

**Craft Education in the United Kingdom
and the United States:
A cross-cultural examination of ideals,
approaches and solutions**

3 Volumes
Volume II of III

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Appendix I: Concise Overview of the UK and US Educational Systems

An understanding of the evolution of heritage craft training since the Second World War that took place in in UK and the US should include a critical examination of the educational systems which currently exist in these societies. The general composition of the structures must be analysed to understand the comparative offerings that exist between the two systems. The structure of these systems is critical to the approaches that they take to education, the barriers in which they experience, and the benchmarks they must achieve to continue to function. The experiences of educators in both systems was analysed in Chapter 5 of this study, and proposals for the future of heritage craft training were advanced in Chapter 6.

The education of a pupil in the UK begins in primary school. A student will remain in primary school from age five to age eleven, when they will transition into secondary school. Secondary schools were formally called Secondary Modern, and according to Gerard Lynch were: “primarily feeders to the trades” (Lynch, 2009: p.147), with a majority of the University placement coming from public schools. At the age of sixteen, the compulsory education of a pupil is complete, and the student must sit for exit exams known as General Certificate of Secondary Education or GCSE (gov.uk, 2015). GCSE’s can be taken to become a school completer or progress to Advanced or A levels. GCSE exams are replacements for O-levels or Ordinary levels. O-levels were taken to advance to technical or further education (FE) colleges. Students who continue to complete their A-levels typically pursue degrees at Universities, or Higher Education (HE) schools (gov.uk, 2015).

The need for certifications in craft education beyond compulsory education was initiated with the development of specific craft curricula by The City and Guilds of London Institute for the Advancement of Technical Education (CGLI), which was founded in 1876 (Lynch, 2011). The framework of this system arranged for a basic craft certificate to be awarded after three years of study, and an Honours or Advanced Craft Certificate being awarded after an additional two. (Lynch, 2011).

The CGLI provided a successful programme, and a series of Technical Colleges were established to provide regional locations in which to earn these certificates. In 1886, the “On Manual Training” Report of the 56th Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science declared the educational objective of these schools was to familiarise students with materials, hand eye coordination, and technical understanding to gain the ability to effectively practice their craft (Lynch, 2009).

Today, the Technical Colleges have transformed into Colleges of Further Education, offering a variety of awards such as National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ), National Diplomas (ND), City

and Guilds Certificates and Foundational Degrees. It is important to define the differences between the awards offered to comprehend the structure of training programmes that are studied in Chapter 5.

Foundation Degrees: Foundation Degrees are programmes offerings that are designed to prepare students to transfer into a university setting.

National Diplomas: National Diplomas (ND) are designed for students attending programmes on a full-time basis, without the completion of an apprenticeship requirement. According to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), a National Degree may be equivalent to an NVQ 3 or NVQ 6, depending on the subject matter (direct.gov, 2012).

City and Guilds: The City and Guilds Craft certificates, which have been expanded to a global market, are still offered in many FE Colleges. City and Guilds certifications depend on an apprenticeship component studied under a block release system. According to the NQF, City and Guilds certifications are awarded in Levels 1 through 3 and are equivalent to NVQ Levels 1 through 3, with Level 3 being recognised as an Advanced Craft Certificate (direct.gov, 2012).

National Vocational Qualification (NVQ): The NVQ system was designed in the 1980's as a modern replacement for the City and Guilds system. National Vocational Qualifications are based on "competency-based learning" (Day, 1996 p.14) which combine classroom-based education with an apprenticeship programme. Students must complete all sections of the curriculum to earn their NVQ levels. External Assessors, typically those practicing in the field visit the students on their apprenticeship placements to confirm they can perform the tasks required for NVQ completion. This assessment will be performed through interviews and demonstrations of skills competency. NVQ levels can be awarded up to Level 8, which the NQF correlates to a doctoral degree. Most craft certification are awarded through Level 1 and Level 3 certification, with many heritage craft certificates being awarded at Level 3. Level 1 competency goals have been defined as;

"...performance of work activities which are the main routine and predictable or provide a broad foundation, primarily as a basis for "progression"
(Day, 1996: p.14)

Level 2 competency is defined as

"... competence in a broader and more demanding range of work activities involving a greater individual responsibilities and autonomy than at Level 1"
(Day, 1996: p.15)

Level 3 competency outcomes are defined as:

"...Competence in skilled areas that involved performance of a broad range of work activities, including many that are complex and non-routine. In some

areas, supervisory competence may be required at this level.”
(Day, 1996: p.15).

An important aspect of this training system is the incorporation of a block release system of education. In the block release, the student, employed in a company, is released from their work duties to attend College for a set period every term. When beginning their study, the block release times are more significant, decreasing in time as education progresses. Companies that employ apprentices enrolled in College programmes receive governmental compensation for participating in the system.

Higher Education (HE) programmes are identified as those which award degrees at a Bachelor’s Degree or higher (direct.gov, 2012). Awards include Bachelors, Post Graduate Diploma (PGDip), Master’s and Doctoral programmes. These awards are conferred by Universities rather than Colleges, denoting a distinction between the two systems. With a few exceptions, such as the University of York’s Conservation of Stained Glass Master’s programmes and the Weald and Downland Open Air Museums Masters in Building Conservation and Timber Building Conservation, a majority of HE conservation programme do not focus on heritage craft skills. This separation between the two systems has proven to cause friction in the industry, noted in section 3.4 of this thesis.

The educational system in the US varies from state to state. School transitions, funding streams, college structures and requirements are in the realm of state governments to define. All schools are nationally accredited through regional accrediting bodies to verify the competency of the instruction offered. Non-accreditation status for an institution signifies an inability to access Federal educational funding and grants, and an incapability of their students to obtain loans and grants for their education from the Federal educational loan system, making study often prohibitively expensive.

Within the US, students begin their educational career at age five in elementary school. Dependent on the state, the student will transition either into a middle school at age eleven or a junior high at age twelve. The final transition during the learner’s compulsory education is into high school at either age fourteen or fifteen. Regardless of state, education is compulsory until age eighteen, or open completion of the 12th grade. Students can withdraw at age sixteen, with parental consent, and obtain a General Education Development, or GED certificate. A GED is considered equivalent to a high school diploma for many college placement requirements.

Graduates from high school have several options to continue their education. Unlike in the UK, the terms college and university are often used interchangeably in the US. The term College can denote a two-year community or technical college or four-year institutions which offers

bachelors and master's degrees, while universities are often referred to as four-year institutions. Schools can also be identified as public or private institutions. Public schools are those which are supported by the state and are under their direct control, being subsidised by the state government. Private colleges are those which do not receive subsidies from the state for their operation and are often identified with religious institutions or a specialised focus. Public and private schools operating at all levels of education in the US need to meet accreditation standards to have access to Federal funding. The American College of the Building Arts, a school in Charleston, South Carolina, which specialises in traditional building arts, is an example of an institution which is classified as a private school in the US system.

Community and Technical College systems depend on the state in which they are located. Technical Colleges tend to focus on technical skills, while community college often offer pre-professional degrees and university preparation programmes. Students have the option of going full or part time to school, and apprenticeship commonly referred to as internships are sometimes required for graduation. Since most states only operate one system, both systems often offer both technical and pre-professional programmes, but the focuses of the individual schools may vary dependent upon the classification in which they operate under. Both systems can offer certificates, diplomas and associate degrees within their own course offerings. The differences between the three awards is as follows:

Certificate: A certificate programme typically can be completed in one or two terms in college. They typically do not require general education classes. These certificates may be taken independently or as an embedded certificate as a component for a longer diploma or degree programme.

Diploma: A diploma is typically a one-year programme which incorporates some general education classes in conjunction with specific career training.

Associate degree: Associate degrees can be offered as either Associate in Arts (A.A.), Associate of Science (A.S.) or Associate of Applied Sciences (A.A.S.). The awarding of a degree is dependent on the award type the institution is accredited to confer. Associate degree programmes incorporate career training and general education classes in their required curriculum.

Technical and Community College systems varying considerably between individual states, but must meet Federal requirements to operate, reflecting the duality of state and Federal government operations. Federal funds are provided to the states to operate their educational systems, but the composition and management of those systems is left to the control of the state governments. Because of this fragmented structure, there is no organised national qualification framework for many programmes in the US. Individual programmes often operate under

standards set by professional bodies for their field but are still subject to the operation procedures of their systems. This disjointed approach is not a new phenomenon within this division of education. As Jencks and Riesman noted in their 1968 publication *The Academic Revolution*, these colleges were often a haphazard amalgamation of courses, serving primarily part time and night students located in random buildings. Even their names were arbitrary, with some being titles Junior Colleges or City Colleges. These colleges, according to Jencks and Reisman had limited ability to set their own paths, having to respond to actual or perceived demands. Because of this "... whatever their missionary impulses, instructors must toe the line drawn by someone else" (Jencks and Riesman, 1968: p.481).

This lack of national focus within this system has proven to cause issues in the training of heritage craft workers, which was studied in section 3.4 of this thesis.

The university system in the US is comparable to its UK counterparts. They offer bachelors, masters and doctoral programmes. There are, however, two differences between the systems. The first is the introduction to the academic "minor" in the US at the Bachelor's level. An academic minor is a set number of classes which focuses on an area independent from the student's major course of study. Minor award requirements vary between academic institutions. The second is the replacement of the postgraduate diploma with the graduate certificate. The PGDip and certificate compositions both are dependent on the individual institutional requirements but can be identified as comparable in award level.

When examining the educational systems with the UK and US, it is found that there sweeping differences pertaining to how students are educated, particularly at younger ages. The most evident difference in the systems is the age in which compulsory schooling ends. In the UK, students can leave school with a GCSE at age 16 and join the workforce through their apprenticeship scheme or enter college to obtain an assortment of degrees, allowing them more time to study their craft through the block release system. In the US, students are required to remain in compulsory education until the age of 18, limiting the time available to them to study their chosen field. Due to this, students in the US do not participate in a block release system, often opting to enroll as a full-time student. This full-time status leaves them less time to practice in the field during their studies. While the full-time student approach may prove successful for students in the bachelor's or graduate level, in the vocational trades this may prove detrimental to these students, leaving college with limited practical experience in their field. Practitioners in the field have their own opinions of the NVQ system, which was studied in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

The fragmented nature of the US system makes the study of the programmes across state borders difficult, therefore an analysis of comparative offerings between US offerings and UK awards is a problematic activity. Award offerings do not comparably align until the awarding of a bachelor's degree. For this study the following comparison, referenced in Figure I:1 will be used.

UK Award/Academic Equivalent	US Award
NVQ Level 1/GCSE Grades D-G	Certificate
NVQ Level 2/ GCSE Grades A* - C	Diploma
NVQ Level 3/A Level	Associate Degree
NVQ Level 4/Undergraduate	Undergraduate Minor
NVQ Level 5/Bachelor's Degree	Bachelor's Degree
NVQ Level 6/Graduate Degree-MA or MSC	Graduate Certificate
NVQ Level 7/Postgraduate Diploma	Graduate Degree-MA or MS
NVQ 8/Doctoral Degree	Doctoral Degree

Figure I.1: Comparison of Higher Education Award Levels in UK and US

This comparison of awards is not exact, given the variances in the state systems and the differences in educational structure between the two societies. These differences, while often problematic in determining an equivalent counterpart with the opposing system, allows for a deeper study into potential approaches for the future of craft education that can be applied between societies. As both societies continue to advocate increased educational credentials for graduates, this in-depth study will be vital in determining how heritage craft education can succeed within the current educational climate. Those educational climates, and the role of heritage craft education has been drastically altered since the end of the Second World War.

Appendix II: Interview Participant Information Leaflet

Craft Education in the United States and Great Britain: A cross-cultural examination of ideals, approaches and solutions

Stephen Hartley

Conservation Studies

University of York

seh548@york.ac.uk



What is the purpose of this research?

This research is a study of the past and present conditions of heritage building craft training. This study will be based on historical evidence, case studies of training providers within the United States and The United Kingdom, and field interviews with generations of practitioners and training providers. It is anticipated that from analyses of this data, that proposals for the future approaches for heritage craft delivery may be set forth.

The basis of this research is to address the increasing concern over the future of heritage craft practitioners within both countries. As those that have been traditionally trained in heritage building crafts increase in age, there are not enough qualified younger crafts persons to replace them. Without those trained in the traditional crafts, the physical fabric of heritage sites will fall under increased risk. Both countries have taken varying methods to address these concerns. It is anticipated that through this research that both societies can gain knowledge of their counterpart's approaches and that future approaches can be obtained which would be mutually beneficial for both societies.

This research is being carried out by Stephen Hartley, a PhD student within the Conservation Studies programme at the University of York. Any questions pertaining to this research can be directed to Mr. Hartley at seh548@student.ac.uk.

What is your potential role within this study?

You have been identified as a potential interview subject due to your role as either a practitioner or trainer within the heritage craft building sector. It is desired that you share your experiences and opinions on the current conditions and future of the field. Your insight into the issues facing craft practitioners will assist the researcher in formulating proposals for future approaches in heritage craft training.

You will be asked to be interviewed by the researcher, answering a set series of questions regarding your practice. This interview session will be recorded via audio and occasionally video to assist the researcher in transcription. You will be informed when audio and video recording will begin and end during the interview.

This research will ask you to participate in an interview that may last several hours, depending on the information you wish to contribute. You will have the option to complete the interview in one sitting or over multiple sessions. You may also elect to withdraw from the research at any time.

Due to financial constraints, the researcher cannot offer any payment for the time you have dedicated to the interviews. The researcher will make every effort to travel to you to conduct the interviews. If this is not possible, interviews will be carried out via video conferencing.

Your participation within this study will give the research increased insight into issues facing the heritage craft training realms while simultaneously providing an historical background into the changes which have occurred to the field during your working career. This information will directly contribute to the proposals set forth at the conclusion of this study for the maintenance and growth of heritage building craft training.

With this benefit in mind that it is important to note that since the field of heritage craft is so limited, particularly in the training sector, that it will be impossible to guarantee anonymity of your interview responses. During the dissemination of this data, your name and role within the sector will be identified. If you have concerns about this aspect of the research, please communicate these concerns to the researcher.

The interview questions and format within this study have been subject to University of York's Archaeology Department ethical review process under the guidance of the Chair of the Ethical Committee Dr. Sara Perry (sara.perry@york.ac.uk). The approval of this format has followed the guidelines of the Department as well as the Humanities Research Centre's ethical guidelines. This approval was obtained on 8 September 2014.

What will happen with the information you provide?

The information you provide the researcher will be kept for ten years to comply with University guidelines. Transcripts of your interview session will also be included in the appendices of the final report. Your interview transcript may be used by future researchers to conduct further studies within the field. No personal data, as defined by the Data Protection Act of 1998, will be shared within the research. You may also request transcripts of your interviews at any time by contacting the researcher.

Should you choose to withdraw from the research, you will be provided with a form from the researcher stating your desire to no longer participant in the research. The form should be signed and dated and returned to the researcher as soon as possible. Once documentation is received, all data collected will be removed from the study.

What steps are needed to participant?

If you choose the participant the researcher will provide you with a consent form which you will need to complete and return to the researcher. You will then be contacted to confirm an interview time which will be convenient for you. Once the research is complete, you will be provided with a copy of the study.

If you have any further questions about the research, you may contact

Stephen Hartley (email: seh548@york.ac.uk)

Department of Archaeology

University of York

The King's Manor

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YO1 7EP

For questions about Ethical Committee procedures and guidelines, please contact

Dr. Sara Perry (email: sara.perry@york.ac.uk)

Department of Archaeology

University of York

The King's Manor

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Appendix III: Participant Interview Consent Form

Participant Interview Consent Form

Craft Education in the United States and Great Britain: A cross-cultural examination of ideals, approaches and solutions

Stephen Hartley
Conservation Studies
University of York
seh568@york.ac.uk

Name (Please Print): _____

Date: _____

Please answer the questions listed below and sign *and* date at the end of the questionnaire in the space provided.

Yes **No** Have you read the information sheet provided by the researcher?

Yes **No** Have you had the opportunity to ask questions to the researcher regarding this study?

Yes **No** Do you understand that the structure and composition of this interview has been approved by the University of York Arts and Humanities Ethics Committee?

Yes **No** Do you understand that you have the ability to withdraw your participation from this research at any time?

Yes **No** Do you understand that you reserve to right to not answer any questions posed by the researcher if so desired?

Yes **No** Do you understand how the data collected during your interviews will be compiled and stored under the Data Protection Act of 1998?

Yes **No** Do you understand that you will retain to right to access the information gathered about yourself during this research?

Yes **No** Do you consent to be video and audio taped for the purpose of this research?

Yes **No** Do you consent to the use of any photographic images taken by the researcher of yourself and/or your facilities during the course of the interview?

Yes **No** Do you understand that you will be identified during the dissemination of the research outcomes and there is no guarantee of anonymity?

Yes **No** Do you understand that the information you provide may be cited by future researchers?

Yes **No** Do you agree to participate in this research?

Participant

Date

Researcher (Stephen Hartley)

Date

Appendix IV-Generational Questionnaire Form

Interview Form-Individual

Name: _____

Current address: _____

Birthdate: _____

Age: _____

Occupation: _____

Interview Date: _____

Interview Location: _____

Interviewer: _____

Generation: _____

Consent Form Signed Date: _____

1. What is your profession?

Probes:

- Please describe what you do in that capacity
- Is this physically demanding work?
- What types of tools and equipment are required?
- Is this equipment expensive or difficult to obtain?

2. When did you beginning practicing your profession?

Probes:

- What year did you start?
- How old were you?
- What company did you begin your career with?
- Are you still employed by that company? Why or why not?

3. What attracted you to your profession?

Probes:

- Was this a family businesses/tradition?
- What is your favourite aspects to your profession?
- What is your least favourite?
- Did you consider/practice another profession before you decided on this?
- Why did leave that profession/ choose not to pursue that profession?

4. How did you learn your practice?

Probes:

- Did you attend a school program?
- How long was it?

- Explain the structure of that program
- Where you employed in the field while you were training?
- Did that affect your education? How?
- Did you feel that your instructors/tutors were properly equipped (physical plant and knowledge)

5. Would you encourage, if your training system still exists, others to take that route to training?

Probes:

- What was the best aspect of your training?
- What was the worst?
- Do you feel that the training system you studied under is still appropriate in today's society? Why or why not?

6. How has your industry changed since you began practicing?

Probes:

- What has changed within the building industry since you began your career?
- What new products/tools have helped/hindered your practice?
- Has your practice moved towards a niche practice, or has it always existed there?
- How has the growth of the conservation movement effected your practice?
- How has the growth of the "heritage craft (preservation trades)" subsection within the construction industry effected your practice?

7. How do you feel about the future of your craft?

Probes:

- Where do you see practitioners in your field working in the future?
- Are there enough practitioners in your field? Are there too many?
- Are the suppliers of your materials/equipment facing difficulty?
- Are those entering the field properly trained for the field?
- Are you confident that your craft will survive in fifty/one hundred years?
- Do you ever train apprentices? If so, how many do you train per year?
- Do you participate in short course training? If so how often?
- Do you participate in academic training programs? If so how often?
- Are you an active member of any professional organisation relating to your craft?
- If yes, which organizations?
- What is your role within that organisation?
- Are they adequately addressing the needs of your profession?

8. Would you suggest others to practice your craft?

Probes:

- How should a person wishing to practice your craft approach their training?
- Are there training facilities or programmes that you feel adequately prepare those entering the field?
- Is there enough work to sustain more practitioners?
- Are there misconceptions about your craft that people have? If so, what are they?
- What “soft skills” would someone entering your field need to have or develop?

9. Do you feel that current educational offerings are adequate to prepare apprentices to enter the field?

Probes:

- Are there enough programs to supply the need?
- Are the current programmes adequately training apprentices?
- Are those which exist properly prepared both in physical plant and adequate teaching?
- What are the biggest advantages of the current educational offerings?
- What are the biggest drawbacks?
- Are these programs sustainable?
- Why or why not?
- What do you feel is the future for the training of your craft?

10. If you were to design a programme or system, how would you structure it?

Probes:

- What skills are required for your craft?
- What skills, which are currently being taught, are not necessary?
- What soft skills would need to be taught?
- How many years would it take to complete your ideal programme?
- Would there be an on-site apprenticeship requirement?
- If so, how much time would be required in this requirement?
- How many students could you train at one time per instructor?
- What would instructors need to know?
- Would they be required to hold external certifications and/or degrees?
- What type of equipment would be needed? What would be the estimated costs?
- What type of material would be needed per term? What would be the estimated costs?
- How much physical space would you require? Are there any special requirements within this space?
- Given the current educational system, could your ideal system operate under the current system?
- Why or why not?

-Are there any existing programmes that you feel meet your requirements for an ideal programmes?

Appendix V-Educational Provider Questionnaire Form

Interview Form-Educational Provider

Program: _____
Institution: _____
Address: _____
Interviewee: _____
Occupation: _____
Interview Date: _____
Interview Location: _____
Interviewer: _____
Consent Form Signed: _____

1. Please describe your programme

Probes:

- What is the structure of your programme?
- Is your programme a generalist or specialist programme?
- If specialist, what type of specialties do you offer?
- How long does your programme take to complete?
- How many modules or credits are required to complete your programme?
- What general education units are required for your programme?
- How long has your program been in existence?
- Why was your programme founded?
- Was your programme founded using specialised grant or award funding?

2. What type of institution do you operate under?

Probes:

- Is your programme located in a College or University setting?
- What degrees is your institution certified to award?
- What is the mission statement for your institution?
- Does your institution serve a specific demographic?
- If yes, what is that demographic?
- Is your school considered local, regional, national, or international?
- What is the standard teaching load as prescribed by your institution?

3. Please describe your student demographic

Probes:

- What is your male to female ratio?
- What is the average age of your students?
- What is the minimum age at which a potential student can enroll?
- What is your average test or placement scores for your students?

- Do your students receive financial assistance while enrolled? If so, how much of their tuition is covered?
- Are your students employed during their studies?
- If yes, where are they employed?
- Do your students come from a certain geographical region?

4. Please describe your faculty and staff demographic

Probes:

- Where do you find your faculty and staff?
- Do your instructors have specialised teaching degrees?
- If so, what degree do they have?
- What is the average amount of time your instructors have spent in the profession?
- What is your student to faculty ratio?
- How many sections or modules do you instructors teach per term?
- Do you employ adjunct or part-time faculty?
- If yes, how many sections or modules do they teach per term?
- What qualities are desired in an instructor for your programme?
- Have you experienced issues locating and retaining qualified instructors?

5. Please describe your physical plant

Probes:

- What is the size of your instructional workspace?
- How many dedicated classrooms do you have?
- What specialized equipment do you have?
- What equipment do you require your students to have?
- Do you have any plans to expand your equipment inventory?
- Have you ever experienced serious health and safety issues in regards to your equipment and/or space?
- If yes, what types of issues have you experienced?
- How has that affected your teaching outcomes?
- Where do you store your materials?
- Have you experienced issues with material storage?
- If yes, how has that affected your teaching outcomes?
- Do you feel that your current facilities are adequate to teach your current student population?
- Does your physical plant limit or restrict the number of students you can teach or the classes that can be offered?
- If yes, what are those limitations?

6. Please describe your graduate placement rate

Probes:

- What is your current graduation rate?
- How many of those graduate within the specified time frame?
- Within 150% of the specified time frame?
- How important are graduation rates for your institution?
- How important are placement rates for your institution?
- Do you have a placement service for you students and graduates?
- If yes, where is that service located within your institution?
- Do you track your students' employment after graduation?
- How many students are employed before graduation?
- Within three months?
- Within six months?
- Do you have a warranty statement or guarantee for student knowledge for employers?
- If so, what are the parameters of those agreements?
- Have you had issues with students leaving for employment before graduation?
- If yes, how have you addressed these issues?
- How has your programme reacted to fluctuations within the building industry in regards to training and placement rates?
- How has these fluctuations affected your programme?

7. Please describe your industry, government and academic partnerships

Probes:

- Do you have an external advisory board of industry professionals that assist you in designing the learning outcomes of your programme?
- If so, how does that partnership work?
- Do you operate within a national standard or framework?
- If yes, how do you feel that system effects your programme?
- Is your programme active in setting standards within national frameworks?
- Do you have agreements with other academic partnerships?
- If yes, what are the parameters of those agreements?
- Have your programme shared faculty, facilities or resources with other programmes?
- Have these agreements been a positive or negative?
- Why do you feel they have been positive or negative?

8. What are the biggest accomplishments for your programme?

Probes:

- Has your programme had any notable graduates?

- Has your programme completed any significant projects?
- Has your programme won any local/national/international awards or recognition?

9. What are the biggest failures in your programme?

Probes:

- Has your programme had any significant issues in the past in regards to enrolment or graduation?
- Has your programme had any significant issues in the past in regards to equipment or material budgets?
- Has your programme ever been threatened with closure? If yes than why was closure threatened?
- If yes, how did your faculty and administration address the issues?
- Is your programme currently under threat of closure?

10. What are the future plans for your programme?

Probes:

- Is your programme expanding or contracting?
- What is the reason behind the expansion/contraction?
- Does your institution have any plans to expand programme offerings?
- Does your institution have any plans to modify programme offerings (times/days)
- Are you currently receiving any grant or specialized funding?
- Does your programme plan to pursue any grant or specialised funding in the near future?
- Are you planning to purchase any new equipment within the next five years?
- Are you planning to employ more instructors within the next five years?
- Is your institution planning to expand your physical plant within the next five years?
- Is your programme losing physical plant space within the next five years?
- Is your programme, under its current implementation, sustainable?
- If no, why not?
- Is your programme currently under threat of closure?
- If yes, what is the current plan to ensure the survival of the programme?
- If no plan how long will the programme exist?
- What do you feel is the future of heritage craft training in this country (US/UK)?
- What do you feel is the future of heritage craft education on a global scale?

Interview Form-Individual

Name: Dr. Gerard Lynch_____

Current address: _____ Milton Keynes _____, United Kingdom

Birthdate: _____ 1955_____

Age: 58_____

Occupation: Master Brick Mason, Carver, Educator, Author, Historic Brickwork Consultant_____

Interview Date: 15 August 2014_____

Interview Location: Gerard-Milton Keynes Stephen-Savannah (Skype)_____

Interviewer: Stephen Hartley_____

Generation: 2-United Kingdom_____

Consent Form Signed Date: 14-August 2014_____

Begin Recording

Stephen Hartley (SH): Well, first some basic information before we get started. Your current address?

Gerard Lynch (GL): Is _____, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, _____.

SH: Your birthdate?

GL: _____ 1955.

SH: Which makes you how old now?

GL: I'm 58 this Christmas. Sorry, no I'll be 59 this Christmas, it's getting worse. Sixty next year, oh my word.

SH: I'm looking at thirty-five and I'm missing about a decade there. I don't know what happened.

GL: I know. It's unbelievable. Unbelievable. Time, gee whiz.

SH: Your occupation?

GL: Well, it's obviously, probably about five things. So, obviously I'm considered to be a master brick mason. Also, I'm a historic brickwork consultant. I'm a carver, I'm a lecturer, and an author. Lecturer, you could always replace the word lecturer with educator. They might be better because I do it through writing as well as through talks, presentations, etcetera, etcetera, as you have seen.

SH: Ah yes. Alright. So, the way this is all going to work is that there are ten questions. Inside of each of those question are what we call probes. Not every probe is going to relate or be relevant to you. And the probes are just there to elicit more information to the questions poised. What I'm doing in this research is how the US and the UK approach heritage craft training in education, but also an important part of this is to how to see how heritage crafts has

changed since the end of the Second World War. So, what I've identified is four generations of crafts people. This first generation would be of your pre-war trained craftsman. Unfortunately, many of those are gone. The other three generations, what we considered generation two, would be, like you trained in a classical way, from those pre-war craftsman, they tend to be fifty-fiver or older. Generation three would be between thirty-five and fifty-five, and generation four, the new guys, and they're under thirty-five. And we're looking at three craftsmen for each country, so for generation two, your generation, it would be you, Jeff Orton, and hopefully Richard Harris. So, inside these questions there are a few, I'm going to put this caveat out there, you know what I do for a living. Don't hold back because you're talking to me. My thing is I don't what to know what I'm doing right, I want to know what I'm doing wrong.

GL: Yes, absolutely.

SH: I hope at the end of this I can find some common ground to help both approach their training in a better way. So, we're just going to run through these questions, feel free to answer as much as you want. So, first question is; what is your profession and please describe what you do in that capacity?

GL: Well, obviously as a master brick mason, I would set out and execute high level elements of brick work or masonry in general. And within that I would be working in mainly the traditional field with the sort of materials that would come from the time when walls were mass walls rather than the modern cement-sand cavity wall type of construction. But that's not to say I don't train within that environment too, it's just the nature of my own individual ability, and the way in which my love of the history, which I always had from being a boy sort of morphed into a love of doing historical work, where I could see as a craftsman the great range of skills in the subtlety, and a greater degree of interest, so it became a passion for me from quite a young age and I had the ability, thank God, to do it. As a consultant I then would advise, inspect and report on historic brick work and masonry. I would be employed to write reports, to do specifications, perhaps to devise scopes of work, I would also act sometimes on a job which I was employed on as a clerk of works, where I would come in and inspect the works as per the specifications. Sometimes I'm used to interpret historic masonry because I would see a depth to it. I would see certain techniques. I would see aspects about how the craftsman was working at that time that wouldn't be apparent to people not in my craft or not at my level of experience with the craft. So, I've been very useful to people in that sense and my line to that is my pioneering work in reviving many, many areas of forgotten tools, forgotten areas of skill and bringing them back to notice again. Also, as a carver, I have the ability obviously to set out and build the elements of brickwork and carve it. And some of my work is in America as well you know, so that would be another aspect. As a lecturer/tutor, perhaps mentor, I'm involved a great deal in number of people, sometimes individuals or through institutions, in programmes in teaching artisans and individuals

not necessarily related to my craft, but who, as architects, as surveyors, as structural engineers would come in contact with my craft and feel that they want to have a greater understanding and depth of knowledge about it. And so, I would be then teaching all of these people aspects of history, technology, practice, and because of my fundamental background in how I trained I can, and of course I do, touch on the modern as well as the traditional so you know I don't remain isolated out of that. That's an area that exploded into in a very big way, but I can never lose sight on the fact I did work in the modern build, I did build factories, I did do all sorts of works like that. Which I believe makes me a much better conservation, personal preservationist, I exist in two worlds, where work that certain individuals take a long, long time to do, I could do much quicker, and probably to a higher standard too, so that does make it very, very valuable. As an author I would be involved in research, a great deal of academic research and I would write books, I would write smaller publications, it could be a complete publication on bricks or the repair of brickworks, something like that. I would write papers, and of course I would be employed to write articles, going into a variety of both peer-reviewed and non-peer reviewed publications. And so that in a way, and of course that links, you know, in my role as I said in the beginning, a few minutes ago as an educator, because I'm educating through my writings, as well as educating through my lecturing. And within that of course I've done TV programmes as well, I've appeared on a variety of programmes through the years demonstrating my skills as well as talking about them.

SH: You were on *What the Victorians did for us weren't you?*

GL: Yes, as well as *What the Tudors did for us*. Yes, with Adam Hart Davis. I did a Channel Four programme some years ago. I should think I've probably done seven or eight TV Things.

SH: So, in these professions, do you have certain tools and equipment that are unique to your profession that you would need to have?

GL: Oh yeah, very, very much so. I think that both needs to be seen in both what you need to do remediation work and what you need to just revisit traditional skills and re-realise them. For example, you know, nobody knew anymore about how to use a brick axe. And you know, is I did an awful lot of research into it, I rediscovered how it was used, how it actually changed, and I went to a great deal of expense to get blacksmiths who could make tools, who did tool working. For example, the blacksmith in American why, at the American College of the Buildings Arts named Jay Price. I got him to make me a brick axe based on, to a degree and model that I had made by a blacksmith over here, but he made a superb job if it because of course, he trained in tool making, particularly historical tools. I also have had to have a whole load of pointing tools made, very, very specialised to do a variety of different profiles, so different sizes and widths. I've also had a great, great expense in my work of reviving gauged brickwork and in the Victorian techniques, having bow saws made with twisted wire blades, cutting boxes in all types of sizes,

shapes and profiles. And then there's a whole host of tools that you need when you're working on remedial works for example tungsten tipped tungsten carbide chisels for removing cement and sand. I would have a whole range of those, probably somewhere around twenty, and these are quite expensive in English pounds probably £15 apiece. And the different types of hammers, and then there's special cutting tools, like the Fein cutter, the Arbotech cutter, and yes, so the answer basically is yes. There would be a whole range of specialist tools that you would need.

SH: Is this type of work physically demanding?

GL: Yes, it is. It's physically demanding in the sense that you are working in a craft that always depends on strength. But also, always dependent on body movement. So, it is a really physically demanding job, even to lecture, like today, I've had a full-on day of teaching, I've given presentations, I've gone out and done demonstrations with lime slaking, turn lime to putty with mix mortars. And of course, last night before he arrived I laid my workshop out, my tools, my equipment, my materials, I set everything out that you can use as visual aids. And of course, once that person is gone and I drove him back to his train tonight to go back to Manchester, you know I have to break everything back down again. Next week I have people coming on a one-week course to learn English tuck-pointing, and I have to then to literally point a to point z, and so there will be a lot of work that needs done between now and Monday. I have all the photocopying to do, I have to prepare all his coursework. Going back to my craft, actually doing my craft, there's a great deal of physicality in it, there's a lot of bending, a lot of lifting, but there's also a lot of poetry of how you move. One of the things that I noticed, and I mentioned it when I talked to the Building Limes Forum Ireland group last year is that I see people coming into my craft late in life, or people who are working as conservators who are toe-dipping into my craft who are, what I watch is rigidity, stiffness, they don't move greatly because I learned my craft as a boy and so my body was still growing and was learning to be used in a certain way where I could see fluidity in movement. Jeff Orton would recognise that in plastering, he would see the minute they picked up the hawk and how they hold the trowel, before they do a single thing they'll just reveal that they've done it. It's just a kind of poetry in the movement. People who are very good at their crafts move with a great degree of ease and subtlety and there's a lot of underpinning movement. So yes, it is a very physically demanding and we normally suffer with our backs, our wrists, as we get older our fingers get sore because our joints have been years and years of lifting bricks and holding trowels, and so these things take their wear and tear. So, it's, all and all, considering the fact that I'll be sixty this year, I'm doing great and that's why Kelly loves me. (Laughs)

SH: Of course. (Laughs). So, when did you begin practicing your profession?

GL: 1972. Yes, I left school then and I would have been seventeen that year too, because I was born in 1955. And that was very much the age, I could have left school at fifteen, because that

was the age for leaving school, but I was encouraged to, with an awful lot of my classmates to continue and extra year to get O-levels and to try to get some qualifications. And I did okay, not as well as I could, but I was very much a lad at school that liked to act the goat and you know, I've got a son that very much like that today. So, I was in the trade, and I'm still in the trade for a total of forty-two, forty-three years now.

SH: So, what company did you begin your career with?

GL: I started with a general building contractor called Michael J Broderick which, like an awful lot of building companies in England have Irish roots because the Irish came over in huge numbers more or less after the famine of the 1840's-1850. And because they were manual people coming from a farming background, that lent itself coming into the building trades, they were used as what we called navies. You know men that would dig out the trenches, dig the footings, be a hot carrier for the bricklayers and so on. So of course, some of the more capable and, not only capable but you know bright, skilled people, would then migrate to the crafts. And the Irish have a great reputation for plastering for example, where you'll find a large number of Irishmen who become plasterers and are usually very good plasterers you know. And I was fortunate to meet on with Michael Broderick's company, Mick Broderick, his foreman, who was his general foreman, was a former bricklayer, Michael Quill, and he was the man, through me watching him I realised that's what I wanted to do. And I asked if I could learn from him and he said of course you can. So that was it really, the start of my apprenticeship.

SH: So, when did you leave that company?

GL: I left that company about four years later because we were doing mainly new build with the odd old building, and by then I really wanted to learn more about old buildings because I was doing so much work on new. And so I applied and went to a company called Powell's who were founded in London in the 18th century, and they had, during the war, moved up to a village three miles from where I live now called Ridgemount, and they had set themselves up and they had workshops and they had a very old fashioned craftsmanship sort of mentality going on and they had been doing largely repair work, remediation work, and that appealed to me because you needed to use an awful lot more of that. It was about skills and so I had what was known as a spilt apprenticeship, it was agreed I could move to finish my apprenticeship at that company. And that was quite common at that time.

SH: So, what attracted you to brick masonry?

GL: Well, it's very strange. I would have to say as a boy I was always attracted to the idea of working with my hands. And I never really knew how it would manifest itself, I just knew that's what I wanted to do. And when I first left school, I think I left school after I did my final exam on something like a Tuesday, and I left school on the Wednesday, and it would have been around about the June of that year, and I made my mind up that, certainly by the end of May, the

beginning of June, I made my mind up that I want to earn some good money as a labourer on a job site, on a building site. And so I went, and I was put very, very quickly with the site engineer. And after probably about four months with him he said to me; Gerard you're far too bright a boy to just be a labourer and, because if he didn't need me I would just go back with the labourers perhaps pipe laying, curb laying, whatever. He said unfortunately because you don't have enough qualifications from school you couldn't become an engineer, you wouldn't have enough to go to university. But what you do have is ability and what I would suggest you do is get in with a small company and get an apprenticeship. And so, I then spoke to my Father, he used to go around servicing diggers, vehicles, pumps and all sorts of things because he was a RAF trained mechanic. And he spoke to Mr. Broderick and said Gerard is looking for work with a smaller company with a view towards an apprenticeship, and so I got with them and did, like I said a few moments ago, I did, I was placed with Mr. Quill, Quill as I now call him, and working with him I suddenly thought; that's it, that's what I wanted. I didn't see it in carpentry, I didn't see it in plastering, and I immediately felt the connection with brickwork.

SH: So, did you ever consider doing anything else besides brickwork?

GL: No. I was very, very settled with, that was home so to speak. Like it was meant to be.

SH: So, what's the favourite aspect of your profession?

GL: I suppose the practice of long lost skills that I've helped to revive. I take a great deal of pleasure in them because that was something that I couldn't go to others and learn. I had to work on the platform of the skills I had already reached and then I had to go a stage further by picking up old books, reading them, re-reading them, using my historical knowledge of English and how they would write at that time and think; yes, they're saying something more than what's apparent here, and I have to read it again. And then I would tease out the information from it. And then I would try to do what I thought I was reading about. And so, you know, it developed from there. So yeah I'm right proud of that, yeah. It's the area that gives me a great deal of satisfaction. Like the people I teach to do tuck-pointing, nearly all of them get commended for the absolute exquisiteness of their work, and that means an awful lot to me, because it reflects not only on them, but on me as well. Because you know, I'm very much about trying to raise the standards of the craft up to the levels that we once enjoyed that sadly in recent years has nosedived. So that would be true.

SH: Alright so what's your least favourite part then?

GL: Well there's no real least aspect of my craft you know. I certainly wouldn't enjoy house facing. You know laying countless miles of running bond would drive me nuts, I wouldn't find any pleasure in that as such. No, I think the bit that I find the least enjoyable is reading or listening to the huge amounts of misinformation that's out there by people that have the temerity to set themselves up as experts, and their really not. They're only, you know, recently acquired the

knowledge. I've seen it all over the world as well, you know even when I came to America. Someone that might have learned with me one week, the next time I go back, they're out giving talks on the trade, type known on the tours of America, and coming over as an expert, and quite clearly, they're not. They can't be, because they've only just learned it themselves. And I wouldn't have dreamt about putting myself out there like that until I'd been about twenty-five years in the craft and with meaningful experience. And I think there's, that something I find frustrating because why they do then is perpetuate the misinformation. And they don't know the academic discipline. So, you'll get someone saying; oh, I know that a certain way of finishing the building is done here because of that and I'll say; but you don't know that. How do you know a janitor didn't do that fifty years ago? You know you cannot go out giving talks to people, stating something as fact that is just your hypotheses that you've not proven. And that's a lack of academic discipline and that's why, you know, you really have to become qualified to learn. And because I have a PhD, I've got a Master's degree and so on, I'm able to arrest my enthusiasm and say; right I believe this, I feel I want to tell people this but I cannot say it's absolutely a fact, I've got to test it. I've got to prove it. So that's and areas that would frustrate me a great deal. I've seen a lot of harm done in America in the five or six or perhaps ten years now since the lime movement began. It's morphed, and it's morphed for the worst. You know people packing ready mixed limes and selling it and saying that will do for everyone when if that's true, we might as well be doing the same thing over here. But every building was an individual, and what mortar was on one building was radically different than that building. But that's not to say you can go off the shelf and buy a ready mixed thing you know. So, I just think that we've got problems whereby a certain number of people or companies need to reign it in a bit and actually recognise there not authorities, they just have a little bit of knowledge.

SH: Exactly. Alright, question number four, how did you learn your practice? Did you attend school?

GL: Yes, I was formally apprenticed, okay. So, I would have done my first year as an apprentice bricklayer in what is known as a proofing year. Okay, that's to prove to the company that you are worth being a bricklayer. And I think to a degree it is to prove to yourself that's what you want to do. Because an apprenticeship is a huge commitment you know, you're taking yourself from boy to a man, and from sixteen to your twenty-one. You know that's a big commitment of your life. So, I was formally apprenticed and I was basically a mixture of on-site and going to college. And that would have been between 1972 and 1977.

SH: What college was that?

GL: Bedford College where years later I became the Head there.

SH: So, you actually answered four of my probes. Did you working while going to school affect your education?

GL: Yeah. Yes I was. And I think it's the only way really to do a very, very good apprenticeship. No disrespect to people who run programmes where people come every day, but I think if you are able to do that alongside learning on site, then you get very rounded. It's one thing laying a brick on a workshop floor, it's another thing laying it down in a trench or whatever. Essentially, I went to a college on what they used to call, then called Colleges of Further Education. And I did what was called a day release system. So, your company was bound by law to let you go one day out of your, in those days, five-and-a-half-day week. Because we worked in those days on site every day until five, and you went to college and college began at nine o'clock. The day ended at eight thirty in the evening. So, a day at college would have been nine o'clock until one, and they'd be lessons sandwiched between a mid-morning tea break. Then you would have your dinner. Then from two o'clock until five-thirty you were in the workshop doing a practical lesson. Then you went for your tea, which was a half an hour. And then you went back for your evening theory or technology lesson. Which would last as long as, it would be two hours until say eight-thirty. And then you had to take train ten miles back home, because I wouldn't have had a car in those days. Now that was one day a week. Now each year as you went back to college that day would change because, let's say in your first year it would be a Monday, second year might be a Wednesday, third year might be a Tuesday or whatever. Then you also went to college one extra evening a week, from sixty-thirty to nine-thirty after your day's work. So, it was a big, big commitment. And don't forget in those days we worked Saturdays on a building site from eight in the morning until twelve. So, you know they were big, big weeks. So that's how the apprenticeship was, you were learning on site from you master, your teacher, but you were also going to college where you are learning the theory, the technology, the practice and so on and so forth. So, it was called day release.

SH: So how is day release different than block release?

GL: Well with the block release, which came in by the time I was head, block release came in, but it wasn't there when I was a boy. And the block release would work as the students would come to you, I remember when I was Head of Brickwork, they came for six months. And in the six months they did their complete first year. Then they left, and you didn't see them again for another six months. And when they came back the next year they came back as day release students. They sort of morphed into a second class of day release. And that was run by the Construction Industry Training Board, the CITB. But when I was an apprentice that didn't exist, the apprenticeship as run by the City and Guilds only. So, the CITB was really contractors getting together to influence training to suit their needs and I would have big exceptions to the CITB, I think they've done a lot of harm to training because they have only been interested in modern day building needs, and they weren't interested in, remotely in extending the breadth. You see I learned brickwork and associated studies. That was my course. Brickwork and Associated Studies.

What it's morphed into now, because the CITB with the NVQ have basically bludgeoned the City and Guilds into accepting it, what is become is bricklaying. Not the same thing at all.

SH: Yeah, a brick mason and a brick layer are two separate things.

GL: Oh, totally different. It's a bit like doing a course in stone masonry and then a course in stone laying. You know they're not the same things. So, what's happened is they have moved it away from its broad-based training, its education, and all the things that greatly influenced me and how I talk about it and how Jeff would talk about it of course. And what they've done is corrupted it to suit their needs because that's what they are. They're the Wimpey's, they're the Lang's, They're the McApline's, they're the, you know the big contractors and what they're interested in is if there is enough supply to feed their house building needs. And that's it.

SH: Well when you took bricklaying or brick work and associated crafts, what where the associated crafts?

GL: No, associated studies.

SH: Associated studies, yeah.

GL: Yeah. The associated studies is where you would learn for example about the industry. So you would learn about your place within the construction industry; how did the hierarchy work within the construction industry, what was the health and safety needs, how would you do site supervision, and of course as the years went by that became more and more sophisticated. Because what they were training you up to be within your apprentice was ultimately you were going to be a foreman bricklayer or a general foreman. You weren't just going to be, no the lads that didn't aspire to that dropped out of the apprenticeship at different levels, so they might get to their basic crafts certificate, and they would leave and they would be considered on site to be a craftsman. But if you went on and did your advanced crafts certificate, which I did, then you were considered to be a craftsman, but you were also beginning to learn science at a more profound level, you were learning about site supervision and all the aspects of that like how would you draw up work charts, flow charts, how could you plan, how could you diary everything, how would you do interviews, how would you control a site, how would you do disciplinary things, so you were learning all of that at the same time as going into a workshop and learning how to build more advanced models. So, it was a broad education and I remember for example, we would learn about soil types and excavating, and perhaps at the first year we would learn how to do a simple strip foundation. And then in the second year you would learn a deep strip, raft foundations. By the time you're in the third year you're now talking about deep poured foundations, and then you're learning about trenching and how to timber trenches to make them safe. And I remember then years later when I was really opening up the curriculum at Bedford to teach traditional skills as well I got into quite a hefty debate with one of the lecturers from another college who said to me; fair enough what you're doing Gerard we all admire what you're

doing, but do the students really need to know that anymore? They don't need to know about soils, they don't need to know about foundations, all they need to know is how to step onto a foundation and lay a brick. And I said hang on, whoa, whoa, whoa. I said do you think every single person works for John Lang's or Wimpey's? I said no they don't. I said I had 186 students under me at Bedford College, I said probably only twenty percent of them went to work for the big boys. All the rest of them work for Fred Smith and Sons and they were doing extensions on houses and they were doing retrofitting and things like that. They did need to know all that stuff. I said no you're wrong. And that's the trouble you've got an awful lot of blinders going on, and they need to take those off and you know brick work, bricklaying and brickwork is a big subject. But what they've done today is they've really pigeonholed it down to basics needed for new build.

SH: Interesting. Well, how long was your programme?

GL: I did five years. Four years at college, one-year proofing before I started at college.

SH: Do you feel that the instructors that you had as a student were properly equipped in terms of knowledge and facilities and equipment?

GL: Yes, I think it was a good college. I think I had a very good apprenticeship there, I think the teachers were very engaging, they made the lessons very interesting. It was very formal, you know we called them sir and we sat at desks, they did things on blackboards, the most sophisticated piece of equipment was an overhead projector sort of thing you know. But, it was good. But I think, how can I best put it, I just think it was still, although it was different in my day you couldn't help but to touch on traditional knowledge because it was still there. We never got, what I would call the historical context of things, because I just think these teachers didn't know about the historical background of their craft. They were good craftsman, they had to be good. You couldn't get a job as a lecturer because if you couldn't read or write properly, if you weren't articulate. I'm finding people now, teaching crafts, who never, ever would have gotten a job teaching in my day. No doubt about it. They wouldn't have got through the door. They just would not have been considered literate enough. And I've marked papers, I've had to teach so called teachers, and what I've sat down to read I've been shocked at the standard and I've thought; my god, you're teaching the damn thing. And that I think is wrong. When you see the colleges open up in the late Victorian period, and you read the quality of the teachers who were teaching and most of those teachers, a lot of them were writing books on brickwork at that time, these were educated people. These were knowledgeable people. So I think we have a big, big problem. It part of society's lowering its standards you know it, it effects everything. You know one thing drops and it's like a cascade effect. So you know, in my day I went in a collar and a tie, went I went into the workshop with the students I put on a shop coat, and I tried to bring over a sort of professionalism, and that's sort of different. Now I know in America you're more laid back about

things but I know that the nature of your society, but in England it's more formal, and if you go to France the education is very formal. If you go to see the German system, it's very formal. And I think that's part of our psyche we need that formality, I think it works for us. And I think when you realise that and try to be American about it somehow it don't work. It's like trick or treat in America is great fun and everybody does it and we all have a great time. Bring trick or treat into England and it morphs into vandalism and people egging the doors and the context is wrong. But anyway, so I think you know largely it was good but I think it, as it inevitably had to I suppose, it had rather a bigger emphasis on new build than I would have liked. I would have liked to learn a bit more about these things, but we did learn about it, don't misunderstand me, but it could only just toe-dip into certain things.

SH: Yeah. So later on, you went to went to get your masters and your PhD, where did you get those from?

GL: I got my Master's and my PhD at DeMontfort University in Leicester. And that was very much an unexpected thing. I wasn't looking for that, it wasn't a focus in my life, but what happened was I wrote a paper for Dr. David Watt. Dr. David Watt was the editor for the Journal of Architectural Conservation, and he liked what he'd read, he'd seen my books, he had met me, and Professor Peter Swallow, who was the head of Conservation Studies at DeMontfort had also met me and essentially what they wanted to do was to ask me would I study, by independent study, my Masters, which I did. I got a distinction for it and they recommended that I go the rest of the way and get a PhD, which I subsequently did.

SH: Would you encourage others to go the route of training that you went?

GL: Yes, I would because I think the proof of the pudding is in the eating. I think, you know if I've proved nothing, I've surely proved that a young lad could leave school at 16 years of age with only a couple of O-levels, I wasn't a particularly bright boy at school, and through the education that accompanied my apprenticeship, I flowered. And the education that really was in me was just able to come out of me. I couldn't, you must remember that when I was a boy, probably one in 22,000 students from the secondary modern system went to university. Universities were for what we would call in England the private school boys and girls, and the public school, the grammar school I meant to say, the grammar school. Because basically at the age of ten you did the eleven plus exam. If you passed it you went to grammar school, if you failed it you went to secondary modern. And most of the secondary modern schools became the feeder into the trades. So, whether you were going to be a motor mechanic, a carpenter, a hairdresser, whatever, a tool operator you came out of the secondary system. The grammar schools proved the doctors, the dentists, the lawyers, and the professional people. So, it was very much kind of an elite system. And then the very wealthy were able to send their children to the private schools, which went by the name public schools, but they weren't open to the public. And that

was your Eaton, your Harrow, your Rugby at the elite end, but then lower down there were schools Bedford High, Bedford Modern, and so on and so forth. And of course, they again would probably, largely, and up going to university and probably also going into perhaps local authority or government roles. So the point I'm trying to make is that I'm a young man that came out of a school system that didn't see people really go on to do very well, but we had driven parents. My dad had been an immigrant into this country from Ireland. Know, how the Asians do today coming here, that the key to success was through education, so he must have been massively disappointed that I bummed it through school actually, but then proud to see what I've achieved through my craft. Because I had achieved so much but later in life and it was harder to do it that way. It's not easy to do a PhD later in life like I did when I was, how old am I now, I'm fifty-eight so I would have been forty-eight when I started doing my PhD. Now that's not easy. You know when you've got a thirteen-year-old and a twelve-year-old, you've got a career to earn and so on and so forth, and many demands on me. So, I would recommend it because I think what the apprenticeship gave you in those days was education on top of training. I don't feel today the system educates you, I think it trains you, but I don't think it educates you.

SH: So, in that respect what was the best aspect of your education?

GL: When I was at college?

SH: Yeah.

GL: Well, I think the workshop was wonderful because very good bricklayers were watching you very closely developing skills. And they would be able to really spend their time with you that on-site you sometimes didn't have that because you were working actually generally building for real. And if you made a mistake then the boss might say Gerard; you're going to have to take them last three courses, you're getting out of gauge or whatever, so I think there was that to it. But I did enjoy the practical because that's where you could really practice and practice your skills and get better at it. But I just enjoyed the classroom. I loved listening to the theory, to the technology, I was very good at technical drawing, which of course has been a blessing to me because of designing and things like that. And I really loved that and they're just not doing that anymore. You don't see students learning how to do technical drawings and using technical drawing equipment anymore. At yet when they come to me these days and you say right I'm going to show you how to set out templates for an arch, we go back to drawing and all that geometry that nobody's teaching at college, it's a huge void. And they go; I don't know what you mean by an arc or a tangent or a sector. And of course, I know they're going to say that, so I preempt it with a lesson on geometry. But in my day that was part and parcel of it.

SH: Yeah. So, what do you feel the worst aspect was then?

GL: I think just the discipline of going through it. You know not mitching off as we used to call it. You know, taking a day off, you know. Having to try and remained focused you know. Finishing

off a day's work at five o'clock and rushing home to quickly get fixed up and catch a train to travel ten miles to be at Bedford for a lesson at half past six. And then, you know, that was hard but because I loved it, I think I never had a day off. And I think Jeff and I discussed this one day and he never had a day off either. We just turned up. We went because we wanted to do it. And I think in my day, and of course Jeff is older than I am and more so in his day, anybody that was in that room wanted to be there. Now with government grants and things like that, there's an awful lot of people that are being told to go there, and they don't want to be there. They don't want to be a brick mason, they don't want to be a plasterer, and they often are unruly, disruptive, you know within the lesson, and spoil it for those that do.

SH: I've got several that aren't going to make it in the field. And I've told them that. This isn't for you.

GL: No, it is a problem. And of course, there's always the good, and I'm talking about lads in my day, there's always the good lad that really wanted to do well, but you could see was never going to be a bricklayer. And you had to be brutally truthful to them. You know about four weeks in you would say to them; look I really hate what I'm having to tell you, but despite all the help I'm giving you, despite all I'm doing, I can just see that you don't move like one, you don't think like one. You know because you've got to think like one, to be one, you've got to think like one. So, I think that was probably the negative. And it's a negative that only has to do with willpower and discipline. It wasn't the course, I have no negatives about the course. I enjoyed the course and I can't think of anything that I didn't like about it and I enjoyed working on site. I really did. I never recall having a moan about any task I was given to. Some tasks would have been nicer than others of course, but I don't recall it being a thing, I just enjoyed the environment.

SH: Excellent. So, do you feel that the training system you studied under is still appropriate in today's society?

GL: Yes, I even think it's more appropriate. I really do because what we've tried to do and what we continue to do is we are continuing trying to fast track training and looking to give people pats on the back to sort of short course accreditations. But you see what it means is that everything is lightweight. There's no depth to anything, there's no profoundness in it. Really the best craftsmen are well read, well versed in a broad range of skills, and in a broad range of knowledge. They would be good at math, to a degree, they would be good at geometry, to a degree, they would be good at the theory, and what I believe was always a shortcoming in the apprenticeship scheme, was the lack of history. And that's something that I certainly have gone out of my way to make up for because history gives you context. This is where we came from, this is how we progressed, this is how it looks like it will be going in the future. And what I've always believed in was when you stand on a building, particularly an historic building, you have to have empathy with the structure. So if someone told you how they worked in the Tudor period, 16th century, or if

they tell you how they worked in the Elizabethan, Jacobean period, or in the Victorian or Georgian, if you can then stand on that scaffold having been taught that, and your craft and knowledge and skills and theory, you can look at that building and actually tune into it. You know that's a wood fired brick, you know that's a rubbed arch, you know that they used a brick axe on that, you'll recognise the marks on the bricks. So, you empathise with that and the building begins to unravel itself in front of you. But if no one's taught you any of that, no wonder you stand on that building with a bucket of cement and sand and start shoving that stuff into it. Because you have no concept to the fact that cement didn't exist then. It just doesn't dawn on you when you've not been taught. But when someone tells you, it's like the scales have dropped off your eyes. And I think we insult young people today by believing they wouldn't want that degree of discipline. I actually think they do. And I think if the right course presents itself, and its put over by knowledgeable, skilled people, that they can look up to and admire, I think young people love it. And when you get something that you've worked very, very hard for, you value that. It really is something that you're proud of because you've worked so damn hard to get it. But when you get a pat on the back for doing something relatively easy and someone throws a certificate at you, you don't really value it, because it all came too easy. And I think that's the trouble, and I've said this before Steve and you would have heard me, we live in an age of image over substance, you know. Where in my day it was substance over image. And I think that's the problem. We are in a very, very challenging times. You could always make the case for not investing. But you never, ever made money out of an apprentice. You never, ever made money out of training schemes. Because that's not what they're about, they're about an investment. And when you think of it, and it's a good way to look at it. You look at the founder of Microsoft, Bill Gates. Bill Gates has given back to his college and his university, so much of the invest money, that he's probably paid for every college student sitting in America at this minute for the next twenty bloody years. So you know just one man with his intelligence and his skills and what he learned going through his system more than paid back what was invested in him. And so people like me, you think about what I have represented for our country and from my apprenticeship, I've given more back because of what I have learned. So, I really think we have to stop punching and penciling this, and we've got to start thinking about quality going in, you've got to vet the students, you've got to get the right type of person in, whose got the ability to succeed and then you've got to teach them properly. Broad based training that teaches them the new, the modern way of working, an also the old, so they're fully employable and work in both worlds. I rest my case.

SH: So, how has the industry changed since you first began practicing?

GL: Well that's a very easy one to answer because when I first came into it by and large the vast majority of companies in every English village and town were largely family-based companies.

And they employed anything as little as four or five people up to probably, typically up to thirty-five or forty. That would be what you might call typically small companies. Beyond that they were usually a bigger company with a bigger family name and they employed anything up to a hundred plus. So, they were big contractors and they were dealing with big sites. But every builder and every town typically had a local builder, and they employed their workers directly. They paid their insurance, they paid their pension, and they paid their holiday money. Apprentices were taken on, usually every year or every two or three years, so that as the apprentices came on and became journeyman, you had the next lot coming in because the firm was investing in its future, and they would learn from the men higher up than them. They would have been the jobbers, you know the ones that did repair work and things like that. Then there would have been good quality, experienced craftsman, and there may well be within that firm, usually within one or two of the disciplines, a master. Someone who was usually recognised to be red-hot in their work or something like that. So, that's how it really was and apprenticeships then were controlled by the National Joint Industry Council, NJIC I think or NJBC or something. And basically they just oversaw the apprenticeship and made sure your firm was letting you go and you were attending and things like that. And that was all done by levy and so on and so forth. Then all of a sudden during the Ms. Thatcher era, during the period of the Conservative government, which would be in the eighties, there was really this huge desire to cut back on public expenditure. And we went into a recession. Interest rates hits fifteen percent, which was affecting businesses. And during that period accountants began to say to these builders; you know what you need to do, you need to realise your real assets. Sell the builders yard, get rid of it. Close your workshops, you want parts, go to a builder's merchants and buy them. You don't need a carpenter's shop making the stairs, it's cheaper to go out and buy them. Sell your vans, let the blokes come to work in their own car, and put the blokes as self-employed, don't employ them direct. And so that happened and that was a huge, huge change in the industry because where a firm did everything from digging the foundations out and building the house then handing it over to the customer, you now had an intermittent workforce of people who were bricklayers, came in, did their bricklaying and cleared off. Carpenters came in, did their second fix and cleared off. Plasterers came in did the plastering and cleared off and so on. And you began to see a breakdown in the respect that they had for each other, where when you worked direct for a company, you did your work as good as you could because one of your mates of their trade was going to come in and follow you. And so I saw that as a very retrograde step. And that was a big change in the industry. And that was accompanied with the apprenticeships getting less and less and so on.

SH: So are there enough practitioners working in the field?

GL: I think there probably is enough, but we mustn't become complacent about it. We need to inspiring an awful lot more people who are working in the industry who are in new build, who are

of great ability and are just bored sick of laying brick, on brick after another on basic new build, but would love to explore the depth and breadth of their craft by going onto old buildings, but the apprenticeship system that they went through didn't prepare them for that.

SH: Has the growth of the conservation movement affect your craft?

GL: Well the conservation game is of course a new invention. It really is, there was no such thing as conservation when we were boys. Jeff Orton will I'm sure have told you that. We just worked as bricklayers or plasterers or plumbers, and one day you would be working on something on a new build and the next day you were doing something on an old building, and it was just called repair work. We never heard the word conservation, it was never, ever spoken. Never, ever heard of it whatsoever. You knew damn well that if you were doing work on an old building you needed a different type of material to work on it, that that was cement and that was lime, that was machine bricks, those are handmade bricks, in the same way Jeff would have known that in the new build he was using lightweight gypsum plasters, but when he went and worked on that Victorian building he was using lime plasters. So, we knew them things. And because we were taught properly, we knew how to do the work on those buildings. And the people that we worked with, who were older than us knew it even better than you did, and they taught you as well, and you learned from them. And so this handing on went on. Now what conservation is doing is rather bastardising the whole thing because instead of doing beautiful double struck pointing to say, repointing at Hampton Court Palace, because that's the original joint profile there, the conservation movement is so obsessed with this exposed aggregate churned brush finish that we're slowly changing the whole look of Hampton Court Palace into one big mass of exposed aggregate pointing which it was never meant to be seen like that. And so the conservation movement sometimes needs to take a step back and I think to a big degree it needs a great cleaning out. I think there's a lot of stuff that's become just the way to do it because somebody said it's the easy to do it. You know just because Ruskin had certain views, it doesn't mean to say that it's right. You know for example I see people from SPAB, wanting you to put tile repairs in and they call that an honest repair. I think it's horrendous. It's ugly, it merely states we have a philosophy that states that, and here it is just to prove that we've got it.

SH: Thank you for saying that because tile repairs don't exist in the states.

GL: No, they're awful.

SH: I saw it all the time in the UK and I thought that was terrible.

GL: It's a deceit. They would argue that putting the bricks back in is the deceit. But I say no it's not. Look we live in an age of cameras, take a picture, put the new work in, take a picture of it and say; right that's what Gerard did so beautifully that in ten years' time you won't actually know he did it. But you actually do know he did it, because we have photographs of it. So it's not a deceit. But how can we pass down skills if we don't keep repairing.

SH: I have to send you an article by Yarrow about a cathedral in Scotland and the debate that went on between the conservator and the stone carver. One of the grotesques was missing and the conservators wanted to put a blank stone on there.

GL: Rubbish.

SH: And the stone carver was saying; look I can make that. The conservator's argument was no if you did it it wouldn't be historic.

GL: And that's the problem. History doesn't stop. In their minds, history has stopped. There will be no history from this point. But you know that's not right, buildings evolve. And really, why these conservators don't want the carvers to do the work is because they can't carve. That's what the truth is. What are conservators? You know, they're just frustrated craftsmen. They're not craftsmen, they would love to be one, but they take five times as long as you do, and they don't do as good a job as you do and charge a bloody fortune for it. Its baloney, it's all baloney, like they've invented some type of lime system.

SH: Oh nanolimes.

GL: Nano, yeah. But I mean it would cost you a fortune for someone to do two hundred applications. You know at the end of the day, we do want to hold on to our precious stock of historic buildings, but some sense has to come into as well. Some common sense has to come into it. And I think we need to be very, very careful. You know, if we go back down through the years, how did skills get passed on, they got passed on because they were continually being renewed, and those things needed to be done. And you can't suddenly just say guillotine. That's it, history is over and you can't ever do that again. You don't restore, you don't do anything new, it always has to be, what are we going to have in the future, we're going to have bastardised buildings all over the place looking like ugly shadows of what they are meant to look like. No way.

SH: Exactly and that's the whole argument in that article is that the stone mason is saying; look I'm doing what has been classically done on this cathedral. I'm part of history I'm continuing my craft.

GL: Yes. And it can be recorded, that's the point. It's not a deceit once you record it. It's a deceit when nobody says anything and then you've got people coming back in fifty years' time and saying oh look at this beautiful work there not knowing Gerard Lynch repaired it, but now you can, you can log it, you can say during 1994 Gerard Lynch did this or 2006 Jeff Orton did that, here's some pictures of before and after. But I just think the thing has become an industry that we really don't need. We don't really need conservators. I think most craftspeople can be conservators, and if we're lacking something that these people think, you know we come out without the university thing and we know more about it than you, you can always make a good conservator out of a craftsman, but you cannot make a great craftsman out of a conservator.

SH: So what about the rebirth of the heritage crafts trades? How has that affected your industry?

GL: Well the heritage crafts of course is basically the add-on to your on craft. You know that you just go to work on historic buildings and then you learn it at a higher level. And that's part of the specialist heritage programme that I designed which was to take these young people who are already are talented craftsmen and good people who are working on old buildings, but their apprenticeship haven't lined them up with knowledge of lime and lime mortars, historic jointing techniques, they really have never visited brickyards and studied traditional brickmaking let alone modern brickmaking, they didn't know the difference between the clays, they didn't know why bricks ended up with beautiful blue heads, you know what was the phenomena behind that, they didn't know what gauged work was or how people got these beautiful fine joints. So, what you're doing is taking these people who have the basics of the skills, and you're educating them and you're teaching them. And I have found with my lads, on my specialist apprenticeship programme that I teach them at a level that I would at a University. And they love it because you're pulling them up, you're bringing them up to a level that never would have believed. I had a lad here today learning about limes and lime mortars, and we went right into it the way that we do, you know my type of teaching. And he was blown away by it. He was just in awe. He said; Gerard I'm in bloody hell. He sent me a text, had only been gone a half an hour, and I got a text from him. And he said, and I can literally show it to you. He said; just want to sincerely thank you again for today. Gerard it's been fantastic. Please pass on my gratitude to Fiona as well for looking after me. I'll email you soon. You know, I mean, this is a young man only in his early twenties, not married, and loves his craft. He told me he's sick to death of modern site work and wants to get away from it. It's great.

SH: So, are your suppliers experiencing any difficulty?

GL: It's a kind of difficult one, yes and no because some products are simply far too dear. And there's no doubt about it people are exploiting it as a high-end conservation product. Lime putty is pennies, its cents, and yet it's out there for dollars or pounds. Something that really costs about fifty pence and probably at the most should be about three pounds a tub, is selling for £15 to 16. That's an absurdity, that as exploiting a very, very lucrative market. You know just because conservation commands more money. And I see the same things with bricks, with rubbing bricks at £10 a brick.

SH: £10 a brick?

GL: £10 a brick. I mean it's an absurdity. And it just should not be like that. Rubbers were historically, typically about two to three times as much as a regular brick. Now even allowing variances in how much dearer it is to employee people today, and even allowing for the fact that it is a bigger lump of clay, and therefore you would normally get two bricks out of the clay to get

that one, even allowing for all of that, drying and everything else, there is no way it should be anything more than a fiver.

SH: Yeah.

GL: Absolutely not. And what do these people do? They make a killing out of selling them dear, but they rob the craft of the ability to use it because people can't afford them. So, it's wrong. So, you know that's it. The positive side of it there have been some good things and some really terrific revivals, we've got H.G. Matthews over there in my county in Buckinghamshire now making wood fired bricks because I had that business plan for them, I suggested they did it. I got Jason Whitehead and Bill to come over from Colonial Williamsburg to teach them how to do it, and we set up a wonderful exchange between these two countries. Again, with my American background you know I've been able to facilitate approaches and things like that, so it's been great for them and it's been great for these as well. So, there's some good stuff there.

SH: Do you feel that those entering the field are properly trained?

GL: I would say for the conservator academics, no.

SH: No?

GL: I really don't, no. I genuinely don't. I think they bare as guilty as being blinkered about it as the craftsmen that work on modern building sites are blinkered about it. They've both got romantic notions about it. There's no romance out on the building site. There's no romance in the historic building site. But there's great beauty in it and there's great craftsmanship in it. But what we've been doing for far too long is waxing lyrical about things. You see people all the time taking about how beautiful the chimneys at Hampton Court Palace are. Yes, they are but do not make them out to be something that they are not. They're achievable. Human beings built them, and human beings can repair them and rebuild them, they just need to be taught how to do it. I could build any one of those chimneys at Hampton Court and I could teach people how to do it and some of the ones that are now working on it today I taught them the skills that they're able to work on them. So, stop over dramatising things. Jeff would say the same about running cornices and doing certain features. People for some reason love to make a big thing out of it. Because somehow it adds kudos to it. But people have been doing these things for hundreds of years. And if we start making these things seem unobtainable, then all were doing is putting barriers in front of learning.

SH: I tell people that building are just sticks and bricks.

GL: Absolutely. It's all about empowering. If you want to be a good teacher of the crafts, you need to be empowering your students to have to do things. So, I think artisans from the basic craft courses are not definitely getting properly trained, but once they get onto these SAP programmers, then they are. There's no doubt about it. Even though they're only six weeks, you can really nail it and absolutely get the essentials in there, I think you do turn out really, really

good, knowledgeable people. But the conservator academics, no. I think there's huge gaps in what they're doing. And I've always said this, and I said it a few minutes ago, if there's something we in the craft don't know, that the conservators know, then just tell us. Just let us know what it is that we don't have. You know if it's some type of needle technique that needs to be injected in, you know we're not idiots, show us the needle, show us the stuff you're using, tell us what we're doing and why it works, and we'll take it on board. We don't need to bring you in at twice the amount of money that we earn, just so someone could say that we had a professional conservator in. I think we have to strip away the nonsense that surrounds these people and get back to realism. These are buildings that we, the builders built, and we have the right to repair them, and restore them, and conserve them. They're ours. Part of our history and our heritage. Not theirs.

SH: So are you confident that your craft will survive another fifty or a hundred years?

GL: Well I am in the sense that I'm naturally an optimist. You know if I wasn't I think I would have despaired years ago. I am worried that if the trend for cost-cutting in apprentices, apprenticeships and not selecting apprentices, just throwing people in and saying you're on the dole go and be a bricklayer. You know how dare people treat my craft with such disrespect. You know, I think I need to get Fiona to send over a few of the things that I have written on the crafts which is saying some of the things that I'm saying now so you can digest it and it might help you. But I get very offended by people saying; right, you're not very good at school, be a bricklayer. You know, how bloody dare they do that. We can solve the problem very easily by banning people from practicing in the craft that are not qualified. All the cowboys who are on site that do not have a single qualification to work as a bricklayer or a plasterer or a plumber, get rid of them. Don't insure them. That's, in the same way they forced us to wear seat belts by saying; right, you don't wear one, you're not insured. Right, then the freedom of expression that I don't want to wear one went right out the door then. Well, do the same thing on the building site. Say right, if you're not a qualified bricklayer and you can't prove that you're one, you don't get insured to be on the site. We can sort it out its just no one has the balls to bloody well do it, you know. So, we need to sort that out and we need to accept that to teach people properly you can't tick teaching. It's a bit like teaching a doctor and saying; well we won't teach them about TB because people really don't get that much these days, and we teach them about scabies because you don't hear about that much anymore. But what happens when those bloody people do turn up? You know, you're going to miss it. So, you don't do that, because you would be stupid. So why would you do that with the crafts? Teach people properly. It's got a breadth to it. Teach them that breadth. Teach them so you empower them to do work with the old and the new. And it can be done. And the old system worked. It worked. All that was wrong with it is that it needed fine tuning. But what they did, they scraped it and they brought in a pale shadow of its former self in.

And I predicted twenty years ago in my book; *Brickwork; History, Technology and Breadth*, I predicted this would come about and it did. You can't just throw away five hundred years of apprenticeships and expect that to be a success. It don't work like that.

SH: Alright, I already know the answer to these next two questions, but I'm going to ask them.

Do you participate in short course training?

GL: Yes. In a variety of institutions and privately myself, yeah.

SH: How often do you typically do that?

GL: Oh more or less every week, certainly every other week. You know primarily my job now is a consultant, and educator, sometimes a troubleshooter, and occasionally I take part in sort of, you know, what's the word I'm looking for here, perhaps organisational thing, you know what I mean. But, most of my time now would be involved in advancing the education of it. People from all over the world want to learn from me, no doubt about it.

SH: What about academic programmers?

GL: Yes, I've been involved in academic programmes, particularly at the Weald and Downland degree programme, their Master's degree programme. And I used to do some work with the Oxford-Brookes College on their Master's degree programme but, their funding ran out to the point that they couldn't afford to bring people in like me which rather was a shame. And so on, so yeah, I been involved in a sort of number of programmers really.

SH: Are you an active member of any professional organisations relating to your craft?

GL: Not necessarily related to the craft, but related in sort of an abstract way, like the Building Limes Forum, I'm on the committee of that. I am a member of APT, I was a member of PTN, and an active member, a committee member, a board member. I didn't really stay a member of the Guild of Bricklayers too long because it seemed to me not to be what I hoped it would be as a broad based organisation which was interested in historical buildings, modern building, education and the teaching of it. It seemed to be largely run by and run for, teachers at colleges. And all they seemed to talk about was skill build and competitions, and that wasn't for me.

SH: I hate World skills and Skills USA that we have here

GL: It's terrible. It's just rubbish that's all it is. And I'm a member of the British Brick Society which is an organisation which looks at all aspects of brickwork. Bricks, brick making, terracotta, looks at it from a historical, technological and modern perspective and I've been a member of that since probably 1978, and it was founded about '73.

SH: Fantastic. Are those organisations adequately addressing the needs of the industry?

