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ARTISTS' LIVES

Frank Martin

Interviewed by Melanie Roberts

C466/58

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Interview Summary Sheet

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F5904 Side A

[The interview with Frank Martin on 11th of August 1997 at East Portlemouth in south Devon. Melanie Roberts interviewing.]

Now tell me exactly your date of birth and where you were born.

Yes. I was born at 2 o'clock in the morning, two days after Christmas, 1914, December the 27th 1914. And... [PAUSE]

A rather significant date, with the war.

With the war. Now the war of course impinged on my early years very much indeed. War had not long started, and I was at Portsmouth, that's the naval base in southern Hampshire which was then seething with energy and ready for war. My immediate family, my father, his brothers and sisters, were all involved in the naval thing, and my grandfather was a great commander then, he was one of the first promoted commanders from the lower deck.

Gosh.

The second in fact. And of course he reigned supreme at Portsmouth and was in fact second in command of the Royal Duke, one of the greatest battleships of now preparing or even at sea at that moment, as I was born, conducting the war. Of course all the family around were involved with it, but the only memory I have of the war was at the age of about three I was picked up by my mother and the Venetian blinds of the bedroom were opened for me to see a Zeppelin passing over Portsmouth with the searchlights on it. Extraordinary sight, and that remained with me I must say all my life, that memory of the Zeppelin, and the bursting shells and things like that around us. And I can tell you more later of the Second World War of course, the last war, similar sort of experiences in a way, but let's go back to my birth. I was born at, I remember the house number, 66 Cardiff Road, North End of Portsmouth, and I was the first of three born from that family, although my mother and father had both been married before, both their spouses had died, and they each had a child, so there were three already then. And two other sisters born later. But I didn't see much of them actually, I didn't know them very well, and by the time I was aware my sister had been farmed out to an uncle at Torquay to be a maid within his hotel, and my brother had been sent to Australia then with the groups of people, the young people they were sending out there at that time. So,

Portsmouth then, I suppose by the time I was four years old, the war had just about finished, but nevertheless the energy and the things that went on around it carried on for many many years. I didn't see much of my father, he was either away at the war or he had commissions to the Mediterranean mainly for two and two-and-a-half years at a time, and he had seemed to only come back for a few months and then he was off again. So a strange life, early life. We stopped at that address until I moved off, but nevertheless came my schooling. The elementary school I went to was literally at the end of the road. A very interesting elementary school, but with very unusual teaching methods. For instance, my first class I went to I remember very clearly, I was certainly dyslexic, not known as dyslexic then but in fact it was certainly something of that nature, but I was left-handed and made to write with my right hand, to the extent that they even tied my hand behind my back, strangely but nevertheless they did, or I got a rap across the knuckles if I was found with a pen in my left hand. I do remember in that particular class that we did some modelling with sort of Plasticine, so my first modelling lessons were with that class. Then as I moved through the school, the various forms, three to four to five, was then taught by a very good man indeed, a man named, I remember his name and I met him later, Ethelbert Harvey. He was a great teacher, he obviously understood my talents, he obviously felt too that I was unacademic, and art reigned supreme within whatever I got from him. But he was always urging me with the art, and the whole classroom walls were bedecked in my works, and also scripts, I remember I did a great deal of script, and he took with him some of that script, the sonnets of some sort I remember, done on parchment paper, and these were hung around the walls and went in annually for various prizes, what they call the Hobbies Prizes at Portsmouth Town Hall, and I seemed to win the prizes. Later in, much much later in life I did find him again and we started to communicate, and although in his latter eighties he did arrive there one day with his wife at my home at Hayling Island then, and said that he still had the sonnets on the wall, which was very interesting. But anyway, art at elementary school was my only training; I didn't go to secondary school of any sort, and I joined art school when I was between 13 and 14, evening classes, and then later on to the major classes, which were then, what did they have, a drawing and modelling examination was all they had, the institutions had then. And I passed very well indeed after what was it, two years I think in modelling. They didn't really have a sculpture department as such, we did a little bit of everything, but I seemed to emphasise, whatever I did was around the three dimensions rather than, although we did painting, painting and drawing, drawing a lot, a great deal of course. And so we went on with that course until I was 17. Modelling was...and then carving, I seemed to be one of the first to have carved in that particular department, and I had a mentor, a man who was working on the Ancient Monuments Department of the Office of Works, who was a friend, a friend of the family, and

he was urging me to get in his service, and that was the restoration of ancient houses, ancient castles, at some time. And following that, he did give me some training in carving, and I carved a great deal in wood and stone, and did lettering, did an enormous amount of lettering. When I was about 17, 17½, he took me into his works, which was in fact to supervise the restoration of the Norman castle at the head of Portsmouth Harbour at Porchester, where we...we grouted the walls and made the whole thing safe, and the keep, a 200-foot high keep there, which previously, way back in the centuries, Neapolitan[sic] Wars, had houses French sailors, French army people, prisoners, and one could find around the walls then all the names cut into the walls of the dungeons. And later we made a sea wall around that, and as we dug the foundations for that wall I remember we were always turning up skeletons, obviously the French prisoners were thrown over the wall and onto the foreshore. I stopped with him for no more than about six months, and they understood that I was appropriate material to train as a supervisor for further monumental restoration work. They were leading then, and they did advise me that perhaps if I turned out well I would get work on the restoration of the Houses of Parliament, which was contemplated then.

Now before we go too far forward, I just want to take you back to the question of education in your family. I mean was this training seen as a form of apprenticeship? How was it discussed in the family?

Oh very much apprenticeship then. I mean sculpture was not thought of, not even named as sculpture. It was the crafts. And the interesting part was that I did get mixed up with the monumental masons of Portsmouth, and at one stage of my work with the monumental masons I was sent to the Duke of Bedford's estate, in Bedfordshire or course, to restore a manor house there, or attempt to restore a manor house. This was slightly aborted in that, it was discovered that I didn't belong to the monumental masons' union, and they said, well, the Government were very conscious then of unions, and they said, 'Well we're very sorry Mr Martin but we want you to go back to Portsmouth, if you can get into the union by working for a monumental mason for about six months and then come back to us,' which I did. Nevertheless, the work I did there was straightforward masonry and monumental work, carving for headstones and things of that sort. But they did want me at one stage to restore, or help to restore, a church that had been burned out in the Meon Valley that was just above where I lived at that time, at Rowland's Castle. In the process of that I restored the statues that had been affected by the fire, replaced and cut letters in the wording below, and general restoration work within the church itself, there were many damaged carved things which I had to help restore. But in the process of that I did find Rowland's Castle brick works, and they

were a huge brick works and the clay was in the surrounding land around, a wonderful terracotta clay, beautiful quality, and I used to take home quantities and did modelling at home, and that was very helpful some time much later on when I did turn primarily to using terracotta as a method of producing sculpture. But you wanted to know more about my early schooling did you not?

Yes, I mean, in a way we've sort of moved forward rather fast. I'd like to...

Going too fast, I see.

...take you right back to your grandparents.

Well there was only the elementary school I had, do you remember, and no secondary school, no, certainly no university. My only university was obviously the Royal Academy Schools, in its way.

Yes. I mean in a sense it would be interesting to have a feeling of who your parents were and your grandparents.

Right, well, I can say a great deal about that of course. As I've already told you, I think, that my grandfather was a great commander, and the only one - am I repeating myself? But certainly the only one who had arrived from the lower deck to commander rank, the second one only. So he was a great symbol in our family.

And did you know him when you were young?

Oh yes, I knew him quite well. Although my father didn't get on well with him, in fact my father was considered the black sheep of the family, and he certainly was that, he was a great drunkard, and his bouts when he came back from abroad were not very pleasant, and my parents did split up eventually and he went off elsewhere, so leaving just the three of us with my mother. So there was only the art school for me and nothing further before I made off from Portsmouth after the work with the Ancient Monuments Department, I did decide not to go back to them after the Duke of Bedford's estate débâcle, and decided to go to London to seek my fortunes as a sculptor, as a modeller, a carver. And that I did. At about 17½ I made off to London, and I had friends there, I had two friends from Portsmouth School of Art, one of them had made his way to the Royal College, a very rare event for provincial schools at

that time to have a scholarship boy, certainly at Portsmouth, and a second one who was working professionally in London as a carver. So we met up and we in fact lived together, we got an apartment together and we lived just off Fitzroy Square in London, and we went our various ways. Now I couldn't find work of any consequence, I had got a few commissions, a bit of letter-cutting in the provinces, around London, sent from London. But what I did do, I decided that, I was a very physical man, I did a great deal of athletics, swimming, I had medals for swimming when I was at school, and medals for quite a few things in athletics, and the interesting thing was, at Portsmouth School of Art we decided in our break between the day class and the evening classes, we had a full-time day class that went on till half-past 4 in the day, and then the evening class which went on from 7 o'clock, we had a gap of 2½ hours, in which you had to do something. And as a group we decided to do athletics, or gymnastics, and we did this appropriately in the Antique Room, with all the Greek statues around us, and we became very adept at it, so much so believe it or not, the people I was working with on equilibrism, what is it, balancing on our hands and things like that, did in fact, when they moved off from art school, take it on professionally and went on the stage. They in fact wanted me to join them and I refused that, I didn't want to go round the boarding houses of, round the provincial cities, and decided no, I would seek my fortune in London, and that I did. And so I was a physical man, a well-built man, and I offered myself as a model in London. Now models then were very special, they had their unions; male models were few, not the sort of job that men took on, sort of sissy job as they called it. But I met up with all the models of London. And then, an interesting thing, I toured the whole of the art school fraternity, from the Royal College, to the Slade, to all the major colleges around London, and acted as a model, and that in itself was a tremendous experience, and also for the, then I became employed as, I was found to be a very useful model, by the Academicians, and I met up with, particularly Charles Wheeler, President of the Royal Academy then, and worked as a model for him; then he discovered that I was in fact a sculptor of some sort, he employed me as an assistant. And then some of the others, his friends around him, William McMillan particularly, then a leading, one of the six leading Royal Academicians, employed me full-time as both an assistant and a model. Together with people like Maurice Lambert, who was very well known then and almost the leading young, forward-looking young sculptor, and we did a great deal of work together. But McMillan was my source of income mainly for the, what, the two years before the Great War[sic] broke out.

I mean I think it would be very interesting if you could describe, you know, what you remember of working for those individuals.

Oh yes indeed I can, indeed I can. McMillan, Scotsman, a bit of a taskmaster, nevertheless was very good to me, and I was his chief, eventually his chief assistant, and what was more interesting, well rather like an apprenticeship of course, in a way, and he was a sculptor, a leading Academician, who got some very big commissions, Government commissions. I mean there were only what, three, four or five sculptors of that calibre, and he had many commissions for, royal commissions, for King George V, statues which were put around in England and right through Africa and India of course, New Delhi particularly I remember, with Lutyens the great architect in charge. And so, yes, I spent my time really working on all those statues, in his studio, and of course they would duplicate castings, were put around the colonies. And then some other very big commissions, some very important commissions then, before the war, were the fountain figures in Trafalgar Square, a very important commission that was, meant to be four figures in the basins, and Wheeler I remember, Charles Wheeler had the other basin to decorate, and this was meant to be, and was going to be, a memorial to Beatty and Jellicoe of the 1914-18 War. They had incorporated with the basins, the fountain basins, a sort of niche, a rather truncated sentry-box-like shape in which they were going to place the bemedalled portraits of Beatty and Jellicoe in each one; in our case it was Lord Beatty that we worked on. But actually that was never completed before the Great War[sic], the Nazi war, the Hitler war, and were put underground, we had completed only two of the fountain groups each, Wheeler did his. And the studio work was very interesting at William McMillan's studio. Lutyens, Edwin Lutyens would visit regularly and make suggestions about the work we were doing and what he felt should happen as regards the decorations. He was a Dickensian-like man who sort of leapt around the studio getting various perspective views of this statue being, this group being made, which was no more than, believe it or not, a mermaid and a merman holding two fountain dolphins with jets coming from them, and that was the sort of work that was being done then. I know from time to time McMillan would say to me, 'Well Frank, take your shirt off, let's see that back of yours, I want to work on this figure of this merman,' pipe figure. And my back, you can see it, any time now in Trafalgar Square my family say, 'Yes, it's absolutely your back'. So, it went on, work for McMillan went on at least for two years before the war, and some for Charles Wheeler. They would work together by the way, they would meet up from time to time with Lutyens, and we would tour the studios, see the work and decide that what we were doing was in some sort of, right, correct for the purposes, our heritage statues for Trafalgar Square. But then, I decided, as a matter of fact I still wanted to do somewhat better in my work, and did put it to McMillan that I really ought to go back to college, and, what about the Royal Academy Schools? Now he was obviously a key one in getting me there, but, I would have started at the Royal Academy Schools as a student, I'd got my place, interviewed and

got my place, the very week almost that war began, so it didn't start, I didn't even start the programme, and was in fact, one year before, in 1938, the great threat of war when Chamberlain came back with his piece of paper, waving his piece of paper that they'd got an agreement, Hitler and he had got an agreement, the war which everyone felt was about to start didn't start, but nevertheless it was threatening. And we all of us seemed to do something with the pending war, and I became a Police Constable around Chelsea. I lived in Chelsea with all the artists, and my friends from the Royal College and things like that, we set up home there, and as war began so I became a War Reserve Policeman touring South Kensington and Chelsea. That went on for only six months, because I found that in fact they were going to take young policemen for the wars, and I felt that I didn't want to go and be taken for the Army, recruited to the Army, so I consulted my family at Portsmouth, my grandfather and father, and they said, 'No, you must be Navy, without a doubt, and we think your style is the Royal Marines'. So I did go back to Portsmouth and recruited myself as a Royal Marine. Do you still want to go back to my schooling? I'm sure.

Well just on the...

Is that going too far, I'm going too far ahead I'm sure, but nevertheless...

On the art apprenticeship front, going back to those sort of, when you were sort of 14, 15, do you remember if any kind of historic input came into your teaching at all, or was it all practical, you were kind of following models and...?

Totally practical. No history of art was taught ever, ever, in my art school at Portsmouth. And interestingly enough neither was it at St. Martin's when I joined it. There was no history of art department. Anyway, going back to Portsmouth and what we did there, it was straightforward craft-like work, and we did a little bit of ironwork, a little bit of pottery, a little bit of stained glass, and then painting, perspective, architecture, letter-cutting, and lithography was the other subject, besides drawing and painting and so on. But there was, it was apprenticeship-like but nevertheless certainly had no history of art taught us ever.

And what was the relationship in that apprenticeship to the idea of fine art as opposed to craft skills?

Well we considered then that fine art was represented really by drawing and painting. Rarely did we think of sculpture as being in it, believe it or not; that seemed much more like a craft

activity, and I remember seeing and dwelling on quite a great deal with the memorials that were being set up almost outside the college then, the great memorials that were put up after the 1914-18 War, where the statues surrounding it, for instance the Portsmouth one, which was repeated incidentally at Plymouth, machine-gunners, by, and they were carved then by the Mancini brothers from Italy, they brought over carvers from Italy to do that, and I don't know of any sculptor around, at least at Portsmouth, that might have done that. I mean the carving, the mason carvers at Portsmouth, memorial carvers, never went quite as, to that sort of monument, it was beyond them, one would have thought. And so the Italian carvers were coming in to do the war memorials for England. But I have since found out that McMillan did two statue groups for the Plymouth memorial, and only recently as a matter of fact discovered them there, a similarly-arranged memorial with the usual architectural sort of edifice with all the names on, with groups, carved groups into Portland stone at the entrances, but very little carving in the long run. But they did intrigue me I must say, coming away from art school of a day I would stop and watch the Mancini brothers carving the statues there, and they were quite unique in a way at that time. I mean the sort of things that were being put up around England, in London and certainly were generally in bronze, and those were the memorial at Horseguards Parade, who was that by then? Derwent Wood or something like that, with just standing statues of soldiers. The most interesting wartime memorial, that we thought interesting anyway, was Sargeant Jagger's Howitzer gun, which gave an abstract look to it, with the usual bombed[??] soldiers below it, that had certainly attracted us. And then in the art world generally they were said to be the leading works, and I remember Sargeant Jagger getting a gold medal for his efforts. But that as far as sculpture was considered was, there was very little of it, and very little of it taught. And do understand I did go to the Royal College and the Slade and worked as a model within the departments and saw what was going on then, which was very very little, and very small departments, very few sculptors, and very low-key work.

End of F5904 Side A

F5904 Side B

[This is Side B, Tape 1, of the interview with Frank Martin on the 11th of August 1997.]

Now we seem to have moved forward rather rapidly, and I think before we get too locked into your professional career could we just return briefly to the sort of physical and emotional environment of your childhood.

Yes, I can do that. Although much of it was pretty traumatic, my mother and father always fighting in a variety of ways. When he came back from his commissions abroad, and he would be away for two to two-and-a-half years at a time, he would come back, and he was a very drunkard man, and they were a great upheaval. We children were bundled off somewhere, either to bed or to a neighbour or something or other, while all this went on. But we were aware that they were very strained times, they were difficult times for my mother, and ultimately he did go off on a final commission and really didn't come back, that's what it amounted to. But I had some interesting times. I was a great adventurer and I was always taking my sisters off to do something or other, excessive sort of things. We would find our way to the countryside and set up tree houses, and we would go back to these tree houses regularly and have little parties. Always seemed to be in trouble, myself, in a variety of ways, even injured for that matter because the activities were a bit boisterous. Yes, I did get myself into lots of trouble, often whisked off to the local doctor or the hospital to have a few stitches put in, because I'd been doing... One in particular I remember, one great adventure, was, above Portsmouth is a line of hills, chalk hills, and there were great chalk pits cut into them, and they used the chalk for obviously road-building and things like that, and left a sheer face of about 90 to 100 feet. And one of these adventures was to climb that 100 feet, I suppose I'm no more than 10, 12 years old, something like that, that sort of age group, taking with me some other boys, but I seemed to be leading that party, and taking ropes and hammer and six-inch nails as petons, to climb this rock face, this chalk face. Very hazardous. And I remember on this particular episode I got within about a, oh, 12, 15 feet of the sheer wall, and with another young boy below me on a ledge saying he couldn't go any further, and there I was remonstrating and knocking in various nails to secure us, when some men arrived. One was an architect or a surveyor who had been looking, they were building an estate somewhere below this chalk pit, a good half-mile away or something like that, and he had his theodolite and using it like a telescope had observed us climbing that wall face, that chalk face, and had rushed in a car to stop us. And he came in in the nick of time as a matter of fact, when we were just near the top, and in the most precipitous part and dangerous part, and yelled out,

‘Stop there, stop there, stop there’. And they got the Fire Brigade to come there and drive in a stake at the top and a fireman came down from the top of the rope and secured us, so we were saved, once again. One of my adventures. There were many others. I became a very great swimmer, winning medals as a youngster, always being put forward for this and that. I became a lifeguard at Southsea, which is the seaside resort of Portsmouth, and I was in fact a lifeguard, sort of Bondi Beach stuff you know, and always seemed to be the leading light, the one that did the swimming out to sea and the rescuing, when in competition mainly, and we were then in competition with the Police Force of Portsmouth, and the Royal Marines funnily enough too had a team of rescuers, and within this annual competition, compete for a cup for us, and I know we won the first year of it against the Police and the Royal Marines, and on the second year I was still the swimmer to go out and rescue the person on the end of the line. And one had a trading line then with a buoyancy bag that came up under the neck when they started pulling from the shore, and they would haul in at great speed. In this particular case, the second year, the buoyancy bag got twisted round the rope itself and in pulling in they pulled me under the sea, and it was quite a long pull but I managed just about to survive, but they couldn’t see that I was under the sea because of the bow wave as it were, that they were actually pulling me under the sea. And I very nearly drowned on that episode, so I was the one to be resuscitated when they got us both, I holding onto the victim that I had caught, and had held on to him somehow, and just as I got to the shore I had to let go of him because, and then both came, and they more or less had to resuscitate me and not the rescued person. So we didn’t win the cup that year, but what it did do, it changed all the gear, for there was quite a number of influential people around that activity there watching this go on, and they decided to alter the whole arrangement of this as a life-saving effort, and they did change the buoyancy arrangements, too detailed a thing to tell you but nevertheless it was changed nationally after that event, because there were so many people watching this, literally hundreds of people were watching this display. So, yes, it was altered, and so that was my contribution to lifesaving in this country. But there is another episode beyond that which I won’t go into now because it goes much, much further on, which is about lifesaving and a rescue service that I had a great deal to do with in latter years, long after the war, which I’ll tell you later on.

Were your sisters as adventurous as you were?

Pardon?

Were your sisters as adventurous?

Well they were led into it rather. I'm not sure that they were that adventurous but I was taking them on these hazardous situations and they did become a little adventurous, yes, but there were great protests at home and around because of these, and I was warned off on many occasions. But I did in fact cycle around a great deal, I had a cycle for a birthday and that did lead me further afield, and I would get greatly further afield, and to camp and things like that, with friends. We had a lot of adventures, young people had, you know, and out camping and beyond.

Going back to your sort of domestic, early domestic environment, I mean do you actually remember the house and what the sort of rooms were like and things like that?

Oh very much indeed, yes, very much indeed. It was a small terraced house, with a small garden at the back, and, yes, we all had our little jobs within the house. If we had pocket money at all, which was what, perhaps a sixpence or a shilling weekly, we had a task to do. I know, I remember the sort of task I had was firstly, the mangling, the washing day, helping with the washing, stoke up the fire. We had a copper, which, with an open fire below it, in the kitchen, in the scullery as we called it then, and that would be stoked up, I would do that, and then the washing, hanging out, and then the mangling, either the wet mangling or the dry mangling as it were, a great big cumbersome great thing of a mangle we had then. And then, one of the episodes around that washing day was that we had a great bath in the same copper, a lovely warm bath in the copper, we all had, went in after the washing by the way.

Sort of climbed in at the top.

Climbed in at the top, and into the washing, yes, into the washing copper. That was, regularly I remember.

Did your mother have any help at home at all?

No no, no no, never any help, we did it all ourselves, and other things that, I did all the polishing around the house. I was a bit of an artist of course even at that time, and drawings of mine were, and paintings were hung on the wall, that was long before art school of course, and so I reckon I was a sort of artist type. And I do remember, there were two other paintings there, one by my father, a water-colour, and another by my grandfather. Now it's well known isn't it that the men at sea did do water-colours, Victorian sort of thing it was wasn't it, all

seafaring men did either did painting or whittling away with wood and tusk, bone, from the seafaring days, and I remember we had a number or those around the house. I forget now precisely what they were, but they were certainly carving, whittling, by sailors, yes. Model boats of course, and model boats in bottles, the model boat in the bottle was of course a very usual sort of thing coming from the Navy. We had about the place certainly native carvings that were brought from the commissions abroad; we had a number of African type things, again I don't quite remember what they were, but, they were interesting sculpturally I would have thought. Certainly I know, and having seen in my grandfather's house, a number of gruesome sort of things, like shrunken heads for instance were displayed in a sort of glass case, he had two there, and quite a number of other furniture-like things that were brought from his commissions abroad. One other thing I remember, outstanding thing in my interests was music over the radio. Now he had a cat's whisker radio, early sort of radio, and I heard for the very first time the pianoforte being played on this, and it did impress me enormously, and I did, I have been very attached to music in every possible way, and not playing an instrument but listening to it. And then as a student of course a great deal, and certainly in London, Promenade concerts was an important feature. But back to home again, may we go back there once again and see what we can find there? Many uncles and aunts, my mother was from a large family of 13, and so we had regular visits from her family, her uncles and aunts always seem to gravitate to my home, the Southsea home, the beach home, because they would be coming from the country, they lived near, I think Aldershot and Fleet and places like that in Hampshire and would come down on their cycles or their motorcycles or their cars and visit us, and then take us to the beach, as children. And assemble usually for the family photograph, we still have many of them, these photographs with us now. And of course the various uncles that went to war, the 1914-18 war, one at least came back very badly injured, he was, I mean to the Royal Huzzars, Army man, and the other uncles seemed to be all around the Navy, and that went in with my father's side of the family as well. So we had, the Navy was the important area, and influenced almost all we did, either at home or in our interests around the family. Always being taken to the great displays, the naval displays, at Portsmouth barracks, where of course my grandfather as a great commander was head of the great displays on the barrack square. And then also the great training areas of what they call Whale Island and Horsey Island off Portsmouth, that's where we went to many displays of a naval nature on land sort of stuff, with the Royal Marines doing their gun practice. That was a regular feature of our early life, on a Sunday morning going to the Royal Marine barracks at Eastney, Portsmouth, for the Sunday morning parade, and then on to the church parade, that was part of our usual routine. And finally of course my grandfather died, and they had a great

ceremony for that, with the usual, being towed by men, a gun carriage by men with my grandfather's coffin on, draped with a Union Jack and all that sort of thing.

How old were you when that happened?

Oh, I cannot remember. Well I can work it out I suppose, directly after the war. I couldn't have been any more than seven, eight, nine years old, that sort of age group. But there were other things about that naval side that were interesting, if that's the sort of thing you would like me to talk about, of those early days. I mean there was also a great scandal, which I must tell you about. It was, there was an uncle, also a naval officer, and also on the Iron Duke where my grandfather reigned supreme, and evidently he fiddled the mess room accounts, the officers' accounts, and was due for a court martial on it, a very ghastly thing that, but was given the option of committing suicide with a revolver, believe it or not, and he did, shoot himself.

Oh good grief!

That was the day we were in then, yes, he committed suicide rather than go up before the court martial and a great disgrace to the family and all the rest of it.

How astonishing.

Astonishing isn't it.

Mm. Was your grandmother still alive at that time?

Oh yes, yes. Little woman, a sweet woman. I didn't have a great deal to do with her, more to do with the grandfather, a great boisterous character, great, strong man, literally physically very strong. He went to of course, went to sea when he was 13, in the Merchant Navy, tarred pig-tail stuff and all that sort of thing, like they were on the Victory. And of course Nelson's Victory was in Portsmouth barracks and that was a great focal point for us, and the museum from time to time. And then, ultimately of course me as a Royal Marine also got mixed up with that same affair. But we haven't quite got to that yet have we, yes, my Royal Marine escapades.

I can see this theme of art and the sea are going to...

Oh art and the sea together, enormously of course. And, you must remember, Turner went down to the Solent didn't he and did a great deal of painting in the Portsmouth estuary there, the Portsmouth Harbour, all those early paintings of his were of great interest later on to me of course, the fact that he had gone out in a rowing boat or a sailing boat to make these paintings.

I mean as you pass through this sort of apprenticeship and education, and you had all this natural skill, the whole kind of aesthetics of art practice, how was that penetrating your system?

I would say none at all, the aesthetics thought of very little. And even to, as far as after the Great War[sic], after the war, and then was well into it, before I joined St. Martin's, I mean Impressionism had only just reached us then. It certainly hadn't penetrated before the war. Certainly nothing was spoken about it or depicted at Portsmouth School of Art, when you would have thought that the Impressionists had a great influence on art, not at all, weren't mentioned. So art history of course as I told you, we didn't have an art history department at the Portsmouth School of Art. And the painting then, all the focus of the painters, and I suppose if you could call us sculptors, was on Paris, only, the Salon of Paris, certainly not the Impressionists, hadn't penetrated. But here we are again jumping a few years ahead. Going back to my Portsmouth escapades, there were many of course, hate to relate many of them, but came the day I suppose, I did meet my wife at Portsmouth Art School, she was a painter, and very young, 15, she was a scholarship student, and I was then, had a little scholarship of some sort, I forget what it was but very little, something like 3s.6d. a week was the scholarship. But prior to that, I seemed to be winning all the, what they called hobbies prizes from my elementary school for a variety of subjects, painting certainly, water painting, water-colour painting, and script, and I did some three-dimensional work but I can't remember too much about it. Certainly no carving. But that then brings me on once again, not of home but on to the art school. Yes, the routine at home, much the same throughout, and the art school had a great influence on the family really, my work at the art school had as much influence as anything at all within my home. My sisters began to draw and paint because of me, and both of them did go to painting, or employment in painting, of a sort, they did decorative work on lampshades and things like that, joined a firm, together, and my sisters were both together, and my wife too also went to a lampshade firm in Portsmouth and did decoration for that sort of work. That was the apprenticeship for them.

Did your wife sort of go on with a more formal art training later?

