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PP: My name is Paul Piper. I'm here with my colleague Tamara Belts to interview Charlie Krafft. And the date is August 21.

CK: 2014.

PP: So, Charlie, if I could begin by asking you to talk briefly about your life before you came to Fishtown, what you were involved in, and that part of your life?

CK: Prior to arriving in La Conner, Washington, I was down in San Francisco doing psychedelic lightshows for a guy down there named Scott Bartlett. I believe he's

passed on, but he was an underground filmmaker who got involved with psychedelic lightshows, via the Merry Pranksters, which was Ken Kesey's group of collaborators on that bus trip from I believe it was the Bay area to the New York World's Fair. So Bartlett was a friend of a teacher at Skagit Valley Junior College, at the time, named Jim Kahn. Jim Kahn left the Skagit Valley JC in 1965 to go study with Ali Akbar Khan at Ali Akbar Kahn School of Music in Marin County. He wanted to learn Indian music, and somehow...Bartlett lived in Marin County and Jim knew Scott and told Scott that I was involved in psychedelic lightshows in Seattle, and so I started a lightshow troupe here, and then got hired by Bartlett to go down there and get an actual salary from him. And at a place called the Rock Garden, which was a club in the Mission district that was put together by a bunch of gangsters from North Beach, in conjunction with a gangster from Beirut, Lebanon.

I call them gangsters because they weren't hippies, and I was a hippie, and I was being hired by entertainment entrepreneurs. And in North Beach, it's Italian, and I mean these guys are connected. And Charlie Henshee was from Lebanon, so somehow they made a deal with him, and he was a guy that was actually talking to Scott Bartlett and myself about going to Beirut and opening up a club there for them. And so what happened was that these North Beach guys saw the hippie thing going on in San

Francisco and decided that they were going to try to cash in on it, and they built a club that didn't last very long. I mean there was a lot of money invested in it and it was a nice enough place, but the kids just didn't feel like it was anything that belonged to them, so it went out of business.

After that, after I lost my job, I hung around for a little a while, and then I remembered La Conner, Washington because I had been taken there for dinner by Glenn Turner, who was an English teacher at Skagit. And I thought, Well that might be a nice place to settle down and start up a career as an artist because I was already interested in painting, and La Conner had a reputation as an art kind of colony. So I moved from San Francisco in 1967 to La Conner, Washington. I moved in with Jackie Green and her husband, whose name escapes me, Robert, out on the end of the Dodge Valley Road, and my girlfriend and I were an au pair for them, kind of. And then Fishtown was just down at the end of the Dodge Valley Road, and I started working on making one of those cabins down there habitable. It took me about three months to redo it so that I could actually use the stove inside and get in and out of there without collapsing through the rotten planking that had been built and then just left, you know. So that's my story.

PP: And you had set that up to use that cabin then with—

CK: No, I was squatting—

PP: Oh, you were squatting.

CK: Here's the story. I was -- Jim Kahn in 1965 had taken me out for a picnic to the Lees' farm, which is the private property above the North Fork of the Skagit River. I mean, that scenic vista belongs to the Lee family. They were Valentines, and then they became the Lees through marriage. And so I already knew about Fishtown in 1965. And my move back to La Conner was into a houseboat that then as a result to being invited to live with Jackie and Robert Green, I thought, Well you know, Fishtown would be a nice place to live, and it's also free. I could just go out there and squat.

I ran into Martin Chamberlain, Jr., on one of my forays to the cabin as I was involved in repairing it. He was a classmate of mine at Roosevelt High School. Which I graduated from in 1965. So I said, Hey, Marty, what are you doing out here? He was on the trail. He said, Well my family owns it. And I said, Really? And he said, Yes. And I said, Well do you think I could live here? And he said, Well, I think that could be arranged, sure. And so, it turns out that the Chamberlain family owns half of Fishtown, and the Lee family owns the other half.

PP: Oh okay.

CK: And so I was—my cabin was on the Chamberlain half, and so Marty made it okay for me to continue to squat there. And in order for me not to be able to demand squatter's rights after seven years, I had to sign a rental agreement with—well I didn't sign anything really. I mean later we signed, they brought papers out. But in the beginning, it was just a one dollar a year token, no, no. One dollar a month token rent, paid to Ken Staffanson, who's the farmer that farmed the Chamberlain land. And so as long as I'm paying something to somebody, I can't get squatter's rights.

PP: So these cabins were originally, they were net shacks or net repair shacks? Or were they lived in by fishermen, or do you know much about the history of them?

CK: They were, some were lived in by fishermen, some were net repair sheds and boat repair sheds. The boat repair and the net repair were two different sheds. My particular grouping of cabins had a boat repair shed and a net repair shed and a cabin to live in. And I've been told that they lived—some of those guys, in the early days, lived there year round. And I know that one fisherman family, the Wymans, he had his kids out there, and there was a swing left on the hill above the path to my place, that Keith Wyman had, you know, put up for his kids. And it was a gill netting operation. These guys were gill netting.

PP: Was that in the 1940s or?

CK: Yes.

PP: Okay.

CK: It was 1940s and it was right up until the, kind of right up until the Boldt Decision, when the Indians were given the right to use setbacks at the mouth of the river. And I think Boldt, Judge Boldt, decided that there was no more gill netting at the mouths of Washington state rivers for anybody but Indians.

PP: And that was in the 1950s, right?

CK: No.

TB: 1974.

PP: Oh, that's right.

CK: Was it? Okay. Well there were no fishermen living—there were-- When I found Fishtown, when I was led to Fishtown in 1965 by James Kahn, there were cabins. There were no year round fishermen. The cabins were weekender retreats, and they had been passed down in families, and so it was for duck hunting and recreational fishing only. Nobody was making a living in Fishtown on fish when I got there.

