grandparents.

A. No. Right.

Q. How about other extended family members from siblings of your mother or your father? Did you have cousins that you knew?

A. No, I didn't. I don't remember any.

Q. So you grew up very isolated in terms of the relationships in this family.

A. Right.

Q. And one of the great surprises for you in life was to meet someone like Lee, who had the ability of sharing those ideas and concepts. Is that correct?

A. That's correct.

Q. And when did you know she was that special person?

A. Well, I can't remember exactly the year, '48, '49. She was a student that came into my class. And how does one talk about those initial meetings, but kind of chemistry, kind of aura about her, that attracted me to her. And I remember a very amusing story that Roy Liechtenstein told us and her later. That she came into my office. The office was really a big open area where faculty had individual desks, didn't have individual rooms as such. And she came down for some advice about her program, what she would be taking the next quarter or something like that. And I had a ruler, a yardstick, and I was tapping her on the head without realizing that I was doing that. It was a really strong attraction.

Q. The importance of this relationship is underscored by the fact that you did not have this kind of intellectual exchange with the members of your own family. You've not described it with Frank and you have said it didn't exist with you or your father or your mother. And in many ways was Lee the first person you found with whom you had that kindred spirit of intellectual exchange. You could talk about life, you could talk about ideas.

A. Well, I think you're talking about life, yes. In terms of ideas, there were other people prior to her. There was Roy Liechtenstein. Roy and I had a very good relationship.

Q. Did you discuss politics or science?

A. Not politics so much but mainly ideas related to drawing and painting; what makes a good work of art, or how does one teach. And there were other faculty around. A faculty member by the name of Professor Hoyt Sherman. These were the first people that I first had some ideas or where there was a dialog about ideas as such. But then when Lee entered my life, why it continued and was expanded so to speak.

Q. Before we close this session I want to go back to your dad, and the fact that it was very unlikely that any of you boys would be anything but machinists, that you would have anything but a hard life. And your dad saw you or knew that you became a college student, and then you became a college professor. Was he proud of that?

A. Oh, I'm sure he was.

Q. Somebody in his family.

A. He never expressed that but I'm sure he was. He had to be. Yeah.

Q. But it wasn't customary in that time for people to express those kinds of things.

A. No.

Q. To children. In part it was our European heritage, and in part it was the difficult times in this country during what was a horrible era between World War I and World War II, and the Depression, and the impact that that had on millions and

millions of families. But you clearly had opportunities in this country you would never had had in central Europe. And your dad saw you achieve them, and that must have given him great pride, whether he could express it well or not. In the areas of intellectual exchange you have identified Liechtenstein as being important. You met him on board a boat. Was it coming home from World War II or how did that story go?

A. This was at the stage when we were traveling to Europe by boat. And I remember being on board this ocean liner. And at a distance I saw this guy that I recognized as a student from Ohio State University. And I got fairly excited. And I came up from the back and I noted that he was making a drawing. And he was looking at some people. And I was very shocked to look at the drawing, look at the subject and there was no relationship. These were a bunch of what I interpreted as scribbles, as marks, on this piece of paper. And I thought that this was a bit strange. And I wasn't sure how much contact I wanted to make with him. But I did talk to him. And we had a brief exchange. And it wasn't until much later when we both returned from the war and became graduate students at Ohio State, that I made contact with him. And we developed a very good relationship.

Q. Well we're going to go and look at that era in our next segment. This is the end of Segment 1.

Q. This is the Ohio State University Oral History Program. This is the summary Csuri deposition Segment 2, recorded on Tuesday, June 10, 2003. I'm Robert Butche and here with me this morning is Chuck Csuri. Good morning, Chuck.

A. Good morning, Bob.

Q. Well we're going to continue now and move into the years after you had been a student in the arts department of the College of Education. And we're going to discuss how you went from being a student to being a professor. What was the first step? Did you start out with a teaching assistant's job while you were a student, or how did that story begin?

A. No, I believe I got my Master's degree and I was offered an instructor's position, which was a temporary position. I don't know that I even finished the entire year as an instructor. But that's where I began and then shortly thereafter I was an assistant professor.

Q. By shortly thereafter do you mean the next academic year?

A. I think it was less than the next academic year.

Q. Okay. Was Liechtenstein a student who graduated at about the same time you did?

A. Yeah, Roy and I graduated about the same time and joined the faculty at the same time. And since we were on the faculty and as students it was very natural for us to interact and develop some kind of a relationship.

Q. Why did this very talented New Yorker come to Ohio State to engage in art?

A. I'm not sure. That might be a good question to ask Lee. Lee might have more of an insight than I did. I sometimes think it's that his family wanted him to get away from the New York environment. They thought this would be a good experience for him. I really don't know. I've often asked the question myself. Why would he come to Ohio State, which was not known for the arts?

Q. Was he one of the better students in your classes that you recall?

A. Yes, I recall that Roy, his art work was always very interesting to me. Roy had a sense of style, a kind of wit, a kind of perception, that I found very intriguing.

Q. Well he was from a very different background than you, to say the least.

A. You better believe it.

Q. And his life had been much more privileged in many ways than yours had been. Were there other great students in that crowd that went on to careers in art?

A. I can't recall that there were other students. There certainly were very talented students who could have made a name for themselves professionally, but for one reason or another, they never went very far with it.

Q. How did Roy get along with the establishment in the department at the time?

A. Well, I think Roy got along reasonably well.

Q. Would that be Sherman now that we're talking about, who had been the principal figure?

A. Sherman was the central figure who had some ideas about Gestalt psychology perception and vision in art, that were of great interest to Roy and to me as well. I think Roy's wit and style, manner made him a very likable person. Many people liked him personally. On the other hand, intellectually he was quite an opponent if you were opposed to him.

Q. How did he fit into the faculty? Was he a smooth fit with other people, or were there rough edges?

A. Well, I think in terms of the daily operation, in terms of his teaching and willingness to cooperate with people, he was very good. I think where there were problems is when we would sit around in a faculty meeting in trying to decide,

what should be the education for the art students. What should be the curriculum? What should we be teaching? This is where it became difficult for him and some other people.

Q. Did he have different ideas on the curriculum as opposed to how it was being operated here at Ohio State?

A. Not really. It's that he was a supporter of Hoyt Sherman, who was the one who was the advocate of a certain point of view about the teaching of art. I don't think Roy came here with any special ideas.

Q. Was Roy cut out to be an academic? Or was he the Savant that became so famous later in his life?

A. That's hard to say. He could have been. I think Roy could have continued in academia for the rest of his career. It's not that he didn't fit in. I think that he ran into a kind of political system at Ohio State that made it very difficult for him.

Q. In what way? Was it because he was Jewish? Was it because he was outgoing? Was it because he was opinionated? Brash?

A. I think it was that he had very strong opinions. To what extent it was because he was Jewish, I don't know. I think it was primarily because of the strong position that he would take.

Q. Were there other Jewish people in arts at the time?

A. Good question. I hadn't thought about it in years. I don't think so. It's possible that the Jewish thing may have been part of it.

Q. In my history on the College of Education one of the things that is very clear is the degree of WASP intent that existed within the College in the period between

1920 and 1960. Blacks were not enthusiastically received and Jews were not enthusiastically received. And I'm sure that would have applied in the arts as well, and I'm just wondering if you saw it or had a sense of it, or whether Roy ever commented on it.

A. Roy never commented on it and now that you mentioned it, it may well have been a factor that I was unaware of, in terms of why he was denied tenure.

Q. Were there any Blacks in the department at the time?

A. No, there were no Blacks.

Q. How many women were there in the department at the time?

A. I would guess perhaps half a dozen.

Q. Of a total department faculty size of how many?

A. At the time perhaps 20.

Q. Did you and Roy teach similar courses?

A. Yes. We taught the same kinds of courses in drawing and in painting.

Q. You've indicated that you were both supporters of Sherman and his vision at the time of arts at Ohio State. Who were the non-supporters? Who was it that would have taken issue with Roy's and your support of Sherman?

A. One of the strongest opponents was Manny Barkin, and now that you've mentioned it, it reminds me Manny was Jewish. And there were some art historians that were strongly opposed to it, and other faculty simply felt it was too rigid a point of view.

Q. The chairman's point of view was too rigid.

A. Yes, too rigid.

Q. That there ought to be multiple facets of the program at Ohio State, or ought to be another single facet.

A. No, multiple facets. They wanted more flexibility.

Q. And did that include all of the artistic media. For example, did that apply to non-drawing or non-painting arts?

A. To a lesser extent to ceramics. To some extent to sculpture. But it was primarily drawing and painting. I think that the Sherman view so to speak was that there should be a basic program in drawing and in painting, and a student should be taught certain principles, certain concepts about what is a good drawing or what is a good painting, and how to approach the problem of making a drawing or a painting.

Q. The historical profile that we see of Hoyt Sherman is a man who was didactic, opinionated, self-centered, egotistical.

A. Yes.

Q. And one was not very supportive of the work of others. Does any of this bring back memories to you?

A. Oh yes, this is Hoyt. Hoyt is a interesting character. I have to think of him as a character in hindsight. He was from Alabama but he spoke with an English accent. Self-consciously.