No she didn't, she only had one year at art school and didn't get a grant to go, to carry on the course, her family weren't that well endowed to see her through the course, and anyway I think her parents were pretty strict about it, that each of her elder sisters had a secondary education for one year and then felt that, no, she couldn't go on to art school, but go into a formal training of some sort. And she did go to photography as a matter of fact, she worked as a sort of apprentice, apprenticeship if you like, to photography, portrait photography at that. But we kept very much in touch as I went to London, eventually, as I've already told you. So there we are, moving off from Portsmouth again. The apprenticeships you want to get to know about. But there were very little, I suppose, apprenticeship, with the, some of the monumental mason[sic] at Portsmouth, they had a number of people there in training as apprentices, and colleagues of mine also were in carving of a sort, one in particular had the most influence, the father of one whose work I did professionally as the Ancient Monuments Department, he himself set up, you know, had a little carving works of his own, carving ornamental garden figures and things of that nature. I picked up quite a bit of carving from him really. He used to work on the outskirts of Portsmouth on an open site and carve in front of the public as it were to help sell his works, and he was a very good carver indeed, and did eventually, we met up again at the Royal Academy Schools in latter years, and, it must have been before the war of course, he was there as a, he'd gained entry to the Academy Schools. And one other student friend had gained a scholarship to the Royal College of Art, and we three met up again. And that again is taking me away from my Portsmouth home isn't it, all that went on there. Too many escapes to go over I'm sure.

Yes, yes. No, I mean I think, that gives a nice sense of the kind of, the energy and the difference in approach to education at that time, you know, that this generation will not have heard of this.

Very, very minimal indeed I can assure you.

Yes.

I mean the Portsmouth Art School was something that was not very high quality I must say.

So going forward again to where we...

Where did we get to? We sort of got to the war hadn't we.

Yes, yes the pre-war period.

Coming up to the war anyway, and working for McMillan might be an interesting one, because it was like an apprenticeship in a way. And as I say, I started, I think I must have gone to him purely as a model. [There's a bee on you there.]

Oh don't worry, don't worry.

Me as an apprentice to him, in a way, as a model first. And I did work for many many RAs, and well-known painters, and certainly met up with many many of them doing the work at the art schools. Now that was a very interesting episode, working as a model. [You have to watch that.] As a model in an art school, an extraordinary experience really, just standing there on the model's throne surrounded by the students and the touring painters and sculptors, modellers, around me, and hearing all that went on, in that way, me standing there listening to all that was going on, was an apprenticeship of an unusual sort I can assure you, certainly about education. And I went to all the leading schools, and even all the leading private schools, like Byam Shaw and places like that. And even to individuals who came here for summer schools, like Ozenfant for instance, used to come over for a summer school in Warwick Road, and I did on two occasions, two years in fact, go back to him as a model, they enquired and found that I would slip out as a model, or would do it for them particularly. And I found Ozenfant very interesting indeed, with his, doing his life-size drawings, life-size drawings they did, and not the little petite things we did in art school, what was it, 15-inch figures that were drawn, no more than 15 inches on a half-imperial piece of paper, never imperial, and certainly not bigger than imperial like Ozenfant did, he used sort of foolscap pages or even wallpaper I remember the students used, full-size figures, you know, in charcoal or Conté crayon and things like that. Yes, and so I did get around, begin to get around to the sculptors, both as a model and then finally as an assistant because they found me, I was very good as an assistant, I could carve so well, and model so well, as well.

I mean just going back to the modelling again, were you asked...

Modelling in clay.

No no, modelling...

Oh that modelling, posing modelling.

Yes.

Interesting then I must say because I met up with all the professional models, and at that time, I mean, the top models then were well recognised and passed around as being great models, the females particularly, not so much the men but, there were very few men, I think I only met up with three or four men in my time. But the Italian models of course were the ones, they brought families from Italy, the whole family, including the babies, would sit there with the baby.

Oh I see.

Yes. Before it was banned of course. But nevertheless, yes, the RAs had the whole families, father, children, grown-up children, and the mother with the baby, as models, professional models. And they were brought, and they came from Italy particularly for that.

As a male model, were you asked to strike particular poses, were you used for a particular form?

Oh absolutely, absolutely, yes. What happened as a male model, you were booked, you would have a contract for a whole term, and they would then use the model for that whole term for like, two days a week or three days a week, sometimes a whole week, but right throughout the whole term, you were passed from department to department. For instance, we were talking about Coldstream, I took on the contract at the Slade, and was passed from department to department, mainly painting or drawing classes, Coldstream's classes. Do you know the Slade? Well you know the main drawing studio there with the balcony, Coldstream's studio was above that balcony, and he quite often would come, working in his studio there out onto the balcony and look down on the students and make comments, and talk to us in general, and usually entertain the models, and if you know anything about Coldstream, he married a model didn't he, that red-haired one, I can't remember her name now, great, I knew her quite well. And it was a great joke amongst the students, this, he would come out onto the balcony and say, name her, and say, 'Do come up for a coffee'.

End of F5904 Side B

F5905 Side A

[This is Tape 2 of the interview with Frank Martin on 11th of August 1997.]

Now we were talking about your experience of working as a model, and I was very interested to know what kind of poses were popular at the time you were modelling.

Well they were very limited I can assure you. The sort of, Michelangelo's 'David' pose was in fact very popular. But I seemed to pick on poses that they liked, in other words I understood the sort of thing they'd like and what artists generally wished to draw. They were poses of course that could be taken, physically taken, and not be too painful, although I can remember the most, the simplest of poses, like standing on one leg for, as it were, with the weight on one leg, like a normal standing position, whatever the position, whether it was Michelangelo's 'David' type thing with the head turned, these would, the sessions would last for something, well if it was being modelled or painted it would last up to a week or more you see, and even that simple pose, a bruise would come out on the top of my leg there through being in one position. And the most painful positions that one got was seated of course; being seated, or reclining, without some sort of padding under one, would be very painful, and quite damaging as a matter of fact, bruising and things like that. I found models didn't find this difficult, the female models I suppose they were well covered, and their bones didn't stick through. But nevertheless the poses were all classical ones; complicated poses were avoided because it wasn't, the model couldn't hold them for that long. But I mean, in the free for all that one got in the Royal College and places like that, yes one would hold the pose for five or ten minutes without a flinch as it were, and then come out of it for a few seconds, that was understood, one would, you would sort of be allowed to do this. Otherwise, to even flinch during a pose for particular, some draughtsmen, some painters, they'd grumble like anything, they really would, and as for getting down to the end of the session, you normally did 50 minutes with 10 minutes' break, and then you had to go, you were marked on the throne, your feet or your hands or whatever, it would be marked around you with chalk, and you had to take the same pose. Now you can understand that a pose, quite a complicated pose, reclining, would be difficult to get back precisely, but that was important, and they spent some time rearranging you if you sat in the wrong position, to get back to the same pose, which then had to be held for at least three-quarters of an hour, without almost breathing in some cases. And they would grumble like anything if you moved, relieve the pain perhaps. Many cases.

Did you pose for women artists as well as men?

Oh yes of course, of course, yes the whole classes at the Royal College were mixed classes, and, yes, throughout the schools of course mixed classes. I was thinking of one particular episode. Oh yes, being a sportsman and an equilibrist, that means standing on one's hands, in this case, the sort of thing we, I did say to you we did during our sessions of the day classes and the evening classes at Portsmouth School of Art, we became very accomplished equilibrists, balancers on our hands, in groups, and as I told you they went professional, I didn't, but nevertheless I still carried on doing this purely to keep the body in some sort of good order. And this emphasis was very much when we took anatomy classes of course, were a very important feature of our training then, physical anatomy, the surface anatomy was stressed enormously and we did a great deal of drawing around that. When it came to the Royal Academy Schools I posed there as a model before the war, and I was selected as the male model for the annual anatomical lecture by one of the leading anatomists of the day, I can't remember his name now, he was from St. Thomas' Hospital, a well-known, great professor of anatomy was imported to give one great lecture for the Academicians primarily, and the students of course. Now I did the session, the modelling session, I was asked to do the modelling session for that, and he, with his great hands, and he would chalk on me, the muscles would be chalked on me I remember. And great big hands the man had and would be around and said... One of the interests I had previously with physical training was to do what they call muscle control, and that was unknown now really. It was a thing imported from Europe somewhere, the man who did muscle control, and one could literally isolate one, a muscle in one's body throughout as part of the exercise. I naturally could do it with the knowledge of anatomy as well being an art student, and I could in fact, believe it or not, almost emphasise any muscle you would want throughout the training. And he used that and would say, 'Will you isolate so-and-so and so-and-so,' of the body, and then I would do this and he would chalk it in in front of the students, and enlarge on that in an anatomical way. Evidently those lectures, those anatomical lectures were very very well thought of by the Academicians themselves, particularly the sculptors, because the emphasis was on figuration and figurative work, and around the studios of course, all the studios at the Royal Academy Schools had anatomical bodies there, either hung on the walls according to whatever it was, or standing there, full-size models of anatomical features. One in particular, one very gruesome one hanging on our studio wall, which I remember a great deal about, was of the Christ on the Cross of course, with a flayed figure, which was said to be of a Guardsman who was hanged and the body presented to the Royal Academicians, whatever century that was, probably a hundred years before, for their purposes, and a cast taken and that cast, nailed feet and hands, hung on our wall, in the studios of the Royal Academy Schools.

So do you think they actually put this poor man on the cross after he'd died?

Yes.

Good grief!

The body was presented to the Royal Academicians and it was cast, displayed for our training at the Royal Academy Schools. I'm not sure that it isn't still there as a matter of fact, this gruesome figure, which I thought terribly gruesome, I did, and a lot of other things about that session. I knew the muscles very well, both as an athlete and as a student of anatomy. So of course I was the student selected, or the model selected for the annual display at the Royal Academy Schools. And then, after the war, and that was, what was it, about a ten-year break, I came back as a student there and went to the annual modelling and it was still the same professor, Appleton, I remember his name, Appleton, Professor Appleton from St. Thomas' Hospital, and he remembered too that I was the model. I didn't do the model, I was then the student looking in, another man modelled, going through the same ritual. And the other thing which I found awful and disgusting was, we were invited, that was when? I can't remember, was it before the war or the after-the-war session? Let's say it was the after-war sessions, we were taken along as students to his museum at St. Thomas' Hospital where they have in pickle, in formaldehyde, bodies, stripped bodies, and dreadful ones, of babies for instance, which to me looked like rabbit. It did in fact put me off meat-eating.

Oh I see.

As you can imagine. Anyway, yes, so that was one of the sessions with Appleton. But anatomy was highly stressed of course within the Portsmouth School of Art, and never forgot it as a matter of fact to this day, the anatomical sessions and all the muscles in the body. Figuration.

How do you feel about the loss of such skills now?

Not a bit, I hated it as a matter of fact.

Really?

Oh yes, I went totally against the skills, as you can imagine, at St. Martin's. That revolution at St. Martin's was a revolution against figuration, and it was led by me I can assure you.

Now why did you hate it so much?

But that's a long story, another story. Mm?

Why did you hate it so much?

I suppose now, now you have opened up a can of worms. Why did I hate it so much? One reason was, it failed me. I felt there were other things beyond the figuration to grapple with as an artist, and the whole of our early session was moving towards this, against figuration and for something else, something else, whatever it may be. Certainly at the Royal Academy Schools after the war, where I was a student, a half-time student by the way at the Royal Academy Schools, in that I was a mature student of course coming back from the escapades of the war, and allowed to spend half my time with the Academicians as assistants, because I needed money, I had grown a family, I had started to grow a family, and couldn't live on just the scholarship alone, so I had a hard time at the Royal Academy, the five years, the course was then, I did half-time. But certainly all those sessions of anatomy were still going on at the Royal Academy Schools after the war. And what was the question you asked me? I forget where I was now.

Why you felt figuration had failed you.

Oh figuration did fail me very much indeed, in that all that I presented, after being a student there, and do understand that we did works that were accepted for the Summer Show, in fact all my, I had three accepted every year as a student there, in the Summer Show, portrait, busts and things of that nature, figurative groups, got minor positions around the one studio that they showed sculpture in then, and the principal positions in the centre were all taken by the Royal Academicians themselves, and the major other stations within the painting, the centre of the painting galleries were then prized sort of places, but the Academicians themselves used those, not the students coming up. And I was greatly adventurous with my figurative work, to the extent that we, my last year, or two years even, the...I don't know if you know the arrangement at the Royal Academy Schools, I don't suppose you do, but the numbers of students within the Sculpture and within the Painting are about a dozen sculptors and probably twenty painters, then, no more than that. And so they took on new painters and

sculptors each year after the diploma show of about four, four sculptors, eight painters perhaps, and new ones coming in. But that was limited numbers. And so, following our degree shows, the finals, we then had to make the effort to put ourselves on the podium professionally, and that was to exhibit at the first Summer Show after the Academy Schools, the great work we had done in that year following. And I did some over-life-size figures with the most dismal subjects, like Adam and Eve, believe it or not, really, because they were the subjects we were asked to do at the Royal Academy Schools, we did Adam and Eve, the Three Graces, and a variety of other subjects, but always named. And those were the prize-winning exhibits of ours at the end of the time. But I did, I got stuck on biblical subjects, and that Christ on the Cross stuff, believe it or not, and, yes, Three Graces I remember as one, a three-figure group was asked of us, the Three Graces, aping what had gone on before with Canova and people like that. And certainly Adam and Eve in my case. [LAUGHS] Disgraceful. And I did an enormous group, Adam and Eve, a couple, in terracotta. Now terracotta was very little used then, but our Academician coming in to see, they ran the School with the Associates coming in doing their turn, you know, for teaching, they seemed to get the stint because the Academicians are much too busy to come in and teach us. Some would, McMillan certainly did, certainly after I was there he came in on, like for a term or a couple of terms or something like that. And Lambert came in, Wheeler never, and any number of the Academicians came in for a short stint of a week or two. The studios were then run really by the senior students, and I being an extraordinary sort of senior student because I was a mature student you see, following the war, so you could say I was ten years the senior one, and I sort of ran the studio as it were. That was accepted as the rule, and it was very strictly done, Academicians coming in only occasionally for an hour or two. The last one, who put in a lot more time than ever before, was Charoux, Siegfried Charoux, do you know of him? He was an Austrian, a displaced Austrian, came over because of the Hitler war and was given an honorary position at the Royal Academy, Academician. And so he just took on the task rather well really, and he was quite a revolutionary in his way, you can imagine him coming from that regime in Austria and Hitler and what-not and being somewhat... And he practised what he preached I must say, and, yes he did instil into us something outside figuration. I think that was, he sort of woke us up a bit, all of us. Do understand that Anthony Caro was alongside me at that time, and many of the others whom I took on as staff at St. Martin's eventually. Yes, he and I got on very well, being the mature student I was and being through the war, he was very much for me, and I followed him into terracotta, use of terracotta. Now he was doing life-size figures in terracotta; nobody else in England that I knew were doing this, and even he couldn't quite do them full-size because to find a kiln that size was

something quite difficult. He would halve his figures more or less and sort of concrete them together.

You mean round the waist?

The half, yes, round the waist sort of thing. And those were the ones he displayed at the annual shows of course. And they were moving away from the usual figuration to formalised figuration. I don't know if you know any of his works but they're, I remember there's one called 'The Motorcyclists' that stands on the Embankment near the Festival Hall, still, yes, well the last time I looked anyway it was there. But he was certainly moving off in a completely different direction than any of our own Academicians. The only one moving away from the figure and on to abstract-like forms was Lambert of course, Maurice Lambert, brother of Constant Lambert, he did a number of commissions that one can still see around that were abstracted away. But there was certainly nobody talking about or in any way talking about abstraction of any sort at the Royal Academy Schools in my day.

Were you aware of artists like Barbara Hepworth and Naum Gabo and...?

Just, just. Henry Moore yes, I remember talking with students about Henry Moore's early figures, and there was great laughter around them, really, and I was dead against that and protested enormously about, but I was beginning to move in that direction myself, certainly, and he was the only one, the only sculptor that we were looking at, I was looking at, at that time, that was doing anything a little outside the normal figuration. And they were termed abstraction at that time of course, but they were still figures, or implied. I mean Hepworth was coming along wasn't she with her very much abstract, but then with descriptions which were figurative in a sense, likely, the landscapes and things like that. But no, nothing had entered our training at the Royal Academy Schools that we called abstraction at all, at all, and that was what, I left in 1953.

Gosh.

Yes.

I mean did you see any references to the sort of thing that Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth would be looking at in the Thirties, like sort of 'Minotaur' and things like that, had you seen any of that material?

Just a little of it, it was just beginning to come through. Certainly there were no books around even on that subject, I mean, it was élitist sort of thing wasn't it, and the publications were few. We students never really saw them. The library at the Academy was the inner sanctum, at the Royal Academy and were, what, fifty years out of date I would have thought even then, because the contributions to that library were by the Academicians who bequeathed their libraries to the Academy, so modern books on sculpture and painting and things like that were very few. And anyway we had special dispensation to go into the library at the Royal Academy, it was for the Royal Academicians, not for students. The abstract sculpture and any allusion to Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth though we were beginning to find when we reached and started at St. Martin's. Believe it or not, with no library, no library, we used Foyle's bookshop as our library. We had a connecting door between the library. And why? It was part of the same building you see and there was a fire door and we students used, and staff of course, used the fire door to go into the fine art section of Foyle's bookshop. And then we began to find a few books on other ways in sculpture, the abstract sculpture, Henry Moore certainly and Barbara Hepworth, but not much more, even at that time, and that was what, 1953.

I mean just going back a little bit to your time at the Royal Academy Schools.

Yes.

Did you go and look at exhibitions? Because there was quite a lot of European Modernism being shown in that period.

Yes, yes. We were beginning to get around, but, you know, there was quite a lot you say was shown around; not that much.

In London.

In London, yes, in London only certainly, although I found out since there were some in places like Edinburgh were being shown, and I have a friend here as a matter of fact at Portsmouth who knew about that and was a patron. But no, what were showing? In the West End galleries, Leslie Waddington, father rather, what was the father's name Waddington?

Victor I think.

Victor Waddington, would show an occasional Moore, a little one in the centre amongst the paintings. Very little of Hepworth. Certain drawings, yes, the Underground drawings of Moore, and Hepworth's operating theatre drawings were shown on the walls, the painters' walls as we called them, not the sculptors' walls. And in the centre an occasional maquette. Certainly nothing of Moore's any bigger than 18 inches. The most impressive sculptor of course was Epstein, oh yes Epstein was the focus for me particularly, and I did go along to Epstein's studios of course and meet him there, and showed us his work and did see models of his that were moving away from figuration. But that's, you know, something that we've got to talk about further on in the interview.

So, that kind of contact, he hadn't come into your mental sphere at the time you were training?

Just at that time, just, really the last two years of my Academy studentship I went to his studio. How we got that interview I don't know, I can't remember how we got there. But he was ready to show us of course his collection of African art, and that affected me more than anything at all I can assure you, even more than Moore or Hepworth, was his African sculpture. It did lead me away and certainly all my work showed later on was the influence from Africa, not Moore or Hepworth, in my case. Certainly I tried to bring elements of African art into my large terracottas, not very successfully mind you, because of the technique really, that building terracottas over-life-size was something that was not done, and not even can't get it. The only indication of a technique of terracotta, using terracotta, was from Charoux of course, and I can show you right this very moment some element of it. I'll only show you to stimulate you. Right here behind you is a hand from one of my sculptures.

Ah!

There it is.

Now would you like to describe that for the tape?

Now that hand, and you can hold it in a moment, is my fist of course, my fist.

Ah!

Right, it's my fist.

But enlarged.

But, the figures that I made were that size, if you understand the size.

Yes, yes. So how much...

I can show you a photograph in a moment to help stimulate you of this very one.

Yes.

The life-size figures, over-life-size figures, in terracotta, in terracotta you remember, that's the important thing. Just hold that for a moment. The weight.

That's very heavy.

And then... Well, you know that's just the hand of the sculpture, as heavy as any stone is, and fired you see, which was almost an impossibility at that time but nevertheless I found a way of doing it. But even Charoux didn't find a way of doing it, at Rowland's Castle brick works, the one I met up with when I was renovating the churches. And, do you want me to describe that?

Oh yes.

Right. Certainly when I was down there I found the clay, the wonderful clay of Rowland's Castle, well renowned for brick-making, beautiful colour, beautiful consistency, plastic, lovely for modelling.

And what sort of colour?

Pardon? Oh red, deep red. And would fire up terracotta colour of course. Well there it is, it's darkened there, so it wasn't quite terracotta in the ordinary sense...

Mm, it looks...

...like brick would be, but it was a brick kiln, and the bricks certainly came out very red. But the larger sculpture, I may well have done something with these, I may have put an Indian clay on it, what they call an Indian clay on the surface, but I don't know, it looks quite light inside too. When any bricks of course are fired, what they call engineering bricks, can be deep blue can't they, with 1,200 Fahrenheit firing. But anyway, this, making clay figures, terracotta figures in over-life-size was not done anywhere, I mean I've only seen it made up in these Chinese underground figures now, that have been turned up. Certainly nobody in Europe that I knew made them. And Charoux of course stimulated us to use terracotta because of his own work, and I certainly took it up. I remember, having made this figure, this group figure of Adam and Eve over-life-size, and photographed it, and taken it to Charoux to see for the first time, it really shocked him, he said, 'You students catch on very quickly don't you,' he said to me. And certainly then the development from that in my own work, where I then took them to the Royal Academy for the Summer Show and they rejected them.

Ah, so that was your disillusionment.

Aha! Disillusionment, yes. That was the beginning of it anyway, disillusionment with figuration, and what was being done at the Royal Academy. I can... Right.

End of F5905 Side A

F5905 Side B

[This is Tape 2 Side B of the interview with Frank Martin at East Portlemouth on the 11th of August 1997.]

Now you were just talking about your moment of disillusionment with the rather rigid traditional figuration of the Royal Academy School and your entry of the Adam and Eve, which you've just shown me a photograph of, and I do see why it would have had, it would have seemed to be a very dynamic and unusual work at the time, and I wonder if you would like to physically describe it from the photograph and also go back to the technical aspect that you were discussing as being so innovative. You didn't quite finish saying how you managed to produce figures on this scale.

[PAUSE] Straight away, now? Well certainly with my Adam and Eve, which was a sort of turning point in a way, the way it was made, how it turned out ultimately, and what happened to it ultimately too as a sculpture, had its effect on me, and I was beginning to reject figuration for all the wrong reasons I've now doubt but nevertheless they were very real to us and to me. Certainly at the Royal Academy Schools no history of art was taught, or did we have access to details of what had gone on in say the early part of the century and certainly in the Thirties and Forties and so on, about abstract sculpture or what followed the painters, the French painters and their attitudes, and the Cubists beyond that and so on, and then Henry Moore himself coming along, with Hepworth. Very little on show then of Henry Moore's, and I didn't see any good works on it, of his work, until Sylvester's books became apparent. I hadn't, we hadn't known that those had been published during the war believe it or not. So, war was just on the horizon, Hepworth certainly alongside, and... But, we were talking about my Adam and Eve and certainly its submission to the Summer Exhibition at the Royal Academy committee. It certainly was accepted as an entry, not just rejected but it was an entry, but of course there were limited positions within the one sculpture gallery they had there and the other positions within the whole Academy, where, you must know that at that time there was one large studio for sculpture, exclusively sculpture, and then any other positions were found down the centres of other galleries, but the numbers were very few, so one gallery virtually, and the roundel had sculptures in. So my submission as a newly-arrived professional as it were from the Royal Academy Schools, they knew about my work of course, my early student work they selected and exhibited at the Royal Academy, very limited works, portraits, small groups and not much else really, but nothing of importance, this was my special submission once I was on my own and a profession beyond the Academy. It was

in fact before I started at St. Martin's. Certainly this Adam and Eve composition and I had made, and do understand biblical subjects and the like were a common factor within our studentships at the time and nothing else, so it was nothing strange to be doing even an Adam and Eve then.

But formerly I would say it would have looked very unusual at the time.

Pretty unusual. And certainly the nudity of it and the male genitals not covered with a fig leaf and things like that weren't sort of done or on display to that great extent then, nevertheless we students felt we had to be explicit at that time and nothing was hidden behind, whether it was a drapery or a fig leaf. Now this terracotta technique was pretty rare in sculpture in this country then, certainly no one that I know of, other than Siegfried Charoux, an Austrian refugee during the war as it were, was doing anything like it, but certainly his techniques he let us see, I mean we went to his studio and so on, but he never in fact ever fired a full-size figure group like this one, because kilns weren't that large, and to find anywhere, I mean, I found a way of firing it inadvertently in a way, because way back, something I've described, where I worked on the church in the Meon Valley, restoration work, I found the Rowland's Castle brick works. Now I've described those, they are great kilns standing inside, semi-circular kilns, about 20 or 30 foot long and inside about 10 feet, and they had many of those with something like 14 fires, 7 a side fires. I worked in the upper reaches of this particular complex where the heat from the ovens below percolated above where they had all the bricks drying out prior to going into a kiln. And I worked on my over-full-size figures not too far away, set already standing on a trolley so that they could be carefully run along rails to the kilns, and also rods embedded in them in a concrete slab. Now concrete, ordinary concrete, will not fire, but fondue concrete, something I learned the technique with during the war, would stand 1,200 degrees or more without bursting. And with the rods in, placed in such a way that the shrinkage quality of the material, for instance one had to reckon on something like eight to ten per cent shrinkage, had to be dealt with, and I did it by placing my rods in the concrete at the appropriate angle, because I was working from a maquette using callipers and things like that, and then surrounding the rods, steel rods, with the grasses from outside, the quarries then, long grasses were bound around it, and then in fact they entered the clay as well, I mixed the rods of the grasses with the clay and that allowed of course the gases and the moisture to come away eventually. But the clay itself was what they called heavily grogged, and that is, grog is no more than broken up bricks anyway, fired material already, ground up into a coarse material, mixed with the clay, and that then built up the body of the work, as I've showed you with that hand over there, allowing the moisture to come away, the gases to

come away from the firing. But they had to, it had to be repaired and dried for a very long time in the, against the ovens or near the ovens for something like a month or more, and then trolled in finally into the kiln. And it was a great interest to the workers there to see this done of course, and there were very many amusing stories around them watching me do it and the questions they asked. I used to take my young son along with me, and he was the only son that didn't turn to art but nevertheless became an osteopath and he's doing sculpture now, his portraits of his patients that he's working on at this moment. Nevertheless he was there. And the men used to come around regularly to see these new figures being made; you can imagine down in a workshop like that, wanting to see these great nude figures being made, and there were some very amusing questions asked. So they were finalised and then trolled near the kilns and dried out and then finally put in the kiln, they would carefully put in their bricks for the drying out of course within the kilns, and then my figures would be right in dead centre of the kiln, and we'd hope to get the full twelve hundred degrees Fahrenheit in the centre of the kilns, because various colours come out differently, the edges at lower temperatures are quite deep red when they come out and the others come out bluey-black colour, and that was the colour I wanted for my figuration. And then the fires were ignited along this kiln, first two fires, one on either side, four, six, eight, fourteen fires in the end, through, taking a week to build up the heat. So it was a magnificent way of dealing with figures that, with a raising of temperature very quickly would burst and the technique would fail. So they came out perfectly as a matter of fact in the end. Now, you were asking me about technique and describing the sort of elements that I brought into this. It was African sculptures that influenced me, although one doesn't actually see it in this all that much but nevertheless African figures were very much in our sights, and certainly was in my sight, because I was introduced to Epstein for the first time in his own, with his own collection way back during my Academy School time so it probably must have been about 1950, somehow we got an introduction to him, and like half a dozen of us went along to his studio and he showed us his great collection of African sculpture, a marvellous show in there.

Can you remember what sort of size figures there might have been in that collection?

In his collection were anything up to sort of five feet or more, a big collection, lovely collection. And the formalisation of the figures naturally had a great effect on my sculpture and a number of other people.

So did this sort of mark a radical change in your style?

Was this a marker?

Yes.

Oh yes certainly.

Yes, so this was a complete change?

Oh yes, oh a complete change. Otherwise it was Italian Renaissance, and nothing further I can assure you, nothing. As little formalisation I suppose entered it, as it did in many sculptors at that time, even the Academicians for that matter. But nothing very, beyond what you know I'm sure. So, this figure group that I made, the Adam and Eve one, was a very special one, and although it was just a *tour de force* really for me, it certainly wasn't anything greatly formalised, but nevertheless it was understood as being something a bit unusual, and as I say they did select it. And the man heading the selection committee then, oh, I forget his name, a well-known sculptor... No, I've lost him for the moment, I may remember. Who himself formalised his figures pretty well, was, we went up to see what he had selected of ours, and he certainly picked on me and said, 'Frank Martin, I'm afraid, we have your figure in but we can't find a place for it'. That was his way of putting it anyway. And so he said, 'Well you understand, large figures like that...where would you put it?' And he pointed out, and there were the small sculptures all the way round that particular gallery, and then about four larger groups, one of them being his, in the archway at the far end. And I said, 'Right where your sculpture is Sir.' You know. He said, 'That's very cheeky of you.' He said, 'Do you understand that we Academicians have to show our works, this is the shop window for us, we have to sell them to live,' and he said, 'and we really can't afford to give those places away to somebody beginning.' 'But we are beginning,' I said. 'I do know that you have shown that before at the Royal Academy Show, it's nothing new, but mine certainly is something new too, I would have thought, for a young man.'

