

## J a c o b   C a r e f

**July, 1998. Can you tell me, maybe start at the beginning, what were the circumstances that brought you to Columbia College?**

Somebody recommended me, recommended me to Columbia College. Who was it? I remember... who was it, I remember, I forget her name. I knew Mr. Alexandroff, I worked for him in 1959.

**In 1959, here?**

Not here, by his house, in his house.

**Oh! What were you doing there, what kind of work were you doing?**

I was doing the carpentry, cabinets, the basement, to finish the basement in 1959. And then in 1964, a woman recommended me—the wife of Bud Salk. I was working there by them, in their house. And she recommended me to—she recommended me to Mike Alexandroff, and Mike Alexandroff, they recommended me... [He has a] college, it was at 504 West Ohio Street, he had a job to do, something. And so I went there, and that was 1964, I think. And I did a job... and a couple weeks later—and a week later I did another job, she called me, and another job, they called me there. And in '66 or '67 I started, he called me in and told me, he offered me a job, I should work steady for him. He says, "You are getting exploited anyway, let me, I exploit you," he said. And I liked the way he said it, you know? I liked very much the way he said it. "You're getting exploited anyway." Men can be very nice to men and just—it magnified me, [it was work], you know. And

we became very friendly when I start to work steady.

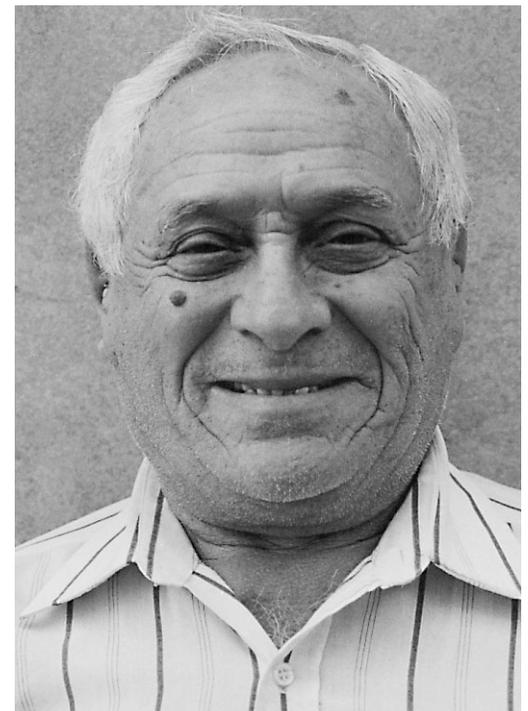
**So tell me about these jobs you did before, what kind of jobs?**

I did a job, a good job was for the television studio. I did backdrops for the television studio. There was—at that time was the Chairman from Television was Thaine Lyman. Thaine Lyman, wonderful person. He used to work for WGN, engineer, the main engineer. When he used to teach it was all day here from seven o'clock in the morning 'til the evening. Thaine Lyman, very dedicated man. At that time it was very—I don't know... all the people was working at that time, in the beginning, from '64, all dedicated: [There] was Bob Edmonds, Film Chairman, really dedicated. Same thing, he was there all that year. [God bless Sonati Joseardi.] At that time there was a—at that time, DeKovic was Photo, then Newberry took over in '67 and I build the first—the Photo started, I build two little rooms. Not two, one room, three feet by three feet. And I went on Maxwell Street and got a sink where the women washing clothes, I call this a sink like that, I got it for something, for ten dollars, but the College didn't got no money, you know. And I did the plumbing, I did—from three foot by three foot, that start the photo. And in '68 I did already Photo, I did for... when I started, it was 170 students that day. That's all, that used to be it. And then a couple years later it was already two thousand, over two thousand. And I built, the Photo was very big, the photo, Newberry was, and I built darkrooms, and still the [traps] for the darkrooms, still now, what all the contractors

are doing, they are doing my copy, they copied everything from me what I did. And by the way, all these things what I made for Photo was from plywood. Plywood sinks, and I get marine, marine—how you call this? Varnish, marine varnish, and fiberglass, in the corner I put in fiberglass. Not one thing was leaking, from plywood. Instead of a sink what used to cost, that time, five, six hundred dollars, I made a sink for two hundred dollars.