GL: Well I think they are. In their own ways I think they are doing their own things. I think the Building Limes Forum is a magnificent organisation, I'm very proud to be on the committee of that, I should be at Bath this year, I'm going down for the gathering. And you know I think we've done a lot in a way to roll back the prejudice surrounding lime mortars. I think there was a time

when everything was putty, putty, putty and we've now got people to see that there was a whole range of limes that we used. And of course, in America that was very true as well and you had natural cements and Portland cements and we have to recognise that Portland cement is now at the cusp of two hundred years old and has to be looked at in that light although it constantly changed and it a very different product than we have today, but its historical and we ought to be aware of it. So I think we've done an awful lot to peel away for it and making us, making many people who choose to chat about the subject but don't know sod all about it realise, like for example there's people now who are talking about are the modern hydraulic limes too strong and some NHL 2 is stronger than a 1:1:6 cement mortar, which is the biggest load of bunkum I have ever heard in my life. There is absolutely no way that an NHL 2 is like a 1:1:6 cement mortar. Not only in terms of strength, but in density in lack of flexibility. These people really don't know what they're talking about, and they do an awful lot of harm. They really do an awful lot of harm and they should really zip it you know.

SH: So, would you suggest others to practice your craft?

GL: Yeah, I would say to them great and I will do everything I can to help you, that's the first thing. There's no doubt about that but I would say to them; don't be frightened to do new build as well, because I think it gives you perspective. When you can lay bricks on a modern building site and work hard and learn how to produce very quickly and all the rest of it, what you get is good trowel skills. Now when you go into historic brickwork as well, these things come to your save. You know, if all you learn is how to tinker around on a building, you never develop any speed at it, it's all tinkering. If you learn how to construct, when you go onto old buildings, you can do it much, much faster. So, I would tell them to read books, study their history, try to do as many courses as they can in historic masonry, in historic brickwork, to advance themselves. Learn about lime mortars, learn about cements mortars, learn about handmade bricks and so on and so forth and get a good, deep base to build themselves up. Far too many people are coming in, and I see it far too often over the last twenty years, that you've got people who met me on a course, and then they leapfrog right into to only high-level work. But they've never worked on house building, they've never done manholes or deep well foundations or anything like that. The problem with these people is, there's a phrase in the industry is that they're all crust but no pie, you know what I mean. Or all icing and no cake. So, they're all, they're playing around at the top end, but they don't really understand the depth or the breadth underneath. And that is a big lacking in you. If you don't have that you'll always be caught out when you declare yourself an expert. Because you'll stand up and say something and someone will always come across at right angles and say; you say that, but what about this? No if you really don't know, you end of floundering in front of a class. And that, you then lose credibility. So, I would say get as broad as you can, and get as much knowledge as you can.

SH: So, are there're any schools or training programmes that you feel are adequate preparing those entering the field?

GL: In that respect I have to say I am concerned. I think we have got the Level Three NVQ specialist apprenticeship scheme, but I have gripes with it. The first thing I was frustrated about is that the lads that would come to me, if they're not mature craftsman who are coming to work who obviously didn't ever do an NVQ because they weren't on the go then, it's the younger ones that are probably in their twenties, say twenty-seven, twenty-eight years bracket, they would have come up through the NVQ route. What I find with those people is that they've got their NVQ Level Three, then they come on the course with me, and it jumps. They all say; blimey this is just such a leap in standard in all respects, academically, practically, in all respects. But the problem is, what do they get at the end of it? They get a Level Three NVQ. Because NVQ had made level four managerial qualifications. So, you've got a buffer at the end that nobody seems to be able to move it. And I had this discussion few weeks ago. I said you've got this crazy situation where people are coming to study to advance, and yes, it is in heritage brickwork as opposed to regular brickwork, and yes is a specialist programme, but they're getting a Level Three. I said; for bloody hell it should be a Level Four, or whatever. I said this is a nonsense. So, it's very ill-thought out, very ill thought out. It's just like me doing my advanced craft certificate as a brick layer and then being told unfortunately Gerard it's still called a basic craft certificate because no one has thought a way out of this basic certificate to call it an advanced certificate or whatever. It's nonsense. But it shows you the mess we're in. Far too many bureaucrats running training, far too many. In my day. City and Guilds had an office in London, there's was about a hundred people in there, and they did all the apprenticeships. Now we've got thousands working, producing paperwork after paperwork, going onsite visits, you've got assessors and accreditors and all that. And is it really any better? No.

SH: Interesting. You know I really don't understand how the level system works, but I'm learning.

GL: It's all bloody nonsense. The whole thing drives me nuts. It really is, like for example I would go out to assess lads on sites, now these are lads that have gone through the system, they really know what they're doing, and I still have to talk to them about health and safety. You know do you wear a hardhat, do you do this and that. For god's sake, leave that bloody subject alone, we've gone past that subject. Push that to the away. But, as you know we've got an industry around health and safety now, that we didn't have years ago. It's crazy. So, there you go.

SH: So, are there any misconceptions about your craft that people have?

GL: Yes. I think, what they think of that bricklaying is basically for low level intelligence people, that you're one step above a labouring offering. They find it incredible when they talk to me that they find this articulate, intelligent, academic sort of man, but who is actually a bricklayer. It's like

no I can't quite figure that out. But once you sit with them and they listen to you and you explain that's how bricklayer once were, like the talk I gave in Charleston. Look at the great craftsman in the past and look how they were resolving all these problems on building and they were architect artisans you know. So, in fact I'm probably more like they were. They were just intelligent people, who had a brain, who had a great pair of hands and the ability to combine the two to become great craftsmen. And what's happened is it's that we've allowed it to slide and then show surprise when somebody actually comes into it that shows that ability and skills. And I met an awful lot of young lads that I can see are not a million miles away from the type of person I would have been when I was there age. And that properly stimulated they could go on and do things. You know obviously I'm very driven. Nobody made me write books. Nobody made me do the research that I've done. But, like Jeff, I love my craft. And like Jeff, it didn't seem to be a big effort to do that you know.

SH: So, do you, and we've already talked about the current educational offerings being adequate, are there enough programmes to sustain the need for heritage brickwork?

GL: I think we probably do need more programmes, purely and simply because, as I understand it, we need to be generating around seven thousand artisans a year. And quite clearly you know, let's say five hundred of them are bricklayers, well I'm certainly not having five hundred pass through my hands a year, you know what I mean. So, we do need to do something, but I don't know how it's going to happen because nobody wants to spend any money. You see, at the moment now they're moaning that they haven't got the craftsmen. But when we had the recession on, did anybody invest? Did anybody say now's the time to train for when the boom years come? No. And how many times have I heard that said in my lifetime. You should invest when times go quiet so when the demand is up, you've got the skills to meet the demand. And that hasn't happened. So, I do think we probably do need programmes, but I think the whole thing needs a massive shake-up. I've always been prepared, Stephen, I've always been prepared to do what I can within the system. Because I didn't want to be guilty of someone who knocks the NVQ system, but the minute he was given a chance said; no, no I'm not interested, I only believe in the old City and Guilds. I didn't want to be that kind of man. So, when I was given the opportunity, I took it and I definitely delivered. And there's no doubt about it, you can interview any of the boys I taught, and I'm sure some of them would be happy to talk to you, without me being in the room, and they will tell you what they thought about the specialist apprenticeship programme. So that may be something in the future that we may do. But what I am going to say to you is this. It needs to be changed. People like Jeff Orton and I are getting older. The years are passing by. And we are the beneficiaries of the old way. And that's ironic because that's the very reason why people want us, because we have the skills, we have that ability, we're able to articulate our subject. I don't see a Jeff Orton or a Gerard Lynch coming out of the present

systems. I just don't see it. Because, the system just isn't broad enough and it's not deep enough, and we're not vetting those coming in, I could want to see eleven keen students sitting in front of me rather than eighteen pressganged into being there you know. And I think that's what's gone wrong. And you know what, students themselves know they're not getting quality. And once they don't buy it, how do you sell it to a public that don't buy it either.

SH: I tell my Dean or Vice President all the time, you want this to be a hundred-person programme, it's never going to happen. I can't give you a hundred people. I can give you thirty really good people. But I can't give you a hundred and I won't give you a hundred half assed students.

GL: No, no it's no good. You're not doing them any favours, you're not doing society any favours. And at the end of the day it will just blow back up in your face. What you want is lads that when they go out there you have an employer that says; I'll tell you what Steve you've done a great job with that lad there. He's a smashing lad or lady to have on my site. She's just a blessing to have on my site. That's what you want.

SH: My reputation is based on what they do out in the field.

GL: Of course it is. And my view exactly. Like I said I don't have everybody come here on courses. If I don't like how they sound when I interview them, they don't come. You know, because I don't want some smartass coming out and saying; I've been taught by Gerard Lynch and I know everything, and you can't tell me bugger all. And I don't want anybody like that. I don't know everything, none of us know everything. I have a great deal of knowledge, I have a great deal of skills, but I'm still on a learning curve as far as I'm concerned. So, I don't want anybody smart assing anybody, but at the same time I want them to go out and do beautiful work, and someone to say: Jesus that is some of the most beautiful pointing that I've seen. My god, and you know who taught you. And someone to say; well actually I went and learned under Gerard Lynch. Oh, gosh I'm not surprised, crickey you are really good. So, they're delighted with him or her, they're delighted with me, everybody's a winner. But because it's done for the right reasons, same with you.

SH: Yep. So, the programmes that do exist, and unfortunately, they are few and far between, do you think they're properly prepared in both the physical plant, the stuff they have in their shop, and the education of their instructors?

GL: No, I would think they're not nowadays. I think that they're all suffering huge cutbacks. You know, you see when I as a teacher, it was a very well-paid job. But you had to be fully qualified in your craft, you had to have x number of years proven track record, and you had to show during your interview that you clearly had a brain, that you were teaching quality, because not everybody can teach. And so, you did attract intelligent people, that you felt that you were a part of an elite band of educators, and what has happened with all the cutbacks, the funding has

altered how teachers are perceived within the system. So, for example when I taught at Bedford College, I was a lecturer grade one, what they called an L1. And I would have been out at the same level as someone coming in teaching biochemistry L1. I would have had the same conditions of service and everything. The fact that I was teaching brickwork and associated studies didn't matter. That is no longer true. What they've done now is say; well you're not having the amount of holidays as these physicists are having, you're only having four weeks per year. You'll also not having the same pension as they are. You're also not getting the same salary grade that they are. So, what's happening now is were attracting in the wrong type of people. A lot of them, in my opinion are failed bricklayers, who did an okay job on site, but are now looking for a cushy job at a college. And I have an apprentice who sat here with me two years ago called Joe, Joe Ruth. Joe had done an apprenticeship at his college in his NVQ's he said he had never, ever seen his bricklaying instructor lay a brick.

SH: What?

GL: Yeah. That is unbelievable. I mean you learn a craft by copying don't you. Somebody does a bit of ironing out, and then you have a go. And you don't do it right and they say; here, with me again, and then you have a go again and then they say; no hold my hand, feel my hand as it does it, or whatever you know. I don't know how you can learn a craft without watching somebody.

SH: Amazing. So, what do you think is the biggest advantage to the current system? Is there an advantage to the current system?

GL: No, I don't think there is any advantages to it. I think that from the government's perspective, its low cost, you know and so on. But, I think there is, no I think there's advantages only for new build. For modern builders, they fast track the people in, fast track them out, and get them on a site doing basic brick and block work. That's it. But that's not a, brickwork and the craft of the brick layer cannot be measured in terms of new build. There's two industries running within the one. And that is the repair work, this historical work, and there's the new build. And what we're doing saying, the thing that I tried to do when I was head of brickwork, I said we mustn't ignore the old work, because there's as many people coming up for apprenticeships here that do repointing and so on, but we're not giving them the skills and knowledge that we should, and twenty bloody odd years later, you know I was there in '87, here we are twenty-five years later, and we've gone backwards. Because basically they're fast track teaching you new build. So, no I don't think it delivers. I don't, end of subject. I really don't.

SH: So, the programmes that exist, because they can't train that many students at a time, and because they are expensive to run, are they sustainable?

GL: Well I think the courses aren't all that expensive. I mean it costs a lad around five thousand pounds to come and learn under me on a six-week course, so it's not even a thousand pounds a week. There's no way that that's not good value, you know. I mean, you know I certainly know

that bricklayers at this moment are earning two hundred pounds a day, so that's a thousand pounds a week you know what I mean. At this moment in England, that's definitely happening. Obviously, you would expect to pay someone like me a lot more than that. I mean that goes without saying because of my knowledge, my expertise and everything else. But what I am saying is that they are good value courses, I've never had anyone complain about that. But there just isn't the government funding to support them. So, you know obviously they take a week off to come to me, nobody pays them for that week, there is a double loss. There's a loss of payment, and it's a loss of earnings. But, what you hope they get and what I know they get is that they leave saying; you know what I've had a wonderful time, it's been a fantastic week and I've learned so much. I've never had anybody walk out the door seriously disappointed, never. So, I think they are good value, and obviously highly specialised work usually it won't be everywhere anyway, you know that is the very nature of why it is highly specialised. So, you know it's a difficult one that. But I just think had we grabbed it poorly we could have got this into all the colleges. But we should have made traditional work, it should have been running side by side, so when you went on a course about mortars you learned about cement and sand and you learned about lime and sand. You know it could have all been done in a sort of ying and yang effect. So, whatever the subject was, you did the traditional, the modern, traditional, the modern, and you could have done that all the way through the system. And that's how it should be taught. It really should be.

SH: So then what do you think is the future of training for heritage brickwork?

GL: Well I think the future is worrying in the sense that people like myself are getting older and obviously we will come out of the craft. In ten years from now, will I even be alive, you know, who knows. But the worry for me is you get people who will step into the shoes of Jeff Orton and Gerard Lynch and people, like that, but they'll never, ever have that depth and breadth that we really have. They may have some of their skills, they may have some of our knowledge, but they wouldn't really have that, Jeff and I would have such a grasp on our subject that you couldn't really catch us out no matter what side you come at us from because we've just been in it for all our lives, that's why the two of us get on so well. Yes, we admit we're still learning, yes, we admit you know there's so much more still to do, but the point is that you have people who have leapfrogged over a lot of stuff and are practicing at the top. And they are doing an okay job of it. Some are doing better than others. But at the end of the day it's all that's missing underneath it that's the big problem. And that's what's not getting filled. And that's why anybody that comes in that wants to do really well they've got to do the low-end stuff as well as the high-end stuff. They've got to complete the circle, and at the moment what's happening is that they're playing around at the top 180 degrees but without the lower 180 degrees and yet the lower 180 degrees is the proper foundation that supports the top. And that is the big worry.

SH: Excellent. So, if I were to say to you, last question, if I were to say to you Gerard, design me a programme or a system to train heritage brick workers, how would your structure that?

GL: I would go back to the type of apprenticeship that I had. I'd look at the way that was styled, and what I would do is add components to that that would develop that just a little bit more. I'd be putting an historical component in there, and I'd be expanding on the traditional things that were there when I was there, and I'd expand them further. You know we did do about cut and rubbed and gauged brickwork when I was an apprentice at college, but we didn't do enough of it. We did do about different joint finishes other than just a bucket handle you know and a raked out joint, but we didn't do enough of it, and we didn't give it an historical context saying; well you didn't see this at this time. So I think I would look back at the best of the past, the best of the present, I would look at the respects about NVQ that I like, because there are aspects that I like, I very much welcomed what came into Bedford College in the anticipation of the NVQ coming, but I left before it came. And that was, what I would call objective marking of models rather than subjective. So, I would go up to a student's model and say; you made a nice job of that, its level, and its plumb. Yeah well done I think I'll give that seven out of ten. And they would go; oh, thank you very much Mr. Lynch and then I would walk away. But you see what I liked was when we started to give anything tolerances. Was it level, plus or minus three mils in two meters. Was it plumb, plus or minus. And I think once we started to do that, then you could score that, you could work that out, and give it a thing. So, it was much more objective, and the student could see how you could arrive at that. So that was something that I would dovetail into the old system, that didn't exist in the old system. So, I would take the best of what I see now, I would take the best of what I learned as a person, how I've grown and what I've developed, in the way in which I've styled my books, and I would dovetail that into the old system, and I think you could get a cracking apprenticeship out of that. And I think you could do it in three years.

SH: Three years?

GL: A good three years. Yeah, I do. I really do believe you could. You know I think two years in lessons is too short, I think probably five years is too long, so I think probably you could do it in a good three years. And then if someone said what would be your Rolls-Royce programme, then I would go for the four. And I think that fourth year is when you could do the niches and you could do all the exquisite stuff, but I think the basics are all there now. They've got the geometry, they know how to cut out an arch, how to cut and shape it, now you can do the crème-de-la-crème bits, you know.

SH: Fantastic. So, your instructors for the programme, what would they need to know. What would their experience level be?

GL: Well they would have to be high end men. They would have to be genuine high-end men. They would have to be high end in sort of two ways. They would have to be high end in that their

skills in their hand are superlative, that they can actually demonstrate what they want the students to do. That would be critical. But I think they would have to be high end academic as well. I don't necessarily mean to say they would be as bright as I am with a PhD, that might be a bit too much to expect, But I'd like to think they would be well-read, they were well-versed in things and they would be able to stand up in front of a class and give a good account of themselves and put it over in a very eloquent way. And then the third ingredient that I would be looking for is motivators. You've got to be a motivator, and you've got to be able to read a class as you're talking to them. Look in their eyes and see if you're losing them, and how to do it. These are all the things I would have built into my PTN thing about how to teach because I've done it for so long I have a lot of experience in that area as well. And there's ways of teaching, there's ways of talking, recognising that students have different abilities, that that lad can take a joke, that lad is sensitive and a joke hurts, and you don't talk to him like you talk to him, and you don't conversely, talk to him like you talk to him. There's ways, or her, I keep talking in a male perspective. So I think I would be looking for someone who is friendly, but not a friend, of the students in or about, I would be looking for someone who has a passion for their job, so that their passion infected those students, and made them long for the next week to come back there in the class again, I'd be looking for some who is dedicated to the job, someone that really wants to be a good teacher, not someone that wants to show up and have a cozy way out of it, and would be presenting good quality lessons, well thought out, well structured, and someone that would be very proactive with the students. So, it would be a high benchmark.

SH: So, do you feel, given the current education system, your ideal programme could operate within that system?

GL: No, no. No because any NVQ is all about fast track learning. And it's not about education, it's about training. The education component is minimal. And that's no good. That's no good because the country that is leading Europe at the moment, industrially, is the country that has the best apprenticeship scheme in Europe, and that's Germany.

SH: Everybody has said that, that they're the best.

GL: It is, then to have quality apprentices, you have to teach people properly. And then what they do is promote people out of those apprenticeships into the positions of responsibility. So, when an engineer is trying to sell an engineering product, it's an engineer talking about it. What happens in England is that engineer that does all the work are not the people that go and flog it, it's some fellow you has never, ever held a tool or anything in his life, and if someone asks a technical question they can't answer it. But when someone asks the German at the same trade show a question, he can answer it.

SH: No wonder why I like to talk to Bendhiem Glass so much (laughs)

GL: (laughs). But it's true. Yeah so, I think that's the problem is that the present-day system is fast track learning; short, modular, and the emphasis is just on how do you do something, rather than what's the theory and technology and the history that underpins it, and that's a huge absence. You've got to know your materials, you've got to understand why something is done in a certain way. It's no good in learning how to pick up a trowel, do something and lay it. Well why do you hold the trowel that way, why do you not hold it that way, why do you cut the mortar that way, why do you cut the mortar, what's the reason behind that. But nobody's teaching the ins and outs and sometimes I'll say the simplest thing, and someone will say; God we've never heard any of this before. And I think what, how do you not know these basics, you know. I rest my case.

SH: So, last thing, are there any existing programmes out there that you feel that are working, maybe not meeting the requirements you have for an ideal programme, or working towards it?

GL: Well I certainly think the SAP programme is delivering. I do, I genuinely do. Not just because I'm on it, but I do genuinely think we delivered. I think the timber framers, the roof tillers, the plasterers, the bricklayers, the plumbers, the sheet lead association has done wonderful work and they're turning out some terrific, so yes, we do. We get people for six weeks and we really, really, nail it to them, at a very high level. My lads go to traditional brickyards, modern brickyards, they learn about the different clays, they learn about the different geological periods. They learn about why wood fired bricks look very different from coal fired bricks, and this is all in week one. They then learn the different buildings, we go and look at a Tudor building from 1440, that's medieval actually. We go and look at medieval buildings and we note the difference between that and say Kirby Ludlow which was built in the 1480's, and we note how that is different from Hampton Court which is 1515. We go to Houghton House, 1615, we go to Willen Church, 1680. And as were going through the periods we note the stylistic changes, the brick bonding changes, all of your brick changes, so really, by going out and looking and by having someone who really knows what they're looking at and talking to them is bringing the building alive. We go into my workshop, we play with brick axes, we learn to recreate moldings in the way that they did, we slake lime with sand like we did in Savannah the old-fashioned way, but at the same time we open up a bag of NHL and we mix it with sand and we learn the modern way of doing it. You know we pick up the jointers and do a double struck, overhand struck, bastard tuck, tuck-pointing, weather struck and cut, all the joint finishes they heard of but no one ever seems to know how to do them anymore. You know and we learn why the industry has a conservation side of it, how do we list buildings, what are conservation areas, we learn about the causes of failures, we learn about remedial actions, we learn about why cement is inappropriate, we learn about SPAB's philosophy, we learn about English Heritage's principles. So, a tremendous depth to their lessons so I do believe, and I was told I could do a six-week course. Six, five-day weeks, which is thirty days. And I as told that's it, that's the system, that's what you've got. And I designed a

system around that based on the style on how the plumbers were already doing theirs. I contacted Nigel Johnson from the sheet lead association that designed it for plumbing, for lead work, and I said; look Nigel, I know you from the Weald and Downland as we both worked there, and I don't want us to reinvent the wheel. You've already got a style, I'll use your style and the next time a course is designed it follows that format, but obviously a totally different subject. And so that's what I did you know. And it really, really has been a success and I've really, really been very, very proud of it, it has been a success. But I just know what more I can do if I could have them longer and I could have, say a much bigger facility, where we could build some permanent stuff and work on it and so on but, given what I have I think I do very well.

SH: Excellent, excellent. Well that's all the questions I have for you, do you have anything you would like to add?

GL: No, no all in all I think what I would say is that I think today one does not become qualified anymore in a craft. You know after completing a course by academic and practical examinations like you did in my day. So, when I got my City and Guilds I was a qualified basic bricklayer in City and Guilds and I became advanced craft qualified and so forth. Today it's just ticking boxes and deeming the person is competent. There's no such thing as being qualified bricklayer it's just being competent craftsman. It's a bit of a cop out really, you know what I mean. And so I think that's that's rather sad. You know, and I think that's something I touched on earlier, you've got to work hard to get something, and when you get it, it means the world to you. You know your sacrifice, and you know the hours up in your room revising for the exam that you didn't know what the questions were going to come. The day of your practical exam you sort of arrived at the college at 8:30 in the morning and by 9:15 you were building a model, so you can finish it by half past four because it had to be assessed and all that. You know, I think that was terrific and I don't know we seem to think that we need to make it easy for everyone today and were not doing them any favours. We've got a whole load of young people who are just coasting through life. And I think they need challenges and they need to rise that's what I think. And I'll end it at that.

SH: Excellent. Well I'm going to turn this recorder off real quick.

End recording

Total recording time

2.14.55

Interview Form-Individual

Name: Jeff Orton _____

Current address: _____, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire, United Kingdom

Birthdate: _____ 1948 _____

Age: 66 _____

Occupation: Plasterer _____

Interview Date: 1 August 2014 _____

Interview Location: Stephen-Savannah, Jeff-Melton Mowbray UK (Skype) _____

Interviewer: Stephen Hartley _____

Generation: 2-United Kingdom _____

Consent Form signed: 30 July 2014 _____

Begin recording

Jeff Orton (JO): I was talking to another of my old school friend of mine recently who was a saddler, and he was talking to somebody twenty-five years ago from New Zealand who said nobody is being training in the traditional crafts, building crafts. And he said it will be the same in this country very soon, and it is. It is. It's terrible. So, I don't know the answers Steve. I would like to take on the government or anybody. Even phone the Queen and ask her about it. So yeah, anything I can do.

Stephen Hartley (SH): Well, first were going to start out with an overview of how this is going to work. I'm going to ask you ten questions.

JO: Yes

SH: Within those questions we have what's called probes, and probes are just basically there to kind of encourage you to give more information or be a little more descriptive of what you're talking about. Some of the questions are going to be simple and going to be so basic that you're going to be like why he is asking that. The reason why I'm asking it is because I'm writing this for an audience that is not, there not practitioners.

JO: Yes, I know what you mean because I've done videos before where I've had to sort of, expect to talk to people that haven't got a clue.

SH: Well hopefully what will come out of this, once it's all said and done, is an examination of how the UK approaches their heritage craft training and how the US does and hopefully finding some common ground where both systems can adopt something to improve it.

JO: Yeah.

SH: York is kind of pushing me to submit to ICOMOS for maybe some international standards. I think that's a little bit ambitious at this point, but we'll see how the whole thing ends up. So,

before we actually go into the questions I just have some basic information that I need to get from you, your current address?

JO: Well, [REDACTED].

SH: Alright your birthdate?

JO: [REDACTED] 1948 is when I was born.

SH: Which would make you how old now Jeff?

JO: Sixty-six.

SH: Sixty-six last week?

JO: Yes.

SH: Your occupation?

JO: Master Plasterer.

SH: Alright. I can get the rest of the stuff.

JO: Which next week I'll would have been doing it fifty-one years.

SH: Fifty-one years huh?

JO: Next week.

SH: I can't even think of what I'll be doing in fifty years. Alright, question number one. What is your profession and describe what you do in that capacity.

JO: My profession is a plasterer. But I would like to stress that it's a plasterer dealing with traditional work rather than the modern construction industry. So, I am involved in the repair of old buildings.

SH: Ok.

JO: It's, when I started my apprenticeship, I was sometimes working on new buildings, sometimes working on old buildings. But I knew then which I preferred to be involved with and that was old buildings.

SH: What's the difference between new and traditional plasterwork?

JO: In today's world, well when I started, fifty-one years ago, it wasn't all that much different. Things have changed from sand and lime to sand and cement backing coats with a gypsum finish and plasterboard, sheetrock, has taken over from wood lathe.

SH: So, when did you begin practicing?

JO: August 1963.

SH: 63. How old where you?

JO: Fifteen.

SH: Fifteen. Where did you start working?

JO: For a local firm in the small town in which I live.

SH: Which is Melton Mowbray?

JO: Which is Melton Mowbray.

SH: You're obviously not still employed with that company. How long did you last with them?

JO: I stuck with them for eight years. I did a five-year apprenticeship and I stuck for a further three years.

SH: Okay. What was the name of that company?

JO: It was called Complast which stood for concrete and plastering contractors. Complast.

SH: Where did you go after that?

JO: I went, well I went to a firm in Leicester, which is our county town. I only stuck with them six months because it was a rat race. Then my friend and I, who I knew for many years, we decided to become self-employed, and in 1972, in January, we went self-employed and worked freelance for whoever wanted us.

SH: Ok. So, you spent a lot of your time as a subcontractor in other words?

JO: Yes. Sometimes it was doing new work and sometimes it was doing old work. When I say old work I'm meaning repair work.

SH: So what attracted you to plastering?

JO: When I was at school I was considered not a very clever person because I've never been tested for dyslexia but I was hopeless at spelling, hopeless at maths, but I was brilliant at geography and history especially. Now when I got to work, and they were doing molded work, and the boss's son told me that all these shapes came to us from ancient Greece and Rome I thought wow this is fantastic. Plus, I could use these, my hands. I could do anything with them so that was, it became a complete shock that I could do this without any, ok it took five years to learn but, it was instant. I could do it. And then that was a great sense of pleasure, being classed as not very clever at school to going into a very old traditional craft, and I could do it. So yes, I enjoyed that. So, then I went to technical college for four years, on day release, and I did very, very well there. So, it did boost my confidence. In fact, I must just say it will be fifty-one years ago this October that I stood in my old boss's yard and it suddenly occurred to me why I was on earth: plastering. So yes. I'd only been at work for three months, but I knew then why I was here.

SH: Did you ever consider doing anything else?

JO: No (laughs). There didn't seem to be any point. You're telling me there are other things besides plastering?

SH: Apparently there are other things besides what we do, but I don't know what they are.

JO: No. No, I don't. To be honest, when I was about twenty-two, my sister, she had a pony, and she liked to go riding. And I got involved and I thought this has got a bit of history in it as well. But no, I you wouldn't get me away from plastering.

SH: So, what's your favourite part of the plastering trade?

JO: That's very difficult. There's so many aspects to plastering. From plain work, external work, internal work, decorative work, run moldings, hand molded decorative work, and I wouldn't like,

now run moldings in situ I do love doing. I just absolutely love it. You know some people like to think on sport, I think that is the equivalent. I just love doing it.

SH: What's your least favourite aspect?

JO: I haven't got one. (Laughs) Dear. Well I wouldn't like to be involved with monotonous modern plain plastering. It was fine when I was young because I was very, very fit. Very fit because it was good exercise. Now I thought oh no. Not that. No, it's got to be something that's visually wonderful, so.

SH: Excellent. So, you talked about school. So where, what school program did you attend?

JO: Well it was classed in England as a secondary education. And I went to infant school, primarily school, and then it was a modern boy's school. So, I left, well I did leave when I was fourteen. It was three weeks before my fifteenth birthday. So, it probably was a waste of eleven years. (Laughs). But the next fifty made up for it.

SH: There you go. What about your college programme. What, where did you go to college?

JO: I went to Leicester Technical College. It was part of Leicester School of Art, Faculty of Design, Department of Building. So, I went there for four years, which led to the City and Guilds examinations at the end.

SH: Could you explain a little more about the structure, how that programme was set up?

JO: Well it was very interesting to think of looking back because I started at Leicester Technical College in 1964. In September. And in a class of twenty-two, I was the only one who had run an in-situ molding at work. None of the others had ever done it, they were just concerned with plain plasterwork. So, the College course was structured around them learning how to do molding work and decorative work.

SH: So, the programme you had, you had block release. How did that work?

JO: Well, when I started we were on day release. So that went on for two years. Then they suddenly changed it to block release, which meant I went on three blocks. The first block was four weeks, the second block was four weeks, and the third block was three weeks. So that was going to college every day for that amount of weeks. So, I was absent from work for that period. It was hard work because my original boss had died in 1966, his son had taken over the firm and had wound down the workforce, so there were only three of us towards the end. So, he kept the firm going while I was away at college for four weeks. So, it was very good for giving me that opportunity. So, but he realised the importance of going to college and the fact he recognised that I was doing very well. Because I did win, it was classed as a college award which meant the award for the best student in the college for the year. Well I won it two successive years while I was there.

SH: Excellent.

JO: So, there was something in it that proved, was it the fact that I just happened to be interested in plastering and the other students wasn't. It was just they went to college because it was a part of their life that they just had to do. But I just enjoyed it.

SH: Excellent. So, did you feel that your instructors at the College at the time were properly equipped both in materials and equipment and in actual knowledge?

JO: Yes, the senior tutor and his assistant were both very skilled and qualified plasterers in their own right. They had gone through apprenticeships themselves and they knew the craft inside and out.

SH: So, what do you think the best aspect and worst aspects to your training were?

JO: At College?

SH: Yeah.

JO: (pause) I'm just trying to think on that one Steve. When I think back now obviously I've enjoyed every minute of it. No, I can't remember, because I do remember the theory lessons, after two years you had the choice to decide between mathematics and geometry because the tutor's opinion was not everyone is good at maths, not everyone is good at geometry and you should decide which way you want to go with life. Someone who is good at maths may want to go into estimating. But someone that is good in geometry may want to go into setting out. So, I chose geometry, so it was obvious then that I didn't want to be in business, run a company. I just wanted to do the work.

SH: Do you feel that the training system that you studied under is still appropriate for today's society?

JO: If it could be brought back, yes it would. Now although we were taught to use modern materials but were also taught the traditional ways. Now in the Colleges in England now, that doesn't happen anymore. All they are taught is modern materials, modern methods and techniques. But we were taught traditional ways. That was good at the time but within the next ten years that changed completely. So, what you have is possibly the generation, certain anyone who started after 1975, wouldn't have had a through training at College. Certainly, that's a long while ago.

SH: Why do you think they cut that? The traditional ways.

JO: Well I know that, because I have been told, it was the CITB, the Construction Industry Training Board, they were on a programme of de-skilling all the building crafts. Basically because they didn't think they were needed anymore, and they wanted to cut back on the costs. I went back to my College is Leicester in the mid 70's, no in the late 70's and I spoke to my old tutor and he said this is not what I came into do. And he took early retirement. The earliest he could take retirement, he did. Because it was not what he wanted to do. So, I lay the blame fully on the CITB

in the 1970's for de-skilling all the building trades. So, and we're still reaping the repercussion from that now.

SH: Do you think the CITB has improved at all since...

JO: No, no, no. It's getting worse. It's getting far worse. The Colleges now just do not want to know traditional work. Where they imagine someone will come from to repair an old building, I don't know. But certainly, I would say the government in this country, the current government more than, well, the previous government were the ones to blame for a lot. But this has been going on for thirty-five years now. The de-skilling of building trades. The simplification of the construction industry for semi-skilled workers.

SH: So how did the industry itself changed since you began practicing?

JO: When I started in 1963 it was still fairly traditional in the way buildings were built. Roofs, brickwork, stonework. Roofs were built by carpenters all hand cut, hand built but now it has changed that practically nothing, nothing at all is prepared on site. Everything arrives on site ready-made and is erected very, very quickly. Which, some people will argue, that is progress. Without a doubt, yes, it is progress. Buildings go up in an amazing amount of time which wet trades are very slow, if we can get rid of the wet trades, the better. But how do we repair old buildings? This is my main concern. The modern construction industry has got to progress. Without a doubt. I see buildings going up all over the place so quickly. Fair enough. But how to we repair our wealth of historic buildings. In the United States as well. There must be, the amount of sixteenth and eighteenth-century buildings that need looking after and we need the craftsman to do it across the board. So that all the building trades, stonework masonry, bricklayers, carpenters, joiners, lead workers, very, very important, and the poor old plasterers.

SH: Has your practice, have there been any new products or tools that have, you know, helped or hindered your practice?

JO: Now as regards to traditional work, yes there's been improvements certainly materials, techniques. But you still have to do it. The most wonderful thing in today's world for mold making is silicon rubber which has speeded up anything is possible to copy. Which is fine in repair work. Now the traditional ways, they still take the time. Now these methods wouldn't have gone out. It wasn't bad work or inferior materials, it just took a lot of time. Now today's, with the advent of plasterboard was it Sacket in the 1890's, someone called Sacket in America developed sheetrock as a packing case material. He leads the world. So yeah, the future, the future for the construction industry is cladding, sheet material, and we'll get rid of the wet materials that takes time. So, anybody with any sense will say well no we don't want that. If it's going to take time, we don't want it it's got to be instant.

SH: So, has the growth of the conservation movement affected your practice?

JO: Yeah. Now when I started, the very word conservation didn't exist. We did repair work. We worked on an old building, we repaired it. And that was that. Now due to the CITB and the lack of people being trained in the traditional crafts, now don't forget when I started we still had pre-war craftsman that had started in the 1920's and 30's and they told me that conservation just didn't exist. But nowadays we've decided that, it's just like they've putting us akin to a museum. Yes, if you've got a very valuable artefact in a museum that needs repairs, then conservation, that is the way. But that's museum. Now our buildings, they need repairing so, the conservator, which is a breed of people that have found a profession for themselves that has never existed, they've decided to jump on the bandwagon because there's not enough craftsman to do the repair work, so they call themselves conservators, and they conserve it. And it's like hang on a minute you don't know how to do it in the first place, so you have to save everything. But you'll never make a craftsman out of a conservator, but you'll make a very good conservator out of a craftsman. Now those are not my words they are from a man named Ian Constaindines, who unfortunately died a couple of years ago. Yes, it's true. Because craftsmanship takes years of training from a young age and I must stress a young age because your body is still developing. When I started at fifteen I was told it was too late I should have started at fourteen. You learn, your body, your muscles develop as you learn the craft, the techniques, your body develops so by the time you're twenty-one your body is trained. A bit like a gymnast, and athlete, your body is trained, but you must train your body when it's young.

SH: So has plaster turned into a niche market?

JO: Now, do you mean the repair of it or traditional work? It has. Don't forget it was an invention in the mid-19th century from France called fibrous plaster, now all of a sudden that took over the decorative work and by the end of the Second World War all the buildings were being repaired in fibrous plaster. That's plaster that's cast in a workshop and fixed as a huge component, rather than done in situ. But, it is wrong to repair a building that was made in a traditional manner with fibrous plaster. It might be cheaper, no getting away from that, but you still, in very historic buildings, it needs to be repaired with like for like materials and techniques. So that's what I've seen. But I will stress that fibrous plaster started from the mid-19th century and by 1900 it really was in vogue. In theatres, even on ships. These big liners were filled with fibrous plaster because it was lightweight and easy to produce. So, it's got its place, without a doubt. Its wonderful material, but it's got its wrong place in historic buildings that wasn't built in the period before fibrous plaster came along. So yes, we must always acknowledge the fact that it's there. Extreme circumstances, mainly cost, it has to be used to repair decorative work.

SH: So, how do you feel about the future of your craft?

JO: I'm in desperation, basically. I've got the idea that I've got to live forever because the state that the crafts are going. Unless we start training young people, it will be lost forever. We'll be

going back to the fall of the Roman Empire when these skills were lost for over a thousand years. So if we don't train people, well I wouldn't like to see an elite form of craftsman. They still need to have a basic knowledge and an appreciation of old buildings to work on them. But I am in despair of the future of where this craft is going to lie and how can we resurrect a system that will teach young people, and I do stress young people in it. And give them the interest. Because a lot of conservators have come into that in later life and their bodies are not accustomed to doing it.

SH: So where do you see practitioners in your field working in the future?

JO: How do you mean Steve?

SH: Plasterers, the plasterers that are still left, first are there enough to take care of all the work that needs to be done?

JO: No, there's not enough left to take care of the building stock we've got. And certainly not enough coming in to be trained. There are pockets all over England. Now Scotland is different. Scotland is doing very well. Ireland's doing very well and in Wales there's a lot of interest. But in England there are just pockets of men all over the country that can still do it, but they're not being made use of. I think our government should do something about it. We had something called the National Heritage Training Group now presumably still got it, which was a half-hearted attempt to get people trained, but it's certainly not serious enough.

SH: Is, are the people entering the field properly trained?

JO: Can you say that again Steve?

SH: These entering the field now, are they properly trained?

JO: No, no. In fact, I get quite in despair with the number of people ringing me up and asking, where do I go to get trained? Where do I get a job with a company where I can get trained? They don't exist. The colleges don't train it. There are a lot of independent training centres. But you don't learn a craft like plastering by going on a course for three days or a week. You need to go, you need to serve an apprenticeship and you need to go to college to get the theoretical teaching.

SH: So, are you confident that your craft will survive in fifty to a hundred years?

JO: I'm not confident at all. I'm in despair. No, I have no confidence in how things are going at the moment. Unless there's a big turnaround, and that can only be instigated by the government, not individuals to try to do it on a commercial basis to me just doesn't work. It's got to be done government run. Like the colleges when I went, a government run scheme where people are paid to learn. When I started work, my first year at work, an old plasterer said to me remember boy, you're being paid to learn. Not to work, you're being paid to learn. And to me that struck me as what a good apprenticeship should be. And you wasn't expected to be able to make money for

your boss until you've been at work for at least three years. So, all that time up until then, you were learning.

SH: So, do you, I know you're retired now, but when you were practicing, do you ever train apprentices?

JO: Yes. Yes. I joined a Birmingham firm, I mean up until then I'd have chaps come to work for me, and two of them went on to be plasterers. But when I joined the Birmingham firm, which was a large firm in Birmingham which had been on the go since the nineteenth century, they had apprentices. So, I was given apprentices to teach, which an odd few of them are still doing it.

SH: That firm was Trumpeter's Limited correct?

JO: It was Trumpeter's Limited yes. But they no longer exist. But a lot of those apprentices are still working on important buildings.

SH: So, what did you do with those apprentices out in the field?

JO: What did I do at work?

SH: What did they do at work?

JO: Well we worked as a team. That was how you were taught. You worked together as a team until you got to the stage where you could work together, that's two-people working as one. That is teamwork. I mean this all across the spectrum of things as I've mentioned sport, the armed forces, anything, and it's a team. And plastering and with other crafts, stonemasonry, carpentry, brick masons can sometimes work by themselves, but plastering is not a job for one man it's at the very least two people working together, sometimes three with a labourer. So it is a team. And a team has to function as one. And a team has to be trained like an individual needs to be trained. And it can only be done by people that have experience on how it should be.

SH: I already know the answer to the next two probes, but I'm going to ask them. Do you participate in short course training?

JO: Yes. I do short course training quite a lot in different parts of England at the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum, West Dean College, I've just been down to Cornwall to a company that produces lime, to do a course teaching. So yes, I do take part although the fact that nine years ago this October I fell from a scaffold, an accident, and hit my head, I'm not allowed to work anyway. But, I do take part in courses to pass on the skills. I decided the reason I fell from the scaffold, whatever reason it was, was to go down a different route so I can pass on my skills to other people whenever I can. Of course, the older you get your body doesn't, it doesn't react like it used to do. But at the moment I'm still capable of doing it. And show somebody how it should be done. So and that is the important thing; the human element of teaching somebody.

SH: What about academic training programmes?

JO: Now I do get involved in academic training programmes. I give lectures on the history of plaster as well. Because it's no good getting involved in old buildings if you don't have an interest

in history. So I do give lectures on the history of plastering and they do come off in an academic way. I'm not some boring historian. I try to make it interesting. I do know a lot about old work so yeah. And this is it if you can sometimes capture a young person's imagination with old buildings with history, that's half the battle. Getting them interested.

SH: So are you an active member of any professional organisation relating to craft?

JO: Yes, I'm a member of the Building Limes Forum, which I sit on the committee. I'm a freeman in the Worshipful Company of Plasterers in London. And I'm also a member of the Plasterers Craft Guild but that's not quite active at the moment. It's another one that fell by the wayside as people get older. There's no young blood coming through. I'm a member of the SPAB; the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, which I do a lot of talks, demonstrations for that. Phew, what else am I involved with? Involved with quite a few, but there the three main ones. The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, Worshipful Company of Plasterers, and the Building Limes Forum.

SH: How do you become a freeman in the Worshipful Company?

JO: Freeman of the Worshipful Company?

SH: Yeah.

JO: You have to prove your worth as a craftsman and be invited to join. This is one of the old livery companies of London. They were granted a Royal Charter in 1501. I can't afford yet to be a liveryman. But I am a freeman. In that respect I can take my sheep over London Bridge. I haven't got any sheep but if I did I could. I could also get drunk in the City of London and not get arrested.

SH: Oh excellent. That second one is a little more important today. So how do you become a Liveryman then?

JO: Well you have to be invited and then obviously you have to have sufficient funds to pay. It's not that expensive and I hope in the future I will. But the Livery companies now, when the Worshipful Company of Plasterers was started just as Guild for the plastering craft but since then businessmen have moved in so it's more of a social thing. But they do do a lot. The Worshipful Company of Plasterers, as well as with the Worshipful Company of Carpenters and Joiners are doing quite a lot. Because they've realised as well over the last twenty-five years we've lost too much and they're trying to move things forward. But, as I've said unless the government does something there's no good of us shouting. We need the government to get something going like they do after any world war; the government needs to get the country going again. What we've lost over the last fifty years I think the government needs to resurrect something. Without a doubt. And whoever we can lobby or bully then all the better. And that's why I think things like this, what you're undertaking Steve to try and get across how important it is to train people, it may feel at times like banging your head against a brick wall, but we've got to carry on doing it.

SH: I'm hoping something will come out of this and it doesn't end up in a drawer somewhere that no one ever reads. Only one way to find out.

JO: Well we've got to do something. There's no point sitting back and watching. So, whatever we can do the better.

SH: So if someone came to you and said, and you already touched on this a little, if someone said to you Jeff I want to be a plasterer, what do I do?

JO: Exactly. And people do come to me and ask that very question. And at the moment I say unless you can get a job with a traditional firm, which is very, very difficult because they hardly exist. There's one or two more setting up. There's one in Nottinghamshire. They're called Sponsor's who've realised that it's important to train apprentices to do repair work. Now that is a good sign. Now going back forty years that was the opposite. We had old craftsman still. So, if we needed people they were still around. But now they're all gone. Virtually all gone. So, if companies can suddenly realise that there is money that can be made. Now modern construction is a profitable business. But repairing old building is not always a money spinning occupation. It's, it's at bit like a doctor. That's why we've got the National Health Service in England. Someone has to pay for it. And there's organisations like the National Trust, that's another one that I'm a member of. I do demonstrations for them and English Heritage as well. But they haven't got a bottomless pit of money so therein lies the problem, where is the funding coming from? We're no different than the men who came before us. We just need to be trained. Or pass the training on to young people. To give them the attitude. And that's what's missing nowadays; attitude and mind. If you've got the correct attitude towards your work, then you will succeed.

SH: Do you feel there are any programmes or training facilities that are adequately preparing those for entering the field?

JO: (Pause). There's a firm in Bristol called the Flood Brothers, now two of them are twins, and they're are in their mid-sixties. Now the firm was started by their father. Now they're doing the best to train people on courses, but it's not like working on site, everyday doing the same thing. Now my son Henry and a friend, they've just been involved in a World Heritage site in Derbyshire and they've done a lot of lime plastering and it's been very well accepted. But they've been trained in it and they were trying to train men there and I might be wrong is saying this, but young people don't really want to know what hard work is. This is what you want to get across to them. A lot of hard work is like doing a sport. You're doing something and at the same time keeping your body very, very fit.

SH: So, are there any misconceptions about you're craft that people have?

JO: Well people think it's easy. It's not. That's a big misconception it's not easy, its hard work, very hard work. But you'll get a lot of pleasure for it. And I must stress that that anyone considering it must be aware that anyone that wants to be involved in it understand that it is very

hard work. Traditional plasterwork, by that I mean lime plaster, only achieves hardness by your physical strength. It doesn't set. It's not like Portland cement or gypsum, because it does not set. It goes hard by your hard work so people need to realise that. No good telling an athlete that he's got to run a mile that he can just do it. He's got to train, and he's got to be prepared for very hard work.

SH: So actually, I only have two more questions for you and before I ask these questions I just want to give a caveat. You obviously know who I am, and you know what I do for a living. I don't want you to hold back on your answers to these two questions because you're speaking to me.

JO: As far as you're concerned you're just someone interviewing me.

SH: I'm just somebody interviewing you and honestly me as my role in Savannah Tech, I don't want to hear what I'm doing right, I want to hear what I'm doing wrong.

JO: Right.

SH: I'm only going to improve when people tell me what I'm doing wrong. So, question number nine and I know you already answered this but we're asking it again, do you feel that current educational offerings are adequate to prepare apprentices to enter the field?

JO: In England?

SH: Yes.

JO: No.

SH: No?

JO: No.

SH: Are there not enough programmes, do they not have the correct faculty?

JO: Yes, but both. There's not enough programmes, they don't have the correct faculty. For years I've said there should be a central training centre in England with satellite colleges in different areas in the country that could relate to the centre and pass on. It was started in Italy. In 1975, European Architectural Heritage Year, concerns were raised then about the future of, well people were realising that they traditional crafts were dying out. In 1979 the European Centre for the Training of Craftsman in the Conservation of Architectural Heritage was set up. Now there were supposed to be different centres in different European countries but the one in Italy was the only one to materialise. Now the Germans, they've tackled it quite well in their country. They've got centres there, but England does not. Now this was backed by some good English architects Daniel Insall and Bernard Feilden they backed it thoroughly as a lot of Labour MPs did in England. But it never had its contemporary one in England. It was planned but never caught on because nobody wanted to pay. Because the centre in Italy got European funding so it's still on the go, it's not in Venice anymore, it's in Tierney as small city north of Vicenza which I go there once a year to teach, which is nice. Thirty-three years ago, I went as a student, now I go back as a teacher. So, I'd

like to think it's an ongoing thing, but we do need to train more people. I was lucky. I served my apprenticeship and I was taught by men who knew their trade inside and out. And we need to pass on those skills.

SH: So are there any advantages to current educational offerings?

JO: Are there any advantages? What to the way things are now?

SH: Yeah to the way that training programmes are set up now.

JO: Well I've only experienced three. The one in Italy, the one in Charleston, South Carolina, and the Technical College in Savannah. They are making moves to teach people and I would like to think they could interact with each other, but these are just starting points. The College in Charleston, very, very good. Very good. The concept there, wonderful. But it's self-funded. Money again. It's a very big worry. But a lot of people are concerned about these things, and they know the right way to proceed. But without the necessary funding, it won't happen. So, I'm not saying I've got a negative outlook, I've just got, I'm concerned that nobody wants to fund it, and where does the funding come from. It can't come from private individuals it has to come from the government. And that's my feelings. Any educational system must be government led.

SH: So, what do you think the greatest drawbacks in the system are? Could you talk a little bit about that?

JO: The drawback is that the traditional crafts have not been pushed forward. They're being dropped. That is the drawback. Nobody wants to know about traditional crafts. It's changed a lot over the last twenty-five years I will say that. There's been a lot of interest in using traditional materials. So, it's reawakening but unless we do something about the training, it's not good in producing traditional materials unless you train people to use them. So yes, that's the negative side of that. We can do anything with the training. With the correct training, we can do anything.

SH: So I'm going to ask this question, I ask this question to all the UK interviewees, now you trained under and got your City and Guilds certificate.

JO: Yes.

SH: How do you feel about the NVQ system?

JO: It's terrible, terrible. Absolutely, because it changed, in the 1970's like I said there was a de-skilling of the building crafts. Then into the 1980's we had the YTS that's the Youth Training Scheme that was even worse. In the 80's they brought in the modular system into the 90's in the Colleges, and it's been downhill ever since. And, no it's not working at all. So unless we go back to what the apprenticeship system, and people have told me; no, no it will never come back, and then I say and the City and Guilds, oh no, no. That was a through, it started in the nineteenth century to train craftsman which was then in the traditional building skills anyway but nowadays, we need modern construction workers. Ok, they're just fixers, but we still need City and Guilds in traditional work. If that could be resurrected then there's must be a vast wealth of information if

someone has thought about keeping it, in what went on through all those examinations over a hundred years. So, that's a drop in the ocean when you think how long buildings need, how long they need, to live, to be repaired, how many centuries so we've just got to keep those crafts alive. Because in the past it went on in the traditional way but now it's changed so dramatically. I mean I must lay the blame on two World Wars. After the Second World War they had to be changed. Because we lost everything and since, because the fact I started in 1963, and now I'm 66-year-old I'm supposed to be retired from the craft, but in 1973 they didn't even receive the type of training that I did. So, we've got to go back to somehow save the future. Or save the past for the future.

SH: Well if I were to say to you, Jeff money is no object. I want you to design a programme or a system, how would you do it?

JO: If that was, I would choose a centre in the middle of England that then had satellite colleges in the regions, the southwest, the southeast, the northwest, and the northeast. And they could all collated the information back to that central base of operation so that it could go out. Because you do get regional variations, there's no doubt about it. But in order to have something like the City and Guilds examination, the end of the nineteenth century, you needed a national format for everyone to adhere to. And regional variations come in, but you still need a national format. So, to me, if money was no object, that's how I would do it, with people traveling the country explaining.

SH: How long would it take a student who started in that programme, how long would it take them to finish?

JO: Certainty not less than four years. Longer if it's possible. Four years minimum.

SH: And there would be an apprenticeship component obviously in that?

JO: Yeah, yeah.

SH: Alright. Let's see here. Because you just answered a lot of these probes at once. Is there anything being taught now that is unnecessary?

JO: (Pause) No I don't think so. Well there's nothing being taught now. (Laughs). This is the problem. I mean even some of the big manufactures, the plasterboard manufactures, they've got training colleges of their own. But all that's involved with is sticking plasterboard or sheetrock on walls and finishing the joints. So that's the future for plain surfaces. But no, nothing being taught. And I, take my word for it I keep good watch in what's happening all over the country and a lot of people, a lot of institutions are doing their best, but it's not getting us anywhere, but in the meantime, us older craftsman are getting older.

SH: So, given the current education system, could your ideal system operate in that?

JO: Yes, because what it would also entail is going into schools and talking to youngsters about the building crafts. When Henry, my second son, when he was at school he was going into A

levels, but some of his friends were leaving at sixteen. And I said to him, what did they tell you about the building trades? He said nothing. He said unless you know someone in it or has got a relative in it, he said it might as well not exist. So there's another reason for if the money was there, for these various centres, to go into schools and explain about building crafts, and how they can make some children very happy earning a living by using their hands. And working hard.

SH: Given today's push on technology and computers and everything like that, what do you think the best way to reach these children are? You know everyone wants their kid to be a computer programmer and not work with their hands, how do you approach those children?

JO: Well whether the schools could have a curriculum that where you could say to the youngster look were going to have a day's demonstration that would appeal to people who want to use their hands to earn a living, and the ones who, it's no good forcing everybody through the same game and say yes, you all will like this because some will not like it. But there would be others that would say, I'd like to do that. So, to me again, that would be, you've got to, you've got to appeal to the youngsters before they get past the age where they've left, and they think well I'll just sit looking at a computer all day. When I was fourteen, we had career lessons. And one week we'd have a careers officer, and the next week we'd have the headmaster. And the careers officer gave use leaflets about all the traditional crafts and everything and the headmaster said we had to make a list of at least three careers that we would like to do. And the headmaster said to us one week he said now boys, because it as an all-boys school, he said think very carefully what you put on that list, because what you choose to do, you'll be doing for the next fifty years. And at fourteen you think (gasp) for the next fifty years? Well I haven't done fifty years, I've done fifty-one (laughs). And it's been fun, well it hasn't been fun every minute, but it's been a worthwhile career. So, and I'm sure young people should again be offered the same opportunities, being made aware of what's there. But, having said that, there's got to be a job for them at the end for them to go to. This is your other problem. There's got to be one. Because they have to earn a living. (Inaudible)

SH: You broke up there for a minute could you repeat that?

JO: I said they've got to earn a living. There's no good them thinking I'd like to go into a craft, but there's no companies to work for. Otherwise I might as well be in a supermarket stacking shelves or looking at a computer screen. So young people want to earn money, we can't get away from that. But in the same time many of them would be happy earning money at the same time practicing a craft. And being taught a craft. And don't forget when I served an apprenticeship we was on low money for five years. Now somebody who just went in as a labourer was on full money at eighteen years of age. So a lot of people then decided oh no I don't want to be an apprentice. I want money. But there were others that were quite happy to have a low wage in return for being taught a craft and a skill. So, I'm sure people never change, but they should be

made aware of the options. People should, youngsters should, we there's lots of them that would love to work with their hands. Well why should, if they, why are there so many magazines for handicrafts for people to make things? Yet there's no magazines on building crafts. Used to be. Not anymore. So is it more, is it these crafts that people are just doing in their spare time, to occupy themselves. I know they wouldn't want to do plastering in their spare time. (Laughs) It's nice to turn a nice piece of wood on a lathe or something, but no plastering's a bit different. Although people are quite happy to make little plaster casts of statues and that but doing that in situ is hard work. But it's fun.

SH: Fantastic. Well that's actually all the questions I have for you, but do you have anything you'd like to add?

JO: Only the fact that when I served my apprenticeship I was taught by men that had been taught by previous craftsmen and they'd been taught by previous craftsmen. So a lot of what I was told was not something that that person suddenly thought up at the time it was something that was handed down. So the skills were handed down, but some of the actually concepts on why we do the work was handed down. And an old plasterer said to me. Again, when I was fifteen, and his name was Stan Hoff, and he said, when you're old with your friends around the town, or in buildings he said, and you're looking at plasterwork, he said don't think to yourself how did they do that, think, how would I do that. And that was the best bit of advice I was ever given. How would I do that because in my life I often came across thing that I had already thought about. So, yes, the best bit of advice he ever gave me. How would I do that? Hopefully one day it would come along. So, yes, it had come before.

SH: Fantastic. Anything else before I turn off the recorder.

JO: No. Only that we must, we must stress the lack of, when I say craftsmen I mean craftsmen and craftswomen. Not craftsperson, craftsmen and craftswomen. Because sometime ladies are very, very good on bench work. Incredibly good. Very, very good. So, it's right across the board so there are opportunities for all of us to go into these crafts. And that's what they are: crafts. Skilled crafts but still very inspiring to do. That's it. Thank you, Steve.

SH: No Jeff thank you. Let me shut this off here.

End recording.

Total recording time 1.02.56

Interview Form-Individual

Name: Richard Harris_____

Current address: [REDACTED], London, United Kingdom [REDACTED]_____

Birthdate: 28 October 1945_____

Age: 68_____

Occupation: Retired(ish)_____

Interview Date: [REDACTED] 2014_____

Interview Location: Richard-Norfolk Stephen-Savannah (Skype)_____

Interviewer: Stephen Hartley_____

Generation: 2-United Kingdom_____

Consent Form Signed Date: 26 August 2014_____

Begin Recording

Stephen Hartley (SH): Alright before we get started I just need some basic information from you. Your current address?

Richard Harris (RH): My current address, yes is [REDACTED], London [REDACTED].

SH: Okay, and your birthdate?

RH: [REDACTED]-45.

SH: Which would make you how old now?

RH: Oh god you work that out. Sixty-Eight I think. Is that right?

SH: That sounds about right.

RH: Yeah that's right.

SH: And your occupation?

RH: Well that's a tricky one. Retired-ish.

SH: And you're in Suffolk right now, or Norfolk isn't it?

RH: Norfolk yes.

SH: So, how this whole thing is going to work is there are ten questions, inside those questions are what we call probes and probes are just there to kind of elaborate more on the questions themselves. The idea behind this whole research is to see how the US and the UK approach heritage craft training, and to see if there could be some common ground between the two of them that can improve both systems. So, the first question is, what is, or in your case what was, your profession and can you describe what you did in that capacity?

RH: Well I trained, I had architectural training and I became Research Director for the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum. This is a profession that only existed in one job, it's not a recognised profession (laughs). And then I became Director of the Museum, so I became a Museum Director, then I retired.

SH: Excellent. So, what did you do in your role at the Weald and Downland, I know you oversaw a lot of expansion in that.

RH: My role mainly was to work on exhibit projects which meant identifying, recording, dismantling and resurrecting exhibit buildings.

SH: Okay. Did you have any issues at that time when you were working in that field? I know that Weald and Downland sort of lead the way in the understanding of traditional building, especially timber frame buildings.

RH: Well, there were a lot of, I wouldn't say issues, a lot of new, developing fields that I was part of. I mean I got interested in historic buildings first in 1968 I suppose it was, 1967-68. And at that time, interest in, professional interest in conservation was quite a very, very small, quite a limited field so, there were a lot of things to discover. Also, I would say that the profession, I suppose I would say if I called myself anything I would say I'm a buildings archaeologist. But that was a non-existent profession at that time we were making it up as we went along more or less. The things, I mean to give you an idea; you know lime, which is a material which is now, everybody swears by and is constantly written about, and has endless books about and so on was, it was almost impossible to find any information about. I was just in the hiatus between the ends of people's career where they learnt this as part of their crafts training, and where people relate it as part of building conservation. It was a sort of dead period really. So lime for example you know, as far as I recall you couldn't buy lime, quicklime or hydrated lime as you can now. All you could buy was hydrated lime, dry powder hydrate lime in bags. So, the idea of hydrolicity and things of that kind were pretty much unknown. You know to a very limited number of people. So, lots of things to find out. And yes, that's when I started in 1968. So then I did architectural training, not really reckoning if I'd become permanently involved with historic buildings, but by 1972 or 3 I pretty much got it, engaged with that and carried on right through until my retirement at the end of 2010.

SH: Excellent, so what attracted you most to your profession?

RH: I'll tell you exactly what it was. It was the experience of surveying a medieval timber framed building because it appealed to my boyish instincts of putting on a boiler suit and wielding a hammer and you know a wrecking bar, and at the same time I always enjoyed geometry and geometrical drawings and those sort of things. I also enjoyed sketching, I wasn't very good at it particularly, but I always enjoyed that kind of thing so it was really a combination of all that and I think, above all, it always appealed, and still does, it always appealed to that instinct that detective instinct in us all, where you want to find out what's really going on, some people have it more strongly than others, and I just have that kind of instinct I guess.

SH: Excellent. So in your career what was your favourite aspect of your profession?

RH: Well the most exciting times were definitely taking buildings down. As a buildings archaeologist is the opportunity of taking complete buildings down, from the roof down to the ground in a controlled and investigative way was hugely, that's what I got the most enjoyment out of. But I suppose, not quite only that, it was what the archaeologist would call the post-excavation work where I'd, particularly with timber frame structures, but sometimes also with stone and brick, I would examine the dismantled materials, and analyse and do science and that sort of thing. And also that process was very, very interesting.

SH: Awesome. So what was your least favourite then?

RH: Well, at first, I think the necessity of carrying out repairs and conservation because I approached it in sort of the established way that was established at that time which was the early seventies where architects would you know design repairs. I hadn't any idea that artefact conservation was potentially such a very, very interesting and widespread sort of field. This is sort of the problem I think with historic buildings is that it has always, for some ironic reason, in the UK I'm talking now, been insulated through the wider world of object conservation. So, where there's been particularly good training and you know philosophical debate involved with wall paintings and polychrome finishes on, you know all that kind of stuff, and textiles and paper and so on, nobody in the building industry had any idea of that, and they had to just get a craftsman to repair the building. So this has been the arc of my career has really been trying to persuade people that repairing a building is not a craftsman, is not only a craftsman's job. In other words, the best person to repair a timber frame building might well be a carpenter, but it will only be a carpenter with considerable extra training and expertise. Carpentry skills don't, in themselves, guarantee conservation work that will satisfy, get to first base in satisfying the requirements of you know, normal conservation philosophy. It still doesn't seem to be a debate in which people in the field have really taken fully on board. English Heritage still talks in terms of preserving traditional crafts, and I think preserving traditional crafts is great, but it's not the same as conserving the artefact when it's two or three hundred years old. It's totally different things in most cases.

SH: So did you ever consider another profession before you got into conservation?

RH: Not, well did training, architectural training, and considered different ways of exercising my skills in the world of building, but no once I got, it was 1975 when I finished my training and I was already beginning to get established in the field and no from then on I didn't. I mean I just happened, originally through a personal contact, that I got involved in opening museums, and opening museums turned out to be a very fertile ground in developing these new skills and interests so that was a perfectly satisfactory thing and I never deviated from it (laughs).

SH: (Laughs) It's funny throughout this, and I've done about a dozen or so interviews now, and everyone, when I ask did you ever consider doing anything else it's always no, when I started

doing this, this was it. And I've had fantastic ones like, when I was a kid I wanted to be a fireman, well of course, everyone wants to be a fireman when they're a kid. Well, you talked a little about your architectural training, can you describe that programme a little?

RH: I trained at the Architectural Association in London, which had a reputation then and still does now as being a place where, how can I put this, avant-garde architects I guess, flourished. People like Reme Cohouse and Will Alsop and all kinds of people you know, I'm sorry you're going to encounter the forgetfulness of old age, all the avant-garde people put it that way, were training and practicing around the AA as it were at the moment. So the programme was not what you'd call a particularly nuts and bolts programme at all. We were forced to learn, not forced to but we all did to some extent learn how to put buildings together but most of that knowledge came through project work, you know there's not a very coordinated programme on how to do concrete. So it was much more conceptual, and the AA was always said to be an architectural school which was, probably the only architecture school in which successful people successfully completed the diploma without ever becoming practicing architects and I think it was probably quite strong from that point of view. At that point it did not have any teaching in building conservation but one of the staff, one of the great influences on me was, on the staff, was a man named Paul Oliver. Now he was a very, very interesting man you've probably don't know anything about him. He was an Englishman, but he had two main strings to his bow. One was vernacular architecture, he was very, very interested in that, and the other was American blues and he'd done a large amount of, he's a leading figure in field research in American blues. Every now and then at the AA there was a southern or Chicago American blues singer would sort of turn up and be completely non-chuffed on why they were singing in the Georgian building in the middle of London because of Paul Oliver (laughs). You can look him up and a book called *Blues Field This Morning* was one of his publications. But he was also quite far ahead of most people in the AA in terms of conceptually in terms of he was very, he was interested in what would be called now, you know, post-modern critical analysis, the apparatus of postmodern critical analysis. And so, he was one of the few people there that would have known, well did know about Chomsky and structuralism and Levi Strauss and all that stuff so he was very important influence on me and he actually gave me my first teaching job in 1974. He asked me to lead a course on vernacular architecture while I was in my last year as a student there. That was really an important beginning for me. He then later moved away from the AA and he's the editor of a thing called the Encyclopedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World, which was a ground-breaking publication.

SH: It's amazing. Absolutely amazing. I have, well my copies at work and it's absolutely amazing. So how long was the programme that you studied under?

RH: Well, at that time, architectural study in England was a five-year course, and I took seven years to do it because I took two years out to go and do work in a firm and I travelled around European open-air museums and I did some private work, so I took two years out. And then when I went back for my final year I was already teaching and beginning to be established. So my career really started when I was about twenty-six or twenty-seven, but I didn't finish my AA course until I was twenty-nine.

SH: Well you talked about working while you were in school. How did that affect your education?

RH: Oh, well (laughs) I guess, well I took two years out I wasn't, school years out, it was like a sandwich course, you go out and work in the industry. In England, after you've done your five years, I think it's now become four but then it was always five years as a full-time student. You then have to go work, I think it's for something like two years, and take a third part; there's a part one and two and the third part is professional practice which makes you able to practice as a professional architect, which is a protected title in England. If you call yourself an architect and you're not a registered architect you could be taken to court and prosecuted. So I, but I never did that professional practice because I was already involved in buildings archaeology and you know putting buildings in museums which just didn't require that kind of contractual expertise and things like that so, I finished after the five years and went straight to working at the Weald and Downland Museum.

SH: Excellent. So would you encourage others to take the route that you took in terms of training and education?

RH: Well...that's a very, very difficult question. You know in a personal way everyone finds their own path. I'm staying here on holiday with a musician, who's had a very varied career; he was a radio producer, he's got five or six albums, he's done concert tours and written his own songs. And he is going a version of, well re-recording old songs at the moment. And he told me yesterday that he had a conversation with his pianist who teaches jazz at one of the London music schools, and this pianist was saying how, there's a lot of skillful players, but there's a real lack of people coming out of music schools and colleges that have been trained in jazz who are finding new modes of expression. And I think, and my response to all that is, perhaps in a funny way there's too much teaching. You know if you go in as students and you're taught everything, you don't have the necessity to find it out for yourself and finding it yourself you find new pathways and more interest on a personal level. So, while I, officially all I can do is say yes someone should go and do the best course of study that they can, privately I think that people actually should, you know, launch themselves out and work it out for themselves in a funny way. So, it's a difficult one because now there are qualifications and everyone's looking for qualification and if you try to get a job without qualifications, you probably won't, and yet at the

same time, getting that qualification may itself have a deadening effect on your originality. So, I think that's a very, very difficult question, what to advise people, what route to take in their chosen profession. After all, it's six in one, half a dozen, you know, you don't really know what you want to do until you've found out how to do it, but you can't (laughs) it's very difficult indeed. But I do think in some way, and we'll come on to this later, I have always done a lot of teaching. My teaching is an attempt to encourage people to find out for themselves but it is, it's quite frustrating because very few people actually do that. Occasionally they do and when they do it's very satisfying.

SH: Excellent. So in terms of your training, the training you took, what do you think the best and worst aspects of that were?

RH: Well, I think the best, in my specific case at the Architectural Association, the best was that it was a very forgiving institution, which allowed to students to take their own course and to not put too rigid an education on them, and that suited me fine. And I did things there that I probably wouldn't allow students to do now in their course because, well things are much tighter. You know you've got a university hovering over your neck and saying no, no they have to do this properly, The AA was a private institution, it had a Board of Governors, but it wasn't part of the universities, so it could make its own rules as long as, it was occasionally inspected, but basically it was much more open. So, I think in some ways the best thing was, as far as that particular course of study was concerned, of course I was quite free to develop my own path. But I think also, what I regret not doing is myself not going out and getting much practical hands-on experience with different materials and methods. I've actually, as a child I was very much taught in a woodwork shop, so I learned hand woodwork tools quite early on, I think I was ten or eleven, by twelve I was quite skilled in woodwork. And those skills have certainly stayed with me, but I think on a building or working on a building site and learning about mixing wet materials and all types of things, to become fully trained as a craftsman, but having more hands-on experience, and I do regret not doing that.

SH: So, has, and you touch on this a little already, has the industry changed since you first started practicing?

RH: Well it's changed since it didn't really exist when I began practicing. No architects were really professionally, well that's not quite true, a few architects did reckon themselves to be professionally engaged in building conservation. Most architects professionally reckoned that they could handle anything in relation to a building and didn't need any special training to do it. And it's a little while now, maybe five or ten years, since I last got a telephone call from an architect saying you know I've got this great Grade I listed building I've got to deal with I wonder if you could give me pointers. Because they are an architect, they're appointed, but they don't actually know what they're doing, so they're trying to find out (laughs). That doesn't happen too

often anymore because architects now have accreditation for building conservation and there's many more avenues toward that sort of thing so, when I started working for Freddy Charles, that's the, you know that's where I worked first. Do you know who Freddy Charles was?

SH: I don't actually.

RH: OK. Well again you can look him up on the internet. F.W. Charles, Freddy Charles was a pioneering architect in the field of building conservation of timber buildings, but he was a very, very radical one. And he was of the school that insisted that the most important thing about the building was its spirit. In other words, his conception of the original carpenter, and if to restore that meant replacing a few rotten beams, then let's replace them so the building works as it intended to work. I eventually changed my view to being the exact opposite to what you're being involved with is the conservation of the historic material and it is what you're aiming at the actually the historic material, not the spirit of the carpentry, anyway, that's perhaps another matter. So, what was the building conservation industry when I started? Basically nothing I think it is fair to say. The Association for the Study of the Conservation of Historic Buildings, ASCHB, you can look all these things up. I think it was formed in, I think it was formed in about 1972 or something like that. The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings of course had been formed in the 19th century, that's a whole other story and I think the SPAB, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings ploughs a different furrow. It hasn't modernised itself and it still ploughs a romantic, picturesque furrow based in Ruskin and Morris and not, what I would call a professional furrow. I don't think they understand building conservation at all really, they just want to keep things as they are.

SH: I'm just shocked to see, well we have a lot of redundant churches in the states, and so do you in the UK, but we can adapt these buildings to do what we need them to do, and our philosophy is at least the building is still here. Where in the UK, I got a call from somebody that wanted to see me a church in Lincolnshire for a pound.

RH: Oh really. (Laughs)

SH: And I said that's great, because I'm looking for a field school in the UK for my programme anyway for my students. So, I said that's great and they said well the only issue is that it has to be a church.

RH: Oh right.

SH: I said well, I'm not a preacher, I'm not going to open a church there. If we're going to conserve it we need to find a use for it. No, no it has to be a church. I said I'm sorry I can't help you. What is the State of Georgia going to do with a church in Lincolnshire?

RH: Well that isn't the case with all churches.

SH: No the conservation trust is doing some interesting things. But anyway, has the growth of this heritage craft subsection in the construction industry affected conservation?

RH: Well, first of all, the growth of the heritage craft sector in the building industry is that what you're looking at?

SH: Yes.

RH: (Pause) There are so many aspects to this, it's really a tough one. For example, take masonry. Masonry has never died. There have been mason's yards, live mason's yards in towns and cities around the UK, you know, all the time. There are some, I mean in some ways I suspect it's a sector that's more under threat. There was a North London mason's yard that I visited and took photographs of some years ago, that then closed down and it was an old established family firm. The Chichester Cathedral Works Organization, that mason's yard has just recently gone into liquidation, I'm not sure what happened to it, but it's basically closed. So, in some ways, some crafts, and carpentry, carpentry's never died in the UK building industry. When I started working in the building industry with Freddy Charles in 1967 there was a building company in Coventry where we were working which had a chap that ran it, a well-trained carpenter, who were capable of doing anything. Very high level of carpentry. The problem was nobody ever asked them to do it (laughs). They were perfectly able to do it, so, and it wasn't known as a heritage craft in was just part of the building industry. And, so how's that changed over the last fifty years? I'm not sure, it's an interesting question. Now, carpenters that are trained in the building industry are very poorly trained, or they're trained in a very sort of narrow skills I would say, from my limited knowledge of it. And of course they're not trained using hand tools by and large because they have to be trained on bench machinery and so on, so the training, there's never been absence of craft it just that now we talk about these crafts as old-fashioned heritage crafts I guess. I'm not sure perhaps I don't know about the current structure of the building industry to be able to comment much about this. I am aware that some mason's yards have closed down, and suspect that there's pressure on that. As far as brickwork is concerned, I suppose it's probably true to say that the level of craftsmanship amongst bricklayers in the building industry is probably higher now than it was fifty years ago. I'm kind of feeling my way I haven't really thought through these things. I mean, you know, as you go around the streets you see brick buildings that have been very intelligently re-pointed, you see some quite good instances of brickwork, whereas in the and sixties you were seeing people slapping up rather crude buildings with, you know, rather crudely made bricks. I think in brickwork, on the whole, there's probably a greater range of expertise available now to the specifier and the client than there was fifty or so years ago. As far as timber is concerned, I think the industry has split in two; the normal building industry has trained carpenters who are trained to do particular things which are necessary in the building industry, and there is, now quite a large industry, it's not what we might call the heritage craft carpentry, of timber frame carpentry, the Timber Framers Guild in the United States and the Carpenter's Fellowship in the UK. They're not insubstantial sectors of the building industry. So, I think there's

been a split there. We haven't seen a split you know of little firms advertising brick laying, heritage brick laying. We haven't seen a split really of forms advertising masonry not quite the same way. I think the timber framing industry that has grown up is different really from those things. And there are in the industry some specialist conservation agencies, firms that seem they have particularly congregated around plaster and so one where plaster conservation, new plastering and decorative plaster work, rendering and all those types of things, waddle and daub you know those types of things, they tend to be on those areas. And of course, you know paint, I mean is another thing. There's been a big change in the way painting is done. When I started probably painters are very traditional, working in the same way their predecessors worked a hundred years ago before very largely. I mean lead paint was still in use in the fifties and sixties. And then I think probably there's was a revelation in the types of paint available, and the quality of paintwork went down, probably markedly, as new paints that no one really understood where badly applied and didn't last very long. And I think again now, with breathable and water-based paints there's much more of an understanding that paint is a subtle and difficult material and probably there's just as there is with brickwork, there's a bigger range of expertise available. I'm too sure I can support all these statements I'm just telling you my impression from walking on the streets and so on and so forth. So, I think there's many different answers from what part of the building industry you're looking at, that's my short answer.

