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CWU Living History Project

Sarah Spurgeon

Ellensburg, Washington

October 3, 1964

Interviewed by Dorothy Bestor

DB: Now could we start with what you had done before you went to New York?

SS: Yes, I taught at the University of Iowa for about four years, and then I resigned and went to New York. That's when I found out about the Depression, and came back and taught briefly just in the summer. I was just filling other people's places, and soon there weren't any places to fill. I went home to Galva, Iowa, a town of five hundred, in northwest Iowa near Sioux City. Then I received a letter from Grant Wood telling about a Public Works of Art Project. I don't think it was called Public Works of Art Project in the beginning. I think it was called it was just a part of WPA.

DB: Yes, it was.

SS: Then later it was made a separate thing. I think Grant Wood got my name from some prize lists in competitive exhibits around that area.

DB: You hadn't ever been a student of his, then?

SS: Never had. He was just a name to me. So I was delighted. In the beginning of the project you just sat in your own little town and painted whatever you wanted to paint. So that's what I did. That's where this painting of a little Lutheran church came from. It has since disappeared--been replaced by a brick church. I'm glad the painting exists now, a record of my home town there. That was one of the first things that I did.

DB: That's the first one you showed Grant Wood?

SS: Yes. And so when he wanted to, he would ask people to come in who were on faded denim pasted on them, and he was being so middle western. You know--"regional". So he was wearing blue jeans and a bandana handkerchief. If it had been in the summer time I suppose he would have had a straw hat on. Yet he wasn't a dramatic person. He was a very quiet kind of person, and of course he didn't look dramatic at all either. He was sort of chubby and colorless in appearance and a very quiet, very gentle person. His suggestions I'm sure were almost always well received because he was not aggressive in his promotion or criticism.

DB: Yes.

SS: I remember on this particular occasion when I took down my painting for criticism, he thought that it was a nice painting, and that perhaps it would be a good idea to tame the sky down just a little bit. He approached that so gently that I did tame it down I didn't take offense at his suggestion. I think that's a whole story in itself.

SS: He was very good at getting his suggestions accepted. At any rate--he told me about a project that was forming, to get all of the artists together from his region, as many of them as he could, move them to Iowa City where they could take over an old gymnasium. In fact, it was a swimming pool section that we used.

(Took the water out first, of course) He set up big--great big canvasses. Their supports had to be constructed out of 2 by 4's. He had certain recipe for priming these canvasses, and that's where he painted the murals that at present are in the library at Ames, Iowa.

DB: Yes, I've seen those.

SS: He used me for a model for some of the figures.

DB: Oh, really What ones?

SS: I remember one, they were all farm scenes, that type of thing--it was going to a cow college you see--and . . . oh we had a lot of trouble with the haw mow. Hay was supposed to hang down, and hay is terribly hard to paint, you know, (are you going to do it one at a time or are you going to do it in a broad way?) You see all those problems that he was dealing with. He must have had twenty or thirty young artists there all buzzing around but he gave me a separate project to do, a mural for the University's demonstration school. The entrance of the demonstration school. I did a lousy design job and so on, but he just let me go ahead and showed me how to set it up. He gave me a place to work in the old hospital building. Most of the people on the project were men. In fact I don't recall another woman besides myself being there in Iowa City. That turned out to be pretty social. I had a reproduction of that Ames mural somewhere. I'll tell you where it was from. (I don't think I have it any more) but I'll tell you where it was from. . . Fortune Magazine. (What year?)

DB: That was of Grant Wood's and also of your . . .?

SS: Well, I was just there as a model on that painting, you know, just a little fast check-up with the usual calico print. You know how he had--like in that in the Gothic . .

DB: "American Gothic."

SS: "American Gothic"--the little tiny calico print. I happened to have a tie on long apron made out of that kind of stuff. Actually of course nobody was wearing that kind of print then. We all fell into the pioneer mode under Grant's quiet influence. All the boys put on jeans and I had an apron made out of old-fashioned dark blue calico. I suppose that attracted his attention. I kind of forget the details of the composition.