**Wow.**

For fifteen dollars, I made a sink. With two by fours, that was good at that time. What else I have to say is that all the people that worked from the beginning was very dedicated. I built the first, I mentioned the photo, the same thing I built for the film, I built rooms, the same thing for holding the film, all the boxes for the film; cabinets and everything. I was very busy. There was a Dance Center; we are quite—oh yeah, I forgot, we had a building on School Street and



Sheffield, the Theater, Theater/Music. I remember-and that must have been in I don't know, maybe '71, I don't remember exactly the year what it was. But I remember in the theater, I used to do the props for the theater. And I remember I built a stage, we showed the stage...

**A whole stage?**

Huh? Yes, a very big stage. I built a stage, a round stage, thirty-two people, forty people, forty actors, in one pass, was able to do the stage all the way around. The play was a Chinese play, from Fan Shen. I think it was going, this play was going on five year, I think everyone in Chicago saw it. The play Fan Shen. I don't know who wrote it, it was a book, Fan Shen. But they came, two teachers from San Francisco, and they presented a play, the Fan Shen.

**Did they join the faculty?**

They were the faculty; they were here for a couple years, this faculty, Theater faculty.

**Who were they, what were their names, do you remember?**

I don't remember names; it's really bad, I don't remember. You can ask Mr. Alexandroff, or Bert Gall, he will tell you, Bert Gall was already in that time. You can ask him, I think one was Davis, I think.

*(Laughs)* I don't know. Then we had Bill Russo used to—every Saturday and Sunday, and Friday night, used to be concerts, musical concerts. [It was all respect, you know, there was a couple other theater seats], you know, but that started the College growing that time, that was in '69 or '70. That was good. When we were running in '71 or what it was, over two thousand people we had.

**Now tell me, at these concerts did you have things to do, or did you just go home and take it easy, or did you have to make sure everything was not falling down?**

I, sometimes I used to—you ask me about that I'll tell you just one job. For the Dance Center, all the lights what is in Dance Center right now, I did it with two students. That would cost now, a contractor would cost now a hundred thousand dollars to do, and I did it in two weeks with two students, three weeks with two students.

*(Laughs)*

That's nothing yet. I remember another job in Dance Center, they brought in material on Wednesday, noontime. We supposed to build risers for the Dance Center, we got bigger, for Shirley Mordine. And they brought in the plywood, there was a lot of plywood maybe fifty sheets, or who knows, I don't remember, anyway, the risers for the chairs for a couple other chairs, risers. They brought the material Wednesday noontime, I unload it and I start to work Wednesday. I worked Wednesday all that day, Wednesday all night, Thursday all day, Thursday all night; by Friday, one o'clock, was done the job. But the concert was Friday night, and I told them we'll do it.

**Wow.**

But the Theater, most names... [first names] for Theater, Vanessa and Don, I don't know their last names, but Vanessa and Don for Theater. They were terrific. They grew the theater. Vanessa, Don. For Film, Bob Edmonds, Newberry Photo, they were very dedicated; and Thaine Lyman. There was another, was another man [at that point], I forgot his name... Bouras. He died, Bouras died young.

**Oh yeah. I've heard about him, tell me about him. What do you remember about him?**

He was a fascinating man. He was able to take a look at a book, he had a photo memory, he'd look at the page. And he was a good lecturer. He was actually a little bit on the crazy side, I would say so.

**You went to some of his lectures? Huh?**

**You went to his lectures?**

Nothing special, no, I didn't, no. That was the politics, you know. In that time, the College was still two thousand, three thousand people, we were like a family, all of that. You know, I came to the States in '49, I myself; I am born in Poland. And I went through the Second World War and my whole family died. They asked me what I am and I said, "My father and my mother were Jewish but I don't believe in the religion, I don't believe in that." When I saw what was going on in the Second World War I was asking, "Where's the God?" And fifty million people got killed for no reason in the war. And the Nazis killed the Jewish people, the Gypsies, and other nationalities, you know, where was the God? As a matter of fact, I was born and raised very religious. But I became, after the war, I start to analyze things correctly, you know. Then what I saw with my own eyes. And I looked elsewhere, I can't believe, you know, that's why I'm an atheist. I don't believe in that. Now I find...

**You were going to be a priest, weren't you? A Jewish priest**

*(laughs)*.