PP: Okay.

CK: And it might have been, I think, yes, you know, in 1965, down farther down the river there were guys, there were gill netters that would go out. I remember seeing their lights at night from Bald Island, in 1965, summer of 1965. And then the Boldt Decision happened, I think, and then these guys just threw in the towel. But no gill net families, no gill net guys in Fishtown proper in 1967 when I put my-- It was 1967 when I first hammered this notice on the door of that cabin that belonged to Anton Wull that I took over. I met Wull's relatives one day. They came out there and they told me I could stay too, so I had permission from the Wulls, and I also had permission from the Chamberlains.

PP: And how many of these cabins were there?

CK: In our section, the hippie section we had?

PP: Yes.

CK: We had two sections. We called our section, you know, the Asparagus Moonlight Nation, and then the other section was called Gasoline Alley, because they had generators. (laughter) And these guys were straights, and we were the hippies.

PP: So was the Gasoline Alley section north or south?

CK: Its south.

PP: South.

CK: Yes. And we got along okay with Gasoline Alley, ultimately. I mean we made friends with Gasoline Alley. At first they were a little bit wary of us, and I did get stopped on the boardwalk by a man with a shotgun in his hand telling me he didn't want any hippies around there. And he didn't know that I knew Martin Chamberlain. And he was not paying the Chamberlains, but he was on their property. Those guys in Gasoline Alley didn't start paying rent to the Chamberlains until after the logging situation happened, you know, when we had to protest.

PP: Yes, I want to get to that. So were they living there already when you came?

CK: They were living there on weekends and during the summer.

PP: Okay, so they were more of the recreational—

CK: It's recreational, all along, up until you hit, you know, our section of Fishtown, which is up and over that knoll and then down. And how many cabins were up and over the knoll and down? There was my cabin, Bo Miller built a cabin, Paul Hansen's cabin, and then Hans Nelsen and Art Jorgensen's cabin. So, one, two, three, four. And then a couple of outbuildings that were already there in my section, and then a bathhouse that Bo built, and an outhouse that he built too, and I think that's about it.

PP: Okay. Fishtown has been called by some an artists' commune and by others a group of anarchists living in proximity. What's your take on what the structure of the community was and/or how it evolved over the years you were there?

CK: Well it was a community and not a commune. We didn't live in each other's laps. We each of us had our own dwelling. The overarching philosophical glue that bound us was Buddhism, and not anarchism. Unless you want to split hairs about Northwest Zen Buddhism and left leaning socialist politics, a la Gary Snyder. Yes, we were inspired by Gary Snyder. Yes, we were inspired visually, I was at

least, by Morris Graves, who leaned towards the East. Bo Miller had been to India, and I had been to India. Paul Hansen had been in a monastery situation down in Gold Mountain Monastery in San Francisco, studying with a Chan master down there. Chan being the Chinese version of Zen. And so, we were all very interested—we were all, I mean, the men. I don't think the women cared much about it really. But the men were sort of like studying Eastern philosophy and other alternative religious philosophies. I mean, we can—theosophy, you know, maybe, and that kind of thing, New Age, the New Age stuff. But basically we were kind of serious about Buddhism. And we actually practiced zazen on occasion. We weren't real strict about it, but we did, you know, we sat for days on end on a couple of occasions. And we invited—oh, listen, we invited scholars—I invited Robert Ektall, who was at the University of Washington in the Far East Asia, Far East studies department, to come out and lecture us on Tibetan Buddhism, and he did. He came out there and gave a lecture.

And then I was sort of responsible for bringing Baba Ram Dass, to Skagit College for a lecture. And he was all set to come out there and make an appearance, but he biffed out on it, and that was kind of embarrassing for me because all these hippies were waiting to hear Ram Dass, you know.

PP: And he never showed.

CK: Yes, he never showed up.

PP: He walked out of a few—

CK: He gave his lecture at Skagit, but then he wanted to drive back to—he wanted to be driven back to Seattle. I said, Yes, but we got people out in Fishtown waiting to hear you. We're going to have a party out there. He said, I don't want to do it, I'm out of here. (laughter)

PP: Interesting.

CK: I was in India with him.

PP: So that's where you met him originally.

CK: I met him in New Delhi, India.

PP: Okay.

CK: I mean, that's another story, but yes, I met him in India. I attended one of his lectures as Richard Alpert, at the Wilsonian Hotel, in the University District, and then he went to India, became Baba Ram Dass. When he was Ram Dass, I actually spoke with him and hung out with him. But I just attended that Alpert lecture.

PP: In terms of the interest in Buddhism then and I guess Chinese work in particular, I mean, much of the work that was done there strikes me as being very influenced by Chinese Tang Dynasty and Zen and

Buddhism and these sorts of things, whether it was the writing or painting or sculpture or whatnot, would you concur with that, that that was kind of a very common theme?

CK: Yes. Paul Hansen was translating Chinese poetry, and actually had gone to the Monterey—when he was in the army, he went to the Monterey language school, I guess, and learned Chinese, and so he had been studying Chinese at the University of Washington, and then got involved with this practice in San Francisco, and then ended up back in Seattle and drifted up to Fishtown. So yes, I mean, he was immersed in it. And my immersion in it was basically through the artwork of Morris Graves and the poetry of Gary Snyder, and then the explications coming from Alan Watts, and I liked the visual stuff.

And Sund was getting involved in it too. I mean, he was sort of drifting. Sund had met some Tibetans in Seattle, you know those, the Sakyapa family came here. They were the first Tibetans out of Tibet that were brought to the University of Washington. Jigdal Sakya was the head of the Sakya school, and his wife is the Dalai Lama's sister, and they brought their guru to Seattle. Robert had met the guru, and so he was pretty impressed with the Tibetan side of things.