SH: Interesting well it's your opinion that I'm actually after, I'm not looking for concrete.

RH: Yeah.

SH: I talked to the Orton clan, you know Jeff and Henry, and to see the two of them, and Henry's about to move to the United States, and the difference between the two of them, Jeff is one of the most despondent people about lime plastering I've ever talked to.

RH: Yeah.

SH: But then again, I've talked to several other plasterers besides the Orton's, and I've never seen a group of people more passionate about their craft.

RH: Yeah.

SH: Timber framers, and I'm a member of the Guild and they're great, masons are the same way, but the plasterers are foaming at the mouth excited to talk about plastering. Henry said I think you have to have a little screw loose to think about plastering for a career. So, how do you feel about the future of traditional crafts?

RH: I feel very positive about the future of traditional, again that's emphasising that's not the same as building conservation, which is a different thing. But as far as traditional building crafts is concerned, no I think my, over my whole career I've seen pretty much an upwards curve. Thatching, there's no danger, thatching is difficult to get the material for but there's no danger of thatching as a craft dying out. I think at the margins there's been, you know some very minor

crafts have been career changes, people who get fed up with life in the city taking up dry stone walling at the kind of thing (laughs). That's not really of any great importance, it's just nice to know. But I guess you can see more examples of really quite high-quality craftsmanship in new buildings that are done in new ways as well as traditional ways now. So I wouldn't feel despondent about that. Quite how it's happened and again where the training has come from I would have to think through craft by craft I don't really know. But no, I think there's an upward swing. I mean, we're staying here in Norfolk, on the north Norfolk coast, and its holiday, you know a great holiday area. But as it happens it's not ever become very commercialised, you know low grade commercialised holiday area. Not great caravan parks or themes parks or anything like that, its wonderful open coastal landscape, but almost every house you see is a rental cottage. And, or at least half of them anyway, and the one we're staying in is a quite modest little house, probably built in the fifties I should think, with flint and brickwork. And it's been extended. And the extension is just absolutely remarkable. Really terribly well done. No, you can just see the joint between it and the original. So, there's some pretty skillful people out there, just in the normal building industry in north Norfolk doing some extremely good work. But god knows where they're trained or where they got it from, I haven't a clue (laughs).

SH: So, do you think there's enough practitioners in the field or are there too many?

RH: Well, it's a market driven thing isn't it? If young people see someone making a good living doing some traditional craft they'll think it might be something worth going into. Are there too many, too few? I don't know. I don't think there are too many. Are there too few? Well is probably more likely that a householder has difficulty in finding good work when they've got few to choose from. But there's not too few in the sense that it's not dying out, it perhaps just a minority interest in that there aren't too many people, but it's not dying out. Thatchers aren't dying out, bricklayers aren't dying out, plasterers aren't dying out, are still pretty thriving crafts I think, they're just not universal.

SH: Alright. So, do you feel that these entering the field are properly trained?

RH: I don't know is the short answer. I'm sorry I'm just not that familiar enough with the normal routes of training in the building industry to know that. I'm just, and I actually don't know, if I was talking to a plasterer, let's say I was talking to a plasterer in his thirties who was a good plasterer, I wouldn't have a clue on how they've been trained or where they've been trained (laughs). They may have taken, or worked alongside a plasterer, they might have learned it off somebody, they might have gone to college and done something alongside, that's a pattern I think we see a little bit in our training on our MSC at the museum. That we get young people, and I interviewed in the other day and we've had several instances of this, young people, perhaps in their early or mid-twenties, who are very attracted by the field, and they say well I'll come and do your MSC. And I say to them well you can do our MSC that's fine, but actually what you want to do is have some

parallel training, you know really good training in craftsmanship, so I suggest sometimes they might go to their local college, I don't know these big institutions where carpentry and joinery are taught in a proper way, albeit for the modern building industry, then can then extend or expand their abilities by taking other courses such as ours. So I think what my general impression is that there is a very strong provision of professional training in building crafts. Now, many people would say, and I would agree that the old system of apprenticeships was a better system, and I think it probably produced better results. Nevertheless, you know take Chichester College, it has a woodworking department with very good people in it, and the necessary syllabus for working in wood, in timber, for the building industry and it is quite well taught. You never do it, well, some people do it full time, some people are working in the industry and the same time, and then there are various levels of qualification. But, you know, there's no shortage of good solid professional training in building crafts. And so people who have the ambition to do more than that or to do other things also have now, much greater opportunities, I mean there were none at all when we were starting, there are much greater opportunities now. We run our courses at the museum, they run all types of other courses and other institutions, there are short courses, long courses, degree courses, and there are more, I wouldn't say more and more on a big scale, but certainly there are, you know good companies that take on people and, may be in plastering and conservation of plasterer work or whatever, in timber or indeed some companies I guess probably with brickwork who give working opportunities to people to extend their skills so, I'm not really despondent from the little I know but I'm sure if I looked at it in great detail I would say well that training is not very good, or that didn't work but in general there is a lot of training available on many different levels for people coming into the building industry I would think.

SH: Alright. Well I already know the answer to the next questions, but I'm going to ask, do you participate in short course training?

RH: Yeah I do. Not very much actually now. I have done perhaps more in the past than I do now, but yes, as a teacher, yes.

SH: And academic training programmes?

RH: Yeah, yeah we run a masters course.

SH: Are you an active member of any professional organisation relating to craft?

RH: (Laughs) Curiously I'm not actually. I am a member of the Association for the Conservation of Historic Buildings, its call ASHBE, but I'm not actually a member of the Institute of, what it is called I can't remember its name. The Institute for Historic Building Conservation, IHBC.

SH: Yeah.

RH: The reason for that is that became established really too late in my career that I really didn't have, if it had been established in my twenties I would have definitely had become a proper member. I'm just sort of affiliated but I'm not a proper member, I would have to go to too many

hoops to do that so, I'm not. But again, I would say, and I'm not a registered architect because I never did that professional practice so I'm not that. There is an Institute of Field Archaeologists, again if it was earlier in my career I might have found it very helpful to be a member of that, but not now. So I'm one of those washed up self-taught professionals that's not actually a member of professional organisations (laughs).

SH: That's alright I'm a member of too many organisations.

RH: Well I'm a member of many organisations, the Society for Medieval Archaeology, the Society for Post-Medieval Archaeology, the Ancient Monuments Society, but these are clubs you can join. In terms of professional organisations are concerned, I'm not a member of the two or three chief ones that would look good on my CV.

SH: I've got too many and for some reasons all their dues come up at the exact same time.

RH: (Laughs) Yes, I know. I know another 300 pounds down the drain, yes. (Laughs)

SH: Well...

RH: I will say, can I just tell you one odd fact that you may not be aware of. One of my retirement occupations is running websites, and I run a website for the British Brick Society, have you ever heard of the British Brick Society?

SH: I heard the name, but I don't really know them too well.

RH: Okay, well look up the website, which I run so I can recommend it, and what I was doing earlier this afternoon was working on a PDF of their latest journal to put on-line. It's a remarkable organisation, it was formed, again it was in that great rush of things, probably in the early seventies I think I would have to look it up to be sure. And they're now on number one hundred and twenty-seven of their journal. It's not called a journal it's called the British Brick Society Information. And it is still a photocopied, forty-five-page A4, stapled publication. It's absolutely remarkable. They've got a few people who are dedicated, academic types and it's probably, or I'm sure it's by far the best collection of historic information about bricks and brickwork. And one of the reasons, the primary reason I volunteered to do their website is that I was really keen to get all this information online, and indeed it is now all online, and you can google search terms and it comes up pretty reliably with the answer. So, you know, there's another little pocket where that's really, really good. I don't suppose many people know about it, many brick people, brick layers and so on don't know about it. But it's there and the job's been done, and the information is all there so we're in a much better-informed situation than we were fifty years ago before all this stuff had started to happen.

SH: Fantastic. So, would you suggest others to practice buildings archaeology?

RH: I think building archaeology is a, yeah great little profession, really, really interesting. You know buildings, human society certainly has great things that it does, and building is one of them. Building, language, cooking, human intercourse and literature, but I mean a building is a hugely

important human activity. And I think to study the history, the material history of building is a noble cause, and one that has been scandalously underrepresented for recent decades. Partly, I mean I have a slightly anti-architect bias as you have probably gathered, partly because the jolly architecture profession, you know dominated it. They are a pretty un-academic lot architects. They're imaginative and they work quite well with imagining new buildings and stuff, you know they do have strengths. But as far as historical research is concerned, they're generally pretty poor. So, buildings archaeology which is a rigidly material, evidence-based discipline is completely new and was never done in any quantity by architects in the past. So, I think buildings archaeology is a great profession, yeah.

SH: So, if someone came up to you and said Richard I want to be a building archaeologist, where do I start, what would you tell them?

RH: Well that of course is the difficulty there aren't that many job opportunities. I mean I would love, English Heritage for example, to be the leaders in buildings archaeology but you know probably most people in English Heritage never heard the term buildings archaeology. It's a tricky one. The open-air museums have a few job opportunities, individual building firms, you can be a private consultant or join an archaeological unit of some sort and you'll get a continual amount of work though that. But so, the downside is the job opportunities, but the upside is that it is a very important sphere of human interest and endeavor.

SH: Interesting.

RH: I mean the other good part about it is that you are never, as long as, if you're in the middle of the countryside you might get bored, but as soon as you come in sight of buildings, whether in the town or the village, or the countryside, you'll never get bored because you're always seeing interesting things. You know I've been sitting in this room and looking around this room, and mind is focusing on little bits of building construction (laughs). I've been looking at all through this conversation. So, you're never bored.

SH: My poor wife, she's getting tired of when we go on road trips I'll just pull off to the side of the road to get out and look at a building. Luckily she likes it almost as much as I do, but she also knows how to get under my skin and go; look at that old building, someone would just tear that down. Now she doesn't feel that way but she knows that it's going to set me off.

RH: (laughs). Another, let me get one another little hobbyhorse, since you're talking about this.

SH: Please do.

RH: I think we keep far too many old buildings actually. And I get quite cross about that sometimes. But particularly, I'm not talking about houses here because most houses can be made into other houses and kept in use, had they are an important part of our culture. But I think in industrial archaeology, society has been in danger of overdoing it. There are industrial buildings, barns, I mean the industrial building, and I come from an industrialist family so I'm very aware of

all this, you know, you want to build up a manufacturing business, so you build a factory. And then forty or fifty years later some, you know EH tells you this is a fantastic work of architecture and you have to preserve in. And preserving it is very, very expensive. And that's not what you're in business for. You're in business to put up a building to make a product. I was involved in a case in Cambridgeshire two or three years ago, or three of four years ago, it was a building put up, probably early nineteenth century I think, as a drying shed for leather. And amazingly in this little village in Cambridgeshire, this site was still used by a leather company. I think most of their leather was imported and they didn't do much processing on site. But, when they were in their heyday they got skins and so a lot of industrial pollution, and they had these drying sheds. These drying sheds, I believe they had three upper floors, I think ground floor and first, second, and third floor above. They had a ceiling height of about six foot six. They're timber framed. They're timber framed very, very lightweight timber framing with minimum load bearing capacity. And they were built for drying skins, so it's like a tobacco barn I guess, these skins, they had similar, very nice shutters built into the outside wall, so you could open or close the shutters to get a very nice draft of air. Well this company, which still owns these buildings on this site in this village in Cambridgeshire, had absolutely no use for these buildings whatsoever. They were taking up very, very valuable space on their industrial property, and they were in extremely poor condition. They were past their sell by date. And yet in the public realm, in the forum of the local authority and English Heritage and others said; oh no these buildings are far too interesting and important, you've got to keep them. And it would have cost, and there were no alternative uses for them because the ceiling heights were too low and the structure was too lean, they were on an industrial site that nobody wanted to live on, you know you could probably work up some kind of alternative use if you really had to, but I think in similar types of buildings, you know people love keeping farm buildings and barns and living in them. And that's actually giving farmers a new source of income and probably saving a lot of farmers from penury, but the fact of the matter is that a barn was put up for, not as a monument, well some were, but most barns were put up as a place where you could store and process crops. And for the public realm to then tell farmers that they have to preserve these things and indeed for the church, who put up churches for people to worship, when people no longer worship in them they never were meant to be kept as churches. I think that these issues do a lot of damage to the worthy cause of building conservation. I think one or two examples can be kept and a majority can be dispensed with, but I am in a small minority. And I think one of the ironies of being involved with building conservation is that by working so hard on keeping old buildings, you further limit the scope for new buildings of high quality to be put in to replace them. And of course, the irony is that the very buildings you're trying to preserve, would not have been built if there were not enterprising, energetic people who built them in the first place. And those same enterprising and energetic people are being

limited, you know stymied because they can't get the opportunities. Take the City of London. There's a famous case of Number One Poultry Street. A Street called Poultry in the City of London. And this late nineteenth century corner building was always much loved by the Victorian Society and people like that; oh no you can't take it down. Well, it was taken down and it was replaced by a James Sterling building. It a brilliant building, much better than the other one was. So, in that case I think justice was done (laughs). But in saving buildings, I think there's probably too much of it. On the other hand, you know Convent Garden, plenty of tourist areas, are quality of life has been preserved and improved by judicious conservation, preservation of historic landscapes, so I'm, well aware it's a very complex issue. But cases like this one with the poor, and they were struggling to make a living in the first place and then to be presented with a bill of a million quid to do something with this silly timber frame building where they used to dry skins, you know is just nonsense really, so I think the industry is full of people with not much grip on reality sometimes. (Laughs).

SH: (Laughs). I run into them all the time people that want to try to save everything. In this country I've got a serious issue with this huge push on mid-century modern. You know between 1950 and 1974 we built 40 million new homes. And our cut-off date for historic buildings is fifty years old. I don't think a building that is built in 1964 is historic.

RH: No.

SH: And we build hundreds of them at a time. And you've got two historic neighbourhoods in town that are early fifties, concrete block, ranch houses. And I say why is this historic? Well its early development of the suburbs in Savannah. I said I don't, I got into this to get away from the suburbs to not preserve them.

RH: (Laughs).

SH: And the amenity bodies' power over in the UK is astonishing to me. We have the National Trust here and they can rally to save a building, but at the end of the day, they have no authority, where yours do.

RH: They do, they do.

SH: I think they get into the mind-set, because that's their job is that they have to save everything, and it upsets things in the long run.

RH: It does and it's a tricky balance. I was showing some colleagues around earlier this year that came from Slovakia, and I drove them around and they were wide-eyed to see the charm of the historic landscape, mixed ages of course, buildings of all dates. But they said you come to Slovakia, there's nothing in our landscape older than 1955 or something, you know it's all been torn away and it's so nice to have some older buildings. So, I do appreciate it, but it's a delicate balance. I mean I live in London. London was built once. Parts of it was of course built several times, but the area that I'm in, built in 1880, 1885. Are these areas ever going to get rebuilt? I

guess probably not. I mean the building stock is there. It's not being preserved specifically because it's beautiful or anything like that. It's just, it is there, it serves its purpose, and it will probably continue to serve its purpose for a very long time so, I think there's lots of continuity that just arises out of the economic facts that's it's probably cheaper to live in a building than it is to tear it down and to rebuild it. And it's probably not necessary for the public realm to take quite as much interest in preventing change in other ways. And I'll tell you one other story which has always stuck with me about this. There's an English journalist and author named Simon Jenkins, he's actually currently the chairman of the National Trust, and has been involved in a variety of things throughout his life, met him a few times. The first time I met him was a long time ago probably around 1975 I think, when he had taken the woman, I was living in a flat that belonged to this woman, and he had taken her to the opera. And he came back and we were chatting, and there I was a young chap, probably thirty, thirty-one you know doing, cutting my teeth on architectural history, and looking at listed buildings and getting enamored by it all, and I said to him; listed building designation in this country is terrible. Because we've got this listing system, but the listing doesn't relate to real historic interest. I can go into a building and find a real 14th century timber frame building at the heart of the building and the listing hasn't even noticed it so, while it's lovely outside, listing should be done by architectural historians. And he said you've got it completely wrong, you've misunderstood the whole point. He said listed buildings legislation is popular legislation. It's to preserve what people like. It has nothing to do with architectural history at all (laughs). And of course, he was only partly right. And here are plenty of architectural historians who study buildings and increase their listing and so on and so forth. But it's an interesting basic point is that actually all this protection is from the fact that people don't want their environment to change too quickly, that's why it's got through. It wouldn't have got through if a few architectural historians went; hey you know that's important. It got through because people like what's familiar.

SH: Well, it's so interesting because we, Americans, we're a throwaway society, we always are, we always have been. And now we're starting to realise, you know we can't do this, and someone came to visit me from the UK and Savannah is almost all wood buildings. We don't have any quarries, we're a coastal plain, and they said, Jesus one match would take down your whole city. I said yeah probably. He said why did you build like this? I said because we were planning on tearing these things down in twenty years. And we just didn't. And we have so much change going on all the time, and the conservation world is very small. And I spoke to someone here and they said I went over to the UK and it was like stepping into a museum.

RH: Yeah.

SH: And my first thoughts were, oh that's not good. And I talked to some people from the UK and they said we are in danger of becoming one big museum.

RH: Yes, and I think it's also very illogical. Think about cars and lorries and things like that. There is no protection system on cars and lorries. And yet they are just as important, you know products, of human ingenuity and so on. Think of the outcry there would be if you bought a car, and you had a car, and suddenly there was a listing slapped on it. It would be ludicrous, same with lorries. And yet with houses and buildings, society has taken it upon itself to exercise that control on individuals. I think these issues have been worked out only on a very narrow perspective. You read books on building conservation, they talk about building conservation. They don't talk about the wider spectrum of artefact conservation and the philosophy developed with that by and large at least, and they don't talk about the issues, philosophical issues of society keeping stuff like I've been talking about. I mean there's another thing that has seemed to me more and more relevant to all this; that is the psychology of hoarding. Hoarding by individuals is becoming a quite well understood psychological difficulty, which of course exists in many shades along the spectrum. You know from the severe hoarders who just, it ruins their lives, to people like me who just keep more stuff than they should probably keep. But it seems to me that it's not a bad metaphor, and it may relate in psychology to society. Hoarding stuff. Not daring to get rid of stuff, to throw stuff anyway. You say America is a throwaway society then all of a sudden, it's keeping everything, well we're a throw away people and yet hoarders in particular, keeps stuff. So, I think were a in a curious relationship there about the psychology of renewal, of keeping, or throwing away. One of the cures for hoarding, any hoarder, generally speaking, they're plenty happy to throw something away, but they have to have the opportunity of looking at it and thinking about it first. And that takes longer than it does to acquire something. And they acquire things at a greater rate than they can throw them away and the balance gradually shifts. And of course, society has introduced exactly the same thing. Listing does not mean a building has to be preserved, it means that society demands an opportunity to consider whether it should be preserved before anything is done with it. That's exactly the same as individual hoarders, they demand the opportunity to consider whether to keep that old pair of shoes, or whether on this occasion they can let them go. And I think it's a really interesting comparison actually.

SH: Excellent. Well, you actually answered question number nine on the educational offerings but, there's one little caveat in there that I'm asking all UK people, and you may know the answer, you may not, how do you feel about the NVQ system?

RH: Right, how do I feel about the NVQ system. Okay this is not a deep answer because I haven't studied it, any aspect to the NVQ system deeply. But I've seen quite a lot of it and heard a lot of conversation about it. I think probably it is an adequate system, but not a great system. I think it's probably overloaded, it's become a very paper heavy system. If you look through NVQ special, you know, specifications, they're almost unintelligible. It's got that whole computer thing of copying a pasting, you know what I mean. So, you end of with text that no one can really

assimilate and use. I think, well it's a workplace-based assessment system, I think it has, you know some, I think the motivations for introducing were probably quite good. But I, I guess my bet is that we would have been better served if apprenticeships and the old-fashioned systems were carried on. But unfortunately, that's too a deep or very well-informed answer. But I'm nervous about them. My experience of developing new ones and so forth has not been very good I'm afraid.

SH: Did you help to develop the NVQ's for the timber conservation ones?

RH: No, I didn't positively help but I did have conversations about them during their development.

SH: Yeah actually this is one area that I am seeing some overlap. We're running into, in the States there are some people who want, it's called a Complete College America system, based on more people getting out of college. We have an overwhelming dropout rate.

RH: Right.

SH: And its push them through, push them through, make sure that they pass. And talking to some people who are outside assessor for the NVQ, they're saying I'm not allowed to fail these people.

RH: Yeah.

SH: They have to keep trying until they actually pass. What good is that at the end of the day? If everyone comes out with a stonemasonry NVQ Level 3, whether they earned it or not, then is that NVQ Level 3 worth anything? Anyway, last question. If I were to say to you Richard, I need you to design a programme or a system to train building conservators, or heritage craftsmen, how would you structure that?

RH: (Pause) Oh well, that's a really interesting question. I think it could be done. Where I would place it in higher and further education I'm not sure, I'd probably avoid that question for the time being. But I would definitely try to achieve a system which had integrated, which integrated workplace experience with academic experience because I think both are very, very important for conservators. So, I think it would need to be based in a very well-resourced institution. And I think it needs to be quite a lengthy training. I'd have thought that's it's probably likely to be a full three-year degree type of training. I think there's that much that needs to be taught, and probably you would have to specialise even within that. I think, well what I feel about building conservation, I may have said this to you, I certainly say this to students is that the reason it's interesting and the reason why I've enjoyed being in it is that it is, ultimately, it's a judgement-based profession. You know, many professions of course have great areas of judgement and the higher you go in them the more the judgement calls have to be made. But many people I suspect think that you know building conservation you just learn what it says in the textbook and you can do it but actually to do successful conservation on a building with any interest or complexity is

very, very difficult. You have to in some ways predict the outcome, you have to be able to feel it once the process is finished. And that takes quite a lot of experience of seeing how things start and how they might progress, but actually how they finish up. So yeah, I don't know if that's enough of an answer but I, are you talking about detailed structures like what type of materials stuff like that?

SH: Anything you could think of really.

RH: Well I think to be a conservation practitioner you do need to understand the original material and craft processes associated with it as well as conservation techniques. And that's far too much to make someone learn in any reasonable period of time into a conservator who can handle timber and stone and brick and plaster and everything else. That is too much to ask. So, it would, I think any course in, any building conservation training would have to pretty rapidly focus on one particular area. Here we are, the only area I know in detail is the timber area. We teach this masters course, it has thirty teaching days, so there are thirty days in which the students are sitting down for a whole day in lectures and seminars and workshop days and so on. Well thirty teaching days is only, well five days a week for six weeks, its, that's not a huge load. In addition to that I suppose you would want to include wider, you know perspectives on buildings and building history. And I guess, so how much time does that give you, if you've got a full-time student with an eight-week university term, so you've got three of those terms a year, so you've got 24 weeks a year, so you've got 72 weeks for a three-year period, and we teach the essence of timber building conservation in six weeks in a concentrated fashion. And so, if you had the resources to be able to use all those days effectively I think you could probably teach quite a broad range of things in considerable detail in that period of time. Lime, stone, brick, they all have their own physical, scientific aspects that you have to learn quite a lot of chemistry, physics to understand them. But, quite a lot of that is transferable between different materials. You need workshop time actually getting your hands dirty, working with tools and these materials. But I think in seventy-five teaching days over a three-year period, if you had the resources to be able to supply the teaching, or course that's the problem it would be very, very expensive. I think you could set up such a system. I'd been interested. I think you should commission me to design such a course (Laughs).

SH: Don't tempt me I will. Are there any programmes that you feel are meeting your requirements, or coming close to meeting your requirements of an ideal system?

RH: No, I don't think so, not at all. I mean there are undergraduate modules in building conservation, but I don't think they go very far and they are pretty theoretically based as far as I know. No, I think, I think we're talking about two different things here though. If you're talking about training in traditional heritage crafts, then that could be quite a long apprenticeship training in a craft, and you'd probably want to build it up focusing on a particular craft over a

period of time. But I think in terms of being a building conservator, which means having sufficient practical skills to be able to do some bits of it but actually having the overall professional knowledge in order to drive it rather than do everything yourself I think that's a course that would be rather different in quality and I would love to see such a thing set up.

SH: Excellent. Well actually that's all the questions I have for you. Do you have anything you would like to add for the research?

RH: Oh, no I don't think so really (laughs). I'm sorry I just apologise I probably led you off on many tangents and into areas that are not directly relevant to your research, but it's given you a sort of flavour to what I think about I guess.

SH: Everything is relevant to my research my opinion. I love to hear anything that anyone has to say. You know what I've noticed is, in the past no one has talked to the people in the field that have experience and practical knowledge and have launched this kind of conservation and heritage craft rebirth. Especially the craftsman themselves because they're not academics. A lot of people don't talk to them and what they have to say is just so important. So, it's all relevant. Everyone has some great ideals, especially with this last question. A lot of people have never been asked that. And why hasn't anyone asked this.

RH: I think, in a way it's obviously a realistic question because you've got half a million dollars on your desk to do just that, but in a way, the question is how would I design an industry to achieve building conservation rather than a training programme. Because you're training for an industry and if the industry is structured in the wrong way then your training is going to be structured in the wrong way. I'll tell you, I had a recent experience just a few weeks ago. You know there's a fantastic timber framed barn near Heathrow Airport called Harmondsworth Barn, it's a hundred feet long, and hundred and twenty feet long. Fabulous, 1480 or something I think it is. And it's in very good condition and I've know it for years, and English Heritage now own it are carrying out a programme of repair and conservation on it. So I got involved because someone at English Heritage asked somebody I knew if they wanted to do some recording work, and I got involved through that. So, we went out there, and we met the young man who, I guess he's the site foreman of these works, for the building company, the company that got the contract, and we talked to him, and it's just so depressing. Because he talks as if it was still the 1930's. You know he is just the chap on site, all these people come in from English Heritage and sit around the table talking, they never ask him what he thinks. That's partly because he hasn't been trained to think of anything. So is slightly six on one half a dozen of the other. But he can see clearly what they're doing wrong, why what they're proposing is not very sensible and so on, but they still go ahead and present it and propose it, because they're in charge. So, the whole industry is still structured and operating on what I call the old-fashioned officer and men basis. It's just like the army; the officers, some are good, some are not very good, but they're in charge so they get to say what

happens and the poor privates and the soldiers and the sergeants in the non-commissioned ranks well, you know, they just do what they're told. And it's a really, really bad way to run a conservation industry. So, I guess that's, that's here I would start. By saying, well it's a bit of a waste of time trying to organize a great training programme when the industry isn't set up in the right way in the first place.

SH: I completely agree. When I wear my suit and I'm Professor Hartley people listen to me but when I put my tool belt on, no one listens. I'm still the same person, what's the difference if I have my work boots or my dress shoes on?

RH: Exactly and I think people like you, there aren't many people like you, but people like Pete McCurdy are such an important aspect to this because he has managed to straddle the two sides of that. He has managed to, you know he's not much on the tools these days but he's a consultant manager of the process but equally he's managing it from the workshop and the workman's point of view. And he's in charge as that person rather than having other people telling him what to do. Although he still gets people trying to tell him what to do (laughs). So, I was hopeful fifty years ago, I was hopeful that we might see the profession changing away from this old fashion officers and men basis, and I think that change has been much, much slower, and much less effective than I would have hoped it to be.

SH: Fantastic. I really appreciate your time Richard, especially since you're on holiday. So, thank you so much for your answers and taking your time to do this.

RH: It's ok?

SH: Yeah, it's fantastic. Like I said, thank you so much. Let me turn off this recording here.

End Recording

Total Recording Time

1.24.19

Interview Form-Individual

Name: Rudy Christian_____

Current address: _____, Burbank, Ohio _____ United States_____

Birthdate: _____ 1949_____

Age: 65_____

Occupation: Timber Framer_____

Interview Date: 27 July 2014_____

Interview Location: Stephen-Savannah, Rudy-Burbank (Skype)_____

Interviewer: Stephen Hartley_____

Generation: 2-United States_____

Consent Form Signed Date: 26 July 2014_____

Begin Recording

Stephen Hartley (SH): Alright. Before we get started, what is your current address?

Rudy Christian (RC): _____, Burbank, Ohio _____.

SH: Alright, and your birthdate?

RC: _____/49.

SH: Which will make you how old now?

RC: I just turned sixty-five.

SH: Alright. So, just to let you know how this is going to work. There are ten questions, inside of each one of those questions I may ask you to describe or elaborate on your answers. Some of the questions, I already know the answer to, like what your profession is, but I'm writing this for a group of people and readers that may not be as well-versed in the trades, so sometimes I'm going to ask you to you know, back up a little bit and explain some of it. The goal of all this is to look at the way we teach the trades in the US versus how they teach in the UK, and to try to figure out if we can find a way in which these two systems can find a way to share some knowledge and share some of their experiences to make it easier for everyone. Your role in all this is that we've identified four generations, post-war generations of craftspeople. And we're studying how they learned their craft, and what's changed in the industry since they started. Obviously, you know me, and you know what I do. Don't feel like you're going to offend me with any answer.

RC: Okay.

SH: Honesty is much more important than my feeling, and I'm pretty thick skinned anyway.

RC: You're just going to have to learn to get over it anyway (Laughs).

SH: Well, shit. Question number one. What is your profession?

RC: That's a good question. (Pause). The answer is probably dependent on who asks that question. When someone who understands what timber framing is, I'll answer that I'm a timber framer. But if someone is really so disassociated with how things are made or how things were made in the past, that really wouldn't mean anything to them, I revert to an older, more general term, that I'm a carpenter. But the problem with telling people that I'm a carpenter is that, I'm a carpenter but I'm a specialty carpenter, because my carpentry works deals with a very specific aspect of carpentry. So, I tend to think of myself as a timber framer carpenter, because that's the easiest answer to give almost anyone who can ask that question. But at the same time, my legal profession, as far as the government and taxes and all that are concerned, is president of the corporation. So, it depends on who's asking the question and what the answer they're looking for is, that's, more than one hat there.

SH: Ok. So, in this role of timber frame carpenter and head of the corporation, can you describe what you do in that capacity?

RC: It's something that has evolved, so the answer to the question could be what I do now. Or the answer to the question could be what have I done in the past, what's my experience. Okay, and what I do now is to try to establish a good connection between my clients and an awareness of the value of my trade so that when they are trying to compare apples to apples as far as costs go or anything else, that they understand why I think that building something out of solid timber joinery which I arguably believe is the oldest contiguous form of building habitats and religious buildings and everything else in history you know. We have been timber framing for, as far as we can tell now, maybe three thousand to four thousand years and probably more. Because when you go back and study the Romans and the people that the Romans conscripted while they were on their campaigns, the work they were doing was timber framing. So, this is not a new trade by any means. But at the same time, it's not a trade that in any way has lost its usefulness. It's still an extremely good way to build things. And so the question becomes what is the reason I would spend more money to build something the way I do it than the way someone who would build it for less money would build it. And so, from the president of the corporation perspective, education is my job. I'm trying to help people understand what I'm talking about and what it means in a way that they can understand it and decided what it means to them. Okay? Because it isn't going to be the same thing to them as it is to me.

SH: Yeah.

RC: Okay. But on a day to day basis I actually tend to cover a much broader field for the work that's required for our company to even exist, okay. I run a sawmill. My wife and I, Laura, who you know, both very much enjoy going out and firing up the mill and either turning logs into timbers or resawing old timbers so that we can find a new purpose for them. In fact, that's one of the projects we're working on right now, resawing old timbers and we're actually creating a bar

for a restaurant. So it's actually going to be a timber frame bar. But I also really enjoy doing the layout, so one thing I find myself doing a lot is, what I'm compelled to do whenever I can is to get in the shop and actually lay things out because there's a part of understanding my trade that has to do with constantly staying in touch with the interaction with the old knowledge and the new trees if you will. Because if you, every single tree is different, every single timber you put on your horse is different. There's no such thing as, this 8x8 and that 8x8 being the same two things. Even if they're both ten feet long, you know. Even if they both came out of the same forest, they're all different. Even if they're both the same species, still doesn't make any difference. One's one thing, one's another thing. And you have to figure out one; whether or not they can do what you expect them to do in service, and two what's the right way to suitably fit it into the structure that you're building. So, from my perspective, I love doing the layout, and I do that as often as I can. And I very much enjoy doing the actually joinery itself. I am a joiner as part of my work. I love using the tools to create the joinery, and I love educating people on how that's done. It's, to me it's a great pleasure to be able to find someone, whether their young or old, doesn't make any difference, who has an interest in understanding what I see and feel in both the tools and the materials and the craft, all of them combined, in a way that motivates them to steal my knowledge from me. And I don't like forcing knowledge on anything or anyone, you know that's useless. Telling someone you will learn this, or you will pay, it's like okay now they're not going to learn it for sure you know (laughs). But if I can sense that they want to take what I know, they want to steal what I know from me, then I really enjoy giving them that opportunity to do that. So, what I do depends on what day of the week it is, depends on what time of the day it is, depends on the season of the year, you know you're not going to find me out there running the mill in the middle of January very often you know. So, and I think that that's, from my perspective, anybody who is in a trade, probably feels very similar, if they're a good tradesperson to me, about their particular trade. It's not good enough just to sit in the office and talk to customers and write contracts you know. If you can't go out there and do the work, then how could you expect someone who works for you to do what you need to have done and are hoping they can learn how to do well if you can't do it?

SH: Yeah.

RC: So from my perspective, I need to be in the shop whenever I can. I need to be on the horses, I need to know how to run the mill, I need to be able to go out into the woods and find a good tree, you know need to know how to do all those things, and I do a lot of it. When work is good, when we have a lot of work, I end up doing a lot of the part I enjoy the least. I spend a lot of time sitting here, like we are right now, in front of a fricking computer drawing drawings and writing contracts you know all that kinds of stuff. And Laura is the same way she ends up doing payroll and you know paying bills and all that kind of stuff and she'd much rather be over there running

the sawmill with me and chopping joinery and that kind of stuff you know. So it's, what do I do? A lot of stuff. But what is all comes back to is always the same thing. It comes right down to what makes me want to do it at all in the morning. I wake up and it's like, alright, what am I going to do today, what makes me want to do it is that I have learned so much from this ancient craft, it has taught me so much about just how intelligent and how skilled the people who came thousands of years before me were, in being able to do what they did, and realising that every single day that I get up and go to work, the only reason why I don't learn something from what I'm doing is because I'm just not paying attention or I don't give a fuck. Because it's there. If I want it, it's there. It's staring me in the face you know. Every old timber I put on my saw horse, the first thing I do is look the whole thing over because I want to find out what is there in this timber that I've never seen before. And it's amazing. It's just astounding you know. Every single building I have ever worked on, timber frame building I've ever worked on, every single one of them has something in it that gives me new insight or a new perspective to what I do. Because the knowledge is there and the juxtaposition of time, space, me, money, all of things just happens to be in the right place and the right time where that little piece of information from way back in the past someone is staring me in the face, and it's up to me to say, you know, well look at that you know. And to me, that's what I do, you know. I learn from my trade every day. That's what I do.

SH: Fantastic. I think you beat Ken in answering question number one, so you can tell him that (laughs).

RC: (Laughs).

SH: And the other thing is that I'm dumbfounded how you and Laura can work so well together. Kelly can't even be in the house when I'm fixing something.

RC: Yeah.

SH: Her main job around here when I'm doing something is to keep the dogs away from me.

RC: There's a funny story about that because Laura's father was a carpenter. But he wasn't a timber frame carpenter, he was a general carpenter and did a lot of remodeling work you know. But he understood the importance of the things that he was handling. So, like if you walk over to my barn right now hanging from, across two bents are half a dozen wooden gutters that her dad saved from a job that he was doing. They wanted the wooden gutters taken off and replaced with aluminum gutters. And he knew that you shouldn't throw those away, so he saved them. He never did find a use for them, but when they had to be moved because they were moving to the retirement community, he asked me he said come into the barn because whatever I leave behind what's left behind so if you see anything you want, take it. And it was like, well I'll take these wooden gutters (laughs). So now they're hanging in my barn. But he didn't, the one line he could not cross, and I don't know why, and I don't know if maybe I'm wrong about this or Laura

was wrong about it but the way we both interpret it and the way she said it to me was that her dad wouldn't let her do the work. He let her brother do the work, but she couldn't. She could be in the shop, she could sweep the floor you know, she could move things around and tidy things up, but a woman's place wasn't to be doing carpenter. When she and I met, one of the things, I think, something must have attracted her to me, I think one of the things that did it is when I just offered her the opportunity to pick up the tools and do it, you know, become part of it. I think that kind of fulfilled something in her that hadn't been fulfilled before. So there's a mutual appreciation that goes on where not only am I honoured to have a partner that can come out and work in the shop with me and get pissed off when I'm moody and be happy when the work comes out good and really enjoy picking up a chisel and knowing when its dull and when its sharp, all the shit that goes along with being in this kind of work. Not only can I enjoy that but I also really appreciate that, giving her a better perspective of what her place is and what she can do.

SH: Yeah.

RC: You know. And that's really, really important for people to be able to know that they can do stuff. You know, I don't really care what it is. If you can convince a person that they probably are capable of something they never really thought they could be capable of, would be capable of, or necessarily even want to be capable of, if you just convince them somehow, that they probably can be capable of doing that, that's what gets them going. That's what clicks the switch. That's what makes them move from nowhere they are in the place of fear, you know I don't want to touch that I might break it. That was my dad's problem when these things came along, these computers. He hated them because he didn't want to push the button, you know. He's going to fuck it up. Something was going to go horribly wrong when he pushed the button you know (laughs). But anyways, that's why I really enjoy working together. And we get along really good on that stuff you know. Some days I'm an asshole and she knows it and she tells me. Other days she's got a really bad attitude and I tell her that. But if you can't talk about that shit.

SH: You're in trouble anyway.

RC: Yeah. (Laughs)

SH: Alright, question number two, when did you actually begin practicing your profession?

RC: (Pause). Probably, (Pause) I'm going to say when I was ten or eleven. As far as carpentry goes. My grandfather, on my mom's side, he did, I mean he built the hotel-motel complex that I was born in and still exists today and is a very, very popular place. He came over from Germany, him and my grandmother, so when I spent the summers with Grandpa I was working. And my dad always liked to do stuff around the house so I would always, I would get involved in doing that so as far as beginning goes, which would be when I realised that I was capable of picking up tools and doing something to wood was then. Ten, eleven right in that period of time. When I actually

started to do it for a living was after realising following in my father's footsteps and my grandfather's footsteps on my dad's side of being a full time General Motors lifer was not something I was going to do. Even though I started, I went to the General Motors Institute, I did the whole nine years of co-opting at the plant and everything else, and I realised that what I didn't want to do for the rest of my life was to work for General Motors, period. So I would start doing carpentry jobs in the summer. You know when I wasn't working or going to the plant. And that would have been 1969. Yeah because up to that time I was going to school full-time at GMI, then I transferred to Akron U, so yeah it would have been around 1969. In 1969 I started taking on odd jobs and it was just before I met Laura, and I just began doing, I built an office for Pete Rose in his basement one time you know, I did all kinds of weird stuff. And it was just, one of the problems of being a carpenter is that if someone asks you, can you do this, you always say yes.

SH: Yep.

RC: Then the question is how much is this going to cost me. And often you shoot yourself in the fucking foot because you really want to do it and you don't charge enough because you know if you do charge enough you probably won't be able to do it. So, you know how works so. So I actually started full time into income producing carpentry work in I would guess 1969, I think I would have to say would be the timeline for that. And when Laura met me I was the plant engineer for Lovell Electronics and, plant engineer was an interesting job for me because basically what it meant was I was just in charge of the whole physical plant. Everything that was there that needed to be taken care of was my responsibility. Make sure the air conditioners worked, make sure that the toilet paper rolls were full, make sure the light bulbs weren't burned out you know. But in the process of getting that job I went to work for a fellow named Jim Ott who really enabled me to use what I knew and to challenge me to see how far I could go with that. And so basically, we just completely remodeled his entire facility, bought the plant behind it and remodeled that. And when it came time for, right after I met Laura, we were at a point that we pretty much had done everything that Jim wanted done, now my job was just down to toilet paper and light bulbs. So, I gave my job to my best employee, and I came home and told Laura that had just quit my job. And another employee that I had that wasn't my best employee that I had kind of become good friends with had decided to go out and start our own company building stuff and we named it Mycroft Homes. Back then no one knew who Mycroft Homes was, so nobody ever got it you know. And we roughed houses, we did general carpentry, did some commercial work, but it didn't really turn out to be something to cause me to feel the way I do know about my work. I didn't get up in the morning and look forward to spot welding down 10,000 feet of form deck. Making sure you put 350 feet of wall angle up at the right height you know. Something about that type of work you just, you go home and drink you know, you don't come home and tell your wife how fun work was today you know. And Laura was actually the

reason that I moved from that type of carpentry to what I do know because she realised you know that what I wasn't doing was getting the necessary joy out of the challenge out of what I was doing. I was just, I was doing things that I knew I was capable of, but I wasn't really enjoying it because in order to get the work, I had to be the low bidder, and I wasn't willing to do things wrong, which is how the low bidder bid it, so I would do it right for less money than the low bidder which meant when we got to the end we could pay the bills and we had just enough money to start another job. So we didn't really get anywhere like that, and she realised, she was the one that saw the little article in Fine Homebuilding about a timber frame workshop. And we knew nothing about timber framing whatsoever, we had been collecting some antique tools, I had tools that I was told were barn builder's tools, we made the connection and figured; oh this might be fun. So we went and called down and Ed Levin was kind of leading up this workshop, and, he's gone now. And I think of him as kind of my mentor, and we called, and he said yeah, we've got one slot left so, me and Laura and 2-year-old Carson in a '73 Winnebago went down to Canyon College and did a timber frame workshop and that's when everything changed. Because I met these guys from Vermont, New Hampshire who were just obsessed with this work that they were doing. And they were there at dawn, they worked until dusk, everyone, it was 120 degrees in the parking lot at least, it was awful, and when I realised that the one thing that was different about those people all they, every single one of them, all they did exactly the same, they all smiled, all fucking day long.

SH: Really?

RC: They were happy. They were really happy to be doing what they were doing all day long. And that's you know, that's when I realised ok so this it, that's it, I don't know what it is but, I want to do whatever it is that will make you smile all the time. You know it makes you happy, what you're doing. So that was the transition. I came back and Don Richards from Novell Electronics who I was the plant engineer for, I started a job designing his house, which was an historic house. And I came back from the workshop and I, and we'd already taken out building permits and everything. And I came over to Don's house with my scrapbook of pictures you know, they were 3x5 cardboard paper pictures. I took them over and said; Don, this workshop, you wouldn't believe it was great. We need to do your addition this way. And he looked through the scrapbook and he said; Ok. And so, we just started all over again, redesigned it so you know, I already had my first timber framing job and, so that's really when what we do now started. And that was 1982, a year before the formation of the Timber Framers Guild, so we were lucky to be in the right place for all that to happen.

SH: Awesome. Fantastic. You actually just answered question two and three. And part of four actually. So, you talked about the General Motors Institute, and then, was it Akron College or Akron University?

RC: Akron University is where I went after GMI. That's where I met Laura. She was going to Kent and after the Kent State shootings she transferred to Akron and that's how I met her.

SH: So you were training to be a plant engineer then?

RC: No, I was actually training to be a mechanical engineer.

SH: Oh, okay.

RC: And then when I got the job as a plant engineer, what I learned at school fit in with, it gave me enough credentials that I didn't just look like some hack off the street you know, which I was you know but still, it looked good. And I literally walked out of college, I didn't finish. I put 3 ½ years into and figured, I'd much rather be out working than going to school. So I did not finish, I did not get my degree I just went to work.

SH: And never wore a tie again.

RC: Nope, no I didn't. I left them at General Motors and actually, in '69 I stopped with ties because I left them all in my dorm room at General Motors Institute. Somebody got them or threw them out (laughs).

SH: (Laughs). The way you picked up your training in this field, would you encourage others to take the route that you took to get into the field?

RC: Yes. Yeah because the thing about education in the trades is that you need to learn the skills, the tricks of the trade from someone who can do it. That's really, really important. You know, the difference between educating people in mathematics or English or any of those kinds of this is that those are things that can be learned from the book. Realistically if you really want to know how to speak French, you can learn it from books and computer programmes and whatever you know. And even in the case of that, you'll never be really, really good at French until you go and spend a lot of time with some French people before you figure out what you're saying that doesn't even make any sense because they speak French. But you can't learn what it takes to be a good tradesperson in any other way than from a tradesperson, in my opinion. And so the opportunity that I had, as soon as I could with any of the older guys, my grandfather or anybody that was good with tools and carpentry. But what was really, the real change for me was the interactive social environment that came out of the formation of the Timber Framers Guild. Because what that did is that it gave me the opportunity to learn from a whole lot of other people who were trying to understand what this was all about. And it's different in the United States because the United States, in the early 20th century, basically timber framing vanished. We just stopped doing it you know. And it didn't come until the period that I'm talking about, the early eighties, that a whole bunch of people realised that there was a whole bunch of other people out there who wanted to do it, that wanted to learn how it was done because I think the one thing that was common to all of us was that it was obvious that there was some way of building that you didn't understand, that you couldn't learn in school, and we couldn't really find

any books that told us what the hell it was. But all you had to do is walk into a barn you know, go down into the basement of an old house, go into an attic in an old house and you could see something that's completely different, the way we build it things in this country that obviously had been around for a long time. You know, I think that it's something that really intrigued a lot of us, intrigued the shit of me, it was like how does this work, what the hell it is, you know. But the revival of timber framing the beginning was more like a reinvention, ok. There were only a handful of people really trying to dig down into the history of it and understand the knowledge from that perspective. There were a lot more people using the 20th century mentality of, you know, well we've got this ancient craft, and we have the new cool tools and computers and stuff so you know we can start using all this stuff and make it even better you know. And so there weren't that many people who were, you know, interested in the revival of the craft inasmuch as the reinvention of the craft. Timber Framers Guild was all about new timber frames. It was not about historic timber frames. That took the founding of, and I was part of organising, the traditional timber framers research and advisory group. It took the formation of that group to have an idea of how many people were interested in old buildings. And what really flipped the switch for us because we were building modern timber frames from 1982 until 1994. Everything we did was just new timber frames. And we were doing it in a way that it was almost becoming anecdotal in that it was what that you read about it in Ted Benson's book you know. Or someone else's book. There were some of them that, you know, no one should have ever read. But you know some unfortunately did. (Laughs). But you didn't have was the opportunity to learn it from a book very well. Ted's was one of the first to give you illustration. And you didn't really come at it from the perspective of learning to be a traditional tradesperson. That wasn't, what we were becoming was timber framers. And there's a big difference you know. You can be a timber framer and know nothing about traditional timber frames. I mean that's, I would venture to say ninety percent of the timber framers in the United States today didn't know shit about traditional timber framing.

SH: Ninety's a high number

RC: Yeah. I'd bet.

SH: I see some of their companies and their ads, and they're basically looking for CNC operators, they're not looking for timber framers. And mean they're looking for people have got a back and are willing to haul this thing into place but really what they're looking for more than anything else is CNC workers.

RC: Yeah. So it's, you know from my perspective there's a big difference between, that's why I tend to qualify when I say I'm a timber framer. Well, okay, but there's a lot of timber framers out there who don't know shit about traditional timber framing methods you know. They don't know the difference between square rule and scribe rule. A lot of them never heard of a term that I

coined which is mill rule. And that's because they're just not interested in the story, they're interested the production. You know it's turned into a business of building. And I think that, I think from the perspective of why it's important that we understand the difference between those things is because the knowledge that was established in the past that I talked about a little before, learning from every building that I work on. If we don't incorporate that knowledge into our understanding, we start off without the full package.

SH: Yeah.

RC: We don't have a good picture of where we came from and where this ancient craft came from. And so from my perspective I think it's really, really important, I have no problem at all with modern timber framing. I think if people want to build that way, that's fine. But what I do have a problem with is people thinking that traditional timber framing is kind of like hand saws. Like where's the cord? It's important that knowledge so from my perspective, 1994 when we got the opportunity to rebuild the barn at Mallobar Farms that had burned, that was really, that was the slap in the face that I needed to realise that I had been in timber framing for twelve years and didn't know shit about it. I can build them. I can design them. You know I could buy the timbers, I had all the tools you know, we built a whole lot of them. But if you asked me to reproduce something historical? I couldn't do it. I had no idea what to do. You know, so for me, that really turned my head around, and I think Laura's too, then we realised there's a lot we're not paying attention to here that has to be of importance and what's happened from then until now is every day I get a little more of an appreciation of how important that is. A little more respect for what's there, that we need to place value on. And that's why I say if you want to teach a trade, and there's a different between a trade and a skill. You can teach someone the skill of using a CNC machine. You can teach someone the skill of using the forklift to load timber onto the CNC machine. You can teach someone to programme the CNC machine. These are all skills. None of them are really trades. I mean if you want to think of a forklift driver as a tradesperson, you can but I think it's a little squirrely. But you know, here's all these timber framers that are spitting out of these companies, but there are no tradespeople in the company. And from my perspective think it's important to keep the trades alive. So when you're talking about educating people in the trades, I think that it's really important to realise that it isn't just teaching people to do something some way. There's a lot of young people today who, they'll do timber frames, that don't have any knowledge of traditional timber framing and are not really tradespeople in that matter. I, the term that probably annoyed me most is when Dennis Markham who used to work with Benson, Ted Benson for quite a while, was talking to me one day and he was saying how great it was that the Humdinger CNC machine came along. Because there were all these people who are in the shop slaving away as tappers.

SH: Tappers?

RC: Yeah, you didn't have to do that anymore because a CNC machine would do it. I was like, what the fuck? What do you do for a living? I'm a tapper. (Laughs).

SH; (Laughs) So, how has the, and you talked about the CNC machine a little bit, how's the industry changed since you first started in it?

RC: I think that there's a large part of the, and again I think it's, what critical is to pay attention to what I've been saying about the difference between manufacturing modern timber frame buildings and reproducing or restoring traditional timber frame buildings. They're two different things entirely. One of them required the skills of a trade person, and the other one requires the skills of a machine operator you know. And I think that the thing that has changed is that when I first started in timber framing, whenever you said to someone I'm a timber framer, they would say; oh, I love log buildings. So there was no awareness by the general public whatsoever on what timber framing was. Even though they lived among them, they were all around them, but they had no idea what they were. But that log cabin image is something that they could relate to. I think that's changed. I think that we now live in a much more educated marketplace as far as that goes, so I think that there is plenty of room for people who are in in the traditional trades who become skilled in the traditional timber framing techniques to make a good living and to find good work. I think that has changed. I think that part of the reason for that is also because we've gotten into a juxtaposition of time traveling where one the one side we've had a lot of people who have been jumping up and down and screaming that you can't just tear down everything and build Walmart's because when they're gone, they're gone. You know, we have to stop doing that. And then, you had the marvelous readjustment of the economy that occurred, which meant now all of a sudden people were taking a look at old buildings and saying I wonder if I can do that cheaper than doing a new one. And is there's been this nice amalgam that has been created in which there's now becoming a demand for, and a respect for, our historic buildings. And the one thing that is true as to why education is an important subject to address is that, and I'll argue this until the cows come home as long as you give me a beer, you can't take care of buildings that were built traditionally, using traditional skills and traditional materials, if you don't know how to do that stuff. You can't do that stuff, you can't take care of the building properly. And the building will pay for it, and the building will shorten its life, it will reduce its lifespan. So you know from the standpoint of why are we bothering to teach things well, from my perspective there's two things. When you get to the point when you begin to feel that you have some skills and experience on what it is you set yourself for, what you decided was your goal, there's some pretty good reward for that. You know it makes you feel good that you pulled it off. You can do it. And it leaves you feeling better where other people say you can do it and I like what you do but that's not as relevant. But I think that, that's one reason that I think that education in the trades are important because it's good for our young people who decide I'm going to go this direction.

But I also think it's important that if we don't have that workforce, then we've just regulated ourselves just to building Walmart's. And I'd much rather live in a European environment than an American big box environment any day of the week you know. After, you've been there, you know what it's like, in England and Germany and France and their whole world attitude about where they live, the buildings that they co-exist with, their past, the people that built those buildings is totally different, completely different. And I think that it's a question of quality of life. If you can't respect the buildings that were built by your forefathers, the people that came before you who intentionally made them well enough for them to last way beyond their own lifetime, they have given you a gift. If you can't respect that then there's something wrong with you.

SH: Yeah. It's interesting last time I was in York, my office overlooks St. Mary's Abbey, the ruins of St. Mary's Abbey. And I'm in the office and there's about six of us in there, and I look out the window and there's three kids practicing parkour off the ruins. They're jumping onto the ruins and jumping off. And I said to my officemates; is someone going to say anything to them? And they replied that doesn't bother me as much as the kids playing football off the monument. So for them they have all these great buildings but, there was a great presentation in York about terraced housing. Row homes as we call them. And no one was interested. I said these are amazing buildings and everyone was, yeah, they're everywhere.

RC: That's the same thing that happened when we brought those French guys over for the project that we did over at Mt. Lebanon Shaker Village. And they could not figure out why they were there because they were dealing with these crappy modern buildings. You know 1835 was not old enough for them. (Laughs)

SH: Well I say it all the time and a guy from Leeds said it better than anyone. He said in America you think a hundred years is a long time, and in England we think a hundred miles is a long distance. With all these changes that have been going on and the growth of new timber framing and things like that, how do you feel about the future of traditional timber framing?

RC: I think that it had a chance that it never had before. I think that part of that is due to how much easier it is for us to exchange information today. I also think that part of it comes from the fact that, there's a lot of just dissatisfaction that is becoming apparent in how we live and learn in our current built environment in that we find young people have very, very little interest in competing with the Chinese or the Japanese or Indians or whoever it is that it is taking all the high-tech jobs. And I think that that's going to grow, I can't see anyway that it won't grow. So I think there's an opportunity for us to educate young people in, repurpose young people in a more environmentally conscious environment where they realise why what they are doing plays into the world were living and makes it a better place. Because I think young people want the world to be a better place. And I think if we give them an opportunity they'll do it better than we will. But we have to give them the opportunity. I also think that we have really gotten to the

point where more and more, higher and higher percentage of people are realising how depressing it is if we really did live in a world full of Walmart's. You know it's starting to sink in. You know it's not an easy thing. When we came through the mid twentieth century and everybody could have a big shiny car, you know everyone could have a stereo system, and these new toys, and all this other stuff disappeared in the background. But now that were in an environment where we can see how much damage is done not only to our environment but to our society, I think that we're beginning to enter into a world where there's more respect. And I don't mean just respect for that nice old house down the street, but I mean respect for the person that can make that nice old house down the street stay the way it's supposed to stay, work the way it's supposed to work and continue to exist. And that's my hopeful, wishful, but I see it as being more likely now than I did twenty years ago for a lot of reasons. So, you know I think that what's important is that a lot of people are given an opportunity to have to answer the question of, well do you give a shit? Does it mean anything to you at all you know? The only way that works is if someone is asking the question. So from my perspective I'm seeing that more and more, you know, but, it may be because I'm immersed in it more than I used to be. Maybe I've lost my mind and that's what I envelop myself in and I believe that it's becoming a better place. But I'd like to think it's not true, I'd like to think that it's actually becoming a better place and that, don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that anything is going to change overnight. Or even close to overnight. But I think the positive changes that we potentially have, the work that you're doing to try and figure out why do we do as far as education goes? You know how I feel about it, you've read my last blog, I think were we have made our biggest mistake is believing that a programme that started out by being an industrial art is something that should be revived in the schools. Doesn't even make any sense to me anymore. No, this is of no value whatsoever. It may have had a purpose at one time, it may have actually worked for a while, but it doesn't have any purpose today at all. So, if we're going to do this. If we're going to teach young people how then my opinion is how do we get tradespeople into education you know. Because if we can't do that, we can't make it work. Because, like I told you before, more than once, not just on this interview, you learn trades from tradespeople. That's the truth. That's the kernel. So, how do we make that work? And that's where I think it goes back to you know, Laura feeling enabled when I told her she was perfectly welcome to come into the shop and be a timber framer. It's the same thing with tradespeople. I guarantee you that if you just, in casual conversation engage all the tradespeople that you met for the next six months and figure out a way to casually ask them; how do you think of yourself as a teacher? You know, how would you feel about teaching? Pretty much all of them would immediately react, no I can't do that. Because they wouldn't feel like they were skilled enough in that way. They would think of teacher as those that have gone and gotten an education to become teachers. And so that's not something that they would grant

themselves. But I can't remember being around someone who I respect as being a good tradesperson who didn't end up being a really good teacher when given the opportunity to do it. It's natural. It's just natural. It just happens that way. You know you want to share what you know. That's why the Timber Framers Guild worked. That's why PTN worked for a while. And I'm hoping it can continue to work because it's a natural tendency to share what you know, to share your knowledge you know. That's the thing that we loved about going to the Timber Framers Guild conferences at the beginning was that you went here to take home this huge sackful of knowledge that you couldn't get anywhere else. And so, to me that's an important aspect and understanding of how to get this education thing to work in the trades. Because that was a great place to learn. Not a good place to get a degree. Not a good place to get a certificate you know. But it was a great place to learn. And it was a great place to learn you can teach. And that was important, that how I learned teaching. My first opportunity to teach is in the Timber Framers Guild. When people started telling me you know, teach people what you know. You have knowledge that we need to share with as many people as possible you know. And I wasn't comfortable at it in the beginning but after I let myself become involved in it, and Laura loves it too. Whenever we have an opportunity to work as instructors. It's just, it's part of paying back and paying forward at the same time, you know. And so I think that if we could figure out a way to make that part of how we approach trades education so that we're in essence teaching tradespeople how to become the teachers they are, that's going to be a big part of making all this work because they're needed.

SH: Absolutely.

RC: Its part of the programme. Without that part it doesn't work. I mean I'm not saying it doesn't work, you could make it work without that part, and it's just not going to work very well. (Laughs)

SH: (Laughs) So you talked about the Timber Framers Guild and you talked about PTN, could you elaborate on the roles you had in those organisations?

RC: I was a founding member of both of them. In the Timber Framers Guild, I was on the Board of Directors fairly early on in the organisation's history, and I became President of the Timber Framers Guild and I served as President for seven years. And I also became a certified instructor for the Timber Framers Guild, and I very, very much enjoyed that whole thing. It was really valuable and rewarding. And the Preservation Trades Network I was a founding member, I actually was invited to meet with Ken Follet and Lisa and several other people in New York, in Brooklyn to begin PTN or what would become PTN at Apple Restorations where Ken used to work. And I was there for that very first meeting before we started to turn this into something. That's when Bryan Blundell was still a big, key player in it. And then I went on to be on the Board of Directors for several years, ended up moving into being the Project Development Coordinator, because we started realising that it would be a valuable thing to start doing some projects and

being involved in some other things besides just having a conference. And then when it came time when people realised the importance of having an Executive Director, I became Executive Director and Laura became the Guild, I mean the PTN Secretary and office manager for a couple of years and I very much enjoyed that too. It was fun and it really opened my eyes to how many people there were out there that had a very similar feeling about what we need to be doing if we're going to have a world like we thought we did, and that was rewarding. People coming to us and just saying, how can we help, what can we do, how can we pitch in? To me that was very rewarding. You know, unfortunately both organisations have suffered some imploding and I don't want to go into the reasons for that because it doesn't belong in this interview.

SH: No, definitely not.

RC: So, that didn't turn out to be a long-term thing. I would have loved it if it did, but that's that. It was rewarding and worthwhile.

SH: Alright. We actually skipped over one real quick. Do you ever train apprentices?

RC: We used to do some apprenticeship awards, but when Carson became a part of the company, he shut it down because he thought it was costing the company too much money, he's more of a business person than I am, and since he's no longer part of the company because of the economic adjustment, we haven't gone back to it yet. I enjoy it, but we haven't gone back to it yet. We're I mean honestly, our company is just really starting to get back squarely on its feet within the last couple of years and you know, it's hard to have an apprentice when you don't have a good stable company.

SH: Alright. So you already talked about others practicing your craft, how would you, if somebody came to you and said Rudy I want to be a timber framer, how would you suggest them getting into it?

RC: (Pause) I think that probably the simplest answer to that question, to give them the opportunity to figure out if they are right or not.

SH: Yeah.

RC: Because what you want to do, and what it ends up being something that you're good at, are not the same thing. And so my first inclination is to put them in a simple situation where they are learning to make simple wood and edge tools interact with one another and trying to get what they want to make happen, happen. Because that's really the beginning level of the whole thing you know. Can they understand why the wood is doing that same thing when they use the chisel this way? Can they find out how they can use it a different way to make it work differently. Can they see the work, and I think it's very, very important part of anyone that wants to be a timber framer is to find out whether or not they can draw three dimensional views of the joints that they are cutting. Because if they can't draw it, they can't see it, if they can't see it, they can't cut it. It's just that simple.

SH: Interesting. Are there misconceptions, I mean you talked about timber framing, I love log cabins, are there misconceptions about the craft that people have?

RC: Yeah. I think probably one of the biggest misconceptions is that it's a building form of the elite. People all too often think that timber frame homes are expensive. I hear that a lot. You know how much more does it cost to build this way. And the problems we're dealing with more than just being able to just explain to why their worth more, it's dealing with people who don't think the way that we used to. We don't build for future generations today. We don't give a shit about future generations today. I'm sorry but we don't. And, so when it comes time to build your dream house, it's all about housing, look I'm me. So when people think of timber frames they think well they're more expensive so the only people that can afford them are the rich. And in reality, when you look at history, what you'll find is that timber framing was actually the form of building for the common man. It was something that could be done with the materials that were right in your environment, just cut down trees and go. You didn't need a blacksmith, you didn't need any of those things, if you just had some tools, and you didn't need that many tools either. You know it was, and today what people don't realise is the value comes from being able to build with all-natural materials which are available from an environment from which we can sustainably harvest, to build buildings that will last, give me a number, ten times as long. I mean I'm telling you right now it's a lot longer than the stick frames crap that we see being cranked out down the road every time you turn around. If people understood that's what it's all about, they would realise the value in our society and our built environment. Because it's a better way to do things. It may be more money going in, if that's the only way you can think. If the only way you can understand things is how much it is going to cost me, well yes, it is going to cost you more. But, it's like my grandfather used to tell me and people don't understand this anymore, we used to, when I was a kid, we had three versions of the quality of the things that you could go out and buy; good, better and best. Good meant that it did what it was supposed to do. Better meant it did it, probably did it better, and lasted longer and did it for a longer time. Best means that it was as good as you could make it, and it was going to last, and it was going to do what it was intended to do as long as you looked after it and took care of it. We don't have that anymore. That's not part of our world. Today is cheap, flashy and exuberate. It's all about how's it looks on me or can I get it at Walmart. It's not about good, better or best anymore. And that's the misconception people have about timber framing is they don't realise that it's the best way to do things. If you want to build so you can have a sustainable environment and have buildings that generations can enjoy, then this is the way you do it. And so, there's this huge misconception there with people thinking; this is for the elite. No, it's not for the elite. It can be for the elite, if that's what you want, but it's not for the elite. It's for the common man. It's for you and me. If you build, if we were to build everything in this way, we would have lower cost building in this country, and we

would have more durable building and less landfill material you know. And it's a misconception so for me it's probably the hardest part of what I do is getting people to realise I'm not doing this because I want to work for the rich. I'm sorry, I don't like the rich and selfish myself.

SH: I like their pay checks. They don't bounce.

RC: Well I'll tell you, the people that I know that work for people they never meet, I couldn't do that. I could not build a house for someone I never even met, I couldn't do that.

SH: Yeah, I'm not going to build anything for you unless I meet you and know what you want. I don't want to just meet your architect.

RC: Yeah. Well, the important part of that is that the architect can't build it.

SH: Absolutely. And many times they can't communicate it, but that's another story.

RC: (Laughs)

SH: This next question, and actually from here on out is, and we're almost done by the way, is all about the educational offerings and education programmes, I'm going to give you a little caveat ahead of time. Don't hold back on this, which I know you're not a person that holds back but...

RC: No, not very well (laughs).

SH: Obviously I have seen it for several interviews where people hold back on these questions a little bit because of my position within an education programme. I don't care you know.

RC: Good.

SH: I tell people all the time, I don't want to hear what I'm doing right, I want to hear what I'm doing wrong. So, feel free to say whatever you want. This next question; do you feel that educational offerings are adequate to prepare apprentices entering the field?

RC: No.

SH: No? Why not?

RC: Because I don't think that the necessary interplay between the labour marketplace and the educational institutions that we have created today exists at the level it has to exist before it can work. You can't create these shiny things that you hope are going to pop up out there and somebody's going to scarf them up because there so nice and shiny looking and it would be good for my company to hire this person, you know. You need to be involved, you know, companies that want to hire people that come out of trade education programmes, need to be involved in the fucking programme. They need to be a part of what's going on. They need to be interactively involved so that not only can the programme come to the labour markets and say; what do you need, but the labour marketplace can come back to the education programmes and say; why aren't you doing this, or why the fuck are you doing this this way? They need to have a line of communication that is linked, blended together so that education and occupation are heel to heel connected. And until we get to that point, I don't care how hard you work to build a good

educational institution, if it's not directly linked to where those people are going, then it can't help to be less than adequate.

SH: Interesting. In terms that the programmes that are existing, what do you think the biggest advantages and drawbacks, you talked a little bit about the drawbacks in terms of a lot of them not being connected to industry.

RC: Well I think that's there's another drawback that's on the opposite end, and you know exactly what this is already, but I'll say it so it's part of this interview. If you were going to just decide I'm going to go out and I'm going to start asking high school guidance counsellors; can I come in and talk to your students, because I think I have something they might be interested in. And let's say you get ten schools that say; yeah, you can come in, we'll get an assembly of kids together and you can talk to them about your programme. And let's say each one of those had a hundred kids from the school that attended that assembly. How many would have ever heard about your programme?

SH: That's...very, very few. Yeah, probably none, most of the time.

RC: None. And that's the other end of the problem. That's the other end of the equation. And that's what I said in my blog. That's not what the public-school systems are built for. There not built to teach people trades, period. And they never should be, it's not what they're there for. But, they should include trades as one of the places that they are directly young people towards, you know. If that many kids really want to become lawyers, more power to them you know. There's not many jobs for computer programmers anymore because computers are programming them fucking selves you know. If they really want to become doctors, which is a real gory, awful thing to do, whatever they want to do, they can do that. But why aren't the trades part of what they are made aware of in a K through 12 programme? Why? And that's what needs changed. We don't need the K through 12 programme at all, we, no, don't get me wrong, that's not what I'm saying. The solution isn't changing the programme, it's getting the awareness of what trades education means in the minds of those young people. Because that's what's going to enable trades education programmes to exist because then you're going to have young people who are making a conscious decision about whether or not they go into the trades or they go into law or they go into medical practice, or they go into mechanisms or whatever. But if it's not there, how can the system work, you know. So it's, from my perspective I think the real problem today, with programmes like yours is that they're not connected to anything on those two ends of, and it's critical, because you're in the middle. You have this place where people can go and get jobs, and you have this place where people are coming out of K through 12 and being told now's the time for you to decide what you want to do with your education from here, and unfortunately that becomes a competitive marketplace which sucks, it's the worst possible way to educate people.

SH: And it's a numbers game, it's all about how many asses are in the seats.

RC: Yeah right. So, here you are, you're right in the middle, and you're not connected to that end or you're not connect to that end, how's that supposed to work.

SH: That's a good question. Do you see any advantages of the system?

RC: I think that the one simple, in your best advantage is that they exist at all. We went from having a screwed-up system where we were pretending we could integrate trades into the school systems which was ill-gotten, misguided, not thought out. It didn't work, fell apart. To creating what we call vocational schools, which was just as ill guided and not well thought out, to the point where we're not actually seeing programmes that are trying to develop and survive that recognise the need for a different way of doing this. Not that I feel strongly that we have come up with the ideas that we need to make it work. But the fact that they exist at all is a step in the right direction. You know that's, so I think the existence of the programmes plain and simple is a positive aspect. And what I would like to see is a way of networking the programmes, not only to public education and industry, but the other way, cross platform between the programmes so that there's less work to be done on everybody's part, and there's more continuity. I would, personally, I would like to see trades education programmes share students. Because there's different things that you can learn about building in different parts of the country because a vernacular building is not the same throughout the country.

SH: You know what I don't teach? Basements. We don't have basements here. Ninety percent of the country has basements, not us. I miss basements so much. But we don't teach about them.

RC: Right, but if you sent students to Belmont to learn about that or whatever, you know, and everybody got exactly the same amount of credits, that to me would be great.

SH: Yeah, we don't have communication between the schools. Simeon and I have good communication, Bill and I were starting to have good communication. Dave and I have never had good communication.

RC: Well Dave's a pretty defensive man. And he has a right to be because he should not be there. I mean, if it wasn't Dave Mertz, that programme would have folded. He has been a fucking tower of strength keeping that thing alive. And I credit him a lot for that but, I think if we weren't in the competitive environment that we are in, post K through 12 in the United States, we could do a lot better, you know. If you weren't competing to see how many asses you can get in your class, you could call Dave Mertz up on the phone and say; hey I've got this guy that I think really should be coming to your programme because you've got this course that you're teaching that he really wants, and I don't have it and probably never will, you know. So, if you don't mind I'm going to send him up to your place for this next semester or whatever, and if you've got anyone you want to swap out that's great or whatever. But it should be a collaboration that education is something we all have a common goal as to what were actually trying to accomplish, instead of competing.

So that's the one thing that you need to realise, the hardest part of programmes like yours is, the same thing I was talking about with the Timber Framers' Guild and why it was such a great environment because people wanted to share, and they did share, and they really enjoyed the opportunity to share, ok, that's what's being a tradesperson is all about. It's sharing what you know. And if the programmes that are teaching this can't do that, how can they expect to work with that?

SH: Yeah.

RC: It's just that, from my perspective it's just common sense. I'm not saying it's easy, it just seems like a realistic goal. How the hell do you get there? Sorry, I've got other work (laughs).

SH: (Laughs). So, do you think these programmes are sustainable?

RC: Well, what we just talked about could be changed, yes. And I think that that's one of the reasons I think this idea of looking at it from an English perspective and an American perspective is important, but I think it needs to go beyond that. One of the things that was great about the ITES in Sweden was realising just how involved both government and industry are involved in higher education in Sweden. And we don't have that here you know, we don't. And so at least learning the differences between how that works in England, which I don't know you may know more than me on that, at least learning that will help but I think extending it beyond that, so we can begin to realise that. Okay, so let's say we were in an environment where primary level of education is interacting with higher levels of education in the trades and industry is working with the trades education institutions, to figure out what's working and what's not. Because that's the information we need. We need to find out what has already happened, or what is already happening, not start from scratch again.

SH: Alright, I'm going to ask you two questions that aren't on my list, but they keep coming up. In the US, why do we have these programmes that exist, I mean Savannah and Charleston are fairly, well, medium sized cities, but why do we have programmes that exist in St. Clairsville Ohio, and in the middle of nowhere in Colorado, eureka, California, Clatsop Oregon, but we don't have any programmes in major cities? Why do all these preservation programmes end up out in rural areas?

RC: When we went to Lincoln and we had our ITES there, and it was the beginning of the end for me because I didn't wear a tie, if you can remember I got up and I gave a kind of impromptu presentation and basically what I've said was what I saw, which was the fact that, in the United States, the programmes that exist all exist because they have an individual's name on them. Steve Hartley's programme. Dave Mertz's programme. You know you can go right down the line. Simeon Warren's programme, okay. It's because the only way that they work is when a champion accepts the challenge of trying to do it even though everybody tells them, this ain't going to work. Good luck, but it's not going to happen. But they do it anyways. And that's an unfortunate

truth. It's an unfortunate reality. It should work the other way around. These programmes should be developed and looking for good people to run them. But that's not the way it works. You guys have to build them from the ground up. You've got to make them exist. No one brings them to you and says will you please do this for us? You have to force your way into the system and make it happen. And until we can get that resolved. Until the higher education institutions see the value in having these kinds of programmes and take it upon themselves to ensure they exist and have good people to run them, that's the way it's going to be you know. The only way we're going to have them at all is if somebody stands up and says: I'm fucking bull-headed enough and I can make this happen, and so I'm having at it, you with me or not. If they say yes, give it a try and see what happens and it exists, and if they say no I don't want anything to with this shit. We don't even have the budget to do the other thing, then it doesn't happen. And that's unfortunate. And again, that's that whole thing. We need the next level. We need to have government, we need to have business, and you need to have other players involved that are supporting this. Pushing capital into this, pushing, in terms of the needs for them goes, which in terms of the government shouldn't have any, it's our money, they could just give it to you, but industry should be working with the schools saying; you know this is what we need. We really need a lot more tappers. (Laughs).