[I was Jewish] but not the religion. I'm a [caen]. [I came to the Christendom]. And I used to bless, let's say, my father used to take me

on Saturdays, holidays, in the Jewish—then we used to bless the rest of the people. And the irony of that, I myself, the way I blessed them and then everybody got killed: even my father, my mother, my sisters and brothers, my family, the whole family, a couple other people—I don't know how I came alive. I don't know.

**How did you survive?**

I don't know. I don't remember. It's blacked out by me, everything now. But that's not the point. The point what I want to bring out, when I came to the College and I meet all the people and I meet Mr. Alexandroff. He really, he was such a man to me, I saw such, so much, humanity, humane in him. It was for me, I would have to say a pleasure to work, to be there. I took it—a matter of fact I took a cut in wages. I used to be a good carpenter, I used to always work and make good money. He gave me a cut in wages; but it was pleasurable, I was very satisfied, and another thing, all of the faculty as I, I as a carpenter, you know, I used to go out with them together, Mr. Alexandroff always we used to have a party, he used to invite people for fund-raisers. Always he used to invite me home, Mr. Alexandroff, to all the parties. I was the first guest always. We got the—you know, for me it was a pleasure. That's why I worked everything, I tried everything. I used to go to these people to buy wholesale everything. Like a table used to cost eighty dollars; I used to pay twenty-five dollars, you know? I get the table from some other material. I used to go buy wholesale everything. I saved the College thousands and thousands of dollars, you know, I saved every year, over the years. Like I said I made these sinks, sinks from plywood. Can you believe it? Sinks from plywood, you

know. The sinks was for ten years maybe, they used these sinks. They moved out here to start already, we moved in here in '75 I think, on the Michigan Avenue, 600 Michigan. We moved in '76. Then in '78 I think we started to order stainless steel, the College had to have stainless steel sinks. Now all these sinks, there was a leak in the sink in everything that they made. What else can I say? I worked there a lot for the drops. I worked special for Vanessa, with Vanessa and Don, she was a good designer. And I worked with her a lot, Vanessa and Don. I worked for the Dance Center by Shirley Mordine. I did a lot of work to try-well, I remember the first day the Dance Center was on Wells Street, 1600 North Wells Street, 1600 something, North and Wells. I remember the first performance. But that performance I remember a very big wall, it was ninety feet long, ninety feet by ninety feet. And I made somersaults; I used to be a good gymnast when I was young. When that was I was at that time young, and that was in the late '60s, I would say. That was thirty years ago, I was in the forties, late forties. I used to go for workouts; here in Chicago too I used to go out. I used to belong to the [German Lincoln Turners], I used to go. And I used to work the ninety feet and then from one end to the other with Mr. Sanders, he was really wild, you know. (*Laughs*) I made somersaults at that time. When I start to work here as a carpenter in 1949, my father's sister was here in Chicago. She moved out to the United States in 1919, when I was born. And they brought me over in '49 and my uncle was a carpenter. And then when I started to work—I used to work already in Europe.

**You worked as a carpenter before you came here?**

No, I was—a matter of fact, I was like a steam fitter, a pipe fitter, I did everything, you know. [I didn't get no time, but it was start at,] I went to school for seventeen years, I finished like here like high school in Europe. The only thing, I didn't go to school here in the United States, I didn't learn English. My accent was bad... but right now I speak six languages.

**What are they? If I may ask.**

My languages is—I was born Jewish, you know, there's Jewish; Polish, then after the Polish I was two and a half years at the Russians, I speak Russian fluently, then came the Germans, I was six years in Germany from '43 to '49...

**To '49?**

'49, I left Germany. I came here in March '49. I speak German, I speak Hebrew, I forgot. When I was in Israel, I speak Hebrew. I understand languages. I understand all the Czechoslovakian languages, Slovakian language, Yugoslavian, Bulgarian, Ukrainian, it's really light for me to understand. And I used to read the paper and write too all the languages.

**Huh. Tell me about, you mentioned talking politics with Harry Bouras?**

Huh? With Harry Bouras?

**Tell me about political discussions then.**

Nothing specially, no, at that time everyone used to be liberal. That was in the late '60s and the early '70s, it was a—it was not about the politics, they didn't care much. It was an art to Harry Bouras. He was a tremendous drawing [teacher], good drawings. He was a little bit on the faking side too (*laughs*).