Now I'm going to stop you there for a minute and I'm going to describe these figures for the tape.

Please.

Because I'm not sure you have. The man is standing very upright, and I hesitate to use the word primitivised for either figure but I think there's an element of it, although it's a very

dangerous comment to use, both figures stand on extremely sturdy legs and have feet that taper away slightly, and the woman's body is sort of very full, one might say sort of fecund. She has her head in her hands, and the man is also looking with downcast eyes at the ground. There is a sort of wonderful combination of monumental, naturalistic and primitive, and look to me to be a long way from Renaissance Italy.

Yes, I think that's a fair description, a fair description. Certainly too with the elements of the genitals and things like that being shown. Incidentally her genitals are covered by an inscribed fig leaf, and an inscribed fig leaf around his genitals too, so, that can't be seen on this photograph you see. Things like that, symbolic things enter into it. But yes, the figures in the long run were influenced somewhat by the African sculpture, but the technique itself of building that in terracotta, that size, influenced what, the way the thing evolved, and did quite, I didn't quite achieve the African elements I wanted to achieve in that. But anyway it was a first off, and... But I must tell you at this moment a great disaster. I did that twice, that group twice, that means two years' sort of work, almost two years' work for the two groups, certainly, yes, all my time, spare time as it were, and I did consider that I did my sculpture in my spare time, otherwise I was away teaching and things like that, doing other things, commissions of sorts, carvings and things like that. But then regularly going back when ever I had any spare time to complete my figures at the Rowland's Castle brick works, so it was done over almost a whole year, that one group. It was fired, and I was going to make the onslaught on the Royal Academy that year, whatever it was, 1953 I would have thought, that was the It was placed on a trailer and held upright by ropes and things like that, but, one of the fixings on the ropes broke when it was being taken to London on this trailer, I was taking it, towed by my car, and over it went and smashed into a thousand pieces.

Oh my goodness!

Yes. I know it was very early in the morning, no traffic about, not much traffic about then on the roads anyway but certainly at sort of, between 5 and 6 in the morning, moving off from Rowland's Castle with it to go to, to take it to the Royal Academy, and only what, twenty miles away from Rowland's Castle, on a bend, the fixing of one of the ropes snapped and the whole thing went over and smashed on the road. Quickly had to clear it off the road, all the pieces, nothing very large left, as bulky as it was, and throw it into a field alongside the road. But I did pick up that one fist, and there it is over there. It'll give you some idea of the composition of it and the size. Very distraught about it of course, to arrive home and say, 'It's not at the Academy, it's smashed in a thousand pieces at Petersfield in Hampshire.' But

I was determined that it went to the Academy, and in the following year I built it again, a little quicker, and a little better in some certain ways. But nevertheless it was submitted and they rejected it, and so, I took it away and it was stored for a while, and ultimately I did get it in the back yard of St. Martin's School of Art, in its crate, it was in a crate then. And I must follow this story by saying that it stood there for many years, never displayed anywhere, never displayed anywhere, nor did I want it to be displayed anywhere because we had taken ourselves right away from figuration in every possible way, and it was finally smashed up, at the request of one of my staff who had the task of clearing that back yard area that we were using for everything then, another story to come to you later on, and he said, 'Well one of the things in the way there is your Adam and Eve in the crate; what can I do with it?' I said, 'Smash it up.' And it was smashed up, and I got a second fist off it, from it, the only things again. And I hadn't remembered either that I'd picked up that one from the road, but there, I've got two of those, the fists of my...

One from each.

...great sculpture, each sculpture.

Yes, very symbolic.

Very symbolic indeed, yes. So there's the story of my Adam and Eve in the Royal Academy and the move away from figuration, all had its influence on what we did at the Royal Academy Schools.

Now the Royal Academy Schools was post-war, and I wonder if before we embark on St. Martin's we ought to return to your war time.

Oh very much. Oh you must return to my war time, because obviously that had its influences in many many many ways indeed, and there are many stories to be told about my war years. Now do understand, I was working for McMillan at that time and I had just got my entry to the Royal Academy Schools as a student, a big move for me because I had then to not only work at the Royal Academy Schools but also earn a living from my now, my wife and new family then. But I had set up as professional I suppose sculptor, and I had a studio off the Fulham Road, north of Chelsea, in Seymour Walk, number 24 Seymour Walk, which was a fairly run-down area then but nevertheless around me, just beyond, a few hundred yards, several of the Academicians, sculptors, had their studios, certainly Wheeler did, and I could

virtually see his studios from the back garden of this flat, and a billiard room that I eventually made into a studio. So I was married two years before the war, set up the studio, still working for McMillan and the other sculptors, and my wife was working in London too as a sort of artist making lampshades down at the Elephant & Castle, and, but really set to get moving, you know, as a young sculptor within figuration. And so the threat of war the year before, and work as a, I did spare-time training with the Metropolitan Police B Division, that's Chelsea Division, occasionally my times, off a half day here, a night here and there and so on, a sort of training, in uniform. And then came the real war, the September of 1939, and they phoned me and said that they wanted me immediately as they expected the Germans to send over gas bombs on London, it was threatened and very real I can assure you, we all thought there would be a great gas attack on London. All of us had, everybody was given a gas mask as you know, and cot like things for the babies, but we all had gas masks ready for the great onslaught that Hitler was going to have on London, particularly on London. I know I reinforced the coal bunkers under my flat, and laced the windows with sticky tape to withstand the shattering of the bombs that they thought were going to fall on us, and I was taken out on various beats in Chelsea, further training and very real stuff. For instance there was a great threat of, believe it or not, letter bombs by the IRA on London at that very time, would you believe it, and every post office in London had to have a policeman against the letterbox, or any letterbox, all the public boxes were closed and you could only post letters in the post offices, so that each one had a policeman against the letterbox to see the packages, any package you had to examine. And I remember having to examine all sorts of parcels. One in particular that I sort of felt and felt, that's a bit odd, and the person couldn't give an explanation what was in the parcel, so I had her to go along to the station with the parcel to explain what it was, and they opened it and it was a rubber dog's bone, because the bombs then were being placed around London, or posted, sent to people were very similar and they were flexible like a sponge. But anyway, my dog's bone was a great, great hilarity over that within the station, but nevertheless it was done. And that's the sort of thing we did as a reserve policeman. All sculpture was put aside of course, all art of any sort, I remember Henry Moore in fact moving out from London and many artists did of course move out. McMillan himself had a country home down in Sussex, and he went off there, so work stopped absolutely for him, and our memorial fountains that we were doing for Trafalgar Square were complete and were cast, were placed underground somewhere I remember, and naturally nothing else went on beyond that, beyond our war effort that we were doing. Now, so the gas attack and the bombing of London didn't occur as we all suspected on that very September day, or beyond it, within a week or so, and the phoney war started, one year of phoney war went on. Six months into my work as a police war reserve, lots of stories I could

tell you about that, I don't think they're relevant, nevertheless it was very real, and they started then to mobilise enormously, and I heard and was told by the sergeant that in fact they were calling up the young policemen from the station, and I would be one. And so I did consult my family, and my father, who was now divorced from my mother, but nevertheless I went down to Portsmouth, my home town, which was seething with the war, preparation for the war, and also the preparation for possible naval battles along the English Channel, the North Sea. So there was great activity seething there, and he suggested that I went along to the Royal Marine barracks. He said, 'Oh no, you don't go in the Navy proper, you're going into the Royal Marines, you're just the character for the Royal Marines.' And that I did, I went along and, although London wouldn't take me, I went to the recruiting office there and offered my services but they said, 'No, we don't want any Royal Marines at this very moment; perhaps if you came back in a month's time.' But then I did go down to Portsmouth and recruited there and they took me immediately. Funnily enough, although I was entering then the Royal Marines proper, as it were, they were evolving a group of various trade men, trades men, and, specialists in every aspect of engineering, and on my earlier escapade of working at Rowland's Castle - oh no, Porchester Castle, I have described that haven't I already? Yes, Porchester Castle, engineering really, and I'd registered myself, for their purposes, in a labour exchange which said I was a mason-carver, if you remember I was going to go back to that as a trainee for, as a supervisor. But I registered, had completely forgotten about it, but they somehow had this at the recruiting centre eventually and said, 'Look, you've registered as a mason-carver. Aren't you?' I said, 'Yes I am, what's that to do with the Royal Marines?' They said, 'Well at this very moment we're forming a group of people with engineering ability and knowledge of all sorts, road builders, builders of all sorts, electrical engineers, a small group, a very specialist group that we're going to attach to the Royal Marines to do any job around, during this war. And if you are selected you'll get a larger pay than the rest.' So I agreed to that. And so I found myself attached to this very unusual group of men, and they were from all walks of life, usually from the biggest construction firms in the country, very knowledgeable men, very well trained men, and me as a mere mason-carver. I did ask what a mason-carver might do in the Royal Marines, and the joke went round the recruiting centre as they heard this conversation going on, 'Oh you're to carve the headstones of course of the Royal Marines that are killed.' Anyway, great joke, great joke but later on actually. Nevertheless there I joined this unit, and started to train. It formed, and it was about 1,000 men, and half of them being the engineers and the other half being the fighters of the Royal Marines. And we were a very interesting group I must say, and ready to go almost anywhere in the world at all, against the coastal fringe of any country, to do whatever we had to do, and we would turn up during the war. And the interesting part too was that it was, we

kept together as a unit, whereas most fighting groups are dislocated for reasons of war and so on, and never stayed together, but we did as a unit stay together.

End of F5905 Side B

F5906 Side A

[Starting Tape 3 of the interview with Frank Martin on the 11th of August 1997.]

Now we were just discussing the fact that the special unit of the Royal Marines that you were with stayed together, which was unusual in operational terms during the war.

Yes absolutely, absolutely, we did stay together and went through experiences together throughout the various campaigns, and I'll describe a major one of these campaigns. But let's get back to joining the Royal Marines as such. The great joke being, when I joined, that I was registered somewhere for reasons of joining the Ancient Monuments Department, I was registered as a mason-carver, and they wanted masons for this unit as well as all the other trades and skills and specialisms. And so I found myself with an interesting lot of men, young, very young, but nevertheless most of them professionally employed in the biggest of the construction firms, they naturally went to all the big construction firms and said we want the best men you've got for this particular unit, and they were very special men I found. But there I was, an ordinary mason-carver, like the other sort of carpenters and bricklayers and concrete men and things like that, just the skilled workers around it, so I was a skilled worker, considered. But nevertheless I found myself before very long elevated through the various ranks, and I did in fact go from just a plain Royal Marine to all the ranks, every rank, I went right through, that is the lance-corporal, corporal, sergeant, colour sergeant, WO1 and so on throughout the war campaign, and eventually being commissioned in the field. But the training purposes, we were trained at Portsmouth in all the aspects of war, because naturally we were armed just any other Royal Marine, and we had, half the unit were Royal Marines proper, long-serving ones too at that particular time, we were the hostilities-only people. So it was quite an interesting unit from that point of view. And so we were trained together. I funnily enough went right back to being at Portsmouth command, which then was, as we formed were housed at the Royal Marine barracks of Portsmouth, but then, after Dunkirk, with all the escapees from the Continent and French and various other units came into Portsmouth, were brought in by the battleships and things like that, so they inhabited our barracks, and we had to make do with whatever we could, encampments around it, but all the people from Dunkirk were housed in the Marine barracks and the naval barracks there. And so, the war went on from Dunkirk, and if you remember they went right up through Norway, invaded Norway didn't they, went right up that coast, and it was thought that they were likely to invade England via Orkney islands rather than the south coast, which was heavily protected, and we ourselves as a Marine group were stationed on Hayling Island, which is an

island alongside Portsmouth, and we put up all the defences around Hayling Island, under the sea and on the coast there, and built the pillboxes and all that sort of thing ready for the threatened invasion. But we were also detached when they found the Germans were going up through Norway, and taken, we were changed to the Orkney Islands, and we started to build airfields and gun emplacements and features like that for the war purposes, for defence, because they felt that was the most likely place for them to come over from Norway and invade our naval area there, because the Orkney Islands was a station, Flotta was a naval base just like Portsmouth was. But it had no airfields for a start, and we built our first airfields on the mainland there, near Kirkwall, and the first aeroplanes that they could muster were four Gloucester Gladiators and some Swordfish planes which dropped anti-submarine bombs, but four Gloucester Gladiators, biplanes, were the only defence we had in the Orkneys at that particular time, until the Americans supplied us with Grummonds fighter plane and we started to get those in by the hundred. So our defences were set up there in the Orkney Islands, and I was there for nine months doing this work, and I was elevated to the rank of corporal by that time, lance-corporal then corporal in the nine months following. We were sent then back to the south coast because it was decided that they weren't going to invade the Orkney Islands but likely to invade the south coast still, and we were put back to Hayling Island once again to build further defences and train further for the possible invasion. During that time, I think we were there for something like six months, and there was a great threat of course of the invasion by barges from France, the Germans then collected them along that northern coast of France. And as you know the whole thing, emphasis changed suddenly when they invaded Russia, and the whole of the barges set up along that coast were dispersed. So that threat along our south coast of course had been, we'd had the Battle of Britain in the air and more or less won that, and that had a lot to do with the plans that the Germans obviously had, but the diversion to fight the Russian war did take the heat off us, except for bombing of course, aerial bombing. So then, the Royal Marines were being dispersed around the world for the various wars that were accumulating, certainly around Egypt and in the Mediterranean, Malta, places like that. Then it was decided that, then the Americans were coming into the war, and the Fifth American Army was formed and dispatched to the middle of the Atlantic and we as a convoy, the British convoys, including my unit, and by that time I had been elevated to something like a sergeant or a colour sergeant, and then WO1, warrant officer, a sort of regimental sergeant-major I was, believe it or not, at that stage, and then a regimental, an ordinary sergeant-major and then a regimental sergeant-major was something, an elevation, like god somewhat rather in the Royal Marines, nevertheless a wartimes-only sort of god. But nevertheless, so I found my unit, we were dispatched to Liverpool, not knowing where we were going, and the plan was to join up with the American Fifth Army mid-Atlantic in

convoys, sail down the middle of the Atlantic, and enter Gibraltar Strait during the night, this whole convoy, the leading wedge of it anyway, was going through the Straits of Gibraltar, a very limited and well looked after not, not by everybody of course, and then on, and invade Algeria and Morocco. That was the plan, with the American Fifth Army backing that mainly. And so we were literally attached to the Americans, my particular unit. And we reached Algeria, Algiers, which was going to be our landing point, for invasion within 24 hours, and we set up an enormous barrage to enter Algiers with no opposition whatsoever in the end, none at all. And so I landed alongside Algiers, the Sound of Algiers, and were dispatched immediately to points in Tunisia, and I found myself with a unit of some fifty Marines of our unit dispatched as the leading edge of what we were about, to take Sfax, and that's on the Tunisian, eastern coast of Tunisia, Sfax, S-F-A-X. And there we did a great deal of work on a whole range of things, putting great oil buns on the land there, containers, and bringing oil from the sea to it to mount up ammunition and supplies for further invasion, our invasion, and of course to fight Rommel from the rear. Montgomery at this time was driving forward, at last, and had taken Tobruk, and we were coming up through Tunisia and were prepared to take Bizerte, that was the point, disembarking point of Rommel's army, so we came through that area, through the Kasmin Pass, where Rommel had put in a show there with tanks and did a lot of damage to the American Army coming in then, very experienced men with tanks, and the tank divisions of the Americans were destroyed, but nevertheless he wasn't serious about stopping there, fortunately for us, he did disembark and leave all his ammunition and tanks on the African side. Needless to say we did get to Bizerte and Fereville, we took the port of Fereville and set up base there. An incidental thing to that was that I was told by Philip King, particularly one of my sculptors at St. Martin's, way ahead now in the story, but nevertheless he was eleven years older when we invaded that, and he watched us from the hills. His father was there employed in some sort of way and he was living there, and went into the hills to get away from the armies and did watch us enter Bizerte, he told me later on when he became a member of my staff at St. Martin's.

Extraordinary.

It is extraordinary isn't it. Anyway we then held Bizerte and did a great deal of work round there. We had docks to deal with, docks that had been partially destroyed by the Germans, the caissons, the gates of the docks were all blown, or had been booby-trapped, and our job was to in fact destroy the booby-traps and make the docks work again, and that we did in a variety of ways, using under water, underwater people, we managed to find Algerians that were skilled in, underwater divers, but we had ourselves a diving arm and I had something to

do with that. And we prepared those docks for use by our damaged battleships, there was one big enough to take a destroyer, which was a very big dock, considered, outside Britain, and so it was very important to get that moving, and that we did in record time I would have thought, and got battleships in there, the ones that were being now damaged in the battles in the Mediterranean, with the invasion of Crete and the attempted invasion of Malta and all that sort of thing, we were, there were many damaged battleships, and so it was important that we gain all the machinery shops of Fereville dockyard and get them in some sort of order to receive, you know, the casualties from the Mediterranean war that was going on then heavily. We were there I should think up to sort of nine months, preparing the way for an invasion of Italy, invasion of Sicily actually, Pantelleria, a little island below, nearer Malta, was our first objective. And that we ultimately did, invaded Pantelleria, with no opposition, took that, established ourselves, and then the bigger invasion of Sicily by Americans on one side that we were with, and Montgomery on the other side of Sicily, and that was successful as you know, war history has well told about that. And then, we then set up another invasion, from Africa, from Algiers and Fereville, collected all the invasion craft, American invasion craft, and the move was to break through at the Messina Strait and for Montgomery go to go up the eastern side of Italy, and the American Army to go up the western side of Italy. So, ultimately I found, after Sicily I found myself in another convoy heading for Salerno. Now Salerno's just below Naples, on the coast there, and we ourselves as a unit, together with Americans, landed not far from Capri, against Amalfi on that coast there, that beautiful coast, but then had to withdraw because they had blown certain bridges across gorges that we had to proceed along with our equipment, and we hadn't expected that, nor could we bridge the gorges that readily, so we were withdrawn and invaded at Salerno instead. It was partially invaded already, but nevertheless it was quite an opposed landing, and shelling, and each of those funnily enough, and on the African side when we landed there, there was a huge thunderstorm which we thought was induced by the gunfire and shells and so on, which it probably was. And the same thing happened at Salerno, we had an enormous thunderstorm at the same time as being shelled, and torrential rains. But anyway the landing was quite successful, without too much opposition, but the Germans were drawing rapidly to Naples. And we ourselves very interestingly were scattered on that particular area, and I spent most of my time rounding up our particular unit overnight and we took over the Salerno opera house as our centre, it could easily be described and understood by the Italians where we were, and we thought that was a good base, the opera house, and we set ourselves up in the boxes and on the stage and down the [INAUDIBLE], and the morning scene was quite wonderful, I know I was out right into the early hours of the morning finding the last of our units that had got scattered because of the shellfire and what-not, but then directed them to the opera house,

and they found it, and there in the morning light, the very limited morning light, of one window I remember like a searchlight, [INAUDIBLE] on the opera house, all the Marines draped over the stage, in the stalls and what-not all around. I myself had a balcony up here somewhere, that I discovered in the moonlight. Anyway, we collected ourselves and made our way the following weeks to move on Naples, and we had certain assignments there particularly, one being a radar station in the castle that stands above Naples. Do you know Naples at all? Above Naples there's a great, there's Vesuvius of course, the spectacular Vesuvius, and another great mound with a castle on the top, and that castle was being used as a foremost radar point of the Germans, and we had the job to supposedly take it before they destroyed it. We didn't quite succeed actually, the castle did in fact have a drawbridge and the drawbridge was up. It was one of these ancient, with a drawbridge. And the sight there was extraordinary, to reach Naples, and we still had a sort of half-million population away in the Catacombs, and so one of our major jobs when we reached there was not only to take the castle if we could but various other tasks we had, which we completed successfully, the machine workshops, the Marine barracks and all that down below were important things to capture, and although they were heavily booby-trapped we did in fact get them, and inhabited the Marine barracks there as our barracks. But then we had the task not only of moving off slightly from north of Naples, but certainly had to support the half-million population without water, without electricity of course, and that was a major task then. It was to make a generator work, one generator only; of all the blown generators, and there were four power stations, we managed to collect enough to make one generator work. Then we brought in five submarines, and submarines have great generators aboard, and we linked all this lot together and supplied electricity for pumping the water that supplied and looked after the population of half a million, and our own people of course. And that we did in the first months of that episode anyway, where the front had moved off from Naples to Messina, the monastery, and if you know anything about the war years then it was held up at the monastery and right across Italy, the centre of Italy, for a long time, many many months. So, dealing with that situation there was very interesting indeed I must say, and the things we had to do around it all, taking Ischia which is an island just off, and Capri of course, Ischia was made into a prison camp I remember; it was otherwise a summer resort for most wealthy people, and we made it into a prison camp. And so we moved in gradually inland with now Montgomery coming over to our side a good bit, and his armies. But there were some vicious battles in the centre of Italy because it was a mountainous area and it didn't take much holding in the long run because of the mountains above, and the passes through the mountains were heavily fortified by the Germans, and the epitome of this was at the Messina monastery, which they dug in underneath as you know and it was bombed by thousand-bomber raids and things like

that on many occasions but they didn't break through for months actually. Now to circumvent... Mm? You were going to say...?

I was going to say, how did you find working with the Americans?

Very well indeed, I got on with the Americans, I like them as a matter of fact. And they respected our way of doing things, because they were new to it anyway, and they got a raw deal when they first landed in Algiers, but we did work together very well indeed, yes. And if I wanted anything, for anything that I wanted to do in the construction way, and I was a key one in being what I was, my rank, I sort of hovered between the officers and the men in a variety of ways. But I found I fitted in very well indeed. I wasn't a specialist obviously, and my trade, my skill was of no use whatsoever of course, but nevertheless I found myself working very well in that position. I suppose being a sculptor had something to do with it, a free-ranging sort of sculptor around construction and things like that, it married up somehow. And I was very good with men of that sort of age group because of my activities, not only rescuing at sea and doing other things with my units, somehow that blended in with it too, to the extent that throughout my training as a war-fighting Marine, you have to go through courses with what they call the PNRT course, which is a physical training course, I'd done it all you see, judo and all that sort of thing, with my police training as a matter of fact, beside my own interests in physical training, my work as a model and all that sort of thing you know, and so I found myself being trained for something that I was better than they were, the Royal Marines even in a PNRT way. And they wanted me to stay on and join as a long-serving Royal Marine, but I refused that too, I wanted to stop with my particular unit, I felt an interest in it, although it was going off to the wars in the Mediterranean, and I found also that it was very useful in my practice with all the men of that age group, of my age group, I was in middle twenties then you see, and what with my, all my other training and interests in physical things, it was very very useful. And I did get on with the men, I wasn't the typical swearing, hard-shooting Royal Marine, high-ranking Royal Marine, regimental sergeant-major, regimental major [INAUDIBLE] understand it, and as I say it was a special role to deal with men. I found I could deal with my age group very well indeed, and I literally did, the particular units that I was with I found I could work very well between the officers and the men, and not being an officer, a commissioned officer, I didn't live in the officers' mess but I was retained a great deal there, as it were, but always, whenever we made an encampment, I slept in my own tent with the men in the encampment which I set up, I was the only one there, and there was only a duty officer, one duty officer, ever in any encampment that I made up. So I was very close to the men and also close to the officers, so I had a particular session with

that episode of working in Italy and so on. Ultimately, in a special, another special way, we had a time in the war then that, the war was so static because of Messina and the defence of the Germans across Italy, that they had to make a breakthrough, and they decided to invade Anzio. I don't know if you've heard of it but Anzio was up near Rome, it was the beach, the lido as it were, of Rome, and about 140 miles up the Italian coast. And it was a gamble of course, a huge gamble, and it was just a lido with just one harbour arm and nothing else; although it was described as the port of Anzio it wasn't a port, it was no more than a holiday centre rather like Salcombe is or something opposite me now, and it is just one arm, and just one arm. Why I talk about that, because I had a great deal to do with that arm, of the mole, the harbour, myself with my unit. And, well it was my unit. What happened was that we were asked for a group of men, some 40 Marines, to go on this landing, and the initial landings, I came in the second flood of landing craft, the first one went in with American Army, Fifth Army, and a group of Brits as well, including the 40th Commando, which I was attached to, the 40th Commando, and they had a little element on the eastern side of this particular landing and the Americans had the rest. Now the object of that landing was to go from the landing point on the beaches of Anzio, and Nettuno, to take the Appian Way, running from Naples down to Rome, and the Appian hill, the mountains and hills beyond the motorway, the idea being to hold the motorway by being in the hills above, and so on. It failed. The landings were made, and I actually landed, my particular convoy came in 24 hours after the first invasion. The first invasion was unopposed, the Germans didn't have anything there at all, it was unopposed, and everybody raced ahead. Now, they could have got to the Appian Way, it was only 4½ miles away, the Appian Way, but we had an American commander there who had been knocked about by Rommel at the Messina Pass and was very cautious, over-cautious, and he began to dig in before the Appian Way. There was some reason obviously for it, because as it happened Kesselring had an army standing there ready to go into the front at Messina, they did that from time to time, changed the whole unit, an army, full army, and that meant something like 14,000 men and equipment actually were standing on the Appian Way, so there was some special caution by the American, with his people coming up with small land-based units, not...I mean not too much heavy equipment of course, hadn't been landed, coming in with us on the same landing it was. So having found an army standing there, we found it difficult to penetrate it and gain the hills above, so we were sort of trapped on that bridgehead by Kesselring, and he gradually built up a huge army around that perimeter which was 4½ miles deep, and I mean, the beach-head, which is a V sort of shape with the port of Anzio being at the end of that peak and the road, the Appian Way stretch that we were after, 13½ miles, so the 4½ divisions we landed with were contained within that small area. And then the ultimate other units coming in behind also

contained, but nevertheless with a great battle going on at the front. I know with my 40th Commando, I went up with them many times, they were contained on that side in the huge ditches that surround Anzio, and so we were contained, and I was there on that bridgehead for ten weeks. The normal run was five weeks, they took everybody off after five weeks because it was so nasty. They bombarded us enormously of course, brought up siege guns, huge siege guns from Rome, which we captured later on as a matter of fact further up the coast when we did break out ultimately. But nevertheless the siege guns would pound us at night mainly with half-ton shells continually. But the focal point of the shelling was on the harbour area because we were landing there with all our craft along that beach, Nettuno beach. One special task they gave me, the naval officer in charge gave me, was to erect on the mole, on the harbour arm, a 35-foot tower, which incidentally, I compared it with Michelangelo's Martello towers which were all along that coast, he built the Martello towers, which were towers for defence purposes, and we actually did at one stage in the race up, ultimately inhabit and use as a mess one of his Martello towers, and so on.

End of F5906 Side A

F5906 Side B

[Continuing the interview with Frank Martin on 11th of August 1997.]