Q. Some people called that his Dixie affectation I believe.

A. Is that right? And it was really amazing, you could never guess that he was from Alabama if you were to meet him. That that was his background and history. But you're absolutely correct, he was not very supportive of other people.

Q. And he wasn't very trustful of other people.

A. That's right.

Q. If we were able to look inside his history today we probably would not find him strongly supporting people that he worked with or he worked for. And yet you're painting a picture of you and Liechtenstein being particularly, what do I want to say, being particular advocates of his way of thinking and planning.

A. That's right.

Q. Were there others? Were you and Liechtenstein the only two or where there others?

A. No, there were others. There was Bob King, the Cottrells, and there were several other faculty that were very supportive as well of the same ideas.

Q. At the time you were in the College and at the time you became a professor in the College, and I think at the time you reached tenure, you were still within the College of Education, that department. Was that a good arrangement? I'm asking the question because it really forced this interest in art education on the program, and I don't have an opinion whether that was good or bad, do you?

A. I think that it was very good for the art department to move out of the College of Education, because of the strong influence of the College of Education. And the strong tendency to limit the kind of professional focus that some of us wished that we had in terms of being an artist, so to speak.

Q. There were good days and bad days in that period, and I'm thinking now primarily of the 1950's. What were some of the good things you can remember? With students' good accomplishments, good activities.

A. Well, I think as a teacher you would take pride in having a good exhibition of student work. At the end of each quarter, we would have exhibitions, and this was an opportunity for faculty to view one another in terms of what they had accomplished, based upon what the students produced. And there would be prizes awarded to the better students and so forth. And it was probably used as a yardstick to judge which of us were good teachers and which were not, that kind of thing.

Q. Chuck, one of the things that was very different in the department then as compared to now, is that when you were deeply engaged in the traditional arts, it was the job of the faculty member to be a producing artist.

A. Absolutely.

Q. And that's pretty much not the case today at any school, as I understand it. Is that your understanding?

A. Yes, that's correct. You see, when I joined the faculty the chairman was James Hopkins. Even though he was a chairman, he still took great pride in producing paintings, and spent as much of his time as he possibly could in producing art. And he supported the idea that the faculty members should teach one half day, the other half they should be producing art in their studio. It was not always possible to arrange it that way. But that was the kind of thing that everybody would strive for.

Q. The historical record suggests that Hoyt Sherman in particular was not prone to support his faculty over a long period of time, and that one of the people he did

not support or who he had a falling out with, was Roy Liechtenstein. How did that come about?

A. I don't know that he had a falling out with Roy as such.

Q. Isn't it true that he did not recommend Roy for …

A. This is what we suspect, that he did not support him for tenure.

Q. Yes.

A. Have no way to really know that, because this was something he would never talk about openly. But I believe that to be the case personally.

Q. Well, it's unclear from the historical record what the cause of that was. There is some suggestion that it was jealousy of Roy's increasing success. In other cases, there's people who merely suggesting that it was a political difference of opinion. Do you know or do you have an idea that we ought to leave the future researchers about how that came about?

A. Well, I think it was mainly a political difference. I think it had to do with the strong position that Roy had took about the teaching of art.

Q. Did he reverse and turn against Sherman? Was that the cause of it?

A. No, I don't think so. I think he supported Sherman all the way through. And I think that it was certainly not the case that he was extremely successful. Roy was not successful in that period of his life. In terms of his exhibition record and so on, it was rather ordinary, nothing significant.

Q. Are you describing his work during that period as being ordinary and insignificant or merely the commercial recognition?

A. The commercial recognition. I don't think that his work was ordinary. I would never call Roy's work ordinary. I think long before he realized his statement as a pop artist, that the kind of work that he did was always very interesting to me. His approach to drawing and painting, the kind of subject matter that he was interested in, and his ability to communicate his sense of wit and sense of humor in his art work.

Q. According to the documents that are found here in the archives relative to that period in the College of Education, it was customary, particularly for Dean Cattrell, to approve all tenure recommendations that came from department chairmen. So we see no reason to assume that it was the college that cut off Roy's academic career. What do you know of Roy's feelings? Did he know it was coming? Was he deeply engaged trying to sell the idea? What I'm after is, why was he so hurt when it didn't happen? He must have been expecting it, driving for it. Did he tell you about it? Do you recall?

A. I don't recall a great deal except that it came as a surprise.

Q. A hurtful surprise.

A. Yes, it hurt him. It was a shock to him. He was reluctant to express his anger but clearly he expressed it to a certain degree. But we all believed that it was, at the time at least, that it was primarily on a political basis and a difference of point of view between Roy and most of the people that were in control, so to speak. People that were making the decisions about tenure.

Q. Was it anybody other than Sherman insofar as you know?

A. I don't know, I really don't know.

Q. You had already achieved tenure, had you not, before his name came up? Is that correct?

A. I'm not clear on that at this stage. I think we came up about the same time.

Q. Well I was thinking that you had come up the year before and that you had already achieved tenure when he went up, when he was recommended for it.

A. It may be the case, Bob.

Q. In those days, it took other faculty members to recommend tenure.

A. That's right.

Q. And then they write up the reasons why and all of that goes to the chairman, who then makes his recommendation, and the dean makes the final decision.

A. Right.

Q. And we have no evidence to say that Dean Donald Cottrell did not turn this one down. It simply we have no evidence that he ever turned any down, and that's why I was asking you about what Roy knew about it or would have said about it. When was it obvious to you that he was angry enough about this to leave?

A. Well, I think when he was denied tenure, then he had to leave following the recommendation, that he had to move on. And that he had to find another job somewhere.

Q. Where did he go?

A. I think at that point he went to Cleveland. He was in Cleveland for a time.

Q. In another academic position?

A. I don't recall at this point.

Q. How did you and Lee react to this happening? These were people you knew very well and were very close to you.

A. Well, we were extremely disappointed.

Q. Did you think he had been treated wrong?

A. Yes, yes. Unfairly. Very much so, very much so. Because I felt Roy was still one of the better teachers in the department. He was very principled and very responsible, well organized, took his teaching very seriously, tried hard with his students, and had a great deal to contribute. He belonged on the faculty. We felt that way.

Q. Did others share that view, others of you on the faculty at the time? Was it discussed with others, do you recall?

A. It's hard to say. I don't think there was very much open discussion about it. I don't recall as such.

Q. Chuck, was this the first time you saw the University behave in an unfair way?

A. Yes, yes. This is the first time something like this happened.

Q. You had had good luck yourself, hadn't you?

A. Yes. I was painfully aware for the first time that it was a political system as much as anything.

Q. And up until this time you had always been on the good side of it.

A. Yes.

Q. Today it would be nearly impossible for someone to achieve tenure at this University at, you were barely 30 years old, you think?

A. Something like that, yeah.

Q. And you proved in many ways the value of that system to the University in the fact that it made it possible for you to do things untenured people couldn't have done during the remainder of your career. Was this a capricious or arbitrary act? What I'm after here is to begin to understand when you saw the University in a negative light, when you saw how it could do as much harm as it could do good.

A. Well, I think the Liechtenstein experience was an introduction to that idea. That's when I first began to feel it and to began to suspect that something else was going on. Something else is working here.

Q. Did it make you angry?

A. Yes, it made me very angry.

Q. In part because it separated you from a good friend over many years.

A. And the way we shared ideas and we had a good relationship. I felt that he was so much better than other people who had received tenure.

Q. And people lesser to his skill received tenure then and do now as well.

A. Yes.

Q. Because there are other measures involved here. There are politics, personalities, there's all kinds of things involved. Did you feel that from this experience that your faith in the University or the institution itself was shaken? Or were you simply angry at a single act?

A. I think at the time I was angry at a single act. I think my negative feelings about the University built up over the years as I began to see other things take place.

Q. Probably at the youthful age you were at at the time that Liechtenstein left, you probably didn't wonder, does this apply to me or when will this apply to me in

life. As we're older and more mature we can look back and begin to understand that there are patterns to these things. And that what we have done here at Ohio State is probably no better or no worse than what goes on in most academic institutions, in terms of the risks that we take in dealing in a political system. But this University has some other shortcomings that are really troubling, that come out of its Midwestern heritage. And that is, a lack of vision. A lack of understanding opportunity as opposed to risk; that we tend to be very conservative and to take safe outs. Were any of those factors involved in the Liechtenstein case? That they failed to see his potential or did it make a damn bit of difference?

A. It didn't make any difference. I didn't see the implications of the system, and I didn't really grasp the conservative nature of the institution and its lack of vision. That came later, as I started encountering other kinds of personal experiences.

Q. Were there any of those experiences during the remainder of your years within the Department of Fine Arts? Or did it only begin to show up as you broadened your interests?

A. I think it became more of an issue as I broadened my interests, as I got involved with computer technology. Then it became much more of a problem for me. It was a sense of isolation and simply not having any colleagues around that could share ideas. It gives one a sense of being isolated.

Q. There you were back being a teenager again, and not being able to share your ideas. Chuck, it's 23 months since we started research on the Charles Csuri career at Ohio State. It's been 18 months since we met with Professor Paul Klohr.