**On the what?**

A little bit a faker, I am told this. But he used to sell the new artwork, I remember. They'd get a student who put stamps all day long on a canvas, stamps, and he sold this for a couple thousand dollars as art. You know, but I did frame a lot of work. I did for him work too on the side; I made from plywood a big chair, a big chair when he covered up something. Or a big cross, I made big cross when he covered up in plaster with bronze something, it was something. He made pretty good money; he was a really likable person. He was not about politics. He introduced me to a man, I remember, it was a man, he was a—I was astonished to hear this, he was a Greek person, a Greek professor. Now he was young, he was here teaching too history in College. He said he was in the Congo...

**OK. So there was an interesting batch of people here.**

That's why it was very interesting for me to work. I used to have a drink with them after work, five o'clock. Not every day, no, but everybody used to call me for a drink, too.

**Where would you go for a drink?**

We used to go out on Saturday, we used to go out to the Greek nightclub. Mr. Alexandroff used to go out too, you know, they used to invite me always to go out. They liked Greek music; I like too Greek music, very much. Until now, I still go to the Greek music if I can hear.

**What did you talk about with Mike Alexandroff? Tell me about him and about you and him.**

It's something I was like one of their family. First thing, you know,

I got divorced in the late '60s, when I start to work for here, for the College. For example, for twenty years until I got married, like how you call this... in November the holiday would come, Thanksgiving.

**Thanksgiving, yeah.**

I was always for Thanksgiving dinner by Alexandroff. And his wife, I got so friendly with his wife the same like with him, with Jane—that was a couple. That was a wonderful couple of people. And I did, a matter of fact I used to go, I traveled a lot too. I traveled a lot. I was three times in the Soviet Union, I was twice in China, I was in Greece, I was in Yugoslavia, I was in Egypt, I was in Israel, I was in England. Then when I went everything...

**These were vacations?**

In the late '70s. The '60s, the early '70s, until '76, I never had vacation. My vacation used to be a weekend, on one weekend I used to go to Florida. That was my vacation. Now in the '70s, in the late '70s, I start to get two weeks vacation. It was the two weeks or the three weeks, I used to go for a trip. Or it's special when I met my wife, when I got married; she is a very liberal person too, born American, very nice person. And as I used to, Mr. Alexandroff, I used to go for a trip always, I used to bring something. I got him from China things I remember, beautiful, he has a lot of good stuff in me, but I can mention just a couple. A vase for flowers for the storeroom. It's worth maybe one piece thousand dollars now for sure, I got two like that. Now, that's not the point; the point is, I always used to be with the College. They used to ask me always if something in the College always, they used to tell me everything, they used to ask me—until

'75, until the '70s, then Bert came over. Bert was—Bert Gall, matter of fact it was at one time he used to be my helper.

**Really?**

Yeah.

**When he was a student?**

When he was a student. I remember, Bert Gall came in after I was here, I was here a couple of years but Bert Gall, he used to work in the bookstore. I remember when I made the library, I used to build the bookstore, it was a very small bookstore, and then I built the library. That must be in the late '60s, I think.

**This is at 540?**

At 540. 540 or 544? 544 I think, Ohio Street, at the corner of Lake Shore Drive and Ohio.

**And what did Bert Gall work with you on? What stuff did he help you with? The library?**

I used to—let's say, not the library, but every summer I used to work, I used to put in the summer let's say one week, I used to put in two weeks in one week. Sometimes we used to hire, I used to hire a couple of painters extra. I told Bert he should come to check up, you know. I used to go out to buy material; he used to watch it. He used to do—that's about everything he used to do, that was in the late '60s, I would say.

**Who else do you remember from this period? Any other people from the '60s, early '70s, notable people, or remarkable, or memorable people?**

I told you before what I remember really well: Thaine Lyman and Bob Edmonds. Then of course there was another person that died, he was working Film, I forgot his name.

Newberry, Dr. DeKovic, Dr. Mann, a person, Dr. Mann, he was Vice President for a while, Dr. Mann, and one woman, I must mention Janice Booker, a woman. She was very good for the College, she was like the mother, like the motherly thing for the students, the faculty, everything, she used to know everything what goes on by everybody: a party, a birthday, a marriage, a divorce; she used to know everything. I don't know what else.

**Now, did the College have very many part-time instructors that you remember?**  
Huh?

**Did the College have any part-time instructors that you remember?**

Part-time instructors? Everything was part-time. It mostly was part-time. This was just, it was the Chairman, and it was—oh yeah, I forgot, Barry Burlison was very, Barry Burlison was the graphic and painting, he was very important when he was for the school, Barry Burlison.