SH: Well it's interesting because I've seen, actually in two weeks I start my ninth year over at Tech. And I look at the programmes that have come and gone since I've been at Tech. Like the one in Maryland that I could never figure out how they worked, Ivy Tech that came and went in Indiana, John Moore's programme that he can't seem to get off the ground in Kentucky, and now College of the Redwoods, it looks like Edgcombe is on their way out, and it's amazing to see these flashes in the pan that people, you know they start and then all of a sudden they're gone.

RC: Right. Well what you just said is it. Its people that start. It should not be people that start it. It should be a people answering a need to run a programme that has already been at least funded and outlines in terms of what the goals are, and what the programme should be. But until that is there, it's a response thing, okay. Basically, the ones that have succeed are the ones that responded positively, even if it didn't appear that it is responding positively to people who decided; god damn it I'm going to do this and I'm going to decide how to make it happen. So, they were able to get the response they needed to make it happen. That's not the way it should work, it's just not, it should work the other way around. You know there should be a conscious awareness of this. But the problem is when you're working in a competitive environment, which higher education is today, when you're working in a competitive environment, everything you're doing is behind closed doors, it's not like you're trying to interact with other institutions or industry or anything else. You're trying to come up with the best business plan you can you know.

What the hell does that got to do with education? You know it just doesn't make any sense. I personally think that's going to be the biggest challenge for quite some time ahead. And in reality, if we want to fix that one, if we want to solve that one, we have to go to the young people directly. And we have to somehow, whether its YouTube or anything else you know, we need to it's the SpongeBob Square pants thing you know. We need to get them to see what the opportunity is that they could take advantage of before they're going to want to do that. And that's not happening today, it's just not happening. Programmes like yours are destined to struggle because like you said earlier in this conversation, there's only a handful of young people out there that have any interest whatsoever. And it's not because it's something they wouldn't enjoy, wouldn't find rewarding, wouldn't enjoy for the rest of their lives, it's not because of anything of those things, it's because they just do fucking realise it's there.

SH: Interesting. Alright, last question, if I were to say to you; alright Rudy Christian, money is no object. Design me a programme. How would you do it, how would you set that up?

RC: Right. Probably the first thing I would do is sit down and try to identify, as best I can, what the trades are that I would be responsible for having someone teach, as a starting point. Not as an ending point just a way to get some context. And then the first thing I would do is I would go out and start talking to the people who are in those trades and asking them specifically; would you be willing to come and teach? And we're going to pay your expense, we're going to pay you as much money as you'd be making if you were on the job, but we'd like you to come teach our students. If it turns out that you enjoy it and we get along, this may be a recurring gig for you. But find out if I can get instructors first because, without having trades people teaching, I know the programme can't work. So that would be my initial process. I would say okay, let's figure out what it is that we want to teach, we know that's going to change but we need a starting point, and then we need to go on and find out if we have people that are willing to teach it. And if money was no option, than I don't think you would have a problem at all, we could easily go out and find people to do it. Because one of the problem the tradespeople have is that they're always looking at that next job as the one that's going to get them more money on than they're supposed to, because they've lost so much money on all the other ones (laughs). But you can say to them; look, don't worry about it, how much do you want. You know and if they say it's going to be four hundred thousand dollars a week you say, well sorry we can't do that. You know be realistic about it, find out how much they would be making if they were on the job, find out whether or not it's going to work for them, and be flexible. Be able to adjust your programme to them, figure out, well when it's a good time for you to do this. Okay, then that's when we'll do that. When's a good time to do this, alright, then that's when we'll do that. But interact directly with the people you need to have teaching the programme as the primary structure that you build things around, so that once you have that, you have a template to build around. And if you

get students for those teachers, and the teachers that those students need, and then build it from there. And personally I think if you could have a programme that was built that way, I know when I've come down and taught with you, I've gone out to Palymora, when I've gone out to teach at different schools, if the system were to be designed in such a way that knew that this was something that I could just count on to do on a fairly regular basis, I would be attracted to that. And I think a number of tradespeople would. But they need to know that it's real. So you have to build it first, so that's what the kernel of it is. Without the tradespeople, we don't have the programme. And then once you know you have the tradespeople, you have a programme.

SH: So are there any programmes out there that you feel are, not meeting the needs of your ideal programme, but working towards that ideal?

RC: (Pause). I don't think I'm qualified to answer that question. And the reason is that there is so much difference in the programmes and the demands that are placed on them, and their sustainability in terms of capital goes and support goes and everything else. I don't think I'm qualified to answer that question. I would like to believe that every programme is making a valuable contribution. And I would doubt very seriously if that's not true. I mean, it's a job that needs done. So anybody that's trying to do it is making a contribution. And I haven't seen, one of the things that I think is a positive, is that I really haven't seen that much in the way of corrupt trades education programmes. You know where someone is obviously in it to try and figure out how to bilk a bunch of money out of the government, whatever you know. So that a positive. People seem to be doing it for the right reason and their heart's in the right place. So from that perspective I think that they all deserve a pat on the back for being willing to put up with this bullshit in the first place (laughs).

SH: (Laughs). I've got plenty of that trust me. Awesome. So, that's all the questions I had, do you have anything that you would like to add?

RC: Nah I think we pretty much covered everything that's banging around in my head about this. I will say that when I'm a happy camper and I feel like we're probably starting to turn the corner is the first time that I meet a young person that comes up to me and says; you know I was thinking about this trades education programme and this trades education programme, which one do you think is better and why. I would love to see that day. You know to me that would just be...cool. (Laughs). But that's, I hope in my lifetime I get to see that day. You know when I'm asked that question, because that will mean that we've started to turn the corner a little bit. And that's, you know, I guess, you know, as far as concluding goes, I think that's a corner worth turning, and I think there's enough people out there that are committed to making that happen that I feel good about that. And I want that to succeed, and I want to do whatever I can to contribute to making that happen so.

SH: Fantastic. Well, let me just turn off this recorder.

End Recording

Total recording time 1.46.43.

Interview Form-Individual

Name: Lisa Sasser _____

Current address: [REDACTED] Amherst, New Hampshire, United States _____

Birthdate: [REDACTED] 1949 _____

Age: 60 _____

Occupation: Historic Architect _____

Interview Date: 27 July 2014 _____

Interview Location: Stephen-Savannah, Lisa-Amherst (Skype) _____

Interviewer: Stephen Hartley _____

Generation: 2-United States _____

Consent Form signed: 26 July 2014 _____

Begin recording

Stephen Hartley (SH): Alright. Couple things before we get started. Your current address?

Lisa Sasser (LS): [REDACTED]. Amherst, New Hampshire

SH: Your birthdate?

LS: [REDACTED]-54

SH: And that would make you how old?

LS: Just turned sixty.

SH: Sixty? Well happy birthday.

LS: Thank you.

SH: Yeah that was a couple of months ago. I don't even know what day of the week it is most of the time. Your occupation?

LS: Historic Architect/ Historic Preservationist.

SH: Alright. So how this is going to work is that there are ten questions.

LS: Okay.

SH: Ten general questions. Inside those questions are what's called probes. Probes are basically if I need you to elaborate or describe a little bit about what you're talking about. Some of them are, from your perspective and mine, fairly simple and almost laughably obvious questions. But I'm writing this for an audience that doesn't practice in the trades and who doesn't really know. The goal of all this is to have a general understanding or better understanding of how the US and UK systems can learn from each other and overlap some of their work and how we've gotten to the point in both of these countries where we are in such a dire need for craftspeople and have not really reacted well to these issues.

LS: Right.

SH: Hopefully when it's all said and done, my supervisors want me to take this to ICOMOS and the capacity building group to come up with a better framework for craft education.

LS: Is that part of Europa Nostra? Is that the same general...

SH: It's a little different. Europa Nostra is much more EU based.

LS: OK

SH: And the EU, the Bologna process within the EU basically says that if you get a degree in England, all other countries in the EU have to acknowledge that degree. Which is positive and negative, and I'm getting a lot of stuff from the EU people on that. Basically, because they can't certify some of these schools, especially the ones in Eastern Europe, so it's becoming a mess in itself. So, I think we're going to have to go to ICOMOS in general and say we need an international framework of how we train these people.

LS: Right.

SH: So, we'll see if it gets that far, hopefully it will, but it all depends in what we come up with.

LS: Right.

SH: So, question number one: what is your profession?

LS: I initially trained as an architect in Texas Tech University. I have a five-year Bachelor of Architecture degree. In the day that was considered the terminal degree for architecture. I also went through the preservation trades apprenticeship programme offered by the National Park Service. The Historic Preservation Training Centre.

SH: OK. Can you describe what you do within your professional capacity?

LS: Over the course of my career in the Park Service I filled a number of roles from serving as an historical architect; documenting, assessing, recommending treatments, and writing specifications for treatment of historic structures, construction contracting, contracting supervision, and supervision of National Park Service day labour crews. I also did training for National Park Service internal programmes as well as other state and local governments, universities and the private sector. When I was at the Historic Preservation Training Centre, I worked hands-on on a number of projects either as a crew member or as a project leader doing carpentry, masonry predominately, window and door fabrication and repairs, painting and finishing work, brick masonry, stone masonry, general carpentry. And I've also worked in general consulting including curriculum development. The project I'm currently engaged in for the National Park Service is working as a member of a team developing an online career academy for cultural resources. So, I'm working both on web design and curriculum design and development for that as well as teaching several long-standing Park Service workshops pertaining to preservation treatment of Park Service resources, cultural resources for managers, and sort of developing several workshops for the Vanishing Treasures programme.

SH: Excellent. So when did you begin practicing your profession?

LS: When I was in architecture school at Texas Tech University, I got a summer job at a living history museum called the Ranching Heritage Centre which was a division of the Texas Tech Museum. And it is a thirteen-acre site that has been developed as a museum housing structures from all periods and geographic areas representing Texas ranching history. So working there during the summers and part time year-round while I was in architecture school is where I really discovered preservation as a profession in particular I became interested in preservation trades and hands on work. So ever since 1972 is when I started working there.

SH: Okay. So you actually answered my whole probe questions right there. So, what attracted you to preservation as a profession?

LS: Well of course when I was in architecture school I had minimum awareness in historic preservation and it was somewhat in its infancy you know as a widely understood professional pathway. There were not very many programmes in preservation either academically and certainly not with any type of trades orientation, so getting the summer job at the ranching heritage centre opened up an entirely new world for me and in particular getting a chance to work with and learn from people that became my mentors like Lee Grades, he was the construction foreman at the Ranching Heritage Centre and he was an old time Texas rancher and jack of all trades and great Texas storyteller who was at one time would have called one hell of a mechanic. He could build just about anything and he had a really deep appreciation for these structures and what they represented and how they represented the lives of the people that settled West Texas. And indeed there were even some structures that he was aware of that and knew of from his days as a young man ranching in West Texas it was like all of a sudden it opened up this whole new world that was so much beyond the buildings themselves and all of this insight into the lives of the people who built them and used them. And that's carried over in my understanding of historic structures generally throughout my career.

SH: So what's your favourite aspect of this?

LS: Definitely the hands-on, which I don't get to do nearly as much I as would like to. And teaching. Those are the things that I absolutely love most. And then of course just getting out and looking at old buildings and trying to understand them and understand how they work and how they were built and what went through the minds of the builders. What Rudy calls putting yourself in the boots of the builders. And then even more so getting to go out and look at old buildings with like-minded people and people who often had this depth of knowledge and understanding of traditional building.

SH: So then what's your least favourite?

LS: Not surprisingly the bureaucracy, the project management, the contracting, the funding issues and dealing with all types of things. The bureaucratic paperwork that goes along with it.

SH: Oh yeah. As a Georgia employee I know all about the bureaucracy.

LS: Yeah you do.

SH: Did you ever consider doing anything else besides preservation?

LS: Not seriously. Not once I got involved in it. I mean I've gone in all kinds of directions within the field of preservation, but I've always circled back around to a primary interest in the trades, but no I've never found anything that I consider more interesting or to have as many aspects as much as novelty in the capacity to continually learn and discover new things and meet really interesting people with this wealth of knowledge.

SH: Fantastic. Well you talked about the Texas Tech programme, the five-year architecture programme, can you explain the structure of that programme as well as actually the trades programme with the Park Service?

LS: Okay. The Texas Tech programme, at the time I was in school was strictly a traditional five-year Bachelor of Architecture degree programme design emphasis. There was no preservation programme at the time I was in school. There was subsequently, well actually I was the first person to graduate from Tech with a certificate in preservation which I think was thirty-two hours of architectural history courses on top of a regular degree.

SH: That's a lot of architectural history courses.

LS: Yep. And I did as my thesis project a historic structures report and restoration plan for the northeast house row in the Tuchuque Pueblo in northern New Mexico with the approval and participation of the village tribal council and the village administration. And honestly, nobody on the faculty knew what to do with a preservation thesis. They never had one. So I did my thesis, I mounted an exhibit, I invited everybody. People came. And it's like, I never heard anything. I eventually had to go to the Chairman of the Department and say like, am I going to graduate? It's like you know I did my thesis, is that cool can I graduate now? He's like, oh yeah sure. So for all intents and purposes I really didn't have an advisor. There was one faculty member that took an avuncular interest in what I was doing but didn't have an interest in preservation and didn't understand it and didn't care about it. But, so that was my history of at my formal degree programme in preservation.

SH: Well what about the National Park Service trades programme?

LS: Okay the Historic Preservation Training Centre was originally established as the Williamsport Preservation Training Centre by Jim Askins who was a National Park Service Building Preservation Specialist, that was at one time his official title. And WPTC was established in 1977 in Williamsport Maryland. In part because there already was an established preservation crew in Williamsport that had been assembled to do preservation and restoration work on the C&O Canal in the years following its incorporation as a National Historic Park. And following several major storms that had done a lot of damage. So they had an existing preservation crew, which they didn't entirely know what to do with, people like Hugh Miller and people in the Park Service like

the Director of Denver Service Centre, and several personnel people who were brought around to the idea that there needed to be a training programme for the development of hands on preservation specialists within the National Park Service. There had been up to that point absolutely no vehicle for doing that. And this was somewhat, probably not greatly influenced by the Whitehill Report and its recommendations that the Park Service and the National Trust both establish trades training capacity. But Hugh Miller for one has really debunked the role of the Whitehill Report for making this happen. But there was a long standing realisation that there was a need for a better vehicle for training hands-on people. And when Jim established the training programme, his plan was to maintain an ongoing permanent stance of experienced tradespeople that had broad exposure to the trades that could execute contemporary work as well as work on historic structures using appropriate materials and techniques. And he did stuff like brought this old carpenter out of retirement that Jim himself had worked for as a young carpenter. And of course, Jim Askins was one of those people that you know he had worked in carpentry, worked in masonry, had done all this stuff and if you ever sat down and figure out how much time it would have taken him to do all this stuff he said he'd done he probably been one hundred and eight years old. But anyway, he really was a very knowledgeable and incredible craftsman and a very shrewd administrator in continuing to get support for this programme, which from its origins was project funded and never really had any appreciable amount of base funding, so it was constantly going out and finding projects to keep this programme going. And another thing that made the Williamsport programme distinctive was that instead of being tied to a region, or tied to a specific park, they had a mandate to go out and look for projects anywhere in the country, basically anywhere in the Park Service, even with some instances working with other Federal agencies like the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, that kind of thing. Primarily the Forest Service. And even in some instances state and local governments. So the apprenticeship programme was set up as a three year programme for people who had, ideally, some trades or construction experience to come in, work as part of the crew, with the existing, on-going crew, develop skills, work as part of the crew, take over more and more project management duties and then also get involved in building inspections and formulating recommendations for treatment working with other preservation disciplines to do planning documents and managing projects. At the end of which time people that had been trained in the programme would be located in parks or regional offices with it was hoped primarily responsibility for developing and managing regional and locally based crews to do training and interface with a larger interdisciplinary team in preservation. So, it was set up with basically a masonry crew, a carpentry crew, initially. And people tended to specialise in one trade or the other or in some places do some generic across the board projects. Of course, I went in with my soul all on fire to do carpentry and joinery with instantly meant I was assigned every masonry project down the

road. Which was fine too, it was all good. But I entered the programme in 1984 after working at the Denver Service Centre as an historical architect for five, no seven years. And then graduated the programme in '86 and remained on staff in Williamsport until 1993 as senior historical architect and also supervisory historic preservation specialist.

SH: Excellent. So, what do you think the best and worst aspects of that training were?

LS: Well one thing that I sort of distinguished in the training, and indeed in the Park Service does as in developing trades skills capacity is that the Park Service in house training is that the Park Service has very few high-level trades people practicing a specific or craft. What they do which is largely in response to what the needs are, is preservation generalists. Ideally that are comfortable and competent with a wide variety of trades and disciplines. Possibly not at a mastery on any particular one but people that can lead, demonstrate, specify, interpret and analyse existing conditions and work in a multi-disciplinary environment. So there are relatively few high-level specialists of the kind you might find in the outside world. Another thing that I think the programme has done a very good job of doing is putting together and maintaining over the years and into this day a team of very, very talented, very dedicated individuals that really do have a good skills base and teaching abilities and the abilities to pass it on to others. And also instilling good preservation ethics and a sense of values into people that go through the programme. And instilling an expectation that people that go through the programme are expected to go on and develop in positions where they themselves will become teachers and instructors over time.

SH: So do you feel that the training system is still appropriate in today's society or today's workforce?

LS: Yes, absolutely. I think that it builds a somewhat specialised niche particular to the Park Service and what the needs of a preservation agency are that might not be as appropriate outside of the Park Service but make a great deal of sense within the Park Service. And the fact that the programme is extremely well established today and continues to grow and continues to do well in the current funding environment I think speaks to the need that exists.

SH: Excellent. How as the industry, the preservation industry changed since you began practicing?

LS: Well one of the things that I notice and this is from a Park-Service-centric viewpoint, is that one of the reasons I was interested in and why I wanted to go into the Park Service is that at that time it was pretty widely acknowledged to be, one of the leaders in the field of preservation, and that people looked to the Park Service to develop policy and standards to develop best practices and develop an active role in the broader preservation community. You know demonstrating, speaking at conferences, writing papers and taking a very active role in the broader preservation community. And as a result I think the Park Service became somewhat complacent and rather insular and while the broader preservation community was developing through academic

programs, through the rise of very educated and articulate tradespeople working as contractors, as businessmen, as teachers in addition to the evolution of the greater preservation community overall the Park Service's role diminished. People within the Park Service were not outwardly discouraged from pursuing this higher visibility and broader role, but just by the nature of the demands on their time and their duties were not exactly in groups like APT and were not a viable in terms of developing programmes and practices and that kind of thing. So I think that it's only now that fairly, in the last couple of years that the Park Service is starting to look to reintegrate and re-establish communication with the external preservation world.

SH: It's funny we have Ft. Pulaski here, which is an amazing site.

LS: It is.

SH: For years we had the managers which would talk to me, but the superintendents didn't want anything to do with me.

LS: Right.

SH: And we've gone through three superintendents and we finally have one, and you probably know her; Melissa Memory and she is just completely on board with it. She's like let's engage and she's big in the southeast to get Tech to be the training site for the Vanishing Treasures programme for the southeast.

LS: Oh yeah. That's great.

SH: So, and she's working with the woman from Cane River who's apparently running the show in the southeast nowadays.

LS: Oh, is it Laura Gates?

SH: Yes.

LS: Laura is wonderful. She is one of the best people out there. She is brilliant.

SH: That's what I been told I haven't, unfortunately not been able to meet her yet.

LS: You will really, really like her. She is a phenomenally good person.

SH: Well I'm glad to see that the Park Service is finally breaking out of that shell a little bit.

LS: Well I give a lot of credit for that to Stephanie Tuzemen who is the Associate Director for the Cultural Resources in the National Park Service who came in on the heels of a really disastrous political regime shall we say, and has been just an incredible breath of fresh air in cultural resources and has really, really, really energised to do training and communicate with groups and external programmes and to really bring new life into this, so.

SH: So how do you feel about the rise of the preservation movement as a larger entity has affected the preservation trades or traditional crafts?

LS: Well, you know it's, in some respects its rather hard to say because the preservation movement as a whole is so huge and so fragmented as goes off in so many directions. And there still is a tremendous perception, on the part of many people in preservation, including a lot of

people who should know better, which is along the lines of the old chestnut; oh there are no more preservation craftsman, they all died off, you can't get good people to do work, and it's a lost cause so all you can do is go out and write this gigantic ironclad construction documents and specifications and throw it out there and any contractor could do it, blah, blah, blah. Which we all know is pretty disastrous. I mean early on in the days of PTN, we were told well you're presenting a solution to a problem that nobody believes exists. So, there's still a certain amount of that.

There is still a lack of perception in the State Historic Preservation Office level, in state and local practitioners that this capability doesn't exist or that's it's not entirely relevant whether it exists or not. I think that's slowly starting to change. And I think it's starting to change in part because there's a lot of articulate, charismatic people out there, like yourself, that are making the case for why the trades matter, for why the trades have not lost their relevance and have not disappeared and because there are more and more young people that either are trying to find pathways into the kind of work or would be thrilled if they knew pathways existed. Which that's one of the big things is that that knowledge is not properly disseminated as of yet.

SH: So how do you feel about you know Pennsylvania and Kentucky as a well examples that are trying to further their idea of trades training through like Patrick's work that he did in Kentucky or John Fugaleso in Pennsylvania. I know I said his name wrong.

LS: These programmes, where they have existed have been great. They have definitely made an impact on the handful of people that they were able to reach, and they've had lasting benefits for some of the people that went through these early programmes that have gone on and did great work and made their own impact. But as we all know, most of these programmes exist in an environment, usually its one highly charismatic, intensely dedicated person that makes it work. Makes it happen for a time, usually against significant odds usually funding in terms of institution support. And even though these may work and may be highly successful, what happens a lot of times is that that one person that's making it happen gets burned out, or finds another focus and goes somewhere else, or the institutional focus where the place where that programme is housed changes. Support evaporates and the programme dies. So there's no underpinning that links these programmes together and gives them a source of broader based support other than that narrow little niche that it's landed in.

SH: So how do you feel, looking at these training issues, how do you feel about the future of your craft?

LS: I think that for all...most people feel that it's been very, very frustrating. And a lot of us had expected to see things much further along, much more established, much more mainstream today than they actually are. That's to lose sight that for all intents and purposes, none of this existed thirty, forty years ago. I mean you look at a Belmont Tech I mean Dave Mertz started that

in 1987, and that was basically the only thing out there. Judy Heyward's programme up in Windsor, Vermont started at the same time, there was nothing out there like that.

SH: Is Judy still up there?

LS: Yeah, she is.

SH: On her LinkedIn page she's says she's now an editor for Restore Media.

LS: Yeah, she wears two hats. The Preservation Institute Historic Windsor is one thing and then she's Director of Education Programmes at Restore Media and Traditional Building.

SH: So, are there enough practitioners in the field?

LS: No. There are not enough. There are more than people generally believe there are, but for a variety of reasons these practitioners are not as accessible for the types of projects of which it would be valuable to engage them. There should be more young people entering the field but the routes for them to get training, to get education, and go out and find good jobs and continue to develop in their trades are limited although not necessarily as limited as people think.

SH: So are those people, and you're not going to offend me if you say no, are those entering the field properly trained? I mean are they adequately trained to get into it?

LS: I think maybe the best way to say that, the respond to that is to say that most people realise in some point in their career that their period of formal training, whether it was in an academic programme, whether it was in a hands on programme or an apprenticeship for a specific duration, is only enough to get them out in the world to start to learn what they need to know to fully develop in their practice. And that's something I hear over and over and over from contractors and people who have worked in the field for a long time is that they're really leery of hiring graduates of certain well known and established programmes because they come out of school and they think they know everything and they're not willing to, and they want more money than what they're worth and they still need a lot of training and a lot of supervision and a year later they really think they know everything and they go out and start their own business.

SH: I had an interesting conversation Fred Ecker. Do you know Fred? From Tidewater Preservation?

LS: I know the company for sure.

SH: Yeah well they opened an office, they've got their main office in Fredericksburg and they opened an office in Savannah and, primarily because John Ecker his son has grown up in the business and some of these guys, these masons and carpenters that have been around for thirty years remember John, picking John up for elementary school, and they're not going to listen to him as a project manager. So they started an office down here and one of the reasons why he was able to convince his dad is because of the Savannah Tech programme... So, John brought his dad in, and the second Fred walked in the door, he said to me; I just want you to know I don't hire students. And I said okay, so why? He said I've hired a bunch of students from

William and Mary and they think they know everything and they just want to do research and blah, blah, blah and I can't handle that. And I said if my guys come onto your site and think they know everything, first off fire their asses, and secondly you call me and let me know because I will take care of them as well. And I think, it was kind of an off the cuff comment that I made but I think it won Fred over and now their whole crew here are my graduates. So, it's one of these things and I hear it all the time from contractors around here, we're not hiring your guys because they think they know everything. So, are you confident that these crafts will survive for another fifty to a hundred years?

LS: I am very confident, and I think that some of the reasons for confidence have more to do than with strictly preservation. I think one of the things that has been insufficiently talked about and insufficiently developed is how preservation and conservation practice in terms of trades in building factor into not the green build aspect so much, but things like resilient building. Building local, adaptive building, that kind of thing. I think that the preservation movement as a whole needs to advance beyond trying to worm its way, worm its nose under the green building, sustainable building tent flap, and start to focus on things that make sense in terms of quality, in terms of longevity, in terms of wise use of materials, in terms of the value of good craftsmanship.

SH: Excellent. Excellent. Are you, I know the answer to this but, are you an active member of any professional organisations relating to craft?

LS: Yes. Preservation Trades Network, Timber Framers Guild.

SH: Excellent. What are your roles or what have your roles been in those organisations?

LS: I'm a founding member and past president of PTN, and currently a board member, again. And past board member and president of the Timber Framers Guild.

SH: And do you feel that those organisations adequately address the needs of the professionals in those fields?

LS: I think that both organisations could have the potential to develop beyond their potential capacity. To engage people in those trades, in those disciplines and also engage in a wider conversation with the building trades generally and with again, notions like resilience.

SH: Its interesting I'm a board member for the American Glass Guild and I'm the youngest board member by about fifteen years, I'm also one of the youngest people at the conference. You know they get two or three young people a year and were turning around and giving scholarships to people who are at our conferences anyway. And they don't need these scholarships, they're making enough money, and they don't need our scholarships. I actually had an interesting conversation with our scholarship chair and she said why should we give our scholarships to people who obviously aren't going to make it in our field? I said who the hell are you to decide who is going to make it in our field and who isn't? You know these people who've had established businesses, they've made it in the field, and they don't have to get our

money. And it's interesting to see it's a lot of organisations that are all about craft, and it's not just in the US, it exists in the UK, they're not attracting young people in. It's the old boys club, and it's going to be a problem very, very soon.

LS: Yeah and I think PTN has done better and better over time at attracting young people, and people just entering the trades, and helping them make connections with potential employers too.

SH: I think they've done the intelligent thing in trying to stage their conference at schools as much as they can. I think that's a really important step that a lot of other organisation aren't doing.

LS: Yeah, And I noted with a certain amount of satisfaction that people that started coming to PTN as students are now becoming presenters. So, I think that's a sign of progress.

SH: Absolutely. So would you suggest to others to practice your craft?

LS: Absolutely. Absolutely. Yeah I think that as Rudy is fond to say inside every doctor, lawyer, baker, accountant there's probably a tradesperson trying to get out (laughs).

SH: So is there enough work to sustain more practitioners?

LS: Yes without a doubt and I think that also goes to the idea we need to quit talking about the preservation trades as though it was so type of precious entity off by itself in its little glass bubble. The trades are the trades and I think Simeon (Warren) is a perfect case in point of someone who practices in new design, execution of new work, as well as restoration, conservation, and care of existing work.

SH: Are there any, and you talked a little about this already, are there any misconceptions about the crafts that people have?

LS: Yes there are, and I think that goes a little bit back to what I as just saying about the preservation trades being regarded as this distinct subset of you know these uber-craftsman, these artisans that kind of thing, that can only do a certain kind of work. That are these sort of hot house flowers of the reads so to speak. That's sort of like Charles Mc...not Charles McRayben, I can't think of his name right now, never mind that thought flew away but it will come back to me. But yeah, I think there's some substantial misconceptions about the trades. And unfortunately I think some people have had sort of made a career out of promoting the idea of the trades as these unique or irreplaceable artisans have actually damaged, to a degree, the perception of the trades. Did that make sense?

SH: It did. So were finally getting onto the education field today. Do you feel, and like I said don't feel like you're going to offend me by any means with your answer, do you feel that the current educational offerings are adequate enough to prepare these people?

LS: I think everything that's out there is good. I think everything that's out there is good enough to make a huge difference in preparing people to get engaged in this work to want to do this

work, to start to learn and master the basic skills associated with it. Some programmes are obviously better than others, some programmes prepare their students in a more realistic way or give them a skillset that's slightly more advanced or slightly more in tune with what they need to make them more employable and continue to grow and develop. But the need is so great and the need for people to have the opportunities where they are to go into this kind of work and get this type of training are such that anyone, anywhere that has a chance to do this is going to gain something really, really, immeasurably good. Like when I was in high school or college, I would have given anything in the world to know about a programme like Savannah Tech or Belmont Tech or College of the Redwoods, and of these, ACBA that would have been my absolute, ultimate all-time dream come true, if I could have gotten engaged in one of these programmes and there was absolutely nothing of the sort. It was just not even considered possible. It wasn't something that I even imagine could exist.

SH: What do you think the biggest drawbacks for these programmes are?

LS: That it is so hard for them to become sustainable.

SH: That was actually my next question, are they sustainable?

LS: (Laughs) Yeah. If most of the programmes out there could become sustainable and could draw on and attract enough students to help continue to build the programme and build their capacity I think that would be one of the best things that could happen for the field, and it would probably require some programme at the Federal level or some large organisation like the Trust or like that to help build the visibility and viability of these programmes in a substantial way. Preferably with some kind of business/industry underwriting.

SH: I'm going to actually ask a question that's not on my list but, it's something that I've been racking my brain about. Why do you think when you look at Belmont, you look at College of the Redwoods, Clatsop, which I don't really know that much about, you know Lamar, why are they put in such rural areas? Why, we don't have them in major cities, but we have them in St. Clairsville, Ohio.

LS: I don't really have a good answer for that. I've heard Dave Mertz talk about it a little bit, I suspect, although I can't prove it, and I don't have any evidence for it, is that in the larger urban areas there would be sufficient potential conflict with unionised labour force training programmes and there would be perceived conflicts/overlap with existing technical education programmes, public education programmes that sort of thing. Plus, the cost of living for one thing, for students, faculty, teachers. Look at the situation with Mather High School, and the cost of living there and the difficulty in getting instructors and their entanglement with this insanely bureaucratic system, educational system. I think a lot of the programmes being located in rural areas is partially, two things, that some of the programmes have been associated with school that have sort of an art/back to nature reputation or theme or ambience and some of them are

traditionally associated with schools that are more trade or technical orientated, that serve populations, typically often rural populations, that are assumed to be right for technical and vocational training in a way that urban systems may not be. And that has to do in part I think the overwhelming focus on high tech everything in education. Computers, CNC, everything has to be focused in the high-tech world and that in turn sort of pre-supposes to a degree access to urban resources, things like that which may not be the same in rural areas.

SH: They wanted me to do 3D training with, they wanted me to teach them how to carve stone using 3D training. And I told them it wouldn't work so after I crashed the computer twice they took the machine away from me now I don't have to do it anyone.

LS: (Laughs)

SH: So, what do you think is the future of this type of education?

LS: I think that's it's going to continue to take the kind of persistence and dedication that it has historically done. I think that there are more people that are, have been produced by these programmes and have developed through whatever other mechanisms, apprenticeships, individual learning and development, to become you know both competent in the trades and articulate and well versed and understand the broader construction environment and the broader preservation environment and want to play a role in teaching. And the other thing that I find encouraging is people like yourself and there are some other really wonderful examples of people out there that have started to pursue higher education courses, the doctoral level that kind of thing with the aim of entering that realm of discourse and discussion about academic training that involved the trades as well as purely academic subjects. And I think that's going to start over time to shape the discourse. When you have more people than you know the Michael Tomlins for example talking about the value of trades in their application and interrelation with academic subjects.

SH: So if I were to say to you, actually the last question, if I were to say to you Lisa, money is no object, design a programme or a training system, how would you do it?

LS: Well I think the programme should start to engage people in high school or before and like the German deVerb Academy programme have a pathway to engage people in high school level, up through journeyman level, up through master level and then teaching level. And I think that it should have a mix of academic education and significant hands on education, and the ability to travel and work in a number of locations and experience a number of training environments, very similar to what ACBA has been doing with placing interns abroad. Working at Lincoln for example.

SH: So how long do you think that programme should be? If were engaging at the high school when would someone say I'm a graduate of this programme?

LS: Well, like as it implies you can graduate from the programme of the high school level, you can graduate from the programme at the completion of the programme at the journeyman level, you

can come back for the advanced training levels to become a master or a full-time permanent teacher. Master theoretician.

SH: How important is field work or apprenticeship inside of these programmes?

LS: I think it's absolutely critical. You can't learn everything in a laboratory. You can learn a great deal in a laboratory, but you can only really become a fully qualified tradesperson by working in work environment with all the stresses and everything else that that entails. Having to master more than just your trade but also getting the job done and getting it done within an environment that supposes that you can conduct business and that you can manage yourself and/or your company and/or other workers.

SH: Given the current educational system, could your ideal programme operate within that system.

LS: (Pause). That's a very, very difficult question. And I'm not sure there is one single answer. I think at least initially it would have to find a way to. Unless there was an extraordinary level of public or private support to fund the development of a system running in parallel to the existing academic system. I think the chances of that happening are probably so remote that it would be technically not even feasible. So yes I think there needs to be a pathway in the recognition that it could be feasible within the existing technical and academic environment.

SH: You mentioned the German system a little bit, are there any existing programmes that you feel come close or meet the requirements of your idea of what an ideal system is?

LS: No, and I mean I think that there are some that come very close certainly in the idea and their plans and aspirations. I think that most of them are limited primarily by funding and institutional constraints from reaching that potential. I think there are number that could get to that level of some of those constraints were removed.

SH: I would love it if some constraints were removed. That's actually all the questions I have. Do you have anything extra you would like to add?

LS: Well you know, I mean I realise there is a lot of cause for pessimism and there a lot of, it's really there is so much its discouraging to see programmes that have done well and have good outcomes to sort of killed off along the way. But overall I think there are so many things that have indicated so much progress that not the least of which is the fact that women are becoming increasingly common in and very much accepted in these programmes. I mean I as the first woman that was ever in the Williamsport programme and when I announced my intention to go into that programme practically everybody I knew told me that I was absolutely insane, that they would never tolerate a woman in that programme. And you know the issue had more to do with me being an architect than me being a woman. Which was kind of funny.

SH: That's interesting. It's a fifty-fifty percentage in my programme. But then we look at standard academic programmes when I was graduated from SCAD it was me and one other

male, and they were all female students. But that programme again goes more into the traditional academic aspect of preservation; documentation, non-profit management, that type of thing. And you're right there are very higher number of females in the field even when I started in the construction field. Well that's fantastic, thank you so much, anything else?

LS: No. I'm good. I enjoyed that. That was fun.

SH: Great, well let me turn off this recorder real quick.

End Recording

Total Recording Time: 1.04.23

Interview Form-Individual

Name: Ken Follet _____

Current address: [REDACTED] Brewster, New York [REDACTED] United States _____

Birthdate: [REDACTED] 1952 _____

Age: 62 _____

Occupation: Historic Buildings Consultant _____

Interview Date: 19 July 2014 _____

Interview Location: Stephen-Savannah, Ken-Brewster NY (Skype) _____

Interviewer: Stephen Hartley _____

Generation: 2-United States _____

Consent Form Signed Date: 12 July 2014 _____

Begin Recording

Stephen Hartley (SH): Alright, just so you know how the whole thing is going to work out, we actually have, there's ten questions, and some of those questions I'm going to ask you to elaborate on some points or explain certain things. Some of them are going to be, in your mind and my mind as well, so obvious, you're going to be like; why is he asking that? We're writing this for people who aren't as well versed in the field as you are. And hopefully, the goal of all this is maybe, when this is all done, approach ICOMOS in their capacity building areas, and those people, don't work with their hands. So, that's hopefully where we're going to go with this. But first I need to get some basic information from you. Your current address?

Ken Follet (KF): [REDACTED], Brewster, NY [REDACTED].

SH: Your birthdate?

KF: [REDACTED]/1952.

SH: Your age then?

KF: 62.

SH: 62. And your occupation?

KF: Essentially a consultant. A hands-on consultant in historic conservation.

SH: Alright, question number one; what is your profession? Describe what you do.

KF: Well, what I do these days is, specifically we assist architects, structural engineers and conservators in their investigations of historic structures. Basically, we provide the hands-on interface with the materials to reveal or uncover information about the structure that goes into the decisions that are later made in so far as design is concerned. We also do mock-ups. We'll do like, we've been doing a lot of paint strip mock-ups because the paint is covering up the brick and they are thinking they want to remove the paint and expose the brick and they need to see what's underneath there. We recently did one which was a case of removing stucco in order to

reveal the brick underneath. You know something it may be a case of doing a mock-up to remove stucco in order to see what the brick would look like if the stucco was removed in part to validate that removing the stucco may not be the right thing to do, but it needs to be validated because intellectually people can think; oh you can do this and you can do that but unless someone comes up with an idea of how to do that physically, then they don't have good information. So in one respect, we're involved in, as I say in the information collection business, but it's all dealing with, we call ourselves consultants with tools. And then there's an occasion project where we will do some sort of restoration work. There's a recent project where we cleaned two fireplaces in the library of the New York Yacht Club, limestone fireplace fronts, and we're looking now to possibly clean a very large elaborate fireplace for them. Another project that we did several years back, we deconstructed some Stanford White fireplaces at another club. And they were in storage for like three years, and we had to come back and reconstruct them in another location in the library. We take things apart, we put them back together. We make a lot of holes. Yeah.

SH: So, what did you do before that?

KF: Well, we've been doing that for the last thirteen years. My son and I are business partners. Before that I was a partner in a small restoration company in Brooklyn that specialised in historic restoration. That was for about eighteen years. And we had a workforce in general of about thirty-five employees that we kept busy year-round. And it was, we're talking about hanging off of a seven-hundred-foot-tall building down to working on someone's stoop in the neighbourhood. Primarily all of that was exterior envelope restoration. We did, we got involved in a lot of terracotta projects, we got involved in slate roofing in the city, we got involved in metal copper roofing, we did cutting and repointing of brickwork, stone work, a lot of cleaning. Oh, and also we dealt with site specific artwork, some projects in that respect. And then the project that we did with Rudy (Christian) which was one of the last projects that I was involved in, we deconstructed Thomas Edison's Building number 11 in Dearborn, the Greenfield Village, and moved it back to East Orange, New Jersey and put it back to where it stood, within ten feet of where it had stood in 1940. That was a very interesting project in so far that we did it as a museum curatorial but it was actually a sacrificial building and the final intent was that it be turned into a hands-on exploratory area for children who came to the museum because everything else there was, it's a national historic site, everything else there was, you can't touch, you can't play with so they had a building that had been messed up enough but had enough significance that it could go back but at the same time it could be turned into a place where people could do things, particularly the children. They have busloads of children that come there, and I haven't been there since but we had a really good time moving the building.

SH: I remember when I was a kid in school I always loved history but I hated going on field trips to house museums because it's just, how many plates do I want to look at, I'm twelve years old.

KF: (Laughs) Yeah. Well my field trips are always with my family, I mean that's how, it was actually going to Colonial Williamsburg and seeing a hermit's hut that was the seed of me wanting to get into historic restoration work.

SH: Awesome.

KF: My background is in stonework, going way back. And fireplaces.

SH: Awesome well that rolls right into our next question, when did you begin practicing your profession?

KF: When I was five years old.

SH: (Laughs).

KF: And I already told you my age (laughs). Well actually, probably prior to that. My earliest, one of my earliest memories is looking at the pointing, the mortar pointing on a cobblestone wall. And in relation to that my fellow playmate, who was standing on the top of the wall, dropping a rock on my head. So, there's some correlation there but this is very vivid in my memory of looking at this mortar and, I don't know why but I had this curiosity, I always had a fascination of just playing with rocks. And yeah, I grew up, I'm from Ithaca, New York, near there. And I grew up on a hill that was a glacial till. So we had rocks all over the place. So if you don't have Tonka trucks, you have rocks. So, and I know it's kind of strange because I was out at working at the pioneer cemetery out in Coloma, California and I have this little shovel and I'm digging this hole next to this obelisk that's eleven feet tall and we had to straighten it out. And I'm digging this hole and I realise that I've been digging holes for a really, really long time and you know I've been in this situation where I was the executive of this company and we're doing millions of dollars' worth of work per year, at one time I was the clerk of the works of a multi-million dollar project, the number two person, and here I am at this point of my life, I'm not sitting at a desk, I'm sitting there with a little shovel digging, and I just realised you know, I love this. There's just something going on here and it's just primarily, and at this point and that time that's where I need to be.

SH: Fantastic.

KF: And you know that's some of, if you talk in respects of education and hands-on, its somehow, I want to be, I personally, because I'm also a writer, I personally work on communicating, and communicating out, I want to convey what that, what those qualities are, that tactile intelligence. You know I'm very keen on trying to understand that tactile intelligence. Lately the thing that's been, or a theme that keeps coming up for me is a lot of people that we work with, they don't engage with the tools. You know we'll be working there with a tool and I'll turn to them, it's like I need to actually turn to them and suggest to them to take the chisel and push it against the wall.

And when I say; you're really not going to understand what I'm saying to you until you do that, they often, they're immediate reaction is that they don't even understand why I'm saying that.

SH: Yeah.

KF: But I know that if they do that tactile process that it will sink it that it will eventually at some point have a connection and they'll realise, you know particularly when they're going to like make a design decision that they're going to understand what that tactical situation was. You have to interface with the material. I don't see, and particularly when you're dealing with heritage fabric. There's so many situations that we've been in that, like workshops and stuff which people stand back and don't engage. And I watch that process and I wonder; why are they not engaging? I think that it has, at least this week I'm thinking that is has something to do with the education process putting an emphasis on abstract mental process and that people are conditioned not to touch their environment. You know it gets into a whole lot of other areas but, sensual and spiritual that is, people are being separated out in engaging with their environment. And then we end up with a built environment that no one knows how to maintain because the people who would be maintain them, whether historic or otherwise, a sustainable planet requires us to maintain our environment. Not to keep replacing it. Sorry.

SH: No, nothing it was fantastic. Don't stop talking because of me. So, when you started your professional career in stonemasonry, how old were you then and who did you work for?

KF: Well actually (laughs), the, I come from a family of electricians, and they called me sparky. So I wanted to, essentially I wanted to understand the value of money and so I started a sort of business in which I had this opportunity that there was a fellow with a whole, giant, like thirty-foot-high mound of bull manure. He had worked at Cornell at the artificial insemination labs and had been taking home and collecting bull manure for decades. And I had this situation, and it was well composted, I had this situation where I would load my pickup truck full of bull manure, and then I would drive it out to someone's house and then I would unload it, and I would charge them a dollar. I wanted to, for one I wanted to load the pickup truck without stopping and unload it without stopping, and just the operation of the shovel. And then the other thing was I really wanted to have a concept, I wasn't quite sure what a dollar was about. You know we all play with money and take it in, we don't think too much about it, but I was really thinking a lot about it at the time and was trying to figure it out. So I happened to take a load of bull manure and I was unloading it next to this mailbox across the street from where a sixty-two-year-old stone mason was working. And along in the process I had, of doing bull manure, someone had asked me if I would rebuild a retaining wall, a stone retaining wall for them. And I was doing that, and I thought; well I really like this, this is fun, I enjoy this. My mother had taught me how to do dry laid stonework actually. Because we had stones all around. So anyways, I was also fascinated with and wanted to learn how to build traditional fireplaces. I didn't know where to go, there wasn't

any schools per se. So it turns out that this stone mason was doing stonework on this house and he was all by himself. And by the time we finished walking around the house he asked if I would start work the following Monday. I spent three years working for him, twelve hours a day, six days a week. And in the beginning he wouldn't let me touch anything. And eventually, well the way it worked was he would do the interior, he would do the firebox, smoke shelf and interior breastwork, and I would build the chimney, I would be outside building the chimney. By the time I was, oh let's see, I would have been twenty-eight somewhere along there, I had been involved in building about a hundred fireplaces. We turned them out one a week. And also we did the exterior of a stone house. And we did a lot of patio work. Essentially, we did work for farmers in the central corridor of New York from basically throughout the Finger Lakes region and north. And then I, what was the question?

SH: When did you start working, how old were you?

KF: Okay, well I think I've answered that. (Laughs)

SH: (Laughs). If you can continue please tell me more.

KF: Oh, ok. Well that went on for a while, and I finally got to the point that he was driving me nuts and I mean it was just really intense. When we were not working we were drinking. And twelve hours a day, six days a week are a bit much. And that was all physical work. I mean I was very strong at that time. I would spend whole days on a pile of the glacial till busting it out with a sledgehammer. I had a lot of anger issues at that time, so it really worked out well at the time. Spending all day in the hot sun busting stone with a twenty-pound sledge worked some things out. Talking about tactile (laughs), dealing with emotional and physiological issues. But also, again I just really enjoyed doing the stonework. I ended up, I had a gangling cyst and I could not move my hand. I'm also a writer and using a typewriter couldn't be done which was a bummer. It was just intense pain. And there was a doctor that we had worked for at some point, and he had contacted me and wanted me to come and do the stonework my mentor had been doing. And essentially it turned out the reason he had three boxcars of Georgia marble chunks that he had brought up and he was building a rec room. And he had these totem poles that he got from a carver in Washington State, and he wanted this fancy fireplace and he wanted a water fountain with a waterwheel with lights from across the room and, but he hired me essentially because my work was more erratic than the stonemason's, and he wanted that. And the way that job went was that I started out with it, and he'd come home and say; no that's not random enough. And I went through that for like, and I'd take it apart and then the next day put it back together, and that went on for three days until I finally managed to do what it was that he was looking for. But at the same time he was giving me Darvone so I wasn't feeling any pain. Basically, you said you take these pain killers and keep working and it will go away. And that did work. So I had my own business for a little while. But I really didn't, other than, I enjoyed working with the materials but

I didn't enjoy working with customers. So let's see, I don't know if a part of your question is the transformation of years of activity but I wasn't really doing historic work at that time. It wasn't until much later that I found a desire to do that. And all along the way there were a whole lot of opportunities and forces that would push me in a different direction. And so I had to keep like redefining where I wanted to go and, you know the fireplaces in a sense were historic because it was traditional construction. And I sort of got the mason to build Rumford fireplaces by kind of tricking him. And the farmers like to have a deep firebox, not a Rumford construction because they want to cut their wood large. You know there thinking in terms of how much effort it takes into cutting up the wood and the efficiency for them is they have a big piece of wood, they have a big fire. But we, I started like playing with the dimensions of the fireplaces, because I was curious of how to make them more efficient. And it's extending the height of the smoke chamber, dealing with the way the chimney itself was structured, and then altering the firebox. And we kept shifting, as I kept making little changes along the way the mason kept seeing that the fireplaces were working better. And so that was part, but there were other things that went on that drove me nuts. But that was part of really getting into and understanding how traditional fireplaces work. I tend to, these days, I built the fireplace for Rudy in his place, which is the last one, other than the reconstruction of the Stanford White one which was a gas fired fireplace in a hotel.

SH: That picture of you flipping off Rudy is classic.

KF: Oh yeah (laughs). Well that's the interface between the stone mason and the timber framer. You know it's like he's telling me what to do with the stone and he's like; no, you do this. I'm glad that you caught that. So, now some other things happened, and I ended up working for an Italian stone mason in D.C., we did a lot of residential landscape work, we'd go in and we'd take a wall apart, these are like semi-mortared dry walls, and we'd take a wall apart and put it back. I did cobble, driveway work and some flat patios with him. I worked with him for a year, and the situation was that he yelled at me every single day. And whatever he told me one day, if I started doing it he'd be telling me to do it differently the next day and it took me quite a while, I had an Italian family that I'd grown up near and talked with them about it and they said; well that's because he likes you. Because if he didn't like you he wouldn't say anything.

SH: Yep.

KF: But, after a year I got to a point where this one instance that I wanted to hit him in the head with a shovel, and it was really bad, so I walked off. I then tried to get into the stone mason's union, and it turned out that the fellow with the giant pile of bull manure was a stone mason and was willing to sponsor me to get into the union. But I had come into D.C. from the country and though I had spent a year working in Washington it was all residential landscape type work, and the immediate attitude from the people I interviewed with was; well you can show us pictures,

but we don't know if you know anything. But what occurred was there was a third-generation stone company that was coming down from Long Island and establishing themselves in Washington. Oh, but working for this Italian, stepping back, we worked at Bowie horse track in Maryland. There was a brownstone cobble wall leading up to the entrance to the track and we rebuilt that and to me that was sort of like, okay we're moving into doing something historic. So away I ended up working for this stone company that was trying to establish itself from New York. I also, because I come from an area in which the winters are cold and snowy, and you can't do masonry work outside, I had also spent a whole lot of time doing framing carpentry. As I remarked recently, before I was thirty I could frame a house, you know besides doing fireplaces. The, and my, I should step back further, I come from a family of electricians but my mother's father, my grandfather, was a master finish carpenter, and his specialty was spiral staircases. And basically, he did them completely out of his head. We have, my uncle has a piece of school paper with figures on one side and figures on the other and that's all he used, and we actually know where the stairs are that that went to. But that was all the documentation. He worked at Cornell for many years, he was a union carpenter. And the reason I ended up in Washington is because during the depression that's where he went and took my mother and I had always been raised up hearing stories about the Smithsonian and cultural institutions. So I ended up going to work for the stone company partially because I was a jack of all trades. You know I could do carpentry if they needed something quickly built on a job site I could throw it together. I don't consider myself a fine carpenter by any means but I'm a good hack. Then they, well I ended up spending five years in the D.C. area, they put me to work as a foreman in Alexandria, Virginia on a ten-story building, and that's where I learned to hang, to do rigging. It was an occupied structure and they were refacing the exterior of the building, actually with asbestos panel, my experience with asbestos. I ran that job for several months, then an opportunity came up to do work at the Marine commandant's barracks, on the Marine commandant's house in which they were replacing windows, you know basically they had to match, they were new windows, but they had to match to the historic, and then some exterior stone patio work. So, that was kind of the beginning of doing projects of historic nature. Then I, let's see, oh and then they were doing a park, an ice skating rink on Pennsylvania Avenue, and I was assigned to that project. There were thousands of stones, there were a whole lot of steps that were involved, and it was all pink granite. And the stone had been brought in and put in the staging area on the street, but it had been marked with like magic marker. And with all the weather, all the designation of each stone disappeared. So then, I was assigned the job of taking drawings and trying to figure out which stone was which.

SH: Oh, fun.

KF: Yeah. And we're talking thousands of stones here, sitting here. And all parts of steps, and in the meantime, we, they had a Portuguese sub-contractor that was the mason, who would simply run out there with his folding rule and find a stone and grab it and run away with it before I'd have a chance to do anything. And eventually I figured out that I had the wrong set of drawings, which didn't help. Turned out that the engineer on the project had the right set of drawings and I had actually switched them, stole them, and took the right set of drawings. But eventually after spending a night with a bottle of Wild Turkey I came in the next morning and couldn't deal with it anymore and left that job. (laughs).

SH: (Laughs).

KF: I then spent about another year working with an outfit that did exterior panels on like shopping malls. I sort of turned into a trouble shooter to go out and fix things that had been messed up.

SH: The thin wall masonry units?

KF: Actually, this was early, in the days right before EIFS.

SH: Okay.

KF: So they made, it would, there were different types of panels. Usually it was like a steel frame with sheetrock and something added, maybe insulation, maybe not, and then something added to the exterior. I forget exactly what it was called. I mean I remember one on particular it had a stone surface to it, and in the shop there was a lot of irregularity of how they applied the stone, so some areas would be concentrated in stone and some areas would not. And my job was to take a rake, on a boom lift and take a rake and scrape the gravel until it all kind of blended it (laughs). So I did that for another year, but I, making ends meet was a little difficult in the D.C. area, I enjoyed working there but making ends meet was a little difficult. And I ended up going back to work for the company that I had previously worked for, with the stone and all that. They were doing three subway stations, Twinbrook, Rockville, and Gaithersburg on the subway line there, they were doing the complete construction of these stations. I was assigned there as a labourer and basically the reason was that they had to have someone with a first aid card on the project. Yeah that was me in, that was the only reason I was there. I mean I actually didn't have anything to do. Most of the time was spent with a shovel and a broom. I think they needed two people. My associate, a marine who had been through the Tet Offensive in Vietnam, so we just spent a bunch of time standing around and smoking cigarettes and telling stories and waiting for something to happen. And if anyone came around we would push the broom around to make ourselves look busy. And every once in a while, a truck would show up and we would unload it. Significantly the only thing I can remember so killing a six-foot-long copperhead by cutting its head off with a shovel. Yeah and them tacking it up on the safety board outside the superintendent's office (laughs). And leaving it there in the hot sun. But that's what I remember

about that experience, it was really, really not too easy for me. And I may have my chronology a little bit messed up but you know, part of it was I came to a conclusion that I don't want to work, the money was good but, I don't want to work where I'm not learning.

SH: Yeah.

KF: There was no progression in that. So, let's see, along with that that same company said to me, like on a Thursday, they asked me if I wanted to move up to West Chester, north of New York to work on a project. To which I said sure, I believe I said, no they asked me on a Wednesday, on a Friday I said yes, and they told me well you need to be there Monday morning. So, I was there Monday morning. That's where I met my future business partner that I spent more than eighteen years working with. That was a job that we had a ten-story building, it was a HUD project, Housing and Urban Development. It was a fully occupied building, low income, and the job was to strip all the brick off the face of the building and replace it with new brick. The shelf angles had all collapsed. And then we also replaced all the windows and doors on the balconies and such. Did a lot of concrete coating there too. And I live not too far from there, I haven't been down there to visit but over the decades every once in a while, I'd stop by to look at it to see how that one went. So I was the site supervisor for that. I then went from there to working on a project in a subway barn, a subway repair barn, and then I had an opportunity, my future partner was doing work, let's see they were doing work with the National Park Service. The project was the George Clark National Historic Memorial in Vincennes, Indiana. And that basically, my partner knew I wanted to, oh yeah I forgot, there's a lighthouse in the middle of Staten Island up on a hill, Todd Hill, and we, the project there was to strip all the brick off the lighthouse, it was an octagonal structure, and replace that. So I was involved in that up to the point, I was involved in that through the whole demolition process, which was a bit scary because the structure had been struck by lightning and when we took the exterior brick off there was a giant crack right under the platform. Yeah and we had these just brainless demolition people that just went as quickly as possible, and then we put. There was, I've done a lot of work over the years with Robert Silman Associates, a structural engineer. Well this was the first project I did with them. We're talking '86, no '84 probably. But they had designed a stainless-steel armature to hold the interior to the outer Wythe of brick. So there was dealing with the application of that and the interface of the engineers and stuff. But then I went out to Indiana. I spent six months out there, and that project, I went out there with a truck driver, we had a boom truck and we loaded it with equipment and we went out there, the truck driver and I. He didn't know anything. The only thing he knew was to drive the truck, how to load it and unload it, that's what he had been doing for years. But, so he didn't know anything about the project. But I get there and I'm walking around to make sure I had the right address, you know we didn't have GPS or anything like that, we were using a map. You know it's like I get to the right place and I'm walking around and I past right on past the

structure and I'm in the middle of town and I'm like; where the hell is this thing? And finally I came back, and it looks like a sort of miniature of the Jefferson Memorial. My issue was once I arrived what it was I was like; I don't believe that they sent me out here to do this. You know, that's what they want me to work on (laughs). So that was, we, there had been, its right next to the river and when the sun passes and the humidity there the circumference on the top of the structure, we're talking stone of thousands and thousands of pounds would rotate.

SH: Oh.

KF: Yeah with the thermal movement. And so the architects for the National Park Service had designed this situation where we would put these stainless-steel channels and the stone above would have these neoprene, hard neoprene pad so it was actually redesigned so it could have that movement. We had to take three courses of stone down with the crane. Supposedly the stone was irreplaceable. So we, that's where I first got into using epoxy injection and pinning stones together, put them back. And we also had, on the interior a standing seam copper roof that we had to do. All, I wasn't actually doing the work, I was the supervisor. I was the only person on site that had to coordinate all the site activities. There was, I really enjoyed it, I was out there, I would be out there for two weeks and then I would get into a small plane, myself and the pilot, two people in an airplane and we'd fly up to Indianapolis and I would fly back to LaGuardia and spend the weekend with my wife and son, at that time we were living in Brooklyn in a railroad flat. But by the time I got done with that I was really, really frustrated with the company. Like I said it was a third-generation stone company and there was a lot of internal politics and things going on within that contexts. But that's when I picked up on wanting to learn to estimate, really seriously. My prior experience, going back to my early work in stonemasonry and my own business I had this one instance in which I built, I started getting into building dry laid retaining walls. And I was really fascinated in how I could figure out how long it would take and what I figured it would cost. You know I had learned a whole lot about a dollar by that point. So, you know I was working with people who had done things like estimate the construction of airports and things. They were kind of my mentors and that was the learning process. My education is very much from mentor relationships, working really, really hard to satisfy their needs and their interests so they would convey, take kindly with me and convey their knowledge. I learned a whole lot about people but also different things. The first, the one mentor I had in that particular situation said to me that his difficulty was that he could estimate materials and equipment very easily, it was the labour that always gave him trouble. So, yeah when I think, in relation to my eighteen years of building a business, we went from a two-car garage to a really nice shop and doing anywhere from \$2 to 6 million per year. My focus was estimating the large projects, my partner's focus was cash flow and whatever jobs we could get. And with an orientation that we are going to do historic work with that particular company. So my experiences became more and

more, I would say my expertise would be estimating for historic work. I've just done it so much. I mean when I say \$2-6 million on average I was estimating \$12 million worth of historic work per year. And you learn a whole lot from the jobs that you get. Whether you were successful in doing your estimate or not, because I also had to manage the projects and administer it and made sure that we stayed on budget and completed in time and completed as appropriate, or so desired. So then, when I came back from Indiana, I was really upset with the politics that were going on in that company and I sent resumes all over the place. As I was just relating, when I was in Indiana I didn't have very much to do so I studied up and did the SAT's and was in the process of applying to Copper Union and I thought I wanted to go out and study architecture at that time. And I'm glad that I didn't in retrospect. What happened was the structural engineer who had been involved with the subway barns that I had worked on was solicited by the company to take over the largest project that they had ever had which was \$20 million to do retrofit of three subway barns, not subways, three bus depots in Harlem. Three separate locations in Harlem. Essentially he said he would only take the job on if I was his second. So that's how I became clerk of the works on a \$20 million project. I would have to say at this point I'm very much divorced from hands-on work and activity.

SH: Yeah.

KF: And within the industry there's a vacancy of people who can really competently handle paperwork. And they had caught on that I could do that so that was why I was getting channeled. Now the bus depots were not an historic project, but I had it in mind that I wanted to do historic work and I figured it would be good to have experience handling a project of that size. The, and that was with the MTA. At that time, they had received \$5 billion in Federal funding and they were trying to spend that money as fast as they could. So it was just a gush of money that came in, and this was just one project out of many that went on at that time. But I got a whole lot of experience dealing with the MTA and dealing with submittals, submittal logs. What happened there was, within the politics of that company there were three brothers, and I was the protégé of one of the brothers. But it was another, younger brother that was in charge of this job. And because I was his brother's protégé he really didn't want me there. And so the first thing he did is that he came to me and he handed me all the subcontract proposals and such and said; we need you to do a schedule of values, and we need it by such and such date. And I understood what a schedule of values was, but I hadn't ever put on together. So, I worked all day on the job, you know we're getting the job started and all that and I had this task that I had to complete, and I think his intent was that I would get freaked out and I would walk away. But I can be stubborn and belligerent and I went home and with a Commodore 64 and a Micropose spreadsheet would stay up until 1-2 in the morning and finally came back with a fully developed schedule of values, including front end loading. So, which was something that the structural engineer was showing

me how to do. You know he gave me guidance on what he needed but someone had to come back and show me what to do. At that point people didn't have personal computers per se and you certainly didn't have personal computers on job sites. Now the job we did in White Plains, the building that we replaced the brick, I had bought a Timex Sinclair computer which I then used to track the windows, the progress of the windows. And comparison to what we can do now that was very primitive. If you bumped the table the cassette table would, you would lose everything (laughs). But it instilled in them this idea; oh, Ken knows about computers, just having one. So, in the \$20 million project I essentially talked them into getting me an XT and I took a one-day class in spreadsheet and then proceeded to assemble this spreadsheet and track the job for the next two and a half years. And essentially my job was to line up, round up, we're talking about \$20 million dollars broken down into two-inch couplings for the electrical conduits, and how many couplers were installed this month. At the height of activity on this job we were requisitioning a million a month. And it meant I had to go around, and I had to really beat up on the subcontractors to get their information, and you know how do you make information flow. Because they know they're not going to get paid unless the money is there, and they just, you know they're just doing their work. When the project manager would go off to a meeting I would be in charge of whatever was going on here, so I was, you know I was also engaged with overseeing the actual work in progress. So then after that, eventually I got to a point which they were hiring structural engineers and assigning them to each depot, and my job was to oversee the structural engineers. They worked for me, and I found out they were getting paid more than me, and that did not go over too well with me. I went from a situation where the one brother wanted to enable me to run away, to me being in complete control and being the only person who knew what was going on with the money. But as we, I was also involved, eventually, in the change orders and negotiation of such which meant, one is tracking things in a project like that as they move along, there's a lot of tracking involved. It's also where I learned about CPM. You didn't do your own CPM back then you hired a consultant who knew how to do this, and then you had to like spend time interfacing with them. That fed into the requisitions as well. The, I lost my train there. (pause). Yeah, I definitely lost it (laughs).

SH: (Laughs). Well that's alright. We can move on.

KF: Alright, well I got tired of that job and I left. I basically said you need to pay me more, I don't care what you pay me. And they weren't willing to do that. They said the structural engineers have an education and therefore we are going to pay them more. And I said well I like working for you and either you like what I do, or you don't. I then went and worked of a small outfit that I have remained connected with in a sense. I worked for them for a year but at the same time my eventual partner, I was working nights doing estimating for him because the deal was if we could get a large job, then that would facilitate my coming to work with him. So, I worked for the one

outfit for a year, and basically at the end of the year it was a point where it was like; are you staying or are you leaving, and I went to my future partner and was like; well you have this choice. And so he made the decision and I went on to work with him and eventually, I spent nineteen years working there. And I could go on and on and on with stories in that respect. But one of the things, well there's two things that are, one of them is when think in terms of educating craft, I think of having a workforce that I'm employing and it's not that they're taking tests per se, but its whether or not the customer is satisfied if the work is done well, and if people that are applying to the work understand and follow through and complete the work. One of, what we attempted to do was have a situation in which we would send individuals to various training workshops, we would spend time in the field working with them, showing them what we wanted done and how, and I would spend time researching different mock-ups. We had a large amount of modified torched on bitumen roofing that was the kind of thing we did a lot of. So there's interface with the crew but the crew would teach people. If someone was brought into the crew the crew would make a decision and I'd go back to them, whoever in the crew is the leader you know, how did that person work out? You know where do you think they could go? What kind of talents do they have? My emphasis was always a case of to what degree does this person need a job but also what is their attitude. And attitude always carried more to me than experience because if they had a good attitude, if they had an attitude that they wanted to learn, then we'd go all out to give them as much knowledge as possible. Contrary to my partners who I was sometimes in sort of contention with, I felt that educating the workforce is probably the most important thing we could be doing. Because it comes down to, when you're working in historic work your working in an environment that, well I was in a situation with Colombia, with the preservation programme, going back to the Whitehill Report and how the emphasis was placed on the academic and administrative side of historic preservation and less on the trade side. We increasingly had situations where the tolerances of error, were sort of reduced but also, at the same time we're dealing with bad information that's coming through, but also tighter and tighter tolerances as to what you could do. So you always have to be in a situation in where you're modifying the workforce. And what their consciousness is, and we're talking about people who are extremely skilled tactile, but who you could work with them for years and we finally realise that they are totally illiterate. But I mean they do such wonderful and beautiful work and they care, you know everyone learns to mask their deficiencies in relation to their social and work environment. Yeah, I've worked with people who I can only admire them, they understand colour matching or texture, the motions of the body in relation to the tools, I've seen, I've been astounded at times with the things they can come out with. Now they're not, none of them went through any educational programme, and I wasn't in a position, I'm trying to run a business, I'm trying to build a business, at times it was really, I mean we went through the recession of '86, at

times it was really though. And you're always dealing with and being a contractor for many years it was this whole thing of; well you're a contractor you must be cheating us.

SH: Yeah.

KF: You know that whole sort of consciousness that goes on. And we spent a lot of time on how to we get past that? Eventually it just sort of happens. Persistence, something like that will do it. The other thing that we did is that we would rotate foreman. If you would be on a jobsite one-week Jose would be the foreman, and the next week it would be Ralph. And so, and they weren't always, it wasn't that anyone, we didn't do it in respect where one person is better at being a foreman than another, we wanted to instill the fact that when you're working with someone one day you're the one that has to satisfy him and the next day he's going to have to satisfy you. That became, in time that became a really good model for managing the crew. I remember there was an old time fella that had been around for a long time, had his own business, sort of but not quite a competitor of ours, and I was in a focus group with him and when he realised who I was and where I had come from, he went on and on about how polite our crew was because he had met them on a job somewhere and talked to them, I mean he just simply discussed that one aspects of that culture, how you develop that culture. That's a lot better than showing up on a site and you're snide and nasty to them. You know, when I'm talking about the \$20 million-dollar project I was working in a culture in where you yell and holler and scream. I smoked two packs of Kool's per day, I drank coffee all day long, I smashed telephones, we, the trailer wall had a large dent in it, the door had a large dent in it where we kicked it. Essentially I was taught that you yell and holler and scream in order to get the stress out, you push the project forward, and you yell and holler and scream at everyone on the phone, and if anyone that says anything that is negative or contradictory to you, then you immediately jump all over them and you shove it right down their throat. That was how I was trained and that's like how the Brooklyn Bridge got built, we're going to build this and there was a PBS programme in which some guy was telling the subcontractor he was their horror and all this. I mean I see that and I think; oh yeah, I know where all this comes from. So when I got into historic work, eventually I got to a point where people were saying to me, that I liked, were saying to me; Kenny, why are you always yelling at me? You know, I'll do it for you. And so I started to think about that, but when I got into the historic work it's a whole different environment in which, for one thing you don't do that with your residential clients.

SH: No, never.

KF: Yeah. I mean you can try.

SH: It's not going to go very long (laughs).

KF: Yeah, it's not going to last very long (laughs). So, let's go onto the next question. (Laughs)

SH: (Laughs) Well this is really, yeah, I think you answered like the next three questions there.

KF: (Laughs). Okay.

SH: Well real quick.

KF: See this usually works a lot better when you're riding with me in the truck.

SH: I'm sure (laughs)

KF: Yeah (laughs).

SH: What's your favourite aspect of the profession then?

KF: Favourite aspect. (Pause) Well, oh, okay, so in the business that we had, though we did these projects, we started working with, the other side of Columbia, the programme was that increase of tolerance and consciousness and that of material science that was coming out of it, we started engaging in doing mock-ups for various situations. The first one, and this I can peg to '86 was at Carnegie Hall, they were doing the restoration of the exterior of Carnegie Hall, which they seem to keep doing. But at the time the question was there was epoxy paint on the granite, on the band above the marquee. So they wanted to know, they needed a means of removing that. And the conservator that we were working with at the time, Ray Pepe with BCA, suggested that we get into using abrasives for that. This was at a time when mentioning abrasives in historic work was forbidden. In fact, we did all this and we didn't talk about it, we couldn't talk about it. But essentially we went in there with a small linseed pot and used plastic media that is used on aircraft to remove the paint off the aluminum bodies of the aircraft. That worked really well for removing the epoxy paint off the granite. And then, it's sort of like the thing of the hammer and the nail, they started having us do that with a whole bunch of conditions that were there, so that went on for a little while. Then again, we, with Ray Pepe from BCA we went to Brooklyn Borough Hall which was, the contractor was my previous employer that I had bus depot work with. And we were hired to do, independently of them, we were hired to do, it was Tuckahoe marble structure. The Tuckahoe marble comes from West Chester it's a stone, Boss Tweed owned the quarry. And so of course he sold a whole lot of this stone which has a lot of iron inclusions in it. It's not a very good marble and it sugars. Grace Church where Tom Thumb was married to Elizabeth Warren was built with it, Tweed Courthouse, so also Brooklyn Borough Hall. And they had a company come in and clean the structure and doing a regular chemical wall spray cleaning. And then they had gotten Georgian marble and brought it in and put it in in places. The Tuckahoe marble and the Georgian marble did not weather equally out.

SH: Was it Tate marble?

KF: I have no idea. I could find out.

SH: I love Tate marble. Those guys are so good to me.

KF: Yeah. Well, I don't know who it was. That particular company, that larger company that I had worked for actually bought a quarry, Bibe Stone in Indiana. And that relationship didn't work out. Eventually that company, in '86 went belly up. They had heavily invested in building new office structures on Long Island, and they were all leveraged out and when '86 came everything went,

everything died. They transformed into another company, which is still around. But you know, people had strokes, different things happened, everything changed overnight. But by that time I was no longer involved with them. But Brooklyn Borough Hall was a case where we went in and they had come up with an idea of if we blasted aggregate again, the surface, and we had just had that experience at Carnegie Hall, that possible we could tone out the shading of the stone. And essentially, we went in and did these mock-ups and it was kind of neat because we could tell the company that I worked for where to go. It's like; we're going to work here, we have precedent, even though they were the contractor on the job we had the authority to say you go over there, we're working here, leave us alone. You know that was kind of a fun power play for me. The mouse picking on the elephant kind of thing. But it settled out into glass medium and I can't remember if it was beaded or crushed glass. But you know there's subtle differences between all these situations. You know we always kept doing these little tasks while running this whole other company and that's what I enjoyed, was that exploratory. I've spent a, I've been involved with all different kinds of exotic blast media situations since then. For a while we got into using walnut shells to remove paint off of cast iron facades in Soho, until the whole lead thing became more consciously understood and we stopped doing that. You know when the baking soda blasting first came out the company that we got our equipment from out on Long Island was working with Arm and Hammer to sophisticate and refine the equipment and so they'd bring us in and do demonstrations and you know it's like we were right there when they were doing that. I've never worked with dry ice, I'd like to do that.

SH: That's, I was actually able to do a cast iron portico restoration. Tidewater Preservation has an office here now and they actually work on one of the site that we work on a lot and they came over and said; we've got this dry ice machine that were taking this paint of this portico. It was amazing. But it was so expensive.

KF: Well, yeah. When people come up with these things, one thing is that we're working with the US rep for the Tornado System.

SH: Is that the sponge?

KF: No, I've advised, I'm familiar with the sponge I haven't worked with it directly, but I did advise a project up in Rhode Island on some schools where the architect used that and it was very successful there. But it was specific to what they wanted to do. They wanted to, it was pre-cast concrete that was in really bad shape, and it had been coated, and the coating was causing it to be worse. And they wanted to remove the coating and the bad concrete. So the sponge blast was perfect for that. And I understand it worked out really well. But the thing with the sponge blast is that because its sponges you have to have a lot of air volume. You have to have a really big compressor, and it's very loud. So, you know they don't really tell you that, you have to kind of find out. It's like every single methodology has something that is a drawback. But the Tornado is,

you have a vacuum head, and it's essentially a giant vacuum cleaner that stand about nearly five foot in height, about two and a half feet in diameter, and it has camber running through. So you have a vacuum head that you set up and it sucks the aggregate through. You can see through the chambers the aggregate sucking through. And it's all self-contained in that box. And then it filters down through the system. It's very specific on what it can do. We used that, you know, when you asked what it that I enjoy is. So what I enjoy is at the Waldorf Astoria has this thing going on where they're contemplating redoing their main lobby, and there's one political faction that wants to restore it back to what is was originally and then there's a designer out of Paris that wants to turn it into whatever their vision is. And so there's these two factions, and I'm brought in and asked what can we do to get the paint off this limestone. And you know basically what I said was; I think this will work. We were able to use this equipment, and one of the driving forces for me is that I worked in hotels before and one of the things I was told by someone who was in the business of going from hotel to hotel from town to town and redoing the hotels, was the idea of leaving a can of latex paint open in a room somewhere because it have the smell of something happening and the residents of the hotel, the people coming in and out are thinking; oh it's nice, something's going on here. So, we're going to go work in the Waldorf Astoria and I think; well we can't use chemicals for stripping. That would be efficient, but you can't be smelling up this space in the whole hotel, they'll immediately shut you down. I've been on other jobs where people, it's like you can't work on a hospital with a roofing material if it stinks. You know it may not have any personal health hazard to it but if it seems you know. I've had people that I worked with that were actually chemical-phobic. It wasn't that they had a physical problem with chemicals but if you showed chemicals to them they went nuts with the whole concept of; oh this is chemistry. So anyways with this one particular device we were able to do a two foot square mock-up while a wedding party was going on within thirty feet of us.