So, we had got to Anzio hadn't we? We had got to Anzio, yes. Yes I was describing of course the battles there. Now the time for being on Anzio, any bridgehead of that sort, it was so small and you had to cram in so many troops and supplies, that most...because it existed therefore, if they've stayed alive, for five weeks. I did in fact stay there for ten weeks, only because a follow-up unit of the Royal Marines, they wanted an experienced officer with them and I was the most experienced officer for that bridgehead, so they asked me to stay on. And it wasn't a nice place to come anyway. But I will describe what we did there, the special job we had, besides assisting the 40th Commando in their episode, I'll tell you all about that, a little bit about it. I did arrive at, landed in an enormous bombardment both from the air and from artillery units, so much so you couldn't put a head up for quite a long time, hours. I did find myself in the cellars of the casino there, the casino was on the sea front. It was a seaside resort for Rome and they had a lovely casino there, with lots of lovely statues around it in white marble, and I did find myself underground there whilst the bombardment, a huge bombardment was going on, and as convoys come in, like we came in, they would bombard enormously both at sea and on land, and there were aerial battles over us, planes thumping out of the sky and all that sort of thing, huge bombardments. And so I stayed underground for some hours with my group of 40 Marines, and had to find my way to what they called Navy House. Now Navy House was something we set up of course on land, and hadn't been, its location hadn't been established until about then, but I did eventually find somebody crawling along in the dark, it belonged to the Navy, a naval PO, and he directed me where they were hoping to establish in the town, and I did ultimately find this so-called Navy House, no more than a house damaged by shellfire and all that sort of thing, but nevertheless they established a headquarters there and set up radio and all that sort of thing. And I found the naval officer in charge, who was a commander, Commander Lockheart was his name, and he directed me for the first job that he wanted my units to do, and that was to erect on the mole, the fishing harbour mole, a 35-foot tower, of any sort he said, 'You can make it of what you like, as long as it's splinter-proof and not much else,' he said, 'I can't say shell-proof because you can't erect any building that will withstand a shell, in the time I want anyway.' So he said, 'Go away for an hour,' he said, 'and come back with the plans for it.' So I went away in a covered place, because we were being shelled, and decided we might move this way, I mean, go into the countryside, and I'd sent units off already, men to scrounge around and find the material by which we could build things. And we usually picked on any sort of engineering

works, railway sidings, steelworks, anything of that sort, to find a body of materials that we might be able to use for this, and my plan was to, it was to find bulk timber, prefabricated, away from the shelling, away from the edge of the shelling, inland a bit, and then take it at the appropriate time and erect it, bolt it together or whatever we decided we could do it. I took this plan to the officer in charge and he refused it, said, 'I don't think it's splinter-proof enough.' I said, 'Bulk timber, it's as good as any masonry, and better to prefabricate.' But he wouldn't agree with it, and he said, 'No, it will have to be something else. Go away again and come back.' And I decided then, the only material I had was, obviously I could find concrete, I could find cement, very little rubble if we could use it as ballast, but building blocks of the buildings of course, stone, were over there, all strewn about, everywhere, and within a hundred yards or so of the buildings that were blown apart, and the blocks of stone were lying there, so I decided with blocks of stone, believe it or not, even under fire. And that we did. It took us a fortnight, under fire most of the time, hugely bombarded, but very safe in the end, as a matter of fact the mole was pretty safe, it had water either side you see, so the shells and the bombs went into the sea and exploded under the sea; very seldom did they get a shell against the pier, fortunately because things like ammunition, heavy shells were being landed there and taken away immediately, but nevertheless were being landed there, so great bodies of this were suddenly, where we were working, and waiting for them to take them away. So one shell amongst that lot would have blown us sky high of course. Anyway, we built the tower over a fortnight, building from the inside as it were for protection, and naturally down under cover when heavy shelling came about, and it did come about regularly. Although in times, there were times when it lapsed totally, and it was quiet as any countryside, seaside, for a day on end as a matter of fact, but then it would start up, a huge bombardment would start up again, for what reasons, another landing, or some objective of the Germans to come in, try to invade. They did in fact, we had a Christmas there, and on Christmas Day they brought tanks right into the actual seaside village, rumbled past the place I was in, we had a villa there with a great shell hole in it which we could look through, and the tanks came past us. They invaded, but withdrew, so, only 4½ miles mind you, a dash in you see, and to do something, I don't know what, they didn't seem to do much as a matter of fact, and they didn't capture us. So they made off back home, back to their side of the line, and the gap was filled in some way or another by our army, the American Army and the Marines. It was described to me by the Marines as a matter of fact later on, because I had other jobs to do with them that were right up at the front there, and so I lived with them for a week on end to assist their work. Anyway the tower was ultimately built, under shell-fire, under direct fire; it was under direct fire in the end we found, hadn't realised it quite but, well we guessed it was but it was...we didn't realise how conspicuous we were as a matter of fact,

from a distance, but we did finally after I withdrew myself and my unit, leaving a small unit there, ultimately, and then there was a great dash up from Messina when we broke through there to Rome, and we did pass where the artillery was stationed along the Appian Way, and I did stand in the German positions and look, and there was my tower and the mole standing up on the silver sea like, as clear as that. [LAUGHING] So we didn't realise, it was so conspicuous that they were actually pot-shotting it, quite often, regularly, with a small calibre shell nevertheless but whizzed past literally, you know, alongside us, like, each side and never quite hit it once. Although we did get some enormous damage at one stage when a craft standing alongside us was turned over by a bomb, it actually fell between the craft and the sea wall, in the sea, and the blast from it turned it right over, and lost everyone on it, but nevertheless we only got splinters through it. Killed two men. Nevertheless it survived, and I did get an understanding that they were shelling us directly when my commanding officer arrived from Algiers, he flew over to Naples and then up by convoy and came to see the tower that we had accomplished, and I took him on the top of this to point out the war to him, and he hadn't been in the front-line war at all, and they must have seen us moving about on the top. We had a mast, a flag mast, a single tower below that and a telephone below that, about eight foot square, no more than eight foot square, and manned by a crew all the time, a naval crew, for all the signalling and bringing in the supplies. The supplies of 13,000 tons a day had to come in there, of food, ammunition, and so on, and men, had to be landed on that coast, daily, and so the working of the port was important. Anyway he did come to see our final building, and immediately pointed out that the front, you could actually, on the Martello tower you could actually see the front, the Appian Way and where the gun positions were, and the shells exploding and the plumes of...and so on, indicated where the front was. And whilst we were up on that tower they obviously shot at us directly, and the shells came within a foot or two of either side of us, and the noise of it. Funnily enough, you know, the story goes that you can never hear a shell coming because the sound is, you know, past you, the shell is past you before you hear it, if you know what I mean, but it's not true. I discovered that if you were being shot at directly, you always get a poop, like that, like you hear on the aircraft when they break the sound barrier, there's a poop before the craft arrived or the shell arrived, and you could say, poop, down, and the shell would pass, directly at us, that's when it's right on you. No more, within a few yards I would think, you wouldn't get this poop. So, he had his initiation into the war on top of that tower, and he didn't like it a bit.

I'll bet.

And he soon scooted off back to Naples in the next convoy, and even the doctor that came to see us, and see how our health was, also went back on that convoy. But I stayed on for another five weeks, and I did work closely with the Marine Commandos on their headquarters there in the front line that was, real front line, within literally two or three hundred yards of the enemy, heavily shelled from time to time, and they all, their work was generally to defend that particular area, which was very marshy and deep gullies there which were very useful. And also to observe where they were of course, they would be sending up patrols nightly into no-man's-land to sort of grab a soldier or two, a German soldier or two, to get information as to the position, all the usual things of war, you know. And that they were doing, and getting casualties. I think they only had, of that particular unit that I was with, they got six casualties only, which is small, really, of the unit. But they did ask me particularly to dig them up when the front moved, they were in no-man's-land, in their own trenches that they had dug when they were doing observation work, they were pointed out to me, I was taken to the observation post and they were pointed out to be meticulously in detail, and I noted them down for the purpose of digging them up eventually and putting them into the cemetery at Anzio, we had a cemetery there for all our casualties, but these couldn't be put into that cemetery because they were in no-man's-land. I didn't in fact dig them up ever, I couldn't get to the front because it stayed static by the time I left, and ultimately when I passed I relayed the message to other units that were in Anzio and they did the task, so at least I did that, pass on the information. And then, that great rush up then to, through Rome in a day, we were in Rome in a day from Naples, and the enemy were still there in Rome itself, on the outskirts of Rome, and making off as we were making in as it were. Lots of things happened there of course. I know we had a huge dump of petrol just by our lorries and our tanks and what-not being formed, but the Germans also, the Germans or the Italians, found out what it was and blew it up, and so we were stranded in Rome somewhat, that particular area, by lack of fuel to go further, and the plan was to rush up to Leghorn, who were another hundred miles further up, was the objective anyway, and so we didn't in fact get there until some time later, I forget now how much, it was a rush up anyway, and when we arrived the Germans had evacuated Leghorn, which was a naval port of course, and La Spézia, the naval base, it was for us to capture that again, rather like we'd captured Naples. And we did as I say travel up there, we did, I did stop and look at my tower in the evening sunlight with the shining sea and the pointer. It brought home how fortunate we were to get away with it. And then we did catch up on the railway, on that coast, the very siege guns that had been pounding us nights on end, because they were railway guns of course, and the RAF and the Americans had bombed the railway so they couldn't get them any further, so they were semi-destroyed on the railway line, we were glad to see that. And so we made our way to Leghorn. An extraordinary sight

to arrive at Leghorn, a modern city, a great city there, arriving on the mountains above it and looking down on this desolate city with smoke and debris everywhere, no people, nobody in sight anyway, all dug in or underground, and then we were to make our way to the dock area to do much the same thing as we did at Naples, that was capture various objectives, and to enter a modern dockyard with everything topsy-turvy, boats overturned in the docks and blasted buildings and smoke and flames, and nobody, no German, no anyone. Just a few cats and dogs around, you know, stray, and an extraordinary sort of silence at that particular stage. But we did come through various interesting parts, like, above there, we went on beyond Leghorn in the end, up to Pisa, and Florence of course was held wasn't it, Florence was held by the Germans, but they did evacuate it rather than destroy it by, we had orders not to destroy, and they did, but they did blow all the bridges, all the modern bridges, but left the Ponte Vecchio, the one against the Uffizi Gallery, is it the Uffizi Gallery the other end? Have you ever been to Florence?

Mm.

Yes, it's the Uffizi Gallery isn't it, the end of the Ponte Vecchio which, when you went there of course, rebuilt I imagine. They had blown each end of it with a huge crater, so it couldn't be used as a bridge, but they did preserve the bridge itself. But all the modern bridges across the Arno were into the river, topsy-turvy with the Italians going through with their cycles and their perambulators along the broken bits.

I did wonder if your masonry knowledge might have been required for just that, for dynamiting bridges.

Well there you are, you see we had bridging people with us of course, but we used the Bailey bridge of course everywhere, they were unit bridges we built, girder bridges, that we could assemble and put across rivers and ravines and things like that, not the Arno, the Arno was too large. But that was soon in operation though, we got something, I [INAUDIBLE] what happened, I did see, yes, Bailey bridges across one, at least one of the broken bridges, and supported, you know, Bailey bridges weren't meant for quite that span. But down near Naples there were many Bailey bridges went up. Go on, you were going to say...?

I was going say I'm probably going to stop you in a minute.

Right.

[BREAK IN RECORDING]

[Continuing the recording with Frank Martin on the 12th of August 1997 at his home in East Portlemouth.]

Now we were discussing your war experiences yesterday, and I know you've got some more that you want to tell us about.

Yes, a little more anyway. Lots of very interesting things happened beyond Leghorn. We did get into the mountains beyond there, Carrara, the Carrara mountains where all that lovely marble comes from, and did look down on Viareggio where I remembered Shelley was washed up when he was drowned, and they burnt his body on the beach there. Another interesting episode was to, we were called to help temporarily roof or re-roof the Santo Campo Cemetery where all the famous personalities right down the centuries had been buried or were in a sarcophagus around the perimeter of it, and there were some rather interesting murals that were being damaged by the rain. But we did manage to save all that. But one thing happened that I was always interested to find out but never got back there was, there was one particular sarcophagus, a big one, which had the front blown out of it, and therefore the person inscribed on the front of the slab, which was now laying flat on the ground and much too heavy for us to lift up, but I did put all the bones back, so it may have been, I hope, somebody like Leonardo Da Vinci or something like that that I managed to put back in his sarcophagus, if he ever was buried there, or entombed there. Yes, we went on scouring that countryside doing various works. I must tell you about a very heroic deed of mine, that got some notice, and that was to rescue two American women that were established in the middle zone between the two armies, at a place called Barga, or Bargo[ph], a village, a pretty big village actually, somewhere north, north-east of Florence, just before the very high mountains there. It had a river and a crevasse around it, and the village was on each side of this crevasse with one bridge still standing only, the rest had been blown. The naval padre at wherever it was, Leghorn, had come to the mess and asked if there were any volunteers to go up and rescue these two women who had been there for three weeks without food and water and all that sort of thing, right in the middle of the zone, with the shells passing over and patrols visiting them, well that's what I found out later. Anyway I volunteered with a group of men, Marines, and we went up by lorry, I in a Jeep, with a very good sergeant of mine who was always very good on circumstances like that one, and a bit dangerous. We came to within let's say a mile and a half of that village on the map, nobody could tell us anything where the

enemy were. We were stopped about a mile by a hand coming out of the road but we found it was a military policeman in a dug-out, and he gave us directions saying, 'Well, this avenue of trees you see before you for about a quarter of a mile or nearly up half a mile is regularly shelled, the shells whistle down, that's why I'm down this hole as a matter of fact,' he said. And so I thought, well we'll go to the edge of that, and then I'll place the men in various strategic points overlooking it, and I'll carry on and try to find out where this couple is, two American women, happened to be, it turned out to be a mother and daughter, she was in her eighties and she was, the daughter was about fifty. Anyway, half-way to there, and I'd been going along very stealthily with my Jeep, stopping at every strategic point and getting as far as I could and ranging the whole area with binoculars to find out if we could see any movement, and there was no movement whatsoever, just shells passing over on both sides, as it does, and one can see shells dropping and the plume of smoke giving them more or less the perimeter of the area. But it was a long plain in the end, and in the middle this ravine and this one girder bridge, oh, several hundred yards long, rather like our Bailey bridges as a matter of fact; it may well have been put up by the German army. Anyway I managed gradually to move along this road, stopping every two or three hundred yards and viewing it again. And then, from a bungalow alongside that road a child ran out, about three or four years old, followed quickly by her mother, and she looked apprehensive, but we moved up to her and started to speak in Italian a little bit and she had a little bit of English, and between us we discovered that she in fact had been on some nights managing to travel there, to actually give these people food and water, so she could tell us almost exactly where they were, which was very very fortunate indeed under the circumstances, and get back to relate, in that the smoke was very clear, a burning building which, a hotel she told us, where these two women had been housed for the time they'd been there, but now was burnt out and they had moved into a bungalow, she said, about four or five up the road on the other side, that's all she gave us. Anyway I got to the very bridge, which was a rise in the road and it was quite elevated this bridge, relatively, and then scanned it and looked at the smoke and more or less could pick out the bungalows along a road which, off to the right after crossing the bridge, turned down the hill and off to the right. Anyway, appropriately, it was getting dusk now, the light was poor, so I thought this is the appropriate time, sped across, down the slope, past the burning hotel, one two three four five bungalows, and there they were believe it or not, first go. They came out, and proved to be a woman of about eighty and her daughter, and overjoyed to see us. They were black as the Ace of Spades as they'd been cooking their meals on the open fire in the front room of this place, and hesitated to me and they wanted us to take their luggage with them, they pulled out two or three very big cases, and I said, 'Well I can take two, I can only take the two,' and they on the front of the Jeep and tied on, and then I tied them into the

Jeep, and she I know sported a wonderful spring hat with flowers all over it, the 80-year-old, as I carried her out to the Jeep. Anyway, off we then sped back, very slowly, watching on either side, and we had to reach the plateau that the bridge was connected with, up a slope. We went up the slope for about 150 yards; as we reached the top there were German soldiers setting up a machine gun, facing down the bridge, which they were obviously putting up there for the night you see, and about a couple of hundred yards behind them on the plain beyond them were two men with the ammunition box coming on. They looked apprehensive, we obviously were, and the other men stopped to see, put the box down, their ammunition box down, and they hadn't quite assembled the machine gun, so I thought, well jam into them with my Jeep, and I had, we had revolvers ready by the way, and cocked. But no, I had the wheel and I just turned left and sped across the bridge as fast as I jolly well could, and leapt almost into the air at the far end and then onto the road before shells started to come across. They obviously had a railway, they hadn't the ammunition there in time to load it; I doubt in some ways whether they would have shot us, they could see we had the women tied in the back, but nevertheless it was a nasty turn. And we managed to get them back to their friends at Leghorn. When we arrived, yes, there were assembled about thirty relatives and friends to greet them, and we carried them in and that's the last we saw of them. We didn't get a thank you by the way, and we didn't get even a glass of wine, the Marines had saved them and that was it, and never anything more was said about that, and when I got back to my commanding officer he said, 'Did you get them?' 'Oh yes, we got them all right.' And that was all that was said about that episode. Anyway, quite a story.

Yes.

And so, Leghorn and Anzio over, the war in Italy was coming to an end more or less and they were threatening now to cross and invade France. We were preparing in the Mediterranean area to invade the south of France, but in the end they decided not to on any big scale because all the landing craft that they wanted, that they had in the Mediterranean, because there had been an enormous series of landing operations with all the craft necessary, it would have been, were used in fact to cross the Channel and landing in France eventually. So, we had a very depleted lot of craft there, but a landing was eventually made by, not by our unit particularly, we were being called back to Malta and then the unit was flown out to Singapore to carry on with the Japanese war. I in fact was flown home because my mother was dying, and also my damaged ears, I couldn't be allowed to go to foreign quarters where I might have got an infection, an internal ear infection, which was understood out there. And I finished up in Scotland actually, finally, preparing for the return of the unit from the Far East when in fact

the war was ended by the bomb, to house all our equipment, a huge hangar we put up there, something I'd never done before but we managed it between us, put up a huge hangar, 140-foot span was quite an achievement. And finally de-mobbed from there and back to Portsmouth, and back to civilian life. So that ends more or less the war campaign for me.

So...

So, we carry on from there I suppose, picking up the ends from the war. Our family home in Portsmouth had been bombed, my studio in London, in Seymour Walk, had had a direct hit, so we had no home to go back to of any sort. The women of the family had managed to set up home in the countryside beyond Portsmouth, but we men coming back from the war, the family men coming back from the war, it wasn't enough for our accommodation so one had to think of further accommodation elsewhere. I did in fact, I then managed to find myself work at Kingston School of Art, a sort of one-day teaching job, plus, I was still doing a little modelling wherever I could find it, at Portsmouth School of Art, my old art school, and at Worthing I heard of, I thought well I'd try those. I tried teaching jobs of course immediately but nothing came up, so I just took on anything I could find. I did particularly model at Worthing, and I'll tell you a little story about that which, a local story here, at Salcombe. It was that recent times I discovered a lady over there who was carving slate, and she has something for the visitors over there, you can find it now, it's every day there, she's carving in slate, plaques and things like that. And in conversation with her about her work, and she had on the walls drawings, obvious drawings from art school days, I said to her, 'What art school were you?' She said, 'Well.....'

End of F5906 Side B

F5907 Side A

[Continuing the interview with Frank Martin. Tape 4 Side 1 on the 12th of August 1997.]

Now you were just describing your connection to a local artist in your relationship to Worthing Art College.

Oh yes. As it happens this lady carving slate at Salcombe, her name was Martins with an s on the end; we did discover incidentally that all names with an s on the end in the Devon and Cornwall way were smugglers and legally they had to have an s on the end of their name, so she was from a family of smugglers. Anyway, carry on with her story. She said, 'Yes, I was a pupil at, a student at Worthing College of Art,' and I did say about my turn there, and she said, 'You didn't happen to be that mad model that could stand on his hands?' I said, 'Yes, it was me.' I could in fact, with my acrobatic training I had at Portsmouth Art School, stand on my hands for half a minute or whatever was long enough. At the end of the day most art schools, after a drawing session, they would have ten minutes of quick pose as they call it, sort of finish the day, and this they did at Worthing. So, and she said, 'Do you know I've got a drawing of you, the only one I ever kept.' And she produced that drawing, and I've got a photograph of her with it now. But isn't that extraordinary, after all those years, finding somebody that had a drawing of me at Worthing. Anyway, so, returned to London, Kingston School of Art for a year one day a week or something of that nature, and an evening class, I know I used to have to travel back to Hayling, get back at 1 o'clock in the morning from that teaching session. And then, also working for McMillan for four days of the week, and so on. And then the return to the Academy Schools. Have I dealt with the Academy Schools yet? I haven't, have I. Some of it, my studentship. Yes of course. And then the following, joining the Academy Schools and meeting up with Anthony Caro and a lot of others. I did in fact hear through, who was it, Maurice Lambert I remember at the R.A. said that they're searching for a new sort of director of what he said was modelling, there was no sculpture there but they called it modelling anyway, 'Would you like an introduction?' And I said, 'Thank you very much indeed.' And he wrote me a three-page introduction, which I thought was very generous indeed, to Morss, the Principal, M-O-R-S-S, Morss, Edward Morss. And he eventually interviewed me and said, 'Well I'm considering it, and you'll hear from me eventually.' After some months I did get a letter to say would I appear again and he would discuss the whole proposition with me, and he gave me one day a week, and then almost immediately a second day. That was in September of, 1945 was it? No, much later than that wasn't it. I've forgotten the date now. It was 1946 or 7, that was better, that's better. What

had happened was, they had this, as I say, modelling section which served the rest of the school really, all students of all departments had to have a three-dimensional session with that modelling section. And they did have a little carving studio, and the member of staff that carried that out was a man named Alberdi, a Basque refugee that Morss had got some way back, and he was the only one left of the old staff, the others had completely disappeared, and I think, there were three of them and I only met them once, and didn't even get to know their names for that matter. And so I started with just two days a week, and it wasn't long before Morss came to me and said, 'Mr Martin, I'd like you to develop this department into a proper sculpture department.' And I said, 'Thank you very much, I'd love to.' I hadn't intended at all to do anything as committing as that, I meant to have the two days and carry on with my sculpture elsewhere with McMillan and that sort of thing. So I did in fact give up the McMillan episode and concentrate on the St. Martin's, then got the third day, part-time, it was part-time, it wasn't full-time employment or anything like that. And he then said, 'Obviously you want more assistants; will you get some of your colleagues from the Royal Academy Schools perhaps, or whoever you like.' And so I started to build the section, employing, Anthony Caro was my first choice, then several others, one a letter-cutting man whose name escapes me at this very moment; a man named Rickard who was the Gold Medallist that particular year of mine, the final year of mine; and a woman named Stern who was a portraitist. All those things had to be done at that time, letter-cutting and portraiture, and modelling in general, and drawing, was some of the activities that was expected of me. And so we...that was for the full-time students, full-time day students. There were, it was a very small section, the larger body of students came from the so-called Intermediates of the schools, who travelled through every department, and really on that, on the Intermediate body of students I began to build the staff around that as there was more opportunity for payment. Yes, that did develop the section. And then I became so successful with the display of work from those particular Intermediate students, and the day students were becoming, well doubled up in no time, they were all sorts of people, mature students, mainly women, who were coming there for their own recreation really, either these young ladies finishing their education as they called it in those days, and their maiden aunts doing a little bit of modelling, carving, whatever I had on offer really. And so we gradually developed that section, and it wasn't any more than about two years after that that we actually decided that we'd dispense with the diploma course that they had there, there were only half a dozen men doing it anyway, they were all the scholarship men, and take on more part-time students from abroad, we were getting a lot of applications from abroad, they began to hear that something was happening in the Charing Cross Road. And so within a very short time I had a very big section, and we then began to put it into the prospectus as a sculpture department as such, and

it was beginning to be recognised by the other departments that there was something going on there. Unusually, the Sculpture Department at St. Martin's was in the top of the building, most sculpture departments are in the bowels of the building somewhere, or out in the yards. We became very noisy with our activities and began to get complaints from other departments and even the Principal and the Bursar whose ceiling we were working on as it were, and they asked us to think of other areas where we could work, and I did in fact take over all the roofs of the building, and the back yards, and we did get a sort of underground area that was not used for anything but storage, and so began a great expansion for the Sculpture Department. And now all this expansion seemed to go on without the knowledge of the Principal, he seemed to be quite content with any display we had, public display, and we had many; the LCC were getting opportunity for the sculpture departments and painting departments to display the work in public, and we had several 'In the Park' exhibitions, and certainly what we were displaying attracted attention from all schools, particularly Chelsea with Moore there, and we began to interchange a little, students from Chelsea began to come to St. Martin's for a day and so on, and many of the other schools' students were arriving wanting to do a session, without the permission of their sections as a matter of fact, and I did begin to get complaints that we were taking their students from them. But nevertheless it began to build a huge department in the end, I mean literally at our peak we really had about a hundred students and staff there, which obviously, enormously large for any art school in the country. Now we were building up weren't we, then, towards the Coldstream-Summerson changes in art schools, and the committees were touring the art schools deciding what colleges would get the degree courses. They interviewed St. Martin's, my department particularly, and were at great pains to understand how we were working and what we were working with, and did in fact turn us down on the first go, and there was a great outcry from everywhere about us not getting the degree course, and all they said was, and do understand there were no reports at that time coming back from the committees, and all they allowed was the Principal to go cap in hand to wherever their headquarters was now, I forget, it was up in the City somewhere, and they would make a verbal report to him as to why St. Martin's was not admitted to the honours degree course. He came back full of woe saying it was, the Nigger in the woodpile was the Sculpture Department, and that anyway the committees did want art schools now to become an integrated fine art department with no definition between the painters and the sculptors. And so that was going totally against what was happening at St. Martin's, and it was agreed between the Principal and them that we would be integrated, and endeavours were made to, in the following years to sort of integrate us in some sort of way. And all we did at St. Martin's was in fact to combine the staff on various projects, and we pass our sculpture students over to the painters for a day or two and vice versa, their painters would come to us.

We had about a year of that, and it was so chaotic and unproductive that we decided to return to the status quo, the painting and sculpture run quite separate, without reference of course to the national body. But we had a review, and they had great criticisms of us, particularly of the Sculpture Department. I think they dismissed, in the report they dismissed the Painting Department's efforts as being a very down-to-earth and common sense way that it was being done then, but the Sculpture Department had great reservations about, and did in fact, the report was, oh, four foolscap pages of criticism. And so, we had to make efforts to show that we were integrating in some sort of way, and doing fine art, not sculpture and painting separately. So we did decide, if they wanted fine art as such, we in the Sculpture Department could deliver that as well, and so I did in fact group staff in a particular way, and did take on more staff. Incidentally I did report earlier to you didn't I that the Ealing School of Art was combined at this same time for the same sort of reasons as a matter of fact with the Hornsey School, and most of the part-time staff at Ealing were displaced in consequence, and the leader of it, was it Roy Ascott. Roy Ascott was in charge of it then. And I took them into my department to carry, to help carry out the directions from the national body to make a fine art department, and the Painting Department came along with that idea. It was a pretty intense course that we dreamed up, with all this new income from Ealing and our own people, and I did subdivide that into what we called A and B courses, and the A course was in fact the combined degree course and the B course was our old way of working, in abstraction and what-not, with all the part-time students we still had there. Although at one stage they did suggest that we shouldn't have part-time students of any sort because it was a degree course, but they seemed to ignore it finally and we did have much the same course going on as we had right from the beginning with this B course. And that was headed by, I had people in charge of it like King, Tucker, Annesley, all those sculptors then who were making their way. And about the same time of course we had that great exhibition at, oh, now, I can't remember the...the 'New Generation' show at...

Oh at the Whitechapel.

Whitechapel, at Whitechapel, with Bryan Robertson of course selecting the people. And that was a turning point in whatever we did, an enormous turning point, in that the first exhibition of sculpture, do understand that that was in 1963 they had the 'New Generation' painting exhibition, then in 1964 the sculpture exhibition, exclusively sculpture, and the nine people selected, one was from the Slade, two were from the Royal College, and the other nine or so were from St. Martin's. So it was an overwhelming sort of show, and all members of my staff, if they weren't then, I did in fact take them on as part-time staff, the whole of that 'New

Generation' group were working at St. Martin's. And then if you remember, following that they had a combined show at Whitechapel of painting and sculpture, a second 'New Generation' show, which got enormous publicity of course, both for us particularly, and we were overwhelmed by the interest from abroad following that exhibition, and then the developments within the department, I did get much more studio space, and I had myself got a few more pounds salary because of my efforts over that. And was appointed Head of Department, which I wasn't before of course, a part-time sort of post. But then they established me as Head of Department and we did have a Sculpture Department soon enough, going quite contrary to what was agreed for the degree show which, that was to have a combined fine art department. But nobody seemed to complain, the results were good, everybody agreed, and we were getting national coverage of course, and international coverage for that matter. The Americans particularly came over by, I was going to say the hundred, and even from Paris, we had coaches arrive from Paris with the artists from around Paris collectively coming to see both the 'New Generation' show and a visit to St. Martin's, and Paris television sent crews over to film us, and other, Americans came across, especially, and there was talk of having an exhibition in the Museum of Modern Art in America, which didn't come off in the end as a matter of fact, what reasons I never quite remembered, but they asked for a whole show of work, and we did have a photographic exhibition touring America and Australia, and where else? Oh, Seoul University in Korea were very interested.

Photographs of the sculptures?

Oh the sculptures, particularly the Sculpture Department. And they did send an educational delegation over to view what we were doing at St. Martin's but particularly the Sculpture Department, and stayed around for quite a fortnight or more, every day within the department, which was much more than any of our British qualifying people did at that time, but... You were about to say?

Well I think it would be quite interesting to sort of go back to the beginning of the development of this department, and you know, give some idea of how this sort of move towards abstraction took place, where it came from.

Yes, I haven't qualified that have I, and I'll do it in this way. I did realise that the move from figuration was imminent, and we intended to really discard it totally, a rather excessive way but nevertheless we decided it was the only way to approach this new thing. We had in fact been working in a sort of abstract way using found objects, and I established at the entrance to

the Sculpture Department an exhibition, a little exhibition of found objects that were found in and around London, on the bombed sites and on the shores of the Thames, wonderful objects they were, of an abstract sort, and we assembled those in a little exhibition in a special box, a special display case at the entrance to the department, so they were alerted as to the direction we were moving in as they arrived every day as it were.

When you say 'we', who do you mean? When you say 'we', you say 'we were moving in the direction'.

We, the staff, the group of staff together.

Right, yes.