**And what did he do?**

He was teaching photography and... how you call this, like a T-shirt, he'd make the pictures.

**Silk-screening?**

Silk stitching, and you start rubbing something like that. He was teaching. Barry Burlison, he was full-time, a full-time teacher for many years.

**Now were the part-time teachers, what do I want to say, less rememberable?**

I don't know. Betsy Edelson was a good teacher here. What else can I remember here? Jeez, there was a lot of teachers for a long time. But I used to do a lot, I used to build for the theater, you know, the time

for the performance. I used to open them dressing and undressing, they never hesitated for me, sometimes in the nude they used to go out, they never hesitated for me, you know? A matter of fact there was one show, we were performing one show on the South Side, it was a chapel in university and there was two or three people in the nude, a stage show. I remember that too. It didn't go too long.

**Who worked with you?**

That's another thing. I used to work just students, with students, A bigger job, let's say, I used to hire...

**This is the second part of the interview with Jacob Caref. Go ahead.**

That was the thing in the '60s, in the late '60s, when I built the darkrooms, a lot of darkrooms. I had a big guy to help me to nail the plasterboard. All the framing I did myself. [I had the plumber, hired] And the plasterboard, to nail on the wall, that I helped—as a matter of fact, three hundred and fifty sheets of plasterboard delivered to me Friday afternoon. It was that afternoon at about four, time for quitting time. And I covered up, there was a dock outside in the 544 building, I cover this up with plastic, I got all the plastic, I covered up, and Saturday, I worked Saturday and Sunday, by Monday was done, not one sheet—I used up all the plasterboard. That day I worked, I got two people, I got a black man helping me, I hired. And then all the work I used to do mostly by myself, I used to work.

**So you could get things done. You had to work pretty long hours sometimes but you could get it done.**

That's right. I worked very long hours. I must mention one thing

what the, I think, that was in '67. We added three classrooms; Mr. Alexandroff didn't have money to do it, he called me up, "What will we do?" I said, "Mike, I'll tell you what," it was after the divorce, my divorce at the time. The job, material and labor I got it, [we put the plated walls], not the canvas we put on the walls, that cost a lot of money. And the plasterboard, and the material, the wood, the doors, the windows to cover up, to darken out, I figured out it was about twelve thousand dollars. He says, "I don't have nothing, what can you do?" I say, "You know what?" I had five thousand dollars, six thousand, and I took my insurance policy, borrowed money from the kids, I gave it the insurance policies and I borrowed six thousand dollars. When I got—and Mr. Alexandroff gave me an IOU, that was the name. I did the job in March, and [he told me] to come in in October, come in "I'll pay you off," you know. And I came in October and he paid me. He gave me the check, the first check he gave me, he paid me off right away. So I remember, but the other job, it was eleven or twelve thousand dollars he gave me. I don't know why he gave me an IOU eleven thousand dollars, that sounded strange that, you know, lots of money the College. What is now eleven, I don't believe it but I can see now that people can't understand—I can understand it, you know, the success to what we can contribute. The time, I think, the time played the biggest role, I think.

**You mean this was just the right time for this type of institution?**

The right time. From the beginning it was very dedicated people, I think. Everybody was—the chairman from the Dance Center, Bill Russo, the Music, the Theater

chairman, every department, Photo, Film, was very dedicated people, you know. That's why, it was to build a thing, a foundation. I am a carpenter, a builder. The most important thing, what people don't see in a house is the foundation. The same thing in Columbia College, people—they don't know what type of foundation, it is a very strong foundation. I think the time, the time is—I remember in the '60s with the war, people didn't—if a student didn't go to war, you know, because a lot of young people came [to kill everyone]. But it was very cheap at that time too, what was it, five or six hundred dollars for a semester. I can't, don't take my word, I don't remember, it was very cheap at that time, Columbia College.

**Tell me about the students. What were the students like?**

You know, in the late '60s, the students, maybe ten, twenty percent was students who go to get a very straight education. The rest was player kids, I would say.

**The rest was what?**

Players, players, players. Now it changed, let's say it changed, I think, in the '70s there came a big change. Especially now, now every student who goes to Columbia College, he comes for education now. It was time, like I mentioned before but the war, you know, that's about every[thing] I can see.

**Where were the students from?**

The students before was just all from here, from Chicago.