And my trips to India to study Vedanta sort of, were part of that mix too. And then Bo Miller, you know, I ran into him in India. I met him through Sund, and then we bumped into each other again in India, so it's a-- I would say, Buddhism was the overarching philosophical umbrella, but there was some Advaita Vedanta in there too, because both me and Miller had gone to looking to Vedanta. And I was pretty hopped up on Vedanta even before Fishtown because there was a Vedanta Society center here in Seattle, and I knew all about Ramakrishna, who was the kind of like this avatar of the Advaita Vedanta movement in the 1800s when, you know, what's his name, Vivekananda came to America.

PP: (Inaudible, talking over each other) --Hindu school.

CK: Hindu, yes. So let's just say Hindu.

PP: Yes.

CK: You know, I mean it was—but basically we were Buddhists, because you know the landscape looked Buddhist. It looks like a Chinese scroll, the whole thing, so. We were very inspired.

PP: Yes, that's apparent. The other thing that was apparent to me is the diversity of work that you folks did. I mean, it's not like, people were maybe primarily a writer, primarily this, that and the other thing, but it sounds like you all did everything. I mean, kind of engaged in writing and drawing and calligraphy and painting and—

CK: And architecture.

PP: And architecture.

CK: Really, you got to remember that Bo Miller was like this Eagle Scout that kept the whole thing together. The rest of us were just sitting around and dreaming, you know, and Miller's out there all the time actually keeping the boardwalk together — (laughter) — you know, he built Steve's tower—

PP: Yes.

CK: I mean, so Bo Miller was the engineer.

PP: How do you account for that though? I mean, do you feel like it was just kind of part of the age that people were just trying any kind of artistic endeavor that they could, or was it—it wasn't a conscious thing was it?

CK: Yes, it was conscious.

PP: Was it?

CK: Yes, because in those days, I mean, this was an alternative lifestyle that we could just slip into. It wasn't even, you didn't even have to do any pre-planning. It was all just there for you if you wanted to take it, and that's what we did.

It's a different now, you know, where it's a smaller world, and there's more and more regulations and fear of the other, and we just sort of slipped into this thing. That's all. And we were-- I made a concerted effort to keep non-creative people away from Fishtown. I mean, people had heard about Fishtown in the counterculture, all the way down to San Francisco because there was a lot of draft dodging going on, and people were making their way up to Vancouver, BC, to get out of the United States to avoid the draft. And somehow, we got draft dodgers and others looking for Fishtown and actually finding it, because it was a countercultural community they heard about.

Some of these people are just deadbeats and hangers on and criminals, and you could tell right away, you know. I could tell that I didn't want them around if they were going to be a problem. They sort of felt-- there was this thing in the air, where among the hippies, of sharing, and if you didn't give them what they wanted, you were not being a good hippie. And a lot of people just thought that they should be issued a place in that community just because they had long hair or, they had a beard or a mustache, or came dressed in buckskins or something. And I could sense, I don't know. I mean, I'm not psychic or anything, but I just didn't want anybody that wasn't going to be creative to be out there.

I sort of issued cabins to everybody else as they came out to see me. I was the first out there.

PP: And you were kind of considered, I mean, I've heard the term mayor of Fishtown applied to you.

CK: Yes. Well that's just because I arrived first. I was the first guy to like make a cabin livable. Everybody else did what they did, put glass back in the windows, repaired the stoves, get the outhouse situation squared away, and that kind of thing. I was just the first guy that thought, Hmm, well this is going to be a cheap place, you know, to land. And then, Oh, that Charlie Krafft's up in, you know, this

cabin on the Skagit River, let's go see him this weekend and drop some acid. And so that's what they did. And as they did that, I mean, these people expressed an interest in leaving Seattle and moving up and having a lifestyle like the one they saw me living, and then I'd say, Oh yes, well we can, okay, take that cabin.

PP: Yes. But you also seem like you had a sense of responsibility almost for the place and for what was happening there, right? Just in reference to being able to kind of sense that some people didn't belong and shouldn't be there.

CK: Yes, I did sense that. In fact there were a lot of visitors that came. I mean, I put up with them until I couldn't anymore, and then they'd get the drift. You know, it was a question of, How much work do you want to do to stay there?

PP: Yes.

CK: That was one of the things. I mean, you had to chop your wood, you had to do all this stuff just to make it comfortable for yourself. If they couldn't do that, and then they were off to some other place where it was easier to land.

PP: Yes.

CK: So that was one of the criteria. If you don't want to work, you might as well just, you know, get lost. (laughter)

PP: Could you talk a little bit about, and this may be impossible, but what your sense of what an average day in Fishtown was like?

CK: The day was your own. You could do whatever you wanted, unless you were behind, like I always was, on the wood situation. I never had enough wood, and I always let it go until the last minute, and I always got stuck at the end of the winter burning furniture. (laughter)

PP: Oh no. (laughter)

CK: Yes. So we had a garden, and you could go garden, you could go foraging for wood, you could sit down and paint, which I was mostly involved in, or translate or write poetry. Bo Miller was always hammering away, building something or chasing his kids around. It was—an average day, I mean, it was average—it wasn't the same for everybody. My average day, you know, I mean if I wanted to-- You know, I just made it up day by day.

PP: Yes.

CK: It was made up as we went along.

PP: That's pretty great.