SH: Really?

KF: Yeah, without any, no need for dust makes, no need for glasses, everything is self-contained. It's all self-contained and it recycles. Especially when you go to empty it out, there was no lead in this paint so that was one benefit. But if you had some you could like take it outside with a hepa vac and contain it. It worked really well for that specific situation, but the problem is that, and if I get too heavily quoted on this I'll be in trouble, when you said the expense, when you spend many thousands of dollars to buy something like this, this piece of equipment...

SH: You got to pay for it somehow.

KF: Yeah. So, the tendency is to go out and push it. It's like duct tape, you want to put in on everything. And the more you can use it eventually you can get your return on it. But that's sort of getting further afield from what I enjoy. But what I enjoy is, I enjoy when the architect calls me for something that is strange and hard to figure out, it has that interface of the tactile. Because if

I did not, I didn't understand how this machine worked. When I read all the literature and when I watched the demonstrations I didn't understand how it worked and what it did. With this you can take the ink of a piece of paper. This is the only methodology that I found that if you really, really wanted to selectively remove coats of paint you could do that. If you were patient, if you took the time, you'd have to want to do it. That goes back to when I first started doing basting on cast iron in Soho. The Landmarks person I was working with said; well can you only take off one or two layers of paint. And it's like; well, no, we don't have that, there isn't that. But this piece of equipment can do that if somebody wanted to do that. It's not practical you know, on a cast iron façade to do that you know the practical thing is to dismantle it, take it off to a, if you really want to get into it, take it off to a shop and do it in a controlled environment. So I enjoy that, being brought in on these odd projects, which is basically it goes back to our business is helping architects and structural engineers and conservators, and it's like design decision isn't solely; oh, we're going to replace this wall here and there, it's also a case of what is its feasibility, in respect of the building. We worked on a cast iron fire watch tower in Mount Morris, New York, which is essentially a cast iron tower on top of a giant rock, in the middle of Harlem, probably the most active drug dealing place in Harlem. You have to walk up this big set of stairs to get up to it. And you come up to this point where there's these three guys just standing there, one with a cell phone, one with a golf club, and I don't know what the third one is for, but when you're working there it's we're not going to mess with you, you don't mess with us kind of thing. There's was a question that came up during the design phase, in that particular case we were hired on as a member of the design team, a consultant on the design team. We also did site work, but we were involved in the design and construction logic and feasibility and conceptual budgeting. Helping them to develop a conceptual budget. They, at some point, there's a spiral stair to go up, and they have wrought iron balusters or rails to support the stair handle. And the question came up whether or not it would be possible to do field forge welding on these rails. Well yeah. Yes, it is possible, but so then my task at that point is I then responded back with what that would mean. Because first off, it's rather unlikely that you're going to find anyone within the five boroughs of New York that knows how to do that, which means you have to go outside of the city. You need to go outside of the city to find someone to bring in that is willing to stand in the middle of Harlem on a rock with drug dealers all around them and not go nuts. I mean one of the things I've done over the years is that I've helped people come from outside the New York environment to integrate their business in or become employed in New York, and I would say eighty percent of the time they kind of freak out and some of them have, sort of like they need to go to an asylum after that. New York is just kind of a place where you can either succeed or you just get chewed up.

SH: Yep. Philadelphia is the same way.

KF: Oh, I'm sure. You know, and I might go down to Philadelphia to do some probes or a three-day job, go down to D.C. to do that or go up to Boston and do that, but I'm not going to go in there and start competing with the locals. And like I said I'm more comfortable going to Washington having spent five years there, but I know that I'm not going to down there and establish a business and work within that network. There's so much difference between, as I know, between New York and Washington.

SH: Yeah.

KF: I mean I went through a transition and had a huge learning process. I never anticipated, I've had thirty years working in New York, I never wanted to go there. I wanted to be a hermit and live in the woods. So, I'm living north of New York City so we're getting closer to that.

SH: Closer to the hermitage?

KF: Yeah well, its state land right behind us and I can just walk out the back door and be at the lake that nobody can get to without an hour's walk. But that's neither here nor there. I also, in talking to what I enjoy, I enjoy, I don't get to do it as much as I did before with the larger company, but I enjoy enabling people to find their best talents. I'm very much oriented into situations, someone will approach and ask me to take on a task. My orientation is to immediately go out and find someone who can do it better. And then help them to get positioned as I can step out of the way. And that's kind of, I can talk about the experience with PTN, that's, some of that is wanting to enable craftspeople who, as I go back to working with a workforce that is essentially illiterate, and this goes back to my grandfather as well. Working with people who have a profound amount of knowledge, a great deal of it tactile based, and they're not able to verbally communicate or announce. In my early relationship with APT, and the first time I found out about APT I was working on that monument out in Vincenze. I found out about APT and I also found out about the National Park Service Preservation Training Centre. Which the superintendent at that time was trying to coax me to go to that, way back when. But, when I started reading the APT Bulletin which was in the tradition of the mimeograph, I thought; wow this would be really cool to relate with these people, I wonder if I'll ever be able to do that. Eventually I was on the board for a while. I was assigned the work, the initial work to develop their website. And what I did was I immediately got rid of the person who was doing it and got someone who really knew what they were doing. That was, you know, internal politics for the organisation. But I also got involved, with Bryan Blundell, because I'd been active in organising and bringing people together in New York, but we didn't have any money. Bryan figured out how to get some money into this, which came from the National Park Service actually, with the first IPTW. But this while issue of trying to help craftspeople learn to communicate better in relation to projects where they involved. As I said my first reaction to APT in getting involved in was, I kind of felt like if you have the education and you have the skills to communicate then to me I feel

there's a sense of obligation, now lately they've been calling this a privilege, due to privilege you have the obligation to help those around you to communicate. Particularly when your focus is what is the best thing to do thing for the structure. Not what is the best thing to do for my company, for my colleagues, for my immediate surrounding environment, my career or the politics of the situation, but what is the best thing to do for the structure. And if that is the focus then those who are educated and have the skills should have an honour an obligation to assist those who don't have those skills to communicate.

SH: Yeah.

KF: But then I find, I remember you know when I talk about these people who have high tactile and low communication skills, they would have situations where an architect was sent to the field and would start asking them questions, an I'd understand the process. The architect goes away and then they start thinking about it, and they would start thinking about what they had asked, what they had seen, and sort of like you start developing the castle dreams inside your head, and then they would come back with different questions and more questions. And a craftsman that I very much respect said to me one day; they bring it back in order to get you. To hurt you. And so I want to say less. So it's like there's this communication break occurs. This isn't like, I can go on a whole, one story about that. That isn't such a good situation when the idea is what is the best thing that we can do for this structure. The architect has in the meantime come up with some bizarre requirement that's not physically possible. The artisan can't communicate that. All the artisan can do is do it. And you give them the desired result, and if it happens then you need it understand it and accept it. What I started to come down to is an understanding that with the trades, and this comes about with PTN, having the hands-on demonstrations it's like in school when you do a show and tell. You give the craftspeople their tools, the materials and a time slot in which they need to do something, and you surround them with people who are sympathetic, perceived as peers, they may not necessarily be, an architect may be standing there they're just dressed differently. They look like they're a trade's person. They you leave the tradesperson to do something and eventually they start talking. I think Patrick Plunkett was the stone mason for the White House, and he came to several IPTWs, and I kept trying to get him to do a demonstration and he didn't want to. And eventually we talked him into it, and we got him started. He didn't think he had anything to say. But at ninety minutes we couldn't get him to stop. That was the first time around. When we talk about issues about how does PTN function and succeed and not succeed and later periods I saw him with only one person there. You know, but I won't even go into that. But I would say one of the things I really enjoy is to set up situations in which people's best talents are enabled and they get to move on from there. I often would say, I was in a situation to where I could set people up to either succeed or fail miserably. And putting them into a position, and you want to do this? Then here, here it is, go do it. You know I always

needed to be in a position to back it up and straighten it up when it failed miserably, sometimes not being able to do that, but instilling that level of confidence and trust in the person that may not be able to communicate to do something really wonderful. And I've seen that many times repeated over and over. You know on another hand I really strongly believe that one should not place people in a position where they don't belong, where it isn't right for them, and you know I've also seen that as well.

SH: Excellent.

KF: Am I up to five questions yet?

SH: You are actually. We actually just finished five questions. (Laughs)

KF: (laughs) What are the questions that I skipped, just out of curiosity.

SH: Well, how did you learn your practice, what attracted you to the profession, you've got those taken care of I think.

KF: Ok.

SH: And you talked about number six a little. How has the industry changed since you first started practicing?

KF: Oh, yeah. Well, first off, you can use the word industry.

SH: Yeah.

KF: Yeah because when I got started in this there was no industry. The whole concept of calling it a preservation industry did not exist. There were companies that were engaged in it, but I say over the last thirty years it has become much more distinct. You know I focused, I spent a whole lot of time focusing on just trying to make a living and getting by in New York. When I talk about the company that I was with for eighteen years, I was working ten hours a day, five days a week, and commuting on top of that five hours a day. For twelve years I drive back and forth to Long Island five hours a day by myself. There wasn't a whole lot of time outside of that work experience. Certainly not time to go and look, except towards the end of that experience to go and look outside of New York. So, then I was aware that people worked with timbers from when I had been in Ithaca. You know there was a point when people were building log cabins. I didn't, I had absolutely no knowledge that there were timber framers, or the timber framer's guild or the log builder's association, because that doesn't happen in New York.

SH: Yeah.

KF: I often typify that in New York a carpenter someone who works with steel studs. I've worked on the oldest, I replaced a door threshold, and oak door threshold at the oldest house in New York. It's in the middle of Brooklyn, next to a gas station. And the only reason that I got to do that is because I know something about a piece of oak, like I said before I'm a hack carpenter, but I can replace a door threshold, but they can't find anyone to do that, they have a real hard time, well there's not enough of it to sustain a steady job. And then, well I could get into this whole

situation, even at that, I mean the door threshold was pretty simple but some of these projects you spend so much time wading through bureaucratic paperwork in order to do three days' worth of work that by the time you get there, the work is easy. But, by the time you get there you don't want to know if you really want to have anything to do with it anymore.

SH: Trust me I'm a state employee I know all about paperwork.

KF: Oh, okay. (Laughs). Yeah and I, you know I've been around long enough to realise that the people that we're interfacing with they don't, it's not their fault.

SH: Yeah.

KF: It's very easy when, which was another thing I began to realise that, you know I always thought it was us as builders, as trades, versus the abstract designer, architect. You know I was raised up in an environment that my grandfather was always complaining about the crazy, young structural engineer you know. Or the architect and the stupid thing that they wanted to do. And I've always been curious you know why, why is there this situation. I remember a young editor for a book publisher was referred to me that they wanted to do a series of books to bridge the gap between design and hands on. And I proposed what they should do is that, if that was the goal do interviews, do profiles of people who do hands on work. You know, what motivates them, just like we're having this conversation now, or the interview I did of Rudy and Laura recently. You know it's like; who are these people? I remember when I was doing computer programming I would read about the computer programmers. There would be a book and it would have profiles of all these guys or gals that were doing computer programming. It's like; wow that's really cool. I understand where they're coming from. We need that, I think that's what we need in this industry, as you say. Going back to how we got to an industry, how has that changed. What I said to them was this is what you need to do but what they wanted to do was more like a how to do blacksmithing in which you have a book where you show someone doing this. What I said to them was; you know I don't really understand why you want to do this. People like Taunton Press already have this cornered. You know why do you want to be number two in this how to this market. They didn't like that. The conversation didn't go any further than that. But one of the things I concluded, that I came to an understanding of within myself is that those who say there is a gap have a vested interest in there being a gap. I won't go into why I think it's in their interest to do that, but they do have that. Well, no I will actually. If a contractor comes along with an unskilled workforce, and this goes back to contractors that do not educate or enable their workforce to have an education. They don't send them to your school. They don't invest in the education. They're the ones, you know, they're the ones going out and getting the work because they're low-balling, because there's no distinction made between the contractor that educates and the contractor that doesn't. Educating, the more intelligent the workforce the more it's going to cost. Because you need to pay them more for their skills level.

Also, it develops new complications because it's like, every time I sent someone off to a workshop, they would come back thinking they knew something special, and they would immediately leave with an idea to start their own business, and then they would be competing with us. So, there's always that issue. You know, but that is where I had issues with my partners because it was like; why are we spending this money, and I just kept pushing we need to educate, we need to educate. We cannot satisfy our customers unless we have an educated workforce. And yet we're competing against contractors who don't. (Pause). So also in the, in so far as going back to the questions of changes, changes seen, there's a particular layer in which having those skills really fits and works and is enabled. The, to me at least the traditional model of sustaining a workforce, sustaining a shop, trucks, vehicles, equipment didn't, that it doesn't really work all that well. What I found was increasingly, or at least the work that I was involved in, the projects I as working with, well let's say the Edison barn, moving it, deconstructing and reconstructing the Edison barn. I essentially handled the project totally outside of the standard model of having a structured workforce because you know we brought Rudy in with the timber framing, we had people who worked for me that we had directly that worked for there, we brought somebody, a specialist in the windows who did the windows, we brought someone else to do the site work, the concrete foundation and such, but the entire project essentially was bringing together, like I got used to saying for a short period of time a dream team. We applied, that was a good project in that it was one hundred percent negotiated. We were not in a competitive bid situation because nobody else had any clue. So, what are you asking us to do here, and we responded to that. So we were able to bring together a dream team for that. Specifically bringing together the talents that, the specialisation of knowledge that was needed to be done for that project as best as you can find people to do that. Bringing good people together, good things happen. I've had trouble, difficulty on other, a whole lot of other projects particularly when we were in a situation where we are competing on a bid that you can bring a dream team together, but the structure is going to cost more. Let alone that a majority of projects when you go to this low-ball, low bid thing, first thing that you're sacrificing is management. You need to compete in such a situation that you have as little oversight, management of the site as possible. You need to do something where you have a crew that just knows how to do that. Torched on roof, yeah is very easy once you teach someone how to do a torched-on roof, or any other roof system, you just have them do it over and over again. You know, it's like you don't have to go in there and monitoring or changing or tweaking the system. But you take the same people and suddenly you're going to do restoration on a glass block wall, it's like you know how do you make that transition. So I would say, you know it's like, the change has been you know things have gotten a whole lot more complicated, and harder to handle, harder to deal with. And I think that's across the board. You know we, at this point, my activity is between my son and I, we work with other companies and

you know we get engaged in management and larger projects. One project that we had recently, not too far back was we were the consultants for doing paint strip tests on an interior of a concrete structure down in Tribeca that was built maybe around 1910, that was board frame work, board frame board work. And the client wanted the paint removed but wanted to see all the knots and details and the graining of the boards. So we went in there and did a whole series of mock-ups. And it was one a case of figuring out what would work in so far as removing the paint, how to do it on the interior in a manner of what would be safe for our workforce.

Environmentally safe and also doing mock-ups for the client to give feedback on the results were, where they could see it and decide what they wanted from us. And I think, I'm pretty sure it was natural cement concrete. It's brown. But then, an associate of ours actually bid on the work, and it was 20,000 square feet of paint removal on the interior, and they ran into some problems and we came in and worked under them, troubleshooting the issues and taking steps to finish the project. You know that we'll get involved in. We just bid on, assisted in bidding on a, I think it was a \$1.7 million carpentry project in a building, an older building development in Queens in which they have all these wood columns, like sixteen-foot-tall wood columns that they want to replace with FRP fire rated columns, so it's not really carpentry. But its work, and you can apply, I mean we can find work and apply carpenters for it, but it's not restoration work. But at the same time if you don't have, you know here's another thing. Insurance has gotten more difficult. Bonding has gotten more difficult. And one of the things I've been working on for quite a while now is, I mean for years and I haven't, I can't seem to get anywhere with is that the state has some really, really nice projects that would be suitable for small outfits to take on, specialise in, but the problem is the state suddenly, with probably good reasons, insist on bonding. After 9/11, at least in New York, insurance went through the roof, mainly because a whole lot of insurance companies ran away from New York. There's issues on the legality, the cross over between workers comp and the liability so when workers comp raised, liability ran away. The insurance companies have an incredible impact on what happens in the construction environment and how you structure your company. And then with the recession, that's hasn't helped because then companies that have been around for sixty years suddenly lost their bonding. We're right, we're within a few miles from Connecticut now. We were on Long Island but we're now a few miles from Connecticut and I've done business in Connecticut and I keep ties there. And in a lot of respects whole cores of competency in Connecticut have been decimated. They just, well I remember when we had the recession of '86 suddenly we, we managed to survive through that because we had a large HUD project in Harlem. But suddenly, I remember carpenter's union halls, people had no work, and so they then went to go be taxi drivers, or almost anything else, whatever they could find.

Whenever you have these situations, people don't come back.

SH: Yeah.

KF: You know I had a conversation with someone recently that they were telling me that they were having such a hard time in restoration carpentry that they were thinking of going back to being an auto mechanic. You know, and this is somebody who really has a passion for, a love for doing the detail work of historic restoration, but you know they've got a family, they're trying to make ends meet, the situation of the economy, the fact that they're competing with semi-skilled, un-skilled. The fact that, you know on that other topic of there not being, there being a lack of people capable of doing the necessary work, I'm very, I've been hearing that for a very long time. And the first time I heard it I was surprised, because I know all of these people.

SH: Yeah.

KF: You know, I'm hearing this and I'm like; no, I can give you a whole list of people. I'm sitting in PTN and someone says to be, like the dumbest traders, says you know; who should we contact, give us five names. And I sit down and in a couple minutes I give them thirty. And I annotate it and tell them; this is what you should do with this person and this person and this person and appeal to them, to connect with them. You know, you're not just making cold calls.

SH: Yeah.

KF: You know you and I interfaced on that. You know we didn't really know each other but I kind of understand what was going on. I thought it was really cool in the feedback that you gave me. Because to a certain extent I was running on my own like, just we got to do this.

SH: Yeah.

KF: And if any contacted, you know basically what I was saying to myself was; well the shit stops here. Yeah so that I've been working on was how to set up, if you're a tradesperson with a tactile knowledge, regardless of whether you are literate or not, even if you have a capacity to do business, you don't necessarily have the capital structure because your focus is on developing capital.

SH: Yeah.

KF: Your focus is not on building a business. You know the eighteen years I spent was learning how to build a business focusing on historic restoration work. So, it makes it possible for me to work with businesses that are trying to do that to help them with problems that might come up and be able to give them advice and guidance in that respect. So anyway, what I've been trying to do it find a situation in which somebody has the interest in developing the capital structure would be able to set up a situation in which they were able to work with the smaller contractors, or the one two-person trade specialist to go and provide the bonding to work on these structures. So I understand what bonding is about because in my former company I built the bonding up to, we are at like \$60 million at one point. So I know how it all works. We actually at times had gotten involved helping the bonding company when they had other projects that had gotten messed up, so a little bit of that went on. But it's, it's nearly impossible to find someone

who has, well it's been impossible, someone who understand and works towards building the capital structure, the business that makes money, with craftspeople who are interested in doing the work. Now a part of it the craftspeople don't trust the capitalist, and the capitalist is only thinking so much in their interest, they don't necessarily look out for or understand what the needs are or the interest of the craftspeople in terms of the work to sustain them. Quite often they don't even understand the nature of the project. I had a friend that, I had an opportunity to, prior to the restoration to go paint the outside of the Guggenheim on 5th Avenue. And I needed to, it was a case of me going to someone who has the capacity and working with them to enable them to do the job, because it was a larger job than I could do. And the way I got involved in that is that there was an outfit of climbers, rope access people, who were coming in from Belgium, who said they could paint the exterior for \$10,000 and would go down the street and teach the local union painters how to paint it, and how to hang and paint it using rope access. And I was brought in to, sort of comment on that situation, which resulted with me writing some really long letters to the people in Belgium explaining to them why they really didn't want to do that.

SH: Yeah.

KF: That didn't happen but then it was; okay then what do we do, so I was asked to come in. But the person I was dealing with, although they had the capital structure, they did do some sort of historic work, they fancied themselves as doing historic work, but they looked at the building as if it were a warehouse. And I couldn't quite get across to them how, if they worked on this structure, even if they just put on coat of paint on it, which is all they wanted at the time, it was going to be some sort of centennial or party or something that was going on that the museum wanted to look nice. It had to be a coating that could be removed later because they were really seriously involved in moving towards the restoration of the building, and there were a whole lot of issues dealing with that structure that eventually worked themselves through. But the fact that the person with the partial structure saw it as a warehouse in his mind, he couldn't place this as; why is this a unique structure. You know if you take them to work on Telsa factory, the story doesn't mean anything to them. They're just looking at it like; where's the bucks, where do I get the bucks out of this. And quite often, simply for the fact that they were able to build up the capital structure doesn't necessarily mean that they have a more refined concept of that's going on, or that the potential is. They have imagination, but it's like imagination that doesn't quite fit with that, they don't quite get the story. Of that issue of, and what I see on the public-sector side of that is, on your side, is a great level of frustration because when we do meet with project managers and such they're all really frustrated that they're not getting the actual touch to the structure that they're looking for. And that's happening because the person, a system is set up in which having the capacity of the capital structure overrides the skill levels and the hands-on touch. And that's again where I come to if people who have the training and the experience are

not being employed, then there's no way that the small outfit is going to be able to have a profitable opportunity within that framework. I don't mean profitability in the case of, profit from the concept of having enough capital to get to the next job.

SH: Yeah.

KF: You know eventually we're all going to be at the end of our rope, we're all going to be dead and it's not going to matter anymore. So, you know we can make as much profit as we want but if we don't have that capital structure, if we don't have that credit, if we don't have money in our pocket, the recession has proven what happens when you don't have credit. You know all of our, we exist on an environment that we all operate on credit. And quite often it's coming down to the sole practitioner is financing the job, because they're not going to get paid until they're done, and maybe not thirty days, maybe not ninety, in some cases, maybe not a year until their completed through that. So, if you could tie them up with someone who has the capital structure, then they can ride through that.

SH: Yeah.

KF: You know but the small, I know that there's companies that are well organised, I won't go into naming them but there are some companies that are really well organised that do operate on a traditional model, but they're a niche. They're specific niches. You know there has been this consciousness of building up this capital, and that's why you go do this project in Queens where you're putting in these FRP columns because you hope by going through that and maintaining that you're developing capital that you could then employ on, take that resources and out it towards, a credit resource and put it towards working on someone's townhouse. Or me being able to be on your advisory board.

SH: Yeah.

KF: But when resources are tight you need to be discreet and selective in how you spread them around.

SH: Fantastic. Absolutely I agree and it's funny I've seen that, interviewing people from both the US and the UK and they're all saying the same thing that; we got to chase this right now.

Well, that being said, would you suggest others to practice your craft?

KF: What do you mean?

SH: Getting into craft.

KF: Oh. What would I suggest to people that would want to get into it?

SH: Well first off, if someone said to you they wanted to get into this, would you suggest they pursue that, and then how do you suggest they pursue that?

KF: Yes. (Laughs). Well I am asked. Sometimes, it's been reflected back to me that's sometimes people don't take my, younger people, when I respond back don't always take my advice as if I meant it in a good spirit, which I did.

SH: Yeah.

KF: I won't use the words that they used. (Laughs)

SH: Well we're a stubborn generation.

KF: Well no it's not a matter of that its people have said some rather, I've gotten some rather. Let's say vulgar feedback of my being frank about it. One person asked me you know; how do you know when it's time to do x? Like go on your own, or set up a business or whatever, and basically my response was; you never know. There's never a time. Every day I wake up I'm still not sure that I have any clue that I know what I'm doing. I'm flattered when people call me and ask me questions, I have strong reservations against people calling me an expert. But then recently someone I really, really considered an expert called me and asked me for my advice on something and I said oh, okay maybe I am, and then maybe I'm being a little too picky about it. (Pause). The only way to do it is just go out and do it. You pick, in some respects, such as in Savannah, ACBA or Belmont, the fact that there are programmes that you can go to in order to gain skills that are focused on historic preservation, that's another change. I think that's really, really vital. Now, as education goes I strongly believe in, many years back when I was working with the stone mason and the fireplaces, I met this guy from Snap-on tools and he told me when you need to know something, you'll find out if you need to know it. I've always been directed towards dealing with mentors, and then when I need to know something, then I will find out. Quite often I've gotten involved in projects and I regret, I've found at later that decisions I've made were not appropriate and not proper, I learn not to make those particular decisions again, and I've learned from the process. In good consciousness I did the best I could with what I had in hand, and I would advise a young person to get as much, do your homework, and get as much knowledge as you can. For a short period of time I wanted to, well talking about profiling of people, I called it traditional resource, let's see (pause), well essentially the way I saw it, going back to talking about those computer people that I admired reading their bios, I thought it would be interested in having a directory of all of the recognised craftspeople that we know of that would indicate whether they were involved in formal education or not, whether they did workshops or whether they were willing to take someone along in their truck for a day. A directory of craftspeople that would essentially show their accessibility to want to teach.

SH: Yeah.

KF: Not focusing on a list of programmes, or a list of topics, but say Rudy Christian is willing to go to Savannah, to go to New Orleans, he's willing to go to New York and teach. If you're interested in learning timber framing, get a hold of Rudy. Seek out that mentoring position. Talk to people, find out if Rudy is really someone that you want anything to do with in that respect. What do you think is your capacity to learn something from them? I have had people come and basically, since I have been with PTN, come to me and seeking, after my engagement and involved, seeking to

spend time either working with me or otherwise, to get what they could out of me. I remember we had one student from Belmont who came to us at an IPTW who asked a bunch of questions because he was actually interviewing us to make sure that we were really a company that was doing historic work. He came to work for us and unfortunately he was one of the percent that had a nervous breakdown right away. (laughs)

SH: (Laughs).

KF: You know he couldn't deal with, and that was right before 9/11 so I don't blame him in that respect but you know I go back to I wanted to learn how to build fireplaces and I found someone who did it.

SH: Yeah.

KF: And had been doing it for a long time. And gained their trust and paid attention to be worthy of them, or in at least their feeling, that they felt that I was worthy to educate. I could also go back to, like I said we work with a lot of graduates from the Columbia programme, from Rhode Island etcetera, from Pennsylvania, we find quite often that our interface in the field is, that in a very short period of time we convey a sense to them that they're getting a level of knowledge that they would not going to get otherwise in all their years of education that they in general they had to pay for. You know there's nothing quite like, and I know your programme and other programmes work to develop this, but there's nothing quite like being in the field and figuring it out, then actually doing it.

SH: Yeah.

KF: It's not just a case of having tools and handing them, which brings up another point. So, I had Harry Hunterman, with Weiss, Janey, Eslier, who was president of APT at the time, and he came to one of the APT events, the IPTW, and he's a friend. And I spent the time to escort I'm around the activity. People doing their demonstrations and stuff. And a question that came up was; how to we validate the veracity of, or the trust of the knowledge that's being conveyed here by all these different craftspeople. You know I didn't really have an answer for him, you know, it's like do you pin gravestones or do you not pin gravestones.

SH: Yeah.

KF: And you know, what do you if you do pin them, what adhesives do you use. You know I've been around long enough, you know if I take it to the subject of coatings on stone, clear waterproof coatings on stone, and how they work and function, I go to seminars on that, and over thirty years they're still talking about the same thing. There's been no resolution. I don't think, I don't know what the time span is, but I don't think there's ever going to be a resolution. You know it's like exactly how to you determine their veracity. I don't know, you know. APT, the Bulletin and such they do peer review, I get involved in reviewing articles and such, but then there's also a question of how to you determine the veracity of that knowledge that's coming

from that sector. You know I remember once reading an article that, a bulletin article about repointing butter joints, and I could go about that for another hour. But the tradespeople within my company came back to me and said; this is nuts what they're saying here, there's no way you can do this. You know I'm looking at it and intellectually, yeah it sounded like, yeah, I can see how this could work. But once you go out and do it, it doesn't work. So it's like that information isn't necessarily good either if you don't connect it with the tactile. (Pause). So, one of the things that got me thinking there was I'm trying to figure out what is the core of the difference of the knowledge. And what I've come to is that if you're on the active craft side, physical, tactile as opposed to the intellectual is that you tend to have a much better understanding of process. You're moving through space, you're moving through time, you're interacting the materials, there's a process that is occurring. Just yesterday my son and I are doing a demo video for a product and he's applying it to the wall and I see some action going on with it sussing and such and I stopped him in the middle of this and I said; what are you feeling? You know how are you seeing this? Are you getting sensitive touch, are you getting sensitive feedback from this? I would say that activity and that feedback is kind of like what the book or academic knowledge side tends to lose. Because they're not really dealing with it in a physical progression through time. So I see that essentially the validation of the knowledge that comes through interfacing with a craftsperson through working through materials is that engagement with the process. I hope that helped to answer that one question.

SH: It did actually. And we're almost done.

KF: Okay. Good. (Laughs)

SH: (Laughs) Ken I could talk to you for twenty hours. The, and don't feel that you're going to insult me or Simeon or Dave with your answer to the next question, but do you feel that current educational offerings are adequate to prepare people for entering the field?

KF: (Pause). Yes and no.

SH: Okay.

KF: And it's not by any sense of because any of the programmes aren't trying. At one of the IPTW's down in Maryland, I don't know who it was, but I heard them say that one of the issues that they dealt with was that the transition from having students who are consumers and having them transition them into producers. And that really caught my attention because it made me more aware that if I'm receiving a student then I need to teach them how to be producers. And this was an educator that was expressing how they were seeing the most difficult challenge to them that they could instill knowledge, but it wasn't, once the student left the programme, then how did they make that transition, that change. When someone's coming onto, within a corporate environment working, there's a certain amount of consumption of knowledge that they have to undertake but at a certain point if they're not producing, then it doesn't work.

They're either not, like I said when we had someone come in and work with our workforce, if they're not producing the workforce notices and they suffer for it. But then also you have an employee that's not giving you a return, a capital return, so you can't sustain it. And they, you know the workforce they quite often, well no, almost always doesn't understand what has to go on in order to maintain that environment. You know it's very easy, and I've fought with this, it's very easy to deal with a situation where they think you're making so much money that's you know why you have a Cadillac or whatever. You may, I actually know a guy with a Rolls-Royce, but he owns a Rolls-Royce for a totally different reason. It actually builds into and sustains and supports your marketing and your business image. But your workforce doesn't necessarily understand that. So, you know I remember one time, and this is not someone who had gone through a school so it's not exactly in your question, but I was thinking about it the other day. We had a lot of problems with workforce and we needed someone who could assist in overseeing and running that, and so we had this fellow, and the first thing he did was come to me telling me about all the problems were as if we were really bad people. And I said to him; well look, that's why we hired you was to straighten these problems out. And then the next thing he came into me and asked when did he get his pension. Now I didn't even get a pension, and I'm the owner of the company, it's like what are you talking about. He didn't last long. But it's that lack of understanding of what that environment, what that student is stepping into that environment in which there's a whole lot of things going on that, as best as you can prepare them, they're just not going to know.

SH: Yeah.

KF: You know how they survive in that is going to be a case of how hard they work, and their perseverance and their work environment. One of the things that happened to me in 2000 when we had the IPTW in Harrisburg was that two educators came to me and basically, we went aside, and they grilled me as to what can this activity, this event can do for them. In so far as you're asking me a question, how can this interaction work better for the educational programmes as well, with it in mind that I'm thinking that your desire is to produce people that can have a satisfactory survivable life experience you know, and a career.

SH: Yeah.

KF: From that I kind of got the understanding that I know that there are tradespeople that want to, for legacy reasons, that it was hard for them to acquire the knowledge that they have and that they perceive that there's not many people around them that have that knowledge and they want to give of that. They're not necessarily involved in any programme, sometimes I hear of someone saying; oh, I think I'm going to have an interview over here or over there, then I hear later; oh, that didn't really work out. And it's like, okay, that's cool. I think the fact that you have people coming in, that you're sponsoring people to come in and teach, I really like that. I think

that's really great. If it ever comes up, I'd be glad to come in and talk to do a session on the problems of estimating in historic preservation.

SH: I'm glad you said that because you're on my list of people.

KF: Well I know I'm on your list, but I don't want to come in and, you know I want to make sure, I would certainly come in if it's something that I felt I can give.

SH: Well you can because one of the biggest problem I'm seeing is that I'm squeezing so much time in working with the tools, I don't have the time to do a lot of estimating.

KF: Oh, okay.

SH: And I've had had several bids on jobs here and they've underbid jobs and once they've told me what they've bid I've said; that's not enough.

KF: Well yeah, I've been slowing writing a book about it but the book also goes into telling stories about when the jobs went weird. I had a cast iron façade that I painted the wrong colour. You know that was a whole fiasco. (Laughs)

SH: (Laughs)

KF: You know I can go, that's one of the thing I say riding around in a truck, and that was another thing with IPTW, we wanted to create an environment in which people share their stories, as if they were riding around in the truck. All those conversations about when I almost killed myself. You know I know we can go on and on for ours sharing stories about, you know I did this, I did that and this is how it worked out. But anyways I would be interested in coming down if we were talking about dynamics of estimating and, you know we can talk about that further.

SH: Yeah.

KF: But I came to realise that within PTN, there's two different communities. And they overlap. It's like you can have a Venn diagram of them, but in certain respects, the needs of each community don't necessarily complement each other. And (pause) I would say I understand the rationale of the ITES, I don't think, I've spoken against it. Not so much that I don't think it should happen, I think it tends to lack the experiential perspective. I feel that I was involved in it when it started, and I feel that in some respects if it assists in creating a community of craftspeople who feel they are relating to each other, if that's the focus of PTN, then that's not the focus of what the educators need. As I say there is overlap, but there's also divergence. And I think when PTN tries to, and I think, I don't think there's been a situation that, and I don't think it will ever happen, that a board will come together that has enough strong focus to distinguish between either of those. Personally, I think there should be two separate, consciously organisations promoting each direction, when they come together, working together. It's just like when ITES or IPTW in Harrisburg in 2000, we had craftspeople who were complaining about architects vicariously. Because they didn't know the architects were there. And if you give them an opportunity they will go on and on, on all kinds of things. But we had architects that were there.

Architects that were very sympathetic to the hands-on side of, and trades practice, who wanted to be there to see and experience and touch tools, but they dressed like everyone else. They were hearing all this stuff, and they came to me and said; Ken, you know, why are they saying this? Because in a work environment, the tradespeople would say; no, that's the architect, they wouldn't say that near them.

SH: Yeah

KF: But in this environment, which we created, the tradespeople were opening up, and we thought that was really great, they're opening up, they're expressing themselves. So, then we had what I call the circle of forty, which we, we were in the horse arena or whatever it was, and we set out chairs in a circle, and we had craftspeople and architects sit, that were present, sit and talk about it. And that lead to the thematic issues that we had later in so far of projects that were highlighted in experiences that where the trades and the design professionals interacted on the projects as a team, as team members. In fact, we wanted to highlight and show where craftspeople had been engaged as team members, not just the workforce. Now there's a lot of situations in which, and I was really worried that it would happen in Charleston, in which, to a certain extent it did, but not really, in which the design side, the APT side, is off in the hotel, and they stay there. Within their silo as they say. And they go out to visit the circus, the zoo, the guys outside. I pay a whole lot of attention, I actually attended the event under APT.

SH: So did I.

KF: Yeah. Well I, the reason I got involved with lining up the demonstrators is that this young fellow that was working with us, I had talked him into, he had some talent, and I wanted to give him some inspiration, and I agreed to take him to the IPTW. And then I realised that things looked, the way they were going was I was going to invest money, I paid for him to go, I took him with me, I worked with him, and I was going to drag him all the way down there, and it was going to be a blowout. You know nothing was going to happen, so I said to myself; I know I can stop that.

SH: I was squeezing money for fifteen students, I was panicking.

KF: Well yeah you had a whole lot invested in that as well. But, I think we pulled it off. People will complain, and they always complain. I remember I wrote the column for Traditional Building for a while, I remember we had so much trouble over cookies, the selection of cookies at the IPTW in 2000, that I then put into one of the articles that we would make sure we pre-digested all the food for future events (Laughs).

SH: (Laughs).

KF: At the same time that got a few people ruffled and I wasn't allowed to write things like that anymore. But the question is are you paying attention (laughs).

SH: Yeah (laughs). Well, I'm going, this is actually built into that other question but, you've been around for a while through PTN and obviously your work experience, and you've seen, just as I have, and I've only been in for less than ten years in the education side, you've seen these programmes come and go, you know it doesn't look like Edgcombe is going to survive much longer.

KF: Yeah, I heard that.

SH: Colorado Mountain College and now unfortunately Bill out in California, why do you think that happens?

KF: Well I go back to St. John the Divine and the programme that occurred there. And I have friends that were integrally involved in that programme. And a whole bunch of things happened as a result of that. And we mentioned earlier the fellow up in Cornell, Michael Tomlin. At one point I was expressing that you know we don't have enough conversations about why these situations fail.

SH: Yeah

KF: And why they fail. We don't have those conversations. We don't have conversations about why programmes aren't working. I've been involved periphery with the various high school programme that come up in New York. You know sometimes I'm involved in sort of an, I'm not directly involved but it's like the instructor asks me for a job and works for me, and I hear things, I know things, I collect information, but we never talk about that. You know if you're working on a programme, and you're running it into a ditch, I'm not going to talk about you. You know, and I know these people, I care about their programmes, I care about their objectives. I understand what they're attempting to achieve. I support that. But also on my side I can, you know I can express where I think you have some problems. But those are the kind of conversations you know that were not going to necessarily have that conversation on LinkedIn.

SH: Yeah because it looks too...

KF: Well it certainly doesn't help the problem.

SH: Yeah.

KF: You know I understand some of the issues that Bill is going through with the College of the Redwoods, I really feel for him because I know he cares an incredible amount for that and has done some really good things there. One of, this gets back to kind of what we're doing with the World Monuments Fund, I'm having a blank on his name right this minute, but we had him come down to the last IPTW, Frank Sanchez. From the World Monuments Fund, and he came down and spoke. And what he expressed that in thirty years of the World Monuments Fund supporting various educational and hands on initiatives, they felt that not once did it produce a craftsman. Out of thirty years of activity. And a frustration with that and a desire to understand why. Or what could be done in that respect. And there's is an organisation that facilitates the flow of

funding from various foundations, was extremely instrumental in our activities in New Orleans after Katrina. World Monuments Fund helped with that, working on a survey with PTN. I think I'm interested in approaching the problem from a different direction. One of the things that has come up often is to parents that are encouraging or investing in their children's education want to have the assurance that there's a career. Which goes again to that point that we need educated and experienced to have the work. I think that comes down to the people that are hiring, that have the money have to be able to make the distinction, which then I think comes down to we need to be able to show ourselves. What I think is that we don't have a lack of tradespeople. We would not have a lack of resources, or that there's a perceived lack, because in essence the small practitioners doesn't build up the capital structure they don't build up the marketing or have an understanding for that. Or in dealing with media. One of the issues, I'm kind of tired of it but, I've been over and over it with PTN is you know; do something, say something. I'm a writer, I deal in media, I very strongly believe that if you don't collect knowledge in some matter, photographs, write about it or do a video, and get it out into media you might as well say that it didn't happen.

SH: Yeah.

KF: Yes, the house got built, or rebuilt, that stone wall got taken care of or this and that happened, but nobody knows. It leaves free all those people who say it doesn't happen, it doesn't exist free to say that. The contractors who's not going to invest in his workforce used to be able to say that there's nobody available. Because although there are people available, as long as he can convince the person he's selling it to that this is all you're going to get, this is the best that there is, there's nothing else, then he wins. He gets to develop the capital. The small practitioners may not even, you know it took me a long time, it's like how do you become aware that this is happening, what do you do about it. You can't really do much on your own. So in part the World Monuments Fund's strategy is so far as doing the survey is how to document the vitality of a career in this profession. In part, I mean if parents, if somebody wants to come to your school and their parents want them to be a lawyer or a doctor or you know a plumber, whatever, but if the student wants to come, where do they have the envelope or environment where they encourage them and help them and feed them towards that. And it's not going to come, particularly if the parents aren't orientated towards that. For a very brief time I was a merit badge consular for the boy scouts on Long Island for masonry. And I only had one person, one scout, contact me for this and I went out there to meet the young fellow and I took my son, we took tools, and you're supposed to do a bunch of things to earn the merit badge. You know it's a whole list and there a book and he had read the book. And we took up the tools and stuff and someone had just put in an in-ground pool, and he had watched them. And it turned out that reason behind all this was his father was a barber. And basically, is father being employed doing

hands on work, he felt that his son should know something about trades. And I was just so delighted that somebody had asked that I gave him the merit badge. Subsequent to that I understand that the merit badge has been cancelled.

SH: They cancelled World skills Stonemasonry too.

KF: I don't even know if they do pioneering or lashing. I was involved because my son was of that age and it was really good for him in that respect, but I really couldn't deal with the adults. The kids were fine (laughs). But yeah, it's like, the whole issue of shop class, and that occurring. Which brings up another topic that I think of that is that the preservation movement or industry, I think we need to wed ourselves with the environmental movement and the arts movement. It's not just shop class that got cancelled, its music and art. And environmental studies, yes there's green and there's science class but we share so much in common with the arts and the environmental movements that I think that if we are looking at political situation, if we are dealing with Congress or whatever, or dealing with lobbyists, the 1% or money interests, in many respects were competing for funding from the same sentiment of sources. So it makes it seem like we are all in rivalry. As I say with APT that I thought for the longest time it was the contractors versus the design professionals, but then I realised that within historic preservation we are all within the same nutshell. We need to look out for each other's interest. The craftsperson that's complaining about the architect that they're interacting with, they have way more in common with them than the Donald Trump.

SH: Yeah. Interesting. Alright, last question. And I'm sure that this is one that, I'm not sure if you can answer all of it right now and that's okay. If you think of something later shoot me an email if you think of something different. If I said to you, Ken Follet, design a programme or a training system, how would you structure it?

KF: (Pause) I have the answer I just want to make sure I package it here. (Pause). Work to make the practitioners who have the practice and the passion in traditional trades visible. Enable them to being situation in which students, apprentices would be able to access them. Would be able to see them and access them. Make sure that the people who have invested in the industry, whether good, bad or indifferent, because there always is some sort of infighting that goes on between sectors, how to enable them to get the work as opposed to those contractors who do not invest in their workforce. Make sure that that work is accruing out there. When that is happening then, you know the, as a former employer of a workforce, if I had work that I was making profit at, I would do everything I could in order to enable my workforce to access and engage in your programme. Or I even think in terms, you know Duffy Hoffman is working on setting up a school north of Harrisburg. I have a young fellow that I've been working with lately, that I'm just getting to know, sort of does handyman stuff around here but has some really

interesting talents. And were talking about doing window restoration and I'm thinking I'll send him off to Duffy. If he spends a week with Duffy, I'll have to de-programme him (laughs).

SH: (Laughs) Yeah, I was going to say he's going to come back as an ornery son of bitch isn't he?

KF: Yeah. (Laughs) Well you got to trust it somehow. No, there is that. Or if you have, I bring someone with me to do to the IPTW and they get the exposure. I think it's like how you went out to seek a guru or Zen master. There's no perfect path, but if you get that spark going, and that vision, and you feed it and enable it, so if I were doing, now I have a training programme, which is someone works for me. And I learn from them and they learn from me. And you know, it's not formal. I think of Norman Weiss and Rudy also. Norman Weiss if you stick him on a street corner, he's educating. I'm not a prolific in that respect as he is. I'm more shy. I'm highly selective. I do not tolerate stupidity very well.

SH: Nor do I.

KF: No it's hard for somebody to, somebody really has to come across with merit for me to want to be involved. You know fortunately I say that, one of the things I say in business is that we will only work with people that we like. And somebody says to me; well how does that happen, how does one manage that? Well, it helps that I like a lot of people. I willing to go a far distance in relation to sharing and providing education. And again, Rudy is a model. I worked quietly to help enable Rudy to teach. And I know that that is a situation where I have been with him on bid walkthroughs, pre-bid walkabouts on projects, in which the objective is that we get the job and make money. But within a very short period of time Rudy is standing there telling everybody, all of his competitors and everyone else what is going on what the building and how it should be fixed. And that urge to teach is so strong in him and his sharing of that knowledge is, you know he's doing it directly in opposition of his economic interest. Because it costs him something to get to that place, and he's there and he's talking against himself, but I can't help but admire that. You know I think some people see that and admire it, some people see other things. So, if you want to talk a training programme, I think the more that you, you know what I would like to see PTN do more of, now there's been a really strong motion within PTN from the beginning to interfacing with the issue of educating. How do we pass the knowledge onto another generation? And that came up very early. And we were a 501c6 trade organisation, and for a number of reasons we passed along to a 50c4 educational. But once we did that, that introduced a set of perceptions of, and I think that's where some of the confusions in that we weren't serving an active community of trades practitioners, there's this crossover between education. And I think to a certain extent that how the IRS sees non-profits and structures them conditions how we deal with each other socially and communally. That's a whole other discussion. Because that abstract framework that's there perceives how we, who we are. And once you enter in that world education, most people think in terms of education as a formal programme. I just found out this week I've taken two Edx

online courses. One from MIT and one from Cornell. And I just found out this week that I'm taking one called Leaders in Learning from Harvardx, and I wasn't, I don't remember signing up for it. But I'm getting these emails telling me about the class and I wonder what I did. So, I said up late one evening this week, and it adds to why I'm exhausted this week, really getting into it and one of the things we're talking about it quadrants of learning. There's like hierarchal individual, hierarchical collective, distributive individual, and distributive collective. And what was interesting to me when answering their little survey, introductory survey that I'm in the distributive individual. Knowledge is out there, and I go out and I get it, and I acquire it. But I'm also involved in with the distributive collective. I'm not so orientated towards the hierarchical collective or the hierarchical individual. But it's like why does it work for me to go out and get a mentor. In many respects I would never encourage anyone to follow the paths that I followed. I've been, I've had ideas in my head, I have been stubborn and wanted to work them through to see through to the reality of them. It hasn't been easy in many times and many cases. But in this point in my life I feel really satisfied with it. I'm happy. What I would like, you know I would think the end result to any education is that you're happy and content.

SH: Do you feel that this whole training aspect, do you think it belongs in a formal academic setting? Is there a place for it in a formal academic setting?

KF: Yes. I am, yes. (Pause). As my son says I tend to paint the grey areas. And that tends to lose a lot of people very quickly. When that stone mason that I was learning to do stone fireplaces with early on, one time we had hired this young kid who had gone to Denmark to learn stonework. And you know I won't get into dealing with the personality of my mentor, but I did write a long piece called where do stone masons come from that talks about my adventure with him. But this particular fellow, whether he learned anything or not in his environment, when he came to us he was totally out of place. So in some respect, when I look back at that initial experience my attitude at that point would have been to say no, formal education has nothing, no place. Because that guy didn't know anything.

SH: Yeah.

KF: From our perspective. I think it does. You know I am often envious of your programmes. Well sure, I wish I had been able to go. You know in some respects there's a sense of credentials that comes with having gone through a programme. I remember, you know I haven't gone to college, I have a high school education. I've taken college courses since then, off and on here and there. I've, you know like I took a technical math course because I thought I was deficient in math and then I aced the course. And the instructor was the guy who was principally involved in figuring out what had happened at Three Mile Island, so it was a tough course. At night, I took an estimating course and I had trouble with that because I kept showing up drunk. (Laughs)

SH: (Laughs)

KF: But I learned a lot from very short exposure (laughs). So yeah, I don't advise anyone to follow the path that I followed. If I find somebody, like this young fellow that I'm talking about, who set about following his own path, one of the things he said to me, he comes as a third generation handyman, and he likes to be in charge of his environment, and so he's the leader of his group, but he said he misses the opportunity, he's being doing this since he was sixteen, and he's thirty-two now, he misses the opportunity to work with people who really know what they're doing he says.

SH: Yeah.

KF: Because he's always out doing his own little business thing. So in that sense I say; okay, well let's do some business. You know I told him; look I know everybody that's anybody that does wood window restoration, I can point you to different people and we can go do this. And if we don't know what we're doing I know who to ask, and I sent him out to see Duffy. You might have something that comes up or I might send him to an IPTW, but it's a case that it's not going to happen if we don't have any work, if we have no money. And everybody is struggling to maintain it monetarily. So, what was the question again? I want to make sure I'm on point here.

SH: Well the overall question was if you were to design a programme or a system, how would you structure it, and I think you got that. If you had an academic programme, what would you lie to see in there and what do you think can kind of be left out?

KF: Well, yeah. This comes up with the Mather High School that was just started out in Manhattan. And in fact, the masonry instructor is a former employee of mine.

SH: Tom.

KF: Yeah Tom Russack.

SH: Tom's a good friend of mine too. And it's unfortunate what just happened.

KF: Oh I don't know what just happened.

SH: Oh, he just got laid off. They laid off all the instructors.

KF: Oh, okay. Well, thank you for telling me, I'll connect with him because I did my best to help him, enable him to get there. I went down there for the opening and stuff. Awe that's really bad.

SH: Well they did a, you know how the whole thing is supposed to be with the Park Service, well they did an event with the Park Service where they had Park Service personal, in fact Steve Elkins was one of them, in fact Steve's one of my former students, train students on a site. And they loved it and said; well we want more of this, we don't think we need the people that we have in place. Because it's not just him it's the carpentry instructor. So they basically gave everyone a layoff notice, and then put something on Preservenet looking for replacements, and I looked at it and they wanted a certified teaching certificate from the State of New York, and all this experience, and I thought, where are they going to get this? And I called Tom because I thought, hey they're expanding, and he said; no, I just got the notice Friday. I talked to him

since and he's fine with it. He said high school teaching wasn't for him. He spent the year writing lesson plans, because nobody taught him how to do that.

KF: Well, yeah. No, I understand. Well he worked for me for about two years, estimating and running small projects, yeah. So anyways, to answer your question, they assembled a group of people as an advisory board. A majority of those were not hands on for one thing. And I don't want to detract from that because they all have different perceptions and that was good but we're talking a high school programme not a college course level. So, what I was saying was well, we should teach them how to use a broom. We should teach them how to use a shovel. We should teach them how to use a hose. They were talking, oh and we should teach them how to run a wheelbarrow. And they're like, you know, why? And I'm like; well because when they get on the job site, the first thing they are going to be asked to do is sweep the floor, they're going to be asked to push the wheelbarrow, they're going to be asked to shovel something, probably while sweeping the floor. They're going to need to know how to carry things, like knowing how to wear gloves. When we started this you said there might be questions that seem obvious, one of the things that I learned over the years is the obvious is often the least understood. And so in many cases I try to focus on okay, what's obvious here because that's what's going to stumble us up.

SH: Reading a tape measure. Do you know how many students I get that don't know how to do that?

KF: Oh yeah. I'm sure. I don't doubt it. But yes, reading a tape measure. You know it progresses into reading a plumb bob. You use a plumb bob and then you start how to use a level. You learn not to drop your level, not to drop your tools. You have to learn how to treat your tools. And they're going onto to well they need to understand lime putty and natural cement and they need to understand the mortar mixes, and we can do material science with them. And I'm like, this is a high school graduate that's going to come out and he's going to be in the workforce and personally, I don't want him to have all that stuff in his head because the first thing that happens is that there's going to be some discrepancy in some situation where were beyond whatever they taught him. You know not that were doing, I'm not saying this in the sense that we're doing something wrong, but our technology, because we're out there applied in the field, working with the architects and engineers who are discovering and exploring this territory, and then I have to deal with un-educating, de-programming someone that's been filled up with a bunch of knowledge but can't handle the wheelbarrow.

SH: Yeah.

KF: You know, it's like I go back to talking about the obelisk and my digging next to it. There needs to be, at least in so far as to going out into the workforce, there needs to be that understanding of that's going on when you're going that physical process. Like when I stopped

my son when the sussing was going on with material and I said; how do you feel? What are you experiencing? And I still have to figure this out he wasn't quite able to respond, but I did get a sense of something, what was going on. But when I'm working it's like there's feedback. I'm feeling something on it. You're either going too far or not far enough or there's a just right position. Particularly when you're working with heritage material. You know that person that's coming right into the job force, as a contractor, anybody would be an idiot to let them just touch heritage fabric. Particularly if it's irreplaceable. So, you know, I think an academic environment is one where you can develop fundamentals. But to me the fundamentals need to be the broom, the shovel, the wheelbarrow and an understanding that you go into the workforce this is where you're going to start. It's not to belittle your knowledge or intelligence or your worthiness, but the guy that's been doing it for forty years has to do the same thing.

SH: Yep.

KF: I have to pick up the shovel. I need to be able to push the wheelbarrow halfway competently. It's like driving. When does it get to the point where I'm not competent to run the wheelbarrow? (Pause). I do feel that anything, you know layout is important, you're talking about measuring with a tape measure. When we start getting into beyond high school level in an academic programme, layout has always been one of those things that I've done that's distinguished me from anyone else on the crew. Algebra. You don't necessarily need to get into calculus but simple algebra. Understanding mechanics, being able to use a lever. Understanding that you can move things, roll them on a beer can, you know heavy things. How to move things around but understanding that all leads to eventually you can start getting into you know how structures work.

SH: Yeah.

KF: There was a book, and I can't remember the name of the author at this point. But I remember him having a description of how the Greeks built and it starts with the backside of a human. And that's the basic that you need. If we're going to talk about knowledge that is tactile then we need to start talking with the body out. A discussion that I'm involved in with LinkedIn right now has to do with some academic researchers that are beginning to understand that teaching, learning is enhanced by tactile experience by engaging with a computer in which you are moving gears. And the discussion is, well why don't we have some gears?

SH: Yeah.

KF: And you know I'm kind of reflecting on well it's really nice that they are bringing this up as new knowledge that the body in motion learns, but it's through this virtual tract space. I'm saying this isn't new knowledge, they're coming at up with it as being new knowledge, because there's people who have never lost it.

SH: Yeah.

KF: But they're not involved in the academic structure. You know one of the things that I understand from the ITES situation is that, and you can correct me if I misperceive this or not, because it doesn't reflect on you or your programme.

SH: No.

KF: But the academic structure is oriented toward the replication of the top of itself, which is an abstract space. Someone was relating that philosophers are continually keep emphasising the value of the mind and forgetting about the value of dance.

SH: Yeah.

KF: So, if you, to me, if you're to produce a student to come out of your programme, I want them to understand whole lot of things, the more the better, but I want them, I need them to be able to function within the physical environment. Safety is a very big concern. Even, you know I've had situations in where I worked with younger high school students, and someone always says to me, well give them the safety talk. And I usually scare the crap out of them before we ever go anywhere. Then the people come back to me and say; well you shouldn't have been so harsh about it. And I say; well if something happens, then you can come and tell me about it. But I'm going to be there watching because you asked me to look out for the safety issues, I'm going to be watching to make sure no one is doing anything dangerous. Again, I go back to the how I almost killed myself set of conversations. (Pause) I'm not sure, I do feel that your programmes have their place. But I also feel that the key to your success is that if you have graduates that go into a workforce in which that level of understanding, knowledge and intelligence is applied to the jobs and it makes a living, and that you have employers that understand that they have profit, and that they in turn invest that into the knowledge of their workforce. Yeah, I would even go so far in that I wish that architect would put, I wish it was institutionalised that contractors bid on historic work had to prove out the level in which they invest in the education of their workforce.

SH: That would be great.

KF: I mean that's where I would like to go. I don't think it's ever going to happen. I think these things get tied up in the legal department and in the accounting. I think that's the greatest force against many things not being done appropriately to the structure. And the frustration of career public servants who really do care, not being able to get the workforce that they want, I work doing these probes and such because we get hired. You know we're working for a public agency, we get hired, but I know that I am not in a position to compete to actually work on these buildings, to do the work. No one that I know that genuinely know how to do the work gets hired, you know even, there are some circumstances that they are, but for the majority, I was told one time there are 20,000 significant structures in New York, well the people who are getting hired to work on them are not the ones who are invested, none of them are graduated from your programme.

SH: No.

KF: You know to me that being applied to that work is a whole other level of education that I would say if I had, in a perfect world, if I had a graduate from your programme come and I was happy with them and the way things are working, I would be sending them back every once in a while. Once to share with your students, tell them this is what happened, this so where I got to where I am, but also to refresh. Just as we have AIA sending their architects out to get more knowledge, the same thing should be encouraged. That's, you know, when PTN focuses, getting back to changing into an educational organisation, a non-profit, the focus I think very strongly became orientated in terms of formal education in that sense, but what I always felt is that we need to educate those who are practitioners. We need to educate them, not so much in, the guy that restores windows, not so much in how to do better windows or whatever, because he knows to go and seek that. But when he turns and says; I'd really like to give some workshops. I don't know how to do that. How do I get started? Or I'm having some issue here with, I don't know how to price this. Every job I do I'm losing money, I don't know how I'm going to sustain this. How do I talk to clients, how do I talk to customers, how do I promote my business? You know we've had business tracks in the IPTWs but we've never really, other than like the first time I don't think we've been very successful in them because it's so much, taking this to a different perspective, we've had photographers come in, we've invited them to come in and photograph the events. And based on my thought, photographers photograph the world that they see. So you have the one photographer that photographs the object and the tools, and you have the other photographer that photographs the people. And that's distinct. And you can tell that there was a different perception of the activity and the event. We applied, when we were going to have the IPTW in Brooklyn, we applied to the New York Landmarks Conservancy for the Lucy G. Moses Award, hoping that we could get one for PTN. And at the time what we were told was that they were struck by the fact that we gave photographs with people in them. That was unique to them. We were asked to, we didn't get the award, but we were asked to come back the next year but unfortunately 9/11 happened and everybody was busy doing something else. So the window of opportunity on that disappeared. (Pause). You know but I do think that the programmes are valid and they need to be supported but the overall economy of the industry needs to be improved in order to do that.

SH: Yeah. Well fantastic. Actually, we got through all my questions.

KF: Okay.

SH: Do you have anything to add or any thoughts?

KF: No, I think I've pushed through everything I've got. (Laughs)

SH: (Laughs) Well it was fantastic. I'm actually going to send Rudy an email today to say that he's got a pretty high standard to live up to for his interview now.

KF: (Laughs).

SH: Well let me turn off this recorder real quick.

End recording

Total recording time: 03.02.25

Interview Form-Individual

Name: Alan Toyne_____

Current address: [REDACTED] Lincoln, United Kingdom_____

Birthdate: [REDACTED] 1970_____

Age: 44_____

Occupation: Joiner/carpenter_____

Interview Date: 31 July 2014_____

Interview Location: Stephen-Savannah, Alan-Lincoln (Skype)_____

Interviewer: Stephen Hartley_____

Generation: 3-United Kingdom_____

Consent form signed: 26 July 2014_____

Begin recording

Stephen Hartley (SH): So, your current address? Just some basic information beforehand.

Alan Toyne (AT): It's [REDACTED].

SH: Chatterton?

AT: [REDACTED], Lincoln.

SH: Alright, and your birthdate?

AT: Birthdate, [REDACTED] 1970.

SH: Which would make you how old now?

AT: Too old (laughs).

SH: And, your occupation?

AT: Joiner. Carpenter/joiner.

SH: Carpenter/joiner alright. Alright, question number one. What is your profession, and can you describe what you do in that capacity?

AT: Wow. Profession, well obviously I started out as carpentry and joinery, mainly in the workshop background, to start off with, in bench work, bespoke making, and then we moved to the outside onto house fixing; roofs, cracks, that sort of thing, and then historic. And then I would say the last ten years looking at historic house and buildings and then working on them to be honest. And then going into department management, and supervision of what I've learned to put into practices with a bigger team, the like of architects and conservation that sort of thing, so no one man band anymore.

SH: Well the one-man band life is not that great I'll tell you. So when did you begin practicing?

AT: As in what stage?

SH: When you started working carpentry and joinery, just at the beginning.

AT: Right. It was 1986. I started in a firm, a local firm, and I was there as a trainee from school, doing six months sort of in between looking for another job and they said right you can have an apprenticeship and they took me on, so the rest is history from there. And I still often work the guy whose dad had that business all those years ago.

SH: So why did you leave that business?

AT: In the nineties there was like, it went solvent. There was a recession on and after ten-eleven years of operating, the company went bust, and then a lot of people from that company decided to go on, like I did with the boss's son, and went on to new, pastures new. And that's when we hit the outside sector rather than being institutionalised in the workshop for the last ten-eleven years. So we sort of learned that side of it and came out in the great wide world and learned the site experience if you like. So in a way, sort of positive in a way, yeah.

SH: Excellent, so what attracted you to carpentry and joinery?

AT: I've always like doing things with my hands. My dad, he wasn't a tradesman, but he was a very keen DIY person. And he used to do it and I was very intrigued from an early age. In fact, once he built me a whole wardrobe system in the bedroom and I think I was fourteen and he had to work away for a few days and when he came back I put the whole wardrobe and everything on a different side of the room (laughs). So I took his work apart and put it back together so from then on I've always used his tools and I think it's the satisfaction of seeing something at the end of it. You use these (shows his hands) and it produces this. Obviously you still have to use your brain, but it's the tactile part I think that first got me into it yeah.

SH: Did you ever consider doing anything else?

AT: I did, I did. I was, I wanted to go into the Army actually. But, I went for a test on carpentry and joinery and I said to myself if I don't get through the test to get me to that level to get into that, I would join the army. Consequently, I passed the test, so I didn't go in the Army (laughs).

SH: So, what's your, you talked about working with your hands and you know the satisfaction with that, what's your favourite aspects of carpentry and joinery?

AT: Favourite, wow. (Pause). Well that's a hard one because I think there's several stages where there's favourites. Where, I mean, designing, it's a wonderful part. The fact that you can think of something in your head, and then making it practical in your head, to be able to make it with your hands, I like that side of it. Then there's actually working on the material. I love working on wood. And then there's probably, looking back on the end and seeing the finished article. I think they're the three, and if you like it's the beginning, middle and the end, virtually isn't it. So in most jobs, I think it's the three phases that I enjoy to be honest, yeah.

SH: So, what's your least favourite then?

AT: (Pause). Right. I don't think I've got one. When something goes wrong (laughs). No because in a way that's a challenge as well. Least favourite? I don't think there is one to be honest. No, no I

think every point of it, as long as it's interesting, and you enjoy it, I don't think there is a least favourite. I think they're all favourites rather than least favourites, yeah.

SH: Awesome. So you talked about taking the test, where, did you attend a school programme?

AT: No this was at College, at Lincoln College. It was like an aptitude test. And there wasn't a lot of joinery because obviously you haven't been trained as a joiner, they weren't joinery questions. They were special tests to see whether you could, it's like a shape of a cube, if you put it out it becomes the shape of a T or a cross, and you fold it all together. There were concepts of shapes like that and you have to build them in your head, fold them all together, and then tick a box on what shape you made, it was questions like that. Maths questions, quite a few maths questions sort of thing, but it was just generalised to see where you was in your capability, but no practical test so it was all in the mind, which was quite interesting really because now we do try, especially here, when we do look at bursaries and stuff like that for the apprentices, we give them a little practical test to see what they're like with their hands because and the end of the day it's no good having it all up here and not being able to do it with these. But with that it was just a sheer aptitude test and that was done just to see what level you was at, to see if you could properly digest the information to learn about carpentry.

SH: So you went to Lincoln College, could you explain the structure of the programme there?

AT: Yeah it was a four-year apprenticeship. And in those four years it was two years to start your first and second level of City and Guilds in carpentry and joinery. When I went you didn't have a choice bench or site, you did both. And then subject to the placement they gave you, your apprenticeship, if they were willing to pay, you went on to your third level, which was called advanced craft, which was advanced stuff in joinery, and then the fourth year was just time served at the place. And then you got your scroll, your certificate at the end of those four years. Technically, you can be commercial in two years, but they wanted me to get all of my credentials, my advanced craft and stuff like that for my full four years, which was great, because obviously it was all their cost and not mine. And they saw potential for investment in the future with me, so yeah.

SH: Do you feel like your instructors at your college were properly equipped both in materials and the tools that they needed and in knowledge base?

AT: At the time when I was there I felt that they covered everything they needed to cover with the facilities. I got to say it was pretty good then. I'm not sure now. It seems a bit, because I'm involved with the training programmes now, it seems a bit almost like bums on seats now. And the trades seems a little bit diluted, and the only way I can combat that is working on the inside trying to create a better system and helping out that way but in my day, no complaints. Not really at all. They seemed to have everything they needed for my training. Although, they didn't pick up on my dyslexia. Now when I did my school, and I know it was in early days, but I got through

school and college a rough way, but they didn't pick up on any of that. I would say that was the only that, if they did, it might have made my theory side of it a little bit easier.

SH: Interesting. Do you think the training system that you studied under still works, would still work in today's economy and today's world?

AT: I think more so than the one they've got now. I really do. I think they were harder on us. They wasn't afraid to fail us on certain categories and stages, and if you didn't pass your exam at the end you know, you didn't pass. And as an assessor now, you pretty much, almost can't fail them now. You have to keep trying until either they decide that they're not cut out to be it, or they pass. So, I think it was harder, they were more strict and fair play, you know they weaned out the ones that wasn't going to make it. Whereas now that doesn't seem to happen, and we go back to that bums on seat sort of syndrome you see, yeah.

SH: Good, Good. Has the industry changed since you started practicing?

AT: Very much, very much. It's changed as in, one aspect there came a period of time where there was no massive influx of construction again, and it became untrendy. In the beginning when I was there they generally tried to get people from school that didn't look academic and shoved them into brickwork and stuff like that. So, there was quite a lot of people chucked into it. Now, there seems to be a gap, and it's all about finances now, filling the gap then looking at the potential of the people. But it's heading back in the right direction. And I think the heritage is a big step. In the last few years, in the last five-six years it's become more aware, the government has become more aware that you can't just train people into the standard industry; carpentry, joinery, brickwork, stuff like that without some influx of knowledge of the old ways as well. And we're trying to fill the gap there and I think that's very important to be honest. And that wasn't sort of looked at when I was there, you know it was new. It was new joinery, using old ideas but there was no conservation and understanding, but now we try to teach that as well you see.

SH: Awesome: You know it's funny these questions, I have these questions and inside them is what I called probes, which is kind of like; can you elaborate on this, this and this. You just answer question number six with seven different probes in it all in like four sentences. You're the only one that's ever done that. That's actually incredibly impressive.

AT: I did some investigating. I've got a copy of your questions. No, I don't (laughs).

SH: Well they don't make any sense to anyone besides me. So how do you feel then about the future of carpentry and joinery?

AT: That's an interesting question that. I think that obviously there's a concern, there's a major concern. And I think that goes with everybody, especially with my industry here, that we feel there's a gap of learning. What the college can't do, we're trying to fill that gap with. And the things, the aspects that we don't like about the teaching, the only way we can change it, like I said is to go in on the inside and gradually change it or put the extra effort in, above and beyond

what we need to do as teachers, to fill that gap even if they don't get credentials for it because at the end of the day, if they practice it, even if they ain't got the paperwork and they practice it, it's still good for the industry.

SH: Are there enough practitioners in your field right now, or are there too many?

AT: (Pause) I've never experienced an industry where there's enough. Not in my sector anyway. There's plenty out there, but they're all at different levels. They all operate at different themes of joinery, carpentry and joinery. So there's still plenty of scope for more of the same sort of ability, because we do diversify a lot as a trade, and then they tend to specialise in where they've diversified to. So there's always an avenue for more trainees, always an avenue.

SH: So do you feel those that are entering the field now are ready to be out in the field practicing?

AT: From my point of view, we obviously try and train that, we don't, we only have them for one to two years and we try to show them the big, wide world before they go out there, but we can't do it all. We all know in the trades life experience is part of the experience of learning isn't it? You can't give every scenario to them in those few years. But if we give them the basics and the pitfalls then I think through life learning, you get the rest. And hopefully if you get a good start, and you haven't got the bad habits at the start, you go in the right direction from then on.

SH: So you talked a little bit before we started recording about apprentices. How many apprentices to you guys train a year?

AT: Currently in the carpentry and joinery department we have three at the moment. We generally have two at a time, and in the eight years that I've been here I would say you're probably looking one maybe two years at the most that we haven't had a form of trainee or trainees. So currently, we're training three. Overall in the whole cathedral I think there's about six or seven so yeah, very active in it.

SH: So what do you do with your apprentices in the shop? I mean are they just bench work, are they out on the site?

AT: They have to choose a direction. They can do the first year where they're not, where they can just do generally carpentry and joinery, then in their second year they have to choose bench or site. And what I do is I help them see which way they want to go and then, I won't stop teaching the other side of it because we do both here, but I'll make sure that within the career that they choose they get all the information that they need, then I make sure they've got a bonus, like I said earlier on, with life experience on the other side of it to help with it. And then also we bolt on the conservation side of it, so they have a heritage module as well. So by the time they've left here, they've got three disciplines of carpentry and joinery. They've might only got on paper two or one, but they've got three disciplines that they can take away with them.

SH: How do you feel about the fact that they have to choose bench or site work in their last year?

AT: I'm not happy with that because I don't see it as a divide. It's very difficult and I think it takes a long time to learn it all, but it is a divide at the moment and the easy divide is site. I mean it's the same old saying you ask someone who's been on site to make a door and hang it; they can hang it, they're not going to be able to make it. You ask someone in bench work to make a door and hang it, they can make it and they'll probably be able to hang it, because of the nature of the knowledge of making the door and understanding. That's not to say that site joiners are not very good, not at all. I think it's just the basic knowledge to start with ideally is to have both, and then progress in life, down the avenue you want. I think you need to start off with both and unfortunately, they don't. And that's to do with money obviously. And people take site more than bench because you can earn more money on site and there's more jobs on site than there is in bench and even the college sometimes will push them in the right direction.

SH: Awesome. Do you participate in any sort course training as in taking it or teaching it?

AT: We do. I just did a three-day course at the castle recently in the skills centre. I took a three-day course with the students taking joinery, and we've also booked in some more classes with them so we're trying to get involved in that side of it as well.

SH: Awesome. What about academic training? Through the colleges, well you said you're an assessor.

AT: Me in general or the team?

SH: You in general, or you, yeah.

AT: Yeah I do have training, some admin training. If there's a shortfall in computer training or anything like that obviously I can get in on that. I do tend to limp my way through it (laughs). I'm sort of self-taught but I could probably do with a little more in the academic side of things yeah.

SH: What is your role as an assessor, within the system?

AT: My role as an assessor. Assessors are site-based assessors. So generally, we are people who are experienced in our sector and we go and visit these people and they tell us or describe the job what they've done or they give us evidence showing what they've completed and then we will see that and judge that as a pass or failure. So we would speak to the student, and in general conversation usually you can determine whether they'd done that truthfully, whether they'd really built that, and you can talk through the process with them. And half the time it's not just seeing the project finished, if they understand how they did it, you can tell from an assessor's point of view, from the core knowledge in their head, whether they've gotten to routine.

SH: How did you become an assessor?

AT: I got pushed (laughs). No what it is obviously I can assess in all aspects of carpentry and joinery, but there is a very big shortfall in the assessment of heritage. So currently in Lincolnshire,

in the whole of Lincolnshire, I am the only heritage carpentry and joinery assessor. There's quite a few of us that can assess standard carpentry and joinery in bench and site, but currently I am the only one. And because we're all trying to get in that sector and improve things, it was deemed that the Cathedral had the right background, and the right employees with the right experience to put this forward. And the colleges have acknowledged it, and obviously using us now in a partnership for them to provide course in heritage as well as normal, and for us to be trained assessors then to advise those and sometimes give them experiences here. We can give them the heritage experience as well. And I think Carol saw that as a potential gap in the industry of learning and through the partnership that's what we've done. Yeah, and the rest is history from there really.

SH: It's interesting that you're not the only, do you remember John McRitchie, young Scottish guy trained through the Prince's Foundation?

AT: Yes, yes.

SH: I interviewed him to and you know he's the only heritage carpentry assessor in all of Scotland.

AT: Wow.

SH: Yeah, he's it.

AT: He must be able to charge good rates.

SH: He's not charging enough. He told me what he was charging and I was like you're out of your mind. I was like that's not enough money, man. But the funny thing is he says all the lads that I'm testing, they all work for me because no one else is trying to get the conservation. So he's like it's easy I get like 300 pound every time I test one of my guys and all I have to do is go into work in the morning.

AT: He's a good lad though. He's a nice bloke. Yeah, I got along really well with him.

SH: Yeah, he came over as Visiting Artisan in the spring and he did wood carving, wood carving and sacred geometry with the guys and I'll tell you he was fantastic.

AT: Yeah?

SH: Yeah, he was really good. The students really enjoyed him. They didn't understand half of what he said, (laughs).

AT: Yeah, yeah, I can imagine, yeah.

SH: Well, how do you feel about the on-site assessor programme? Is it working is it...?

AT: It's heading in the right direction, but it's not there. One of the things is that I don't think the assessor has enough power to be negative. I know that sounds wrong probably, because we're all trying to be positive here, but at the end of the day our hands are tied in the fact that if he's just made the grade, you've made the grade. I would like to have a bit more say in saying look this just isn't quite good enough yet or you need to go away and redo this or you could fail. Now I

can't say that, but at the end of the day, sometimes you need to be told that. Now at the moment all I can say is yes, you've passed or yes that's enough or I will leave it blank if it's not. I can't say to him you're going to fail, you need to improve. So as an assessor who, because I think assessors are realistic, they've been there and their out in the outside sector, and we're not, we're not in a college environment, where it's all political for the rules and regulations and doing everything that's politically correct, we're on the outside, and so we see it from the outside and we're restrained in trying to be like college teachers, when our experience, our expertise is there because we're not college teachers. We're there because we're real people, if you like, I'm not trying to down them, but we're real people in the real sector, with real experience, and we're carrying on working in that sector. You know we're not teaching anymore, we're based in the industry, and I think we need to be harder, for the students because they need to be because as soon as they step out of that umbrella of college work, they're going to walk around saying they've got these credentials, they can do it, and we all know that just because you got the credentials doesn't mean you can do it. And so, they go out and find a job and they get a CV and get a job and I think well, you're not really up to standards mate. And unfortunately, you've been trained by so and so and start using our name as being part of your programme and well that's not very good for them if they're producing joinery or any other thing. So I think we need, I won't say power but a bit more ability to be harder on our students.