**From Chicago. From the city and suburbs?**

I remember there was a couple students who was from the other countries, was from Iran, Pakistan, India a couple students, it was—I

remember a French girl from Paris was here I remember, I remember here, I remember... from England there was a couple students. Now we've got them all over the world, from all over the country now. Now the, like Film is one of the best schools in the United States. But other, every department now is [blessed].

**Were there different sorts of students, different students in different programs?**

There's always different people in a school. You ask me a question like that! Now, people are people. You know, especially for me, and I saw the war, that people are all over the same and I would say [getting good] from the top down. That's what they say, "They need to adjust themselves." Well, you know, and every society is like that too. And the same thing is in a college, the same thing in every—in a factory, in a company, it's the same thing. I always have different people. [Wherever they're from], it's like every—that I would say, people are overlooking, they're not analyzing the human being that must be analyzed

**Well, some people say that Columbia, in its earlier days, was very diverse and it was a comfortable place for lots of different people and there was a lot of mixing and so on...**

Exactly that what I'm saying, you know, you didn't pay attention to that. Like I said, Columbia College was like a family. A little bit of students, the conformity, you know, they feel themselves very simple, they felt themselves, and they felt like a family, they felt the same way, that's what made it, you know. But still it is, I think, not what Columbia used to be, but still it goes. Let's say the workers, with working. When I was a supervisor,

superintendent, for let's say, for the '70s, I am retired now. I am now, I am an old man, I am 79 years old, I will be pretty soon 80. I retired, let's see, 14 years ago, and I'm still been coming here. You ask me what I'm doing? I don't know, nothing, but I like it, you know? Sometimes I'm working; I work at, this summer, a couple different days, I'm a—I'm going winter in Florida, I'm coming back in April from Florida. Now it's April, May, June, July; four months, I got paid for one week. And I didn't care, you know (*laughs*). Wait a second, and the week too, the wages they gave me [were ten years ago]. I'll tell her; I still keep the check here with me, you know, I will go out and I will tell them they should take it, a big check, that wouldn't be no problem, you know. No, that's fine. What else?

**So do you think, what makes Columbia a special college?**

Columbia's specialty here for a time, you know, there is, it's just like in companies, you've got the singular companies, the United States, like Gates, you know, became a billionaire in a short while. There's another person from California in electronics became the same thing, moved to billionaire too. There's companies that having a good product, the timing; the same thing pharmaceutical companies with a good product, a good deal like the things... but I would say Columbia College was in the time. And the time was running right. And Mr. Alexandroff, he would read everything right, that's why it came out everything. But like I mentioned before, the foundation, I helped the foundation, when it's a good foundation you can build anything, anything could work out, you know, it holds up

everything all that good. That I think is the most important thing. And the time, the time like I mentioned, the Vietnam War, and we started—there was dance, there was music, there was a little theater growing, you know, a little handicraft, all kind of handicraft, even for not bright students it was a place to come and get a degree, you know. Now it's different now, you know. That was the—everything worked, and it fell into place, it fell into place, I think. That's why it became now, it became so big, this school.

**This is a school that has an open enrollment policy. What did that mean when you came here? What do you—I can't understand what you're asking.**

**Well, when you came here, as today, this is a school with an open enrollment policy. First of all, is that part of the formula of success, do you think?** It has success too. You know, I'll tell you another thing. We have the black students a lot. They felt good here. We had Spanish students from the beginning. You know, that was a very liberal atmosphere here, right from the beginning. If, let's say, a person what was not a liberal, he wasn't able to work here. We looked at him, you know, politically... I remember... I won't mention it. I'll tell you later. What else now?

**So, tell me a little bit about the growth of the College. The College grew—and let me just go back to what you did and the work you were doing and who you were working with and stuff. You said for a long time you did almost all of it yourself except that you had some student help. Everything what we added. You know, when I started there was just one floor, there was one classroom,**

two classrooms on the seventh floor, and there was one classroom on the fifth floor. You know, in a couple years we had so many classrooms I don't remember. And I built up every classrooms. And then, that's nothing, I built it—on the Sheffield? I worked on Sheffield and the theater, on Sheffield and the school, I worked on Wellington we had a theater, North Avenue, and Wells was it? Wells and North, I did a lot of work there. Where else? On Sheridan, on the Dance Center, it's now the Dance Center, but I did the work, amazing. I did all the lights, like I mentioned before. And the floor coverings, tile. You know, I went to buy the floor coverings, I went direct to Kenmore, Kenmore the company. And I got it, I got them to say, I went there, the girls, debating the girls, at the main thing, the South Side, I remember like now. I came and said, "I need two thousand square feet of plywood." They say, "We're not selling plywood." I said, "The Director from the College, he sent me here and he talked with your President." And I say, "What do you want, I should lose the job?" And you know, I got it for half the price I got. So I used to do everything. I used to get things like that, for every price. I used to go to all kind of tricks.