A. Has it been that long?

Q. Yes, sir, it has. In which we mapped out a general strategy of doing this the way that we've done. It's been 15 months since we did the preliminary interview in April of 2002. And we have now produced five volume complete DVD record of your years at The Ohio State University. And one of the things that we document is your vision, your ability to see things that other people don't see, your ability to appraise opportunities that others don't see. That has not served you well in your career here, has it?

A. No.

Q. Has that vision been a pain in the ass to you?

A. There is no question about it. It's been a real problem and continues even today, even though I'm not on the faculty, the insensitivity, the lack of vision just astounds me. The inability to seize opportunities, to move forward. And it just makes you wonder what kind of criteria do people use to look at situations and look at opportunities.

Q. That lack of vision is common to central Ohio.

A. You better believe it.

Q. It's part of the conservative farmer background that we come from, our agricultural heritage. It's part of the conservatism that comes from our industrial heritage. We don't take big risks and we don't do big things. And it permeates this University, as it has for years. If you look at how we advanced from our charter in 1870 to develop additional colleges, you see in each one somebody with vision took a risk and pushed it. That was the case of George Arps of course in the College of Education, and others, and the list is long. The University is very

broad. It has a lot of interests and maybe art wasn't one of them. What do you think? Is this University interested in its breadth? When you were in the Art Department did you feel that it was a solid foundation, that it was part of the University's mission?

A. No. I think so often I've had the feeling and tend to have the feeling even today, that the arts are an afterthought. That the primary focus is upon medicine today, biology, engineering, possibly architecture to some extent. Certainly agriculture. That when it comes to areas like the arts or philosophy, English, we need that in a University if we're going to call ourselves a University. But that's not what we're really interested in. That's the message I continue to get today.

Q. But you didn't see that in 1960, and then your friend introduced you to the computer, and you began to see what can-be's that others couldn't see. How did you develop those ideas? How did you ever get from where you were, a tenured professor in fine arts, to starting the digital revolution here at Ohio State.

A. I don't know how to answer that. I know that my friend Jack Mitton, the engineer who introduced me to the computer. Jack was a professor of civil engineering. It was a circumstance where I simply had an intellectual curiosity about what is a computer, what does it do, why does it do this or that, or what can you do with it.

Q. But you were not surrounded by people who had that kind of intellectual curiosity. You were a loner.

A. Well to a large extent, but I also had other friends that made me question the Sherman heritage, if I may call it that. I met a philosopher by the name of Elasao Veevas, who was a philosopher and aesthetician. Murray Kreeger, who was a

philosopher, a young philosopher. And they began challenging some of these ideas on a logical basis. And for the first time I began to question and began to develop some doubts about it. And I think Lee was an important part of it also. She had an intellectual curiosity, and we began to ask questions of one another, and review dialogues that we would have with our friends in philosophy about aesthetic issues and so on. And this made a big difference.

Q. Do you remember describing to your other faculty members in the arts that you were thinking about working with computers? Do you have any recollections of that? Did they encourage you?

A. No, they were very much opposed to the idea. But I was in a curious position in that I was a professor of painting. I was a highly regarded professor of painting and I was one of the few faculties, perhaps the only one, who was exhibiting in New York. And that had a certain prestige. Even though I wasn't getting high marks in New York, I was doing reasonably well. And so I had credibility as an established artist. People just didn't know what to do with me. They didn't know what to make of it. And I found no way to share ideas with them. It was such a remote thing. I found that I could have a dialog with a scientist rather than with an artist.

Q. I've heard it said the only thing worse than being around people who have no vision, is having it yourself. And you were very much in that position, of having this vision of what could be, of where arts might go, of where this University might go, and you had little or no support. In fact, you had people in your

department who became detractors, because you were wasting your time. Do you remember those people? Do you remember who they were?

A. In a very general way. There was no single individual that stood out. It's just that I got tired of the difference in the art department. And I found that the people in art education had much more of an intellectual curiosity about what I was doing, began to ask questions. And so I could engage in a conversation. And it really wasn't very long before I was invited to become a faculty member in the Department of Art Education. And at the time I thought it was a very good move. At least I could find a few people around me that would be intellectually supportive.

Q. Sherman never supported you, did he?

A. No. Sherman and I simply had no dialogue. Once I got involved with the computer, that simply dissolved whatever relationship we had.

Q. He's described you in some ways as being a turncoat, for turning away from the arts and going to other things. He was not very charitable in his view of you in that period.

A. I hope it's true.

Q. But he still very much benefits from your support during that period, when you supported his ideas. As a human being we know, as so many people on our faculty, he was not one who could not reciprocate that kind of thing. And it wasn't just you that he found fault with, but nearly everyone, if not everyone around him. Chuck, what began in the case of Liechtenstein, of seeing the arbitrariness of the University, began to impact your life at about this period. In

the years that you were starting out in computers and learning about them and founding the Computer Graphics Research Group, CGRG you saw the capricious, arbitrary nature of this University in its good and its bad. You had things happen to you you had no reason to expect to happen, and I'm thinking now of the assistance you got from Ned Moulton. And you had things happen to you that were very negative that probably should never have happened. The capriciousness of that has troubled you for some time. Do you remember the first instance of where it really began to bother you, where you began to think the University was taking advantage of you.

A. Well, I think in hindsight it's hard to point to a single incident

Q. There were many causes. I just wonder if you knew when it began.

A. I wish I knew how to answer that, I really do. I have difficulty in knowing how to respond to the question. I think it's a good question.

Q. Well there were two issues in those early years, one of which you got a grant of a computer and a graduate assistant as I recall, from the University that moved you strongly forward in this. And in fact, that was the capricious nature of the University on the plus side, that really set you in motion and allowed you to break free of the University's conservative views. But there were later instances where that turned very much in the other direction. And some of those events relate to that period when you were really bringing together CGRG, do they not?

A. Yes.

Q. And there were people who worked against you, both in the arts and in the sciences, were there not?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you remember those people. Do you remember what their motives were? Can we learn from that experience?

A. I think I got mixed reviews in computer science, for example. There were faculty members who certainly took the position, that guy doesn't know anything about computers, not really. What does he know about programming? What does he know about interface design? What does he know about artificial intelligence? Then there were a few others who could accept a broader view of looking at technology. There were a few of them that were supportive. I found as much support, perhaps even more support, outside of computer science in those early years. People in physics and in mathematics, who probably were not as intimidated by programming, by technology per se, who had another mission so to speak. They were looking at other issues and they saw computers as a means to an end. And I think those are the ones that could understand my interests, and I received encouragement from them. These were the people that encouraged me to apply to the National Science Foundation, which was a fairly outrageous idea in 1968. The idea that an art professor could get a grant from the National Science Foundation, who has no Ph.D.

Q. Or a grant from anyone.

A. Yes, and especially something dealing with technology. But as I talked to my friends at the computer center, the biologist or the physicist about visualization, and how you could look at information from a different point of view, they were the ones who said, "That's an interesting idea Why don't you put that down in

terms of proposal?" And of course I was so naïve, "What's a proposal? How do you write something like that?" And so I had to have all kinds of guidance, but I worked my way through that and applied to the National Science Foundation, really not believing much would happen. And of course a miraculous thing did happen. I received the grant.

Q. Did the University bureaucracy help you in doing that?

A. No, nothing whatsoever. They were totally indifferent to it. The people who helped me were certain individuals in the University.

Q. Wait a minute. The University not only had a lack of vision in this area, but once you started out, the infrastructure did not support you? Or you simply didn't ask?

A. I probably asked to the extent like, "Well, where do you apply? What's the format? How do you put some of these things together?" And we did have a research foundation, that there were staff who probably helped me walking through the steps that were involved in doing something like that. But these were not the people that were in any position to make any decisions about resources or whether or not it was a good idea or not.

Q. I think the record shows that all in all you raised several million dollars for the University. Was it six or ten or do you recall the number?

A. I think it's about nine.

Q. And was all of your fundraising of this type something you did on your own, without University support?

A. Yes, I did this on my own.

Q. How did that make you feel about this institution?

A. I felt that they were exploiting me, taking advantage of me.

Q. They were quick to use your name.

A. Absolutely and continues to do that today, whenever something comes up where I receive some kind of recognition or some kind of award. It continues to be the case. And I am resentful of that, and I feel that they have exploited me.

Q. And it all has to do with funding or other places where this has …

A. Well, I think where I find particularly great disappointment, it goes back to the lack of vision, where I see technology moving, where I see opportunities are kind of shifting in patterns and the way that we're going to use information in this society, in research and in education, that Ohio State, particularly a few years ago, was extremely well positioned to take advantage of that. But the inability to see what could take place made them resist the idea of some kind of support for staff, for equipment, for demonstration projects so to speak, where you could then leverage the demonstration project into major funding. Inability to see and it continues to be the case today.

Q. There's more here than funding. There's the issue of direction and support in other areas. Particularly I'm looking now at the Computer Graphics Research Group. Did it become an important part of the University once its capabilities were proven by you, or was the University's failure to recognize that one of the causes behind the creation of Cranston-Csuri.