SH: So have you had to pass people that you wouldn't employ?

AT: It's been borderline.

SH: Yeah?

AT: From my point, from my personal experience, I would say I wouldn't have gotten away with it at some of those levels. And that's not being big-headed, that's the industry's changed and it's been diluted that much that yeah, you're not allowed to, there is no losers in this world now is there, everybody has to be a winner. No one can be second place. You go to a school race now you know, they all get medals. Well I'm sorry, but that's not the real world is it.

SH: No.

AT: You know, and you need, you learn from the hardships you know. As well as the things that've gone right as well as the things that go wrong especially in our industry because a good fifty percent of our work could be making things right that have gone wrong because you learn from them as much as you learn from things that have gone right from the start. And if they're sheltered and they're umbrellaed from the start and thinking yeah, I just breeze through this, everything's gone right, I've got everything I need I must be one of the top dogs of joinery and carpentry and you leave this inside world and it's just not there you know they're going to be, a bomb's just going to hit them you know, so to speak. And I think life experience will give them that, but you need a taste of it under tuition. And we are too soft now, I really do think we're too

soft. And when I had my apprenticeship, they were hard on me, not just at the college, but at the workplace. I was treated just like everybody else. I wasn't treated as you now a young guy that needed to be nurtured. You know if I made a mistake, I got a severe telling off even though I was an apprentice you know, and it was exactly the same industry when I finished my apprenticeship, where I worked, was the same as when I started it. So, I sort of knew what I was up against when I finished my apprenticeship whereas now, I think it's going to come as a shock to some of these people you see.

SH: I been told by multiple people in the school that I'm too hard on my students. That I shouldn't talk to them in the way that I talk to them. Because I just come in and I'm like, that's shit.

AT: What about the students, what do they think?

SH: They just kind of smile. I mean they get upset but at the same time they know that I'm doing it because I say half assed work doesn't leave the shop. Ever. Because when you get out there and you get into that reputation of doing half assed work. Or get into that comfort zone of that's good enough, you're not going to last long.

AT: No.

SH: And I say when you go out there, when you graduate, you go out there with my reputation on the line.

AT: That's it. Yeah.

SH: And you're not going to fuck with my reputation because you're lazy.

AT: Yeah you are passing your knowledge on, but also, you've named that person. That person has worked under you, so you've carried your legacy on so if they're not up to scratch, it looks bad on you. And also, from another point of you, what happens when they start training?

SH: Yeah. If we keep dumbing it down where everyone gets a pat on the head, then nobody's going to learn anything.

AT: No that's right yeah. So you know we're, it's the old saying you've got to be cruel to be kind yeah. And I agree with being harder on students, I really do. Fair, but you know a bit harder.

SH: I got, I was screaming at my students one day and my Vice-President walked in right behind me, I didn't know he was there, and I went; I would fucking fire every single one of you.

(Laughs). I was like none of you I would hire, not a single one. And I turned around and he was standing there, and I was like, oh hello. And he was like, yeah, we're going to have to talk about this. (Laughs) And we sat down and talked about it and he's an ex-military guy and I said, when you were in boot camp what happened there? Did they say; oh, Ken you're just fantastic. And he's like no they yelled at me. And I said that's what I'm doing. Have you ever been on a construction site it's not a nice place.

AT: No. I totally agree. Sometimes now you can see it because you start to almost tell somebody off and they look back like, you can't talk to me like that. Well, yeah I can and you know, I've been where you are, and you can take it because you're at the bottom of the ladder here you know and I'm not. And regardless, you need to know this. We used to sweep the floors to start with. Now, you've got to be politically correct, you've got to let them do what they're supposed to do. You've got to get them right into it. It's like you were saying with boot camp, they have to understand the criteria. And it's got nothing to do with your trade, it's got to do with understanding you're the student, and that person's the teacher, and there's a respect.

SH: Absolutely.

AT: And you can't get that across sometimes. They'll come to college and they'll think I'm in school. you can't speak to me like that. Well, you're still, you're not a lower life form but you're still at the bottom of the chain for what you want to go for in industry. And you have to learn to listen and to take in what people say.

SH: Absolutely. Well, are you an active member of any professional organisation relating to the trade?

AT: (Pause). No I don't think so. A professional active organisation, is usually involved with where I am here. I haven't got anything outside of here. No, not really. I have interest but not really involved in anything at a professional level no.

SH: Okay. If someone came up to you and said Alan, I want to be a carpenter and joiner, I want to do what you do, how you would tell them to approach their desire to work in the field? What would you tell them to do in terms of go to college, do this, or do that?

AT: Well first of all I probably wouldn't tell them anything, I would try to find out a bit more about them. Because you can tell a lot about a person before you find out whether he, he or she would be good in our industry. So I would try to question them and I would try and find out, probably tell them what avenue, because people look at carpentry and joinery and think, well it's just carpentry and joinery. No, there's a lot of different areas they can go into. Someone might want to be a carver and think that's the only avenue or way in carpentry and joinery so, I would probably engage them in the fact that it's a big world out there and different lines of the industry, what do you want to go down, are you very historical and you like that then do you want to pursue that side of carpentry and joinery and go down that route or are you out to create a load of money and go self-employed. I would want to know where they want to be in the future, as to where I can put them in the present. And then start heading in the right direction, telling them about schools and college and whatnot.

SH: Alright, now the last two questions, are all about training and the current situations in colleges. And I have to give this caveat. You know what I do as a profession. Don't hold back because you think I'm going to get offended. I always tell people I don't know what I'm doing

right, I want to know what I'm doing wrong. And its fine, it doesn't really apply as much to you as it does our American people because they always want to tread a little lightly around me but I'm always like, look just tell me what you think. That's the more important thing than hurting my feelings. I'm a pretty thick-skinned person, I'm not worried about getting offended. So, do you feel that the current educational offerings are adequate to prepare apprentices to enter the field?

AT: Here or in America?

SH: In the UK.

AT: UK. No, I don't. No, I think there needs to be more money made available. I think there needs to be more, I think the business, the local businesses need to be pushed more into showing more interest in taking on apprentices. Business, with economics the way it is and what have you, they're all, they're only looking sometimes at cheap labour or just tick the box where is when I was there you could be an investment for our company in the further, we're going to make that potential. We're going to invest in you, we're going to spend money. And I don't think there's enough of that and I don't think the government helps to support that from businesses at the moment.

SH: Okay. So what do you think the biggest advantages of the programmes are?

AT: Advantages? The media comes a long way than what it used to. And I think research and advertisement, getting the messages across at college and it's like is far easier and far better with technology. Mobile phones that sort of thing, the apps. Learning, it's a small world and there are opportunities everywhere now, so I think the media has played a massive difference in it.

SH: Alright. Well, you already talked about some of the drawbacks but are there any other drawbacks in the way the current thing is currently framed?

AT: (Pause). Well one of my main nibbles like I said before is its bums on seats and we need them to pass to make the money and at the end of the day, you need to be a qualified tradesman, you need to be able to do the trade to a standard, that is right for out there. And sometimes, they get through the system a lot without that standard.

SH: So, do you think these programmes are sustainable, I mean will they last in the way that they are?

AT: (Pause). Financially or are we talking with the finances you know or are we talking with the gap in the ability of the students?

SH: Well both really.

AT: Financially, the trade is renowned for being up and down. When there's plenty of work, there seems to be plenty of influx into training people. There isn't, we tend to stop. Which is bad because we now it's going to build up again. And then you know, you've got a gap in the system so we need to keep a rolling programme not dependent on the outside sector. We need to keep

it going and we need to up the level of it to a standard that we can all be proud to leave that student knowing that he's going to fit in and take on a role. So we need to up the standard as well.

SH: So, what do you feel is the future for training in carpenter and joinery?

AT: One of the futures is for the local authorities to be heavily involved with the local companies, like ourselves with the local authority, where in a unique position to teach certain unique aspects of my trade, and I think the local authorities and the government need to try to get more contact between those who can do that. Because colleges are wonderful sources of information, but it's only half the training. Half of it has to be outside, in the sector. And without that, we have a load of people coming through the system, where they've just been taught at college, there's nobody taking an interest in them in the outside sector, so they can't get an NVQ based qualification, they can only get the diploma. And then they become unemployable to a certain extent because someone will say I can't take you on, you've got no experience. But I can't do the work because no one will give me the experience. So it's that relationships between the college, the local government and the local companies.

SH: Fantastic. Well I'm going to ask this question, this probe here which I'm only asking the UK people, how do you feel about the NVQ system?

AT: (Pause). I did better with the City and Guilds system. Our NVQ system can be very complicated, it's not a total failure, but I think that you can get by, you can get qualified, fairly easy and not do half the stuff that you should do for your qualification in your trade. It's, it's too diluted. And it should concentrate more.

SH: And City and Guilds was a harder system?

AT: (Pause). Yeah, not just harder, I think it was managed different. It was, particularly in your workplace, it was they expected you to be at a higher level than what I think they expect you to be now. And City and Guilds would, you know it's almost world renowned, whereas you had a City and Guilds, you were recognised. And they're trying to do the same thing now with the NVQ and trying to make it recognised, but I think it's a completely different level than what it should be. It's too easy to get a qualification and somebody say to you well how come you can't do this, how come you haven't been taught that? Whereas I think in the old City and Guilds system it seemed to be you were at a good core of learning of all the basics of your trade.

SH: Fantastic. So last question here. If I were to say to you, Alan, money is no object. I want you to design a programme or a system to train carpenters and joiners, how would you do that?

AT: (Pause). Wow. I would take time to go to all the colleges, going to college and going to local firms and calmly asking what they want as a level in a trainee, and find out which areas where, because every college deals with its local industry. Well we all know that all the different counties have different industries, and different levels of buildings. So for instance, London has a lot more

building going on than here. So you can say that's quite important as to do your research on where you study and at what level. And then I would probably go around the schools speak to them about who they would promote and what sort of industry they could help staff with, heading them in the right direction instead of saying look you're all academic we'll just push you down in that area, because there's a lot of people who are academic that would like to be in our trade who are finding out now. The last few ones that we've had have been accountants, we've had office managers that sort of thing so just because they've not shown that level of intelligence, that don't mean to say they'll going to go into the construction industry. So I think there's be a lot of research first.

SH: Well, you talked a lot about the on-site apprenticeship, would that be a requirement in your system?

AT: Definitely. Yeah. Probably it would be very important but it has to be on the basis of half and half. Half is your college time learning, site work and knowledge, and probably going through different companies as well, on a block release as well as your primary company, and to get as much varied knowledge as possible. Because when you go out there you are expected to know a good, varied amount of carpentry and joinery. And if you haven't gotten them in your learning stages it's very hard to get them out there.

SH: Are there any skills that are currently being taught in the schools that you think aren't necessary within the trade?

AT: (Pause). I don't want to diss school but there seem to be a lot, and college for that matter, there seems to be a lot of courses that sound pretty, but I can't see anyone getting a job from them. (Laughs). I know that sounds a bit harsh, but you know in the economics in the way that they are, it's pretty dressing and pretty qualifications but then these people leave and then they go into very mundane jobs because they haven't been taught core skills that there is a need for employment out there with. It's almost tragic to choose something really diversified to say look at this, I've got this on my CV, but I'm never going to practice this there's no one out there that wants to employ me in that. And I think schools and universities and colleges need to learn their responsibility, they need to be told that as well. So, encourage them, by all means, into this sector if it's needed, but also be aware that obviously there is a local area where detailed research has been done, that there isn't a massive demand for this, if you want to practice this here, or even abroad. Schools, colleges need to take on the responsibility of knowing their surroundings before they push someone into academics or skills sector.

SH: I reminds me a story of a school I worked at where someone proposed a class called historic foodscapes. I just thought, when did I ever need an expert in historic foodscapes?

AT: It sounds very pretty, and I'm sure there's wonderful knowledge there, but if you're hoping to take that course and then work in that course, you're getting blindsided because it's not practical,

it's not realistic is it in any way. I'm not saying we should stop promoting outside the box thinking, I'm not condoning that, but the student needs to be shown and told realistically what the potentials are for the future to go down this road in this particular course. They just expect to see these young students, these kids, they're going to get the money for it, then they say bye-bye and there's no further sort of help. Because you've got what you wanted, you've got your qualification, it's up to you to find a job. Well no, you've never really sold it to me right really did you.

SH: Yeah. Well the historic foodscapes is one of the reasons why I left that school because I was like this isn't going to get me anywhere. Given the current system, could your ideal system operate within that structure?

AT: Again, good question. It would ruffle a few feathers. The PR people would probably not like it, they would be tougher, but it would be passing at a level that I would say would be better. So I think it could be fit in, or it could be phased in. I don't think it could be fit in now. Because we had it. That's the funny thing years ago, we had this system. We've had a high level of training, but unfortunately, we've got to back step, and get back into it using the modern PR regulations like. So we had it, we lost it, and we're trying to get it back. I think, it's going to take a long time.

SH: Are there any programmes, existing programmes out there in the UK that you feel are maybe not meeting your requirements for an ideal system but close to it?

AT: Again, going back to a question discussed earlier, the way that the local colleges are working with us and the local government and looking at an industry that we can provide, as an extra industry in conservation and stuff like that I think we are heading in the right direction and they're thinking outside the box as we need to create a better skill level. So, it's started but there's always that side of finances that could totally shut it down again. As long as it looks good and they have the money, they are looking at the pretty and fashionable side of heritage at the moment, because it is very fashionable at the moment, and we're latching onto that, but the money is there for it. But when the money's gone, will we keep this system going and will we encourage this higher level of teaching? I doubt it.

SH: Fantastic. Well that's all the questions I have. Do you have anything you'd like to add?

AT: (Pause) Well, I think your questions are very good, very thought provoking, no I think, I'm assuming that the information that you're getting now from all this research is heading in the same direction of creating a better level of training and seeing where the gaps are from your point of view.

SH: Well what I want to do in all this is look at the way the US trains, and some of the stuff that we put together here, and some of the stuff that you guys have done, because the building tradition and the knowledge base is so similar that, and a lot of times the people who are doing the training don't know what's going on on the other side. And to see if we can find a way to

improve these systems from kind of learning from each other. But if I just talked to the trainers, they would say well industry's not getting involved and this and this. Which is funny because I'm talking to the craftsman right now and a lot of them are saying, the schools aren't reaching out to us. So that's an issue and I know that's an issue with many schools. You know it's ridiculous that I know people in California, sitting here in Savannah, and the school in California doesn't know these people. I don't think there's going to be international standards, there's too much difference in the systems. But if we can have a basis in saying, in conservation, this person is going to learn this, this, and this. If they go into heritage joinery, they're going to learn this, this and this. Now that might mean that they're learning on English oak, that might mean that they're learning on heart pine or redwood, but they're going to need to know this set of skills because that set of skills is universal throughout the world. Because there are universal skills there's just different understandings of, well one is age. You know someone from Leeds was talking to me when I was over there, and he said in American, you guys think a hundred years in a long time, in the UK we think a hundred miles is a long distance.

AT: Yeah, that's well played. (Laughs).

SH: So it's interesting to see how this who thing is going to play out. I'm trying to find some UK schools. I had a few that were interested. It looks like I'm going to have to look at Weymouth College because every damn mason I've talked to in the UK seems to have gone through Weymouth College, but I'm having real problems communicating with these schools they just kind of shut me down. It's a struggle so next time you talk to the people at Lincoln College, tell them I'd like to talk to them. That will give me an excuse to come back to Lincoln too.

AT: Well obviously we have some good contacts with the local schools, we have better, we use another college further afield it has a much better, more flexible in learning than our local college because they're so stuck on the numbers of this red tape and they're not as flexible as everyone else and you've got to be more flexible in your learning. And to be honest we have a problem sometimes with our own college. And it's right on our doorstep.

SH: That's unfortunate. I have a problem with another college that's in this town because they just won't talk to me. So I started unintentionally stealing their students. Now they really won't talk to me.

AT: (Laughs) You're so sweet.

SH: Well you're supposed to be all southern and genteel, and I can only be so kind and genteel. I'm a Philly boy at heart you know and I've got that chip on my shoulder and it's never going to go away. Much to Kelly's chagrin because she can't take me places because I can't keep my mouth shut.

AT: I haven't noticed Steve. I never noticed you had a chip in your shoulder at all. (Laughs)

SH: No, no not at all. Well I appreciate you sitting down with me and you know talking and answering my questions. And what's going to happen when all this is said and done, you're going to get a hard copy of the final report and once I transcribe these records, because know I actually have to go back and listen to this thing and right it down, I'll send you a copy of that as well.

AT: Excellent.

SH: And what I might do since you and Paul were both interviewed, I might send them to Carol to stick in the Cathedral archives as well, if they want them.

AT: Yeah that'd be good.

SH: So we'll get all that going, it's going to take me a little while to transcribe them. You guys have been pretty good. You know the three-hour conversations are what's going to kill me. Well, thanks for all of your time man and well, its four o'clock there you better go home.

AT: Yeah, yeah, it's nearly that time. Been a pleasure Steve. It was good to hear from you and it was good to catch up.

SH: Yeah man it's always a good time talking to you and we're going to get, I am working with Carol for something in December for you guys, let's see how it works. If not, you're on our list for Visiting Artisan so we'll just have to work it into your schedule over there. And hopefully the next time I see Carol she won't punch me in the face for consistently trying to steal her workers away.

AT: (Laughs). It's a pleasure Steve we all enjoy it.

SH: Alright man I appreciate it and I'll talk to you soon.

AT: Alright then Steve, Cheers.

SH: Cheers.

End recording

Total recording time 56:51

Interview Form-Individual

Name: Paul Ellis _____

Current address: [REDACTED] Lincoln, United Kingdom _____

Birthdate: [REDACTED] 1962 _____

Age: 51 _____

Occupation: Stone mason/carver _____

Interview Date: 29 July 2014 _____

Interview Location: Stephen-Savannah, Paul-Lincoln (Skype) _____

Interviewer: Stephen Hartley _____

Generation: 3-United Kingdom _____

Consent Form Signed Date: 26 July 2014 _____

Begin Recording

Stephen Hartley (SH): Well, before we get started on the actual interview, I just need to get some basic information from you. Your current address? You can give me the Works Department, that's fine.

Paul Ellis (PE): Well yeah, the Works Department. Its [REDACTED], Lincoln.

SH: Yeah a lot of people don't want to give me their personal address, they're afraid I'm going to show up on day. I won't though. Your birthdate?

PE: [REDACTED], 1962.

SH: And that would make you how old now?

PE: Fifty-one, just coming up fifty-two.

SH: And your occupation?

PE: Well I'm a stone mason but I'm employed as a stone carver.

SH: Alright. So what I'm going to do is, so basically its ten questions. Inside those questions I may ask you to elaborate a little bit on you know what you're talking about. Some of the questions you're going to look at or think about and you're going to be like why the hell is he asking that? Because it's fairly obvious stuff for someone who's practicing the trades, but I am writing this for a group of people who you know talk a lot about conservation but don't know what it's like to be on the tools. So, hopefully at the end of all this we'll come up with some solutions on how we can improve these systems. I hear a lot of complaints about the US system and a lot of complaints about the UK system. So hopefully we can find a way to make them better and get these guys ready to hit the workforce with the skills they need. So question number one, what is your profession?

PE: Well I'm a stone mason. Carver. Stone mason-carver yeah.

SH: Ok. So what do you do within that realm?

PE: Within that realm I, well at the Cathedral I'm employed to do the carving, the fancy stuff. But I'm trained as a mason so that helps in the respect that I do the masonry as well as the carving. When I'm given a stone, I don't just carve into a carving block, I actually carve the masonry around the carving as well. So that helps in that respect. So I would classify myself as a stone mason/carver.

SH: Okay. When did you begin practicing?

PE: Well, about twenty-eight years ago. I've been in the trade for twenty-eight years.

SH: What company did you start with?

PE: The first company I worked for was Wells Cathedral stone masons down in Somerset.

SH: So what about, before we started recording you talked about training as an engineer beforehand?

PE: Yeah when I was sixteen I went into a big factory and trained as a platter, as an engineer. I did my full five-year apprenticeship and then did a year or two out of my time, and then I was redundant from that. And then spent a year or so out of work doing various things before I dropped into stone masonry. I went to Weymouth College to do the full-time course, the craft City and Guilds course in stone masonry. There was an option of a second year advanced, but I preferred to get straight on the tools, so I got a job at Wells Cathedral in Somerset.

SH: Well what attracted you to stonemasonry?

PE: Well it was an accident really. Whether it was the big fellow or what you want to call it. I was because I got me papers from engineering, I was going to join the REME, Royal ExCom Mechanical Engineers and follow my oldest brother into the Army, there's a big tradition of military service in my family. And I was going to do that, and I'd got my entrance exam, I passed my entrance exam and I had my medical date, and my two, both my brothers were home; one was on leave and we went out for a drink together, and the upshot was my middle brother said why don't you do something with your hands, your good with your hands. And my oldest brother said don't join the army just for the sake of it, just for a job. And that following week, the same week, I looked in the local paper, and because I was registered on the unemployment at the time, there was, in the jobs section, there was a course being offered at Weymouth College, down in Dorset, for architectural stone carving. I'd never done any stone carving, never shown any interest for it, well I used to do a bit of whittling in wood, carving and stuff just in wood. So I thought well; stone, wood same (laughs), it's just a different medium, and I thought well yeah, I'll give it a go. Because I was unemployed, the state paid for me to go on the course. And that's where I started and I've never looked back since.

SH: You know you're the third person I've interviewed that went to Weymouth College.

PE: It's a lot. There's a lot, especially in my generation sort of thing. I know a lot of people in the trade now still who went to Weymouth College. Like Paul, from here, the head stone mason.

Heather from Canterbury. Heather was in, there were two groups when I learned and Heather was in one of the groups, I used to go out drinking with her husband who's a stone mason as well. And there's quiet, a number of people, Martin Cowart up at York, who was in our year, because it's a fairly small trade, most people know each other or know of people. So you're sort of connected that way, yeah.

SH: So in your profession, what's your favourite aspect of stone carving and masonry?

PE: Favourite aspect as in what do I enjoy the most?

SH: Yeah.

PE: Well personally I enjoy the most the actual, when I'm carving, when I'm free carving. A lot of the time we're restrained by, obviously we have to try and put back what's there and most of the bread and butter work on the cathedral is stiff leaf. So it's a style we have to follow, but I like to embellish that and put things in there so I'm always coming up with ideas all the time but when I'm free carving, or a big free carving then, if you like you know I'm just lost in that because you can it's you sort of see your stuff in the stone, you can see what you want in there what you want to get out of the stone. When you're working masonry, you're working to parameters, to lines and to get the various geometric shapes. It's very satisfying, but it's, you're being guided all the time by the pencil lines. And when you're carving it's more creative. You can see it, but you have to get it out there, so it can't come out quickly you know. That's the most enjoyable I find, especially the roughing out stage, where it's I'm creating something and your sort of battling with the stone to get whatever thing you want out there and it's satisfying.

SH: Well I've seen a lot of your free carvings and they are fantastic.

PE: Yeah thanks very much.

SH: What's your least favourite then?

PE: Well I don't have a least favourite because it's, I enjoy my job. I enjoy masonry as well as carving so there not a least favourite. I would say, what could I say is my least favourite, is repetition. Because I've worked commercially as well, in commercial stone yards, and I've done more of my fair share of what I call cabbage work you know. Just boring monkey work where you've got miles and miles of coping, sills and things, repetition of work to do. And you've just got to get through them you know there's just pallet load after pallet load. So that, I would put that around, but even that in a way is still okay.

SH: You talked a little bit about the Weymouth College programme. Could you kind of explain the structure of that programme? How you studied?

PE: How I studied? Well that was a long time ago. It was a mixture of theoretical work and practical work. And like anyone that wants to do that trade, you want to be on the tools and not really the practical side. Having said that I did enjoy, I suppose because of my engineering background I enjoyed the technical drawing side of it which obviously comes in play a lot in

masonry for setting out. So I enjoyed that aspect of it, but there was a mixture, I can't remember the ratio but it was a mixture but because the course was architectural stone carving, there was a smattering of carving stuff, relief carving and bits and bobs, and then there was also a bit of letter cutting, so it was a general sort of thing, across the board, because, as you know yourself, when you go through the trade, some people diversify, some people become carvers, some want to do letter cutting, and some are just happy doing masonry, and some end up doing everything. So you get, I was taught a little bit of everything, the basics of all of them really.

SH: Do you feel the instructors and tutors were properly equipped in terms of knowledge and tools and everything like that?

PE: I think that's potluck. We were lucky in the fact that the year we went, the first year, we had a chap called Tony Steele I think, and he'd just finished, he was foreman at Wells Cathedral workshops in Somerset. So he was just coming in and it was his first year in the job, so he was very enthusiastic, and he was keen to take us down a route that was more suited to a working environment. Whereas you get some people who are teachers and they will teach you curriculum sort of things, that's how they do it, but he was keen that we should learn the setting out aspects and things like that so he was good, he was grand. And we had a nice old boy who was a carving teacher, he was a nice chap. And a bloke, a very laid-back bloke, who used to do the letter cutting. So they were a cross section and they were okay. But I know from people since then that it's potluck when you go to colleges because we have it with our students and sometimes when we get the feedback from our apprentices or whatever, if it's not good you think well what they are teaching you are they preparing you. You're aware and you think well what they are teaching you at school. So sometimes I think it can vary, you can have a good in or a bad in, but I had some good ins.

SH: So would you encourage others to, because the Weymouth Programme is still active is it not?

PE: I think so yeah, I think it's still going.

SH: Would you encourage others to take that route if they wanted to get into carving and masonry?

PE: Yes, I would because I think there's not enough apprenticeships out there, there's not enough jobs to go around if you like. So, there's, it's funny recently, just last week, I had a young lad who phoned me up who wants to get in the trade and it's very keen. And his mother obviously knew about me and so gave him my number and, so I'm trying to point him in the right direction now for that. And that's what I suggested to him because he's said he's written to companies for apprenticeships and things and unfortunately, I don't think he's going to get in that way. So I said to him sometimes you have to do it yourself. So if you go to a college you might be able to get a

grant off there and actually get the qualifications somebody's more likely to take you on. So I would point people that way yeah.

SH: So, how's the industry, the stone carving and masonry industry changed since you've begun practicing?

PE: To be quite honest I don't think it's changed that much. I think over the years I've noticed it sort of goes in troughs, peaks, troughs. And it goes with sort of economic cycles. So you'll find that certain times there's loads of work and then that work falls off. London's booming, oh yeah there's plenty of work if you want it down there. I've never wanted to work in London though. And it sort of goes that way I think, it goes with the economy really. It goes up and down. When there's money there, there's money there and so jobs get done. And when there's not the first thing to get cut back obviously is work like ours, architectural heritage work. People will only pay for it when they've got the money sort of thing. When they can get grants for it.

SH: Yeah.

PE: So it's that sort of thing.

SH: Yeah. How do you feel about CNC cutters for stone?

PE: What you mean the profilers and all the...

SH: Yeah

PE: I that's with anything with technology, there's a place for it. There's a place in, within the industry for that. Because it can, it can relieve a lot of, a lot of what I said; cabbage work. A lot of mind numbingly boring work, if you're just going to work sills and things. It's good practice for a young mason to do that, to learn in flat surfaces and things. But, if you're just doing that week in and week out, there's a machine that can do that, and take away that, I don't, I don't particularly agree with them in other ways because it is taking people's jobs but I've also been in a factory before, when I was learning, I went do to Portland and some of the big factories down there, and all the lads were doing there was just returns, just finishing them off, where the profilers could only take it down so far. So I did feel sorry for them in that way. Like I said six in one, half a dozen of the other, and sometimes there a good thing because they relieve some of that cabbage work, that boring work. Other times, they actually take work from people. In an ideal world I think there would be thousands of us masons. There used to be. You know the turn of last century the houses in this country, street after street of terraced houses and things, which had fantastic, you know lovely openings around the doorways and the windows with carvings and things. So there must have been tens of thousands of masons you know and that sort of died away, that will to have that, that sort of craft made stuff has gone out the window with prefabricated stuff and precast stuff, and so that's a shame.

SH: So, you know that would kind of mean that carving has turned into a little bit of a niche market, you know it's something that is done more on heritage buildings than it is on new construction would you say?

PE: I think, well it's all about cost at the end of the day. It's always about cost. So, if there's a new build, unless the architect or the client can afford it, they won't specify any fancy detail, they'll cut back on it. Which is a shame but they tend to do that. And there's enough masons out there, and there are enough, more than enough competent masons out there and carvers for all the work that's going around, and it's the biggest shame of anything is that lack of desire to build traditionally and properly, using those skills because everything's money orientated like I said so, that's a great shame I think that is.

SH: Someone told me onetime that concrete is the great architectural equaliser.

PE: Well yeah it is, yeah.

SH: Anyone can buy a precast concrete piece that looks nice, you know you can get a lot of detail out of it, and just stick in one the side of the building and all of a sudden you don't need that carver anymore all you need is a mold maker.

PE: Well yeah and also there's also, well I know in the states you have a lot of terracotta work.

SH: Yeah.

PE: In cities. And I used to work for a, well I subbed for a terracotta firm. There's only two left in this country I believe, and one of them just shut down. It used to be located in south Nottinghamshire where I used to live. And they did a lot of work for the states, but a lot of lovely work and that in itself is a craft and a skill, the terracotta work. But unfortunately that's going out now because again they can get replacements, casting in concrete or whatever you know, or resins either all sorts of stuff. So that's another shame that something else is going because that sort of went hand in hand if you were building, like in America the skyscrapers and all the buildings there, they were constructed out of steel and then all this terracotta work could be fixed to them. And it's grand, they could do it quickly and it was jobs for people, jobs for creative people. But again, that's going by the by too isn't it. That's not ranting that's (Laughs). Next question.

SH: No, that's, trust me compared to others, that's not a rant at all. So how do you feel about the future of stonemasonry and carving?

PE: I think, I think it's very healthy there's a lot coming through, lots of youngsters. I'm the oldest here, in the yard here. There's lots of youngsters coming through, that want to come through. I think that it could be a thousand times better. I think that our, the way that we're taught in this country is nowhere near the way that the Germans masons are taught, or the French masons. I think we're miles behind. That could improve, that could be better. But I think it's healthy there's enough that want to come in the trade but like going back to what I keep saying it's the desire of

people or the powers that be, or anyone to want to build traditionally. My dream would be to rebuild an abbey somewhere. You know and use that as a centre for training. I actually put down that idea, sent a letter to Prince Charles. They said thanks for your letter, he's very busy, thanks but knob off but it was, that would be my idea because it, to have that desire, all you need is to have someone have that desire, somebody with the money or someone in his position. Because if he said yes, was patron to it, all the ass-lickers in the country would follow suit, and they would buy into it. And that's all you need. The desire, someone to want to do that and then, because you and me and everyone else in the trade now, none of us are actually stone masons, are actually builders. We are actually conservators really. We are all into the restoration and conservation industry. So we only get to put plasters on a building. Take a stone out, put one back, things like that. We never get to build. I've never built in my career, a vaulting you know, or a spiral staircase or anything you know. Unless I'm extremely lucky you know, or some rich person wants to put a façade on their thing or build a mock gothic thing or to actually build properly, to understand that trade in that way, that to me is what's lacking. And I know there's various projects in Europe, in, I think there's a few in France and Germany where they're actually rebuilding castles and things, and they're actually doing it and there's a desire there to do that. And that to me, would personally make me and everyone else learning and working on that building a better mason and a better thing for it. But I, there's no, like I said there's no desire to do it anymore, so I'll probably never get to do that but.

SH: So, I feel the same way I don't get to build new. I get to build a new a little bit more than most people because I'm training students, but those going out there, these guys are never going to build an arch. They're going to fix one, but they're never going to, but they need to learn how to build it so they can fix it. So you talked a little bit about the apprentices and how they are coming in and the differences between Germany and France and the UK so, do you feel that they're properly trained to enter the field, coming out of school?

PE: Blimey. (Pause) I think it could be better. It could be a thousand times better. Because a commercial mason will be trained, the amount of training and the amount of things he builds at college sometimes will be the only times he ever does them. Take for example our apprentices here, they would, most of them if they stayed at the Cathedral, would never do any decorated tracery in their career because the building is primarily early gothic. So they would be extremely luck to touch any proper tracery. And in the same way any vaulting at all, things like that. Any canopies with the vaulting in those and things. So I've been lucky enough, because I've worked around before I came here, so I've got a very diverse practically experience base to come from, and also working with different stones. If you, if someone goes to college and they're working for a firm, then they go back to that firm and that company is mainly making windows, fireplaces, things like that, that's all they're going to have. That's all they're going to do. College is one

experience but I think though the Cathedral workshop fellowship, which they've done here, I've just been talking today with the bosses and that because I've been trying to infuse to them our exchange with Trondheim in Norway. And that's, and I actually got something from that. In twelve years of working here I've never got that type of stimulation to actually work with different tools on different stone. I've never worked soapstone before and they work it using axes. So that was fantastic for me you know to do that. But I believe we should be bringing that back to here to the Cathedral. Because our original cathedral would have been built by French masons with axes, so why can't we reintroduce the axe here and learn how to use it. We have a colleague who, Sebastian, a German mason, he knows how to use an axe because he was taught how to use an axe because they do that in Germany and in France. So its things like that that I feel...there's constraints. There's constraints through either money or the work programme, where people work they wouldn't be sort of pigeonholed, well that's all we do here, and that needs widening. But the only way to do that is the desire of the bosses to nowadays its coming back, it's coming back to here because they want to expand, and they want to be seen for the training and doing that. So they are doing that here now and that's grand but I would imagine there's a lot of firms out there, private firms that the boss would say well I don't have time for you to fanny about with that you know, there's your job and get them done you know, there's three hundred fireplaces to work and stuff like that. So, I think it could always improve. Always. But it has to be the desire by the bosses to do that to let them do that.

SH: So do you, you have apprentices that you take within the mason's shop, how do you work with them? What do they do typically on the job site?

PE: What do they do? Well they'll start out as any apprentices you know with the flat surfaces and go through all the different moldings and things. But then they'll be taken through, hopefully they're mentored by one person. Recently, our last apprentice Adam has been mentored by a colleague of mine Mike, Mike Packett, who is extremely good, clean mason and carver. And he's art trained, so he's got a degree in art as well so he's very clean and everything so, Adam's been mentored by him. So his standards are extremely high. So for Adam to get that knowledge from somebody like him is fantastic. But again, potluck who you get because, and that will go across the board wherever people are working.

SH: Well do you participate in any, in terms of teaching or short course or academic training?

PE: I don't, well we have done things for the Prince's Trust and Foundation where we've have groups of students come in and we've just basically done sort of day courses with structured, a bit of relief carving like the apprentice panels in the cathedral, it's a small carving. And we've just taken them through the basics for people and complete novices to people who have a bit of knowledge. But we've done it with a range of people and we've done it in a structured way so they can, if you like, go away with something at the end of the day, they actually carved

something themselves, so because of the way we've taken them through it, like broke it down into steps, its, well hopefully it very achievable and it show them that they can achieve something at the end of the day. And we start it like a kid riding a push bike, you're holding them, and then you let go. So we'll take them through it in stages, and then there's that last stage when they're actually doing it, and where they're be asking me questions and I'll say well you've answered the question in what you're, you've given yourself the answer that you're asking me in the question, because they're grasping it and they understand. It's just simply, at the end of the day, just an exercise in light, the way light falls across a stone in simple relief carving so to get them to understand that at the start of the day when you show them one of the panels and say by the end of the day you're going to carve one of these, the look of disbelief on half of their faces you know. We had a load of students from New Orleans and that was, I think that was through the Prince's Foundation, it was after the disaster there and it was come to build up whatever they're rebuilding in New Orleans. And they come from all different backgrounds in life, was we took all these lads and lasses through these things and the look of disbelief in the morning, at the end of the day they walk away with a bit of stone, and they we're chuffed to bullocks, they were over the moon. That was satisfying and grand but apart from that I had never done any structured stuff teaching.

SH: These day courses and those things for the Prince's Trust, how do you think, do you enjoy doing that kind of work or is it like a hindrance to your day?

PE: I enjoy it. No, no I enjoyed it. I found it very rewarding, but also very tiring. Because different people have different levels of understanding. To try and recognise their level of understanding, to show somebody a chisel, here's a chisel, here's how to hit it, you know, and it does this, some people pick it up, and the hand eye coordination is very good, so people won't you know, and they'll really struggle. So after trying to talk one round or show them in different ways, and also to encourage people in different ways and inspire that person I try to break it down with a bit of laughter or a something to cut the ice, but then also to show at the end of it, they can recognise what they've done. There was one of these lads from New Orleans who obviously must have come from a real rough background, and at the end of the day he was the hardest to get through. And you could see there was a wall that went up and he was very withdrawn and everything. But at the end of the day the piece what he produced, I stood it up and I said to him look at that and what do you think? And he was just (shrugs), and I said that's the fucking dog's bullocks. And I says you've produced that in one day, you know, you should be proud of yourself. And his, you know his face, he cracked his face and smiled, and I thought nobody, probably no bugger ever in your life has told you that you've done something good and you could see that. And I thought blimey. And that was the most satisfying moment for me I mean trying to teach someone. I mean I've got through there and he's actually gained something there. You know his own self esteem or

something like that. So I can see how it's extremely rewarding, where I can also see how bloody tiring it is really. I'd sooner carve stone it's a lot easier to carve stone than it is to teach, yeah.

SH: People wonder why I drink so much. So are you an active member of any professional organisations involved in carving. I know you put together the European Stone Festival. Which I really wanted to be at.

PE: Yeah it was good, it was fantastic. That was an amazing thing in itself that was, it was a spectacle. You know I enjoyed it. I was pissed just talking to most people I mean. It was, it was fantastic, it was lovely to be proud and very tiring to do for all of us and unfortunately, we didn't follow it up. We didn't follow it up with anything. I think that we lost a massive load, we lost momentum, we lost an opportunity, a massive opportunity to do further things with the general public; outreach things and things like that because what we created there when we all worked together to do it was amazing. Unfortunately I think, maybe our bosses and things were more happy just to break even and make some profit and things so, and that was the end of it. So I think we lost, we've missed a massive opportunity we that because that was such a spectacle that I was stopped by people in the street and everything and saying how fantastic it was and how much they enjoyed it, and it just died after that there was no follow up to it. You know I think there's so many things we could have gone on to do from that, it was like a massive springboard to do for other things and unfortunately that just came to a standstill, but we'll see maybe there's something in the future, if they do something like that again it should be followed up I think with other things. Because if that, you've showcased it all. That's what the idea of the festivals were all about; to show the general public what we do in the trades. And they came in the thousands and people loved it you know, none of this health and safety bullocks when normally when you're doing the shows it's no you can't do that or something, someone might get smacked in the eye, people were looking over your shoulders and they were loving it. And just the sheer spectacle of the noise in the tent you know of over a hundred masons, that noise had not been heard there since the cathedral has been built, and I was trying to infuse and say that to people you know, what it's like is looking back through a window to what things would have been like you know, the noise and everything it's fantastic it was really, really good yeah.

SH: So don't you feel like the groups like the Building Limes Forum and, are there a Worshipful Company of Carvers?

PE: Sorry?

SH: Is there a Worshipful Company of Carvers?

PE: Oh, I don't know I'm not into any of those sort of organisations. A lot of them, or whatever, a lot of them they're Guilds and things. They're going back to what they used to be, were the freemasons used to look out for each other in the trades. They've become organisations for advancement now and they're just fronts for whatever. So, I don't personally think I don't need

to be a part of any of those types of organisations you know. I do what I do, and I put my trust in the big fella, you know he's given me a gift to do what I do, I'm thankful for that and I choose to work on his building. My works there for everyone. And it's not about me, it's about the building, and that's where I think it should be. When you've got these organisations that are handing out titles, they recently handed one out to our head mason Paul, and my boss asked me if I wanted one. You know the only criteria for me to get this was that I'd been in the trade for more than twenty-five years. Well who are they to call me a master mason after twenty-five years? I could have been a bloody fish fryer for all they know. Just because I call myself a stone mason for that period of time doesn't mean, and I tried to say to my boss there's no way I would class myself as a master mason. I'm a very competent and clean stone mason and a fair carver and I have some setting out skills but fixing wise I've not done a lot because I shit myself at heights. I still go on the building here on very big scaffolds and things but I'm not a master mason, no way. So for a body of people down in London, the Worshipful Company of Masons to dish out those titles I find, I find quite shocking, personally I think it's wrong. Those titles are earned, certainly they're earned in Germany and France, you know a master mason there would be a master mason. He would, his knowledge we be you know ten times what we've got you know so I don't believe in bodies like that. It's, you know titles are easily handed out, but to me those titles should be earned through knowledge and through experience. You can't just dish them out things like that so, no I'm not a member of anything (laughs).

SH: Perfect. Are there any misconceptions people have about stone masonry and carving, just general people?

PE: Well I think, going back to what I just said about the festivals that is there main objective, to actually showcase what we do, showing people and people, we're amazed. Not many people but some people the amount of ignorance they think things are cast or stuck on, or molded you know, it's not, it's made piece of stone you know. So that side of it, when we do festivals things like that, it's very good because it helps people and it educates people. There should be more of it. We've done it here a couple times when they've opened the yard for letting people in. It's, or anything like that when the general public can see what we do, is a good thing because it helps to inform them so they can understand how much goes into our work and how we make things and obviously time is money and everything so they can appreciate that so the stone will take two or three weeks to work and they'll think blimey well can't we get a cast one or something like that. So it helps in that context to help them, their appreciation for our craft skills.

SH: Fantastic. I only have two questions left and I'll let you, maybe you can squeeze out of work a couple of minutes early, don't let, just don't tell Carol I said that. So the last two questions are all about training, current training and I just want to put a caveat in, I know I'm a trainer, and I have to tell everyone this, I'm not going to get offended with what you say, so if you say

every programme in the world is shit, I'm not going to get offended by that. I tell everyone, I don't want to know what I'm doing right, I want to know what I'm doing wrong. And so don't feel that you have to you know, bite your tongue because I'm in the training field. I don't, please don't actually. Tell me exactly what you want to say. Do you feel, we already hit this a little bit, do you feel that the current educational offerings are adequate to prepare apprentices? And if not, what do you feel that they're missing?

PE: (Pause). I think that (Pause) again, I think they're probably too short.

SH: Too short?

PE: Too short as in there only for a few years. And there's only a limited time, at least in this country, they do it in block release or modules and they have to complete so much for each module and things. Bear in mind what we just said earlier, what we discussed about they might not get to do certain things again, I think there should be more practical time. There should be more practical hands on, and more theory stuff to be taking apprentices through and three years of college work or whatever is not enough. I think apprenticeships should be longer and what they should, within the length of that, they should be more diverse. They should, they should be more experience gained from them in different environments. Whereas they wouldn't just be going to one college or work one type of stone, they could go to a another region, somewhere else. Like the old journeyman sort of system. I believe that that would benefit youngsters or anyone starting out greatly. I was lucky because that's what I did. I worked around and I found that very beneficial in that way of doing it. And the German system, you know their journeyman still, where they're told they're not allowed to go live within certain kilometers from where they trained, and they have to go away for a year just with the clothes on their back, you know and the tools or whatever, you know they have to go and you have to look after yourself. I think that is a fantastic way, because that is forcing you to go somewhere else and learn about people. Having said that, how many firms would accommodate that from people. Unfortunately we don't, since I've been here, we have people who've come in, but I don't remember us taking on any journeymen here. I think throughout the trade there should be a way for that. Yeah, so I think more. More and more diversity they should have.

SH: So, in that, looking at that, how do you feel about the future of training within your craft, do you feel that it's getting worse, it's getting better?

PE: Well, I don't think it's getting any worse, it can always get better. Everything can get better so, whatever ideas have come forward or whatever ways for training it all depends, like yourself, it all depends on you, on what you want to come up with. It depends on the tutors or the trainers being passionate about what they're doing and doing it for the right reasons. I know, like going back to the college thing, you get certain people in the trade that will gravitate towards lectures or things like that because; awe that's easy money and just, that to me is not the way to do it.

They should be doing that because they're passionate that they want to train. But I was lucky to have the bloke that trained me because he was fresh to it and he was passionate with ideas for it and he wanted to impart his knowledge on it and do that, and that's how it should be. I think it's...again its there's no way of saying definitely that, you can't because a teacher's only as good as he wants to be isn't he. Like yourself. If you're passionate about it, you care, that person that you're training will be a better student than one that couldn't give a toss. I know for a fact we had a lad here on a bursary last year, Kieran bless him, he was literally special needs. He was, Sebastian my colleague, fantastic German stonemason trained, he tried to teach Kieran for eighteen months. Kieran just couldn't grasp it, in his head. But Kieran was Level 2 NVQ. How he, how they gave him that verification was know you, someone should get their arse kicked for that. Because there's no way on earth that, he'll never be a stone mason, he just couldn't do it. And he tried. No matter what route you told him the next day it had all gone out of his head. He had special needs, he had learning difficulties. But there are colleges out there, because it's about numbers and funding, they want to pass all the students, get them through it, it ticks all the boxes, and then they get all the funding for the next year. So they don't give a toss, and somebody should have said to him; look Kieran, I'm afraid you're not grasping this. You know we, they just wasted eighteen months of his life there and whatever he's done before. He's unemployable. I've heard he's gotten a job, been offered a job somewhere in Scotland, and I've heard they gave him the sack, I think they gave him a paint brush you know, to try to do something else but, and they've binned him now. That poor lad has just wasted all those years of his life, there's no way he would do it. So, but that goes back to the reflection on the college that gave him that certification for them years because he wasn't ever going to attain them, they just ticked all the boxes and stuff. So in that case, and I know that from when I did, everyone passed. It didn't matter how thick you were you know or anything, people would pass and you think bloody heck. And you know, looking at their hand skills, it wasn't there, and they're not, they're kidding themselves you know. So that needs looking at definitely so.

SH: So you trained under the City and Guilds system.

PE: Yeah

SH: Which is not operable anymore?

PE: Well the equivalent now, I think it's called NVQ.

SH: Yeah. Or NOC's. Every time I turn around there's a new acronym for it.

PE: Yeah, they always call it different things. It's like, I think they mean well but sometimes I think its meddling for the sake of it. So, we'll change it, it's not called that anymore it's not called this. You know its equivalent to that but it's better than that you know. At the end of the day, people have to learn, and they have to learn in a certain structured way.

SH: Yeah.

PE: And that certain structured way, going back to what I said, it all depends on the teacher. If the teacher's good, you'll go onto stuff and you'll be inspired to do good things. If the teacher's crap you're only at the end going to pick up a certain amount of knowledge. No matter what that certification says at the end of it. You know Kieran could have the same certificate as me but that doesn't mean he's a competent stone mason you know. It just means that someone's given him that thing you know. And that's going back to the job title. If them blokes down there, load of old farts down there in London and say oh we're the Worshipful Company of Masons and you've done twenty-five years in the trade, here's a master mason handle you now that's, but it's, it's given away too cheaply.

SH: Yeah.

PE: You know.

SH: So if I said to you, moneys no object, you can design a system or a programme you know, how would you do it, how would you structure it, how would you set it up, you talked a little bit about that already.

PE: I've already done it. I would say pick an abbey site, in the country, and rebuild it. I said right let's see what we have there, what styles are there in that building, and we'll rebuild it. We'll start from scratch and it will be done traditionally through everything. I was talking with my boss here, we're the only Cathedral workshop here, in the country, with our own quarry.

SH: Yeah.

PE: And yet we don't produce our own lime. You know what's that about. We've got the material there, we should be burning that lime and slaking it and producing our own lime. Commercially, you know, they'd be laughing their tits off. The cathedral, Lincoln Cathedral lime. We buy it in bags. And our apprentices know it's just what's that lime. You know its 3.5 or whatever. They don't understand the different gauges and all that. So, if we were doing that they would know from start to finish, they would know the different properties of the different gauges of lime and they would understand it.

SH: They would be what they would put in the building anyway because that's originally what they did they didn't go out and buy bag lime, there's your lime right there.

PE: Exactly. So that's what I would do. If I had the money, I would pick an abbey site somewhere and we would quarry it, we'd work stone, and the only machinery we, that we would use would be health and safety wise; scaffolding and thing and other things. We would use obviously tungsten and wide tipped saws to cut the block, to cut the stone into block, but from then on, it would all be hand done. And that's what I would do definitely because you're starting from scratch and you're doing everything right. I'd get all the old journeymen, it would be open to everyone. So people like myself, people like you could come and go, and have six months or a year there, and our employers would say go and improve yourself, go there, and everyone...it

would be like a holding bank of knowledge because different people would pass through, imparting their knowledge onto each other. And that's what it should be I think. And my boss just come up here. Was that the last question?

SH: It actually was yeah. That was an awesome answer to a last question. Is there anything else you want to add on to the conversation?

PE: Not with my boss hear no (laughs). No, I think that's about everything Steve. It's been nice talking to you.

SH: It's been fantastic talking to you. I appreciate your time.

PE: You're very welcome.

SH: These have just been fantastic answers, you've really helped me out a lot.

PE: If you ever get over to England, well you have been over haven't you?

SH: I've been a couple times. I was just over a few weeks ago and unfortunately, I was stuck in York so I couldn't really get away. We're hoping to get back, well before next summer we'll be definitely be back for a little bit.

PE: Great. Well when you come over, we'll sup some piss, drink some beer.

SH: I can do that.

PE: Talk some bullocks, how's that.

SH: That sounds good. And remember, as soon as you're ready to get on that plane, you let me know.

PE: Oh, don't tell my misses that. The only way is to go away with her. Because she's very well-travelled and she loves going abroad. I actually, I crap my pants I don't like it. But I do it for her. I know, I have mentioned it to her so the only way to get me over there is to work on her. That's the only way but for the moment, no, no.

SH: Well if you change your mind, let me know.

PE: We'll do Steve. Alright, all the best.

SH: Appreciate it.

PE: Cheers.

SH: Cheers.

End recording

Total Recording time: 50:06

Interview Form-Individual

Name: Nigel David Copsey_____

Current address: _____, Thorn-le-Dale _____ United Kingdom_____

Birthdate: _____ 1958_____

Age: 56_____

Occupation: Stone Masonry/Building Conservator_____

Interview Date: 8 July 2014_____

Interview Location: University of York, Kings Manor Room 155_____

Interviewer: Stephen Hartley_____

Generation: 3-United Kingdom_____

Consent Form Signed Date: 8 July 2014_____

Begin Recording

Stephen Hartley (SH): Ok, Your name, full name please

Nigel Copsey (NC): Nigel David Copsey

SH: Ok and your current address?

NC: _____ Thornton le Dale _____

SH: 7SA? Alright. Birthdate?

NC: _____ 1958

SH: Ok, Age?

NC: 55, 56? I can't remember. 56.

SH: 56, Okay.

NC: Maybe I'm 56 this year. I have to do the maths.

SH: Occupation?

NC: Stone mason, building conservator.

SH: Ok interview location we're going to do that, and today's the 8th correct? Wait you asked me earlier. Okay, consent form signed. Alright so there are ten questions, they're not yes and no questions, they are designed to give a little response.

NC: OK.

SH: So, you can say as much as you want or as little as you want. If there's something you don't want to answer, that's fine just say you don't want to answer it. So first one: What is your profession?

NC: Well building conservator as much as anything but I'm a stone mason in my own opinion. Well I am a trained stone mason. Stone mason is enough in my opinion for everything we do.

SH: Ok, so what do you do in that capacity?

NC: Well I work on site, but I do a lot of specifying and increasing a lot of surveying and management plans for specific projects, particularly for Natural England but I've done that for other people as well.

SH: Ok, when did you begin practicing?

NC: I started as a dry stone waller in Cornwall in 1982-3? 1982-3. Primarily I had finished a politics degree at York, but I no idea what I wanted to do I had just done it because I had at the time but when I came out of University and there were no jobs so in one way I thank Margret Thatcher for becoming a stone mason because there were no jobs in 1983 when I finished but it just so happened my partner at the time just had a barn converted and it didn't have a garden so I started building the garden and building walls and I got to like that and began to do work for local farmers repairing the dry stone walls around there and then for contractors and so on so and that developed however, although I enjoyed working with stone, the weather in Cornwall is pretty bloody awful if you're working outside and for in other parts of the country dry stone walling is seen as a skill in Cornwall it is seen very much as labour. It was hard to earn a living and I but I say by that time I had really started to develop a real satisfaction with working with stone, so I thrashed around looking for courses and ended up at Weymouth College in 1989 to train full time as a stone mason there.

SH: Ok. So what attracted you to stone more than anything else? Was it a....

NC: Well, I guess initially it was accident but I just it was the satisfaction of working with it, building things and creating things. Yeah, whether I would have developed the same attraction to wood if that's what I first encountered I don't know but, either way I can go deeper, I in one sense I am from that generation that, when I get philosophical about it, I look back and I think I was first person in the history of both families, my parent's families to have gone to university and for all that in this country that seems to liberate, well you know class mobility but class mobility doesn't really exist so although I had the qualifications I didn't feel worthy in many ways, in some ways you know. I didn't feel that I had achieved anything so reverting to my working-class roots if you like seemed to be a logical thing. I mean it didn't, in that sense also I've heard many people over the years say, what the fuck are you doing that for when you've got all these qualifications but actually I felt comfortable there if you know what I mean.

SH: Yeah.

NC: I was uncomfortable, I know I was made to feel uncomfortable when I was at University for not being upper middle class or not being from a public school or private school as you call them, and all of that so, and jumping ahead it was only my experience in America that made me feel that I knew a lot, you know that I had something to give.

SH: Yeah.

NC: Other than just doing the work but, so, that's jumping ahead I'm sure so that's actually coming to America where that class system is, of course it exists but being British I guess I was able to bypass it in a way that maybe an American stone mason couldn't and that from my own personal confidence point of view, the time I spent in America was the biggest breakthrough I made and I'm not sure I would have made that had I remained in this country.

SH: Interesting so what's the favourite part of what you do? What is your favourite part of it?

NC: That's hard to answer because it's...I've made a conscious decision over the years to remain on the tools as much as possible. And when the company has grown so big that that's becoming difficult, I've shrunk back because I don't want to step up and be in an office and I don't want to be running around pricing jobs I want to actually be doing the work. So I enjoy actually site work I enjoy, but I also enjoy the bigger picture so I and it's difficult and increasingly as I do historical research and putting the buildings in those contexts which I've done mostly in the last 15 years but particularly in the last five where you get to research a full historical background to the project and the building I enjoy that too, so I enjoy both and I get the best of both worlds but again it's difficult in some ways because people want to put you in pigeonholes don't they? People want you to be in a box where you're a stone mason you just work the stone or they want you to be a surveyor so it's quite a, you're on a difficult route to maneuver or to work your way through dealing with other people's expectations and other people's prejudices, but as I said at the beginning, actually I think everything I do is entirely within the compass of a stone mason.

SH: Yeah.

NC: And my training actually equipped me to do all the recording and the drawings and all the other things. And I suppose my politics or my academic side equips me to write things and you know to write reports and enjoy them. But at the same time it's not, I don't do academic, I feel I offer something different being from a craft background so my management plans are not the sort of things that people learn to do here I try to write the really comprehensive narrative and to really, rather than just bullet points that people might find them a bit too long but my experience in getting those is that the clients tend to respond to something they can read as a narrative rather than just bullet points that they don't bother reading. They're just bullet points. They don't engage them in the same way. I like to think that whether it's true or not is another matter. So I can't say. I enjoy doing everything I do equally probably and the year, the cycle of the year if in an ideal world I'm doing that research side of things in the depths of winter and then back on site in the spring. Yeah.

SH: So, do you have a least favourite part of your profession?

NC: I mean the least favourite part is the way that everything is organised really. Competitive tendering and all of that that is my least favourite part and in truth the fact I've never earned a bloody living doing this. You know I've never earned the circus I just, I run to stand still, which I

think is a common experience in the industry really, so that's the part I don't enjoy is the fact that you have to tender for jobs very often and going too cheap and knowing that you'll never, you know probably you may earn enough to pay everyone but, and that's been a common experience for me I've often only earned enough to pay everyone and I end up with nothing at the end myself. Which is, and yet I'm the one carrying all the, so the stress of that is my least favourite part really. I fantasize about being a nationalized industry. That said the money is the least important part to mean as well it's just you have to be realistic I don't do it for the money I do it for the satisfaction, so we'll always end up doing as good a job as we possibly can whether were losing money or not but that's a personal thing isn't it. I mean generally speaking, but for an example the job we're on that the moment the architect told me the other week that I'm cheap but I only won the job by 50 quid so, what else can I be?

SH: Well 50 quid is not much of a...

NC: Well exactly, so if I wasn't as she said cheap, I wouldn't have got the job. So, what do you do? So very often you have to decide how much you want the job because of what it is and the satisfaction you'll get from doing it and the money side of it has to go, you know. So that's the least favourite part of it.

SH: Well did you consider any other profession before you decided on stone masonry?

NC: No. Because I had no idea what I wanted to do. I mean at that time, quite rightly education for its own sake was the norm and I did A levels, I went to University and I was quite political which is why I did politics but of course it's a different thing but it was just there and it was there to do and at the time we got grants so we didn't have to pay for ourselves obviously and so it was there and it was something doing for its own sake but it wasn't something with a career idea. No, I had no idea what I wanted to do.

SH: So you talked about Weymouth College, can you explain that programme a little bit?

NC: Yeah, I mean it was a full-time course which was unusual, well unique when it started. It started by John Garland and another guy whose name I can't remember at the moment, but mainly at the time because they were, in the late 1970's I believe, early 80's no but have been before that it must have been in the 1970's. But, essentially the flow of apprentices from Portland where obviously there was a large stone working tradition in that area, dried up so I think it was a pragmatic decision initially that they thought well how are we going to sustain this course out at the college and the way they decided to do that was to make it full time so you did the basic City and Guilds craft and the Advanced Craft certificate over two year period. And they opened that to all comers so there was a wide range of people. The apprentice side of it did revive so that did carry on, but this always ran in tandem, so they were the only college doing that. I think John's experience started initially, I mean he trained on the island, he started at the young offender institution training stone masons and that's how he got into education and that

extended over to Weymouth College. So it was two years full time and at the time, it was actually quite difficult then even when I did it in 1989 to '91 it was still quite difficult to get into the trades then because they said we hadn't had an apprenticeship. Although in truth, because it was an intense two-year thing you probably learned more in that time than most apprentices did. And the other positive thing I would say about the course generally is that the people from a great diversity of backgrounds most of them mature like me, I was 32 when I did that so there were some from an artist background sculptors, and that sort of thing and there were others from all over the place, a lot from the forces because John encouraged people who left the forces to come. So that was a very rich experience in that sense you had all these different backgrounds but crucially, of course everyone who was there had decided that they wanted to do it, they were motivated were most of the apprentices if they were grown up on Portland they did it because it was there, it was a job that you did but they weren't necessarily engaged. I mean many of them were probably better stone masons than any of us ever were, they didn't have the same engagement with the thing that people tended to have on the course that we did so it was very good. And it still runs, and other colleges have responded in similar ways, so you can do them now on a full-time basis. And their fees weren't very high and they're still not even now.

SH: Did you work while you were in school?

NC: No, well on in occasionally because I had a business, the walling thing, so I did in the holiday times, vacation times but a lot of the time, also because I was so into it once I started once I learned how these tools work and what I could actually achieve with it that in that first period it was just for a long time suddenly I could these things that I couldn't image and hadn't imaged that I would be doing so I did as much of that as possible but I had to earn a little money as well.

SH: Do you feel at the college that your instructors were properly equipped in terms of what they needed in physical plant, you know the shop space and knowledge as well?

NC: Yes, generally although the workshops at that time, it's changed now, it was limited so that the apprentices when they came in on their blocks took precedent so then we were thrown out and we did a lot of drawing or something but there was always the refuge of the letter cutting shop which was something I hadn't even thought it was something that I wanted to do but something which probably remains the thing I'm best at. I don't do a lot of it now but, so we used to just take ourselves off to the letter cutting shop and carry on and do that. Do our own thing you know. But now it's much better equipped I think, so I'm sure that isn't a problem anymore.

SH: Would you encourage others to pursue the training system that you used?

NC: I would but with some reservations about it. I mean it's not bad but it's not a good as it was, and that's partly because of NVQ. You know we were the last year that did City and Guilds. And when NVQ was coming in we were there obviously so the tutors were talking to us about it and on the face of it, it seemed like a good scheme that you could come in and do six weeks and

upskill in specific areas. I'm not aware that that's ever happened actually, it's just displaced City and Guilds as an apprenticeship and dumbed it right down at the same time so its removed and lot of things and it's become a lot of, I mean this might be a prejudice view, but it all about tick boxes. You push a wheelbarrow and you get a tick, ridiculous things like that but the more important thing, and I know that that's the case across the crafts is it's the essential removal of geometry and drawings skills from that certification. It's responding, in my opinion anyway, it's a response to employers who did want people to know too much.

SH: Dumb down your workers and they won't take your job.

NC: They just wanted them to try out stuff and do what they were told and to not have this, the skills if you like, but that's my own personal opinion. I see what happens is not about empowering workers. I personally believe that the best work comes from an empowered worker. And that's my biggest beef with craft education generally in this country and perhaps elsewhere I don't know, but you get the best out of people by giving them the tools they need to excel, not taking those tools off them. In this country part of that in the construction industry I'm sure is that the trade unions were broken in the 1960's and so there were none and we see the consequences of that you're never employed by anyone, you're always self-employed. To be a builder in this country you need nothing. There's no qualification you can just do it. Just phone up and say yeah, I'm self-employed. So that was a lot of my impression in America that the unions are still very much involved in the training people and that's a good thing in my opinion.

SH: In certain areas of the country they are. Particularly in the Northeast where they're very strong. Unfortunately, down south union is a four-letter word and we don't speak of them.

Unfortunately for me. So, since you've been in the industry, has it changed?

NC: I'm not sure maybe it's my attitude has changed, or my idealism has been knocked out of me by brutal reality, probably, not especially no. There's been a great, certainly a heavier emphasis on conservation, particularly in the southwest where I was when the lime revival happened. I was aware of that back then whereas other parts of the country are still catching up as it was then. So it's hard for me because I haven't been in the same place to see how it's changed in that way. It's not the same up here. Conservation is a foreign language up here for the most part, but the changes are more about the focus of the work perhaps, but no I don't think it's changed that much but the NVQ has changed the quality of the people coming through I would say. No, I can't really answer that. Not officially. It's much the same as it was. It's been the same for me since I started pretty much I would say generally speaking the opportunities are remain much the same. Whether the economic situation is different I don't know perhaps I'd hazard that wage rates have fallen overall.

SH: What you guys get paid over here is obnoxiously low. I'm just blown away with what you guys get paid. We're moving off topic but in the states, you would be getting \$50-60 an hour.

NC: Which I know because I've worked in the states. \$40 an hour with a house and a car is what I've had in private industry and that's right. That's quite an attraction, depending on the exchange rate. But more than that it's the money is part but you're actually valued far more as an individual or a skilled person which the money reflects that but actually that wouldn't be the reason that I would want to go work in America again which generally in principle I would its actually the thing that people listen and want to hear what you've got to say about what you're doing and that they value your input and you're treated better and that's an empowering thing in itself and that's more of an attraction to me than the money would be. It's not the money that attracted me. Well it was initially but also the interest and the challenge of going somewhere different and seeing how they did it. But it's a different attitude that you get from people. In this country generally if it's a homeowner they assume that you're going to rip them off. That's the starting point.

SH: Yeah.

NC: And that you're going to try to create unnecessary work and those things are just a common assumption and partially a function of the fact that you have so many cowboy builders around because there's no control of who can be a builder

SH: Well we've got plenty of them in the states too....

NC: Well you have yeah but, that's quite draining, quite wearing that you are constantly facing this attitude and then you've got wealthier people in this country, the estates and such, but they're even worse. They want to drive down the price of everything. They want the best quality work for the least cost.

SH: I don't understand why the richest people are the cheapest when it comes to building.

NC: That's not the case in my experience. In New England anyway. The first advice I was ever given actually was don't go in cheap because actually they want to pay they want to think you're worth a lot of money.

SH: Well they can brag.

NC: Exactly. It's totally different. I often felt that the conditions that I've experienced in New England, I don't know about anywhere else but in New England where obviously there's a huge concentration of excessive wealth, but I'm sure that I've often felt that is the conditions that were the case in Britain in the 18th century. You know where that's sort of where we did have this explosion of wonderful work and decadent work and excessive expense on work but that attitude, I feel I see the parallel there but that no longer exists in this country generally speaking that's for sure even amongst the very wealthy. It's not, they just don't want to pay. They really don't want good work necessarily. They just want to bodge it.

SH: They just want it done.

NC: Yeah.

SH: So how do you feel about the future of your craft? Are there enough practitioners? Are they good enough? You already touched on that a little bit.

NC: (pause) I don't know (pause). I'd like to think it won't change or it will continue. But I feel it's...But I don't know I don't think it's...Yeah, I don't know. I'm pessimistic in many ways.

SH: That's fine it's... (Laughter)

NC: I don't believe the training is good enough. So it really does rely on individuals who have gone through the basics training encountering people who you can continue to learn from but of course if I can be immodest enough to include myself in that category at the moment say if someone like Steve who's working with me who's sixty-one, but those people are getting older all the time. And there are young you say you hope you can instill some enthusiasm and passion in the younger people but certainly the ones I've come across younger, coming out of college they don't have the necessary humility and either they're for a quick buck, but of course there isn't one to be had really, or they think they know it all when they don't, its that's not just me its everyone I know that takes on youngsters finds that same problem. Whether that's a problem with our education system I don't know. So that's always a problem. And they end up usually leaving because they think, they can't accept that steady progress in required. You know to learn because they think they know it all already because they don't. So they feel they're being shat on to be honest when you ask them to do basic skills. I remember, again in Vermont I worked initially when I went with a guy called David Baker, a wonderful mason. And he just took on apprentices on rotation. You know he took two every year. But they spent the first-year mixing mortar. And maybe then they start to learn a few things. But for five years. Then after five years had been happy for them to leave and go set up and that's what they did over the years but if we asked a guy in this country to mix mortar for a year they wouldn't be on it they would find that demeaning. But mortars are the basics of our whole. They hold everything together. So that's quite difficult and its very rare to find someone who is like that and if that, in my experience and of that of other I know, if that is the case then I am fairly pessimistic for the future of the craft really. And I'm not convinced that, on the other hand I think there's with the NHTG and people there been a tremendous focus on saying that the skills don't exist. I think generally speaking the skills do exist but it's the materials and the state of mind are the things to change not, you know there are still builders who are good builders and take pride in what they do but they are using the materials that are damaging to the buildings they're working on. But if you can change that, if they're good craftsman then they will, so they will change. And again, I found that in America there's a lot more receptiveness to change once you demonstrate to the craftsman well actually this is probably very good for the building you're working on, no good craftsman wants to do damage do they?

SH: Hopefully not.

NC: So, in that sense the wider skills are still there just in our particular industry bringing them into, its tweaking those skills and changing the materials and the frame of mind in which people approached buildings it's always been seems to me always the most important thing and not having to training them entirely because like I say, the skills exist. Maybe they use gypsum instead of lime, but you know it doesn't take a lot, and there are still people wanting to learn those skills and work in the building trade and all that so the building trade as a whole is no different much as it ever was it just the materials are wrong. In stone masonry well I don't know because most people, most masonry today is produced by machines isn't it? And I was in Panswick down in Gloucestershire a few months back and I was just looking for some particular stone and I went to a mason's supply in Panswick, but they had just invested hundreds and hundreds of pounds for profiling machine because he said they couldn't find stone masons to do it by hand. But that's an area that obviously has the richest of stone working traditions and it's where I grew up around there. And yet they're saying they can't find the stonemasons. But, that's where it comes down to if the stone masons can't earn a decent living, or of skilled craftsman can't earn a decent living, why are they going to do the job? That's the bottom line isn't it? If they can earn far more in IT or in all these other things, then they would be almost foolish not to. I mean I guy I trained and worked with together named Ollie Cole, he's based in Wales now he says if anyone asks him and I say he's the finest stone mason I've ever know or every worked with you knowing his head and his understanding and his skill with the tools. But if anyone would ask him about becoming a stone mason had said don't fucking bother. He's advice would be don't do it because you'll never earn a living. You can do it for love, but that's not enough is it. I say I mean....

SH: Love doesn't pay the bills.

NC: Yeah you can say I mean I think I'm at the top of my craft, I don't have a pension, I don't have anything. I don't own a house and David Baker saying to me in America he bought his first house when he was doing his apprenticeship in Maryland so, but you'd couldn't even contemplate that. As I say I often wonder whether it's just me or whether I'm totally incompetent but I'm not because we wouldn't get the jobs if we priced them where they should be priced.

SH: Yeah.

NC: And everyone knows that. You know you've got big firms and this is a function of capitalism and dare I say. You know the bigger firms especially in the recession were buying the work in and they're all hundred, thousand, million pounds overdraft and the banks own them, so they don't allow smaller companies in really in those circumstances. So they buy the work in so you're in a vice you know, you can't escape from it. Which is why some of the best stonemasons end of going upstairs and into the drawing shop. One of the initial, which I thought was commendable efforts of the NHTG was to set up to make it worthwhile for skilled craftsman stay on the tools

and not have to go up to the office. I'm sure they're not terribly happy just to earn a little more money. But I don't think the NHTG has achieved that but that's what needs to be achieved really. But this a social thing isn't it, that's a bigger thing to think you can change that.

SH: That's ideal or idealism but how can you as an organisation and say you need to pay your workers more?

NC: Yeah.

SH: If they have to pay their workers more than they're not going to get the jobs so...

NC: Yeah exactly. So it's a very difficult situation. So you end of doing it for love and you have to, if I didn't put all that out of my head, my partner gives me a lot of grief about how little money we earn, but I can't actually afford to think about it too much because the stress would be too much (laughter). And the depression, so you have to put that out of your head and you take the job on and you aim to do it as best you can and actually you don't say we can't afford or we've underpriced that and you don't try to win extras which is the other strategy to go in cheap and try to win extras. I find that unethical myself and I find that obviously there are genuine situations so I'd rather just, so I have to put all that out of the way and get on with the job and go job by job and do they best we can for the building. And that's, but you can't demand of everyone that that's how it should be and the other small dimension in this country in conservation I mean in purer conservation if you like that historically it was the area of the upper middle-class people often with independent incomes.

SH: Yeah.

NC: So they don't give a shit about the money. But if you have to make a living out of it, you know what I mean?

SH: Yeah.

NC: And that's, I don't think that's untrue to say that was the case. I think the departing head of ICON, the Institute of Conservation who came from a business background and is leaving things he says well conservators need to charge more money well of course that's true but a lot of people don't actually need to. So if like the stone mason into conservation and has a conservation ethic then that's another dimension of how difficult it is to earn decent wack because historically the rates have been lower because people didn't need to charge a lot of money they did do it, they could afford the luxury of doing it for love if you like.

SH: So, do you participate in short course training, in terms of taking it or teaching it?

NC: I take fewer and few I do go on occasionally things but yeah, we do participate in short course teaching. For my point of view, I first started doing short courses and talking when I was in the states because people were interested and the first one I ever did was with Judy Heywood at Historic Windsor

SH: I know Judy very well, yes

NC: And only two people turned up, John Wastram was one of them. But that actually allowed me to think, well actually I can actually do this I can say something actually worth listening to. And we did a few training things as part of the first project when I went out was part of the Landmarks Trust USA and part of the deal was we would do some lime, so I did those but when I came back, I used to go over in the summers for five years, but I ended up in Malton where certainly the town is owned by a single individual. I learned that's a very shallow understanding ambition. But at the time it seemed genuine that they wanted to use best practice conservation and follow that, and so I was encouraged to do training courses. And so I did more and more of them and we did them regularly. And I enjoyed it I enjoyed that side of it. You can see that you inspire people. And also I did do a bit of teaching in the carving studio in Vermont as well so I taught a letter cutting course and an architectural carving course. I did a project there the first year, did a lot of informal teaching so while we were working on the building so I was doing informal sessions with people as they were coming through for the other courses, so the following year I did the two weeklong course and I enjoyed them, I really enjoyed that and it's a very satisfying and we've continued to do them Ben my colleague who is in Canada now but actually it does remind you of actually what you know I suppose and the value of what you know. And it's very nice to see people, the scales falling away from people's eyes it's like; oh yeah, they feel that they can do this, something that seemed so mysterious. And even the carving course which seems ridiculous but a lot of stone from various regions have said well you can't teach anyone anything in a week, But actually you can, if they want to learn. And so just giving them the basic tool skills if you like and the basic idea that you can do it is a very satisfying thing. It very affirming of yourself isn't it? So that's one reason we do it. But and in 2008 I organized, I was in Nebraska actually for three months and we thought we should do a conservation faire and we organised that around a particular project we had been doing in Malton, a very important house and we opened the house up to people when it was all undressed, everything was stripped out that was coming out and everyone said I was mad no one would want to see that but we had about a thousand people in a day come through and the house was packed with people and we had other trades. We did it with the SPAB and so we had blacksmiths and people around the site and around the town doing stuff so. And again, that to me is real conservation. You've got this house as a centrepiece and you're using the house to explain but actually again empowering local people to see this house that they've never been allowed access to, partly because of the estate and how that was, it's sort of semi-feudal, thing, and that gave me great delight that these people coming and looking and being like I've never been in the back garden I've never been you know giving them ownership of that which I think is conservation. You need people to feel some ownership of the place don't you to really protect it. And so then we carried on and, on of, my negative experience in training was because the estate manager there suddenly decided that I

shouldn't be having to deal with all the admin so we'd done various lime days and things so we got a local training, actually engineering organisation to take that on, and so they then spoke to the LSC, the Learning Skills Council, to see if they could get some funding for this lime day. And they said; oh, we can give you some funding but only if you involve a college, so we needed up with this lime day, and then the NHTG jumped on as well we'd have hourly, you know hour long meetings with about ten people sat around this table, talking about this one fucking lime day, do you know what I mean.