**So we, now this is a big department now, when did this department start to grow? Which department?**

**Building Services, and the work you did. When did you have to hire another person to work with you?** I didn't got no place on the, where do you call this, on Ohio Street? My department used to be a toolbox, in a toolbox I used to have inside a closet. I used to hang

around, you know, if I didn't work, I used to go around and talk with the people sometimes. But most of the time I always was busy. Now, sure, here a little in basement, I had a basement too on Sheridan Road; I think I had something there too.

**Uh huh. In the Dance Center?** And they took over, when they took over in '75, I had a basement. I made it a shop in basement, the 600 building. Now is, we need more room, we made the shop here. I made it to help to make the shop here when they took over the building.

**Which is when?** The Wabash building? Wabash, that was the second—wait. The first building we got was the 600 South Michigan, or the Dance Center was before, the Dance Center was already a long time. The Dance Center was, Shirley Mordine was a long time. And then we took, yeah, we took Eleventh Street, we took over, was before Eleventh Street. That was already about twenty years ago I would say, that I was...

**Now, do all these buildings require-and presumably, more facilities of all types, more every-thing... Do you have to hire more people?**

The Building Services, we have, they are real dedicated. See, I hired the man what is now the engineer from the 600 building. When I hired him, a tremendous man, a plumber/electrician. Then there is now a plumber, then we got here we got three carpenters here now, you know. They're doing all the work all over. So many buildings what we have at Columbia College, it doesn't cost that much, the upkeep, you know. If we were a company, I don't know what is

the—they say they take in a year about forty million dollars or something. You know, the upkeep is really very minimal. The same thing that goes, the way I did it. What they're giving out a lot of workers now, remodeling. They're giving out, you know.

**To contractors.**

Yes. Now still, you need to have always—a toilet floods over, the light is out, it's cold in one room, it's warm in another room. You know, you need to have a little painting, a door didn't work, the lock doesn't work: you need to have people, you know. What it is now, we have now the 600 building, 623, we have Eleventh Street, we have the Dance Center, we have 218, we have a floor, the papermakers, at 218 Harrison, we have 33 Congress, we bought a building on Michigan, Michigan and Fourteenth Street, now we bought Eleventh Street, another building, Eleventh Street the corner building, Eleventh Street and Michigan. That's a—Columbia College is now the biggest one in the Loop, I think. Not I think, it is, I think.

**Does this department still make darkrooms and things like that?**  
Huh?

**You still make darkrooms?**

No. We are making, let's say, specialties, we are making specialties. The darkroom, they needed—let's say, I remember last year, before I left for Florida, I made them a big, how you call this, I can't remember, I forgot the name of it... how could I forget? The enlarger, you know, a big enlarger. They needed to make a table lower, lower, lower. I made them a simple thing, you know, like with clips, a

shelf; you push it in, push it out, push it in, push it out! I made now, for this year, I made for the paper people, a mixer for paper. [There's a thing what they say is everything imagined it could be]. I have something in thinking things like that.

**Do you save any examples of your work?**

Huh?

**Are there any examples of your work?**

Examples?

**Yeah.**

You can take a look, I don't know where but...

**Did you save any old ones after they're not in use?**

Go up on the fifth floor. On the fifth floor, on 600 building, on the left, the information, the window, the glass, I made it for a couple hundred dollars. On the right side, the new one, cost four thousand dollars. You see, I made everything myself, the molding, all the tape, the Formica, they're all—I went and cut it out in a special place. He cut out a hole, and I put in the back with screws, everything—my imagination, I made it for a couple hundred dollars. They made it two years ago, they paid four thousand dollars the same thing, over four thousand, you know; it's a different... On the fifth floor, in the 600 building, all the department, the plywood, all I did it myself. Everything, I did it on the fifth floor. All the doors for the offices, I hung all the doors. I replaced thousands of doors, I used to hang them. Now it's for me, pick up a door, it's a heavy door, you know, solid—now, I used to go just like a picnic, I used to throw them. I was a strong man, you know, I was a strong man.