A. Well, I think that the University certainly had taken advantage of the fact that there was a computer graphics research group, and it gave the University a kind of international prestige. I think that Cranston-Csuri came about as much as

anything, in that I saw an opportunity to move the technology in ways that had never been done before. And there was the notion that perhaps there might be some financial reward for me, that I got intrigued by the idea. I was also again encouraged by Ned Moulton on this venture. And he is the one that brought me together with Robert Cranston Knuss.

Q. Oh it was?

A. Yes. He brought us together.

Q. I'm glad we uncovered that. I did not know that he was instrumental in that. Has anyone in the University administration other than Moulton ever been supportive in concrete terms? That is, not laudatory but … Certainly this University did not ignore you for 30 years.

A. No, I think that we did have the case where I felt that of all the administration Ed Jennings, the President, was supportive to the extent where he gave me recognition, making me a commencement speaker for example. He is the one that supported the idea of a super computer center and contributed four million dollars to that project. But that's pretty much the extent of it. I think when it comes to the deans of the College of the Arts, they still didn't know what to do with me, didn't know what to make of it. We did persuade them to put together the advanced computing center for the arts and design, but the principal funding for that came from the Board of Regents. But we wrote the proposal, Tom Lenahan and I. And at the time there was money for such projects and persuaded the Regents to give some continuation money for that activity. And this is what really established the advanced computing center for the arts and design. It's not

that the College of the Arts decided, “Well let’s put some money into this project.” It came from an outside source.

Q. I only learned today in our conversations that you were deeply involved in origins of the Ohio super computer center, and we know of your involvement in founding ACCAD Advanced Computing Center for the Arts and Design, and separately the Computer Graphics Research Group, and Cranston-Csuri. What other academic or operational activities in this University were you involved in creating?

A. Well, that’s hard to answer. I don’t know that I can point to any others in particular. Maybe to some extent I’ve encouraged some faculty to, in architecture, to become more involved with software and have tried to encourage other faculty members to look at technology as either an art form or as a new look to deal with their discipline.

Q. As a state Ohio has a very checkered to poor record in support of higher education. It’s better in some periods and worse in others, and right now is a particularly difficult one. Doesn’t our University suffer greatly from this questionable support by state, and doesn’t it give us cause for this lack of vision of not taking roots, of feeling insecure all the time.

A. I don’t think there’s any question about it.

Q. Or do you just think there’s just bad people in this institution who want to stop good things.

A. Well, I don’t know that I would go so far and say there are bad people, Bob, but I don’t know what it is. It’s the case where, when we talk about technology today, particularly computer graphics, people say, “Of course we could see it coming.”

But the truth of the matter is, they couldn’t see it coming. As they look at it in hindsight they could see that it had value and it had potential. But at the time, at the instant, it was being formed, so to speak, there was no support, no understanding. And I don’t know. I think it’s the case that we tend to hire administrators who stand in the middle of the road so to speak. I've often wondered, could somebody with vision do anything at this University? Really? How much could they do? Because there’s so much resistance to radical shifts. The nature of an institution, the tenure system simply works against making any kind of rapid shifts in direction. And this forces a slow movement anywhere, any way you look at it. But I think that there have been golden opportunities for people in the research foundation, in the office of research, office of development, to bring together resources and fund those opportunities. Even today, there’s incredible opportunity. But if you mention that to them they just sort of, it’s like a blank face, they don’t understand.

Q. Is this just because you’re in the arts? Aren’t there other areas of this University that do get that kind of support?

A. It’s harder for me to answer that. I suspect there have got to be other areas. I think it’s particularly difficult when you’re trying to deal with something that’s interdisciplinary. The kinds of shifts in direction I think that are taking place involve interdisciplinary research. Where there is a collaboration between computer science, the arts, architecture, psychology or psychiatry. It’s harder to bring disciplines that are very different together, to collaborate on a problem. It takes a certain kind of leadership to be able to do that. It’s hard to find people

who can handle that somehow. There is a great deal of resistance on the part of faculty as well to changes in direction. In all fairness it's not just the administration. The tenure system, if somebody is doing something and establishes a certain reputation, but now things are changing, they're shifting, they're not inclined to shift or change.

Q. No, the tenure system encourages status quo, that's for sure, except for you and maybe that scares people. There are two areas that we're discussing. One of which is University support and the other is vision. We're going to talk more about vision later in the next segment. But when it comes to support, do you think that the University's failure to support you, and you are making that argument aren't you, that the University has substantially failed you?

A. Yes.

Q. Consistently, over nearly 30 years.

A. Yes.

Q. Is that a failure of omission or a failure of commission in your view? Are they just too dumb to see what you were doing? Or are they out to stop you?

A. No, I think they're too dumb to see it. I think that's mainly it. And I think the other thing that in a way worked against me, I was able to bring in my own resources. I got outside funding. And especially in the arts, they would say, "Well, why does that guy need support? Look he's got enough money to do what he's doing, whatever he wants to." And they move on and think about another area, and not inclined to focus on what my interests might be, or what my vision might be. That's pretty much it I think. I think for the most part, what's the

word, they're not bright, open to something that's new. It's a lack of vision. How does one talk about the lack of vision in people? It's a combination of insensitivity. You get angry, you say, "They're just simply too dumb."

Q. We're looking at the history of this University and we're trying to understand to what degree this is a failure on the part of our institution. Or whether or not this is a failure of mankind in general, or of large universities in general. Are you angry at this University? Do you think they have intentionally taken advantage of you? Do you think they would intentionally take advantage of you?

A. Well, I don't know how to answer that. To say they intentionally take advantage, I think it's just simply an indifference. They just don't care to do much of anything except support those things that they understand.

Q. So we've established we don't think there's a conspiracy against Csuri. Indifference is a pretty bad branding for this institution, and that's what you're branding it with.

A. Yes. And I think that it's hard to know how to talk about some of this. I think that there, I don't know. Let's rephrase the question again.

Q. Are you trustful of this institution?

A. No, I'm not.

Q. Because of indifference?

A. Yes. And because you tend to have an administration and faculty, mainly administration, that would support those things that they think is going to bring prestige to the University. And there tends to be the concept that prestige is based upon quantity. If you can bring in more research dollars, this makes you a better

University. Right now, there's a tremendous push to support medicine and the biological sciences. Well, that's what everybody else is doing. There are opportunities to do something new with information technology. Well, not many people are doing much in that area. Now your better universities, like your Stanford's and Harvard's, have a broader view. They don't think just in terms of quantity. They truly think in terms of quality. And you have people around who can accept more innovation that I think this University is capable of accepting.

Q. You're accusing the institution of having weak leadership.

A. Oh yes. Absolutely.

Q. Over a long period of time.

A. Yes.

Q. Do you know any other institution that would do any better?

A. I think this is likely to be the case in most public institutions.

Q. So it is not a particular problem here at Ohio State but general to the kind of institution that we have at this university.

A. The structure of the institution and so on.

Q. There are thousands of people wanting resources and seeing great things in their department, that are competing for funds and attention, focus at this institution. Isn't it possible that the leadership of the University is overcome by all of those demands and that it isn't just disinterest but it's overwhelmed by having more opportunities than it can accomplish or explore?

A. I think your point is well taken. I think it may well be overwhelmed. But at the same time, this comes back to the question of vision. That if you have leadership

that can make choices, somebody has to decide, even though there are all these resources, we make certain choices.

Q. You developed something very unique here at this University in the period between 1965 and 1995. Very unique. And most of what you brought in here left. It left Ohio, it left this University, it went to New York, it went to Hollywood, it went to other places. But a good bit of what you created left. And the institution that's left behind, in the case of ACCAD, is in serious condition. Not adequately supported, in part because of its multi-disciplinary approach perhaps. No one department is fully responsible for this animal. And you have tried to solve some of those problems including since your retirement. In fact, you've taken many ideas to the University and your most recent venture in that direction, I believe, was in July 2002. No, earlier than July, when you met with then President Brit Kirwin. What was the subject of that meeting and what was the outcome?

A. Well, the notion was to get him and Brad Moore, the Vice President for Research, to support the idea of a visualization center. And we had written a proposal and talked about what that might mean, how it would be an interdisciplinary center, and how it might benefit the University. And I'm sitting there in a meeting and here's President Kirwin, a theoretical mathematician, saying to me, "What's practical about this? What can we do with it?" He was thinking in terms of what kind of a payoff is there immediately, in the short term. Brad Moore, the Vice President for Research, the same kind of response, who incidentally has had a good record, of bringing in major support. But then is the model of where you

identify those areas that the government is supporting, and then commit resources to that area, to help build up some kind of momentum or demonstration that makes it possible for you to get to this major source of funding. But this does not really represent true innovation. Here's the thing that's so bizarre about my meeting with Kirwin. He's asking about something that will be very practical, with a practical outcome. And here's the field of computer graphics, where there was no commercial software for the first fifteen years. Look where it took us, where it has taken us. Unbelievable. And I believe that the ideas that I was talking about in terms of a visualization center and how we're going to deal with information technology, can take us to another position that can have tremendous benefits for the institution. Not just in terms of resources but in terms of our approaches to problem solving and the way we approach disciplines. The way we design curriculum. The whole thing. It's unbelievable. It just stuns me. I'm shocked that these people are idiots that they can't see it.