DB: I'll look it up.

SS: This mural business, of course, was going great guns at that time. Everybody was very critical about the way it was done; a good deal of the criticism was justified, for a lot of it was lousy art. For instance, the mural that I did, a very pedestrian kind of map of Iowa City. Well, considering what that cost the government, it's a real crummy, uninteresting mural. I learned a good deal doing it. I was never able to finish it. I was working on it and was back teaching at the University after the project had closed, and I was trying to finish it for the University on my own time. I then had some family problems and quit my teaching, turned the mural over to a student to finish. I really never have seen it finished. But I'd just as soon not, because my memory of it is that it's very dull. But since then…

DB: Excuse me one moment. Where is the mural now? At the University at Iowa City?

SS: Yes. At the entrance to the college demonstration school. I understand they're going to have a new school now so it's hard to tell . . . If I were the principal of that school I'd have somebody paint it all white and paint a new mural on it. That's what I'd do if they haven't already done it .

SS Let's see--I should probably insert here, instead of just saying that I learned a lot personally, I might elaborate on the idea of what I learned on PWAP a little bit.

DB: Fine.

SS: The first thing I learned was to build a staging, a scaffolding in order to stretch a very large canvas. The canvas I worked on must have been eight or ten feet high, and probably twenty or twenty-five feet long. I learned about carpentry work on that. Then …

DB: You hadn't had any experience with that before?

SS: No. It had all been easel painting, and my background hadn't involved even the study of what my paints were made of. I learned first this scaffolding business and the carpentry work that is involved in preparing for the thing, then stretching the canvas, then priming, which was very elaborate. I've lost Grant's recipe for priming and I wish I hadn't, because it was brilliantly white. I've never found anything to equal it. It was composed of zinc white in a powder form. Then it involved ammonia, and it was USP ammonia; it wasn't household ammonia, it was the pure quill. This was all put together hot.

DB: What was the purpose of the ammonia?

SS: I have the feeling that it bleached things and that it had something to do with the brilliance of the white. It was a real gasser. I was doing this in one wing of an old hospital, (that was where I was working) and the room wasn't too large. It was a sun porch. I had all the windows up that I could put up and it was summer time, but even so the smell was extremely strong. You painted this stuff on the canvas and held your nose and ran out for air. When it dried it was just beautiful. It was a shame to touch it. I remember taking a tube of Favor Ruhi, zinc white, which is the whitest white that you can buy (a new tube), and putting a little bit of it on this canvas and it looked blue--the F.R. white looked pale blue. That's just how white that prime coat was! So, that was one thing I learned--the mechanics of preparing a canvas. And that stayed with me. I have my students do that now. I don't have them buy a ready-prepared canvas. I have them build their own stretchers and put the canvas on, and then prime it. I feel that that PWAP experience was a very valuable introduction to the technology of painting. It meant a lot to my teaching, to my students. They get a lot out of that actual physical contact with the dimension and the size. Long before they paint on it; and I find that's one of the best routes into composition. It's a more natural route into composition than the design route.

DB: Yes, it would be.

SS: So I owe that to the project. I don't think I would have occupied myself that way at all. Then of course that made me interested in pigments. When I discovered that white looked blue on top of this prime coat of Wood's, I got to wondering about pigments. I connected with Max book, and I think it's still the best book for artists' materials and their properties, whether they're poisonous and whether they work with other pigments, and so on. That is a continuing, useful area of knowledge for both mc and my students, you see. And it all grew out of that doggone crummy mural. The mural was no good in my opinion, as a work of art. As a map it's all right, probably, but as a work of art it's I'm sure a real dud. Nevertheless, even though the government was probably robbed when they paid wages for this thing, I'm sure they've got their money back through the actual knowledge that I've been able to give my students. And, through the encouragement I have been able to give them to search for themselves in this area of paints and paint chemistry which is getting to be more and more important now. Now that synthetics coming to the fore it behooves every artist, I think, to try to get informed

on what's happening in paints. By the way, there's a new book on that. I just saw it reviewed in Art in America. (I think that's where I saw the review.) I'll look for it before you leave. I think synthetics are very tricky. They're also lethal; it's turning out a lot of them are quite poisonous.