CK: Yes, it really was. It was great. That was what I remember most about it, was this time situation. And oh, there's another thing about time, that it's different in the country out there than it is in the city. So I would go to the city to take care of business, because I was selling my art in the city, and seeing friends in the city. I'm from the city. It would take me 24 and 48 hours to come down from the city, and then drift back into this extended river time, where it was, you know, kind of lazy. Lazy river, you heard the, (singing..) *Up the lazy river where the noonday sun...* Or something how that goes?

PP: Yes.

CK: That's the way it was. This lazy river. And so you could do whatever you wanted to do, including, if you wanted to just get wasted, you could just stay wasted, which I was famous for. (laughter)

PP: (laughter) How many people do you figure, and I know there were waves of people that went through Fishtown. And I think it was Maggie Wilder that told me that there was this kind of original Fishtown that ended with the, kind of the timber thing.

CK: Yes.

PP: I want to talk about that. But during the section of time, maybe a 1967, 1968 to the mid-1970s or whatever, what were the most people that were living down there at one time?

CK: I think that I once counted 14 people, including kids.

PP: Okay.

CK: But don't hold me to that.

PP: I won't.

CK: I don't remember exactly.

PP: Yes. And was Robert considered -- I mean he really didn't technically live in Fishtown, but did he come by a lot and was definitely part of the mix and whatnot?

CK: Yes, yes. He was a very—Robert was the elder statesman of this group because he was older than we were, he was a very serious poet living the poet lifestyle, and we were interested in poetry of course, and everybody kind of deferred to Robert, his seniority. But there were problems with Robert because he was a prima donna, and collaborative efforts that Fishtown did, Robert backed off of because he couldn't control them.

We got tired of asking him to be part of like those chapbooks that we issued and things like that, because getting him to do stuff was just too much work after a while, and we just gave up. (laughter) He was always late with everything, and then there was always a problem with the way we had it arranged

that he didn't like. So he was our friend. He was up and you know he came up to see us and talk to us and party with us, and we went down to see him. But after a while, we just let Robert be Robert, because he needed his own support group around him, and we couldn't give—we gave it up to a fashion, and then that was it, we weren't going to give anymore.

PP: Yes.

CK: Then he'd find somebody else to sort of help him out. So I would say that Robert was the chief of the Asparagus Moonlight Nation.

PP: So tell me about that name. How did that name generate?

CK: It was a code word for marijuana.

PP: Interesting. (laughter)

CK: (laughter) Robert called marijuana asparagus moonlight. And he would come up to see if anybody had any asparagus moonlight when he ran out of it.

PP: He probably would have been amazed that the state today [legalized it] ... (laughter)

CK: (laughter) Robert, at first when I met him, was anti-marijuana. And there's a story about me going down to a poetry reading of John Logan's at the, I believe it was Seattle University, and there was an after party for Logan at Robert's house and within Ravenna Park, and Scott Williams lit up a joint, and Robert kicked him out of his house. Scott was a teacher up at the Skagit JC. And then Robert got on—somebody turned Robert on finally. He was staunchly against marijuana and beatniks and the whole business, you know, and then I don't know who turned him on, but after he got turned on, that was it for Robert. He was a stoner from then on. (laughter) But I'll never forget that night when Robert kicked Scott Williams out of his house for smoking a joint. He said, You can smoke that outside. And Scott went outside to smoke it and he never came back that night.

PP: He was pissed off.

CK: Well, something happened to him. I mean, he showed up on Monday at school with a black eye, and he never told us what happened—

PP: Wow.

CK: --after he left Robert's party to go smoke a joint in the ravine. I don't know what happened to him. He wouldn't say. It was a mystery. And he's dead. He died with this mystery. How did you get that black eye after you left Robert's party? He'd say-- He never told us.

PP: Interesting.

CK: I don't know if he got rolled downtown or something.

PP: Yes.

CK: He got himself home, you know, we partied on until the early morning hours, and Scott got himself home. I believe he drove us down there or something. I don't remember exactly how he got back. But we didn't go back with Scott. Anyway. I'll never forget that. You can smoke that outside. (laughter)

PP: Yes. What was the relationship with La Conner like with Fishtown? And let me just kind of provide a little more substance. Did you folks go into La Conner a lot, like did you go in every night—

CK: Of course we did.

PP: --and hang out at bars and drink or that sort of thing?

CK: No.

PP: Or was it more going in out of necessity to buy groceries or?

CK: We had our friends in La Conner. We had our necessities to get. The bars, I personally went on Friday nights and Wednesdays because that was dime night and you could get a schooner of, let's see, dime night, you could get a glass of beer for a dime. You know, a schooner of beer for a dime. And pitchers were \$2.50 or something like that. And there was bands on Wednesdays and Fridays, so you know, I was looking for girls, among other things, and looking also to get lit up. And so we would go by necessity, and then for companionship and camaraderie.

PP: And what was it like getting there? I mean, could you drive?

CK: Yes, you could drive. You could drive or you could—I hitchhiked, you know, or walked. I would walk. When the bars closed, many a night, I walked all the way from La Conner out to Fishtown.

PP: How far was that?

CK: It's about a mile and a half or maybe two, but you know I was drunk and it didn't bother me in the least. I just put one foot ahead of the other, and in a while I'd be home. And it was fine.

PP: Yes.

CK: And if somebody was going that way, they'd drop me off. I did it a lot. I had a car. I had access to a car, I would drive it in, but I did a lot of hitchhiking, and I knew, man, who was going to pick me up and who wasn't. I could just tell by their trucks and their cars, you know, That's him, he's not going to pick me up.

PP: You get to know that.

CK: Yes. Indians would always pick you up. I'll tell you that right now, the Swinomish, they'd stop and pick you up. And then hippies of course would stop and pick you up.

PP: Yes.

CK: Richard Gilkey would always stop for me. He was a painter that lived in Conway.

PP: He's pretty well known.