Q. Do you think it would have been different had Ed Jennings still been President?

A. I think Ed would have given us a shot. I think he would have at least might have said, "Okay, I can give you a few hundred thousand dollars. I can support a couple of people. Let's take it to another level. Let's come up with some demonstration projects." I think he might have done that, and that's what we were asking for.

Q. You've made several suggestions in the area of vision to this University, in fact just since you've retired which was in '91?

A. '90.

Q. And you still do. In our recent meetings with Jim Tressell, you saw some opportunities for him, for the University, in ways that technology might be used to improve athletics, and to provide new interest in and new support for scientific endeavor. In fact, almost anytime you look at something in the University, you very often see opportunities that other people don't see. Csuri is a very complex guy. He's angry at this institution, but at age 81 he's still working daily looking for ways to make it better. How in the world do you explain that?

A. Well, I don't know. I think that it's hard for me to remain quiet when I can see opportunities for innovation, for change, for new and exciting ways to look at the world. And I'm attracted to that. I guess I'm the kind of person that perhaps gets bored quickly and I need change. I need challenge. And I'm not afraid of new situations and new ideas. I find it very exciting. And I like to share that viewpoint with people. Many people are very uncomfortable with that kind of an attitude. And I think even today in my own art work there are days when I say, "Why in the world are you doing this?" And I think even today, in my own art work, there are days I say, "Why in the world are you doing this, you old fool. Stop it. Go play golf. Forget it. It's not going to make a bit of difference." But I finally come around to the position, it makes a difference to me. And I like to be able to go into my office and take a look at an animation run or something I've set up. Because the technology is too slow, I have to wait patiently for it to be responsive. But just to see what will happen if I did this another way. That in and of itself is exciting to me. And I think that, I don't know how to explain something like that. I don't know where that comes from.

Q. Chuck, you didn't answer my question of why it is you're angry at the University and you're still working almost daily to make it a better place, and to provide leadership where you see that need. Why do you give a damn?

A. Well, I'd like to see other people succeed. I'd like to see the program to be more successful. I would like to see an environment that would attract even better students. I would like to see a shift in the structure of the University, where they would come to their senses and put together something like a computer art department, rather than the kind of simple minded approach they have of having individual faculty members who are isolated in different departments. Bring them together so they can build up a sense of being comrades and have a feeling of kindred spirits, where they can share feelings and perceptions and ideas. I tried to argue the case for this fifteen years ago and it continues to be a problem today.

Q. Before we end this segment, I want to address the positives. We've identified the shortcomings that you see in the University pretty clearly, and yet they've done a lot of good things. They provided you a foundation. You told Jim Tressell two weeks ago that you thought you had had a great career here at Ohio State, all the way through. I don't know of any other emeritus professor who has a University provide an office, graduate assistant support, computing equipment to continue to explore their field. The University has been supportive in many ways, that others have not enjoyed. Does that make you feel any better about the institution?

A. This makes me feel good about the environment I'm in. And I'm inclined to see this more as the response of individuals who are not necessarily in higher administration. This has to do with the director of ACCAD, with people at the

super computer center. And people are very good to me in terms of helping me with technical problems and being …

Q. But Chuck, these people are part of the University. Exactly the same as the people who have ignored you.

A. That's right. But I guess I tend to see them at another level. Maybe that's not fair.

Q. Well you like the ones who agree with you and like the ones less that don't.

A. That's like Sherman, right?

Q. Indeed.

A. When I retired, one of the arrangements I made was that through a provost, that I would have an agreement with the University, that they would be obligated to give me a budget of $10,000 a year, as long as I was professionally active. That's the terms of the agreement; it's a legal contract. And at the time it didn't seem like to be that much money, but it turns out today $10,000 worth of computer equipment is a pretty nice deal. And there was a point where Dean Donald Harris wanted me to retire and I was reluctant to retire three years before I had to. But I did so after, through advice from friends, I made this arrangement for this legal contract, about $10,000 a year. Then, at a later point, and I can't tell you what year it is now, but it's somewhere in the mid-90's, Harris wanted to terminate that contract. And I would have nothing to do with it. And then he had the Provost call me personally, saying, "Don't you think it's been long enough?" I said, "No, I'm professionally active. This is a binding contract. If you're going to make an issue of this, I'm taking this to the American Association of University Professors

and I will embarrass the hell out of this University. I will make them look like a bunch of fools." That stopped it. They never pursued it any further. And that was one thing that really made me very angry. This is why I think Harris is such a jerk. And then of course, at a later point, when I'd met him socially, I got the Sullivant Award after that, well I was a great guy you know. It's all such a farce.

Q. Chuck, part of growing up in Ohio and Columbus is growing up in an area of conservative politics, conservative people, not very visionary, not very curious about life beyond. We're pretty satisfied with how things are here in the hitherland. And the University is a product of that environment. But in your experiences at the University and the things that happened to you, both good and bad, some are not recorded as is customary. But here in the history of the University where we're trying to save its heritage for others, we want to talk about issues that have not been public or are protected. One of those places had to do with the bringing in of an eminent scholar into the college some years ago. About when was that?

A. Well this had to be sometime in the 70's, early 80's, I'm not sure.

Q. And at that time Cranston-Csuri had closed and you were director of ACCAD at the time.

A. No, I think it was before that. It was before that.

Q. Oh that's right, it came after. So you were Director of CGRG.

A. Right. There was no ACCAD at the time.

Q. Yes, now I have that time straight in my mind. Thank you. So in the mid-70's, the University decided to have distinguished scholars, and one of the places they

were to bring one is was in the College of the Arts, or was there the College of the Arts yet?

A. It was the College of the Arts, yes.

Q. How did that come about? How was it discussed?

A. Well, I think it was a circumstance where there was, I would guess, some Regents money. They decided that the College could have a certain number of eminent scholars. And the College of the Arts was entitled to one of them. It was something like that.

Q. Was this an effort to improve the graduate programs at the University, do you think?

A. Yes, it was supposed to improve the graduate program. The idea was to bring in somebody who was involved with art and technology, at a theoretical level, somebody who had a Ph.D., and some background in publishing articles dealing with art and technology.

Q. Do you recall, was there faculty involvement in this program at the time, or was it handled from the administration?

A. It seems to me it was handled primarily by the administration.

Q. And the dean at the time was?

A. I'm not clear. I think Andrew Broekema possibly, but I'd have to double check that. And the decision was made to bring in an eminent scholar and his name was Mehigh Nadin.

Q. Wait a minute, they already had the pre-eminent scholar in the field running ACAD, you, didn't they?

A. Well that may be the case but they wanted to bring in an outsider. They felt that we needed an outside influence to bring in fresh ideas.

Q. That's not a bad idea, is it?

A. No, it's not. Sometimes it works very well.

Q. And where was this person when they selected him?

A. I'm not sure what institution he was at, or whether he came in from Europe. He was European by education. And that may have been the case. Where he was actually teaching at the time, I can't tell you. I don't remember.

Q. Was he known in the field? Was it a name you recognized?

A. No, it was not a name that I particularly recognized. No, it was not. But apparently it was a name that was recognized by some people in more scholarly circles. It was certainly not a name in the field of computer graphics as such, or a name that I recognized as a producing computer artist. It was a theoretical position.

Q. So the University decided to bring in an eminent scholar in your field that you did not know, you had not met, and you had not heard of, and had no particular literature in the field that you were aware of.

A. Right.

Q. How did you feel about this?

A. I felt very strange. I certainly felt ignored. I didn't see why I didn't receive such recognition, because I had a record to support that. On the other hand,

Q. But you had a degree that wasn't a Ph.D.

A. That's right.

Q. And sometimes we get Ph.D.-itis in this and other colleges and universities.

A. I didn't have a Ph.D., that's right, and that certainly was a part of it. Also, you have to remember, I was not writing scholarly articles on art technology.

Q. True. You were writing funding proposals.

A. Funding proposals and involved with research projects and publishing papers for conferences, giving lectures at computer graphics conferences. And occasionally in the field of art.

Q. So this candidate was chosen, apparently without as you recall, and this is 30 years, we have to take that account, you don't recall there being faculty consultation.

A. I don't know the level of which there was faculty consultation. It may be that Lee might have a better memory of that.

Q. And they brought him in in the mid-70's.

A. Yeah.

Q. As a distinguished scholar, eminent scholar in the field.

A. Right.

Q. And how did he turn out?

A. Well it proved to be a disaster.

Q. Was he poorly received by the other faculty members?

A. I don't know that he was poorly received. He may have been. He was difficult. He was a person who was very arrogant, very self centered. And extremely opinionated. And we found him troublesome, to say the least.

Q. Was it because of language problems?

A. No, I don't think so. I think he had a good decent command of the English language. He had a good command of language.

Q. Did he have any course load, Chuck?

A. I think he offered some courses, yes. What his course load was, I can't tell you.

Q. Was he to handle Ph.D. candidates?

A. That was the idea.

Q. 'Cause you were handling Ph.D. candidates at the time, as I recall, at least on the science side.

A. Right.

Q. There was never a Ph.D. program on the arts side, is that correct?

A. That may be the case that he, come to think of it, he may have been assigned to art education.

Q. I see.

A. And I think that's how they looked at it, but it didn't last very long, because problems I think within the first year or so.