DB: Oh, I didn't know that.

SS: I think we'd better look out a little bit on this thing.

DB: Some of the colors are certainly rather garish.

SS: Yes, they're raw. They also bog down. I noticed that about four years ago we were using Thalo purples and Thalo blues. I noticed those paintings with purple that were so brilliant at that time are now brownish.

DB: Oh, really?

SS: That's a very short length of time for a color to change, and they've not been any place to have that happen, not been any place in particular, not in the bright sun or anything like that.

DB: And the other colors in the picture haven't turned brownish? . .

SS: Well, the one I'm thinking of in particular was an all purple painting. It was a study of a surface. It's quite different. But Stan, the fellow that painted this picture, said that he found the same thing and he had been using them at this time. He has more or less cooled off on them because he said in his paintings the same thing had happened, that they had changed in a relatively short period of time. Also there was an article last year in Structure (I think that's where it was) on a certain synthetic, quite a horrifying story about a professional artist-I think he was a sculptor--and he used this stuff, painted his sculpture, an abstract kind of thing, over a period of time, he had a great big room, a loft, so he felt he had plenty of air and so on. He developed a very bad kidney condition. It took him about two years to get over it. Didn't know what was the matter. It turned out it was from breathing the fumes of whatever this paint was. You really should have a fan going if you're going to use synthetic paints.

DB: I thought it had all been tested before it was put on the market.

SS: All I can make out of it is that the paint manufacturers are in business to sell paint. Even good old rubber-base paint isn't good for you if hang right over it. You know, they're always the ads full of this business about how you paint your living room and the guests are coming in fifteen minutes and there's no odor, and so on. I just think that a person still needs to be skeptical about things that are sold, and just wait and maybe let somebody else pioneer on it. If it's a moneymaking proposition, you might as well figure that they are not there to take care of you, they are there to sell paint.

DB: To get back for a moment to this mural that you don't think very well of-the map--did someone tell you to do a map or could you . .

SS: No.

DB . . . have done anything you wanted?

SS: I was left entirely alone, and I consulted the art director in the demonstration school, Edna Patzig, and she thought that a map would be a nice thing to have, so I went ahead with it. a very accurate contour kind of thing, with streets exactly as they are, and so on. The whole works could have been done by photography--a much more practical way of doing it. But it did, as I say, serve some kind of purpose, I was not directed in any way as to choice of subject matter or method of execution. Grant Wood and the University people in charge were very open. I'm sure if I'd wanted to do practically anything that I could have. There was no direction. Now it would be a different story on something like the tunes murals because naturally that was one person's design and a design has to be unified. It was Grant Wood's design. He did the drawings for it. Then he had a crew of artists. He had them paint it. He would paint here and there too or change things or develop things. But basically it was a kind of school type of situation. I'm quite sure that those fellows would not be allowed to change this and change that just at will, and that their style had to correspond to Grant Wood's style, or you'd have a real hash over the thing. That was governed by the

situation. I don't think that Grant was the kind of person who was in any way dictatorial in his approach, either to the easel paintings or to the murals.

DB: Do you remember some of the people who were working on the Grant Wood mural?