CK: Yes he sure is.

PP: We talked a little bit about kind of the Buddhist aesthetic of the art there. Could you call Fishtown, especially looking back on it, as a school of art, I mean?

CK: No. Not really. We didn't develop anything. There was no manifesto written. It was just a, I just call it a pillar of fog on the fen.

PP: A pillar of fog on the fen?

CK: On the fen.

PP: On the fen.

CK: A fen is a green spread, you know, and it was—the reference is to something that was kind of there and gone, you know. A pillar of fog on the fen. There was no institution left. There's no real record of whatever we did that exists in a real context. It all has to be gathered by that curator at the Northwest Museum, and then it got sent back to its owners, and it's probably not going to be reassembled again in our lives, I don't think.

PP: Do you feel, or how do you feel that period of time affected your life as an artist? I mean, do you feel that the work you do now – I mean, can you see how it had an influence on you?

CK: Of course, yes. I got inured to having that much time of my own to do what I wanted. In 1980, I left and came to Seattle, and tried to live the same way only in an urban situation, and I woke up at about the age of 40 and I thought, What am I going to do with myself? You know, I don't have any other skills. And so rather than go back to school or retrain myself somehow, I thought, Well, I'll just either starve or continue being an artist. So I made sacrifices so that I would be able to have the time I need to make art. I took day jobs doing this and that to make ends meet, but basically I got spoiled in the 1960s by the 1960s, and I'm in the 2000s now living like I was in the 1960s. I mean, it's a lot more expensive, but I mean look at it, it's the same kind of shabby, boho existence that I had then. It's just that, and that's the way I like it, you know. I can't stand formica (laughter), but the older the better. If it smells like mildew, let me in. (laughter)

PP: Yes. Well, you've got a really comfortable place. I mean, that's one of the beauties of older places that get lived in and settled in, is they're comfortable.

CK: Yes, well. I know. And I don't own this. This is a rental unit. I mean, this is kind of my style. And this is what it looked like in Fishtown, except we didn't have electricity.

PP: Did anybody—you probably didn't have generators out there.

CK: Yes, well there was generators, but nobody wanted them because the noise bothered us. Astrida Onat came out there one year with her group to do the digging, the archeological excavating, and she wanted to use a water pump to wash away some of the hillside where they were digging, and she hooked up a generator. And we just went crazy. We said, God damnit, shut that thing off. It's just making too much noise. We can't meditate. (laughter) So she—we made a deal with her that said she'd only run it on certain hours. That was one of the big wars, Astrida Onat has a generator.

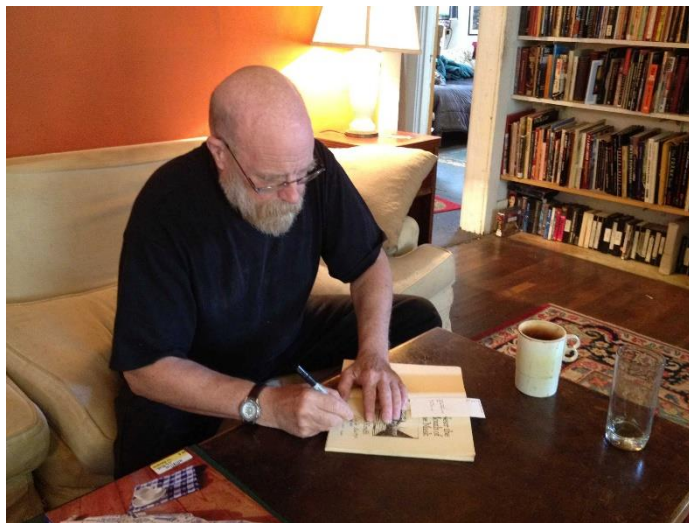
PP: Hah.

CK: Do you want to get into the big controversy which nobody wants to talk about?

PP: Yes, I definitely want to talk about it. I just want to see if there's anything else.

CK: Ask me what happened to me.

PP: We can go there. So in terms of that era in Fishtown ending, could you talk a little bit about that?



CK: It ended for me in 1980. We're talking about me. I'm not talking about anybody else. I got a job as a guard at the Seattle Art Museum. On one of my forays into town, I applied for this job, and I thought, Well, I'll go down to Seattle and I'll work for a while as a guard. And they put me on the guard force there, and I used to patrol the museum, and got an apartment off Broadway, and a studio down in Chinatown where I could paint. In the course of that—and I left my cabin locked up in Fishtown and I thought I'd use it on weekends. Well I didn't really avail myself of it that often during that year and the next year. My

cabin was finally given to somebody else by Martin Chamberlain, Jr. I lost everything I left up there. And it was kind of—I didn't protest. I didn't do anything. I was sort of, I had stuff going on here, and I couldn't keep stuff going on there, and so this guy moved in and he took over the cabin. And I thought,

Well it's better to have somebody in that cabin than nobody, because they'll keep it up out of the mud. He was there for, I believe, you know—and I can't remember his name. Do you know his name?

PP: No.

CK: I don't either.

PP: I'll see if I can find out.

CK: His wife had gotten in touch with me on Facebook though. He built a boat out there, and they ended up in Texas with it. But anyway, I went up there once and he wasn't home, and his lifestyle was a little bit different. Richard. We called him Avocado Pit Richard, because he painted—he carved avocado pits. (laughter)

PP: That's a niche. (laughter)

CK: Avocado Pit Richard, that's—you know, we had names for these people, like Black Dog Alan and Avocado Pit Richard and Dirty Dan Stopy. (laughter) Everybody had a moniker, you know, in the community.

PP: So what was your moniker?

CK: What did they call me? They called me the Ether Bunny. (laughter) Because I sniffed ether, if I could get my hands on it, and volatile solvents.