Q. Did you feel ill towards this man? Did you feel double crossed? Were you angry at the process?

A. Certainly I was angry at the process, but then at the same time I was so pre-occupied with my own research and I was getting all sorts of external rewards so to speak. Recognition from the field of computer graphics, from the field of art, that is to the extent from those people interested in art and technology. And so I had confidence in my own abilities and that part was okay. But I felt, in terms of the recognition, that I was clearly ignored.

Q. Now in fairness to the University, this is before you became renowned. You had a show, was it in ’78 or ’79?

A. No wait a minute, you have to remember, in the years he was brought in, I was receiving attention in magazines like Newsweek, I was getting some national recognition.

Q. So this was at the time of your emergence as a national figure?

A. Right. Walter Concrite recognized me, okay. And so it’s not the kind of scholarly recognition that one normally gets, but because I was in the vanguard, so to speak, of technological development, I was getting a lot of attention.

Q. And he was Dr., what was his last name?

A. Nadin. Nehigh Nadin.

Q. And was he writing scholarly papers or books in the field while he was on staff?

A. Yes.

Q. He was publishing.

A. He was publishing and this eventually became the source of the problem.

Q. Uh-oh, and what was the problem?

A. Problem of plagarization. Taking some of my material and some of the material of the computer graphics research group and producing parts of it in his own articles. Taking credit for work that he had not done, for ideas that he had not developed.

Q. For historical accuracy here, they brought in this guy, Dr. Nadin, who was to serve as the eminent scholar in the field in which you were the eminent figure or

emerging as the eminent figure at the time. And then he plagiarized your material as if it were his for publication.

A. Yes.

Q. This is the sort of thing that would really make people damn mad.

A. Yes, you got it.

Q. And did you take issue with it? Did you say anything about it?

A. Yes, I did. I said a great deal to him and I brought this to the attention of the Dean.

Q. Were you asking him questions of why he did or were you telling him how you felt about him doing this plagiarism?

A. Well, that's not clear to me how I handled it.

Q. That's a long time ago, you may have forgotten.

A. Yeah, I'm sure I handled it badly because I was angry.

Q. Because you were angry.

A. Yes. And communicated to the Dean that we were going to go public on this. That this was going to embarrass the University.

Q. What do you mean by we? You and Lee or the faculty.

A. Tom Lenehan, myself, and some other faculty.

Q. People that were in your group but in the faculty.

A. My group and also in the Department of Art Education.

Q. And that had to do with material he plagiarized with you. Well how did this then play out, Chuck?

A. What happened was that he was confronted by the administration and he could not deny because we had clear evidence that this was material that had been plagiarized. And he was forced to resign from the University.

Q. Were you the only one that he had, let us say, stolen ideas from?

A. That I'm not clear on at this stage. I would be surprised if there were not other people.

Q. Were his academic credentials such that you would not have expected this?

A. Yes, but at the same time, in hindsight it's clear that there was not a careful enough analysis made of his academic credentials, at least his publication record.

Q. Are you saying some of it was fanciful or incomplete or overblown?

A. Overblown, yes. And he may have misrepresented some things.

Q. But in your recollection it had to do with his research as opposed to his degrees or other academic accomplishments.

A. Right, it had to do with his publications in terms of his research, in terms of his concepts about art and technology.

Q. Well, how did he handle it when you told him your feelings about it? Did he apologize?

A. No, no.

Q. Or tell you you were wrong. That it just happened that he chose to use the same words and the same sequence you did?

A. He simply chose to do it and I think that other people, the administration handled it. I didn't handle it particularly. And he was confronted with this whole issue and then forced to resign.

Q. And the administration at the time was Ed Jennings?

A. I don't think so. I don't know who was the President of the University at the time. I'd have to go back and double check.

Q. It might have been Enarson because I think Fawcett left, as I recall, around '72.

A. Most likely Enarson.

Q. Most likely Harold Enarson. Okay. Who was a scholar himself and probably not very tolerant of such things. What was the upshot of this? What happened?

A. He left Ohio State. He came here as an eminent scholar with tenure, was granted tenure. A huge salary. Far above what the rest of us were making. And because it was such an obvious thing that he had done, the plagiarism was very clear, he had no choice, because he had to resign.

Q. Well he had tenure. He didn't have to resign.

A. But the University would have gone public about it. And I think he did not want that. So he made the decision to resign.

Q. Do you know that was the case or did anybody ever tell you?

A. Yes, I was told that was the case. And he resigned on the condition that the University not go public about this whole issue.

Q. So he suddenly resigned. Now they had missed the fact that you were suitable for this position before they brought him in. And he had kind of proven you were suitable for this position by plagiarizing your materials as his. Then what happened?

A. Then at a later point they brought in another eminent scholar in the design department at Ohio State, who to my knowledge, I have not heard a single word from him about him, since he came here at Ohio State.

Q. Is he still here?

A. Yes.

Q. And his name is?

A. I don't remember his name?

Q. You don't remember his name.

A. But this is so inconsequential. It just meant nothing to any of us.

Q. Well obviously it meant something to you. You said you felt double crossed and taken advantage of, and this was another step that the University had taken that made you feel that they were not supportive or understanding.

A. That's right, absolutely. This is one reason why there is a strong element of anger inside of me about the institution. Because of this Nehigh Nadin incident, and also the fact that after all of that, they still brought in another outsider as an eminent scholar.

Q. And all of this took place in a period in which the University was trying to parlay or build upon your work. That is, I'm assuming that when they brought in Dr. Nadin, that it was in some way an extension of your work, since you said he was in computer graphics. That was his particular field of expertise. They were seeking to broaden that. Are you still angry at the University about this? Do you understand how they might have made the mistake?

A. No, this is a part of the institution I cannot understand.

Q. And it had to do with the fact that they overlooked you twice or how they treated you during that period.

A. How they overlooked me twice, but as I said before, they eventually did one thing. They went along with the idea of the Advanced Computing Center for the Arts and Design. And I became its Director. And that helped me personally in that as a Director, you can credit your salary towards retirement, it's 12 months, whereas with a faculty member, your salary is a nine month contract. And so it meant something like a 20% increase in salary for me, together a 12 month assignment. And that's been a great benefit to me in retirement. So that was one good thing that they did do.

Q. Were there other people in that era who were similarly slighted?

A. I didn't know, I can't answer that.

Q. You never had anybody else complain to you that something similar happened to them, or that they were overlooked or slighted.

A. No.

Q. And during that period, were you as conversant with other faculty members as you had been in your early days? That is, were you socializing with other people in the College of the Arts, or were you ostracized because of the ACCAD connection?

A. Well, I had very little contact with the faculty in the College of the Arts once I became Director of ACCAD. And my dialogue for the most part was with faculty outside of the arts. And I was in a strange position where I had a certain amount of power, so to speak, and I didn't have the usual teaching responsibilities. And I

had the opportunity to do fundraising. And I think my role was such that I needed to establish relationships with people I felt could help the program.

Q. Very good. That's the end of this segment.

Q. This is the Ohio State University Oral History Program. This is the summary deposition of Charles Csuri, being recorded on Tuesday, June 10, 2003. I'm Robert Butche. This is segment three and with me this morning is Chuck Csuri, and we're going to talk about vision. And we're going to tie it into the last segment we recorded, and that is the many opportunities you've suggested to the University that were based upon your sense or understanding of where society or technology was going. Where do you think we are going today as a country? Are we going in a good direction?

A. That I don't know about going in the right direction, but I think about, let's go back and talk about an opportunity for a moment, and then we could spin out from that perhaps. I think that we really should establish what I call a Visualization Center here at Ohio State University. I think that we have the situation where technology is changing so rapidly that it's very hard for even the professionals in the various disciplines to keep in contact with new techniques, new approaches to problem solving, all really related to ideas about information technology. It's not simply the case where you might decide as a professor, if you're in, let's say, the field of psychology, well there's this software I'll just turn over to a graduate student and have them take a look at it and we'll apply it to my discipline to help me. That it's a deeper problem than that. That we really need a situation where there are experienced professionals in computer science, in the arts, in interface

design, people that know something about immersive technologies, about networking. And as new ideas come forward, they're able to grasp them, look at them, develop demonstration projects, and translate its meaning to other professionals in the field, to that psychologist, to that person in engineering, to help them with their discipline. That there should be a way to develop a dialogue between people who were in a position to understand rapid technological change, and translate that into terms that are meaningful to the rest of the culture, so to speak. That this is going to continue to be an increasing problem in the future, primarily because of the way things are driven, the way we have technology moving. I mean, there are a whole source of things with hardware and technology that are taking place. It's hard to know for the average professional to understand what's going on. You read a popular article about it or you might have someone talk about it at a conference, but it's not good enough. It has to be more than that.

Q. Well as this is recorded in 2003, technology is still very much controlled by Moore's law, is it not? And that is with each generation we double capacity and cut costs in half. That might not continue forever. But we're certainly influenced today in the fact that technology is changing That's why vision is so important.