And, you were asking about how we moved in the teaching way. What we did in fact, I did really dismiss my colleagues from the Royal Academy Schools because obviously they were highly figurative in their work, and we negotiated that they did leave after some time mind you, gradually reduce their days, and started to take on all those people that had joined us from abroad, and people like Philip King straight from, an unusual way into art school, from university, from Cambridge, and Tucker from Oxford, unusual people, unusual students. And we got many more from abroad of high status. Obviously sculptors in their own right in their own country, but joined in with our efforts, they understood very soon what we were about, and particularly the Israelis, we had a great large group of Israelis arrive following their Six-Day War with Egypt, obviously these Jewish boys from all over the world had collected to support Israel in their battle, and it finished so quickly that they were left wondering what to do with their lives, and many of them had decided to get back to university somewhere in some part of the world, and many of the sculptors, all the sculptors that had got awards in Israel, all arrived at St. Martin's over that period following that Six-Day War, and we had a great liaison with the Israelis, with their studentships and the scholarships and things like that, as we hadn't money really to entertain them as full-time students. So I used a little bit of subterfuge there, I did have them students, as part-time students, and there was no restrictions on that entry at all. Most of them spent most of the time there anyway, and their fees were paid by their own families or their country; we did get a number from the kibbutzes in, I remember one, a bulldozer driver who had been supported by his kibbutz financially, and there were many others of that sort combined with the people we were getting from Britain really, but we were getting more, many more from abroad, and particularly from America, than we were getting from our own coffers of talent. So, yes we moved quite deliberately into

abstraction. We decided first with one studio, we had two studios thrown in and all the trappings of modelling, we removed all those, all the stands and the armatures of life modelling, and the clay we used for that, and lastly the models' thrones, and had the wall space, the wall and the floor space from which to work, and that did extraordinary things for the sculpture, and began to grow life-size, very large, and it wasn't long before we really had to move out into other areas, and we did spread, as I told you before, onto the roofs, very large flat roofs we had there at St. Martin's, unbeknown to the Principal by the way, and into the yards. And started to set up satellite areas. Now that was very interesting moves. Some of the more mature students wanting much more room to work in, and we hadn't got it there, what we decided to do was then to search out premises somewhere in London, and the first one and a very good one we set up was Stockwell Depot, below Camberwell there, and it was a factory there, a derelict factory, and two of the Jewish boys particularly did negotiations over that. And what we did was to employ them as staff and their wages paid for the rental of the factory. And it was quite a big area, and they not only worked there but eventually lived there, they set up home there, and I suppose there was room enough for anything up to about ten sculptors to work there. And they interchanged, and quite often if they were there for a year or two they would probably return to their country of origin, wherever it may be, America, Australia, Canada, and a space would be allowed for another sculptor from the body of students at St. Martin's, more advanced students. But one thing we did insist on, and they all religiously did this, was to return always on a Friday at St. Martin's, we held a seminar the whole day, a sort of adversarial sort of situation where works were set up that they were making outside the school or they were making within the school, finished works were set up and a whole area of criticism was built up around the workings of that particular Friday day, which would go on as I say right through and right through to the evening. St. Martin's was a school that was locked up at night, it had no school-keeping, so we couldn't carry on into the night, though they would have done if we could have done there, but we did often go way beyond the lock-up time with great difficulty with the keeping staff. And then when they were dismissed from the school they would in fact then go on to the patisseries and the pubs and carry on the conversations around. But that was a regular session, we called it the Sculpture Forum, and it developed into a regular Friday thing where we invited sculptors from all over London and members of staff from other schools, and critics, and gallery owners would come to these seminars on a Friday and have a fight, you know, around the subject. And they did, and many of them came, many of the leading critics came and contributed to the conversations around it all.

Can you remember now, you know, what positions people took as it were in relation to this new work?

Well they seemed in great sympathy with it I must say, and certainly the critics that came along were all going that way, in that direction. One important man I remember around it, he was teaching at Goldsmiths' then, was Andrew Forge. Now Andrew Forge would come regularly, and I have a number of letters from him thanking us for all we were doing for the art of London, even when he did go to America didn't he and settled there, would often write, or when he came back for a while he would call in and discuss what he was doing out there. As did many other Americans of course, came over regularly to both Paris and London, would... Now, I'm just trying to think of names now. Difficult for me this morning, my brain is not working very well. The big critic of course, Caro's follower, you must know his name.

Richard Cork?

No no no, not Richard Cork, American.

Oh American. Oh Greenberg.

Greenberg, of course. Clement Greenberg, sorry about that. Yes Clement Greenberg was very inclined towards us, and every time he came to Europe or, he would go to Paris quite often to lecture, would come back to London, and as we did with all these people, when they came to me and said, 'Well, we'd like, you know, to be around for a while,' I said, 'Well come in and either work like a student or a member of staff, and join our seminars, particularly the Friday one, and make a contribution'. And Clement Greenberg did this regularly, and a great time we had with him. And there were many others, names again you ask. This morning names are not coming regularly, but all the main and leading people in the art world in America seemed to gravitate to St. Martin's at one time or another, and take part in our seminars. And I've got a lovely lot of letters from them as a matter of fact, I'd love to show you but it's not what we're doing. And from Korea, we had a great deal from the art history department there, very, very lovely letters about the time they spent, the week or two they spent at St. Martin's. That is in my archive, my St. Martin's archive will eventually no doubt be lodged at the Tate Gallery, if all goes well.

I mean did Clement Greenberg actually make any sculpture?

No he didn't make sculpture, but he did, we did set up the sculpture and he entered the criticism of each piece in a variety of ways. And Michael Fried of course was another one. That connection was with Bennington College of course, and Bennington College were always sending their students along, and I have again letters from them saying, 'Well, we'd love to have all your people but we've got nothing comparable to send you, so will you by arrangement send members of your staff?' And we did just that. Of course Caro went there and stopped for a whole semester didn't he, in 19, whatever that was, I can't remember the dates at the moment. But certainly he and Philip King and Tucker all possessed it.

End of F5907 Side A

F5907 Side B

[Continuing the interview with Frank Martin at his home in East Portlemouth on the 12th of August 1997.]

Now I want to just take you back again to your start at St. Martin's, and just give us a sort of as full as you can idea of how you built that team and how the whole ideas of abstraction were developed.

Well now, I was taken on part-time, first one day and then a second day, and found that I was replacing a small staff of modellers, mainly modellers, and it wasn't a sculpture department in the true sense of the word; it was a modelling department that served the other departments, and this was common enough in every art school of course at that time. I can only remember one art school in Britain who sported a sculpture department, other than of course the Royal College and the Slade, they were in a different strata, it was Leeds of course with Frank Dobson teaching Henry Moore of course, Henry Moore was a student there, he was the only one that really advertised having a sculpture department. I believe there was a little one in Edinburgh, but other than that all the other schools had modelling departments and they stemmed of course from the age-old way that modellers, that painters had to model in the round because they were trying to paint in the round as well on the canvas, so the training was in Paris and elsewhere modelling with the clay in the round, rather like Degas and people like that. But it was a common rule that all painters modelled, and we had a number didn't we in England who did both, Landseer was one of them wasn't he, I mean he sculpted the lions on Nelson's Monument in London, whereas in fact it should have been a sculptor from the R.A., not a painter. He did sculpture quite seriously but nevertheless... So, anyway, there we were, coming up in the wake of all that, and figuration, and deciding that we wanted to cast out figuration. Now this was helped along by particularly a visit by Caro to America. We had started working in an abstract sort of way by using found objects, found objects being those sort of objects you find on a bomb site in London, on the shores of the Thames, extraordinary things, I've still got many examples of them around me, wonderful objects, and they began to... But they were sculptures in their own right, you didn't have to almost work on them, they were it, and although in fact the assembly of these pieces were quite often attempted, were rather like Smith, David Smith in America, when Caro found a little exhibition in New York somewhere, didn't know the man, hadn't heard of him before, and he came back very enthusiastic and saying, 'I've found a chap,' he said, 'in a little exhibition in New York making objects rather like we're doing with found objects.' And Smith then was

incorporating, oh, tools from foundries and things like that, and welding them together; whereas we were beginning to make sculpture from sheet metal, bar and angle-irons and things like that, which is a slightly different approach, and we literally were going to the scrap yard and bringing back lorry loads of that, of scrap metal, off-cuts mainly. Some of the off-cuts were quite intriguing and could be incorporated, rather like found objects in a way. So the found object which was an emphasis at one time, very much so that we in fact had a great display of them in the entrance to the Sculpture Department, as a stimulation and always there every morning they arrived to see these stimulating found objects, they themselves were going off and finding such objects everywhere. Caro came back with a number of great chalk lumps from the Dorset coast, and bowed in by the sea urchins and things like that, and I myself found many at Hayling Island, I was living against the coast then, and diving under the sea myself and finding objects down there that were very useful to what we were about, and many abstract-like works, pieces, were found under the sea I can assure you, altered by the sea erosion or accretions over them. For instance I often, I found on many occasions sort of, great coils of rope were dropped under the sea and then the accretions round them made into sculpture-like shapes, and I brought them up intact and did display them at St. Martin's. And so we were looking at forms outside figuration. So Caro came back as I say with this exhibition of Smith's, and without meeting him, and showed me the exhibition catalogue and said, 'Keep that, we'll do something with this'. And so we seriously sat down and decided how we might approach this, and one of the things that we decided, we would throw out everything figurative within the studios, and we did this quite consciously, really cleared them, clinically clean, you know, all the casts on the walls of the Antique Room days and any casts of any sort that one always found in art schools anyway, and St. Martin's we had an Antique Room too, we cleared all those out.

What did you do with them?

We just pushed them into corners and other parts of the corridors and things like that. I mean Venus went very early on, and all those boy-and-goose and the Gladiators and clapping fawn that every art school had from the British Museum castings, we did push out into the corridors, or gave them to other departments or something or other. But we certainly cleaned one studio first. Do understand, in the second studio we carried on with figuration, we had to because we were doing the old modelling exam then and some of the students I inherited were on their last year, and so the posed model was employed in that particular studio with half a dozen people working around it. In the second studio we cleared everything to do with that, the sands, the armatures that one had inside of figures, model figures, all the casts, and

certainly in the end the model's throne, that was the last thing to go but the important thing, the symbolic thing to go, the model's throne. And we started then to work, fabricate sculptures from plain board and plank and iron, bar, sheet, and getting ourselves for the first time a welding machine. Now that was something we were not supposed to do in an art school, to have such a thing as a welding machine, and do understand that all the materials, all the materials that were supplied to art schools from the County Council were from their stores, and we all got regularly batches of material that we could use, and that was laid down by the County Council, all our money had to be spent there, we didn't in fact buy things ourselves, never had the money in our hand by the way, it was the Bursar who bought the material, or it was allocated from the depot of the London County Council. So the stone, wood, clay of course, and plaster, we retained plaster because it was useful for a variety of ways, but nevertheless all that was cast out, or left to the other studio for work, still were working on figuration. A clean studio in fact, ready to work up from the floor level, and casting out the old stand and the pedestal for sculpture was something I can assure you, it brought a completely new dimension into it, we standing alongside the sculpture being made. And believe me, the way it grew, enormous sculptures began to develop, and we then had to find space to put them, and we began to display them on the roofs, we had various recreational sort of roofs that were used by students in break times. We started to display these big sculptures, huge, some in fibreglass, coloured fibreglass, wonderful shapes, simple shapes, began to appear all over the school, with lots of questions being asked by the painters and even the Principal in the end, to say, well where were we going with the sculpture. And, yes, so, then began a period of actually developing, with basic materials, very basic materials, not combining a lot of, rather like David Smith did, the tools and tongs and things that he used, but actually developing from the flat bar and so on. And then also moving into the use of fibreglass, which was a new material again for art school, had been developed hadn't it for boat building. I brought evidence of it from Hayling island where, the boatyards were there, and they started to use fibreglass building of boats, and that was a very good, fine building material of course for sculptors. Simple, instead of moulding as we did before, moulding in the, casting from clay, we made moulds and then filled them with fibreglass of course, and made simple great coloured shapes that would endure in the open of course, that was one of the important features of whatever we did.

So did you bring that material into the art school yourself as an idea?

Oh yes, oh yes, very much indeed. Went researching, and I know Philip King also found a factory in south London that were starting to use fibreglass, resin fibre, and together, he in

fact was the first one to use fibreglass as a sculptor in his own right, working as a teacher of course at St. Martin's. But of course then we began to, as I said, build the staff around that sort of situation. I did discard my colleagues from the Royal Academy Schools, the three or four that I had there, doing the traditional thing of whatever it may be, carving, cutting lettering and casting and portraiture and things like that, and started then to replace them with the mature student that I attracted, particularly people like Philip King and Tucker. Within a year of their studentship they were working as staff, part-time, I gave them a day each, and that began to subsidise the whole situation of course, the one-day's pay was an important feature of course for those young artists. And so I began a whole series of additions of students that now were being attracted from abroad, as I said before, sculptors in their own right, particularly the Israelis, very mature. And so it wasn't long before I had what, anything up to 15 staff, part-time staff, and then up to 25 and so on, and most of them working there for a year or two, many of them going back to their own countries of origin and things like that, making way for the new members of staff from the students. And most of them working, of course, in an abstract way in their own right, sometimes working away from St. Martin's, they managed then to get their own garages and lofts or wherever it is, the worker studios, quite an inexpensive place. And also as I've said before we set up the satellite sort of situation of Stockwell, where groups then began to work and live together, really were a part of St. Martin's, they were staff of St. Martin's and working and living in places like that. We had several going, I mean three of our, some of them quite small, just with two, two members of staff working. Greenwich, we had a very good set-up there, and... But then, what we did insist on was, everyone coming back on a Friday to have this one seminar day where the, as I said before we brought, they brought their own works and set them up and there was a day's criticism around them.

So how many sort of works were shown at once for this?

Oh I should think anything up to half a dozen, sometimes even more. Some of them very big exhibitions of course, the whole... I did then get the main hall of the college building, which was then being used by the school below us, and I made an arrangement whereby I hived off the part under the balcony of that great assembly hall, the, it was a gymnasium as a matter of fact, for the stage, and that became our main studio. And as I say each Friday groups of work would be set up in this, or an exhibition or two of quite importance to this whole episode.

Just on the practical front, how did you manage with sort of transport and, these sort of huge quantities of materials, did you...?

Well we hired lorries of course, simple enough, or they themselves hired their lorries to bring the works and take them away.

But was there a budget for that, or...?

Well we found money in many ways, or the students themselves paid for it, or I did out of my money, personal money at that by the way, to help either build a sculpture or to display it somewhere. And then of course we began to make attachment to galleries. The first gallery that gave us a public showing, and a free-for-all really, in fact was the Grabowski Gallery in north London, is it still going? Do you know of it?

Grabowski?

Yes.

I'm not sure.

It's still going I think.

Yes.

But they, that couple running that, a Jewish couple, were very good to us, and gave us exhibition time. Following that they gave exhibition time to individuals, not a personal but a collective one, and that was before the Whitechapel by the way, that was before Whitechapel. But then, the whole of the exhibition periods and standards were really supported from 'New Generation' shows and following those galleries with Robertson. But then all the other galleries came in on it; Waddington of course started to take on a number of artists and gave them a bursary, all the most successful ones at the 'New Generation' show at Whitechapel he employed, gave them sums of money to make sculpture and he displayed them in his new gallery, Leslie Waddington and his father were doing this. And then Kasmin Gallery, the Kasmin Gallery started to support us, and also Caro himself of course getting individual shows within all that. Although Caro had had a one-man exhibition, his very first one-man exhibition, at Whitechapel in 1943, where Robertson then was alerted to the fact that this sort of sculpture, abstract sculpture was being made in a college, at St. Martin's, and obviously

from that stemmed the determination to give the young sculptors from St. Martin's an opportunity, so that the 'New Generation' was thought up you see.

Now there are a couple of things I want to ask you about that. I mean just in terms of the young artists being picked up by the galleries, I mean can you remember how they responded to that at the time?

Well, not too well as a matter of fact. I thought they didn't work hard enough for the opportunities given them by... They were a little young and immature, hadn't realised the opportunity they had, and I being much more mature around that gallery situation realised the opportunities were rare, but they didn't, although in fact they were subsidised from time to time they had to be driven pretty hard to get the sculptures done in time for the exhibitions that Kasmin gave them, and Waddington.

Yes.

And some of them lost the opportunity as a matter of fact, because of that, they were not so conscientious around it. Yes, too much too soon rather I thought. But nevertheless most of them did mature and become important within the scene, the London scene.

The other thing is Anthony Caro, who has been, you know, very central to the history of British sculpture.

Yes.

What was your relationship with him in this teaching set-up?

Well, a great friend of course, that's the first thing, and a colleague from the Royal College - from the Academy Schools. And yes, we were really very friendly indeed, and when I started the St. Martin's grouping he was the first one I thought of as an assistant. A very immature Caro by the way at that time, and himself hadn't made his way at all. He certainly, his work, then parallels what were doing, I mean he was getting as much from it there and working in the same way, in parallel, with all these other people, Tucker and King and, in his own way, but had a studio of his own, and a studio incidentally and a place to live at Frognall, which I vetted for him, he took me along to see it and said, 'What do you think? I can set up here?' I thought it was an ideal place. And of course a great opportunity, I think his father paid for the

place, he had a wealthy father, and he set him going. But anyway, enough work at St. Martin's also, two days a week, pay, to help keep the thing going, and as I did with all the leading people, they first had one day with the directive that they in fact would have to do professional sculpture as well as teach, and I wouldn't give them any more than two days in the end, I said this, the rest of the days they had to work doing their own sculpture and making their way within the galleries. Then we started, as I've just told you, making contact with the galleries, and then following that of course the 'New Generation' show drove that along enormously. And then the opportunities coming from abroad, within a year of the 'New Generation' show at Whitechapel people were coming from abroad asking for our young sculptors, either for a period or for just one exhibition or two, within Australia and Canada, and many of them took up the roles of course within, and many of them are still there now within Canada and Australia, as full-time artists, probably leading departments now many of them.

I mean just generationally, Caro was sort of sitting between the younger lot and yourself really isn't he, there was a sort of decade on either side.

Yes. Ten years younger than me.

Yes, yes.

Although in age, with some of the young sculptors we were having then, I mean, King I suppose wasn't too much younger than Caro, and certainly Tucker, and many of them coming along then were five or six years younger I suppose. Nevertheless we were working in parallel at that time.

Yes, right.

But Caro of course was a bombshell there, he was like a streak of lightning coming into that every, once a week, certainly a clap of thunder anyway, and drove it along enormously. But getting an enormous amount from it himself of course. I mean the first sculptures, abstract sculptures, welded sculptures, I remember were parts of his own car, bumpers of his own car, were somehow glued together, I can't quite...how he glued them together. They certainly weren't welded. They were failures of course but nevertheless they were attempts of combining metal shapes, rather like Smith, bumpers of cars and bits and pieces like that. But then of course we did start the welding at St. Martin's, they were the first welded things, at St.

Martin's, and the technician we got in to teach welding also taught him welding, used to go to his studio and help him weld. He wasn't a welder at all as a matter of fact, he couldn't weld, and it wasn't too long before, as you know, he set up studio in London and employed welders, and that's gone on ever since of course, his main assistants were all welders, sometimes students from St. Martin's, staff from St. Martin's of course as well. So yes, everything, that was running parallel, the whole thing, the development of Caro, the development of the others around it.

And what about your own sculptural practice?

My sculptures, my sculpture?

Yes.

No I lost all my sculpture. I mean my sculpture then, do understand that I was a very skilled sculptor in the old sense, carving wood; abstract sculpture didn't suit my style, and I didn't want to work in it. I did some as a matter of fact, didn't like it. It was the skill of making, the skill of carving, the skill of modelling in clay that was something that involved me anyway. But then, I was somehow doing another thing in education, I mean I decided that education was the way I was going, wasn't making sculpture, not in...my sculptures didn't, wasn't involved really. I just got great fun out of doing it in my own way, but it wasn't involved with the abstraction. But the concept around it all was very much what I was involved with, and we did then, do understand, it moved from even abstract sculpture on to conceptual sculpture of a variety of people as you know, Richard Long, Deacon, all those sort of people, George and Gilbert, all came out somewhat out of the conceptual ideas that started to be used within the group. And we had two areas of study going on then, called A and B, and within those areas certain attitudes of sculpture were developed that were the mainstay of what happened beyond ordinary abstract sculpture.

I mean can you remember how that transition evolved, because you know, the product at the end is radically different.

Radically different. And opposed to it by the way, they were opposed. Long if anything wasn't admitted to the other area, and the staff didn't get on with what he was about, or George and Gilbert, and so I had to surround them with staff that were sympathetic to whatever they were doing. And there were so many that were in that area of course, and that

haven't come on as sculptors since, very difficult area to develop of course. But people like Deacon and Woodrow, all well-known now of course, were all within that field. Yes a completely different principle around it. But we surrounded it with the appropriate staff, and drove it along in a variety of ways.

Can you remember sort of who and how?

Who was driving that area?

Who were the staff that you brought in?

The staff. Yes, we had, oh a number of staff that were sympathetic, not too many of the basic staff were interested but peripherally they were. But I had some of the old guard, like Adrian Montford who was a Gold Medallist at the...one of the other staff other than Caro that I kept, he was most sympathetic. Then we had, oh many other groups of staff together. A man named Atkins, who in fact has changed his name to Kardia. What happened was, because, we had...as you yourself I think said, you found writings in 'Private View' about St. Martin's and the Royal College, there was one chapter particularly about us, do you remember it?

Mm.

It was the difference between the two colleges and what the concept was between the Royal College and St. Martin's, and this was highlighted by a film that was made for the BBC by Christopher Burstall, and he came to me and said, 'Look...' He was a man who made films about art of some sort, or artistic subjects; he made previous films like, about the poem 'Tiger tiger' was one, and about a piece of Monteverdi's music and his instruments. But on the art side, and he came to me and said, 'Look, I've discovered that there's something quite different is going on at St. Martin's compared with the Royal College whom I've been interviewing, and I want to make a film about it.' He said, 'It's likely to be a 50-minute documentary, even longer,' he said, will be shown on the BBC. I said, 'Well if you want to know about St. Martin's you must come here as either, like a member of staff or even as a student. Would you want to do that?' He said, 'I'm glad to.' I said, 'Well now, come from...' we arranged a date, and he did come systematic for about a month, and performed in the studios and worked in the studios or stood around or, and discussed it with the students and staff, and developed the film. Now the film, originally its title was 'What is a Work of Art?' but he changed it at a later stage to 'A Question of Feeling'. He made, he interviewed

all my staff, took film in the studios of all the leading staff, coming down to Hayling for two days and making film there, and developed this documentary which was, it turned out to be 55 minutes in length, and they showed it on BBC on three occasions I think actually, and, it had an extraordinary reception I must say. One of the strong points he emphasised, which I didn't agree with nor did anyone else, he wanted to depict St. Martin's in its most powerful way, and that was the abstraction of course, but he did settle on the group of staff and students where, what we call the A course, which dealt with the concept of little more than, say, abstraction, they did a lot of things but the abstraction, and it was headed by Peter Atkins. Now, because that was shown, was emphasised in the film the BBC had shown, and the abstract sculpture in general, and the staff, weren't depicted, it gained a wrong emphasis for our purposes, but the publicity around that A course and its conceptual views were something he seized on, and he himself, we've always felt, because he was an intellectual himself around it, it appealed to him. And the strong showing within that film got Peter Atkins a job at the College, the Royal College, they set up a new department for him called Environmental Media, and he headed that department for seven or eight years, something like that, and did use members of my staff at that session. But eventually it was closed down by Jocelyn Stevens, and that great thing that went on at the Royal College when they did in fact close almost every department and told the lecturers, the Sculpture Department with King there was the last one to go.

End of F5907 Side B

F5908 Side A

[Continuing the tape with Frank Martin on the 12th of August 1997. Tape 5.]

Now off tape we've been trying to sort of figure the form of what it is that is missing from this story, and what you've made very clear is the one thing that is very difficult to put into words, is the extent to which what happened at St. Martin's was about an environment of thinking and feeling about sculpture. And I know it's really putting you on the spot to ask you to describe that, but I think, if you could tie that in to your story about Eccles, the Minister for Education, visiting, and your very determined battle to get a proper status for the Sculpture Department at St. Martin's after the Coldstream débâcle, I would be most interested to hear it.

Yes. Well now that's a very controversial time, but it has a great deal of meaning for what went on following that, when Summerson introduced the degree courses. We at St. Martin's were at a stage when, yes we decided that abstraction was most important to the advancement of teaching art, and we intended to open an area of study away from figuration completely. Now in the process of that we did decide, we had two main studios there, one with, both of them had the models thrown in, and trappings of modelling from life, with all the sands, the armatures and things like that around, clay of course. And we decided that we had in fact closed one studio with that work, keeping...we had to keep the other going because it was in fact the scholarship boys who were going through figurative examination finally. But even so, they had only worked on the figure for a very short time and were so intrigued by what we were doing in the other studio finally that they came away from working on the figure and worked in the second studio. In the second studio, as I say, we cleaned it clinically clean of all the trappings of figuration, the model's throne we pushed at last right out of the studio, symbolic throne for the figure, and figuration, and started from scratch really as a floor if you like with new materials, all new materials, or at least we did in fact use the stone blocks and the lengths of timber, but purely in an abstract way, not to construct anything in particular but to use them in their flat and detailed way, stone blocks minimally shaped in a Brancusi-like way, or used together in a combination in an abstract form. And you must understand that all art schools in the London area were supplied with these materials automatically monthly or terminally, whatever it may be, for their use, and nothing beyond those few materials, like stone and wood, clay and plaster, were supplied to art schools. We didn't buy our materials, it was all bought and sent to a depot and ordered from the school on paper. So anything outside those materials we had to find money for ourselves, and we did that. We decided

about using constructed abstraction and therefore using any materials that we found useful to that end, that was plain board or plank or rod or whatever it may be in wood, and certainly the scrap yard for metal. We sent two lorries, open lorries, with all the staff concerned with it, to these scrap yards, first a breaker's yard, a car breaker's yard was one, which wasn't very useful; the second we in fact went to a yard where they had off-cuts from industry, and they were very useful indeed, although pre-formed lumps coming out of it, stamped-out things for commercial purposes, and they proved to be useful, more useful than found objects, which were rather specific, and like for instance some of the, the best objects we found were, let's say a piano keyboard that had been tossed into the Thames and came up with part of its keyboard, and it looked a lovely shape, the internal part of the piano, and I've still got that incidentally in my collection. And other shapes that were modified by water and tide. But anyway, we decided, yes, fabricating from scratch the abstract shapes, and so welding became, we got our first welding machine which was difficult to in fact introduce because it was against health and safety according to the schools' inspectors, but we did get dispensation and we did get an official welding basement in the dark somewhere, artificial light. But nevertheless it worked out usefully for many years until we got further studios, but with great restrictions on the use of the welding area eventually, almost halving our space because they wanted circulation space, they needed trays of sand and many other things. We'd never had an accident with any of it, but they insisted, and they were right I suppose for safety purposes, but nevertheless it did restrict the number of things that we were producing. But then you I'm sure want to know how we decided that abstraction and the conceptual side of sculpture could be developed, and it could be developed in many ways we found. We did at one stage decide that certain concepts around sculpture would interfere with even making abstract sculpture, and I did subdivide the departmental group, both staff and students into what we called A and B courses. Now A was in fact the conceptual one, if you like, it did introduce many ways of working that we had never worked before, and I'll describe those in a moment. The B group were in fact the standard group of St. Martin's sculptors, using all the materials that we had decided to use for it, abstraction and what-not, even clay and plaster were retained within that group. And the teachers around that group were the ones I incestuously used from our students were people like Philip King, Tucker, Annesley, Bowness, and others, Scott, Tim Scott, an architect. And then the A group, well you could call them conceptualists but nevertheless they were ready to go almost anywhere, with the concept and the aesthetics within that field. And I headed that particular group with one of my figurative teachers as a matter of fact, who was modifying his ways, and had an element of abstraction in it, or formalised figures. He in fact was Atkins, Peter Atkins. He himself was, I'm not sure if he went to the College, the Royal College at one time, I'm not certain he did that, but certainly