SS: I can remember two names, out of that mob. John Bloom. He was from one of the river towns, Davenport or Muscatine, or one of those Mississippi River towns, and Elwyn Cues. He was from Des Moines. When he left there I followed him a little bit more definitely and I knew what happened to him. He went to New York City and joined a professional mural firm. The firm did photographic murals. They did things in offices and public places. They were largely photographic, though not all of them were. He sent me some photographs of his work and of some things that the firm that he was associate with was doing. Some of them were painted murals. I remember that one of them was a map that seemed to be for a steamship company, and then they did night-club work too. Decorated certain types of things. But it was a more uptown type thing. It wasn't strictly a night club kind of work.

DB: Did you get any reaction to your mural? Did the public who saw it like it or criticize it or just ignore it?

SS: Never heard a word, never heard a word about it. It's probably the kind of thing that you wouldn't. It's practically like an abstraction really. The city blocks, and then the curved lines--because Iowa City is built on hills--and then the river going through, and the curved lines indicating the contours of the hills. It's really a wallpaper job, and you could hardly have ideas about a thing like that you know, pro or con.

DB: How long did you work on it?

SS: I worked all one winter and into the spring on it, and it wasn't done then.

DB: And that was when you were teaching as well?

SS: Then later I taught returned to the University as acting head of the department that's when they got their new building. I went ahead and did a little more on it at that time. Of course you can't do much when you're holding down another job, but I did as much as I could and then I recommended a student to finish that, and as I say I never have seen it since then. I never have been back to Iowa City.

DB: Incidentally, how large was it?

SS: Two walls were--I think it was twenty-two feet by whatever the height was. There was something down below, and then the height . . . As I remember the stuff on the scaffolding, it would be about 6 or 8 feet high. So two walls were that way with the door Out of one side, and then two short walls this other direction at that same height. I don't know ... it would be about twelve feet or so. But it would be a total of probably fifty feet, but chopped up to go around 4 walls and with things cut out for doors or windows at the sides of the doors and stuff like that. It wasn't a very big deal.

DB: And after you turned it over to someone else, you were too busy from then on with teaching and other things to do any more PWAP work at all?

SS: I never did any more. My home is in the northwest part of Iowa, and, of course, Iowa City is down towards central east. Very difficult transportation.

SS: At that time my mother had been an invalid for years, and my father all at once had a heart attack--scared the wits out of us. I heard about a job at Buena Vista College, which was only eighteen miles from home. I went over there and nailed the job. It was a very demanding job but exactly what I needed at the

time. It was a Presbyterian school. They didn't have any money, so I did everything including the building of an art room in an undeveloped basement. I learned a lot there. I never had the opportunity to go back.

(Side two)

DB: The job you got at Buena Vista. . . now you didn't do anymore PWAP?

SS: That's right, I never went back to Iowa City. I haven't been back there, oh, I suppose, for twenty or twenty-five years. What has happened, whether it's been useful, or liked, or disliked, or painted over, or what, I have no idea.

DB: It would be interesting to find out. I might write to find out whether it's still there. You don't have any reproductions of that do you?

SS: No. No. The canvas of the mural was applied directly to the wall with lead, and it was never photographed before it was put up so far as I know. As I left it, it was still on the scaffold, you see, and the boy painted on it. I wrote the directions for putting it on the wall, and that's the last I heard of it.

DB: Even when it was finished?

SS: I think it would be almost impossible to photograph in place because the area couldn't be much bigger than the dining area in this room. You'd get a very distorted kind of thing even with a wide-angle lens, if you'd try to photograph it in place. Though it might be possible to stand on a step-ladder and use fast film, I'm sure you could get a black and white of it. I'm not so sure about color.

DB: Did you come in contact with any of the WPA classes later on, or community centers or art centers?

SS: I made a visit to Sioux City, Iowa, once, and that seemed like a very fine thing to me. They had an art center there. It was in the basement downtown, a very good location for drop-in kind of trade, and it was well designed on the interior. Whoever had been responsible for setting that thing up had done a nice job of it.

DB: Was it well patronized?

SS: It seemed to be at the time I was there. I was there just once.

DB: When would that have been? In the early thirties or . .