A. Yes. And I think that, I see this, as a matter of fact, we even have our National Research Council, which is a group under the National Academy of Sciences, who are recommending that we look at information technology from an interdisciplinary point of view. That there be more of an ongoing dialogue between the designers of interfaces and the people who actually write code. And that there be an exchange to make it meaningful. This is going to become

increasingly important. That this has to be some kind of ongoing process. And I think a visualization center could at least serve as a demonstration of something like that. My hope is that this might have a greater impact and influence disciplines to look at their own curriculum from a totally different prospective, rather than thinking in more isolated terms. But that across the board, there be more of a multi-disciplinary approach to education.

Q. At all levels?

A. Yes, at all levels.

Q. So we're talking about K-12 as well as higher education.

A. Yes. I want that engineer to take an art course. I mean, I'm making the case for much more general education really. I mean, the specialization does us so much good. It's important. But it only takes us to a certain point because it quickly becomes obsolete.

Q. Your career has been based heavily on the concept of marrying technology and the arts, but in fact technology and the arts is a very small part of the world of technology today. Where is that technology taking us? What do you feel about technology ten or twenty or fifty years from now? What will be the importance of nanotechnology and super small machines? How is that technology going to relate to us as humans? What role will it play in the arts? Do you have visions or ideas in these areas you can share with us?

A. Well, purely speculation, but it seems to me that if we just, let's say at least start with the arts, with nanotechnology we're talking about computers that what, are a million times faster than what we have today? We're talking about being able to

process enormous amounts of data. And we're talking about being able to look at concepts of real time systems that we can't even consider today because we're limited by the technology itself. And I'm inclined to think that the notion of real time art object will become increasingly important because that will be driven more by technology that is with nanotechnology.

Q. Hasn't this been influenced in many ways by your recent work in the field infinity, of showing this relationship of what the future might be when we have the ability of having real time . The infinity series you've worked on could very easily become a real time, I think you've talked about having it as an installation in a place of art or in a place of business, where you might have this kind of artistic endeavor going on, where the machine is taking a basically sound artistic idea and running it through combinations and showing us variations. Is that what you're talking about here?

A. I think that's certainly a big part of what I'm talking about.

Q. Well you said real time and that's what it sounded like.

A. I started talking about, I wrote an article about real time in 1973 or 1974. I started doing demonstrations in 1970, with the idea of a real time art object. That's when the idea first occurred to me. And it's something I've always been very interested in. It's hard to know how far that will go because we're asking people to get involved with what we might call immersive technology.

Q. How do you mean that term?

A. Well you become engaged in the technology. You become a participant in the process itself. That there is a kind of relationship, in the case of infinity between you and the pictures, where you have some control over what's taking place.

Q. Well, you're VRML work certainly has that.

A. Yeah, but that can be extended to become more complex. And where the technology responds to your hand movements, to gestures on the part of humans. We have the outer edges of that here today with some new software that's coming out. And what I'm saying is that, I don't know to what extent people would enjoy being involved in that kind of process, because it takes time and energy on the part of the participant to be engaged. And as a culture we tend to be passive. We tend to want to keep things at a distance. In a way, it's like asking somebody who really doesn't want to move their hands or their bodies to do anything. Or even use their brains. They want to be entertained somehow. They want to be completely engaged by whatever they are observing. Maybe an art object that is so compelling that you become totally engaged. But the idea that the engagement involves your making some decisions, your involvement. You're making a decision about where something is in space or a color or an object, or what it is that should be in this space. That's a bit overwhelming and I'm not sure how far that can go.

Q. In your years of dealing with technology you've been at the cutting edge and most of that time the cutting edge was very slow and very plundering and very limited and small band width, and all kinds of limitations. Where do you think this technology engine is going to be ten or twenty or thirty years from now?

What kind of band width do you think we will have for computing power, and what impact will that have on our use of these devices in arts or sciences?

A. That's so hard. I don't know how really I might be able to answer that. I think that with easier access to information it makes much of what we spend our time on learning seem obsolete or unnecessary.

Q. True, yes.

A. That what we need to focus on is, how do we deal with concepts? How does one develop a broader vision?

Q. When you spoke earlier you thought nanotechnology would produce computers a million times more powerful than we have today. So what? What is the importance of that in the arts, or were you looking at it more as a sociological issue of what impact does this technology going to have on us as humans?

A. Well I think I was thinking more in terms of the impact it might have on us as humans. The arts are harder to figure. It may be the case, you know, I remember people saying, "Well once we had easy access to text on the computer screen, that books would become obsolete." Well, books have not become obsolete. In fact, it's a nuisance to read a lot of text on a computer screen. It may well be that technology will improve enough that the computer screen will be the pages of a book. I don't know. But there's always these high expectations, that these things will replace certain kinds of human behavior. But I think that certainly nanotechnology means access to data bases, to files, to informations, and things organized in such a way that it makes certain kinds of techniques or technical training that we can engage in obsolete very quickly. And the issues become

more about, well how do you look at information, how do you look at a discipline, what is the discipline? And conceptually where you come from. I mean, what does it mean to create a building, let's say if you're an architect, and you have robots that can make buildings, you have ways of putting together material that would be unheard of because you have machines that can do this. What becomes the issue now? What are you looking at? What can you take for granted or what are you likely to take for granted? And I think if I may go back to the arts for a moment, the one area that I have not been able to explore because I haven't had the resources to do it, which has to do with my notion of cognitive art objects. I've made attempts at it and have had some modest success. The idea that objects can become characters, objects can have behaviors. And that they can be engaged in a dialogue between one another. And then as the artist you set up a world space and a community of objects, and you decide on how those objects can live. How they can relate to each other, how they get involved in message passing, ask questions of one another. At what points do you give them freedom? What kind of freedom do you give them? What are the conditions and what are the actions? Then the creative process becomes a different kind of thing.

Q. That's algorithmic thinking that you're applying and it's foreign to most people to think that way, isn't it? Giving objects rules of behavior and so on, is not something most people would think of. And that raises this question, and that is, will there come a time do you think in the future, when artists will see, I'm not going to call it computer art but digital technology as being just another medium?

A. I think it can happen.

Q. Maybe the dominant medium, who knows?

A. Well, I think it could happen. I think one of the things that gives me some hope that this might take place is the technology itself becoming increasingly more powerful, capable of creating imagery, of being able to if you wish, print out imagery or produce imagery that can be displayed on giant screens or whatever. But the artist might have more and more independence as they get to the position of algorithmic thinking, but in the concept of what I might characterize as modular programming. The way people develop software today, they use a language called C++ for example. And it's a very tedious, time-consuming, and very rigid way of thinking. But I think that there are signs of developments taking place in software itself, in the ways you can approach programming itself. That will make that less tedious in the future. It does not eliminate the idea of algorithmic thinking, of logic, but as we develop more powerful tools for artists, develop their own custom software, their own personal set of tools, and in a way you are giving the artist more independence, capability of being more independent, with more powerful technology, with the capability where they can develop their own software, there is the prospect that you could have far greater important computer art and more people involved with computer technology.

Q. Is this University well positioned today to participate in this future you are describing?

A. No, I don't think it can because you see, to do some of the things that I'm talking about, you need more resources. It comes back to support.

Q. Is this going back to that Britt Kirwin didn't understand the problem before?

A. Yeah, I think that's part of it. It's that, alright, if the name of the game is that we ultimately need to get major resources, whether it's from the private sector or the public sector, what is a great advantage is if you can come up with demonstration projects, where you provide enough resources to show the potential of an area, of an idea, which gives the projects and the University more leverage to get major funding from either the public or private sector. That's the part that's missing, and this is where they need to take their risks. This is where they need to make commitments of equipment and people to test out these ideas. They need to bring together people and encourage them to share a kind of vision that speaks to the future, so to speak.

Q. Do you find anyone in the University who understands these ideas in ACCAD, in engineering, in computer graphics, in the College of Arts, anyplace?

A. No, I find it very rare. I find it hard to find. I think there are a few people that say yeah, yeah, that sounds like a good idea. But it's hard to find anybody that is very passionate about it, that really believes this to be true. I haven't been able to find many people like that.

Q. If in fact digital technology becomes another acceptable media in the arts, it will certainly exonerate you for having postulated that position in 1964. And it clearly will mark you as being one of the legendary figures in changing this view of art. Does that give you pride or pleasure?

A. It gives me some pleasure, to believe that might be the case. I'm not sure it will really make much difference because I won't be around to enjoy it.

Q. No, but we're alive today and you can contemplate it and that might be fun to contemplate, because that may well be the case. Secondly, if this vision of the future says that technology is going to impact our lives in so many ways including the arts, does that offset the negative qualities of what the technology has done. And let me give you two examples. One of the great accomplishments of your career was the Cranston-Csuri era and what came out of it and what was done, but eventually for whatever the reasons, that energy left the University and went elsewhere, primarily to New York and Los Angeles and other commercial centers. Similarly, the work that was done here in developing Renderman under your supervision and Al.

A. We did not do Renderman.

Q. Al only?

Q. Yeah. I thought some work was done on Renderman. And you look at the influence that Al has had, particularly on the movie business, and you can say, "Well, it certainly has created money. It's been successful but it hasn't necessarily advanced much of the art or the science, and hasn't done much for the artists." As a matter of fact, some people think today it's way overused and I wonder if the persons listening or reading this thirty or fifty years from now will even think about computer graphics and movies anymore. Either movies will be all computer graphics or none at all but it will be something different. Those are two areas of things that happened here and left because of a number of reasons, and support and vision were clearly part of that. Do you feel that your time in these areas was wasted because it left? Because it's no longer activities you're

directly involved in? Or have you been satisfied with this career of fathering many, many children, and having them grow up and leave?