he had, he was involved with the war years, he was that age, not the whole war but part of the war, but came out in a terribly different frame of mind around the causes of the war and things like that, and the social structure around it after the war, and decided that he would go to South Africa and work with the Zulus. And the sculptures that came out of that was a sort of cross between figuration and animals, very unusual sculptures they were. And there was yet another young artist sculptor, Peter Atkins - I beg your pardon, Peter King, not Philip King but Peter King, he was before Philip. Now he was making sculpture out of forest waste, that's what it amounted, tree trunks, gnarled trunks of wood and so on, combining them into rather spooky-like figures but nevertheless very interesting in a way. So with Atkins and Peter King, who unfortunately was killed not long after he joined us, he was in a car accident, motorcycle accident, but nevertheless that element was in it, and a number of other people verging on working in an abstract sort of way, I brought in. Well, I actually brought in Elizabeth Frink of course, Elizabeth Frink and Robert Clatworthy. Now both were students, the only people I brought in from outside as a matter of fact, all but one anyway, from another college. We had an exhibition, the LCC were putting on exhibitions in the park for their sculpture schools, and they displayed work that I liked, rather liked, they worked in direct plaster for a start and not the casting method, obviously introduced by Moore I would think, or Willi Soukop anyway, at... And we were doing the same, we were beginning to work with stick and plaster in an abstract way, but nevertheless they were doing it in a figurative way. And the figures they portrayed were, I think Clatworthy was rather stuck on bulls and matadors and things like that, and Elizabeth Frink figures, and I forget the name of her figures then but they were quite, they were quite impressive. Birds, a lot of birds I remember she had. And I thought, well they're two young ones, and were students still at Chelsea, but then gave them a day each at St. Martin's to teach. Now they went on for a number of years teaching their sort of sculpture, it was in fact using stick and plaster throughout. And do understand I had a lot of beginners then around it too, beside the sculpture students who were really doing sculpture, but we had the Intermediates who were really sent in to do modelling but nevertheless we started to get them to use stick and plaster and paper together, which is a direct way of producing a piece of sculpture that you could retain rather than that in clay, and plaster-casting was a rather laborious business anyway, they got direct results by having this stick and plaster together, and that was an important feature in the way we progressed from then onwards, in all the departments, all the areas of study rather. But then came, I suppose we were doing that for a year or two, and they became rather disillusioned, Clatworthy and Frink became rather disillusioned with the way we were progressing, away from the figure and into abstraction, and decided that they'd want to go their own ways, and we were quite happy, friendly about the whole thing, but they, Frink then decided to go on, she was

making... She also was dealing in carcasses wasn't she, drawing in carcasses, in fact from, while she was at St. Martin's in her lunch hour, a very contentious girl she was, went off to the market, the meat market in Long Acre to make drawings in her lunch-time at that period, and came back and showed me the drawings she'd made of the carcasses, which was going in totally a different direction from what we wanted, it was really going into the figuration that I personally hated, the carcass. But nevertheless it was done with talent. And Clatworthy also, with his bulls and things like this, seemed to be pushing in the same direction and wouldn't move from figuration, when we decided, so they both went. Elizabeth Frink, her own work, I think she did get teaching elsewhere, a day or two, and Clatworthy the same, and eventually he did in fact head the sculpture at the Central. We were in touch all the time, over all this. So they went, and I brought in other people, and kept the conceptual side going with Atkins and a group of others, Ascott, Roy Ascott came in from Ealing and joined them, Allsop, an architect, I brought in, and there were a number of others anyway, one other College boy, can't remember his name now, and Garth Evans from Camberwell, a friend of Tucker's, helped with us doing a particular thing within the combined course of painting and sculpture, which came along directly in the wake of the Summerson débâcle. But, yes, you were asking a moment ago about how the art evolved from us. All I can say to you is that, as it was virgin soil we were about, it was sort of atmospheric, it grew from day to day almost, and by interchange between the various sides of what we were about. Nothing was certain, nobody wanted to fix in any particular sort of way, but in the conversations around it, particularly the sculpture forums we had on a Friday, a great deal of where it sparked off happened then. Much of the work that was presented was rejected by the others, it was taken in good stead by everybody, and they understood what it was about, and went on bringing their works in to be rejected, and that was the important thing. Yes, it developed step by step in various groupings of staff, and the groupings of staff changed from time to time. I re-hashed the various groupings for a variety of reasons, and brought in more people, particularly with the A group, because of, I don't know if I have alluded to it already, I may have done, a film was made for the BBC, it was by Christopher Burstall, it was an arts filmer, and he made several subjects within the arts, firstly one I remember was a poem, 'Tiger Tiger', he said that was a universal poem and everybody reacted from the nursery upwards, and he made this film, it was rather interesting actually, the film. And then he made another one about a piece of Monteverdi, Monteverdi's music, and his instruments he developments around it, that was another. There were others, I've got them, titles. But he came to me and said, he had discovered in 'Private Views', a book published by Snowdon, Russell and, who was the other one, Brian Robertson, that there was a sort of controversy between the Royal College and how they worked as a department of sculpture and St. Martin's, and he really wanted to get to the bottom of this,

why the great change from figuration to abstraction. And I did propose that he, if he wanted to make a film of that he must come and work in the department, either as a student or a member of staff, as it were, anyway contribute to our forums and the discussions that were going on. And that he decided to do, and he came in solidly for a month at least, almost every day, right from half-past 9 to whatever time it was in the afternoon, he stopped there and worked, and discussed and so on. And then he came to me ultimately and said, 'Well, yes I'm going to make this film, it's likely to be about an hour, 50 minutes, something like that, on BBC2.' He said, 'I'm going to throw up the differences between the two colleges in some way or other, but I'm not going to call it...' what was his title now, he had in mind? 'What Is A Work Of Art?' was the title he decided on, but having come to St. Martin's and worked with us, he decided it was going to be a different title and he was going to call it 'A Question Of Feeling', meaning the difference between the two colleges. I understand that he did in fact, the only direct contact he had with the College, and his theme, and filming, was the session of interviews made for entry to the College, which was very limited, and the film did turn out to be something like 35 to 40 minutes of St. Martin's and the rest, 10, 20 minutes was it, for the College, and a few other extraneous things. And the film when it was shown caused an enormous controversy in the art schools, and also criticism of St. Martin's. What I must emphasise, that the film wasn't a balanced view of St. Martin's and the way we worked at all, it certainly rather conceptualised all we were doing and therefore emphasised the course, course A we had, which tended to deal with that sort of thing with Peter Atkins in charge, and the interviews with the students and the members of staff, my leading members of staff on the B side, like King and Tucker and all those people, all our main sculptors, the 'New Generation' group in fact, he neglected totally, the film taken wasn't used.

I mean personally, do you identify more strongly with those 'New Generation' sculptors, or the conceptualists? All of it?

No no, the lot, no no, anybody, identify with the lot. I mean, that's exactly what I wanted.

Yes.

Was going on then.

You wanted a more balanced view of the evolution.

A much more balanced thing. Moving away from figuration to abstraction, and then abstraction to conceptualised, other work, whatever direction it may go in. Oh no, I very much backed the conceptualists in their isolation. And do understand the conceptualists at that time were a body of students, Atkinson was one, a man named Atkinson, a man named Bainbridge from my department, and there were several others from the department had joined that group. Atkinson was in fact, I employed him for a short while as a technician. Now he evolved, between them they evolved, a group that went off to a college in the provinces, and eventually became Art & Language Group.

Ah.

Who are still thriving aren't they, I mean Art & Language are still about. But it did change enormously I gathered, it was, they did base themselves in America eventually and then it came back to Britain from America with Atkinson still within it but many others had gone, vanished somehow. I did not follow it a great deal, but I mean they've made their own way and they, yes they made whatever they decided on quite valid and useful. But it's not something really that I really wanted within the department; I didn't want the page of writing about, that they were producing, or a book on writing, written, the word, written, was all that the students would produce. I mean if you move from figuration and into abstraction, and then into conceptualising, of course you are rejecting the lot aren't you in the end, and the written sentence around what they have in their mind, the concept, is all they will produce. And I did have in fact quite a number of students from the Art & Language Group, wherever they were working in the provinces, come to me with their work, which was a bound volume of some sort, asking for a criticism. But we did reject that really, to have people just verbalising or the written word, they had within that A course they had to produce an object, whatever it may be. And I must describe the exercises we put them to. We did select at intake, we did select groups of students that would go along with A and B, in other words on abstraction, and whatever we were doing in that field, we selected students for that, and we did select students applying to us for the conceptualistic field and put them with the A course.

Did you put it to them as obviously as that in the interview?

Yes.

And they either said yes or no.

Yes, yes, we did put it very much to them, that this is how we would work, we were working at St. Martin's. And when we decided on them we said, we put it to them, we feel you can do what you are doing within course A, and we do want you to stay within that course for one year at least, and if you feel at the end of one year that you could do better in either the A or the B, we will change you at that stage, but if you then go on for the second year you are stuck with it; we wouldn't have you, have them still attending, moving between the two. And that was accepted, I don't think we...only one change as I can remember, from A to B, and whoever that was, I can...it was Deacon of all people, Richard Deacon, who was certainly in the B course very much, changed to the A, and stayed with them, and then when Peter Atkins - oh no, I haven't told you this, but in fact Peter Atkins was, after the film was shown and the great controversy around that, he in fact got himself a job at the Royal College on that film, and, Jocelyn Stevens employed him to head a new department called Environmental Media, and he did attract a number of my staff to it, and also a number of students, one of them being Deacon, Richard Deacon. So he had, Deacon had something within B and something within A, and then went on to the College to be with the Environmental Media, and as you know he's one of our leading sculptors now, but doing very much abstract sculpture in the ordinary sense, objects made, large objects made and so on, and very successfully at that.

I thought the A was the conceptual side.

Yes. So he went from B, that was...then into the A, the conceptual; he went from the conceptual into the Royal College, but returned to doing work like B.

Right.

Got it?

Got it.

Full circle.

Yes.

And obviously whatever he'd done in the B course - in the A - in the B course rather, the abstract sculptures, making objects in fact, making objects, he then took up into his work at the Royal College.

And you don't know what he produced in his conceptual phase do you?

No, and it didn't show either, it didn't arrive. And that was one of the outcomes of that course. I mean I looked for years to find what the result of that course was, and I never did find it.

All in the head.

Absolutely all in the head. I'm sure they went off to art school to teach something or other, elsewhere, probably, abstract sculpture I would assume, making objects. But, no, you could say that some of the conceptualists within that group, like Bainbridge and, sort of were with it anyway, and Atkins went off with Art & Language, that was a result, but it wasn't quite, I don't think we had even formed A course at the time they were there, because I did reject them quite firmly, saying that every course within my department would have to produce objects and not written, the written word.

I suppose one of the curiosities about Gilbert and George is, they are more productive than many object-based art.

No, Gilbert and George, everybody alluded to Long, Richard Long, and George and Gilbert, and some of the others being within the A course, they really thought they were in the...hadn't arrived. The course had not been evolved before they left. And Long and George and Gilbert were doing something quite different to what they did outside. I mean, certainly Long stuck to his guns, and the story about Long is quite interesting in that he was rejected by Bristol School of Art, and one of his tutors at Bristol, by the name of Epstein, came to see me at St. Martin's and said, 'We've got a student here that everybody rejects except me, and' he said, 'he's a most talented man, and he's actually been thrown out of the college.' He said, 'Will you take him in at St. Martin's, he's absolutely ideal material for what you are doing.' And I said, 'Yes certainly, send him along with his photographs and what he's doing.' And I was bowled over by what he had been doing, in a figurative way by the way. Now, there was an element of his figures that gave the impression that he was homosexual, crouching figures. It wasn't at all, it wasn't at all, but the principal of that college evidently thought he was, and some of the staff, and that was a big element why he was thrown out. But not only did I get representation from the members of staff, I got his parents, wrote to me, a whole group of people wrote to me to say will you take him in because we feel he's so talented, and that

what's happening at St. Martin's is just what should happen to him. And I took him in. He himself didn't know about the controversy around him and all the representation, until later on, I've told him since; I don't think he knows all that. I've still got all the letters from the people by the way in my archive. And he proved to be a most talented student, most talented, and the object he brought along with me, we soon displayed, you know, for influence around whatever might have been going on within that A course. But he didn't actually join the A group, he was in a group on his own completely, and George and Gilbert were in that group by the way. Now both George and Gilbert were doing abstract sculpture, I remember Gilbert who had come from Liechtenstein of all places, he said he read something in a magazine in Liechtenstein and said, and wrote to me saying he must come to St. Martin's, and so I took him on that alone actually. So there he was with very little English, and took him on, and he worked alone for a very long time, and then somehow they paired up, the pair of them, in a variety of ways that we know, and produced some very delicate works in plastic, in sort of dripped resin, very colourful dripped resin. They were very delicate works, and lovely works. And George on the other hand was doing something vastly different. What was he...I can't describe his works at that time but anyway his works were acceptable in the ordinary sculptural sense. But they were doing things beyond St. Martin's, and on the very day, the final day at St. Martin's they did put on, came to me and said, 'We've got a stage show we want to put on, and can we just have it this evening?'

End of F5908 Side A

F5908 Side B

Continuing the tape with Frank Martin on the 12th of August 1997. Tape 5 Side B.]

Now you were just talking about the Gilbert and George stage show.

Yes. So came their finals, and their display, and what I allowed them to do, which was much against the rules, was for them to show a combined show. We knew the work they did, but it was a combined show. We gave them in fact a whole studio, and they wet up an installation with their work, they painted the whole floor white, the whole of the walls white, and put their objects around in this together, combined, you couldn't tell the difference between one made by George or Gilbert. But of course we had to present them for their degree as individual students, and that we did, and they got a good ranking. But they did come to me and say they wanted to put on a stage show that evening for a sort of entertainment really, purposes, for any member of staff and students who wanted to go, and they knew enough about them to have a very good audience, I mean, I went to it and I suppose there must have been 150 people in the big hall below the one we were starting to use and the stage and so on. And they did that 'Underneath the Arches' with the gramophone one, which I'm sure everybody knows now. The strangest thing I really came across at St. Martin's, this little shuffle around, and one standing on a pedestal, and playing this cracked record, this 78 record on an old gramophone, singing 'Underneath the Arches' with their faces painted gold I think it was at that time, with a walking stick. And everybody was completely bowled over by this show of theirs, and so strange it was, and especially coming from that pair, you know, they weren't people that sort of came out in a public way at all, and yet there they were on the stage doing this peculiar show, 'Underneath the Arches'. And so they went from there, as you know only too well, and they've done it with enormous talent and showing throughout the world, invading all the capitals of the world really with their shows, and taking with them literally tons of sculpture. They came to me to talk about the Moscow show, and they said they were taking, I think it was 20 tons of literature with them.

Good grief!

20 tons of literature. And they did, I know they did. And as you know, in every capital of the world practically they've had a show of George and Gilbert, and very professional it is put on isn't it, I mean, their displays are enormous. A great deal of help mind you I know that, and Saatchi & Saatchi, and the Lisson Gallery isn't it, the Lisson Gallery are backing them.

That's interesting that in fact the Lisson Gallery now have gathered that the sort of conceptualists or these bordering on that, from St. Martin's, have made a particular sort of showing and direction as a Lisson Gallery thing, but of course it's come, it's been taken directly from St. Martin's initially, way back, I mean years ago of course.

And did you get involved in...?

It's interesting to know that the Lisson Gallery headed by Logsdail, the man's name is Lonsdale isn't he? Now Lonsdale was a student with Coldstream, and as a student he was starting to decide that he would be a gallery owner, and he actually set up an exhibition, his very first exhibition, and went along to Coldstream and said, 'I've set up an exhibition of sculpture and painting,' and the reaction of, expecting to be applauded by Coldstream, and Coldstream's reaction was, 'Well if you want to be a gallery owner, you'll be a gallery owner, you won't stop here in my section,' and he sacked him. Yes. Now Lonsdale, I didn't know this until recently, he was writing about, he had had an interview with, I don't know, somebody, was it Bragg or somebody like that, certainly I've read it, where he said, he told this story, his fight with Coldstream and the way he was sacked, and he said, 'My mistake was that I went to the wrong school, I should have gone to St. Martin's.' That's now in maturity and so, now with all the St. Martin's people with him of course. I think of six people, five are St. Martin's students, ex-St. Martin's students of course, he's got, oh, any number now, I forget who they were, certainly Long and so on, and Deacon, and others, again I've forgotten, got references over here, my memory's not that good. So that was a rather interesting comment by him, and he said yes, he'd missed out on that.

Did you ever get involved with the galleries in terms of identifying students who might...?

Oh yes, very much indeed, yes. Oh Kasmin oh course, particularly Kasmin came regularly to our seminars, and talking with the staff about the students. Certainly Waddington, and he supported them financially as well. And many other galleries of course, more galleries came and discussed it. Provincial galleries for that matter, and many of them have had very very good shows indeed with St. Martin's students. And we had quite a number of offers of studio space by the way from the provincial people, councils, county councils and even local councils, said they were setting up complexes for craftsmen and they'd like a number of sculptors for instance, and that was on at least three occasions, they wanted a good sculptor or two and they would rent them a very cheap, at very cheap rental, a good studio.

And did any, can you think of anyone who took up such an offer?

Oh yes. Well, I don't know if I can remember names now, I really can't. You've got me there, without referring to my books, my references, I cannot recall them. Yes, I'm trying hard to think of one in particular.

Well I'm going to stop you there.

No, no I....

[BREAK IN RECORDING]

[Re-starting the interview with Frank Martin on the 12th of August 1997.]

Now we were talking about your time at St. Martin's and the various sort of bureaucratic power struggles connected to the Summerson Report, and you were going to tell us the story about Lord Eccles, as he became, coming to visit the school.

Oh yes, a great story. It went this way. The Principal was phoned up from Lord Eccles', who wasn't Lord Eccles then as you said, office, to say that the Minister of Education and important inspectors wanted to visit St. Martin's, like the next day. And they particularly wanted to see the Sculpture Department, made it quite clear it was really the Sculpture Department they wanted to see. So Morss, who really didn't know what was going on in the Sculpture Department at that time, and the interest around the whole field of art, was so aghast that he... It was my day off when the message came through, I always took a Wednesday off, and Anthony Caro was there on that particular day, and he, Morss rang my home and I wasn't at home, and therefore had to call Anthony Caro in, in place of me. Now, Morss didn't deal with staff, the lowly staff of the college, he dealt with heads of department, very seldom met the lower staff, and Caro had never met the Principal in his office, so he was a bit aghast at having to go up there and explain what, or at least to be called to the office and asked why, he said, why was the Minister ringing to come to St. Martin's the following day, and specifying that he wanted to see **only** the Sculpture Department, he said, because this is a three-ring circus you know. And of course of course, Caro didn't know either, at all, any more than I did for that matter, and couldn't really put it together at that time, why the Minister of Education, because this is unheard of that a Minister of Education could go to a lowly art school like St. Martin's; might go to universities and places like that but never lowly

St. Martin's. Anyway, I was phoned up by Caro later on in the day and he told me about it, I said, 'Well look, we've got to put on some sort of exhibition, which is going to be difficult, and you'll have to work into the night to get it up, so get in as many members of staff as you can, and students to stay on, and I'll get dispensation for the school to be kept open for you,' and that I did by phone, and he worked into the night I can tell you, pretty late into the night, to get this exhibition up. And so I arrived sort of an hour earlier the following morning, getting myself up at sort of 6 o'clock in the morning for the train journey, and then prepared to be briefed by Morss if he knew any more than what he told Caro, and he didn't obviously, he knew no more than what they has asked him, that he wanted to arrive the next day with the inspectors to see the Sculpture Department. So he said, 'Well, you know all about it Martin,' he didn't call me Frank then by the way, 'you must meet him at the door of the college, and do his rounds with him.' He said, 'Perhaps, you ought to bring him to my office first, and then do the rounds.' So that I did, I met Eccles at the gate of the college and his retinue, and up to the Principal's office, and then did the tour of the exhibition that I had there, I had called in as many staff as I could, including people like Elizabeth Frink, and Sheriff, and King, to assist in the rounds with the various bodies that they brought along with them. They brought the National Inspector of Art, the Inspector from the ILEA, and quite a number, about a dozen in all, to this exhibition, where we displayed what we termed our Brancusi period, together with old sculptures, very old sculptures of portrait heads and things like that. We had to bulk the whole exhibition out, we felt, for this particular purpose, because we had no idea really why they were there. But in the course of the touring around, and in the exhibition we stood and talked, Eccles and I, and I really, I said to him, 'Why are you here particularly?' He said, 'Well, you've made your mark in the art world, did you not know?' And he said, 'It's been coming back to us for a long time.' And he said, 'With the Summerson scheme coming along, we wondered what, how we would fit St. Martin's into this, because,' he said, 'you don't fit the pattern a bit. And obviously we don't want to dash you because you're so important to the British art.' I naturally agreed with all that, but I said, 'Surely, why do you think we can't measure up to the degree course, when I can assure you we can, we've got a wonderful staff, a mature staff, of young people but nevertheless mature staff, and there are internationals, and surely we can measure up to whatever is required.' He said, 'Well the first thing, you're a sculpture department and a painting department.' He said, 'What the Summerson conditions are, that you will be a fine art department, but there you are, standing out firmly with two heads of department, doing painting and sculpture, and from everybody's point of view we think that ought to stop, it ought to be in fact some sort of fine art conglomeration.' So I said, 'Well, I think it would be a great loss if we do.' 'Well,' he said, 'put your...see that you put your case forward as an individual department thing and see what

Summerson's committee say about it. But,' he said, 'I can obviously back you up to a point,' he said, 'but it's not for me to interfere with what they require. But nevertheless we were very concerned about leaving you out as a college.' And that's how the interview went in general. I mean there were some rather odd remarks from various members behind me I remember, whoever they were, inspectors, about our Brancusi-like exhibitions; I know there was one there, a lovely shape which someone said, 'Oh that looks like a...' I heard this coming out very loudly, 'a dog's bone.' And I always say, well surely he's never looked at a dog's bone to see how beautiful it is. Anyway, yes they stopped there for about an hour, and discussed it with members of my staff, who were there, and that was that. The Principal was totally nonplussed by the whole episode and we had a great discussion, and he said, 'Well obviously,' he said, 'we've got to do something about the Sculpture Department as regards space now. I'm approaching the ILEA for either annexes outside or something of that nature,' he said, 'and if you care to look round London and point out any building that perhaps might house the Sculpture Department, I'll see what I can do.' And I did exactly that. The first building I chose was the Roundhouse, which was then empty and not being used by anyone, and that was put to the ILEA, and they didn't give it to us but did in fact, it was developed into some sort of theatre group activity. The second one I found, and I had even a third, the second one was the backdrop painting studios of the Royal Opera House, they had four floors where the backdrops went through several floors, they could paint at different levels, and that had good studio space. Again we showed them that, and it was passed over to a school of ballet and not us. And the third one was the actual market which was then being broken up, the fruit market.

Covent Garden.

Covent Garden, and the meat market. Again a wonderful complex, again it didn't come to us. And, the only way I thought we might proceed then, if they wanted sculpture, and I had it, we anticipated that perhaps we were not being included in the degree course and that we would make a case out for working as a college in our own way and probably get support financially from the County Council. I did moot a scheme of using the big hall in the college, which wasn't ours at that time, a gymnasium and a stage, as an exhibition hall for sculpture, a sort of international exhibition sculpture gallery. I put my scheme and the staff surrounding it to the ILEA and they came back very enthusiastically about that. And then it was decided to have a conference around it, and extraordinarily the other departments of St. Martin's all disagreed with it and said that if you're going to have an exhibition in that hall, we must have one at the same time. And so the scheme was dropped, it was really literally dropped there.

What a pity.

And, I did try other schemes as a matter of fact, and nearly got there. I found St. Columba Church in north London, in north-east London, and a beautiful church, and it was an ideal place for a gallery of some sort, it had two or three large Sunday school buildings alongside it, was at that time inhabited by nuns whose building had been burnt to the ground but they had built, were just about finishing a new building, and said yes, it would be available. I did get a whole lot of help from, Henry Moore supported us, Barbara Hepworth supported us, and even offered works to be sold to help finance it. And then suddenly a sort of bombshell. Property dealers in London, who had obviously had their eyes on this complex for a very long time, moved in, and they were most powerful property dealers too at that. At that time I discovered that the one in particular who wanted this building in some way, I don't know how they were going to use it, because there were certain restrictions on the use of it, was in fact involved with the prospective oil at Poole, they were that powerful. And we didn't get it. So again we were frustrated totally on moving [INAUDIBLE]. We did in fact try other churches, and there were lots of them available, but they weren't quite suitable. And I went to the Church Commissioners on several occasions to look at plans and various addresses in London but none measured up quite to what we wanted, or were available in the way we wanted it for that matter, so that was all, the whole scheme was aborted. And so the application situation went on with the degree course with Summerson, and as I've told you before they actually did turn us down, and the Principal got a report on, yes it was the Sculpture Department was the cause of it, and the only way we would reapply, with a scheme for one department, a fine art department. And that was drawn up by the Principal and Frederick Gore without consultation with me, and it obviously had been evolved that Gore would head this and not me as head of the fine art department. And that's really how it went. He wasn't named actually as the head of the department but they made him vice-principal, a paid position called the vice-principal, but it was an undercover way of saying he was in charge of the fine art department, and we were really pushed into the doghouse, the Sculpture Department. But then we sort of measured up to what was required, and we said all right, if they want fine art we'll give them fine art, and as I've told you a little bit before, I did bring into the scheme of things that we had evolved a number of people from the Ealing School of Art that had been displaced by their linking, Ealing linking with Hornsey at that same time, and we did have a pretty good lot of staff or what we now decided would be their sort of fine art, and that went on, the amalgamation and the way we worked went on for a whole year, a whole academic year, and the Painting Department were so dissatisfied with it, because we really did take over I must

say, the sculpture staff, and really dominated the whole scheme, and they just couldn't stand us, and came back, Gore and the Principal and I had a meeting, and they said, well we can't go on in the way we're going on, it's a waste of everybody's effort, and we suggest that we return to the status quo and painting as a department. But we put forward a united report at the end of the time, subterfuge thing, you know, really it was. And that, we were quite happy in fact to return to the status quo and perform in the way we had been performing before, but pretty battered by that time I must say.

Now I know that you got a copy of the Coldstream Report.

Oh yes. Oh yes.

And I'd be quite interested to know what you remember of what was in it.

Well it may even be in a book I've got here and I could actually read little bits of it which are very interesting, so, might you...?

Yes, I think that would be interesting.

[BREAK IN RECORDING]

Now we're actually looking at a section of Frank Martin's book in which he quotes part of the Coldstream Report that was finally formalised in writing after the initial rejection and after everyone had moved into place to try and work together as a fine art department in order to meet the requirements.

Well there's one section here I'd like particularly to quote because of the wording, and it's well into the report, it was, I don't know how many A4 pages, a lot of pages anyway, and in one part it comes to, 'There is evidence (in 4.36 in the report) there's evidence to suggest that some students from A course (you remember I had an A and a B course) in sculpture found increasing sympathy with complementary studies, and have tended to spend correspondingly increasing time in this department. This raises a question as to the extent to which A course is really suited to the needs and temperament of some of such students.' 4.37: 'Despite these reservations however, and rather against expectations, the visiting party found A course was the more interesting and catholic of the two on the whole.' And this is the little bit I want you particularly to listen to. 4.38: 'The B course is in the mainstream of the powerful St. Martin's

tradition associated in particular with a line of eminent sculptors working in welded steel, the visiting party found in the course an almost brutal preoccupation...brutal preoccupation...degree course in sculpture. The Council could not wish to impose on the college...' That seems wrong by the way. 'The visiting party found in the course an almost brutal preoccupation...degree course in sculpture.'

[BREAK IN RECORDING]

Yes, we've discovered that a page of the typescript is missing so sadly the quote on brutal preoccupation can't be completed, but I think it certainly draws out very sharply the distinction between the conceptual and the strictly formal side of the work at that time.

Yes, yes, good.

Now, where do we go from here on St. Martin's?

On St. Martin's, now come on, we... You'll have to prompt me a little more, I've been so...through so many lines of approach.

It would be quite interesting to go forward to the end of your time there...

The end of my time?

And, you know, describe the period approaching your retirement.

Let me focus on it somewhere. Can you switch off?

[BREAK IN RECORDING]

Now we've just broken off for a moment, and actually rather than go forward we're going to go backwards briefly to the early Fifties and the Festival of Britain, and I understand you were actually involved on working on one of the works.

Oh yes indeed. The Festival of Britain, we, all of us, the younger sculptors then and painters, decided it was a great thing. It certainly stimulated and employed a lot of my artist friends. I was then working for McMillan but nevertheless I was asked to assist Maurice Lambert on his

commission for the Festival of Britain, which was for the Agriculture and Fisheries Department display, and that I did, did a great deal of work on a 35-foot high interlacing of fish, which was the central feature of that particular exhibition and went up through two floors, you could see it at two levels. Anyway it was a great mass of fish flying upwards, and we...I did a great deal of work on both the actual armature for that, a very complicated armature that went up 35 feet, and modelled it as well, simply because Lambert could not stand heights, he literally couldn't go up a ladder six foot high, he suffered from vertigo, and did explain this to me that he was, during the war decided to join the Parachute Regiment to overcome this vertigo, and was the first officer ever to refuse to jump in his parachute. So here he was, following the war, doing this 35 foot high piece of sculpture but I did it under his direction as it were, and wherever he had ever attempted to come on the scaffold to either alter something or wanted something changed, he really gripped the little scaffolding arrangements I had made for him to the extent that in fact one time I had prepared to bend a piece of sculpture, a piece of armature, metal sculpture with heat, and he came up to view where I was bending it and the scaffold swayed and he grabbed the hot piece of metal that I had just made hot to bend, and burnt his hands rather badly. Gripped it of course. Anyway that was developments within the lead up to the Festival of Britain. And on the site there were lots of things that happened but I did meet any number of our leading artists. Epstein had work there and Dobson particularly had a very good piece there, and many young sculptors did get commissions at that stage, and did encourage young artists. And following that festival, there were a lot of incidents around that, one could talk for a very long time, but nevertheless let's go on a little further, came the competition for the 'Unknown Political Prisoner', and that again was a great fillip for young artists, and I say young artists because so many painters entered maquettes for that exhibition, and people beyond painting and sculpture, and Butler who finally won the competition was in fact himself not a sculptor but an architect, had done some welded metal - not welded metal, wrought iron he told me. And as you may know the competition was held on the Continent and the various capitals held their own national competitions and winners, and then in Britain, I was one chosen as a matter of fact, the last, I don't know how many it was now, ten, twelve, last entries, Butler of course amongst them, and I in fact, my work was exhibited alongside his in the centre of one of the halls at the RIBA in Piccadilly, and he was selected as the winner. Now he was so inexperienced with sculpture that, and he did know that in fact I was somebody who had done big public monuments, and it was mooted that the winner of that competition would have to produce.....