SS: No it would have been . . . it must have been after 1934. It would probably be more like about 1936, would be my guess, on it. I also visited when I came west here, I also visited, what was his name, Inverarity (?)

DB: Yes. He was the director of the Washington project.

SS: Yes. Well I visited his workshop and school where they did all, those wonderful craft things.

DB: Oh. Was that the one he had in Seattle?

SS: In Seattle. I found that extremely interesting and at a very. . . (I considered it) a very high level of design. I wouldn't know about the craftsmanship, but certainly his direction of the design of hooked rugs and silk screened textiles and things like that, I thought was very superior. Actually, you see, it's very hard to look back now that it's been thirty years. That's a substantial amount of time.

DB: Yes, it is.

SS: And art has moved in so many different directions.

DB: Very definitely.

SS: … that personally I think it's awfully easy to be critical of what was done at that time--say l935--diversely critical. Particularly in painting. Mural painting especially. Because those things stay up there on the walls in post offices and so on. Those were stirring times, and some of those things were done in an extravagant way because of the times.

DB: Yes.

SS: Well, they wouldn't be done that way today partly because ideas of art have changed and partly because ideas about the world have changed. But if you'd have been assigned to a mural at that time, what did you have back in American art history to look at? You had the pioneers going across the plains with somebody in her nightgown floating around up in the sky or pointing the way, the spirit of the West, to a covered-wagon lady. You see, we had no tradition except a kind of leftover watered- down classic tradition of mural painting, a few things around in capitol buildings and that's all. That was really all.

DB: Yes, it is.

SS: There was nothing in any business building at that time. Business wasn't interested in having murals, and so I think that the painters really did remarkably well.

DB: Yes, I imagine they did.

SS: For instance, under Grant Wood's direction, everything in the mid West area was all hot for regionalism. You were supposed to tie yourself in and relate yourself somehow to the area in which you lived. Well, that's a real quaint old-fashioned idea now.

DB: Yes, it certainly is.

SS: Nobody would be caught dead doing anything like that flow. So the things that were done then are more or less under fire from the stand point of art now. But, maybe we should put ourselves back to that time and think of . . . how if we wanted to paint a mural and we had never seen a mural, what would we do? We'd get a book and try to find out what some of the murals were like that had been done, and what would we find. I mean in our American tradition? Or, for that matter, even in European tradition.

DB: Of course, there was the Mexican, the twentieth-century Mexican tradition that influenced some of the muralists, some of the WAP muralists

SS: Yes . . . Yes . . . And for the good, largely, I think. But the fact that that kind of thing was selected, either the Mexican or the regionalism it was all subject matter.

DB: Yes.

SS: I think that the fact was that there were very few things painted of the kind of wishy-washy.

DB: The allegorical.

SS: I think that's to the credit of the project.

DB: Yes, that's certainly a step forward.

SS: Seems so to me. I think it showed pretty good direction from the top.

DB: Yes. Was Thomas Hart Benton an influence when you were painting murals, in your region?

SS: He was to me . . . He wasn't. . . he wasn't invited to Iowa City as far as I know. At least he never came. But, of course, he was painting, and some of us had seen his things, for instance at the Chicago fair. He had some great big Indians and some things like that in that very rococo style of his. It was most impressive. They were in tempera-- a medium new to most of us. And once again there you have the influence of new materials that hadn't been used before. I, speaking of people being invited in, I remember Grant invited, oh the man who did the murals down in North Carolina University, in the library down there. There's a book -- Chariot -- there's a book of his murals. Well now Grant had Chariot there. Chariot of course does his work in the Mexican tradition, so that there was a little exchange and growth in ideas too. He spent a day with us there, and we all talked to him, and he talked to us about our work, and had ideas and expressed them. My experience there at Iowa City under Grant Wood was that it was a growth kind of thing, and very permissive, really, considering that it was all governmental

DB: Yes. I'm interested to hear that you think of it as having been permissive, because the criticisms that are made usually are in the other direction.