**The College has grown. Do you think that's good or bad for students?**

Sure it's good for students, no question about that. We have better facilities, we have research, we have a Science Department which we didn't get before. We have a beautiful Science Department. We have everything in Film or in Sound, the facilities are now tremendous, the facilities. It's not what it used to be, the facilities now, take a look at computers what we have, hundreds and hundreds of computers. Who knew in twenty years about computers become now what it is, the school has many classrooms, classrooms full of computers. And it is, we are giving the management of the school, all they facilitate all the needs for the students. You know, that's a very important thing. That's why we are growing, the school grows. We are adjusting to the time; the time calls for that, calls for science. What good is a student who goes to college if he doesn't know a little bit science, knowledge of science, you know? I am talking about—but I am an old man, I went to a [higher middle] school, I didn't go to college. No, believe me, I know it's sometimes more for the College, and I used to learn from that. I am a curious person; I want to know, you know? Like I mentioned before, after the war, I wanted to know why did that happen, why in Germany? I know Germany was so nice, why did that happen in Germany? And I used to read a lot too, I will [study that]. Now I can't, my eyes are no good. I used to read when I was a little boy, when I was fourteen, fifteen, I used to read all the Russian writers: Chekhov, Turgenev, Dostoyevsky, and Tolstoy.

I used to like very much the Russian writers, which I don't remember now. That used to be a big influence. That's why I became a rebel, too, a little bit when I was already young I became a rebel. Especially I became a big rebel here after the war. A rebel against my religion. You know, the world exists billions of years, what the heck are we [talking] Moses five thousand years ago. In China, the history is already ten thousand, and the Egyptian still is more—I cannot believe the contradiction. One religion or another religion, the contradiction, everything. You know, and the thing is... in every society, in everything there's a ruling class, a ruling thing. Assume they have a hold over you, the people who are adjusting to it. But the United States, when I came to the States, to Chicago, Chicago was nothing. Like the suburbs, there was no suburbs. Like Lawrence Avenue was the end of the North Side and Forty-third, Sixty-third Street was the end of the South Side, and the West Side was Oakton by, what is the name there...

**Oak Park?**

Yeah. Austin was then already a different village. There was no Skokie, no Highland Park—there was Winnetka, it was already. In Winnetka used to be, I remember the old men in Winnetka, [I used to work in there] all night and come to Chicago. It was before, before the Second World War, England used to be the boss over the world, explored the whole world. And the policy in England, the English government, but now United States took over and it's nothing better for here. The poli-

tics says it's better for the people here, but it's not better for the world—I don't know.

**You described Columbia as a family when you started here. Has it lost that, do you think? Huh?**

**Is Columbia less like a family now?**

Oh sure, that's for sure. It's not no more like that, no. Except that some departments working together, you know. The workers were working but still something's left a little bit, it's still a little bit—like the year the three or four carpenters, the painter, the electrician, the engineers, they still all work together, you know, still work together. Sure, the chairmans, you know, it's become everything big, has become big. Don't forget now it's eight thousand, over eight thousand students, you know. Is every department is already like a college for itself, you know. You can't expect it should be the same like yesterday. If it's better or worse, I don't know. So that's what it is.

**Would it have been better to be a student at Columbia, in terms of that, with that in mind, in the early '70s or the late '90s?**

I can't answer that question! It's not the question that's supposed to be asked. It's a different time. You know, 1970 was 1970, we did according 1970. Now it's '98, we do according to '98, you know? You can't compare, there's no comparison. That's different times. When I do something, a job, I need a screw has a slot or a screw needs a Phillips, I can't with a Phillips screwdriver, I can't do the slot, if it's not a Phillips. I mean everything was, everything was—you can't compare one with each other. That's what it is.

**Fair enough, fair enough. I wanted to ask you about one other thing. Somebody told me about incidents of vandalism up at the Theater/Music building up on Sheffield. And I just wanted to ask about vandalism. First of all, do you remember any?**

Sure I remember. I saw once, not on the Sheffield, it was on the Wellington, I think, the street. Wellington. The theater was there and the people used to play the music, with the trombones, and a guy...