End of F5908 Side B

F5909 Side A

[Continuing the tape with Frank Martin on 12th of August 1997. Tape 6 Side A.]

As I was saying, the competition was won by Butler from the British entries, mine standing alongside it by the way, and, he did know, and we had had several conversations at the entry, at the exhibition of the entries, he did know that I was in fact a chief assistant to the R.A.s and knew a great deal about public monuments, and said to me, 'I have no experience whatsoever of large sculptures, and it would appear that, although I can get the main structures, the sort of scaffold-like structure he had for his maquette, with very small figures at the bottom which were about an inch in height, but nevertheless he seemed to think that they were the sort of parts of the sculpture that he would have to model, life-size figures or thereabouts, or even bigger, and he had no experience whatsoever. So I suggested to him that in fact he should join an art school, and I did suggest that a very good art school he might go to and use for, he could go in at any time between works that he might have been doing, would be the Kennington & Guilds Art School, rather the Lambert & Kennington Guilds School in, near the Elephant & Castle.

Do you mean the City & Guilds School?

City & Guilds School is it called? I think...

Yes, in Kennington. Yes I know that one.

Yes. Right, you've got it, City & Guilds School, in Kennington. And I had been a student there. And I in fact incidentally had won the Traveller but never awarded it at one stage, another story. But let's go back to... Anyway, there, that was the school I suggested he might go to; whether he did or didn't I don't know but he certainly started to focus on modelling from life, the model, and did in fact throughout his sculpture future he in fact focused on the nude in a most extreme way. He did in fact not only make them so life-like in coloured flesh but he did include the hair on these models, everywhere on the body, and causing a great furore when he in fact wanted to exhibit one of these at the Battersea, the first Battersea Park exhibition, and they did include it but they had to include it at the last moment as they couldn't supervise it overnight, and vandals had got in and attacked works and things like that. And he did in fact exhibit it for only one day and then it was taken away. Yes that was the story of his 'Unknown Political Prisoner' success.

Can you remember what your entry looked like?

Oh yes indeed I do. It was a twin figure, male and female, rather like my Adam and Eve as a matter of fact, with a web holding them, a web, an implied power at the bottom of the web, rather like a spider's web really with a power at the end, but it was a composition that fitted a certain sort of joke. It was much too personal and low-scale to do for a large monumental sculpture, and I thought his at that time was very much better, the structure, the architecture type structure which we hadn't seen anybody do as a matter of fact quite like that, happened to just serve the purpose for what, how the committee were thinking for this future very large memorial that, where it was intended for I really don't know, I never did quite follow it up as to whether and why it wasn't finally produced. Whether it was because Butler felt he couldn't do it I don't know, but obviously a lot of money had to be accumulated for it, and more than likely it wasn't intended for Britain anyway. But that, yes, that was the most memorable sort of period of the Festival Hall with all the commissions for young sculptors and painters and illustrators, and then the 'Unknown Political Prisoner', which got a great deal of publicity of course, because all the Sunday papers in Britain donated money to it, something like £1,000 a time, so the final prize was pretty large really, for that time. And there was all the added publicity of the competition in London, Britain's entries, and then the Continental various entries, they were all illustrated at one stage in, certainly the Sunday papers. And then ultimately the grand exhibition and competition winning at the Tate Gallery, and following the actual Butler winning it, the maquette was in fact smashed by some political man who was a little mad and he actually squashed it, and of course that again brought a great deal of publicity around it, and then a court case around it too. But he was, I don't know the final about that, he certainly was imprisoned or something for a time over that, and then following the court case put on probation I believe, fined for something, probably directed to an institution, but... That's all I remember about it.

I mean both of those two art events in effect were political weren't they, in very different ways.

Oh yes.

I mean how do you see the relationship of art to politics?

Well whatever it did it gave the chance for the artist at least to work in public and be shown, and with all this great emphasis around sculpture which obviously in Britain was the very first time I would have thought they'd had a big open competition like that for sculptors. I mean it was indicated, and I remember my painter friends and that were all pretty up in arms about this great competition for sculptors, said that there should be a painting one as well, and talked of the 'Guernica' of course as being so influential in painting, and I remember things like that came into the forum around it. But, yes it was a great time that, and one would say that it was followed ultimately by the collecting of all the young contemporary sculptors that came along in the wake of both the Festival of Britain and the 'Unknown Political Prisoner', some of them being and working in sculpture at any sort of level, professional level, for the first time, then followed it up and became sculptors around it. I think you'll find a number of names in the original entries that became well known within sculpture in Britain, and then were ultimately exhibited together for the very first time, it took some ten years after the war do remember, before there was a great display of sculpture at the Tate Gallery of all the new modern sculptors, and it was a big exhibition, the very first one, a little late everybody said, they should have had that exhibition long before. And then they were upstaged at that very time by the 'New Generation' show which was showing in parallel at the Whitechapel, and I'm sure that the majority of the sculptors showing in that Tate Gallery exhibition didn't know of the sculptors and the sculpture being made at St. Martin's that led up to the 'New Generation' and were totally nonplussed by the reports around it following the exhibition. Of course the reporter did concentrate on the Tate, it was a great Tate Gallery show, but nevertheless in the wake of that came quite a lot of press reports on the 'New Generation', even popular papers took it up, and I've got a number of very good press reports on that 'New Generation' show, very amusing ones.

How was it received at the time, do you remember?

How was the 'New Generation' received?

Yes. Was it criticised or applauded?

Oh criticised enormously of course, at the top end of it, and from, leading from I suppose the number of Academicians who made reports about it or spoke to the press about it. And, yes certainly. But it was heavily supported. It seemed to me that the students of that day recognised that they were being represented in some sort of way within the arts, and the

exhibition was inundated by students from all over London, and it got enormous publicity consequently.

I noticed that in your sort of collection of material from this period you have a leaflet on the McAlpine interest in those sculptors. Now did you get involved with that initiative to sort of buy in this extraordinary amount of work personally?

Oh yes, oh very much indeed of course, in that, yes the works were purchased directly from the 'New Generation', the two 'Generation' shows, because the following year there as a second 'New Generation', a combined one of painting and sculpture; there was a sculpture one in '64, all painters, but then followed by the sculpture exhibition which was so well received of course, overall. And then the following one, the 'New Generation', the combined one, also, and McAlpine bought from both exhibitions, sculpture of course, not painting, all sculpture. And then ultimately decided to give, make it a gift to the nation, the McAlpine Gift he called it, and it was presented to the Tate Gallery, and they had a separate little exhibition space off Tottenham Court Road of all places, because the works were so large and they didn't have all that much space for sculpture at that particular time, and so, yes, the McAlpine Gift was housed in quite a separate gallery. Now, that was quite interesting that McAlpine Gift, it was for me anyway, because we were invited to a dinner at, where was it, it must have been at the Tate Gallery, where McAlpine was presenting the gift, and I met there many people that came in early on. And of course Eccles, Eccles was there, yes, now Lord Eccles, and he I found looking around that exhibition, and we approached one another, and I did in fact walk up to him and say, 'Oh Lord Eccles, we've met some six or seven years ago if you remember at St. Martin's, and, you came to see a little exhibition we put on there of sculpture when you were deliberating over the colleges that would get the degree course'. 'Oh,' he said, 'this is your sculpture? This is from your...?' 'Yes,' I said, 'they're the very works you saw then, now developed into the McAlpine Gift.' And he stood there for quite a time, sort of speechless, and then looked down at me like that and turned his head and walked off. Now what to make of that I really could not understand.

Yes.

And also I was given the cold shoulder by Coldstream who was sitting next to me at the dinner, and he had been invited simply because of one student only, Sanderson was included in the McAlpine Gift, and Meadows of course was there with his two sculptures in that. But neither of them, we certainly eyed one another, and I had discovered as a matter of fact, I had

quite a lot to talk to him about in that he was alongside me I've discovered in Naples, in the Army, he was a war artist then, and I was in Naples for quite a time, and the fact that we had missed one another there in the Army I thought was a talking point. But I never got the opportunity to discuss it, as they ignored me totally.

Amazing isn't it.

Anyway, quite extraordinary yes. And what to read into that, your guess is as good as mine. We never could quite put it together, neither Eccles arriving of course in the first place, and then this latter meet-up when the McAlpine Gift was on show, there was something... I imagine in some ways we had so dominated the sculpture scene and the fine art scene developing in London then, and not the colleges doing the new fine art course, it was something in that way that...that's the only way we could translate it. And we had sort of demolished it in a way, because of the attention by all students in London anyway if not the county, on St. Martin's going on doing its thing still regardless of what had been, you know, developed by the Coldstream course and Summerson course. Yes, I never could, we never could quite put it together, nor could we discuss it of course at any time.

What kind of amounts of money changed hands, do you know, I mean who...did the Whitechapel take a percentage when those works were purchased? I'd be quite interested to know just the financial side.

No, no I'm afraid I don't know that. There were copies made of course, I think each artist, it was arranged, could make five copies. A number of those went to America, others were bought privately beside McAlpine. But I don't know to the extent how they were all purchased. We have discussed it but I've completely forgotten whether all six were purchased from each artist, but I think the majority, yes, were, and taken into private collections. So yes, that's...

A nice bonus for them.

Yes, not half.

I mean when you gave up your interest in practice in order to really pursue this sort of teaching aim...

Yes.

It must have been quite uncomfortable sometimes sitting on your side of the fence when these youngsters took off into, you know, international financial arenas possibly?

Not really, no, no I was very glad for them of course, I mean really. No, I was elated that my department and all those artists in it, you know, really led the way. Oh no that was, I considered my work now was that department as a whole, and certainly, yes, we never looked back until what, the middle Seventies I suppose. Yes, it was a great time, and yes, I felt very much involved, not as an artist in particular but as the leader of it really.

Moving back into the sort of progression of St. Martin's, I mean the A and B courses fed a very interesting line of work for a long time.

Mm.

And we've sort of gone up to the generation of Gilbert and George and the 'New Generation' people before them. I mean can you take us on a bit after that now?

Well, do understand, I did, I have introduced haven't I the fact the department was filmed, Burstall's film, and there were other films made by the way from people from abroad, and certainly put quite a different emphasis on it, as that evolved from that, and also the principal people around it were dislocated somehow, for instance Atkins was taken off to the College, and so I had to then evolve a new set. That was quite unexpected, I didn't know he'd got that till the last moment, and I did have to evolve a new staff entirely for that A course, and it brought in a completely new emphasis. I did in fact employ Kenneth Adams, he changed his name by the way as well as the other one, to Praverra, and they were all As, Adams, Atkins, A course funnily enough, and Allsop. And following that period I did in fact get Allsop, the architect, to take it on, and he did that very well I think, and that was now getting into the late Seventies. And it finally was actually, I did in fact discontinue that course before I retired, simply because I felt that nobody in the other part of the courses, either the Advanced or the B courses, liked it, and I was really the great supporter of it, the A course going on in parallel, and I thought they'd lost the principal people, and that also it was obviously going to be great changes within the college, because at that time Gore left the year before me, then I was leaving so the two heads of department were leaving, and left a completely open field for something else to go on anyway, maybe to revamp the courses totally for the Summerson

degree courses, somewhere to satisfy them we imagined. But it never really came about, they went on in their own particular way doing what they could, and my replacement was in fact Tim Scott, one of my staff, was a student, was a staff, and then became, replaced me. I was for that happening by the way but I had no say in the final choice, it was the governors of the college that did that, they felt he was the best applicant of six. And so he went on in fact developing the degree course in a particularly new way. He did in fact return to figuration for a time in a particular sort of way, a very intense course it was, almost too intense, and they lost students because of it, and they didn't do it very well anyway the whole staff group, and they were again reviewed by the Summerson Committee and they lost the course, they lost the degree course, or at least they were allowed to carry on for one further year to revamp it in a way that would satisfy the committees, that they did but still lost it. And so the whole course was lost. And at that time St. Martin's was amalgamated with Central Schools of Arts and Craft and the amalgamation was named Central St. Martin's College of Art, and only three of my staff carried on with that amalgamation and they in turn within a year or two, maybe a year, a year and a half, took early retirement, and so the whole of the St. Martin's element was lost, and where they've gone from there I really don't know.

I mean do you know what the thinking was behind the amalgamation?

Oh financial I suppose, or, who's to know? They didn't want to demolish St. Martin's totally. I mean you would have thought that that's exactly what did happen, except in name, I mean, the name Central St. Martin's gave the impression didn't to outsiders that it was the Central St. Martin's and not the Central School with St. Martin's. Whether that was subterfuge or not I really don't know, but the course did die totally, in great acrimony as a matter of fact, oh a dreadful situation they had of reviews and the governing body coming in on it. And I've written this in my book as a matter of fact in great detail that final thing, and it was a disaster, a complete disaster.

Were you personally involved, or were you just [INAUDIBLE] it all happening?

No no, only from a distance, do understand it. There was talk believe it or not, I was in retirement then, here in Devon, and there was even talk of calling me back to take over, to, whatever they intended. It was a silly, silly idea they were putting forward. It was put forward of all people by, of all people, Bryan Kneale, who was at the College of course, at the Royal College, and he was on the Fine Art Committee, and he mooted that. I mean it's a strange idea, I mean, he didn't consult me or anybody else, but I was phoned up by somebody

and said that it had been mooted at one of the confrontations, many of them going on then with the governors and with the body about the amalgamation between the Central School, and that it had been put forward, but then was finally rejected by the Principal. Yes, it was not his thing to get me back there, and I wouldn't have gone back, it was a silly idea.

I mean this was the new Principal, Ian Simpson who is still there?

The new Principal, Ian Simpson, yes, yes. And then finally, do understand, I've just said that they were amalgamated, and St. Martin's really has disappeared as a college, except in name. The Principal also was sacked, Ian Simpson himself was sacked by the new... The amalgamation of St. Martin's and Central went together with the amalgamation of all London art schools in one thing called the London Institute, and the man in charge then was named, do you know his name? The Dean of it, I cannot remember his name at this very moment, had a headquarters off Oxford Street, just round the corner from St. Martin's, and it was said over the grapevine that he did walk in one day to the college and had a great disagreement with Simpson on the spending of money. He was a man from the London School of Economics by the way, that new Principal and Dean of the London Institute, which I thought was most appropriate as it was about money generally that they amalgamated all these, all the London art schools. But nevertheless also did as I say walk in and sack Ian Simpson, so it went, so the story went. So that was the total end of St. Martin's, both principal and the college, and the Central really took over, Central School of Arts and Crafts, the staff of the Central, and the last three of the sculpture, all early retired.

So in terms of the Sculpture Department, you were sort of in charge for most of its life in effect.

Oh its 25 years.

Yes, yes.

Oh yes, the absolute beginning of it, and right until the Eighties really, yes 25 years, 26 years.

So who do you see as the inheritor of your role? There's still very good sculpture being made.

In what, in sculpture?

Yes.

Or in art schools, what are you asking me?

No, in art school sculpture.

Of what?

Art school sculpture. Where would you go if you were a student now?

I really don't know. No I haven't been looking at that that closely, recent years. Oh it's totally changed of course. They decided to emphasise the various elements, painting was meant to go to Chelsea I do believe, all the other elements of design and that were going to be emphasised at Camberwell, I understand. And so it went on, different elements were sort of farmed out to various colleges. Where it's going at this very moment I really don't know. The only new element that appeared that I know of is the post-graduate course of that particular educational alignment, and that has been taken by Goldsmiths', and led in by a member of my staff as a matter of fact, or ex-member, I say of my staff, he was of the combined staff, his name, I'm not certain, I can't remember it at this moment, but certainly he forwarded the postgraduate principle and they thought that the Goldsmiths' College was the sort of college to take over the role of postgraduate. He did in fact organise it in a way that we were organised at St. Martin's, that is in fact they decided to have a satellite studios, rather like we had with Stockwell. Obviously they built it on and moulded it around my idea of having satellites around the major school, and that they have done for the postgraduate courses, I understand. But I haven't followed it in this last two or three years.

Now I think we're going to stop there for today.

I think so.

End of F5909 Side A

F5909 Side B

[Continuing the interview with Frank Martin at his home at East Portlemouth on the 13th of the August 1997. Tape 6 Side B.]

We're sort of coming to a conclusion on your career, and before we move on to your personal interest outside the college it would be very interesting to discuss the period in the Sixties when St. Martin's Sculpture Department became sort of critical within itself and that became part of the art activity, and I would be very interested to hear your views on John Latham for example and Bruce McLean.

Well now, I was very close to both, both Latham and McLean, McLean particularly because he was a student of course, of my department. But let's go on to the Latham thing. There's so much nonsense that's gone on telling the story of Latham and his chewing of, what's the American critic and...?

Oh Clement Greenberg.

Clement Greenberg's 'Discourses'. Very much, I was very close to that, and then I'll try to remember precisely how it went. It was that I remember particularly Barry Flanagan of course coming to me. Now he had been a student of mine of course and also I had employed him as a member of staff, ready to subsidise him more than anything else, he wasn't a very good teacher, but nevertheless he wandered around and did pick up here and there individuals that had rather got lost, and from that point of view I always had around me several sort of shepherds like that, and Montford was one, Adrian Montford, that would pick up the lost people around the courses, who hived themselves off somewhere in the college and seemed not to be with the course, but nevertheless they would pick them up and help them along, and help them into the courses for that matter. Now the Latham thing. I had Barry Flanagan come in one morning, he was quite new then in teaching, he needed a bit of urging to do whatever I wanted, and he came in and had his sort of brief, and he said to me, 'Had a lovely happening last night.' I said, 'What's that?' He said, 'Well with Latham, and with a group of painting students, and I was there, and he's dead nuts against,' again his name I forget, Clement Greenberg's 'Discourses'. And he said, he got the students and me he said to chew them. I said, 'What do you mean?' he said, 'We tore up the discourses, because you know how dead nuts he is against Greenberg and the way he elevated the Sculpture Department as opposed to the Painting Department and all that sort of thing.' I said, 'Well I didn't know

that, but nevertheless, go on, tell me the story.' He said, 'Well we chewed the discourses, pages, and spat them into a jam jar, and he was going to distil them.' So I said, 'Good God! that's a new one.' And then he went on to relate exactly what...he was very amused of course about it himself. Nevertheless, that thing sort of blew up a little, a few days later, in that the librarian woman, do understand we'd just only then had established a library, and the young lady in charge of it, a lovely girl, was very put out by the fact that he had taken one of her books and chewed it, that was a new one, and she took it straight to the Principal. And it got into a very bad place then in that Latham again wasn't thought too much of as a good teacher, and I understand there were moves for him, to off-load him from the department, the Painting Department. We liked him very much as a matter of fact. But he was very put out by, particularly by the Sculpture Department because he was just as we came along in the Sixties - in the Fifties rather, and of course the 'New Generation' show, which seemed to obscure his efforts in art as he was then verging on, as you know, the burnt books thing three-dimensionally inclined, hanging on the wall, but there never three-dimensionally inclined. And he was getting quite a lot of notice but somehow we took all that away from him, the things that were happening at St. Martin's. So he was...and so he blamed a great deal of that on Clement Greenberg and the way he had supported us in the press and in the media generally and elsewhere, in America. And so, that episode of chewing the Greenberg 'Discourses' and distilling it was a whole row going on within the college and the departments for some weeks, and I heard that they were going to sack him as a matter of fact. I thought that was very wrong, and so I went to the librarian and said, 'Look I've got a copy of Greenberg's "Discourses", you can have it, so forget about the chewed one.' And, though it didn't stop him from being sacked eventually, and we were very much against it and I did employ him here and there after that in a part-time way, but got into bad odour with the Principal because of doing that. And we did start to back him a great deal more than we normally would have done in the various shows of his that came along in public that, his happenings as he called them. Anyway, alongside that was Barbara, his wife, and they had started, well they hadn't started APG, Art Placement Grouping, but I had intended to employ her because she was so good with exhibitions and she could write a lovely brochure and promote and all that sort of thing, so I had her in, and I gave her some teaching work, purely to subsidise the brochure work she was going to do for us, and we talked about how artists might be employed in quite a different way than making sculpture, and I also was trying to start then a three-dimensional design course, purely to take up so many of the sculptors in the department who were not getting on professionally, and I thought perhaps we ought to find other avenues of professional work, and I talked of a design group, and I did in fact start a design group with about three students, put it to the Principal and he said, 'Well make your

case out and put it to me later on'. I said, 'Well I'm hiving off three students to do the design things, and I will in fact research it a bit further. I've discovered a man named Kovacs in Czechoslovakia who has just started a design school, supported by the Government, but,' I said, 'it's difficult to get to him because of the Communist element now deters our people from going over there. But,' I said, 'I've got a young artist who's got dispensation to get there, he's a reporter, and I'll ask him to contact Covax[ph] in Czechoslovakia to come back with some information,' which in fact he did. Anyway to go on with the Latham story. She said, 'Well we thought of having an Art Placement Group which would place artists in industry in some sort of way for them to apply themselves in an original sort of artistic way or whatever ideas way within, even on the shop floor.' I said, 'Well look, you know, we're beginning something rather like this in this design course, this design course, and so, 'I said, 'perhaps we can join this in some sort of way.' And that she was enthusiastic about, and she said, 'Well I want some artists to begin this,' and I said, 'Well, we'll select some, certainly Barry Flanagan might be one,' I said, 'he's not the idea man to be on the shop floor, but nevertheless let's think of somebody'. And I did in fact have two or three that were placed, one in particular who made his mark was Garth Evans, who was on my staff then, and he went off to a steel works I remember and did produce something quite well which was well noticed by British Steel, and they gave him a prize as a matter of fact for it in the end. But then, going again back to Latham and the chewing of the 'Discourses', he then began to exhibit this file with the chewed element of Greenberg in it, and it was exhibited in the Charing Cross Road as a matter of fact in one of the book shops that closed down, he had an exhibition, and it was displayed there in a number of ways, and if you...you do know, you I'm sure do know the whole Latham story, the Museum of Modern Art bought that as a work of art and it is displayed there now. But anyway the attachment to Latham went on, oh for a very long time, and only recently as a matter of fact, a year or two ago, I had another letter from Barbara, they divorced by the way by this time, nevertheless she was starting up a similar sort of thing, I don't think it was going to be called APG but another similar organisation, and I don't think he seemed to be in it now, he's detached himself away somewhere. But I did in the course of the conversation find out that they had at one time lived at Totnes, which is of course not far from here, and whether he was in this area, because I was talking around Totnes not long before, I'd seen a person which appeared to be Latham, but I wasn't too sure, he was a much older Latham and a much-bearded Latham but it could well have been him. And she said it could well have been him as a matter of fact. So I shall certainly look out for him when next I'm in Totnes. And did in fact ask her to write to me further about her new organisation, but I haven't in fact heard a word about it, so whether it did get off the ground or not I really don't know.

No, it would be interesting to know wouldn't it.

Yes it would.

I think I saw a notice about it up at Wimbledon Art College.

Oh did you?

Yes.

And was it called APG?

No it wasn't, but it referred to it in the information saying that it was...

That's right. I've got it around, well it's not here now. I've just recently packed all my archive and so I can't refer to it. But I did in fact ask her to contact me, she said she was coming to Dartington for some, Dartington was in it in some way or other, Dartington College, which is not far from here of course, and I did say contact me and perhaps you could meet at Dartington or she'd come here. And I left it completely open, but I've not heard a word either about the organisation or whether she was coming this way or not. But for years, yes, we had great contact with... I can go on to another little story or two about Latham as we are talking about it. It was that, he did, as you know, have a number of things called 'happenings', and...

Let me take your glasses, because they're going to pick up...

Oh, it's coming through is it? Ah. Latham and his happenings. He had one quite opposite, right opposite St. Martin's in a book shop that was closed down, and he used all the redundant books that were left there, and incorporated in with this happening of his, and asked me to go across, and I went over there at some time, not with him but some time later in the day, and there it was, all the pages of the books hung up on strings in a great maze of sheets, books and what-not, and you had to push, literally push your way through this. And it was claustrophobic as a matter of fact, this whole bookshop was filled up with these hanging pages of books. And I did push my way right through, there were lines on, I think there were lines on the floor or something to guide one through all this, and it was pretty gloomy, there

were one or two electric lights. But as I got half-way through I found of all things standing on a table a number of objects to go along with this, but a naked candle alight, in amongst all this paper. I was aghast, a flickering light was standing there on this platform amongst all these pages hanging down. I immediately went back to the person who was organising, who was in the entrance hall, and said, 'For God's sake,' I said, 'I've put the candle out, but don't ever keep that going. You could set the whole thing alight and burn people, let alone...' Yes. And that would be a good happening. But anyway, yes, he put, the candle was put out, and I didn't complete the travelling through this maze of paper for a lot of different reasons, but nevertheless at least they put the candles out and didn't cause a disaster for one of his happenings. But most of his happenings seemed a bit like that I must say in the past, and they were quite a notable lot of press around because of this. I remember burning, the burning of his books of course on the South Bank, and things like that, which caused a furore around the South Bank park staff, somewhere there, and there were other happenings as a matter of fact at that time, I'm afraid I'm not picking them up very well, but nevertheless, there was one other man rather like Latham who had happenings of that sort, breaking of glass, great sheets of glass and a lot of press around. Can you remember at all anybody that worked in that sort of medium? Gustav somebody or other, Gustav...

Oh yes, Gustav Metzger.

Metzger, you've got it, Metzger. A little man, a little dwarf of a man. Did I not see in your hand-out for the Life Story project that he's on that list?

Yes.

That's extraordinary I find. Never heard a word about him since those happenings of his way back in the late Fifties, early Sixties.

Well he's still around because I saw him recently at a kind of reading at the South Bank, and he's very...

Is he fit and well?

He's very fit and well, and he's very intellectually active.

Extraordinary, he was a little old man even then, and that must have been what, how many years ago, 30, 40 years ago.

Yes. I mean I actually think it raises quite an interesting question about, you know, knowledge and books and Latham, and your tiny library, and you know, the whole intellectualisation of art now, and, you know, volumes and volumes that every art student has to read.

Yes. Have I already told you about no library at the beginning? I think I have spoken about it. Nevertheless, I'll go through it again. No library, and we ourselves, the Sculpture Department, decided that we would make a library of our own, so out of our own pockets we bought books or had them around us that we could add to this library. We collected, within a week or two we collected 100 books that we felt were influential to sculpture, and they weren't all about sculpture or anything like that, there were a number of things as a matter of fact. And it went on to the students producing two little booklets called 'First', 'First One' and 'First Two', Tucker being the author of the first one, and it had, again we were talking about the Willendorf 'Venus' and on the cover of that first one had Tucker's hand holding the Willendorf 'Venus', which was a high point in some of our investigations at that time about the beginnings of figuration. And certainly the hundred books that we collected, when we began a library at St. Martin's, whenever that was, in the middle of the Sixties I do believe before we... '60, '63, 4 or something like that, 5, began a library, we did have to give those books to them, but we paid for them out of our pocket, and we were aghast at how they had sort of disappeared within the library, where we felt they should have been kept together as an emphasis rather on the lines that we had accumulated them. But our episodes in fact producing books if you like, Tucker being the first and the second one, I can't remember who published that one, were quite important pieces, I felt we, we were very proud of the production of that little pamphlet book, and I did remember going to the British Museum and giving them a copy, I thought it ought to be in the British Museum. But the only books produced following that of course was, Tucker himself produced his book on, you can remember the title can't you? Tucker's well known, well made book, well written book, on sculpture. My memory won't pronounce on the title. [BREAK IN RECORDING] Yes the volume of course I'm thinking of, Tucker's volume, is 'the Condition of Sculpture', which is well thought of, and he's written others since, but again I can't remember the titles of the volumes. But that really terminates the story of the happenings around John Latham.

I mean the other person that amuses me at least is Bruce McLean.