SS: Well, I'm sure you could run into that, and that it would depend entirely on your director. And probably on the temperament and background of the artists who were on the project, and the work that they were doing. Now I can well imagine that with crafts it might have been different. For instance, Mr. Inverarity, well, he must have run across a lot of people who did things technically very well, but whose design ideas were horrible.

DB: Yes, some of that comes up in the correspondence of his that I find in the U. of Washington library.

SS: I'm sure you'll find that in the craft area particularly. Lots of people hook good rugs. But they hook Old Dog Tray with a basket of flowers in his mouth--you know, a Montgomery Ward, a copy of a Montgomery Ward runner--and they'd think that was just great. Well, now, he no doubt had to insist on certain standards, probably designed the things himself, or maybe had a good designer who was on PWA and had him design for these people. Then probably these rug hookers would resent that, because they would rather do roses than to do the totem figures, that were done for Timberline Lodge. Then they would always carry the feeling with them that they were unappreciated. Thirty years later, I imagine, if you would interview somebody, why they'd say, "Well I had a lot of ideas and they weren't accepted, my ideas weren't good enough." Well, the plain truth is probably nine times out of ten they weren't.

DB: True. A couple of things I forgot to ask you. Where had you gone to art school, or what had your art training been before you started teaching?

SS: I went to, I took my degree at the University of Iowa and .

DB: Whom did you study under, there?

SS: I studied under Catherine McCartney in portrait, and Alma Held in still- life. It was quite an academic thing. A four-year course and you studied just one thing all year long each of the four years. So the first year was spent in charcoal drawing. Ellen Thornberg. And the second year in still-life was Alma Held, and the third year in design .as Irma Bratton and the fourth year in portrait with McCartney. They did have some sculpture at that time, but I didn't take it for some reason or another. Then I worked on my Master's there. I had a Carnegie for two summers back at Harvard, but that was all history of art. It certainly opened my eyes though, and its very fruity around that area with the museums and the private collections and so

on, and as Carnegie students we had access to a lot of nice privately owned things. I studied with Paul Sachs, by the way. I don't think anybody has ever had a better course in the history of French painting. Then after I got my degree, I continued to teach at the University, and then quit there and went to New York and studied at Grand Central School of Art. I don't think it exists anymore, although the galleries still exist. I don't think the school does. I studied with Oberteuffer there. George Oberteuffer.

DB: Possibly not. One hears about it but it may not still be a school. And you studied at the Art Students' League, didn't you?

SS: No, their classes, practically all of them were closed when I went back there. I was ill in Iowa and got to New York late in the fall. I had to find a school in a hurry after I got to New York because I was determined to stay. I rounded up this Grand Central thing.

DB: Was it good?

SS: I lucked out there. I just took George Oberteuffer's course, and no one has ever heard of him. He's a fellow that always takes third or fourth in the national exhibits. He has an excellent teacher, very permissive. Everybody painted in a different way under him and that's pretty indicative of good teaching. Fine person. I studied figure with Bridgeman at this time. I would say that that really covers the thing pretty much. Little dabs here and there but they are not . . . oh a little with Hawthorn but it was largely just a kind of demonstration thing. It was very influential on the kind of work I've done in portraits, however.

DB: When was it you left Iowa and came out here to Washington?

SS: It was January the first, 1939, in the middle of the year. Came out for a temporary stay here, and I've been here ever since. Couldn't resist it.

DB: And you've been connected with Central Washington State College ever since then?

SS: Well, except for the war years. I resigned during the war years. I couldn't get a leave and I had to save the country, so I quit and worked at Boeing as an artist during the war

DB: In industrial design, or what?

SS: In production illustration. And then the college softened up while I was over there, and wrote that if I applied for a leave of absence that it could be granted, so I promptly did, because I wasn't mad here, I just felt real patriotic or something, I guess. I couldn't get into the Army, failed my interviews. So I guess that was kind of lucky too. I fought the battle of Boeing during the war and then came back to Ellensburg very promptly.