SH: Yeah.

NC: And then we delivered the lime day and that was a great success but, everyone took a cut out of all this money so at the end of the day it cost 7000 pounds to deliver a one-day lime day. And then we did another one, a stone one, and so everyone's taking their cut and I thought what the? You know, so I said what the bloody hell is going on here you know. So I set about making, trying to make the case that they could pay for themselves, so we did a whole run after that, leaving all these people out. But again, all they did, all these people actually wanted was to claim the credit for what we've done. And if I can name names like Craven College who just jumped into this. What that is showing is that funding I find funding a corrosive thing generally, you know what I mean.

SH: Yeah.

NC: It corrupts what should be a very simple thing. They need to funding to keep their existence going and they're all taking a piece of the pie when in fact all you're trying to do is give twenty or thirty people, hopefully builders and such people really just an understanding of this material and how it's good, and how you work with it and her you go, take it and run. And everyone has to take a slice of the pie and it becomes unsustainable you know. So then we did do a run of two-day, three-day courses. Again, at York House, and they broke even is all I can say. But, it was just the cost of my time you know what I mean. So I've done all sorts of different forms of training. But in that instance, I mean, just to settle a few scores, there we had Craven College involved there and they say, oh we do all this. And I'm thinking yeah, ok but. And then they didn't deliver, they didn't turn up when it came to organising it or they the first one they did a flyer for the stone conservation one, with a picture of Skipton Castle, which is based in Malton but its miles away, Skipton Castle and Craven College, it was all about Craven College and they took out adverts in the paper and no one signed up and I think. So and then they disappeared so for some reason so I said to David Trainer right I'm going to do it, I wrote the flier and advertised it the way I advertised it and we got a full house of people. Then suddenly of course Craven College comes back up. Then a year later Simon Holmes of the CITB phones me and says oh you should have this and sent me a copy of the newsletter, and there you've got Craven College saying yeah, we organised this thing in Malton with the Fitzwilliam Estate and all this and this is what they did.

They did fuck all. You know what I mean I did it all. All of that kinda leaves you feeling a bit cynical do you know what I mean?

SH: Yeah.

NC: Because you're doing it really with the best of intentions and, but everyone else is trying to rape off and tick their boxes and that doesn't do what you're trying to do any favours out it that way.

SH: Yeah.

NC: So that funding thing I don't know if you have this I know in the states of lot of it is private, which in some ways politically I'd find that a problematic in some ways its less bureaucratic and you haven't got all these bodies that need a cut to sustain themselves taking it out and robbing it from what you're actually doing. So I don't know, I don't know what I think about that. So my experience in all that has been negative and I find increasingly funding, when it first came about the Heritage Lottery Fund, seemed a good thing. But even in the beginning we saw as conservators seeing things that would be done that didn't need doing, Monuments that were dissembled off church walls just because maybe there might be some corrosion, you know all this. And so already from its very start it was this negative thing. In many ways it's been positive but a lot of it, again, how much of that money is actually reaching the building and how much of it is being diverted off into these NGO's effectively isn't it. And what are the groups and what contribution are they actually making? I don't know. Do you know what I mean?

SH: Oh, trust me I know. I deal with it all the time.

NC: So, that's a problem and we see funding streams deterring the nature of the project. So again if...am I going on too much?

SH: No, no please the more the better.

NC: To give you more examples these are all the things that make me feel jaded and weary, but if we look and say take a case study of the pyramid at Castle Howard, when two years ago, or maybe three even though they had a conservation minded service manager she asked me to write a schedule and a price to conserve it. A Grade I listed monument it's a Hawks Moore, his last work. Not meant to be any magnificent. Actually, just a thing in the landscape, because the public don't have access to it so it's just a shape in the landscape effectively, but the podium of it very heavily eroded, so a lot of the detail in that had gone. Some remained and enough to be able to reconstruct it with a drawing, which I did. And I think that was bounced around to English Heritage and other people, but I was proposing conservation as is because I could actually image English Heritage or anyone else would contemplate restoration. But the stone, of course from which is was made is no longer available although it could be. And then suddenly, with the Buildings at Risk Register, somebody say this should be restored. So someone from English Heritage is saying to the estate, this should be restored. And then the agent there asked me to

write give him a price a guide price for restoration, which I did although I said to him I wouldn't do it. I don't agree that it should be restored. Or if it was it would have to be the same stone as the original, all of that. And I gave them a price. And anyway, then suddenly an architect is appointed, a conservation architect, and the architect says to me; well I want you to be on the tender list, And I said well I disagree with this and what stone you are going to use. And there's email trees of English Heritage and I said I know what you'll use. You'll use this Pennines sandstone which is totally geologically different, it will never weather or erode in the same way. Wouldn't it be better to use this, we could get the quarry back up that the original stone came from. For which permission exists. So I was involved with getting the permission which has never, well anyway, so all of that is going on then suddenly, it went, the actual architect said to me well I did want you on the tender list, but the client only wants people they know and that have worked there for the last ten years. So, which I'm the person that's worked there the most in the last ten years. So the fact that that was given as the reason why I couldn't be on the tender list because I hadn't, it was obviously political. It had more to do with stuff in Malton and all of that. But, so I was still involved in the discussion, and they are going to use completely the wrong stone and they are going to use, so what, and I was stating to the architect, you can get the quarry open back up. But yeah, the funding stream wouldn't allow us time. So why are we going to use the wrong stone. So I said to him, and I'm flattered in a way he's used my drawings, because there's a very particular detail that would have probably been missed otherwise in the design of it, and he sent me the trial panels of the rustication. And he, the other thing will it be done anything like the original? Since enough evidence still survives, and of course it wasn't. And he sent me a note saying I think it looks nice. And I said I'm afraid I'm going to have to disagree. It doesn't look anything like the original. But then I went on to say but actually, this is what I believe, what you'll end up with is a copy of Hawks Moore pyramid. It's no longer Hawks Moore's pyramid. So as I say the main thing is they could have waited to get the right stone, and they could have opened the quarry and done it, and that still not maybe necessary but that could have been, instead we're going to get completely different stone that ignores every principle you think of good conservation. But it's being paid for and driven by English Heritage. The other dimension to that is when I had initially been excluded because the client was deciding not English Heritage is it was required to go out to tender or general bid to tender with PPQ's, but every one of these PPQ's was loaded in favour of a big company. Whereas again from my own perspective from a conservation, there are plenty of stone masons in this area, not necessarily me, more stonemasons whose skills and company size probably best reflect the people who did it in 1730 when it was built. But they were, because of the way that English Heritage structured the way so you had to show growth, annual growth three year in turnover, three years of growth in profit. You had to employ more than ten people, you got points for more people and all this. So, my

opinion, and I'm saying this to you but I will be saying this in a public forum eventually someday, that's set up, that's the antithesis of everything that we, but it's also set up to exclude small firms. The last thing to say is that my initial guide price for that work was £26,000, and the three firms that were in the running, because the architect's spoken to me about it, and including the one who got it out in, are large firms, were talking 100 plus people with all the office staff and all these overheads, there prices were in the 120,000 mark. Impossible in a, truthfully, they bought that work in. I understand why they might want to do that. But of course, every boss wants to do it as cheap as they can. So all these things, that's an example of why I feel so pissed off with the industry because it could have been done really well. It could have been a brilliant project it could have been, if you set aside the question of should it be restored or not, they could have done it in a better way, much better way, and it could have been done by, in a way to encourage the skills of a smaller company and encourage the skills of those who do take on apprentices, instead it went to a big company who bought it who will win extras everywhere down the line, and that's not a fair environment is to?

SH: No.

NC: And that's what I mean, so it discourages the smaller firms entirely. And it really is in the smaller firms that the skills remains I think. Because the odds are, I think, I don't know, it might be defamatory, that the most of the firms probably priced that thing to get it done by a machine, you know sandblast it off. But luckily because I have been involved, secretly, that have changed it and they have done a more representative version of what was there rather than otherwise because the architect has asked me, I still don't know why. I think it's because he's trying to disarm my criticism in the future because I'm been involved in the process in some extent, I'm not paid of course, that's the other thing. No pay for that involvement. So anyway. That's my rant over.

SH: That was a good one. I liked that. Are you an active member of any professional organization related to your craft?

NC: Well, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings is professional organisations that I have been a member of for a long time. And ICON; Institute of Accredited Conservators so. But there again you see if you go through that process and I am accredited you see, but it was quite a struggle to become accredited not because I didn't meet the criteria, but again because you're dealing with class issues so although the criteria were initially ten years' experience or post-graduate accreditation, and five years' experience, well I had postgraduate building, I mean I went, I didn't say that, I went and did part time an MA but never did the dissertation because I just didn't had the time, but I did the post graduate diploma.

SH: Was that here at York?

NC: No that was Bournemouth University.

SH: And that program no longer exists?

NC: Sadly not. Although it continues in a way at Weald and Downland to some extent. But so I did that. I met the criteria I did postgraduate qualification and fifteen years' experience, so I mean, initially they, when I did the application and I filled it all out, they came back to me saying well, you're too much of a stone mason we think. Or you're a stone mason.

SH: Yeah

NC: Really. And so we're advising you not to proceed at this time. So I needed up I phone up the committee that said that. And they give you two weeks to proceed or not, and I said well I am going to proceed. And Sarah Stanley whatsit, whose head of conservation at the National Trust was the one I was speaking to said well I'll look at your application again and I'll give you some advice as to why we don't think you've met the criteria or why you should wait. And I said well yeah do that but I'm going to proceed anyway, I want to put my application in. And in the end about, bear in mind I had about two weeks to make that decision, about two months later I got her feedback. And it was, it amounted entirely to it would have been better if I had filled out the form electronically rather in longhand. (Laughs). That was it. And of course, when I went to assessment I, to get the accreditation you need to get, there's eleven categories and you need to get six. To be competent in six and have knowledge in five and when I got the feedback I was considered competent in ten and had the knowledge in the one which makes eleven so obviously that vindicated my intention. But again, I would see that entirely as a restrictive practice they didn't want a stone mason to be a conservator if you like and so, that was early days in ICON and of course in the way of these professional organisations the people who are already in it give themselves the accreditation and actually don't want any more people to get it. So anyway, that's another reflection of all of that really. So ICON, and I'm not terribly active in that, but SPAB really is the thing that I considered that I'm pleased to be I'm considered myself to be a, or it fits with my world view. But that's a world view that I came into touch, because when we trained at Weymouth College, for all that I recommend it, and just as an aside that were I think Simeon hasn't moved on from, well maybe given what he said. But, we were trained to have absolute contempt for conservation, there's no question. A masonry training, particularly in this country, nothing is the case of anywhere I know of where they still train you, that you're trained, part of your training is to despise conservation and to think that is robbing us of work. That's it's a bunch of wankers doing it and so I'd bought into that when I trained you know. But the first major project that I we did with Nimbus Conservation as freelance I was confronted with SPAB ideas and confronted with a surveyor that was very much, well Phillip Hughes which has written one of their most important documents about breathable buildings, and initially we thought he was a bit of a dick and we thought we were all clever. Well the thing we thought that we were most clever about we did a finial that split across a vein and we glued it back together with pink polyester

resin and we saw it we said no it's a vein in the calcite and he believed us. And then we thought; wow brilliant but actually of course it got me thinking and then I, as I looked into it I sort of looked at the ideas of Morris and people like I'm and I was like this is someone I actually agree with not just about that but politically too you know and all those things. And so, yeah I'm very much a committed member of SPAB. And at the end of the day that's the only one I feel that I need to be a member of ICON yeah, I'm pleased to have done that, but I've never had to prove that I'm accredited.

SH: Yeah, it's never come up.

NC: And it's good that it exists but yeah so those and I don't know if I'm well I am in ICOMOS and those things but again you know, I find that a bit too esoteric for the most part and so the SPAB really sums up I think the best approach to training and to conservation and just the ideas to back it all up. I'm trying to think if I'm in anything else.

SH: Building Limes Forum?

NC: Ah, yes not recently, but I was. I was years ago then I fell out with them. I didn't agree with them anymore. They humiliated a guy who written a lot of stuff in the Daily Telegraph telling people that they took exception to what he had written that they were just a trade association for the hydraulic lime industry. And they invited him to speak and then basically were just very rude and set him up for a fall in public. But I just thought that was unacceptable because actually what he was saying was probably true. So that's when I didn't want, when Stafford Holmes prevailed upon me to re-join a few years ago, I did, so hopefully things are backing away from that but there is no question that hydraulic lime that yeah that issue is one that they became dominated but that industry I think. It fair to say you know.

SH: We've got one in the states called the Society for the Study of Historic Cements. It's the Rosendale Company. All the people that actually have it are the board members are Rosendale Company people. So...

NC: I mean I think they were reflecting a collective blindness because when I started we were using in putties and potsalams and they suddenly all these hydraulic limes suddenly appeared. And they took over. That particular first project using blue lianas lime but that's a softer end lime. Although the Victorians considered it eminently hydraulic in structural engineering words, but then that ceased to be available, so we just carried on using it. But again, with the Building Limes Forum, and this may be a total distraction, I raised concerns about the hydraulic lime back in 2000 when I was in the states, in 2001 when I had done some work with some hydraulic that was 3.5 then the owner called and wanted me to do it about five years later and it was hard as fucking nails and I thought well this can't be right. And there we were working with schist, so you know, not a problem but, in fact so I did write a thing for them and Doug Johnson said; oh yeah, I'll publish it and never did and finally one year later I was like are you going to every publish? Yeah,

no oh next year, yeah. And never did. It was more the suppliers came to dominate the BLF I think with vested interest and anyway, yeah. So, I...can't remember where I was going with that. But no, I became disillusioned with really essentially that but no I've re-joined and I'm hoping things are moving in the right direction and it's not just me there's plenty of people that are seriously concerned about NHLs and their consequences. So, and I know Stafford is and has been for several years but that's a measure of how dominate that idea became that people like Stafford sort of ducked out. They were overwhelmed by it themselves and felt defeated and I know I assuming too much in Stafford's case but my impression because I've worked with him on one of the units here, but he's delighted to see people like us doing what we're doing with the softer limes. So obviously he agrees. It's almost like he was beaten back by this wave of NHL that had spread in from France mainly. Yeah so.

SH: We've got plenty of them in the states too. So, would you suggest others to practice your craft?

NC: I would yeah. But I would feel guilty about, I would also feel guilty you know I think I would probably express that to with the module I feel that, maybe guilt's too strong a word but you know I'm aware that, lots of people, Ben you haven't met Ben but yeah, he's a guy whose enthusiasm and passion and skills can really inspire some people. So you do these modules and you can see that you actually are inspiring some people. But given my experience over the last thirty years, I feel guilty in a way that I'm inspiring them to go into an industry that they're probably never going to earn a decent living. Unless which tend to say to them these days that as soon as you can get yourself to America.

SH: That's why Edward called me.

NC: You know because that's somewhere that's its more appreciated and where you might earn a decent living. But I might be, maybe I'm wrong but the project I'm just running, just starting up with Natural England where the contractor is one of the only other companies in North Yorkshire that does the sort of thing that we do and we sat there on Sunday and he said well what I really want is someone to give me a job so I can work on the books because I just can't take it anymore, you know what I mean?

SH: Yeah.

NC: It's just grinding me down. And so that's a common experience in this, And it's sad in a way and I know real conservators as well that, I say real in a way but paper conservators and that but it seems a common experience that you start off in an industry with great enthusiasm and passion and idealism but my the time you get to my age or their age you're just totally defeated and you know disillusioned and you know and it seems to be a common experience and that's not to do with the industry that's got to do with, well I don't know. I'd say that's to do with capitalism really. That's if I were to give you the big answer on that if these skills can really be

sustained, I'm not sure they can in a capitalist society, in my opinion it seems impossible to me that when we are teaching these skills are even still very much a fabric of society and their cultural references or those places where they are still strong like the Yemen or these are places that are on the margins of capitalist society where this is still possible. Or maybe not I don't know. I'm not assuming that you agree with me on that but in a global sense that's how I feel. And in that sense if you go to William Morris you can see he felt that what's changed? Not a lot. Everything he said in the late nineteenth century about it.

SH: It's still going on.

NC: It's still the same. Because it is. Empowering workers with skills that cost money, they don't want that really. I mean ultimately, there's not enough profit in that. So, in that sense I'm pessimistic, that's a general pessimism about things in that way. But we can't escape that, we can't escape the dominant economic system that we exist in and I do think that we, in many ways, that unless it becomes a luxury thing, that people are prepared to pay for, but is that really any longer the craft that we were a part of?

SH: Does it become a niche for a certain group of individuals and then it becomes are their enough people to, is there enough work to sustain the people actually do it so?

NC: So, I, yeah. We've got, there are various things that we've got on. Again, it depresses me I mean in Malton where I was fully invested emotionally and every way but was just sort of pushed out in the end, but they just announced plans to build a five hundred house pastiche development. You know a luxury for the middle classes with a few token affordable house thrown in. But they're already and they will as time, based on the Sundry thing with Prince Charles down on Dorset, where I used to live, and I saw it evolve over time, in my opinion that's a disaster. But most people it's a complete fraud so they'll be saying this is promoting traditional skills but there are none at play really in the construction of cavity walls, insulated houses with sawn stone, you know everything that actually is what a traditional building or a traditional house in this area or anywhere but in this area if we look at that doesn't actually apply to those buildings. In truth if you really want to build a house that has these principles that really is traditional you know respecting the traditions if you like, then you're looking at earth houses and more solid wall construction in that respect but our insulation requirements don't allow, but you could build those they just don't want to do that.

SH: Yeah.

NC: So they want to build these stone houses that are pastiche house and they've got a bloody market cross for goodness sake and they, it's all ahistorical nonsense. And it's all the brainchild of, I can't help but, it does my head in do you know what I mean. Selling something to people who think they're getting something that looks like Thornton-le-Dale but of course it can't ever because the construction is totally different it can't look like that. So that's a fraud also they're

trying to imbue meaning to the place. And yet the guy who Liam Creole, who is the guru the brain behind all this, the Fitzwilliam estate is paying loads of money as a consultant, defends the architecture of Albert Speer. You think, so what's, where, you can only do that if you're saying architecture is pure and has no or has no cultural meaning can you defend Albert Speer's designs and yet they are telling us that this housing estate has great meaning, because its pastiche, it's all bullshit, but that increasingly the way that they this whole movement in the traditional building group and Prince Charles is a leading proponent of the same. They are deforming what traditional skills are and pretending but it's all about making money of course, it's all about making money.

SH: Of course. Always.

NC: And selling a vision that isn't really a vision that you meant to support but it doesn't either support traditional skills either. So that's depressing too, but in the context of this country that's exactly how everything is, these imitation stone houses but I was reading the other day about the 3D printing houses but wouldn't that actually be more meaningful than what they're talking about in a way.

SH: Yeah.

NC: They would at least be more honest.

SH: It would be representational of the era I think.

NC: But it depresses me in the sense that if that is the house of our time then were a pretty impoverished society. Both in skill terms and construction terms as anything else. I've been looking at the Unison and Frank Lloyd Wright house but where have we come since then? Nowhere you know that sort of house anyway, house of our time but we're not building them in this country but if we are then our time has nothing much to offer in the future has it, because you're not stating anything new and it's just a debasement of skills do you know what I'm saying. I suppose what I'm trying to say. I still don't know quite what I think about that if you know what I mean. I just know I don't like it. And I know I've got all these issues but there's something deeply wrong with it but that's why things like the pyramid depress me because even the people you think like English Heritage that you think would be standing up against that are actually supporting it and you know the Fitzwilliam estate and Malton have organized several conferences where they are trying to entirely redefine authenticity and say you know and the architect involved, not Cribb but the one whose actually doing the work, we engaged him about that and he's telling me if William Morris were alive today this is exactly the sort of architecture he would like so they're trying to seize this agenda off of conservation aren't they. But it seems like English Heritage they were at that conference they were speaking at that conference, so they are actually supporting that completely crazy agenda which is an ultimately what that is about is heritage as a community isn't it. Because heritage has become a commodity to buy and sell and that's not what we, well I don't think that's what I was about, that's not why I came into the

industry but that's the way it seems to be going right now and the original Morris Idea and SPAB ideas I mean there's a SPAB visit to the pyramid next month, well in a couple of weeks and in my opinion that's something that SPAB should have been objecting to not condoning by going and looking do you know what I mean.

SH: Yeah.

NC: So everything is feels like I'm maybe I'm just an old dinosaur, but it just doesn't, none of it feels good. Do you know what I mean, and I suppose that in a nutshell it is that commodity that heritage is a commodity now. I mean recently I've been reading David Harvey and I don't know if you know he's work.

SH: I don't actually.

NC: But it does have some relevance to the thing about urban design because he's a Marxist in New York, what's it called...anyway he's talking about monopoly rents and the desire to create distinctiveness in towns in an post-industrial all this. If you up all the distinctiveness of what you have and heritage is the perfect thing. Like York we see it. I've seen it unfolding in York for the last twenty years. It almost becoming a theme park isn't it? And you've got the heritage but it becomes a commodity that you can market that makes your city different than that city and all these things, but his point really is all of that is a pursuit of monopoly rents because your trying to create an aura of identity that allows you as a landlord to charge more rent at the end of the day. Because what the does is bring in all these companies that are then making, you know renewing buildings saving buildings by restoring them but doing it in a way that degrades their cultural meaning that authenticity. And that's a function of capitalism angina your end up, all these places end up destroying exactly what make them distinct. And that is a contradiction. And in a way he's his ideas actually frame what I feel, the anxieties that I feel if you know what I mean. It's made sense of them as I recommended his book on the crash. He's the only guy that's ever really made sense of the crash you know the recent, 2008 one. But, you know so that sense I don't know if I would recommend, coming back to that question, would I recommend people to go into it. I don't know because from a personal level I feel that everything is against the increase you know what I mean.

SH: Yeah.

NC: Well the reason I went into it, the reason I do it and take the greatest satisfaction in doing it are being pulled away you know in a way. And what we're being asked to do which is one of the main reasons I fell out with the Fitzwilliam Estate in Malton is just created to destroy these places by saving them in a way and you think it's not why I came into it. It's not why do it you know what I mean?

SH: Oh yeah. Do you think that current educational offerings how they're designed in this country are adequate to prepare apprentices to enter the field? I know you've touched on that a little bit.

NC: Well yes and no. Well they are in the sense that they are producing people who aren't going to question too much, but I don't think that's too good for those individual over time. I'm sure they are in many ways well they're giving people the basics but then, so then then it depends on the company that they are working for if, generally, and how they're treated within that, as to whether they can continue to advance but no I don't think it is. I don't believe the NVQ is an adequate preparation for the craft and understanding it. And equally the way it operates again comes back to funding and I know for absolutely certain from various people, not just in stone masonry but in all the other aspects of the craft that they every year, I mean a bricklaying guy said to me out of fifteen students every year I would say only five deserve to pass but we have to pass them all.

SH: Really? Just for numbers?

NC: Yeah. For money.

SH: Just to keep the course going.

NC: If they, and without, I don't want to have a go at anyone at York College, but I had an apprentice that, and he was a complete dickhead in the end, and when he was supposed to be at College he wasn't going and after two years I finally had enough of it so, it was six months before the end of it. He only had one or two major blocks left in college, so I sacked him.

SH: Yeah.

NC: And then, but that means really that he can't finish his apprenticeship obviously but I didn't feel that he actually learned enough anyway by that time and his attitude was so, you know it was not the right attitude in general and the fact that he was just taking the piss and not even going to College to do what he said he loved doing and all this. He was just using it as an excuse to go off on holiday and not telling me and claim his wages and all that but what shocked me in a way was the desperation and the extent to which the tutors at the College went to give him that qualification. They wanted to give him that qualification. They were trying to track him down on Facebook, they were trying to get him to come in and talk to them but he didn't. And they said if he had just gotten in touch with us we would have given you the qualification but I'm thinking what does that say? He doesn't deserve it, he really doesn't deserve it. But they were desperate because if he didn't finish the course they would have lost funding so that's the bottom line so that's the case with all the colleges I know and obviously so that too is a major problem because as I say those that I know and that have talked about them themselves don't believe that a majority of the people or at least fifty percent of the people that they're pushing out there,

having gotten their qualifications, deserve them, have done enough to merit those qualifications.

That's a major problem. I think it is.

SH: Yeah, I would say so.

NC: Do you know what I mean?

SH: Absolutely.

NC: But again, it's all driven by finances and the desperation for funding and the commercialisation of education in the country really I think you know.

SH: So if you were to, and this is going to be the last one too, if you were to design a program or a system, how would you do it? What would you see in there?

NC: Well I mean, I can't, well I know really, I think what we did at Weymouth, and I think that is the better way. I'm not sure that apprenticeship systems work in this country anymore the way, the way they work it's just an excuse to take on cheap labour often you know and if it's a sixteen year out in this country you can pay them £2 an hour I think it is.

SH: £2 an hour?

NC: For the first two years of their apprenticeship. What's that about? It doesn't work. So it really demands an awful lot of commitment from the individual to learn the trade if that's all they're going to be getting. On the other hand, it would be great if we could get them in, but you would need to get them in early in schools. And I think that one of the things in this country, and I don't know about America, but working with your hands is generally looked down upon anyway, and that's a major problem, and has been for a long time. But in an ideal world if we can get those people who, that want to do it and don't feel that it's a failure if they do that, or they don't come up to scratch, and do it on a more intensive level. I mean, when I trained I know the masons from Portland, the apprentices, the only carving they worked relevant to what they were doing really was in college. They were back at the stone firm sweeping the floors. You know that's what they did the rest of the time so it's, I don't know I suppose it can only be ideal, well I know about what you do and what the American Crafts College, what's it called, the one in Charleston?

SH: The American College of the Building Arts.

NC: That to me seems a better way. A more realistic way. It's not, well its disregarded or looked down upon in the German system, but I have a lot of problems with that system too. I don't necessarily think that that's produces, well, somebody, I believe it was Pat MacAfee actually said; well I was at that thing recently because James Simpson the architect was saying how wonderful it was and I was saying well I'm not sure it is. And Pat says well I think it's like a cult. I never thought of that myself but in some ways, that's the case. It about creating separation in this besieged way, but maybe it works they do produce these stone masons, but that's not an Anglo-Saxon tradition, its alien to us. It's actually alien to the way it was ever done in this country, to learn a trade or become a stone mason. Recently, I was reading Jean Gimpel and I hadn't really

thought about that either that idea of Guilds and that restrictive practice which essentially that's what it is. But Gimpel argues and others have argued that actually that's the beauty and the achievement of early medieval stone masons in this country is precisely because there was an apprenticeship and precisely because you had people you were doing and wanted to do it who just came in and there was no restrictive practice. They came in and there was an explosion of creativity and ideas, precisely because there wasn't a guild system you know what I mean. That doesn't answer your question in any way because actually I don't know the answer to that but in some ways I have a certain affection for what we learned, how we learned at Weymouth out it that way.

SH: Yeah.

NC: It was engaging people who were committed it wasn't, the fact that you were 32 or 40 of you wanted to do it that was the key thing, do you know what I mean. And not, we are I say the apprenticeships system has become so degraded, I'm not too sure that it delivers anything of great value. It can only be what they then do with that. So I would like to see the skills initially embedded in high school level somehow really, but that's treated equally with all the academic stuff.

SH: Which it used to be.

NC: And complementary with all of that. Because I think the education is important to the training. I remember the, I can't remember his name, O'Connell from Lincoln but when he gave a talk at Kings Manor he made that distinction that yeah training is one thing, but you need training and education. And I agree with that I'm not a worker about this that you just have to, well that's important isn't it. So somehow creating a situation where those two are somehow in tandem but equally having that situation where an individual, whatever their background, whatever has brought them to that point can fully engage and get trained on a full-time basis I think that probably the most important thing to our cultures, to our societies in America and this country really. So, from what I see, and I'll change my mind if I see it closer but what you're doing and what they're doing in Charleston seems to be the best way. And the best way ultimately, I don't know what happens in Bloomington and the apprenticeships that's probably better but the way it works in this country I don't have a lot of faith in it really. Hopefully, well there are going to be exceptions to it real and there are going to be people, like if Emma does it she's going to be, well have to put up with that low money but why should she have to put up with, well wages really, when a lot of the time they won't be doing stuff that's relevant to what they're doing really. So more intensive from fully committed people is what you want. Ultimately that's probably the best guarantee of the craft surviving. And it maybe, it may or may not be a perverted form of that because I don't say I took great reassurance in reading that about the medieval masons, because I hadn't been aware of that, but that's how that was. Somebody worked in the quarry and they

said; oh, I fancy doing that and they were trained on the job. And people just making the point that in the masonry trade at the time you could actually couldn't have an apprentice because you weren't sedentary enough to, it was impossible to have an apprentice in your house because half the time you're were at the other end of the country and half the time you didn't have a choice in that matter either you were sent there by the government, you know the crown they said right we need to recruit masons to work on that castle in bloody Wales or wherever. So, you couldn't feasibly have an apprentice in the way that a glazier could or some of the other trades like plumbers, so it made, it marked, masonry out as a different thing really, so it always embraced people coming in with passion, and that obviously changed with the Guild system when that briefly was in charge. But again, that wasn't the creation of stone masons was it it was the creation of corporate bodies and councils who made these things and made all these rules which kinda dumbed, that degraded the trades in a way. So I don't have a great admiration for the German system really. Actually, I think it's a Stalinist system really. You know that's why it survives because of East Germany and it was all about upping the worker and I don't think it's real I don't think it has many antecedents in medieval society. I think mainly it's a 20th century, but, and to might be effective. I'm not knocking it but again my problem with it, and there are several things, is that there is only one Guild out of however many there are fifteen to twenty that allow woman in. So that's not a good thing in my opinion. And equally that they too are trained in this contempt for conservation. There's pure masonry that I don't think ever existed except in our own heads you know what I mean? There all about carving and new stone and unnecessary work and, whereas that might be a romantic thing, but our job is just as much if not primarily to preserve the work of our ancestors you know our former mason. Who are we to just know better? That's how I think of about lime you know. Why do we think we know better than ten thousand years of people you know?

SH: All of a sudden in the last twenty years we've got that much smarter.

NC: Yeah. Why do we think 1:3 lime to sand was what we did when it in our eyes every day that says the mix was much richer in lime? Why do we, well I know the answer to that it just seems that we don't respect the people who came before us somehow. It's about ego. Which contradicts what I've just said about individualism which created the best work isn't it.

SH: But at the same time that individualism needs somewhere to be encouraged.

NC: Yeah you do need to. I don't disagree with Simeon in regard to, I keep mentioning it but, I don't, obviously you need to learn the skills, and you need to learn the craft but not just that. It needs to be a broader view at the same time because you are a part of a broader thing. And that's what I think, and it's changing at the Minster and other places, that if you're a stone mason you either cut stone or fix stone is not supported by the historic evidence. You know you did plastering, you did roofing you did, a mason did all those things so why restrict yourself in a way?

Why confine your horizons. For what reason, just to create or preserve some purity which of course never actually existed do you know what I mean?

SH: Yeah.

NC: Demarcation and all these things that never really existed that somehow we think did or should. So yeah, but I mean they're changing over there so and embracing all those things because it's all part of what we should be doing and why are we doing it I suppose is the other thing. But most new work it is that case that it's important for people to learn the hand skills but as I've said in the thing I've sent you, the trust is that a majority of the work is going to be made by machines isn't in. In new build anyway. It is only in the field of preservation/conservation that you're really going to use those skills that you're learning, hand skills, tool skills so yeah. All that said I do not in any way regret doing what I've done that's an important thing to say I've, so I wouldn't actually discourage people but I say I would still feel a certain responsibility if I'm encouraging them, inspiring them to do something which may not deliver a great income to them in the future you know. But will hopefully deliver them immense satisfaction. And that's the most important thing really.

SH: Absolutely. Well fantastic. Yeah that's great. Thank you.

(End recording)

Recording time 1:29:06

Interview Form-Individual

Name: Simeon Warren _____

Current address: _____, Mount Pleasant South Carolina _____ United States _____

Birthdate: _____ 1969 _____

Age: 44 _____

Occupation: Stone carver-conceptual artist _____

Interview Date: 30 July 2014 _____

Interview Location: Stephen-Savannah, Simeon-Charleston (Skype) _____

Interviewer: Stephen Hartley _____

Generation: 3-United States _____

Consent Form Signed Date: 26 July 2014 _____

Begin Recording

Stephen Hartley (SH): Alright. So, here's how this is going to work. There's ten questions. Inside those question I may ask you to elaborate what you're talking about. Some of the stuff seems kind of obvious but, I'm writing it for an audience who may not practice the trades.

Simeon Warren (SW): Yeah.

SH: So they may not know the terminology or may not know how things work. So, first some basic information. Your current address?

SW: _____, Mount Pleasant, South Carolina _____.

SH: Alright. Your birthdate?

SW: _____-69.

SH: Which would make you how old now?

SW: Forty-four. Going on forty-five.

SH: Your occupation?

SW: Which one?

SH: Whatever one you want it say.

SW: Stone carver. I got three really. Conceptual artist, stone carver, and Dean Emeritus/professor.

SH: Alright. Question number one. What is your profession, and can you explain what you do in that capacity?

SW: (Pause). Do you want me to break it down into the different things that I do?

SH: Sure that would be great.

SW: So, stone carver, I'm a professional worker of stone material. Whereas carving it, cutting it, install, and you know, fabrication of stone basically. So that's one side of it. Just finished a job up in Albany where I did all three of those things. I chopped out stone from an old, historic building,

worked new stone for it and installed it. So that's one side of what I do. Also, I teach at a College. American College of the Building Arts. Been building that College since 2001. Up until last year I was the manager, the Dean of the College and I stepped down this year to focus on teaching, my private practice, and my own research, and I teach in the masonry trowel trades which includes brick, plaster and stone work. And my main focus is the stone carving which is my major profession and specialism. Then I also consider myself a conceptual artist. Very quietly, I do stuff by myself. I started a new research project which looks at the conceptual nature of English Gothic cathedrals and what the master masons were doing at the time when the major gothic cathedrals were being built. Trying to conceptualize in a modern way what they were doing in that period. And I have my own private practice where I take on private work. I work in stone. And that's kind of the major areas of what I do.

SH: So when did you being practicing?

SW: Well, do you have a question of how I trained?

SH: Yeah that's later.

SW: Okay well I won't go into that then. So, I probably started professionally, when I was getting paid for it, at Lincoln Cathedral. And I worked there for three years in I think the eighties when I was twenty-twenty-one. And I worked in the stone yard, on the cathedral itself chopping out, worked in the carving yard. So I enjoyed the carving mainly, getting on a scaffold is not what I enjoy doing, but when you're installing stuff you have to do that. And that, the question was how did I start?

SH: When did you start.

SW: Yeah, so I was about twenty, twenty-one. And Lincoln Cathedral is a great place to begin training. I was an apprentice, finished my apprenticeship there, got my papers. I don't have them on my wall like you do, but I got my papers when I finished that, and that was from the CITB, Construction Industry Trade Board, and I also finished my City and Guilds. And I think I got, I would have to have a look again, but I think I got my Weymouth College diploma which allowed me to take on that job. So that's where I started.

SH: So why did you leave Lincoln?

SW: Magna Carta was sent to Australia at a specific time, and they lost a lot of money. And they should have sent it to America instead. And so that period they down forced the work force by half. Basically cut the whole workforce down to minimal staff because of that lack of resources that was there at that time. So I got, I was allowed to finish my apprenticeship, which was six months later, so they kept me on until I finished that, but that was the reason why I left Lincoln. And it was quite interesting I talked to Carol (Heidschuster) a little while back, when she came over here, and she said; we always thought you would go on to better things. So that was an interesting statement because I, Lincoln is a great place to learn a trade and there's something

deep down inside that I have a great affinity with it. But that is why I left Lincoln. She said she expected me to move on anyway so, but in my head, I still think I am working there somehow so.

SH: So you went over to Wells right?

SW: No actually I went and did a fine art degree after that. I spent four years, got my, I went back to Leeds, got a foundation in fine art, then did a conceptual programme in environmental art up in Glasgow School of Art. And I did that for three years in Glasgow, one year in Leeds, then I went to Wells. So I got my degree from Glasgow, basically Glasgow University, but through the Glasgow School of Art, and took a sort of side journey to more conceptual stuff, which is kind of really interesting in the sense of what I do because most of what I do is, I mean building a College, you know conceptually you have to figure out how you do stuff, and so that, more kind of deals basically kind of stuff has helped me in working with the College down here, and, but most people don't know about that stuff. So I kind of keep that for myself.

SH: How long did you spend at Wells.

SW: Wells Cathedral. I started down there, probably '98 and spent three or four years there. Then came over to America in 2001. And I think I left Glasgow in '97, I think. And I was the deputy, at the end I was the deputy yard foreman at Wells Cathedral. Mainly for doing a lot of behind the scenes work on the saws and stuff like that. But I was mainly a stone carver at Wells Cathedral, working in the shop. I didn't really do much stone installation there, but I learned more production-based carving, using angle grinders and spinners, where at Lincoln I was using just hand tools. No air guns at that time, just hand tools. So that's where I learnt how to use faster methodologies for working stone and got really into using saws to cut out and chop, chop out stonework, and then use the hand tools to carve.

SH: So, what attracted you to stone carving, stone masonry?

SW: Is this the question about why I got into it?

SH: Yeah, why did you decide on this as a career?

SW: Okay. So when I was fourteen or fifteen I had a school teacher who was really into, did a lot of clay modelling at the school, so I got into clay modelling. This is when I was in, it technically was a high school, but it's kind of middle school kind of time I think you guys do middle school a lot. So that, because I went to another place after that and went back down to a, seemingly a middle school then went to a high school, so it was a, yeah that's a comparative for you. So I think I was about fourteen, fifteen. Maybe thirteen. You've got to remember at the time that was when Star Wars was out, you know, probably the third movie with the Gamorian Guards, so I was modelling clay models for Star Wars and kind of fantasy kind of stuff. And, so that was, I enjoyed doing that. So that's what I really wanted to be, a model maker for movies. And you know, in the eighties there's not much, you know not many colleges that teach that kind of stuff. There's more of them now that teach a lot of people to do stuff that there's probably no industry for now but,

it's all computers now as well. But, so I started out thinking about doing something I could do with sculptural work, 3D modelling and, it was really funny, that kind of time you get at school, you kind of get this choice. You get set down with someone a say; what do you want to do. And so my choices were you know, you come up with something. Being a policeman, you know I wanted to do something good, being an undertaker for some abstract reason, and modelling for Star Wars movies so you're set down with the guys and told; well you're not the right personality to be a policeman. And my dad took me to an undertaker's, and that knocked that one off pretty much. You know when you see a dead body on a slab. And then my dad took me to York Minster. And went for an interview at York Minster, at the stone yard. And I didn't get accepted. And then I went to the CITB and they said I was too old, I couldn't get on for an apprenticeship, and there was nowhere to do it. And so through just trying to figure out where to go we found Weymouth College. And Weymouth College is the only full time programme in England. There's some part time programmes, there's one in York, there's one in Bath, I think there's one up in Scotland, that does industry-based block release for the stone industry, where they teach stone carving and stuff like that. But Weymouth College was the only one that did a full-time course and at that time it was City and Guilds. I think now it's probably NVQ. And it probably went, between those two it was Btech courses or something like that.

SH: Well it is changing again. It will soon be NOS

SW: NOS?

SH: National Occupation Standard.

SW: Oh good. They keep changing it. Every ten years or something like that.

SH: Yeah.

SW: Yeah that didn't work, we'll try something else. So we found Weymouth College and went down, I had an interview and was given a, I was accepted straight away. So I spent, that was kind of how I got into architectural stonework, trying to get some use of 3D modelling, because that's what I enjoy doing. So, that was the answer to the specific question.

SH: Well, we're going to get back to Weymouth College in one second. What is your favourite aspect of stone carving?

SW: Creating something. Starting with nothing and ending up with something that's physical and, it's actually, with stone carving it actually becomes something that is useful. Whereas, my great love is sculpture. And you know, I've got this book (*Gothic Sculpture*). I've just started getting into Gothic sculpture I've never been into Gothic sculpture before, I've been into very conceptual sculpture, very modern. My background is really, do you know Richard Long? He's an artist and he does a lot of, goes on walks and makes pretty patterns, or round circles with stones, landscapes and stuff like that. So just very, very, human's place in small elements in landscapes and changes in landscapes that is, what my great love is, but sculpture. And, but there's two sides

to what I do. One there is a side that is very small, conceptual, kind of things within landscapes, and then making big things for buildings. And, so, did that answer the question?

SH: Yeah. So, if that's your favourite past, what's your least favourite part?

SW: (Pause). Getting on a scaffold.

SH: (laughs). You don't like heights?

SW: No, working on a scaffold is very physical. I mean working in a stone yard is very physical. But it's a very, when you go to chop out stone, you're working on wooden boards, you're lying on the boards, you're in the conditions, particular down here. This summer I was up working in Albany, Troy (New York), you know lying on the floor, chopping out, getting dusty, trying to install this stuff, it's just hard work. You know its labour. And it's not as pleasurable. When I'm working stone, I don't have to think. I get to a place where I'm just working and my mind can wander off and invent stuff and it's very peaceful. Even working using saws, you know saws, when you've got a stone on a saw, and I'm talking big saws, you know with 25-30-centimeter cuts, because your blade's 60. I'm trying to convert centimeters into inches. So, your blades you know. And just turning that wheel. I enjoy turning that wheel and making stones go through saws, and, because it becomes very, it's almost like a yoga in a, I'm very spiritual in that kind of way with work. But I don't get that when I'm installing stone on scaffold.

SH: Alright. So you talked about Weymouth College, can you explain the structure of that programme, how it was set up?

SW: Well, this was a long time ago. Twenty-odd years ago. Twenty-five, twenty-six years ago. I think I went there when I was nineteen. Between nineteen and twenty-one. So, you know it would be hard for me to explain the specific structure of it now, but it was a full time programme, teaching carving. And it had mathematics, preservation, or conservation as they would say in Europe. I think they should use conservation terminology over here rather than preservation. Anyway, but that's another conversation. Two years, pretty much like an Associate Degree. First year is architectural stone carving, the second year was advanced architectural stone carving, you got a City and Guilds and you're carving certificate from Weymouth. So, (pause) I think in terms of (pause), I mean I've been told that it's become more arty, where they're doing a lot more kind of sculptural stuff, but I can't collaborate that.

SH: Well it looks like, originally Weymouth wasn't going to be one of my case studies but since I've now hit four people that have trained at Weymouth, they got bumped right to the top of the list.

SW: Right, well, that's the only programme they do, it's the only real programme like that they do in terms of, I believe I mean you know it's a long time ago, but the other programmes are like bakery and hairdressing. And the only reason why it's there is because Portland is across the way and that's where, you know a majority of London was built, the big buildings in London were built

in Portland stone. So originally that programme was built to train students from the industry there. And it became so, you know, it's the only full-time course that allows someone who doesn't have access to going into a programme to actually go to train and learn something. And you know that's the great thing about college programmes is you know you've got all these people out there who want to do stuff and they've got nowhere to go. And just kind of real quickly about apprenticeships. You know I talked about going to York Minster, and they didn't give me an apprenticeship. I went back six or seven years ago to York to take some photographs around their yard because we were looking at trying to build workshops for the college and I wanted images, so I went back. It was probably five or six years ago. And I spoke to the guy who I think interviewed me when I was eighteen. And he said the only reason why I didn't get employed was that I was too old. At eighteen. To get government subsidy for the Minster. Because the apprenticeship system that was in place then was based on fifteen and sixteen-year olds. So twenty years ago, my decision to become a stone carver and to work at York Minster was decided by governmental apprenticeship policy.

SH: Well I don't understand the apprenticeship system and how it works. I don't understand how you're going to decide your life at sixteen.

SW: You mean in England?

SH: Yeah.

SW: (pause). Well in England, and I can't talk about America.

SH: Well there is none in America except the union systems.

SW: Well the unions, but that's another conversation I don't know them. You can probably talk to Tom (Russack) more about that, up in New York. Funny thing is I worked with a union guy up in New York for the past two weeks, and obviously he's been trained, but he works to the rule. It's like he'll stop working because he's done enough work at that moment in time. And if he works any harder, he will have worked too much.

SH: Yeah.

SW: I was like, and he's not used to cleaning up anymore, he's not used to mixing his own mortar, he's not used to sweeping, because someone else does that for him.

SH: That's how the union world works. I was a union kid. I mean, I was in two unions. I was in the baker's union, which was hilarious, because I worked in an industrial bakery, and I was in the steamfitters' union. Never steam fitted a pipe in my life, don't ask me how. But all I did in the steamfitters was sweep. And towards the end they got me into oxy-cutting. So, do you feel that the instructors at Weymouth were properly equipped in terms of stuff that they needed and knowledge?

SW: Yeah, let me go back a little bit. You asked, you said you didn't understand choosing at fifteen-sixteen, so English school systems, and I'm just going back to my time, rather than what's

happening right now, but at 16 you're allowed to go out to work, or you can go on to do A-levels. Which are, pretty much everybody in America is in school until they're eighteen, is that right? So at sixteen you can go out and make a choice to go to work. And so all, most of the practical people, who are not academic, get put off, go through whatever, and go out working. And they can leave school. So, the apprenticeship system is built on that sixteen to eighteen-year-old time frame. And so, what they do is the industry and education do what is called block release. So they work for three months and then they go to college for a week. And, you know it may be different now but that's who they used to do it. So that's how that's set up.

SH: Did you do block release when you were at Weymouth?

SW: No I was full time. Full-time course. They had students coming in from industry that were doing block release. So they did both.

SH: So do you feel that your instructors at Weymouth were properly equipped?

SW: Well, most of my instructors were, worked across at, pretty much the guy who built the programme, can't remember his name right now, but he ran the programme, but he was an old mason. Well, not old but, he was a mason that worked over at Weymouth, or Portland and, so he knew what he was doing. And, you know I built my programme differently, more on an art side basis rather than a, I could build a programme a lot differently. I could build it on, it was based on a very specific group of things, like you had to build an ovolo, you had to this and you've got to do that where I will do an ovolo and make it into something, and then install it. I never did any install at Weymouth. And we did a little bit of conservation, but not a lot. And so it was mainly the carving side of it. But I think the instructors were good. I think they really didn't have that much academics, in the sense that we did maths and we did drawing, and we did technology, can't really remember the specifics but it was very simple, simple stuff that you had to do to get your City and Guilds. Wasn't like what we're building here, which is much more collegiate level. So I would say they knew what they were doing. They were professional people that worked in the industry. They weren't people who know a little bit about nothing and teach a lot about everything but don't really know about anything. They had actually worked in the industry. Does that make sense?

SH: Yeah. Would you encourage others to go through the Weymouth system?

SW: Yeah.

SH: Yeah.

SW: Yeah.

SH: Why's that?

SW: (Pause). Because when I went there was nowhere else to do it. I mean, so if you went to work, there were two, basically two systems in England. There's the system where you go and work, and then you do the block release, or you went to school, and you get the same degree.

And, you know, I went to Lincoln and did my apprenticeship. So I got the two, two sides of it. But I enjoyed the student life. I enjoyed what I learned, and I have no issues with what I experienced down there. So it was a very positive experience.

SH: Do you feel that the training system is still appropriate today? Where you don't learn cutting out, at all that?

SW: You mean specific to Weymouth?

SH: Just in general. In the way that you, the training system that was in place when you came up.

SW: Yeah. I think (pause) I mean my context is American now. Rather than England. You know in England there's a much broader scope for people to do carving work. However you know, learning the install stuff as well, it's pretty difficult to do install, unless you have a building to do install on. And so the industry, and the people who are doing that work, industry is better equipped to try and teach that. I mean it's very hard to teach chopping out on a building unless you have a building to chop out on. Difficult to teach install unless you have a building to install on. And I try to do that stuff in the programme I built here. The American context is that I don't believe that just teaching students architectural stonework is something that would be viable without knowing masonry, brickwork and plaster. If a student has that body of knowledge, they could go work anywhere, and that's not saying, and they have to use power tools in America. Air guns and grinders and spinners. And so you've got to teach that stuff, but you've got to give people a broad brushstroke of stuff rather than a really, really specialised in depth approach into learning one specialisation. And that specific to America because the training system just isn't there. But whereas in England, there is a system, and its industry based, and a much broader breadth of industry, and so you can be a little bit more specialist.

SH: So, how has the industry changed since you began practicing?

SW: (Pause) I think that's a multi-question answer really. Because I think society has changed. I think, I was working up in New York working on this job this summer. And people kept coming up to me saying; oh wow, you're doing that. That's a dead art. Then I have people coming up to me and saying; oh, my goodness I need that done on my building. So there's a great respect for what I do, and there's a great desire to, and a great need for it, and it's almost like as a society you know, we're not thinking of buildings in a long-term way, were thinking of them in, we're not going to be here in five years what's the point of doing all this work so. They you get products that people sell these products that may last ten, twenty years at most, which cause issues with the stone work. The stonework that I was dealing with had cement on it that was capped over the brownstone, which was probably seventies -eighties kind of stuff. Probably seventies maybe, I don't know. But that product now is destroying the stone even more. And we're in this cycle of where moving on quickly, you know this age we're in we're very much of the moment, so people

aren't living in their houses for twenty-thirty years, so that puts an end on what the buildings respectfully need. So as a society I think we're at a point where one; we think people can't do it. Two; we don't have the inclination to respect the buildings, however we have the inclination to respect the idea of keeping buildings. So there's a disconnect between the reality of buildings and the reality of thinking about it. Idealism of upkeep versus upkeep. Then you've got the industry that sells you products, and the industry that has to make a living. They're making stuff quicker, cheaper, because they have to compete. They can't compete unless they do stuff that is not high quality. And so, some of the time when this high-quality stuff is costing an arm and a leg, the low-cost stuff is costing an arm and a leg anyway.

SH: Yeah.

SW: Look at countertops in kitchens or countertops in fireplaces. It will cost five or six thousand dollars to install this amount of stone, and all they've done is cut it and spun it down. And they're paying a lot of money for it. But the industry is having to meet a need, or a perceived need of, doing things quicker and faster. And then computers. And then the specifications from architects and engineers is geared towards new products rather than traditional products and they don't know how to specify for the kind of work they do. And so you end up doing the work for the architects. And, but they're placing it within new frameworks or buildings that are set to block standards that are not set to, you have to form your stonework to, you know (pause). For example, I'm doing a job right now making windowsills for a new build block house. And I said to him, the architect that I as working with; it would be much better if the stonework went into the structure of the building. We could cut the block and install it over the sill you know. Where they want me to cut out the sides so the sill just fits into the blockwork. So structurally, it's not a structural part, it's just a, something to push the water off the building. And he said; no, we can't do that because that would damage the framework and allow water to ingress into the building, which was completely...ridiculous. But it was more the idea that you're building to a specification that doesn't allow room, that is so set by an individual or by a sequence that you know, makes it quick, but it doesn't make a good quality building anymore.

SH: So what about CNC machines?

SW: (Pause). You know it's interesting when I was in Albany I went to a shop and they had CNC machines. I said to him; well do you have any carvers or people who work with stone. And he didn't, in a stone shop. And I think there's this idea that because you're using spinners and grinders and machines that the person's not using it. But there's always, it has to be finished off. Even on a CNC machine. So you always need the people to do the final work. But because they're cutting it out almost, they're making, like I've said before, they're making it, the work fit to the machines rather than the work fit the building. So, you're not going around corners anymore. So you're making odd kind of shapes to put these stones together now because you're doing it on

very specific machines. You know it's, I don't see my job as being a stoneworker, a worker of material, and if someone gave me a stone I could work anything on the stone, and we don't have the people coming into the industry anymore that can do that. All they can do is set processes to finish off other set processes. And so it's very limited. And it's being limited by the procedures, the way they're building buildings now. And so it's, the craft is being dumbed down more and more to meet sequential stuff set by computers by architects or engineers that don't know any better than you know, okay I'm designing this building; here's a window frame, put it into the box, here's another window frame, put it into the box. And this summer when I was talking to this architect about these windowsills I was shocked at how unaware the architect was of any ability to move beyond the system. And if you move an architect beyond the system, they're lost. You can't have a conversation with the architect because it doesn't fit into the computer system. And that's the kind of architects that are being built right one through these college programmes. It's all based on square footage and the table, or the window. And so they put the table in or they put the window in, and now they're training people just on machines. And you could actually take it a step further, like the machines and the workers go to the point where the machines and the workers are having to work in unison to create even better stuff, but that's not going to happen. And it's an anomaly to say that the machines can do a better job than humans because the humans can do the job. It's just an excuse. But it does do it faster. But I still believe that you have to have people to go the finish stuff. If you can train them up in a way, you have a much broader breadth of what to do. But if you're going to stay within the framework of programming, then there's limitations on what you can achieve. But if you train people correctly alongside the machines, then your limitations are much broader. So I think the systemised nature of the industry and the inability to make things that are much more (pause), you end up with buildings that are just sheets of glass.

SH: Yeah. Makes sense. So if all these changes are going on in the industry, how do you feel about the future of stone carving? You said a little bit about the finishing off and learning how to programme machines. How do you feel, how does the future look for stone carving?

SW: Well I would classify it right now in the sense that stone carving is classified as a work in materials. I think if you train someone to work in materials, they could go anywhere and work anywhere, because they could be trained in a way that no one else has been trained. And if they want to go and use those skills, then they could go anywhere and utilise those skills because they know how to work the materials. So I think my job right now as a teacher is to teach people who can conceptually understand the materials and to physically utilise the materials, out the two together and they could go anywhere. Particularly in conservation work. I'll send you an image of the work I've done this summer. Conceptually, a computer couldn't have done it. I was working on a building that was, I worked this whole corner, so I cut custom pieces, for a very specific

space that a computer couldn't have done. So if someone could work stone, and they know how to fit something like that to a specific place, you can't, a computer can't do it. The only other way that you can deal with that is to use a consolidate material that you're going to have to buy from somebody and ten years later you're going to have to come back and redo it. And you know that will be there for fifty, sixty, eighty, I'll be dead by the time that fails. Whereas the consolidate, it will disappear. So if you train people on how you work materials, whether it masonry, whether its plaster, whether its stone, and you allow them the knowledge base to go and work on a job, because all we can do is train. But you can teach, but then they need to go and put that into practice, they need to go out and work for people to put that into work, and how to put that into practice. So, I'm not 100 percent hopeful of the industry, because the industry is dictated by the system that we talked about, computers and the architects being trained. But I am hopeful of people willing to do the right thing. Because there are people who are out there doing the right thing, and they need the people and are looking for the people. And so it's finding the people who want to do the right thing who are going to employ the people who are going to do the right thing. And so there's a, on a broader scale I think everybody who's in the industry needs qualified people to work materials. And you can't, the building industry is I think the largest industry in the country. You can't come in, you could probably quantify that. But you've got this mammoth industry, but you've got no qualified people in it because the system is computerised, so people just fit. But on the other side of it, people need stuff, when it comes to a point, what do we do with this? Well you hire people to do it. So somewhere along the line you have to train people to be able to fit into those spaces that can't use a computer. There's no shortcut. You know, so I mean I'd love to get the unions involved into a system that's broader than a small subset of just teaching people how to point or lay brick you know.

SH: Yeah. So, where going to get into that next question in a second. Are you an active member of any professional organisation related to your craft?

SW: Not anymore.

SH: Not anymore.

SW: I'm thinking of joining the stone carving guild. Just for my own, because I, it's something I want to be involved with. It's a very small group but you know, it's kind of where my heart lies. I've been involved with PTN, I was on the board of PTN. I was Vice-President of PTN when I stepped down. Was on there from 2005 to 2011 maybe 12. It was at least six years. I was on the board of APT probably from 2006-7, probably 2007 till around about 2011. And I stepped down from the boards to focus on the Charleston conference that we did. And then I felt I had gone as far as I could with those organisations in a sense of benefit to, I didn't see where I could go anywhere else, because I was going around in circles. And so I stepped back. I wanted to

concentrate on something I wanted to do. And so it was a personal decision to step back to focus my energy on stuff that excited me.

SH: So do you feel that those organisations are adequately address the needs of the profession?

SW: (Pause). I think PTN is an organisation that won't go where it needs to go because it doesn't have the resources or the people to be able to achieve what it could achieve. And I think that's really based on the fact that craftspeople are very, more artistic. In a sense of structural organisation abilities and ability to see long term goals and start it and meet it, it's very difficult especially in a non-profit organisation that changes its board almost every four years. So I don't think it can achieve on a global or national level what needs to be achieved on a governmental or industry level because it's not meeting those needs. It's meeting a niche need for people who can or want to express themselves as craftspeople. And I don't think it can meet a national or industry need on a scale that is necessary to achieve a lasting legacy. APT, on the other hand, I think it like wants to get involved with craftspeople, but its focus is on technology, new technology. And the new, and it's meeting the needs for architects and engineers to promote themselves. And I don't see it open with trade until industry expands its capacity to create well qualified craftspeople.

SH: I thought APT was going to have a heart attack when someone start talking to them about nanolimes, now that's there big thing.

SW: Nanolimes? Never heard of it.

SH: It's a spray, it's a water-based spray but it's a lime, and they use it to consolidate stone. It's really cool stuff but it's also incredibly expensive. But it's the new thing we don't have to shelter coat or chop out and replace, all we have to do is spray it and the lime pulls the stone back together. Basically, what you're doing is a shelter coat without slapping a coat of lime on top of the stone. Anyway, if someone were to say to you; Simeon I want to be a stone carver. How would you tell them to approach their training?

SW: (pause). Where in England or America?

SH: Either way. Let's say in America. I'll put you in the American stance now.

SW: (pause) Might have to turn the recorder of (laughs). Alright. So in America, there's no system. So, are we specifically talking about stone working?

SH: Well, stone working would be great but if you have a general idea about getting into traditional craft, that would work to.

SW: Ok so there's no training system, so you can't go anywhere to train. I mean you could do, the problem with America is that if someone trains for a weekend and they think they
(Line interruption)

SH: It looks like we got disconnected there. Could you repeat what you were saying?

SW: Alright. So there is no system. And you can do weekend workshops, but most people then think they're professionals, which normally takes ten-fifteen years to train to do stuff, specific stuff. So the system in place is based on learning stuff very quickly with limited abilities to have really good experiential stuff in the long term. So it means that people, the people who are working have never been trained, so they don't know what they're doing. And so if you go and work with someone who doesn't know what they're doing, you're going to learn how to do something but you're not going to know how to do it, even if you know what you're doing. So it's a Catch-22. So you can go and learn, if you live in a state where there are unions, you can go and learn with the unions. They have a certain set system, I don't really know much about it. But you're only going to learn a very specific set of stuff because it's the industry's training to what the industry wants you to do, rather than to give you broader subsets of knowledge base. So, there is no system in America. And so that's why I tried to build the College in Charleston, to give people the ability to go somewhere to learn something. To then go out industry. So you've got to get your training from somewhere. But, then you need to work with people who have been doing that for a long time. And do it from a sustained, at least two years, probably three to learn multiple skill sets. And then go on and learn from somebody else. And (pause) but it's very difficult to go and learn stuff that, when there's no system.

SH: So do you feel that the limited amount of programmes out there, are they adequately training those to enter the field?

SW: No.

SH: No? Why not?

SW: Because, are we talking the specific education system? Are we talking about weekend workshops?

SH: Both but primarily focusing on the academic system.

SW: So weekend workshop system or week programmes where you go and learn something for a while are, they're good, for what they are. But, you know, its hobby.

SH: Yeah.

SW: The tech system that's out there, can never be specialised. It has to be de-compartmentalised. So industry leaders it can't create people who have a large knowledge base specialism. It can create people who are have a small subset of knowledge in a number of different areas, just because of how the system is set up. And so it can't put people out there who have a specialism. They have to put people out there who have a generalism. And those, the good thing about them is that people who go through the system can then choose a specialism and then go and work for a person who they can specialise with. And hopefully that gets him in a door to a place that has the quality of people employed who actually know what they're doing,

and those people are actually getting trained. But it's hard to find people who have been trained because there's no training system.

SH: So, to answer the next question, are there enough programmes to supply the need that is out there?

SW: (Pause). I would say that the answer is 100 percent no, that there aren't enough programmes. However, having said that the industry's not involved. The country is so big here in America that tech programmes are set up to be so specific to an area and need of the area that it becomes dependent on the industry that's there. And if the industry is not involved in the education system, and the building industry isn't, to some extent it's not in high quality trained craftsmen, then it's very difficult to build something that is sustainable. Because the need's there but the needs not supported. And on the degree level I think there's one college in America, maybe two, but I don't think beyond that, I don't think that every place that wants to do something could create, there's just not enough support. It's a support system. And I think more people would come if there's an understanding of what ACBA is trying to achieve, but the support system is not there. And so you get phone calls from people; I want to set up a college just like yours in my town. That's not going to happen. You need ten million dollars before you even start off doing anything to achieve something like that. And most places, you know, it's like you almost have to create a national college to get to that level of support throughout America, and then hopefully get industry involved and donors and sponsors to get involved in that specific one. But I don't think another college as a degree level would be sustainable. I do think colleges at an associate degree level could be sustainable. Not many, but you know within regions. Probably, but they have to have the support system of the college, the president, and long-term goals of creating a national system. And you've seen the five-point plan I've created. But how to make that happen, you know that is why I stopped with PTN it's just, that couldn't happen there. And, you know, even at ACBA, you know getting to the people who have the resources to be able to continue to build something of magnitude, to be effective, and to bring the students in, they're out there, the students are definitely out there, but just nobody knows that these places are here. So it's a Catch-22 on all of this stuff. Catch-22 for the money, Catch-22 for the colleges, Catch-22 from the industry, you know. And a lot of people don't really know that they need it. Even though they do need it. Even though they see how it's done and they go; oh, I need that. Like when I was in upstate New York and everyone coming up to me and saying; oh I need you to come and look at my house. Because they've got no one there that can do the work. So I think we're in a situation where were a Catch-22, but I think were in the end of a forty-year cycle away from education for craftspeople, and I think people are turning back to sustainable methodologies. And I think craft-based stuff is more, on old buildings and new, craft-based stuff on new buildings is something that people are interested in and I think we're at the end of that

forty-year cycle where we walked away from teaching kids how to do craft at school and stuff like that so.

SH: So you mentioned one or two programmes in the states that may be sustainable, what do you think those two are?

SW: Well, in the tech side there's Savannah, and then there's Mertz up in Belmont. And then there's North Bennett Street School, but that's onto itself up there. So it's got a good reputation and creates skilled people but its, it is what it is.

SH: Interesting. So are there any advantages to the current educational offerings?

SW: (Pause) What do you mean?

SH: In terms of, is there anything that they offer, or can offer that can be of a great advantage. You talk a lot about the generalist, how they're trained as generalists, which I entirely agree with, but is there anything they have in terms of funding, in terms of physical plant, all that stuff. Is there any advantages that they have to train people?

SW: Well again, it's Catch-22. The issue is with most of the tech programmes in the country that have tried to build programmes is that it's based on a personality that does something. And when that system changes they fail. And in terms of those systems is that if those personalities that built them, or the president changes, or their educational contexts changes, then the programmes disappear. And so there's an issue there. However, a state system, if you have a good system that is supportive, then you do have the resources in some senses. And you know, if you create a small institution at that level that can support a need, then there'd a positive there. However, within that system you're faced with that change in the wind. Which is why at ACBA we tried to set a system up that was not dependent on politics and that has its own mission.

SH: Interesting. So I'm actually going to ask you a question that's not on my list, but I'm asking all the US people this. If we look at the schools that are in existence or have come and gone in the US, we look at Belmont in St. Clairsville, Bill Hole out in Eureka, California, Clatsop out in Oregon, now one in Montana, Edgecombe in Tarboro, all the ones in Colorado, there all in very rural places. Why is it, do you think, the we set these programmes up in very rural places, but then, where it's difficult for students to work while going to school, or don't know what they're doing, don't know where these places are, I look at Bill Hole is an hour and a half from the closest airport. Why do you think that we set these programmes up in these places, but don't have them in major cities where there is enough work, where there is enough, possibly, support to do that?

SW: (Pause). Idealism.

SH: Yeah?

SW: There's the great American tradition. And I'll give you an example of what I mean by that. Fine arts. Richard Long, the landscape artist, conceptual. Creates, goes into the wilderness, gets a

load of stones, puts them in a circle, takes a photograph of it. Within six months it will probably disappear, it may still be out there. And that's idealist, but it's very less obstructive in the landscape. There's another guy who's American, Robert Smithson or something like that, gets a big bulldozer, goes out into the landscape and changes the landscape. Digs out, the famous one he did was the water jetty where he did a spiral in a salt lake. So he actually changed the whole landscape, it's very idealist. And I think in some senses the small college places where there is a small need, in a small community that want to create something, are creating these idealism like Richard Long, that's very English kind of thing. But it's in America, I'm talking about how our attempts to change landscapes. Whereas in America, and going back to buildings now, we have small places that have a body of buildings that need changing, and they create a programme to try and resolve that issue. And it's kind of idealistic that perhaps they can build a system to help a need, but its idealist within a small framework. And so your buildings may get a need, but it's not a national framework. So the problem is in the big cities is you would probably have a national framework where you need the big bulldozer. And you could build a college system, but they just move in and they don't have the building stock so much. In a sense of the industries there and they're just doing the work. But they don't have their long-term idealistic desire to create something to meet a need. Whereas if they had that idealism and saw it, they're too many big buildings. They can't, they're just doing the work and they're not looking at the bigger scope of things. So I think it's the nature of people having the time to think of things, and wanting to achieve something, whereas if you're in a big city you don't have the time to think. And you know, you can't see the woods from the trees. You're just doing. And a lot of those places have killed their downtowns, taken out their old buildings because it's just easier to build new ones. But if ACBA is in New York City rather than Charleston, it wouldn't be there now. The idealism of Charleston in building this national college. It's an idealism that has an ability to grow as it has, and it would have been left behind in '08. They would have just closed it down if it was in New York City. Alright we've done that, move on, let's try the next thing. And so I think it's that it's a matter of idealism in a sense of people having imaginations within a small framework in trying to achieve something, but it's not working on a national scale. So the scope is smaller. Like North Bennett Street, which is Ohio based. No, Belmont. It's Ohio based so it's based on the contexts of sustaining something just in Ohio. The thing is people come from different places, but the thing is that it's Ohio where David Mertz is working it, so it's dictated in some degree to that, the governmental systems there. So, but it's harder to jump to a national level when you're working in a regional level. Much like these little programmes that are built, what the one in, what do you call him worked at?

SH: Ben (Curran)? Edgcombe.

SW: Edgecombe. The idealism of trying to sustain something but once the building's done, what's there left to do? So you're not going to get students to go there. So I think people need to see it on a national level. And it needs national players. But the problem is when your one national level like America, the big players, such as the unions, are looking after themselves. So they have the idealism for themselves, but not the idealism for the national scope. So how do you get into that system where you have players who get resources and money based on national politics, but are looking for their own members? I mean who's out there, on a national level who are pushing trades-based education that is sustainable and is not based on one party's desire or need. Who's the idealist who can see the national scope? I've not met that person.

SH: If I met them I'll let you know. So, with all these issues with training and everything, what do you feel is the future for training in your craft?

SW: (Pause). In America?

SH: Yeah.

SW: (Laughs). Probably at the wrong time for asking me the question. (Pause). I think personally I'm in a transition place. My, personally. And normally I have a very clear sense of where I'm going, but sometimes I lose that sense, and I'm not quite sure what the next step is. And I'm in that place right now where I'm not quite sure where that next place is. I have less control now over what that next step is. And I'm not seeing the people around me or the people nationally who can visualise or idealise the next step. I think I've idealised for the College, but I mean you've seen my five-point plan, which is a huge...

SH: Huge project.

SW: Huge project and so, I don't know how to find the people who can make that happen. But when I stepped down at PTN, I think I said this to you, I think it has to be regional in some senses. Maybe you can create a small subset in one place and then expand it into another place, but you have to be able to do that in a sense that you have to make a connection, you have to make the dots connect. Because if you do it isolated, you're on your own.

SH: Yeah.

SW: And we've talked about that between ACBA and Savannah Tech and creating a hub within this southern region that attracts people. But you have to make sure what you do done there and what we do up here sync in some way that allows people to, pathways, create the pathways. Create the systems, whether its Colleges, whether its internships, whether it's an industry but I'm not seeing that next step right now. And I think I'm in a position right now that, personally, I'm more interested in following a path of my own rather than an industry or collegiate path. Because I've been there for twelve years and I need to recharge my batteries. So it's a tough question to ask right now. And I think in terms of (pause), you know I think the question as what's the future of these systems. Is that correct?

SH: Yeah. What's the future of training for your craft?

SW: (Pause). I mean I'll go back to what I said before, I think we're coming out of cycle where I think that if people notice it, that we're at the end of a negative cycle, we're at the beginning of a positive cycle. It started about ten-fifteen years ago, and these cycles that happen for twenty, thirty, forty years. So I think we've spent ten or fifteen years, where at that critical stage where we can take the next step where the funding and the political players can see what's happened. And I say I can't see right now those people. And so, it's that kind of, it's in the hardwire, but to take that next step is the one you can't do by yourself.

SH: Alright, well I'm going to ask this last question, and it's going to be for you fairly straightforward, it's going to be a fairly loaded one. If you were to design a programme or a system, how would you structure it? If I said; Simeon, money is no object, design yourself a stone carving programme, how would that programme work?

SW: (Pause) No object? Resources?

SH: No object.

SW: Well you've got my five-point plan. Its, if you had the players and the people and the industry, and the one thing, and I'm talking about ACBA. I think we created a great model, I think I would take it to Master's level. At a Master's level you would bring architects and designers and craftspeople together and get them to design and build together at master's level. And try to create a system whereby architects and engineers are thinking like craftspeople and craftspeople are thinking like architects and engineers. And I still believe that America needs a generalist specialist programme, rather than a specialist-specialist programme, because of the nature of the country. If you train people so specifically were they don't get the breadth to be able to go anywhere, so that's why we created the trowel trades rather than just the stone carving because I don't think the breadth of America has the ability to just take a stone carver and give them a living. But a stone carver than can work brick, can work plaster has an ability to go work anywhere. I think the key would be to get industry involved in that system, and to meet a quality of the craftsperson for that industry, but not defined by a specific of that industry. Create a student for that industry that has a breadth of knowledge, for the industry as generalists. And so, because if you make it a generalist, they don't have the breadth of ability. Just as in England, when you're working with Weymouth College or those programme there, they have their block release, so they're, companies are sending students to learn the smaller techniques but their also learning broader scopes that their company can probably use. But that company benefits from the fact that they can have a student with broader knowledge. They're one of the only issues with that in terms of industry is that you train someone up and they think they can do it. So they're going to set their own business up in America. So again, there's your dichotomy there, you train somebody up to a certain point and then you lose them. So the industry is kind of

lagging there. If you have someone where, if you have and hundred big companies that can take an apprenticeship each year and every year you can send one student there, that's not a big deal. You it's a hundred big companies that need craftspeople. You train a student, one year you send them here, one year you send them there, you know, five thousand dollars a year, you've got million-dollar companies. They might not use all those skills, but at the end of it they may have students that want to work for them because they have jobs. But I think the key is industry and getting them, you know such much is put on donors, and you said money is not an object, and you know government doesn't matter if money is no object. But the government can get the industry in but the problem with the collegiate system is that you have to be accredited. The American system is great to allow the ideas to happen, but how do you get over that point. There needs to be an intermediary system on the education side to allow the growing things to achieve something. Like ACBA right now is stuck in a cycle where we can't get out because it spends all the money it gets, so it can't build up its resources, it can't get donors because it's not accredited, major donors say once your accredited we'll give you money, we can't get students for the same reason. So the education system needs an intermediary between full accreditation and license that allows you to operate. At ACBA we can say; at ACBA, we're not worried about it, but the truth of the matter is students and parents are worried about it. So you can't get out of that. So idealism, bring industry in, create the education system that allows the programme to grow, and politically and financially, the system has to be there to support these programmes.

SH: So given the current education system, could your ideal system operate under that?

SW: No, I just.

SH: Yeah I know, I had to ask.

SW: The only way it would work is if we, ACBA becomes accredited. And you know we're in a two-year holding pattern right now. We were in a two-year holding pattern, and it's all about finances. So again is a cyclical thing. And speaking of other trade programmes like the tech programmes, they're in a cycle as well. And it's all based on individuals that are in programmes. Or presidents that dictate which programmes run. So there's that cycle. You know Bill Hole's the prime example right now. Alongside those programmes in Denver, or out that way. I can't remember what that state is.

SH: Colorado.