PP: Really?

CK: Yes, I liked toluene, and I used to get it at Carl's Paints, and I'd sniff that shit and-- (laughter) —I'd go crazy. So it's like Buddhism with airplane glue. (laughter)

PP: That's one of the stranger mixes I've heard of.

CK: Yes, it was an interesting mix. So, Richard, whose last name I don't remember, he was the guy that ended up in my cabin. I believe he was there for six or seven years after I left.

PP: So I heard, I mean—

CK: I never went back.

PP: I heard a story that there was this dispute over logging that I guess it was the Chamberlains, but I could have these facts all (inaudible, talking over each other).

CK: Yes.

PP: And that at some point, either the Chamberlains or the Lees -- it was the Lees, right? -- got pissed off and came in and just razed all the cabins.

CK: Oh that's the Chamberlains.

PP: The Chamberlains.

CK: The Lees never—

PP: Okay.

CK: The Lees can't raze cabins in our section. That was Chamberlains.

PP: Chamberlains, okay.

CK: See the deal was, it's actually tide lands, it's state tide lands. They had some sort of ownership over the right of access, and that's how they succeeded in getting us evicted, getting them—I was gone.

PP: So this happened after—

CK: After me.

PP: What date?

CK: 1984, wasn't it?

PP: 1984.

CK: I believe. I got the whole, I have an entire collection of information downstairs about the protest, if you want to look at it.

PP: Okay.

CK: I have to return it to Bo Miller. I had it digitized. It's the entire record of this protest, including photographs and posters that people made for fundraising to pay the lawyers. We-- It's downstairs. Are you going to go talk to Bo Miller?

PP: I'm talking to him next Wednesday.

CK: Why don't you take these, take this to him, okay?

PP: Sure, okay.

CK: For me.

PP: Alright.

CK: Great. I got to find it now. I got the disk, but anyway. That's one of my things I got to get back to him. I hope he gives it to the Skagit Valley Historical Museum because it's a great collection of ephemera about the protest.

PP: We'd love to have it, if he was good with that.

CK: Yes, okay. Let me go down there and look after our interview. What was the question, and I'll get back to it?

PP: Just how that whole dispute evolved, and then—

CK: Okay, here's the, my version of the facts are these. The Chamberlain family has a revolving trust. Members of the Chamberlain family sit at the head of the trust each year. They chair the meetings of how they're going to handle the income on their land. And one of the husbands of a Chamberlain was a developer in Arizona, I believe, named Christopher Sheaf? I don't remember.

But anyway, he decided that the land wasn't making enough money for the family, and so he was the one that wanted to log. They had every right really to log their own property, but we felt it was a crime against beauty. So we mounted this protest. And I called Earth First and got them involved, the Bellingham chapter of Earth First. They came down and they—it sort of kicked off this idea of, you know, protest. I was living in Seattle and I didn't really have too big a hand in it, other than getting in touch with Earth First, who then got in touch with these other people and taught them civil disobedience techniques on how to stop logging.

Ultimately what happened was Gilkey went to jail one day. They just rounded everybody up out there, and they were protesting off the Dodge Valley Road. They had fires, it was kind of a vigil during this gypso logging operation, and I got a picture of Gilkey being led off in handcuffs to the Mount Vernon jail. They got bailed out the next day, but ultimately the Chamberlain family succeeded in getting the Skagit County sheriff to evict everybody. And after they were served eviction papers, Staffanson and his son came out and pulled all the cabins down with tractors along the dike. They just hooked it up to the joists and just pulled them down. And they said, that's the end of the hippies. We don't want any more trouble from you fuckers.

PP: But the cabins on the Lee side were—

CK: They stayed because-- Oh no, there was still some cabins on the Chamberlain side that stayed. You see the Lees' property only starts at the—you know how that rock is, you come around the bend?

PP: Yes.

CK: That rock is the Lees' property. Anything that way from the rock, as you come around the bend, belongs to Chamberlain, and then those guys in Gasoline Alley, they all had a big problem with Chamberlain, and they had never been paying any rent. But now they're paying the Chamberlain family trust an annual rent. I think everybody, and I think Maggie even pays it, right?

PP: I assume so.

CK: I think everybody does.

PP: When did that house get built?

CK: That was Martin Chamberlain, Jr.'s house. He built it in high school, about a first-- I mean, that was his grandmother's property, and her house burnt down. And there was a shell of a shed there, and then John Bisbee and Marty Chamberlain, they were kids, high school kids, and both of them lean toward architecture. They were both really interested in architecture. They built that A-frame that Steve Herold took over and Maggie lives in. They built it themselves as kids.

PP: Impressive.

CK: Yes. You've seen the Fishtown books?

PP: I have all of them I think.

CK: Well there's Bisbee's pictures of it, you know, in there, his drawings. And John Bisbee runs out-- Have you talked to him? You should.

PP: I haven't talked to him.

CK: Well he runs a shop down in Chinatown.

PP: Oh, he does?

CK: Yes, he does. Kobo's, Higo's—

PP: That gallery?

CK: Yes, that's his. He goes-- No, Kobo at Higo, on Jackson and about 5th, 6th, 6th and Jackson.

PP: Kobo at Higo?

CK: Yes, Kobo, K-O-B-O, at Higo.

PP: H-I-G-O?

CK: Yes. Higo's was a ten cent store run by these Japanese people.

PP: Okay.

CK: And John's married to a Japanese woman. There's two Kobos in Seattle. One's up on Roy, across from the Harvard Exit Theatre, that's Kobo. And then there's Kobo at Higo, that's downtown. There's two.

PP: Didn't know that.