Oh well Bruce McLean, again I can, yes, can brief to him very much indeed. He in fact was with us for two years, and rather hated our, I found, our forums, and he hated all the talking that went on, he felt, he wanted to make rather than talk, and of course the Friday forums talking about sculpture lasted all day around the sculptures. And he came to me, I think in his final year, before his final year, and said, 'Mr Martin,' he said, 'I'm sick and tired of all the talk that's going on around with those chaps down there with their pipes and things,' that was, Gout[ph] and Caro both smoked pipes, and whilst they were in these groups, McLean evidently hated the smoke from the pipes, and he said, 'I'm going to leave,' he said, 'and get on with it in my own particular way,' and off he went. But he's been, of all people in his various monographs that have come out around him, he's written very well about his episode at St. Martin's and how well he really liked it and got on with it, although he left that one year early. Talking about McLean's attachment...

Yes.

A very interesting young man really. He did in fact do two years within my course, and did come to me before the beginning of the third year to say sorry he was going to leave, because he hated the forums, our forums and all the discussions that went on on a Friday, which were so, everybody else seemed to so much like, but he didn't, he said, 'All those staff of yours,' including Caro and I remember Gouk, 'smoking their pipes, I hate the smoke of the pipes, from the pipes. And I'm going to leave.' I said, 'Well look, you're doing, making very good sculpture now, this last one I've got a photograph of, you've just put up on the board,' I said, 'is very good one, you should follow that up whatever you do, whether you stop here or not, you should carry it on.' He said, 'Well no, I'm going off, I'll be in touch with you, and thank you very much for the two years,' and shook me by the hand and left. But of course we've met up many times since.

And how did you feel about, in a sense, I mean Latham's quite serious attacks on some of the ideas around art, and Bruce McLean's satirising, did you feel it was fair sport?

It was what?

Fair sport.

Fair sport. Oh of course, of course, oh of course it was fair sport. And there were many around us rather like that anyway, and I would have thought, yes, anything, a lot that we were doing in verbalising was fair sport around sculpture. No, they were around us a great deal following their various happenings, the pair of them, and I always seemed to be coming across McLean doing something that was attached in many ways to whatever was going on at St. Martin's. He in fact did link up in recent years with, who was it? Allsop, Ken Allsop was, he did in fact take charge of my A course at one stage, he was an architect, and a very useful man around it he was too. When Atkins left for the College and I had my other man in charge at one time, Adams, who became Praverra in name, for some reason I displaced him and put Allsop in charge of the A course. And I found in recent times that he and McLean were co-operating in various aspects of public work. Now Allsop, going back to his architecture, and designing bridges, one in particular that I've seen in the press recently that might well span from the South Bank site to the other side of the Thames, and very a ambitious scheme, and I think McLean was mixed up with that. But again, a little later I was in conversation with Allsop on the phone from his office, he was inviting me to his new office in London, and said that he and McLean were going off to Germany and they had entered a competition for the redesigning of Berlin, and I thought that was a very good combination of McLean and Allsop redesigning Berlin in some sort of way. I haven't seen any further about it, have you?

It sounds very adventurous.

Yes, it does doesn't it. There are no Germans doing something of that sort. But, yes, I'll wait the redesigning of Berlin, yes.

I mean Barry Flanagan made a very sort of interesting transition in response to the 'New Generation' sculpture in the mid-Sixties, that, I wouldn't say he sort of followed through in the long term.

Which ones are you talking about? The sculptures he was producing?

The sort of squashy things.

The what sort of things?

The sort of squashy things with very obscure names.

What, in metal?

No, I mean those, you know, sort of...

Oh lumps.

Yes.

Lumps on the ground and things like that. Oh he went in every direction, that man, didn't he. Lumps on the ground, and torn metal. Yes I went to, he had a commission for whatever council it was, at Lincoln's Inn Fields there was a sculpture put up of his and I went along to the opening, and that was a sort of, a sheet of metal, a bent sheet of metal with a torn aspect to it, and it was at the official opening or the official placing of it. And we had a long conversation about it as a matter of fact, how he had arrived at that. And I did in fact take him along to the end of the Lincoln's Inn Fields, to the other end of the square, where I had in my studentship days, or a bit beyond I think, had a commission for some carvings on the Post Office headquarters at the end of that very square. So his was put up at that end and mine was at the other end, it was two figures above an entrance, at the entrance of that Post Office headquarters, and we had a very amusing conversation as to where sculpture had gone from that, from my days to his. Yes, he's been through so many transitions hasn't he, what with his blankets and his snaking ropes and so many others, and of course his leaping hares in recent times. No knowing quite where he might go.

Well I think as we leave St. Martin's it would be, you know, nice for you to reflect perhaps on the moment at which you did retire from St. Martin's, looking back over this...

Oh yes, oh yes, that great... I was in fact glad to leave St. Martin's finally, because of the drama we had around the degree courses and all that I felt was going to happen to the college, there were so many things threatening the college as a whole as a matter, even the site for that matter, because the St. Martin's building, an office-like building wasn't it in Charing Cross, never like an art school in some ways; although it was meant to be a purpose-built building for an art school, it was more like an office block. And although it was built on glebe land by the way, did you, I don't know if you know that, you surely know the beginning of St. Martin's, in that it did start in the crypt of St. Martin's Church and was elevated to, at the St. Martin's Academy in St. Martin's Lane, the oldest art school of course in the country, I don't know whether its centenary or 150 years we celebrated whilst I was there. And, yes that

building and the possibilities that they did want to develop the Charing Cross Road and destroy the building for that matter, all the way down Charing Cross, all the buildings were beginning to be destroyed, and one felt that they would love to have displaced the St. Martin's college and wipe down the buildings all the way down there including St. Martin's. So yes, so many changes were in the offing, and certainly with the degree course débâcle which was very very nasty after I left, and they did, it was taken away from the college as a course, and my, the person who took over from me, Tim Scott, one of my, was one of my students and a member of staff and then became Head of Department, I was glad for him to take the post but, it wasn't used very well as a matter of fact, those few years that the college went on, I think it was no more than four years before the whole thing was demolished and the courses, the St. Martin's Sculpture Department was virtually demolished and amalgamated with the Central School of Arts and Crafts, and disappeared really as a college, disappeared, the department disappeared, and all the staff eventually went, and only just recently I discovered that the last three of my staff went on and joined the Central St. Martin's, that was the name of the college, the combined college, also were early retired. So that was the end of St. Martin's in every possible way.

But you did have some wonderful times by the sound of it.

Oh, wonderful times, beyond belief, yes. Oh yes wonderful years. Firstly the Fifties and the Sixties, early Seventies. It began to violently change in the middle Seventies when the, we had a new Principal, and who was in fact Ian Simpson, from the Complementary Studies Department of Hornsey College of Art, and it began to change violently from then onwards, so the last few years of my time there were not good.

I mean was that because of him as an individual or because of pressures that were put on him?

Oh no, I think it was pressures that were put on him really. I don't think he integrated with it at all, he wasn't the right person. We didn't... I did in fact, I was shortlisted for the principalship, but there was little chance that I would have got it, I only had two years in me of course before retirement time anyway. But nevertheless I thought, with the two years that were left of my time there, that in two years one could have done something pretty violent around all the departments there. But anyway I didn't get that, and Simpson did. But he didn't take it up, and I did find that he was trying to get another post within the time that he

was Principal, and they kept it rather secret, but didn't get a post, but was finally believe it or not.....

End of F5909 Side B

F5910 Side A

[Continuing the tape with Frank Martin at his home in East Portlemouth. Tape 7 Side A, on the 13th of August 1997.]

As I was saying as you changed tapes then, about the ending of St. Martin's and the Sculpture Department. It was, as I retired there were obviously going to be a lot of questioning of the way we were performing in the Sculpture Department particularly by the National Council, and in the offing was in fact another review, a quinquennial review, and I felt that, I could have stayed on until, I finished at Christmas 1979, and I could have gone on to the end of the session, but felt that a new head of department could grapple with the problems that were obviously appearing. And Tim Scott, a student of course, he was, of ours, and also a member of staff for many years, was the one chosen ultimately to take my place. But he had an awful battle on his hands, and it didn't go well, he himself has early retired and the department carried on for what, another, after three years that was, and on the fourth year the department itself was, and the school was amalgamated with the general amalgamation of art schools, and entitled now the London Institute. And then the various rearranging of the courses within all the art schools, seven art schools was it, of London, were amalgamated, and rearranging of departments gave different emphasis from what we had had in the past. Certainly it appeared that the sculpture, my department was disappearing almost completely, although in fact in the amalgamation, just I think three or four members of my staff did join with the Central Schools of Arts and Crafts staff, although the head of that, the new area of study was from the Central rather from St. Martin's, and only just recently I've heard that all three were early retired. So that was really the final of both the department, and the college for that matter, it just disappeared, politically disappeared. I always thought it was a bit like the Bauhaus and the way that was demolished at a certain time, and certainly St. Martin's disappeared somehow in all that rearranging of the London art schools, although the name was maintained, the Central Schools there, it was the Central School of Arts and Crafts, the St. Martin's School - no, the Central Schools of Arts and Crafts it was called. No, I've got it wrong again, it was called...

The Central St. Martin's.

The Central St. Martin's School. And so what that portrayed I really don't know but it certainly wasn't St. Martin's that I knew.

So the end of an era.

An end of era indeed.

Now I know that one thing we definitely should include is this extra theme in your life of the sea and your activities around a rescue service.

Mhm. Well that's something, a part of my life of course, a big part too incidentally, and do understand it that, I was a coastal-born man, and mixed up with the Navy in family life, certainly during the war as a Royal Marine, and so the sea and the coast and the naval aspects, nautical aspects of the sea, and also another dimension for that matter. Directly after the war, Jacques Cousteau had invented the aqualung, and we swimmers anyway took to that, I did particularly, and during the war I did integrate with the submariners, naturally we were very close to all that went on in that sort of way as Royal Marines, and I had friends and even relatives within the service and serving with the sub-aquatic part of the war, the frogmen of the war. One in particular who was outstanding was Commander Crabb, the notorious Commander Crabb, and I met up with him on several occasions during my war years when working on the invasions of Italy and all that went on throughout that part of the war. He was a notorious man in that he developed a team of frogmen to counter the frogmen that were developed by the Italians, who were very good at it under the sea, under-sea war, in that aspect, sort of, a completely new arm of warfare. And Crabb was the early part of, at least the British aspects of that. But I always had close to me people that dealt with the Midget submarines and what they call Chariots, that was sitting astride a sort of torpedo and steering them into various harbours and doing what damage they could. But certainly came, I came out of the war with those closely alongside me, and in my nautical attachments and sea attachments at Hayling Island where I had my home, living on the sea for a time as I've told you already, aboard an ex-naval craft, and with my family, growing family, we ourselves were very attached to the sea, and very useful with it, particularly coming out with the expertise of the war years, and I found myself at, I think I've told you, at Hayling Island, and living partly on the sea at that time and then partly on land. But nevertheless I found that we were very, as a family of course very efficient with the sea, and everybody got to know this, including the coastguards and the rescue services, and we had no actual rescue service in the entrance to Chichester Harbour, and I lived closely against the entrance with my various host boats and things that I had there, and we began to be called by the coastguards in the event of a distress at sea, because the lifeboats were far away, the main lifeboats were at a place called Selsea, another one at Bembridge on the Isle of Wight, and Portsmouth; they looked after the east Solent area. But there we were, at the entrance to Chichester Harbour which is off the

Solent, and very efficient with the sea, and everybody knew it, and came events that we were being called by phone by the coastguard to stand in at a moment's notice to help with rescue. And this went on so regularly that I in fact established a rescue service, my own rescue service, my family, my young sons, and a few diving friends, established a rescue service that served the whole area outside the Chichester Harbour, at Chichester Harbour itself which is a great inland water with eventually 15,000 registered boats in it, and the weekends and the summer holidays that I had were, we were being called out for rescue so regularly that, yes, we formed quite a serious and professional sort of service there, rescue service. And I headed it of course, and was in fact the coxswain of the lifeboats that we established there, and my own, with my own expertise in the sea as a underwater swimmer and frogman we were equipped well with wet-suits and Neoprene suits and compressed air and all that sort of thing, which we discovered was very useful for rescue anyway. Now this was somewhat contrary to the established rescue services in this country by the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, and we discovered that there was no actual rescue in this country, rescue service in this country could deal efficiently with what we termed under-the-sea rescue. There seemed to be a lot of boats turning over and going to the bottom and trapping people directly after the war, must have been plenty during the war of course but nevertheless after the war there were so many in the Channel and around us that seemed to be trapping their crews under the sea, going to the bottom too with them there, and with no services around that could efficiently... Except perhaps the Fleet Air Arm were then beginning to train their own men, swimmers, equipped swimmers, to be dropped from a helicopter to, in fact to rescue their own trainees in their helicopters at Portland, and they could, they were trained to rescue to a hundred feet or more. Now we were, I peripherally was doing this at Hayling Island with my friends and ex-frogmen, and in fact began to move, developing a service that could be airlifted anywhere in the British Isles to deal with this problem. Literally we had a team of people that could have gone to anywhere below the sea to rescue, using explosives that were used during the war, and then the aqualung of course, although there was an apparatus we called the re-breathing apparatus which was used in escape from submarines, and that was a particular sort of rescue apparatus which was useful but nevertheless dangerous, because if you went to any great depth one could get oxygen poisoning, and several aspects of that were highlighted during my campaign for establishing a rescue service. We began to portray this on film, and it was many times that it was shown on television in the southern area, and we did submit, I did in fact submit a work, a book on rescue at sea and using this method. It was highlighted in the press and by television, and I did produce a book which I passed around the whole of the rescue service and the coastguards with this in view, and submitted it to the Royal National Lifeboat. I submitted that every lifeboat in this country and around our coasts should have an aquatic

man aboard a lifeboat, who could, a) personally was a strong swimmer, but secondly could in fact go below the surface and rescue in conjunction with the lifeboats. Now I found that the Royal National Lifeboat Service was established on fishermen who are notoriously non-swimmers, and aboard there were very few who would ever go into the sea, over the side, they weren't equipped to do so anyway, and so I submitted to RNLI and the other authorities that perhaps they ought now to think of the frogmen of the war and those coming away and now developing around our coasts with the British Sub-Aqua Club, which I, incidentally I helped to promote, and they could draw on their new crewmen, their one crewman or at least two crewmen is possible, who were swimmers, and perhaps were divers as well. And they took this very seriously, they formed a conference and I was invited, and did in fact discuss all this aspect of rescue, and in fact they accepted it, they did [INAUDIBLE]. We had another conference in London where it was mooted that my unit, which was called HISRRO by the way, which, the capital letters, HISRRO meaning Hayling Island Sea Rescue and Research Organisation., two Rs for research. And, I put forward that we could form, amalgamate, and become a service together, but I would retain the aspects of HISRRO alongside the RNLI crew and boat, and in fact I would, with my crews, crew their lifeboat that they would give to me, and they did in fact, gave me money to build a lifeboat station, a unique one, where the HISRRO was on one side, this other service alongside their service, and I became in fact, I was made the Honorary Secretary of the station and the launch authority for the lifeboat, and my crew circulated, I had six crews that would circulate onto their boat and onto mine, and we would be called out in emergencies, in various emergencies around that coastal area. And we became known nationally for this particular aspect of our rescue, and we in fact helped train people for the lifeboats. But the RNLI did in fact accept my thesis, and did say that they were going for five years to have aboard every lifeboat in this country an aquatic man who could in fact go over the side on a line - not on a line, as a swimmer, an equipped swimmer, to assist with the rescue of people in difficult circumstances that lifeboats couldn't get to, sort of thing, under a pier, into a cliffy area, a rocky area, under the sea perhaps, or upturned boats on the surface, we found trapped people, which were unknown to the service when they arrived, but were actually up inside the boat. And this has been borne out in many rescues since my service began, and have been highlighted regularly on the national TV and on film, and in the press. They did have this five-year period of training for their crewmen, and many of the aspects of that did, we dealt with at Hayling Island as regards to training and the information that we had gained. And we did in fact develop other boats to go along with this, I developed, designed and developed other boats to go along with this. All in parallel with the St. Martin's thing of course going on in London. So there I was at the end of a railway with St. Martin's doing their experimental things and travelled down the 72 miles to Hayling Island and then I

was doing an experimental thing with the sea, and it became quite an important part for my, the whole of my family were involved, even my wife in many ways would help us deal with the service, and certainly with the alarm rescues that we had at any time. Fortunately they did seem to occur at either weekends when I was at home there or in fact later on in the summer vacation when everybody goes to the sea of course, and even at night, when I arrived over at St. Martin's, I was quite often called out during the night to rescue in storm waters, and we had some quite adventurous times I can assure you, and rescued a lot of people, and brought in a lot of property.

So was this from the early Sixties?

This was, well this was...now when was it? I've got the book here so I can see the date. It's right alongside me. The book that I produced, here it is. I think the book submitted was for... I'm sorry about the rattling against my... And the date was, this book was dated 1970. But of course the aspects of it were being dealt with from about '69. Running parallel with what were doing you see, at St. Martin's in an experimental way. But nevertheless the energy around both were comparable really. And, yes, I can remember many times when I arrived at St. Martin's after a night out at rescue. And it got enormous publicity, enormous publicity, and Parliament took it up, the Government took it up, and I was invited to meet MPs and discuss all this, and I had great support from many MPs and did finally get with a paper in the Lords, and I was asked to submit a case for the addition of the swimming man. Funnily enough the very morning they put a written question in the Lords and there was no reply, but nevertheless, and it doesn't cause, normally cause a discussion, it's just a written paper and aspects of it are answered by the Speaker. In this particular case, only the day before this paper was to be discussed in the Lords there was a particularly spectacular rescue off north Foreland, where a woman and her child were trapped under an upturned trimaran, and again our services were not efficient enough to send the right sort of people and they brought in American frogmen, flown by helicopter, to do the rescue. And so all these aspects of that, and they did rescue the mother and child, and of course, there were headlines in the ordinary newspapers the very morning my paper was going to be discussed in the House of Lords, and it gave the opportunity for the man putting it, he was in fact, I'm forgetting his name at this moment but he was in fact the, he was the chairman or the president rather of the British Sub-Aqua Club, and had been in contact with me on many occasions on this aspect of rescue, and it was he who was putting it, and we did develop it further later on, in Parliament and in the various diving conferences.

So did it end up being part of the RNLI practice?

Well now... No it hasn't. That traditional service still with fishermen who were notoriously non-aquatic, non-swimming, but they did... I think the changes that have come about, whether they've been installed precisely I'm not too certain, but nevertheless they did say that in future, after the five years experiments they did, with all that we contributed to that, they did come forward with a letter to say that they did in future mean to experiment with a swimming man in lifeboats, and that in future all new lifeboat men being recruited on the standard lifeboats would have to be able to swim for 45 yards with their clothes on, but in the inshore rescue service, which is now 80 per cent of their rescue service, were all to be very strong swimmers and with diving training, perhaps. Now whether this has really come about I'm not too certain, I do ask from time to time. And interestingly enough, unbeknown to you, last night there was an alarm in the estuary here, and I did get the coastguard out because there was a red flare over the estuary, and red flares of course have to be reacted to immediately, and I did get the coastguard out, and a lifeboat was launched, and this morning I've ascertained that, yes, they found a boat with, a yacht anchored in the estuary with six people aboard and asleep, had dragged its anchor and they were up on the rocks. And so this conversation is very real. And they did take them off, but nobody was in any way troubled by it. But, so it continues in my life this attachment to the sea and the rescue services.

Well it certainly sounds as if you've had a very active and wonderful life and...

Oh an extraordinary life, yes, and you could imagine with all that was going on in London. I must tell you one other story, a very amusing story really that I can remember now. I did, as I have told you, produce a quite extensive book on this aspect of rescue, it was called 'Rescue at Sea' and there it is in front of me now, with every aspect of this new type of service. I did in fact circulate all the countries in the world to find out how they rescued, what their services might have done. I discovered that only America had anything like the thing I proposed, because they hadn't a Royal National Lifeboat of course, they had in fact the coastguards, and their coastguards are very very professional indeed, and when I applied to them to get knowledge of their service they said, 'Well, all our people are expert swimmers, and many of them are divers, and we've always used them, right throughout.' So there they were with the service of the sort that I was proposing for Britain. But we had a great deal of interchange on it regarding what aspects of it would be carried out, and I had, I applied to every embassy about their nationals and their services, and got some very interesting returns, particularly from Germany and the Scandinavian countries, and then Australia of course, and their

services were based very much on swimmers, because they're a great swimming nation, against their coast, and surf boards and people like that dealing with enormous seas, and obviously lots of events that would call for swimmers rather than a lifeboat service. So, but this aspect was, this inquiry internationally had a very funny side to it from one thing I can tell you about. The Brazilian Embassy came back to say that yes they had a service but nothing like this, and they were very very interested in this applying of frogmen for rescue services, might we meet? So I was invited to the Embassy, the Brazilian Embassy in London, central London, and I entered the building, and I tell this story because it went on with what was evolved further on, later on in my conversations with them, and there it was, the entrance was a foyer where there were seven doors, steel doors, with no handles on, no ways of getting up, no staircases, no enquiry desk, but all these sheets of metal which were the lift doors. And a microphone, a loudspeaker came on asking what I wanted. And I told them that I had a meeting with the Consul, and in a few moments a lift door opened, one of these sheets of metal, and there was this lift. Up I was taken into the bowels of this building and ushered to a room where we could have a conversation, and the Consul, and we had a very friendly talk for a while, and he said, 'Yes, we are very interested in this,' we went through the book and he seemed to dwell a great deal on the photographs of frogmen that I had in it, which, they were, many of the photographs were naval frogmen, the best we had in this country, with all their equipment. Because I was putting to the service, this is the sort of thing that frogmen have now, or divers have in our naval service. And many of the people that I was employing and using in this were from the experimental branch of the Royal Navy. And he dwelt on that a great deal, and the emphasis, and I wondered what he was getting to as a matter of fact. But then he went off, he said, 'I've got somebody here who would like to talk to you further.' And down came a man, a very policeman-like man is all I can say, a foxy-looking man who sat opposite me with a pad perched and his hand and pencil placed on it, and he just sat there looking at me, not a word, and I said, 'You want information?' And he sort of nodded his head only. And I thought, well what is this? Nothing further. So I said, 'Well, I've really talked to the Consul enough about this. I don't know what you want but I have said I'd send more information if you want it.' He said, 'We were only interested in the frogmen.' And so, it began to get through to me that they thought somehow in this enquiry that I was trying to get in touch with them, for obvious reasons.

Oh no.

For spying. Yes, believe it or not, for spying. They didn't say so mind you, but I mean everything indicated it.

Gosh!

And so, I really said, 'Well I think I've finished all I want to say here,' and left. He had invited me further but I ignored it of course. But they really thought my enquiry was not about rescue, how would anybody want to know, have information about rescue? It was about the secret part of the Navy that they were after, yes.

Good grief!

Extraordinary isn't it. Anyway one little story around it, but I could tell you many more of that sort.

Well, I think on that rather exotic note, we should probably be winding up.

Yes.

Now is there any last sort of...?

Oh I, lying in my bed this morning you know thinking of this interview, and the rounding up. It's only briefly touched on of course all the aspects of my life, and there's an enormous lot that has gone on that couldn't have entered our conversations, particularly about St. Martin's of course. But nevertheless I think we've somewhat touched on the quite important aspects of it. But, a bit unsatisfactory in many ways because it's so brief. I had in fact, as I've already told you, written a work on it, a manuscript, of the whole aspects of this, it's a vast work, it will I suppose be published one day somewhere, and I have been negotiating about publication. It's not in the pipeline yet but it may well be. It covers all aspects of St. Martin's history, is 250,000 words, I remember that, and I suppose I've written it about three or four times really, and an enormous number of course photographs that go along with the history and aspects of the beginning of all that went on from the Fifties and the Sixties, and in fact the 26 years that I was in charge of the department, and still maintain a close attachment to all that's going on. And do understand that here I'm often interviewing and phoned up from distant places, asked about aspects or whether they can meet me and discuss it, and researching people, young men and women who are going to take a Ph.D. on subjects of art, art history. And I produced quite a lot of evidence that goes along with it. But oddly enough no one, no one has managed to write a history of it prior to mine, a comprehensive history,

although there have been mooted over the years, there are other people, there were people tinkering with it in many ways, and in fact at the time that I retired it was intended that a book be published, and we did have a young man, a critic, I won't him, but he did fail us, who was supposedly writing a book that would be published then, and we did give him an opportunity to come to St. Martin's on many many occasions and work and be around the studios so that he could understand what was going on, and also I gave him a whole lot of photographs to go along with the possible publication, but he did fail us, and, although he does, he's quite a leading critic at this moment and is of one of the leading papers, and aspects of St. Martin's introductions that I've had.....

End of F5910 Side A

F5910 Side B

[Continuing the tape with Frank Martin on the 13th of August 1997.]

We were rather rounding up that, rounding up then weren't we, and interrupted by the ending of the tape. But, I feel that a lot, and many aspects of St. Martin's are not understood, and certainly our international attachments have never been written about, the many many artists who we collected around St. Martin's, and do understand I've always emphasised that we had about 100 sculptors there at any one time, and that's a lot of sculptors. What I mean by that is, the students of the three courses, the Advanced course as we call it, which a postgraduate type course, the two arms of the degree course, A and B, and a lot of other people besides by the way, part-timers that seemed to be there, and quite a lot of hangers-on to St. Martin's including the staff, the young staff I had, and the many staff, and really made up about a rounded hundred, and I'm sure that no other place in history anywhere in the world had so many sculptors together at one time. And it still bubbles up of course all over. But the international part of it has not been written about or known, and yet leading young sculptors, are leading by the way in their various countries, and to the extent that they now represent a particular country at the Biennales that have gone on over the years, certainly many from Israel, young men, many of them as I've already told you I think coming to us directly after the Six-Day War, had been displaced in their education and in their country because they had accumulated from various aspects and various parts of the world to fight the war, and just six days only and left them high and dry and many of them in fact arrived in England, and America. And we had a great interchange with them, always have, and with the foundation and the people that, the Israeli American foundation that supported them, and there were always visitors by the principal people around that foundation coming to visit us and discuss aspects of the work that they were doing in the school. But every country practically has been represented, we really have had one, two or three students from all the outlying countries, Australia many, South Africa many, New Zealand, the Far East of course which, some from Japan, certainly a number from Seoul, from Korea. South America, Brazil certainly and some Argentinians. Certainly Spain and Portugal, Germany, some Scandinavians, Italians. Not too many from France funnily enough, they seemed to come completely away from...France very much kept their students to themselves and somehow wouldn't support if they left their country for education, and the number that did come from there, from Paris, seemed to be doing it on their own steam really. And I regularly have contact with students from Paris even now, many of them have gravitated there since or did originally come from Paris, they visit me here at Portlemouth. We've had several reunions where they've all congregated. We

had, I must tell you, we had a wonderful party, my retirement party, and they decided because of my nautical attachments to have it on the Thames, and so they staged this for me in one of the water buses called the 'Silver Dolphin' I remember, and some 150, nearly 200 people congregated at that retirement party, and we had a wonderful time which went on into the night. But talking of the French student, a number of them in fact missed the party because in fact they were late, their boat or aeroplane was late arriving, and the boat, because of the regulations around drinking after midnight, had to put to sea as it were before they could pop the champagne bottles and so on. So we had, we did in fact have another party the following day when we discovered them wandering around in London and having missed the boat as they called it. Yes, they were very, lovely people, and I enjoyed getting visits from them and being in communication with them over the years. And they await my book by the way, they're all awaiting my book.

I think we're all awaiting your book.

Because I do in fact mean to name everybody in it, I mean there will be an addenda with all the names of everybody that occurred, I knew at St. Martin's. So, anyway...

Good, well I hope that your books comes out sooner rather than later.

I wonder.

And that your archive is lodged sooner rather than later.

Well the archive of course is, it may well go to the Tate Gallery, the archive library, we've had discussions over the years and they certainly want it, and at this very moment as I'm moving from Devon and I'm breaking up my property here as it were, it is already sort of in boxes ready to go to my new residence nearer London, but yes it will be designated to the archive library at the Tate, I think that's the better one, although in fact the Moore Foundation were a bit interested, I understand, and Leeds particularly. Yes, so, getting a publisher is important. Whether the Henry Moore Foundation will come along in the end with the money and, because obviously it's an expensive publication, two large books, with all my photographs that I've got. But anyway, whatever happens, whether the archive does go to the Tate Gallery, if my book is not published, I suppose I shall put the manuscript with that.

Indeed.

But I'm hoping that it might well be published.

Oh yes, well I think art education is much under-historised, so I think it will play a very valuable role.

I wonder, I wonder.

I'm sure. Anyway thank you very much Frank Martin.

Not at all Melanie.

And I hope you have a very successful move.

I wonder.

From this beautiful place I have to say quickly.

End of F5910 Side B

End of Interview