A. Oh, it's I think that it's a source of satisfaction to me, to know that I set into motion a program that has produced some very talented people, and that they are involved in Hollywood films and commercial production of one kind or another. There's a part of me that wishes somebody would have been a pure artist but I don't know what that means anymore. I don't know to what extent that might be possible with technology as of 2003. But I can understand why they were involved in it. It's a practical decision and yet they were involved in creative ideas. And it's a pleasure to be able to say, "Yes, one of my former students worked on this film."

Q. I accused you not too long ago of being algorithmic in your thinking, a concept that many people will not understand if they're not into computer software and understanding the principles of software development. The University has today a pretty good course under Wayne Carlson in the history of computer graphics it would appear, and one that is fairly popular, and from what we can see well done. I can't find anyplace where the University teacher algorithmic art or algorithmic-art concept. Why is that? Isn't that part of your vision?

A. Let me see if I can respond in the following manner. I think one of my disappointments in the program I set into motion is how few students get involved in what I would call a truly artistic career, so to speak. That where the students, there are some exceptions, but students who really do something because it's a work of art, because it's not that it has some potential for getting them a job

working for a production company or one thing or another. That this is not a very great concern of theirs. But they are focusing on some concept about expression, about an idea, as an artist. I don't know that there's much teaching that's done in this direction. I wish that there were more.

Q. I don't find any here at Ohio State. Is there some that I have missed? Is there any at any other institutions?

A. That I can't answer.

Q. And yet this something that you practiced every day and have since you retired. You're engaged in algorithmic art, using algorithms to capture the power of computers to express an artistic idea. Is that idea going to die, Chuck?

A. I don't think it will die. I think it will take a long time before more and more artists become involved in it. What I'm involved in, you really need to have some knowledge of computer programming or three dimensional computer graphics. And data generation and it requires a variety of skills, certainly an understanding of some concepts in all of these areas. That what attracts many artists to the computer unfortunately, is something like PhotoShop, a two dimensional concept, where there is a very strong link between whatever experience they had in drawing and painting, and then the computer monitor.

Q. Or CorelDraw or the other software packages.

A. Right.

Q. And these are nothing like what you do?

A. No, right.

Q. In those cases the user applies their skill against this hook to generate an object or image.

A. Yeah.

Q. In your view, you don't do that. You don't draw for the computer; you give it a data base so it understands a shape in space, and then you use its abilities to modulate, articulate and change that data base to create an art object. And the work that has come out of you, particularly in this last ten years, is absolutely phenomenal. Without even getting into inventing a new art form like infinity. But just looking at the things that you've done in algorithmic art, that you've done prints of that are gorgeous pieces of work. Shouldn't that persist? Isn't that part of the vision of the future?

A. I would hope that would be the case. I might mention one other thing, is that a friend of mine observed that the software that I use is not that sophisticated.

Q. No, as a matter of fact it's very primitive in my view.

A. It's not the state of the art. But it's the way that I use it, I think, that makes the difference. And there are much more powerful tools out there that one could use.

Q. Have you ever wondered what would happen if you learned to use some of the more powerful tools, what you might do?

A. I worry about it, you see. It's a reluctance to maybe learn more. It's a fear of being consumed by technology.

Q. True.

A. By keeping it simple I keep a primary focus, which is that of being an artist. Whatever tools I have I learn them well and easily.

Q. But let us underscore for the reader, this is recorded in 2003, and the base part of your technology is eight to ten years old. That's ten iterations in the computer business today. It is very primitive but it produces very sophisticated results as you interface with it. Well let's not go further with that. We've talked some about vision. We're going to end this segment here. Cut.

Q. This is The Ohio State University Oral History Program. This is the summary deposition of Charles Csuri, made in the afternoon on June 10, Tuesday, the year 2003. I'm Robert Butche and with me is Chuck Csuri. Well as I mentioned earlier, it's been 23 months since I started to work on this project, 18 months since you've been engaged in it. And during the last six or seven months you have been engaged almost full-time, seven days a week, in some ways in putting together this historical record of your many fabulous careers here at Ohio State. We've covered a lot of interesting material. We've involved a lot of interesting people. I've gotten to talk to former students in Hollywood. You've had a ringing endorsement from a championship Buckeye football coach. What's it been like for you to go through this experience, of making five DVD's, preparing material. Has it brought back pleasant moments in your career, of your life?

A. Well, it has brought back some pleasant moments but it's been also a very strong experience.

Q. Uh-oh.

A. Well in the regard of one looking at their own life.

Q. It's like an out-of-body experience I expect.

A. Yes, it's like I died and I came back to see what in the hell did I do.

Q. Well this is quite a eulogy then, isn't it?

A. Yeah. And questions like, "What does it all mean?" All of those things come up. And I found in many ways it's been very exciting and very meaningful. It's been meaningful, I'm just saying that psychologically it's been some what perplexing, to say the least.

Q. Has it been fun? Has it been a challenge?

A. Yes, I think for the most part it's been fun. I've certainly enjoyed meeting you and Kip and Bill and others that have been involved. This has been a very good thing.

Q. This Kip fellow is the Richard Patterson that you see, is our chief engineer and our credits, and Bill refers to Dr. William Moore, M.D., has been very instrumental as a volunteer.

A. This has certainly worked out well and I feel like I've made some good friends. I think I've also continued to learn some things about technology.

Q. It's amazing to work with you, Chuck, and to see how much you've learned for a man that's about to turn 81. You have a very active learning mind. This has been a funny experience for us as well. For one thing, it's grown considerably from where you and I first talked about it with Paul Klohr on that day in 2001. It seems a long, long time ago. And we talked about the fact that it was going to be an oral history and we were going to do some of it on DVD. And then as we decided how much to put on DVD, it got up to be five volumes. Essentially you and I and Kip and Bill and others have produced the equivalent of five full length movies on your life in the last six months. That's quite a bit. It's put an awful lot of demand

on your time, and on Lee’s time. But I could tell when we did volume two, you remember that snowy January day, we did it up in the library, which I think was outstanding, that Lee was enjoying this at least as much, perhaps more than you, because she was seeing you get recognition that perhaps she thought had not been before, from the University. Which was quite an amazing thing. Do you have any fond recollections of things that were fun or shocked? Did you enjoy it the day Kip and Bill invaded your house and were running around with video cameras. It was near 100 degrees and they had you out in the backyard.

A. Well, I think that seeing my work in this format has been an interesting experience. Somehow it has made it seem larger than life to me. The nature of the technology has made my work look more important to me than I thought it was, that kind of thing.

Q. Certainly with the digital art and seeing it with a plainer animation that we did give it an impact that just blows you away.

A. It’s just amazing, and then the notion of being able to put this on a giant screen is exciting. And then, the prospect of reaching out to the world in ways I never thought would be possible is an exciting and meaningful thing to me. As we sit here today, we just had word, in discussions you’ve had recently with the Ohio Super Computer Center, that some of this material, perhaps all of it, might end up on the very wide band width internet too, between universities. We know that the University is planning a roll-out later this year of the DVD series, planning to bring former students back. It looks like all in all that the project’s going to be

successful and probably bring you a very, very nice round of applause late in life. That's not a bad experience at your age.

A. No, I can't complain. But you know the thing that I like so much is the prospect that people in various art departments around the country, where there is some faculty member interested in art and technology, will use this as a way to communicate with their students about how they should look at technology. And that in many ways through this project, I'm likely to have a greater impact on the country, maybe even the world, than I ever thought might be possible. Primarily because of the way that the information is being presented, in the idea of let's say my traditional art, my early computer art, the early and late digital animation and animation itself.

Q. You blew us away when we were producing volume three and you were interested in doing the plainer animation of your own images for the discussion.

A. Incidentally, I have yet to see that.

Q. Well, we'll be very glad to show that to you very shortly. But the point here is, this was a new and challenging way of expressing yourself artistically with your own images, and you're like a 14 year old ready to dive in and have at it. That's really been a hallmark of your career, this willingness to try things and experiment with things.

A. Well, I don't know. When I think when I was teaching drawing and painting, what did I do? I reached maybe over my, as an 18 year period of my life, I might have reached at best 1,000. That might be exaggerating it. Students. Maybe 500.

I haven't done a count. But now with this DVD technology, my God, this could literally reach millions of people.

Q. Yes. Good.

A. And who knows? It might help shape the field. It's an interesting prospect.

Q. Very well might. And that is an interesting prospect.

A. Hey folks, you know really you still have to study art. It takes something more than technology to be an artist. And don't get seduced by technology itself. That in and of itself is not going to make the art.

Q. Well for all of us who have had an opportunity to work on this project with you, we've come to know you and to love you and to respect you, and it's been a great experience for all of us, for which we are thankful. Because this has been a labor of love from a lot of people. And we're pleased with the outcome and we look forward to seeing it when it's rolled out in November.