CK: And John was Marty Chamberlain's best friend.

PP: Oh.

CK: And Marty Chamberlain's family are the people that own the property.

PP: Right. Who were some other early—

CK: Keith Brown-- Are you talking about Fishtowners?

PP: Yes.

CK: Keith Brown, the guy that's—he's been put away. He's down in Steilacoom forever.

PP: The mental hospital?

CK: Yes.

PP: What about Art Jorgensen—

CK: Art Jorgensen—

PP: He killed himself or got killed—

CK: No, he died of a heart attack.

PP: A heart attack.

CK: He died of a heart attack during the Fishtown regatta.

PP: Okay. But it was out on the river, right?

CK: He was out on the river.

PP: Okay.

CK: He was sailing.

TB: 2001, I think.

PP: So he and Robert were the only—I mean, everybody else is alive as far as you know?

CK: No, Clyde Sanborn was kind of a member of our extended river rat community. You know, there was Fishtown, and then there were others that lived on the river. We were all river rats.

PP: Okay.

CK: And Clyde's dead. He was a poet. He died, he drowned one night leaving, trying to get home from the 1890's probably or the La Conner Tavern.

PP: That's terrible.

CK: Yes. Who else? You know the women should be contacted too.

PP: That's on the agenda.

CK: Elizabeth Mabe, Gul, Ivory Jane Waterworth, and Sandy Jorgensen. These are women that actually lived with us out there. And nobody ever asks them any questions.

PP: Well I'd love to.

CK: How they did it?

TB: Is Martin Chamberlain still alive?

CK: Martin Chamberlain, Jr., is. Senior died.

TB: Yes, okay, but you should think about getting his side of the story.

PP: Definitely.

CK: Yes.

PP: Yes, I'd love to. I have a budget to do five initial, but I'll get more next year.

CK: Okay.

PP: So I wanted to do you, and Paul I did already, and Steve we're doing today, and then Bo, and then Eric and Hans Jensen, I believe.

CK: Nelsen.

PP: Nelsen.

CK: Yes, Hans was up there, at first. He was not—he rebuilt Art Jorgensen's cabin.

PP: Okay.

CK: And prior to that, he had a cabin that burnt down on Ika Island, so he was up there really early. And so was Tom Skinner. Do you know Tom Skinner?

PP: I don't. I've heard a reference—

CK: Okay, he lives in Edison.

PP: In Edison.

CK: Yes, he was like the first person that actually I issued a cabin to.

PP: And is he a practicing artist?

CK: No, not really. He's a school teacher by dint of his credentials, but he's a fisherman by trade, I think.

PP: That brings up another point too that I meant to ask about. Did you folks—

CK: Dan Stokely.

PP: Dan Stokely.

CK: He's also in Edison. He was in Fishtown. And he was on Shit Creek too with Robert. He was on Shit Creek before Robert ever moved there.

PP: In that same house?

CK: No, in a cabin that was nearby.

PP: Okay. Did you folks fish a lot or get food from the river at all? You talked about gardening some—

CK: You know, I had ducks given to me by duck hunters occasionally. I had salmon given to me by salmon fishermen. I caught my own Dolly Varden. I don't know if there are any dollies left. But no, I

didn't go out there and—I didn't live off what I could forage, you know that. I bought my groceries in La Conner.

PP: Because there was that whole back to the land movement—

CK: Yes, but it wasn't that far back, for us.

PP: OK.

CK: We didn't raise any animals and slaughter them. We got our milk up at the Lees' farm. We got fresh milk.

PP: And eggs probably.

CK: No, I don't think she sold eggs. I don't remember buying any eggs from her. Maybe. But she did sell milk by the gallon, fresh, and 99 cents a gallon with a great big bunch of cream on top. And then, you know, during the, whatever season it was, if it was duck season, I knew these people after a while, and they would just lay ducks on me, you know, they had extra ducks. And then sometimes, I remember some Indians like laying a big salmon on me one time. And I used to fish for king salmon out in front of my dock. And one time we got a sturgeon given to us.

PP: Wow!

CK: It was immense. Keith Brown, somebody gave him a sturgeon that they'd caught.

PP: That's amazing.

CK: It was amazing! And it was big.

PP: Yes, those things are huge.

CK: And what else was out there? That was about it. We only grew vegetables. We didn't have any animals.

PP: I don't really have anything else. Do you have anything Tamara?

TB: I think it's just interesting, this is probably maybe a really dumb question, but you were calling yourselves hippies, but did you call yourself hippies in the beginning? And at what point did people themselves identify themselves as hippies versus people oftentimes refer to long haired people as being hippies, but did you—

CK: I called myself a hippie.

TB: You did? Okay, back then. Okay.

CK: Because, you know, that word hippie was coined by Herb Caen—down in San Francisco. He also coined the term beatnik, believe it or not. And I was coming from San Francisco, where, you know, Herb had started calling all the long haired hippies, and he'd made the distinction between the beats and the hippies. It was a generational gap. My career choice in high school was beatnik, and I went down in 1965 to Berkeley to hang out with the poets at the—it was called the, it was a poetry conference at the University of California at Berkeley, and everybody was there. Ginsberg was there, and all these beats, you know. It was a big deal. It was a big pow-wow for beats. And shortly after that was when Herb Caen coined hippies.

So I left San Francisco with the moniker attached to me because I wasn't old enough to be a beatnik. So it didn't bother me, plus there was a real divide between these young people with long hair and the Skagit Valley farming community and the fishermen, and there was only a couple of people in that community who were—

If you talk to Tom Robbins, he'll tell you that, you know, there was a few people up there that were open minded enough to make friends with beats and hippies, because there were beats up there. I mean, like Graves had been up there with his beard. They thought he was a communist. And then Tom Robbins had come up. He's a little bit older than I am. And then people older than Tom Robbins that were leaning towards Bohemia, you know, writers, poets, artists, had been coming to La Conner since Graves and Anderson. Well Anderson arrived after Morris Graves. And so some of these guys up there were used to having Bohemians, and we can call Bohemians beats. And then when the hippies showed up, well that was fine too.