DB: For four years?

SS: No, I didn't go over until forty-one, I guess it was. And I came back a year early. Or six months early because, of course, ours was a designer group and we knew darn well the war was going to end. We were doing nothing, just change orders, any high school kid could do that. I was getting awfully bored. I tried to get a job in Alaska, and while I did that President McConnell wrote to me and asked me if I could possibly come back that September, so t fired a letter right back and said that I certainly could. So I was here when the war ended--when they dropped the bomb.

DB: Have you come across any other people around here who were connected in various states, whether Washington or elsewhere, with any of the Federal Art Projects? As you say, people don't talk about it very much, but it might have come up.

SS: Well, of course I suppose you've contacted people like Callahan in Seattle and so on. I wonder about Ernest Norling?

DB: He's on my list. I'm going to get in touch with him soon.

SS: He talks more than I do. He's funnier.

DB: Do you know him?

SS: Yes. He's from here originally.

DB: Oh, is he? I didn't know that.

SS: Yes. It's his home town. Incidentally, he has a mural too, that's down here in the National Bank of Washington, and I imagine that if he had his finger in any murals during the good old PWA days, that probably influenced him to want to do a mural down here in the bank.

DB: Is it here in the bank at Ellensburg?

SS: Yes. It's historic and illustrative. His work is all of an illustrative nature. The Bank mural is early Ellensburg, which he remembers very well you see. He's old enough to have an actual memory of certain Indians, and certain buildings and then, of course, his relative, Mr. Hogue was head of the art department here for a long time, interested in photography, and had a wonderful collection of photographs of the early characters, and so the mural is quite authentic about what it has in it. Actually authentic for Ellensburg, not just vaguely the West. People, older people, recognize those old Indians that are in there. They're portraits actually.

DB: By the way, do you have any general impressions about the project? You've given me an awful lot of material. Is there anything else you'd like to get on the record?

SS: Well, something that would be, I think, a personal and kind of emotional reaction that might be of interest here.

DB: Yes, it would.

SS: A lot of PWA things were for people who were in quite desperate need. As it happened I did have a home to return to when I didn't have a job. I could have stayed there indefinitely, but there was a kind of feeling of failure. I'd go around and try to get jobs with no success. Here I was with four years--over four years--of experience at the University of Iowa and a year of public school experience. I tried every place that I ever heard that there was a teaching job you see. I would immediately pounce on it and try for that job, and be turned down, and turned down, and turned down. Well, that kind of experience does something to a young person.

DB: Yes, it does.

SS: I was young and inexperienced. I'd never asked for jobs before. I'd just been given them, the high school job and then I'd been invited to return to the University, so I'd never had that experience of asking for a job. I was a complete baby about that kind of thing. Well, it seemed to me as though in this PWA thing though the salary was small. It was my own, and I did a full day's work painting, and it was a fascinating, interesting kind of thing to do, interesting people to work with. Stimulating people, and most of them young. And with a person who was very well known to get acquainted with as a director, so that you had respect for him. The whole thing I found very stimulating, and it buoyed up my courage in some way. So that then, when I went to Storm Lake, Iowa, to Buena Vista College, I just wanted to nail that job, it was

ideal for me, I'm sure that when I was able to ask for that job with more conviction, more authority than I had had with all the others. Because I was asking from a job, and not from a no-job position.

DB: Yes, it makes a great deal of difference.

SS: Yes, and it made an internal difference in me that expressed itself so that I was able to get off the public payroll and onto a private payroll, and I feel that the fact that the project was there really did something for me. More than just the other things . . . that it had been a continuing . . .

DB: Yes, I imagine it accomplished that for a log of people.

SS: I wouldn't be surprised.

DB: Well, thank you very much indeed.