But there were other people that didn't want anything to do with us because they figured we were communists, which means, you know, a lot of different things to different people. But basically just anti-American revolution, you know, reactionaries. So the John Birch Society, they're all up in, like Lynden, Washington, they had a, oh man, you know, Barry Goldwater for president going on up there. (laughter) Even more reactionary than that, the farmers...

PP: Yes. Was there any violence against you guys?

CK: Just that guy that come out with the shotgun on the boardwalk one day and said, No farther. And I said, Okay, fine. And then, you know, I walked out. But I already knew that, once he left that I was in like Flynn because of the Chamberlains, you know, let me stay there. And he couldn't stop me because he wasn't paying any rent to the Chamberlains, and they could-- I mean, he wasn't going to shoot me or anything. He just wanted me to know that, you're trespassing, and who are you, what are you doing out here? And I got a beard, right?

I made friends with everybody eventually on that, in Gas Alley. Clara Lowe and all these, hardcore rednecks—hardcore rednecks. They weren't rednecks at all, but we had thought they were, opposed to us. I mean, we charmed them into accepting us because we were helping take care of their property when they're not there, and keeping it, you know, people from busting in and swiping stuff, which was

happening all the time. It's just, I mean, it's empty, people would decide you know, kids, a lot of kids do that.

TB: And you weren't very political though, right? I mean, you were very into—

CK: I was apolitical, pretty much.

TB: Yes, it sounded like it. You didn't say anything about there being a lot of politics associated with your group. It was more—

CK: No, we were, listen, we were—there's a difference too with this hippie thing, because I've been going back and checking it out very, very seriously. There was the political faction, and then there was the hedonist faction, and we were the hedonists. And by hedonism, I mean drugs and metaphysics, not politics. We wanted to be enlightened, but we didn't want to change the system. We just wanted to get, close to some sort of understanding of ourselves, not change what was going on in Washington D.C. We could care less about that. Just leave us alone basically was our attitude. Nobody was out there-- You know, Barbara and Clayton James were always getting everybody to sign signatures for petitions about nuclear power and let's get a Democrat in at the city council. Nah. We couldn't be bothered, you know, to sign their petitions. I mean, some people went in and got involved in Mount Vernon politics, you know. I can't remember the names of all these left-wing, ecofriendly, folk music, banjo playing, and Marxists bullshit that was going on (laughter) with the radicalized hippies, but we didn't, I didn't want to have anything to do with that, myself. I mean, God bless you to keep the nuclear power out, but don't ask me to volunteer anytime knocking on doors.

PP: Okay.

CK: And here's another thing, that Steve Herold's going to tell you that we— I made a poster for this Asparagus Moonlight show, and I called it a neo-Wobbly colored confab, and Steve Herold was a card carrying Wobbly. And so he just loves the idea that we were all Wobblies out there. Well, I didn't really know what a Wobbly was when I said neo-Wobbly. I knew that they were kind of reactionaries and they wanted to unionize the mills and all that. Harold's a committed damn Wobbly, to this day, and he'll tell you that we're anarchists, we're Wobblies, we're left, we're Marxists, you know. Okay, Steve, you can be that. (laughter) I wasn't really. I'm sorry I said neo-Wobbly. (laughter)

PP: I bet.

CK: He got on Maggie Wilder's film and started preaching politics, and I wanted to punch him, because I'm on the complete other end of the spectrum from where he is today. I am so far reactionary to the right that, you know, people don't even want to talk to me anymore. (laughter)

PP: I do. (laughter) So, you mentioned Maggie Wilder's film. That's not the film about—

CK: Robert.

PP: --Sund. Oh it is.

CK: I think, you know, this is another film that Steve's talking about. This is the film that's being prepared by another person.

PP: Oh yes.

CK: What's the name of that guy?

PP: I forget, but Kathleen Moles told me about it.

CK: Yes, and then Steve's on there, he's got some footage that he's prepared. And Steve is talking about Wobblys on that.

PP: Okay.

CK: But not, he doesn't do it on Maggie's film.

PP: I contacted the guy, and he's bogged with—

CK: Yes, he's a wooden boat maker, and he's a friend of mine, and I can't remember his name right now. But he's been putting together film—he's been trying to string a film together. And he got Steve on it, and Steve is going on about, you know, Steve is interjecting from this political thing, which, you know, it's okay. I don't mind it. But you know, Steve and I—he thinks it's a joke with me, all this reactionary shit I've taken up since I got involved with Romanian Interbelica history [Ed. Note: Interwar Period (1918-1939)]. (laughter) I mean, I'm lost. (laughter)

I mean, my friends out there-- I got a letter from the guy that actually took me to that John Logan poetry reading in 1965, where Robert Sund told Scott to smoke his joint outside. That guy wrote me an official: *Our friendship has ended*. Anyway. So I mean, I got all kinds-- I'm still, you know, a hippie kind of guy, but at the same time, I don't, now I think that the hippie movement was a psychological warfare operation that was spun on our generation by the CIA. And I've got some evidence to prove this, and I can help you understand how it was done if you are interested in learning, but most people aren't.

PP: Yes. Well that might be—

TB: A whole other story.

PP: --a whole other story. I mean, I'm going to cut this off, because this thing is going to run out of juice any minute. But I want to thank you very much.

CK: You're welcome.