SW: Yeah. You know you had someone come in and build a programme, move on and build another programme, and I think those programmes have disappeared.

SH: Lamar is not physically offered on campus anymore, but what they're doing is accrediting the Historicorps students that are out there working on the state parks in the summer. They're giving them their certificate through Lamar, but you can't take, as far as I know of, you can't take the certificate at Lamar. And Colorado Mountain College is gone.

SW: Yeah. So my no is quantified by, specifically ACBA is quantified by money, it's qualified by the academic system that has been in place and quantified by the industry. And you know I think there's a desire by the industry to train people. I think there's a desire in the education system to have programmes. But, you know, the infrastructure is not there.

SH: Well that's all the questions I have, do you have anything you would like to add?

SW: (Pause). I don't think so. I mean I know you're going to publish this so I have to be careful about what I say about ACBA right now. You understand?

SH: Well, obviously.

SW: In the sense that I have to be gentle in the way I phrase things. It's all based, it could change in a moment. All it is is money. Political will, money, financial resources and industry to really see what's happening. For people to really see what's happening.

SH: Yeah.

SW: Because there's magic. There's magic in what we're doing. And I'm talking generally, I mean what you're doing down there as well. And people see it. You know I was walking, I was on the street, and I guy was working next door to me, where I was working. He's a mortgage or insurance guy. Been there a hundred and whatever years as a company, so a family business. He walked out and said; oh, you're doing amazing work. And I said; yeah, I just finished that jamb right there. Oh, that's great. Then I pointed at the one next to it that was just a block that was blank basically with not carving on it. So it was in the wall, chopped out, out the new stone in it, blocked out with no carving in it. And he looked at it and went; oh my god, that was like that. And he got it. So the magic of that is that they know it's really cool, and they know it's amazing, and they really respect it, but they don't really understand it unless they see something that really wakes them up. And I think that we're at this moment in time where we spent the last fifteen years, you go back to the beginning of PTN which was what '98. So 1998 was, ACBA, well it was still the School of Building Arts, started. It was when PTN started, it was when all the lime stuff started, may have been a little earlier than that, but it was in the last fifteen years. But were at that point where those systems and cycles are at that tipping point. And it doesn't take much for someone to get excited and say; oh my god I really see the value in this. And we're in that place when you go to most cities where they're talking about regional and buying local and America, working with, you know building in America, manufacturing in America. We're on a cusp of doing that but you have to have those people with the imagination to be able to see the fact that there's the blank, and there's the finished article. And ACBA is like twenty years before becoming the finished article. But it's the blank in the wall. I've got a few pictures of the architect and the engineer who hired me to do the work. And in the picture, the architect is standing next to the blank, and I stood next to the actual carved piece. He had the imagination to know that I could be able to do that, but he didn't know how. He could see the blank that could become something.

And I think that's where with you all down there, I think David Mertz is, I mean you, you're building something down there, and I know you said you think you have some funding coming in. David Mertz is you know, stable. I don't know what will happen when his system, you know when he steps down, retires. If he does, maybe he will go on forever. But you know, it's been on the cusp of people being able to see the idealism of the blank and being able to visualise what it could become. You know I think were at that point that things could happen. But ACBA is being held up by, you know, because the education system is not there, and people are held by from giving us the funding because they can't see the blank that ACBA is. And in terms of why we put these programmes where they are, I think you have to look at the idealism of the setup. Because it's not about, it's normally about a building, or a set of buildings, and trying to make, get them working. And you can't build a system on a sequence of buildings.

SH: Yeah, the guy Larry who was actually the first person at Edgcombe before Monika came on, he came down to visit me, he had been on for about six months, and I said what's going on up at Edgcombe? He said, well they moved a building onto the campus, they didn't realise how much money it would take and how much skill it would take to actually fix it. They don't have construction department. So they created this department to basically fix this building. And I said what happens after the building gets fixed? And he goes; programme will probably close.

SW: Yeah well that's what happened to the one in Colorado. They had a, "the ranch". And they had a great vision, but they were up there in the mountains where no one could get to it. I mean you were lightheaded when you got there so maybe that's where they got the idealism from (Laughs).

SH: And they you had Lamar in the south-eastern corner in the desert. That's the northern tip of the southern plains.

SW: Did they have a building there?

SH: I don't know. I think, since they are a state standard system they just took Colorado Mountain College and tried to replicate it in Lamar. But I don't know anything about that town. Awesome, well I'm going to turn this recorder off. Do you have anything else to say?

SW: No turn the recorder off and I might have something to say.

SH: Alright.

End recording

Total recording time: 1.56.50

Interview Form-Individual

Name: Tom Russack _____

Current address: [REDACTED] New York, New York [REDACTED] _____

Birthdate: [REDACTED] 1955 _____

Age: 59 _____

Occupation: Director of Historic Preservation/Senior Project Manager-Central Construction Contracting _____

Interview Date: 1 September 2014 _____

Interview Location: Tom-New York Stephen-Savannah (Skype) _____

Interviewer: Stephen Hartley _____

Generation: 3-United States _____

Consent Form Signed Date: 22 August 2014 _____

Begin Recording

Stephen Hartley (SH): Alright Mr. Russack, before we get start with the questions I just need some basic information from you. Your current address?

Tom Russack (TR): Current address is [REDACTED], New York, New York, [REDACTED].

SH: Your birthdate?

TR: [REDACTED]/55. [REDACTED], 1955.

SH: Alright, which would make you how old now?

TR: Almost sixty. Hitting sixty.

SH: Sixty. And your occupation?

TR: I am the Director of Historic Preservation and Senior Project Manager at Central Construction Management in New York City.

SH: Alright. So how this is going to work is that there are ten questions that I'm going to ask. Inside those questions are what are called probes. And probes are just supplemental questions to try to get a little more information from you. Some of the questions I ask, you're going to be like; well why the hell is he asking that? The reason why is that I'm writing this for an audience that may not be familiar with the trades, so we've got to give them more clarification.

TR: Got it.

SH: So, question number one. What is your profession, and can you describe what you do in that capacity?

TR: Well my profession is to manage the repair, restoration of buildings. I fix buildings, that's what I do, and my specialty is historic buildings.

SH: Alright. Any particular craft?

TR: Well, masonry is my forte. And building facades.

SH: Okay. So, when did you begin practicing?

TR: When I watched my grandfather build a block barbeque when I was five. That's when I started. Started to learn. In his broken Ukrainian he said; watch, watch me, you watch what I do.

SH: Excellent. How old were you when you started getting paid for work?

TR: Well then, I'm a third generation New York Union brick worker, although I didn't finish to become a journeyman or a craftsman, I just did my apprenticeship. But the question was when did I start making money at it. When my uncle, who learned everything from my grandfather, during high school, would have some side jobs and I would start working with him, mixing mud, laying brick, laying block.

SH: Awesome. So, you've had a bunch of different jobs over the years, what kind of companies did you work for?

TR: Well it's interesting. Yeah I usually stayed in the realm of construction or the arts, believe it or not. I guess we'll get into education later, which plays into it. You know, it comes back to something my father told me when I was fourteen years old. I asked him; pop do you like what you're doing, just out of the blue. And he worked in a factory. And he said son I hate my job. I hate everything about it but it's the only way I can put food on the table. So when you're fourteen and you hear that it's kind of impressionable, and I told myself I'm not going to do that. I'm going to work, I'm going to do what I want, and I'm going to enjoy it. I'm not going to go to work, I'm going to go to fun. And he said something else afterwards. He said if you get a trade and education, you'll always put food on the table. Get a trade and get an education. So that's been the cornerstone of my career, my entire life. I've got two master's degrees, and I love my work going out and fixing buildings in New York City. So to answer that, I've been a bricklayer, I've been a painter, I've been a plasterer, I was the Executive Director for the Centre of Safety in the Arts here in New York City, teacher and project manager. So those are some of the things, and author.

SH: Yeah don't forget author. Don't forget the book it's very important. It's still being used in that little dinky school down south.

TR: Well thank you. I thought it was next to Ted Williams head in some freezer somewhere.

(Laughs)

SH: Well, what attracted you, overall to your profession. You talked about you being a third-generation mason.

TR: (Pause). I think a love of history first on all. I remember, I'm from a small town on the west coast of New Jersey, and I remember getting my library card and going up to the little brick library and just walking over to the history section. Basically starting from the top shelf left and working my way through the entire thing. Just anything to do with history I loved. And coming

from a family of builders, from construction, the two kind of went hand to hand so...and then my older brother, he was a history major and he said something that influenced me. He said you can get a history degree; but there's only two things you can do with it, you can teach it, or you can make it, and the world doesn't want either of those right now. And then I got a history degree (laughs).

SH: So, what's your favourite aspects of the profession?

TR: It's satisfaction. It's before and after. I love documenting, which is part of the preservation trade, I'm always taking a bunch of pictures, and it's the gratification of seeing a job well done, and I just like fixing things. And buildings are things. And there's a lot of them here in New York City, and they all need work. So that would be it; the satisfaction of a job well done.

SH: Excellent. So what's your least favourite?

TR: People (laughs). I've got the seven P's of New York and I'll share with you. What I don't like about the city, even though it's where my profession dragged me, led me; the people, the pace, the pressure, the process, perspiration, it's hot up here, the parking, and the perverts. (Laughs)

SH: Well that's why you need to come down south, we only have the perspiration one.

TR: Yeah I know. There's a couple more but I limit it to seven.

SH: Well did you even consider another profession before you decided on masonry?

TR: Oh heck yeah. Oh yeah I can remember when I got into the union, people were, the parents of my friends were slapping me on the back saying wow you're set for life you know, you're going to have a career, you're going to make good money, and you know I was brought up in the age of exploration and wanderlust, so I spent several seasons working construction during the summer months, and in the winter, following my drug of choice, which was skiing. And I was a ski bum in Colorado, Utah, Vermont, so the pursuit of happiness came into my life also. And there was a point where I was really involved in the arts. Youthful zeal you want to change the world and I thought I could do it through the art world so, actually one of my master's degrees in the science of management of non-profit organisations. It's a degree in management, but how to deal with people and how to run an organisation.

SH: So what pulled you back to masonry finally?

TR: Money (laughs). And here it is, boy we're getting real personal here, dealing with management is dealing with people, and I came to realise that you can't fix people like you can fix buildings. You know I can take a sledge hammer and knock something down and rebuild it, I can't do that with a person.

SH: Well, I'll be honest I don't like most people.

TR: Brother, you hide it very well. (Laughs)

SH: Well, the people that I like are the people that I talk to. If I don't talk to you or if I'm very short with you, it means that I don't like you. And it's the majority of the people I have to deal with all the time. I'm dealing with administrators and you know what that's like.

TR: Oh, you can put that on the top of my list, I hate bureaucracy.

SH: So, you talked about your union masonry and you talked about your schooling, what school programmes did you attend?

TR: Okay. Well after high school, here's the hour interview right here, I started out at it had to be U, Boston University for two years. I was accepted into their Liberal Arts programme and gosh what a great experience that was. I loved Boston. And after two years they said pick a major, and I said ski-bumming in Colorado I'll see you later. So there starts my wanderlust journey. I did not, I took off, had the course, had the classes and you know union bricklaying things and art courses but I did not start my formal education until I returned to the east coast and attended Roger Williams College where I got my undergraduate degree. And I started out there in their historic preservation division, but that wanderlust left and I got a B.A. in Fine Arts and a minor in business. And I'll never forget the graduation the head of the historic preservation division over with the group of the arts and he said you're in the wrong group, you should be over here with us. And he was right because after I finished my undergraduate I attended a school at a small college in Cambridge, Massachusetts, you probably never heard of it called Lesly College and I got a Master's in the science of management, non-profit organisations. Then I became a, you know what, let's step back. Before attending Roger Williams, yeah, gosh, let's replay this. I was living in Vermont, working construction and ski-bumming, and my sister-in-law pulled out a newspaper from the University of Vermont, and I still have it, she said they teach a programme at the University of Vermont, it's a graduate programme, it's at night, I think you'd really enjoy it. And it was historic preservation, and it was taught by Chester Leeds and it changed my life. I mean I thought I went to Disneyland. You know I would go to work with cement dust on me and just loving it, finding out about historic preservation. And then the next semester, I took a course with Max Ferrell. And you know, I thought I died and went to heaven again. This guy was the most amazing, and I can still hear his voice and hear the things he's saying. And after it, and he knew I was peculiar because I was a tradesman, he said there's a school opening up in North Carolina. It's going to be a historic preservation trades school. And this was started at Durham Technical Institute by a man named John Fugeulso. And in the fall of 1979, I packed up everything and moved down there. I was in the founding class, the first class of historic preservation trades education, at a college level, at Durham Technical Institute. And I attended that for a year, and that's what led me up to Rhode Island, where I was going to attend historic preservation but then I got my undergraduate degree from Roger Williams, my graduate degree in, my MSc in the science of management at Lesly. Then I came to New York and my boss at RAND engineering and

architect; said it's time to finish up, continue your education, so I picked up another Master's degree in historic preservation from Lesley College. So that's it.

SH: Lesley College had a historic preservation programme?

TR: Excuse me Goucher College. I got it on-line. It took me two and a half years at Goucher in Baltimore.

SH: Awesome. How did you working while going to school affect your education?

TR: Oh gosh. Well I worked my way through school. I can remember going to Boston University and I would just walk up to a construction site and say hey do you need any help? You know, eighteen years old they would just have me cleaning up around the site but I would love going to classes with my work clothes on and you know, cement dust on my shoes. It was a chick magnet. (Laughs). And you're making money too.

SH: Hey you need to somehow. Do you feel your instructors were properly equipped in both knowledge and what they needed in terms of materials and tools?

TR: Yeah, definitely. I have no complaints or problems. I never thought they were inadequate. Max Ferrell is probably the best, and I mentioned him a little while ago. He would require you, for your final project, to do a slideshow. Which he would abscond and use in his lectures. If he liked your slides he would do that. And the funny thing is he gave me an incomplete because the slides I did on tuck-pointing were not, they didn't come out right, they were too dark or something, I guess for what he wanted. So he gave me an incomplete for that course. I think I hold the record for the longest, because then when I wanted to get my historic preservation degree, I wrote to him and said I can't use the credits, it's an incomplete. So he wrote a letter, like twenty-eight years later saying no he deserves it, so I turned that into a real grade I got a passing for it.

SH: That's pretty impressive, twenty-eight years. Well, would you encourage others to take the route to train in historic preservation that you did?

TR: Yes I would but, in thinking about this interview, this here, I had some things on my mind that I wanted to say and I'm not sure if this is the time...

SH: Say it whenever you want to say it.

TR: It's just tough. I commend you and I will be praying for you because it's quite an obstacle we face here. You see, we have three separate camps. We have historic preservation, we have trades, and we have the education system. Okay, you get that triangle, there are three. Historic preservation, trades, and education. Well historic preservation, most of the schools out there don't know about the trades really. You know they're not out there in the trenches. They know about buildings and architectural history, but they're not picking up the tools. Would you agree with that or not?

SH: Absolutely.

TR: You know and even architecture. I think architecture 101 should be; here's a wheelbarrow. I don't think a student should get his degree, when he goes up to get his diploma, they should have callouses on their hands, paint on their boots, and mortar stains on their pants and then, and splinters, and then they can get the degree. Then they can go out and build buildings. But until then, you don't get the sheepskin. So, we're not picking up the tools in historic preservation. We're learning all these facts, and there's a lot of in-fighting with these facts, that it tends to get confused. You know, who knows more, this and that. So that's one camp. So the second camp being the trades, they're just learning you know, the skills of what it is. And now it's just generally replacing, not replacing, you know, modular. You know, install glass, pre-fit you know. Its installation it's not really building. So and then the third is education. You may find it hard to believe but people actually go to college to learn how to teach. They get Master's degrees in teaching because, it's a whole separate thing. And these three things, don't fit. I spent a week trying to come up with an analogy. It's like aardvarks, amnesia and Alka-Seltzer. They all begin with A, but what the heck all these things have in common you know, there's nothing. You know, what the heck, and to get to a point where you can get an individual who knows, like my father said, the education, and the trades, you know the hands, but then the proper methodology for transferring this to the minds and hands of somebody else, god bless you. It's a big boulder to push up a big hill.

SH: Yeah, I know. And I'm dealing with a complete lack of information. I was talking to one of my supervisors for this research and she asked about previous reports and I said here's the Whitehall Report, when you print it out its four pages. And that's all I've got. And I've got the National Trust report that they did over in the U.K., the traditional skills training thing, ninety percent is rehashing what I can write in five pages. That's it. I don't have anything else.

TR: No. And it makes me wonder if the need is out there. We don't have to go into that but, to formalise it, to structure it, is something that they should be doing in historic preservation, but people are too busy doing other things. Let me just, before I get way too far out, you know I want to help you out as much as possible, and I'm not tooting my own horn, but I wrote my master's thesis, here's the title of it, The Development of an Introduction Masonry Preservation Programme for High School Age Students. And I laugh now because I remember what I wrote in it, you know because I practiced it. I worked, seven years teaching masonry trade, historic preservation and green construction up here in Harlem, and you know it's different than theory. It really, really is. The closest, here's something I'll have to send you a web link I found, one of my professors at Goucher who was the chief architect in the National Park Service back in the sixties or seventies put together a real programme to teach architects historic preservation and son of a gun if this isn't one of the best manuals to date that just lays it all on the line in terms of what you

need to know, and I found that a couple months ago. I've forgotten most of the information. When I find it I'll send it out. But that's it brother, I'm telling you, there's nothing.

SH: Yeah, I wrote all these lesson plans before my programme started, I don't use ninety percent of them. They didn't work. I tried them one and they really didn't work. And I feel bad for that first class that came through. They were my experimental class I mean, they all got jobs, they're all working the field, they're all happy but got that first time could have been so much better. Well in terms of your training, would you suggest others to take that route? What were the best and worst aspects of it?

TR: Well the disappointments were the worst. When things just didn't work out. You put it well it was an experiment, and that brings up to the present. I spent a year of my life teaching high school students in the New York City School System. I was the founding masonry preservation instructor at Mather Preservation High School which is a combination of some bureaucracy, the Department of Education and the National Park Service attempting to teach preservation trades to high school students. And it's a noble experiment, and something long overdue. But it is an experiment and its nothing set in stone, pun in pun, of how to teach, and make it practical, and make it palatable. So I know the frustration of which you speak. I guess it's time for me to plug also. When I was teaching at Abbsyiann Development, just one day a week while I was working my profession of architecture and restoration, I wrote a book. I got a grant from the National Park Service, the National Centre for Training and Technology, and I wrote a training manual called *Masonry, History and Integrity: An Urban Conservation Primer*. Just trying to make it digestible and interesting and useful and that's what got me to the job teaching in high school. I don't know if that answered your question, I just ran off.

SH: Well, you did. Do you feel that the training system you studied under is still appropriate in today's society?

TR: Well, I (pause). You see I'm not a teacher. That's why I resigned from the job, because I just didn't have the mechanics of that third part of the triangle. Yes I definitely know preservation, and yes I know the trades and the working stuff, how to fix the buildings. But that third link, just wasn't there. You know there's a lot to teaching that; you can't just think you're going to get in front of a bunch of kids and show them and it's just, if there's anything I can offer to you it's the necessity of teaching teachers. I have so much more respect and pardon my sins of my high school youth, but you know you just have to have that element that is absolutely, it's not even though if I don't think. I didn't even think of it to be critical, and yet it is.

SH: Awesome. Well, has the industry changed since you first started practicing?

TR: Which industry? Preservation, construction or...

SH: Preservation and construction.

TR: Yeah, I guess so. I think preservation, when I started out and this was '78, it was sort of a grassroots, we're all wearing blue jeans and flannel shirts. I don't know. To tell you the truth I don't belong to many preservation organisations because I just see so much bickering and infighting and competition, and I'm kind of put off by it. I do really like PTN, the Preservation Trades Network because there's a comradery. There really is a brotherhood of the trades which is so strong, and I like what PTN does with that and their intentions to promote and fulfil and train so, I think somewhat academia has overtaken the preservation trade movement. They put in in a chokehold and haven't let go. And therein lies the death knell of what we are trying to do because they won't let go of the chokehold and when somebody knows it all, how you are going to tell them different.

How are you going to show them?

SH: Yeah.

TR: So that's it. The trades have changed because, immensely. You know we have to realise, and someone brought this to my attention, and it was kind of a shock but, because the trades are hard work, real hard work, they're mostly done by minorities. That's how I got into it. My grandfather came over from the Ukraine. Never could speak good English. And he was a hard worker. And he picked up a hard trade and did it good, and here I am and that's my story. And most of the workers know are Spanish, or Ukrainian, or Polish. And what has happened is that we, and gosh I know this is being recorded, I think we've gotten too soft. I think we are just expecting entitlement they deserve, and they don't want to work for it. They probably said the same about me, he's just lazy. And you don't just walk into a \$100,000 job, you got to start with a broom and move your way up. And I see that as a huge, huge problem. And the computer age changed everything. Everyone's sitting in front of a computer terminals instead of going, go outside. Go do something. Another one is, man you really got me rolling here, I find this hugely critical. The age of wanderlust is dead. When I grew up, I just couldn't wait to go out and explore. When I left high school I said I'm going to discover America. I'm going to look, I'm going to find, and I don't see that in kids. And yeah I hopped freight trains, and I hitchhiked across the country and you know, jumped off mountains with skis, you know just do wild things, and sometimes just to write about it. You know just to put it in my journal, just to have that memory. I don't see that in kids today. And it's gone, and I don't know how to put that into them. You know I thought I could change the world with enthusiasm and the love of what I do, and I couldn't. And I'm going to step aside and let some other people try a different method. To try and get what is so necessary out there, maintaining what we have. And that's another thing. I love fixing things. I just, that's what I do in my spare time. And everything in my house is broke, I break them and try to fix them. But I love doing that. Right now I've got a poultice on a marble top and I'm fixing a table in the dining room, I've got electronic stuff here, and kids don't do that. They throw it away

and they buy something new. It's consumerism. What the fuck is that all about. And fashion, it's just like...next question. (Laughs)

SH: So, how do you feel about the future of your craft?

TR: Well, even though I feel young for sixty, I'm still hitting sixty. And teaching is a young man's game. Construction is a strong man's game. Preservation is kind of a smart man's game, I guess to finish the three. We really need to look at what we don't have and what need. I'm just thinking this through I don't really, I haven't thought this out. I guess to play it safe I'll say we really need a younger generation to come in. You know I really like the Preservation Trades Network, but when I go to meetings and stuff, I don't see an influx of a lot of young people, people who know the trades and love the trades and know what they're doing who can get together and appreciate one another. But, I don't know if it will keep going for another decade.

SH: So, are there enough practitioners in the field?

TR: Well, what do you mean, restoration, preservation?

SH: Yeah. In the preservation trades.

TR: You know, I see good craftsman, because it's my job to go and see work. There's always been good work, and there's always been bad work. It's a matter of pride. Here's another one Steve. Let me get on this soapbox. It's the appreciation of the working man. The salt of the earth. You know, people just look down when you walk in with cement dust on your shoes, paint on your hands or you know, splinters, and they go what's wrong with you? How come you're not in a suit and in front of a computer? And that's something that has to change to. We just really have to get some respect for this. So that's it. Kids just don't want to get dirty. Kids don't want to work hard. You know I generalising but, you know I was a lazy kid too you know. I can't fault any of them. I can recognise that as part of adolescence. So, I don't know what to say to that but people have to start...Let me put this in too. If there's a prejudice, and there's all sorts of prejudice in this world, whether its minorities in the workforce, and just the work itself, the best revenge against prejudice is skill. The best revenge against prejudice is skill. If you need your sink fixed, and the guy comes in, doesn't matter if he's dirty or what colour he is, you're going to respect him. So that will change things. And I respect the trades. Gosh, salt of the earth. The people I meet, and the comradery, and it is, it's a brotherhood. That's what the Guild system was all about, it's a family. And we lost that too. You want me to add, I think we've lost a sense of family, we've lost a sense of that...there's so many others as well, but that's it's so. Next question.

SH: Do you feel that those entering the field are properly trained?

TR: Well, they get the training from where they're at. If they're with a bad company or have a bad teacher, based on a short change, just trying to value-engineer the job, they're going to screw it up. But if they get a good one who takes care, I see it all the time. I see guys working with the tools and guys who are thoughtful and careful, you know it's beautiful, its poetry to watch

what they're doing. And the building reflects that. It shows in the work. Then you get the guys who are pushed, who are yelled at, and you know, kicked around and the work show there too. So, it depends. There is no system of training, they're trained on the job and that's left to the hands of who are in charge.

SH: So do you participate in short course training, either teaching or taking?

TR: Do I participate in it?

SH: Yes.

TR: Give me some examples.

SH: Anything that's under three or four days of training. You know like a weekend class or something like that.

TR: I probably have somewhere along the line. (Pause). Nothing comes to mind. But I think it's good because it will introduce people, and because there's nothing out there really. Oh yes, yes I have cause me I'm certified by Cathedral Stone. I'm a certified Cathedral Stone installer. So yeah, I have that. And I I've taken scaffold safety classes. Its mandatory, I can't get on the scaffold without it, a scaffolding card. So I've done that as well. I'm also a LEED Green Associate, but that's more than a few days. So, yes, yes. Let me say this, another thought that comes to mind. What they have in Europe, that we don't have here, heritage centres. And heritage centres are a combination of community centre, Home Depot, This Old House. You get the old craftsman who come in and teach the kids or fix things, and if you have something broken you can bring it there. Like in a community, a community centre. They are prolific throughout Europe, and when I went to England and spoke at Lincoln and met other people, they looked at me like, you don't have these in the United States? You need these over here, this is how people learn how to take care of things, and how to fix things. You know the preservation movement is kind of new so to say, you spoke earlier of the Whitehall Report. We're just starting to look back. And here in New York its damn the torpedoes, full steam ahead you know. The 1939 World's Fair "Futurama". Fix it? Why? You know we're going to build new, tear it down. So since the destruction of Penn Station, people said, well stop. I'm not going to throw my grandma in a ditch and cover her over just because she's old. I can use her. She can teach me something. I can learn from her. I kind of like her. So we're starting to get that kind of respect. But how do you get that, how to do teach that to kids who are looking for the next video game you know. So, somehow we've got to instill that appreciation for what we have. And there's no place and there's no vehicle, so let's start with the place. If we could get some heritage centres started up, I think it would really help change the mind-set of people. Because, maybe they'll get dirty, maybe they'll get away from the TV, maybe they'll fix things.

SH: How about academic training programmes do you participate in any of those, as a teacher or a student?

TR: No, I'm much better now thank you. (Laughs). I pretty much played out to the 'nth degree the education system in receiving and giving. The answer to that would be no, no I do not.

SH: Alright. Would you suggest other, if someone came up to you and said Tom, I want to be a mason that fixes old buildings, how would you suggest them going down that route.

TR: What age is the person? Doesn't matter gender, but what age?

SH: Eighteen.

TR: You know what. I don't have an answer for that, and I knew that question was coming up. But it's funny, I was just sitting there having breakfast and in today's New York Times, in fact that reminded me we were having this interview, they're speaking about the fact that there are so many useless education courses out there. And kids are just run through this system, run through the bureaucracy of getting an education, but they don't know what they want. And this article in the New York Times is saying there should be some mandatory testing, and there should be some questions asked at these critical stages; what do you want to do? Who are you? What do you like? And that's where they should be directed. I think there's too much liberty in allowing kids to find what they want to do, and they spend all their parent's money when they find out they made a mistake, or went down the wrong path, when you really have to, at a young age, dig down into your heart. What do you want to do? That's what's going to lead you. You need to think about this, and people don't. They're just too busy, and they're stuck in fashion, they're trying to do what everybody else is doing, and it's not honest. Everybody has different skills, you know explore them. They're not given the opportunity. You know it's just how this conversation is going. I don't know how many times I've said, what really sparked me on was during my first year of teaching up at Abyssinian in a basement in a housing project with my own tools and basically no money, just a bunch of kids who were high school dropouts. And this one kid Richard, I finished my teaching, and he starts laying brick. And the kid was laying brick better than me (laughs). I said where did you learn this, how did you do this, he said you just taught me. The kid was a crackerjack. The kid had it. Never knew it. Never had the opportunity. And he was my star pupil. He went on to get a career and do this because somebody gave him a trowel. Like somebody gave me a trowel. And he was a father, had kids and everything, and it changed his life. And kids just don't have that opportunity to find out about tools. And don't get me started on that. Tools are cool you know. Find out about tools. Work with them. You'll see the stuff that can happen. Kids don't work with tools. They don't have that opportunity. I don't know if that answers your question.

SH: It does actually. Alright, these last two questions are all about educational offerings. I just want to put this caveat out there before we start; you know what I do for a living, and I don't want you to hold back because you're talking to me. I want the truth. I always say to people

you're not helping me by patting me on my head and telling me I'm doing a good job. I need to know what I'm doing wrong.

TR: With that let me say this too. I'm the type of person, I'll tell you I lose sleep at night because I say, I shouldn't have said that. You know, I wish I didn't say that. That's the stuff, and I don't mean to, and I hope I haven't already you know. I believe encouragement is very important. And I believe the people who do this deserve credit and I don't find fault with anyone.

SH: Well, I'm pretty thick skinned so I want your honest opinion. Do you feel that the current educational offerings are adequate to prepare apprentices to enter the field?

TR: Well I don't know. I am fortunate to be part of the Union system. And my gosh, is that amazing. That is a standard, that is a wealth. Organised, well thought out, it's a shining light on top of the hill. Unfortunately, you've got to be a Union member to get in. So it's not for everybody. But we do have something here, God bless America, that we can do that here. I have to put a plug in also for my favourite training institutions. It's the Williamson Free School for Mechanical Trades.

Transmission interruption.

SH: Sorry Tom it looks like we had some phone issues there. Could you repeat what you were saying about Williamson?

TR: Well, what I was saying is that they are going to train you emotionally and physically. And you're going to have confidence in what you're doing. And these are things that aren't made available to younger, to kids out there, although there's an attempt. There's a noble attempt out there. And God bless everyone who's, you know, working it.

SH: Yeah. So what are the biggest advantages of the current education system?

TR: (Pause) You've got to be kidding me. (Laughs). Now you know my past, I just resigned from teaching. You want to give me that I'm going to think through that carefully.

SH: Well I've got a follow up on that, what are the biggest drawbacks?

TR: What are the drawbacks?

SH: Yep.

TR: (Pause). Oh gash. I guess just the education system in general. It's not an easy profession. Doesn't really pay that well. To an extent it's appreciated but people don't know what teachers have to go through. I didn't know what teachers had to go through. I think every teacher deserved a medal, they really do. And whoever says people who can't do something teach it, I think they should be flogged. You know I have just the upmost respect for those trying to put stuff into the brains of adolescent youth. So, the ills in the system are, there's libraries about that and you know, there's a reason for that you know, that is a tough occupation. I don't know if that answers your question.

SH: It does. So, are the programmes that exist, are they sustainable?

TR: My friend. I, in speaking with you, and preparing for this I had my fears. A good friend of ours in upstate California, his programme has just dissolved. (Pause). Is there a need? Oh yes. Do people know about that need? They haven't a clue. So I think they are going to get blindsided you know, where have all the craftsman gone? Long-time passing. I think the general populace is not aware right now of the need and the opportunities and therefore we're at a loss. You know I tried, in my wildest imagination, to come up with things, you know even pilot TV programmes. Here's one, let me just vent a minute. There's nothing, I just love being around construction guys and telling stories you know about what happened at the construction site, things like that. That's going to get too far off. What was the question again?

SH: Are the programmes that exist, are they sustainable.

TR: (Pause) The answer is no.

SH: No?

TR: No because, (pause) they should be, they need to be but there's not enough money. It's all about money. There's not enough money from the government, from the private sector, to do it. These programmes need, besides money, they need publicity, they need to get the word out. And there needs to be a programme set you know, there need to be these training centres, there needs to be high school programmes, and they're just not there yet. We've started way too late. At least we've started. You know if they brought back buffalos and bald eagles, maybe they won't go the way of passenger pigeons, but at this point they need a lot of help. They need money, they need advertising, and (pause), that's good enough.

SH: So, then what do you feel is the future for training in these crafts?

TR: Well like I said I'm talking a step back now, it's the first time in eight years that I haven't been teaching, so my heart and prayers go out to everyone whose, you know, fighting the good fight and marching on, but I think I just need some time to rest first of all, and to think about what's to be done and go about doing this. But I, I really like what you're doing. You know we don't have to reinvent the wheel. I see what they have in Europe. It's just a matter of making it presentable here. I think, you know I was talking about guys and construction stories, well here's one. That would be a great TV show, not guys talking, maybe recreating, it's just funny, and informative too you know, what goes on on a construction site. I guess that's a safe answer right there.

SH: Yeah. So I'm asking this to all the US participants, I'm asking the UK people something different, but if we look at the programmes that we have, you know we have Belmont Tech, now there's one in Montana, there's one in Clatsop in southern Oregon, and we had College of the Redwoods in California, and the ones on Colorado. They're all in rural places. I mean Savannah and Charleston, they're on the two biggest cities, and I don't consider Savannah a city, my neighbourhood in Philadelphia had more people than Savannah does.

TR: Sure.

SH: Why do we put them in these rural locations? Why aren't there ones in major cities? Why isn't there an associate degree programme in New York, Philadelphia, or San Francisco, or New Orleans, which really needs it?

TR: That is a brilliant question. I haven't even thought of that. Willie Loman, why do you rob banks? Because it's harder in the cities. You know it's faster, it's more expensive. You've got the people, but you don't have the space, you don't have the time. I would have to think in that. Maybe the people who are teaching, maybe they want to get out of the city. They're in their retirement they want to have, gosh a Savannah, a Charleston, heck yeah. It's Harlem or Savannah, which one do you want? I don't know. Maybe because that's where the education systems are. Again, this whole movement kind of started with the education system so that's where the schools were, and that's what propagated it and moved it forward. Even though Columbia had the first graduate programme in the United States, it has no trades. There's not a place to put a truck and a wheelbarrow you know. I don't know Steve, I don't have an answer for that. I'd have to think about it.

SH: Alright, last question and this is a big one. If I were to say to you Tom, money is no object, design me a programme or a system to train craft workers, how would you do that, how would that be set up?

TR: Well I, to shoot off the top of my head, from my hip, I think we discussed that already. I would start at a young age, I would have these facilities and these places, and I would have more trades education in the schools. I gave a presentation for Green Groups at my daughter's fifth grade class, and they went wild, it was one of the highlights of the year they said. They got to take some of it home, some of them are still growing it (hyper tufa) in their little gardens. We've got to start bringing this stuff to kids at a very young age. And then right through life you know, and people would love to find out more. This Old House is still on TV. Let them have a place where they can talk to other people. We've got to mingle more. The need to connect the people who know with the people who don't know. And, you know, the Spanish speaking population who have skills or any of the minorities...how can I say this. They want to be more infused with, into the culture, but they kind of feel that because they're working, and the work that they do, there's that prejudice, I have to say. You know, they have the skill, but there's the prejudice here that we need to overcome. It's not the colour of your skin or the clothes that you wear but it's the abilities that you have that can be shared and appreciated and used and passed along to other generations. So, that's how I would do it I would start there, I would make it mandatory for college in historic preservation to have more hands-on trade skills instead of just academia, so that they. You know one of my favourite questions I ask every architect I go how old were you when you read the Fountainhead. And incredible they say I can tell you, seventy to eighty percent will tell you I was fourteen years old. I just asked that question last night to a guy, an architect, on

Park Avenue, doing a huge building, and it's ironic because it was built by the architect Ayn Ryad based the novel on one to guys there, on Park Avenue, she worked there under this guy for six months to get the background for that hallowed work. How old were you when you read the Fountainhead? He said I was fourteen years old. Its impressionable, it is. And we need to get some of that into those things, into those younger kids. Frank Lloyd Wright said if you want to build a kitchen, you have to work in a kitchen. So that's what we need to do. He also said if you don't like what I build, plant ivy. So that's it. We have to get the guys out of retirement who were there, my uncle was the best bricklayer I ever saw. I've been on many jobs and I asked him to teach the kids here in Harlem, he was in his eighties, he had to crawl down the steps backwards because his knees were that bad. And he showed the kids how to lay brick. And those kids were amazed. And they laughed too, because after he was done he had one speck of mortar on his stomach that he flicked off and the kids said; you see that Mr. Russack, when you're done teaching us you need a hose to clean off your shoes. And he's got that one little speck of dust on him (laughs). You know, so we've got to get the old guys in with the young kids and training them in doing that. So multigenerational, multi-age, multi-cultural. This blending. It's about people and buildings and we're not doing a good job of putting that together and meshing it and working it. I know I have other thoughts and ideas, and I will but I think that's a fairly good start right there.

SH: So, would you require an apprenticeship in your ideal system?

TR: Yeah, yeah. Again, I think the Union has a great system. You know what else I would like to do. I was thinking about this in my research, do you know about the Tour de France?

SH: Yeah.

TR: We know it as a bicycle race in France.

SH: Yeah.

TR: Do you know what its roots are? Do you know how it started?

SH: No, I have no idea.

TR: That was the trade route of journeyman after they finished their apprenticeship, they would travel that route to the different cities to learn trade skills from the people in that town. That was the Tour de France. They would take their tools and they would do that journey. And then it became this bicycle race going to these different towns. We should do that. We should have people who are interested, do that little tour for a couple of years. To pick up skills in other places. If I had one dream it would be to have kids go to Scotland and see what Historic Scotland is doing, because they have an amazing training system. Amazing. I do not want that to go unnoticed. Please put that in. They have the most amazing stone cutting, masonry training programme that we need over here. And if we can get some guys over there to see that, to practice that, to be a part of that, I think I would fulfil what I'm trying to do to fulfil that here.

SH: Yeah, I've been to their new training school in Stirling at Forth Valley College, that's where I met Colin Tenant by the way, he says hello. And it was just unbelievable what they had there.

TR: Its, that is something that, I hope you can put a chapter in about what they're doing. I still have their test, what you need to do to become a tradesman, and it just blows away everything. I showed to several people and they just can't believe the amount of knowledge that is necessary to get your credentials. It is wonderful. Another thought, I'm just throwing things out here left and right, I was told that many of the first black colleges that were built, were built by the hands of the students themselves.

SH: Yep.

TR: So that's something that, you know education we're giving away education. You have to build education.

SH: Absolutely. Yeah Savannah State here was built by the students.

TR: There you go so.

SH: Which is becoming a problem when they have to repair it, because they don't know how they did it. Because they didn't write anything down, they just went out there and built. Given the current education system, could your ideal system operate within that system?

TR: (Pause). Does anybody's ideal in anything live up to reality. That's why you have ideals, because you want to set the bar high. We're dealing with such a, we're dealing with a new-born here, really. If I went to the first historic preservation hands-on training programme in 1979 ok, that shows you how young this movement is. So, we're still trying to figure out where to go and what to do with it. And that's, you know, everybody has their own ideas on who to do it, and that's okay you know. Just so long as they're doing it you know, moving forward with it. Again, I don't know if that answers your question, but there's a thought there.

SH: No it does. You talked about Williamson a little bit, are there any existing programmes that you feel meet the requirements of your ideal system, or come close to your requirement?

TR: Okay so we've got Historic Scotland, we've got Williamson, and we've got the IMI, the International Masonry Institute, Union, And I know some people there if you want to do some interviews, talk to them, that's pretty much all that comes to mind right now as standard bearers.

SH: Awesome, awesome. Well that's actually all I've got for you, do you have anything you'd like to add?

TR: Yes sir. Just thinking about this last hour and twenty minutes, I don't want to wake up in the middle of the night thinking; gosh I hope I didn't say anything off-key or inappropriate or offensive, you see anything in there?

SH: No, this is one of the most docile interviews I've had. Remember I've interviewed Rudy Christian.

TR: Oh (laughs).

SH: And Ken Follet, Gerard Lynch, and Jeff Orton, I mean these guys are fired up.

TR: (Laughs)

SH: No there's nothing. This has been the least amount of profanity in an interview as well.

TR: (Laughs). Well we have to remember that the Guilds were part of the Catholic Church too, let's not forget that.

SH: Yeah (laughs).

TR: Let's put that in place too. The Worshipful Company of Masons. A quick background, I was working with Ken Follet at Apple Restoration when PTN was formed. I came into work one day and was like hey who's at my desk here? It was like yeah there was a bunch of people here and he had a meeting, we formed this organisation. So I kind of feel I was like the Forrest Gump of preservation, you know, I've just been to all these different places throughout it so. And you're one of the first people I know to get a doctorate and I can't congratulate and encourage you enough. I'm glad somebody is carrying the torch and moving forward and whatever I can do to help you, do not hesitate.

SH: Thanks man, I've got a long time, I've got another two years at least, probably three, we'll see how this next defense, my next defense is in twenty-five days, so we'll see how this next defense goes moving forward. You guys doing these interviews has kind of sent this in a different direction, I've learned a whole lot about how people from the field see educational system and really what we're missing, that we don't teach and what's really needed and what they think of the apprentices and its actually been incredibly valuable. My initial goal was just to look at a bunch of schools and see what their problems are, but the problems go a lot deeper than we think. You know, talking to the UK people, they've got that NVQ system, and what you looked at through Historic Scotland is the SVQ, the Scottish Vocational System, or Qualification, and theirs is a little bit tougher than the NVQ, but the problem that they're having over there is that they're not allowed to fail people.

TR: Yeah you talk to them about that.

SH: And that is unbelievable. We think that the UK system is so much better, and they have all these craftsmen and this, this, and this, I mean they do, don't get me wrong, but they've got, they're in just as bad as shape as we are. If not worse.

TR: Hmm.

SH: We at least have some flexibility on how we do things. If I had to pass everyone that comes into my programme, what the hell is the point of even having a programme? Just come in, pay the money and I'll give you the certificate and you can leave.

TR: Well, here's what we're dealing with now. We're dealing with problems and faults in the education system and like I said I'm going to steer clear of that just because they're multiple and we all know them, and I fell headlong into them not knowing. We've got to teach people how to

teach. And my friend, that's, there lies your task. So, Godspeed in all you do. Is that about it? You think we pretty much nailed it?

SH: Yeah, I think we got it. Let me turn off this recorder real quick.

End Recording

Total recording time: 1.13.05

Interview Form-Individual

Name: Patrick Webb _____

Current address: [REDACTED] Charleston, South Carolina [REDACTED] United States _____

Birthdate: [REDACTED] 1970 _____

Age: 44 _____

Occupation: Plasterer _____

Interview Date: 3 August 2014 _____

Interview Location: Stephen-Savannah, Patrick-Charleston (Skype) _____

Interviewer: Stephen Hartley _____

Generation: 3-United States _____

Consent Form Signed Date: 3 August 2014 _____

Begin Recording

Stephen Hartley (SH): Ok, so we are good to go. Just some basic information. Your current address?

Patrick Webb (PW): [REDACTED] Charleston, SC [REDACTED].

SH: I remember the two nines when I lived in Myrtle Beach. Your birthdate?

PW: [REDACTED] You ready for this? 1970.

SH: 1970. Which would make you how old now?

PW: Twenty-Seven?

SH: And your occupation?

PW: Well, I'm a plasterer. But I guess I'm a Professor of Plaster Working at the American College of the Building Arts as well.

SH: Ok, question number one. What is your profession, and can you describe what you do in that capacity?

PW: Right. Well I'm a plasterer. So, there's probably three main fields of employ for a plasterer. It's what they call solid plaster working or flat work. So that's basically what they think of as walls and ceilings. Just trying to achieve something that's flat or planer, if you have curvilinear walls or ceilings. Then there is molding work. So, you know extruding moldings, making casts, that type of use of plaster. That's mostly a gypsum plaster based work. Sometimes it extends to ornamentation. I do some ornamentation, I'm not the world's greatest modeler. I'm getting better so I'm taking and even leading studies to improve my drawing ability and sculpting to get better and better at that. And then there's the decorative plaster working, which involved a few different things. It usually involves colour. So some of the integrated colour plasters. There's a French tradition called stupier, there's the Italian tradition of marmarino, as well as scaligla. So those are plasters that are specifically meant to emulate, in the case of stupier, limestone and

then in the case of scaigliia marble. It also sometimes extends to things like fresco work. I do a bit of fresco work, and also scrafilo which is carving into wet plaster to reveal other colours underneath, sometimes used in combinations it can be very interesting. So that would all be included in the decorative field of plaster.

SH: Do you do any pargetting?

PW: I have done a little bit, but not too much. Another area of interest for me is the jeps, or the gypsorie. It's really where, a North African technique where they, you would carve wood into the still, you know set but not dry plaster. Again, it's a gypsum plaster technique. What you'll find in the Alhambra that type of thing. So I'm studying more and more carving techniques and how you can actually carve into wet plaster.

SH: Is it physical demanding work?

PW: It's not so bad. There are some aspects that are more demanding than others. I'd say the flat work or solid work, you know real three coat rendering over masonry or over lathe is the most demanding. It's a young man's game, and I'm not doing as much of that as I used to, but I think for the decorative aspects; molding and ornamentation, all these things, you can just last for years and years, probably until your 70's or 80's. As long as you're generally healthy, you can do it.

SH: So when did you begin practicing?

PW: Well I was kind of fortunate because my father, he came over from England, where he was a decorator. So he did a bit of, a decorator over there is not like an interior decorator here. It's a man in the trades. It's mostly paint, wall coverings and plaster. Not that he was a particularly renowned plasterer by any means, but he had a basic understating, mostly of flat work. And at some point he came over here and became partner with someone from a union plastering company, so I learned even more from him. But I think my real, you know knowledge beyond the flat work came when I started working in New York. Worked for a very old company, had been in existence for almost a hundred years and they had these, they had this body of knowledge already. And then they had clientele from Europe, who were well travelled in Europe who wanted things they'd seen over there. So, fortunately I spoke French and I could get by in Italian, so I was always the one to go and learn. So I kept getting sent over to Europe, established connections there, and when I left the company I kept going back. It's kind of an expensive, pricey way to learn.

SH: Yeah. Trust me I know.

PW: But the connections are, it's hard to put a price on. I really learned a lot. A little bit in London but mostly in Paris and in Venice. These are like the epicentres, even today of plastering.

SH: What about the Irish plasterers, what do you feel about their work?

PW: Oh, Irish plasterers. Well, yeah I worked with a lot of Irish guys in New York actually. Irish and the English are kind of the same you know. They've got this reputation for drinking. And yeah you don't want them on the job drunk, obviously. But neither do you want them on the job sober. You need them to have at a continual buzz. Because otherwise they're just not happy. But they're not, they're pretty good, they're not bad.

SH: So, how old were you when you started.

PW: Oh, I think my first construction experience I remember was working on a roof with my father when I was about three years old. That probably was not the wisest thing looking back at it. But yeah, my earliest memories really are working with my father, so I definitely grew up in the trades. Now actually he does more wall veneering and painting, he's still working, still contracting. He has a few people working for him, but he still works himself. Paint, wall covering, and I never liked, I detested painting and wall covering you know I'm good at it, but I don't like it too much either. It's because of the unlimited artistic expression of plaster that I love plaster. I mean, it's a plastic medium, you can do anything with it and so I was really drawn to that one it was one I decided to pursue.

SH: The company that you worked for in New York, why did you decide to leave that company?

PW: Well short answer, now I can't tell you their name, they got mobbed up. Yeah, the owner made some very poor decisions, and, gambling decisions, and they just came in and took it over. And it happened very quickly. It was a learning experience for me. I had to leave New York City. I had my life threatened. They didn't just want me out of the company, they wanted me out of the whole scene. So, yeah that's why I left.

SH: Ah, takes me back to the Philly days. I was in the steam fitter's union, I know all about it.

So what's your favourite aspect to your profession?

PW: Well, I'll tell you what it is. I know what it is. I'm glad you asked that question. I think I like to work physically. I like to sweat you know. I like to work with my hands and that is an aspect of plastering. To say it's not labour, it's labour. And that's okay. But with plastering there's also everyday there's an intellectual component. There's a lot of geometry involved. You have to understand architecture. You have to study those subjects. There a lot of philosophy behind these as well. So there just a huge intellectual, mathematical component of plastering.

Particularly when you're dealing with the molding work, and yeah so it's physical, there's intellectual, and there's artistic. So as soon as you introduce colour and you have to understand colour theory. You have to understand mineral tints and how they work together and how they don't, what things are compatible with what and ornamentation is almost self-explanatory.

Understanding the history of ornament, how to stylise something, you everything, all ornament comes from nature, so you have to understand nature. It all starts by looking at a leaf.

Understanding how the leaves furl, how the petals furl, how shade and shadow falls on that. You

can't represent the leaf or the petal. Its fractal, there's a million details, you have to pick out the four or five that stand out to you and then figure out a way to simplify that, stylise that and convey it to another person so, that's what I love about it. I'll never approach to mastering the medium it's impossible.

SH: So what's your least favourite then?

PW: The business side. You know I think that's why I've gravitated towards the academic, there's less of it. I can really focus on my art. I just don't deal well with sometimes the constraints of dealing with the economic realities that are brought to bear on my craft. And yeah, I'm just don't have the mind-set, I mean I can do it, I've done it, but to just doesn't bring me pleasure. And I think it's interesting because I have students who just, they're going to be fine. They're hard wired for it. They'll enjoy that just as much as they'll enjoy the other part.

SH: So did you ever consider doing anything else?

PW: I actually went to college for civil engineering.

SH: Did you?

PW: You know, I wasn't very well supported to pursue what I pursued, as far as sometimes your parents have something in mind. You know a three-letter word for failure is art so. But, so I went to civil engineering, but I really enjoyed, you know the core classes are all maths and physics and dynamics and statics, and very fundamental concepts of engineering and it served me well. I mean I liked that part of the education but as soon as I got into the upper level engineering classes where they actually turn you into an engineer, I just realised it was all, it was all doldrums. You know it was all bereft of any type of imagination or creativity.

SH: If it makes you feel any better my parents wanted me to be a middle manager for Stroehmann Bread. Because that's what my dad did so and he's still there.

PW: Oh.

SH: He said one thing about the economy is that everyone always buys bread. So you talked about your school programme, which was not trades based, so when you left school, did you go right back into plastering?

PW: No, not exactly. I ended up working for an architect in New York City doing interior design. And so I did that for a number of years, and we were doing renovations of historic properties and it really bothered me while I was doing it because basically they were unsympathetic renovations. We were gutting beautiful interior work. Because you can't touch exteriors, but you can just gut and rip out interiors, particularly back in the nineties when this was happening. So in some cases we had a few clients who say no we don't want it stripped we just want it spruced up a bit so at that point I got to get in touch with real plasterers. At that time I only had solid plastering experience, and I started consulting on these projects. And on the weekends, my spare time, I

started working a little bit with them, and it just kind of, at some point I just made the switch like I don't want to do this anymore. I want to get back to plastering.

SH: Awesome. Well, the way that you approached plastering in terms of learning the field, do you encourage others to take that route?

PW: No. No it was expensive. You know I think, it was difficult. It was difficult. It's a real circuitous route. I mean there was no other route at the time. Now, thankfully, we have at least a couple programmes. That we've got a little beachhead on education for the trades in this country, so. I know had I been through this programme that I'm now instructing, particularly they get all the historic preservation which is really more like conservation the way it's taught at the American College of the Building Arts. And then the architectural core curriculum, they're all learning to draw and draft by hand and perspective, these things would have been so valuable. It's just so integrated. If this is what you think you might want to do, we can get better but I think it definitely the way to go. It's a good foundation.

SH: Has the industry changed since you began practicing?

PW: Yes, it has. I think it kind of interesting. The industry, real plastering, hit a low point in the 80's. It was in steady degradation from after World War II forward. There's the rise I think of modernist architecture being taught in all the major universities, basically paving the way for industrial systems as opposed to traditional crafts. But I think some point in the '90's it had bottomed out. I mean all the plasterers back in the 80's they were just old Italian guys in their seventies, it was a joke. And they didn't want to teach you nothing because their pot was always getting smaller in their mind. And that's what happened their whole working lifetime and they were going to die with all their own working secrets. But sometime in the 90's, two things happened. Well, maybe three. There was, probably that's when the historic preservation movement started really gaining momentum. Money, and there were budgets to actually restore things. So, there was a demand for plasterers among other traditional trades. Secondly, there was a renewed interest in building new construction in traditional architecture. I'd have to assign a lot of credit to that to the Institute of Classical Architecture and Art, maybe Notre Dame University and their programme as well. They can, a little bit later, but still, those two institutions. So they started looking and saying how can we build this way again? And educating architects that is was okay to specify these things. And then thirdly the natural building movement. Sometime around twenty years ago, it's hard to say this but it was like a hippie movement from the sixties through the eighties and it was all about building hobbit houses. And there's nothing wrong with that. I mean I've hung out with those folks and they're fun, if nothing else. But it wasn't mainstream. And that began to change. They got better organised, architects, engineers, builders, plasterers, who are always building in monolithic structures no cavity walls in natural building, so plastering inside and out, plastering is, after the substrate; adobe, straw bale,

pressed earth block, hemp lime, the next thing important after that is plastering. So things really began to change in the nineties because of those three areas of the built environment.

SH: So, has the practice moved toward a niche market, or has it always been there?

PW: Has it moved towards a niche market? Like maybe for the wealthy?

SH: Yeah.

PW: You know it's always kind of had, well not always but in recent times it's had that elitist thing, well plaster is just something for the rich. And that's something that I try to talk about architecture as a...plaster as an architectural specification. Where it makes sense you know and where you can responsibly specify it. I would definitely say for the natural building world it's definitely not a niche market at all, it's just a part of how they build. And they're building very economical it's between a hundred and twenty and a hundred and eighty dollars a square foot. I mean they're not outrageous. So, it can be part and parcel to a very responsible way to build. I think obviously the way that we typically build, like contemporary construction today, plaster just seems like an extra expense. But I always tell people, you know, particularly in places like Charleston, we have a lot of inventory of nineteenth century buildings, that were built right after World War, Civil War I'm sorry. Savannah has the same. And things were built in the 1860's and 70's and some of those properties now, you know the plaster over wood lathe is at the end of its useful life right? Some people rail against it. This stuff, you know, plaster just cracks you know, and its falling part and it would be expensive to replace. I just remind them that yeah, it's at the end of its useful life. It lasted for a hundred and fifty years. It's been passed through one generation after another. We're in a world where we build so cheaply. We think of our homes not as an inheritance. It's an investment. And if we can't get a return on our investment in five years, it has no value to us. So I think that is the only justification for why something like gypsum drywall has supplemented plaster. It is not more economical in the long run and its poor quality right away and you're going to live with that poor quality every day. So maybe that's something I bring to people's attention and perhaps we do have to change the way we're thinking in a larger architectural, built environment way of looking at things to see real, or significant increase in plaster specification. But I see the difference in Europe you know. In Europe you have, you still, even on interiors you'll have terracotta walls that are covered with renders and they wouldn't think of putting sheetrock in their homes. Sheetrock is something saved for temporary office space. Something that you know in fifteen years you're going to rip it out and it's meant as a temporary thing not the way you would build for your home.

SH: I was with a guy from the UK and he as here in Savannah, and he said what is that on your roof? And I said its asphalt shingles. And he goes what are asphalt shingles? And it didn't realise until I went to visit him at his house, his entire town is pan tile. There's not a single

building that's not pan tile roof. Or BTM. But that's all the industrial stuff. So how do you feel about the future of your craft?

PW: Well, if you probably would have asked me that question twenty years ago, I would have just told you I'm a monk, keeping this knowledge alive. So, we're kind of like in a cultural dark ages and you know I'm just trying to pass it on to the next generation, maybe one day we'll come out of it and you know appreciate something that has such a human connection. However, out of all things that have given me hope, craft beer. Craft brewing. You know again twenty years ago, it was basically Miller, Coors, and Anheuser-Busch. You wanted any kind of beer, a light beer, a dark beer, they weren't going to provide it. I mean they had the market and to this day you can get a six pack for six bucks. So why would you buy anything else? And, but I'll go to a my local, Charleston has several, we're blessed with I think we've now got seven breweries, and I'll pay six dollars just for a pint. Why? Because I can look at the guys who made that pint. And in my opinion it tastes better too. So I'm contributing to my local culture. And people don't buy that beer because of nostalgia. The memory of when craft breweries used to exist in this country is long gone. I mean it happened before prohibition. There's no memory of craft brewing, but they're buying it because of the human connection and the maker movement is happening. And I think it's a reaction to...I've told people I don't think industry and technology is the future of construction. I think it is clearly the present of construction. It is the way we build today. So anything different than that is actually the future. So we're thinking more local.

SH: Yeah. Are there enough practitioners your field?

PW: I beg your pardon?

SH: Are there enough practitioners in your field?

PW: Absolutely not. I tell my students that basically if we continue to graduate you guys and we retain you here in Charleston, or you allow yourself to be retained, the market would just absorb you in the next five years. No problem. Maybe ten. Truth is you know, we have a whole country that could absorb you. So our college hopefully is just, what we are doing here, what you guys are doing in Savannah can serve as a model of what could be done around the whole country. You know we had our President talk about craft, and how there needs to be an investment in craft, putting people back to work. Not everybody wants a type of education that is strictly office based that is being offered typically from the universities. They want to use their intelligence, but they want to use their hands as well. And trade education offers that so hopefully, what I'd like to see is actually some support for those institutions that are making that effort.

SH: So do you feel those entering the field are properly trained? Don't look at it from the teacher side look at it as a professional.

PW: Those that are entering the field are properly trained. No, absolutely not. And honestly, what we're doing at, in these programmes, is we're trying to jump start. We're trying to kick

start. It wasn't traditionally done that way. The idea of actually having an institution where you go and study this in a classroom setting, you know in a studio environment, what happened traditionally was that to plaster houses, someone would come in as an apprentice. And they would do basic tasks and they would learn under a journeyman, and but those houses they would teach you know, they would also give. They get this young person's energy, but they're teaching this trade. It was very formalised. And they learned geometry through the trades, they learned art through the trades. And with the rise in the nineteenth century, with the rise of industrialisation, you know those systems broke down. So were trying to artificially reboot it to the point where you do have plaster companies that are not just looking to hire people that are fully qualified but looking at taking young people and bringing them up in the trade to become the next generation of plasters. It's a more natural progression. It's exactly the same thing that happened to architecture. Architecture, there was no such thing as getting an architecture degree, you know in the Renaissance building times when they were doing all those marvelous buildings. You know an architect was just taken as an apprentice first, he didn't know anything. He would learn to draw and draft and he was brought up and eventually maybe by the age of, if he was a genius, maybe by the age of his late twenties, more likely in his forties or fifties he would retain that masters level of qualification and then be seeking to bring people up so that the next generation would have architects. So it's, trades and architecture used to follow very, very similar tracks.

SH: So are you confident that your craft will survive in fifty to a hundred years?

PW: Oh, I think it will have a hard time over the next fifty years. But after, we're in this unsustainable course, it will be a struggle for the next fifty years, but it won't die. But we're on an unsustainable course as a society, the way we build, we can't imagine that were going to build this way a hundred years from now. Cavity wall systems that are wholly dependent on mechanical systems to function, absolutely not. We're going to return to the way we've always built. And you're going to have carpenter, and you're going to have ironworkers, and you're going to have plaster workers and you're going to have stone carvers a hundred years from now guaranteed.

SH: In your professional career, do you every train apprentices in your business?

PW: I have. I've always tried to teach, but it's hard. The economy is not set up for that, there's not cushion for that. Margins are so tight. It's very, very difficult to do that. However, I did have a different mentality then I believe a lot of the folks who do have plaster businesses, particularly when you're talking about mould and ornament. There has developed a strict demarcation of responsibilities, so you have those who do design and engineering, the intellectual side, they're separate from the people in the shop who are production let's say moldings and castings, who are in turn separate from those who are a field crew, that just doing affixing, and are separate

from the custom shop people who are doing the sculpting. Of course, those people are separate from the business people in the office who are administrating everything. So you have these five groups of people and typically you might have a project manager or equivalent position that is the liaison between, but what you have is you destroy the opportunity to truly understand their trade because you don't want any one individual to see the big picture because the thought is that person could break away and become competition for you. That's again with the thought that the pie is getting smaller and smaller. It doesn't serve the market. The market has less choice. It doesn't serve the trade either. So I've always had the opposite position I had the opportunity to run a shop in partnership with someone else and I ran it very differently in California and I encouraged that type of cross training. I made my engineers go into the shop and run plaster moldings, made them go in the field and affix them. I wanted them to understand. So we had a lot of cross training going on across shop and field as well. I wasn't afraid. You know what, none of those guys left me. They were appreciative of the fact they didn't want to go anywhere else. They wanted to go somewhere where they could learn. And even if they did, I wish them well. Why should you have a shop for twenty or thirty years, a business, and at the end you close the door and nobody from that business was able to leave and form a business of their own. I mean what does that say about your shop? I don't think architectural offices are proud of that you know. If you're a prominent architect but you never produce out of your office anyone that could open their own office in the architectural field, it's shameful. I think tradesmen need to learn a lesson from that.

SH: Well do you participate in short course training?

PW: Could you repeat that please?

SH: Do you participate in any short course training?

PW: Short course?

SH: Yes

PW: Oh Okay. Yes we have, I've always done that but we have like workshops, usually like a week long, where I invite plasterers from around the country. Sometimes I lead those other times I'll bring someone in who was a mentor of mine or who I know has a particular expertise. We've run tantalic workshops, hydraulic lime, learning how to run moldings on a bench. Particularly those, we've conducting one of those last year, and professional plasterers came from around the country because it's almost been like a hidden secret. You know these guys have made a fine living by just flat work, solid plastering, sometime decorative plastering, but it's been a mystery to them how to make a molding and how to affix it. And because they've been working in plaster, they know the medium, so after just a week of training they had the confidence to go back and say I can do this at home. So I think they're ongoing professional training is very important. Intensives. For the trade.

SH: So do you participate in academic training programmes?

PW: Do I participate in academic training?

SH: Yeah.

PW: Just a little bit. Yeah I teach at the American College of the Building Arts and primarily what I teach there is plaster working, everything we've just been talking about. However a large aspect of that's and something that I'm focusing on this semester, I'll hardly be doing any actual plastering at all, we're preparing the students for model and mould work. So a large part of that is the ability to sketch to be able to conceive, to focus the eyes and actually see because have the mind conceive a design. It's a lot of drawing and teaching that as an elective and I'm teaching the junior trowel trades students drawing and sketching. My advice to tradespeople, particularly those who are interested in the artistic side, draw, draw, draw. And there's three ways to learn how to draw. You can read about techniques for drawing, you can observe someone who really knows how to draw, and the last and the best, draw yourself. There is nothing like repetition. Just draw again and again and again.

SH: Are you an active member of any professional organisation?

PW: I am, a number. I am a member of the Preservation Trades Network as well as the Association for Preservation Technology International I'm a member of....it just slipped my mind, the British Lime

SH: The Building Limes Forum?

PW: Building Limes Forum. There we have it. As well. Those three, I have a level of activity. It's mostly membership, maybe once a year I'll get to a conference. I have a more focused energy in the California Straw Building Association from living out in Los Angeles. They are very active in promoting all the trades that they work with; timber framing is important to them as well as plastering and some of the other trades. So I feel I get more bang for my buck by supporting them. And then probably the most active organisation that I'm involved in is the Institute of Classical Architecture and Art which I just talked briefly about them because they have really changed their mission in the past five years. They had changed their name. It used to be the Institute for Classical Architecture and Classical America and when I first encountered them I found they were very elitist. You know bow tie architects group of folks. And I think they've really appreciated and realised how important trade and craft is to their organisation. So much so that they changed their name to reflect that. I'm deeply involved in their education committee. I chair the newly formed materials and methods committee that has a focus on craft and the building arts, and how to incorporate that into the training that they give their architect members. Which, they want to include hands on training so that is a fantastic, it's under development and I'm proud of that so. Two other organisations that are working with the Institute are Notre Dame University and University of Colorado Denver, both of which have traditional architecture

programmes, and the only ones that really have that, I guess Miami to a degree a little bit but they're the two that have the best established programmes in the country and they are also interested in integrating the traditional building arts directly and overtly into their curriculum so I'm working with those institutions as well.

SH: Miami has a great one. The biggest problem is trying to get a hold of Hector. Because Hector is the one you need to talk to about it and he never answers his emails. He's actually the Chair of INTABU US and Michael Meffehy had to step back in and start answering emails because they were sending votes out to the US thing and they never left Hector's desk, so Michael said you know what I'll step back in and I'll start answering emails. Do you feel that those organisations are adequately addressing the needs of professionals?

PW: I didn't. But I think they're turning the ship. Yeah, and I think they will. So I can't criticism them. I'm in dialogue with them and they're like whatever, they'll support it financially, they're on board. So we might take a couple years before we start reaping the results, but they're working on putting it all together right now. I'm encouraged.

SH: Good. Would you suggest others to practice your craft?

PW: Yeah, I would say, and I speak particularly to parents I suppose that if you have a young person and they, not to discourage them. This is a viable trade. They can go out and make a living with this right away. I mean I know our students, we're sending them out on their first-year internships with organisations, and they want to hire them on the spot. And pay a living wage. So, I think it's such a problem in our society that we are churning out so many people with a Bachelor's degree from somewhere that as just like the old high school diploma and they've just got a mountain of debt and there's just no job opportunities for them. I'm not saying it's for everyone by any means, nor is anything else. Nor is being a doctor for everyone or being a banker is for everyone. We all have different personalities and certainly there are a lot of us who, just like me, they like to be engaged intellectually, artistically and physically, and definitely the trade of plastering is something that you can be compensated for and make a living wage.

SH: So if someone came up to you and said Patrick I want to get into plastering, where should I start, what would you tell them?

PW: Well, let me see, what I would tell them. Be ready to work. It's not something it's so easy anybody can do it. No, it's a craft. It takes years of investment. It's not easy. But it's rewarding, like a lot of things that aren't easy, it's very rewarding so. Yeah be ready to focus a good ten years on your craft. I tell my students the same thing when they graduate. They get about two thousand hours of hands on under guided instruction, through directly what we teach at the college and the internships we arrange for them, but two thousand hours is not enough. I think Malcom Gladwell had written a book about this and he basically surmised that it takes ten thousand hours to be professional at anything. And that's under guided instruction. Well I think

he's about right, at least for plastering that's the case. So what that equated to, after they leave our school, is going out and working somewhere for four years. And I tell them don't even think about opening your own business. Better to learn the business by observing the guy you're working for. See what works, see the mistakes, you'll learn all that through osmosis if you're paying attention. But focus on your craft. Become a master of your craft, and then you'll have that for the rest of your life.

SH: Cool. So, are there any misconceptions about your craft that people have?

PW: Yes, definitely. One of those is that nobody does that anymore. And it's funny this has happened to me on more than one occasion, where I have been on a scaffold affixing an ornament or putting up a molding, people will look at me, architect will look at me, and it's like, wow, what are you doing? And I tell them what I'm doing. Putting up a molding. Oh, that's a shame nobody does that anymore. And at that point I'm trying to figure out is this guy an idiot? Is he mocking me? He's making fun of me. And what I've come to appreciate it is that it's so engrained. The educational system has told people, this can't be done anymore. This is a part of history, this is not something that's done anymore. So that even when people see it with their own eyes, they still can't believe it's happening. So, that's one of them. The other is that it's only for the rich. That it's expensive, and I have written some articles on that saying that like anything, misapplied it can be expensive. But properly applied it makes perfect sense. So a lot of times that's just understanding how materials are specified and a little bit about what we talked about earlier are you looking for a long term, lasting material, or really are you only looking for something that is going to last for a few years. I think John Ruskin, a quote from him, there's hardly anything in this world that can't be made for cheaper, for a few dollars less. And the person who is quick to buy that is that man's lawful prey. So, no craft represents quality. It represents an investment of not only materials, but the people who created them. It's an investment in our cultural patrimony.

SH: Awesome. So, we're getting into the last two questions which are all about current training systems. So, do you feel that the current education offerings, that are currently available, are adequate to prepare those entering the field?

PW: Well I can't speak for all of them, I can speak for the one I'm familiar with, that I'm involved with. I do. I feel that we can improve. We are improving but, like I said even on their first internships, part of that might be that the trade is in such a diminished state that people want them right away. They don't want to wait until they graduate. So definitely by the time they leave here, that's why I advise them against setting up their own business. They easily could, they're more qualified than many of the people running businesses out there, as far as their physical skills and their intellectual skills in terms of their trade, but maturity is another matter. But, yeah I think we are achieving our goal as an institution in terms of preparing people to actually

contribute right away at a level of probably, classically, I would say at a high apprentice level or a low journeyman level depending on their level of ability.

SH: So what's the biggest advantages of current educational offerings?

PW: The advantage of that setting is (pause). What's the advantage of doing it at an institution? I think it's the liberal arts side of it. You know being to be able to integrate, seeing how your trade, it's not just something that exists on its own. You know it's integrated to literature, it's integrated to mathematics, to historic preservation, to architecture, they see all the connections. All the students get the same, you know we have trade specialisations, plaster's just one of them but they get a degree in the building arts. That's the degree so, and everybody get the same core curriculum of education, then they go off into their own trade specialty and get studio time. So, I think there's tremendous value in that. They're able to talk with, they're not able to, maybe that's what distinguishes it from a trade school. Sometimes a trade school their focus is just on a trade, and there's a question about that, should you just have trade schools, or should you try to integrate more of a well-rounded education. But that ability to talk with designers, with architects, with homeowners, with historic preservationists and thought about these, and thought about these issues and be able to take a stand and contribute on design problems is just huge. And we need that type of leadership. You know perhaps at one point it will be re-established and we'll make ourselves obsolete, and again you'll have an apprentice, journeymen, master system in the trade. But right now, we're needed.

SH: So what's the biggest drawbacks then?

PW: I think just the expense. You know time and expense of going to school for four years. And I guess that's the same problem facing any college student. I do feel for them. A lot of the students coming in, they are millennials, children of Generation X. And Gen X has had a rough time. You know we're not as well-heeled as our parents, their grandparents. And then we've been taught not to work with our hands by and large. The baby boomer generation, our parents, were happy to get away from that, to move into office jobs. So there's not a lot of moral support. People are like why are you doing that? So it's, I think one of our biggest challenges.

SH: So, are these programs sustainable?

PW: Don't know. You know, unlike Europe, they don't get government support. There's talk, but there's no support. And that makes it tough. There's no popular support. We would, it takes a lot of fundraising, and faculty spends a lot of their time helping to fundraise. We have to always be aware, not only what we're teaching you know, making sure our programmes are funded. And so honestly, it is happening. I've seen it at Notre Dame, I've seen it at University of Colorado Denver programme that if people understand what you're trying to do, there are people looking for a legacy. And there are people that once they understand what the building arts are and what they contribute to society, they want to be a part of it. There's that patronage. You know we're no

different from Michelangelo or Raphael or these guys in the sense, maybe we're not as talented, but in the sense that it doesn't make itself. We need patronage. People who appreciate it.

SH: I know how you feel. I'm actually not fundraising for money because I'm funded by the state, but I'm whoring myself out for press. Because what we don't have is a budget for marketing that runs past four counties. So I'm guerrilla marketing anywhere I can. I'm going to start spray painting cars with my logo if it doesn't get better. So, how do you feel for the future of training in the craft?

PW: It's the highest point that I've seen it in my career. It's not that it's enough but it's more, I mean there was nothing before. So at least, like I said, at least we have a beachhead. We have something to build on. So we have this flame, we're protecting it. You know I feel that my students, some of them will go on to be much better plasterers than I had the opportunity to be and perhaps give back. Be willing to be the next ones who will educate another education, either through this institution or with really good companies who are doing great work and have a large enough margin, where they take the people, because they know what they're doing, and taking their people and investing in them. That's the message I'm telling them. Don't look at people like objects to make money off of you know, invest in people. I'm investing in you right now. I could be doing something else more profitable.

SH: So, here's a question that I'm asking all the US people. We look at the schools that are out there that are trying to teach, a lot of them fall under the guise of historic preservation, but traditional crafts. And you look at Edgecombe in North Carolina, Belmont in Ohio, College of the Redwoods, there's one now in Montana, Clatsop in Astoria, Oregon, the ones that were in Colorado, they're all in very rural places. Where Charleston and Savannah have the programmes that are in the biggest cities. And I don't consider Savannah a city. 135,000 people, my neighbourhood in Philadelphia had more people than this. And why do we put these programmes in places where there's not a lot of work, they're, you know, are economically depressed. I mean Belmont when it started was an old mining town, Edgecombe is leftover tobacco farms. You know, why do we put them in those places, but we don't have them in place like New Orleans, which really needs it, New York City, Philadelphia, D.C. I mean there's the school in Boston but that's a specialist programme just in carpentry, Bennett Street. Why do you think that is?

PW: I don't know. But I agree with you. We need schools in the areas that have work. And you know, Chicago, New York, San Francisco, they're expensive to have schools there. I understand that, and maybe it has to be outside the actual city. Be better if it was inside. I think the trades, trade education is, would be so beneficial to the inner-city. And some of the young people there who are having real difficulty finding meaningful employment. I know there's something going on, I visited them actually, and hats off to them, the National Park Service is working with New

York Public Schools to form Mather High School for the Building Arts where their teaching carpentry, masonry/plastering and I think some landscape design as well. And maybe that's something that will kind of, be the idea to spur on the level of post-high school training, and I think what they're trying to do is fantastic.

SH: You know they laid off all their instructors.

PW: I did not know that.

SH: Yeah. Tom and the carpentry...

PW: I had no idea.

SH: Yeah, they gave them the letters on Friday and all of the sudden it was on Preservenet the next day looking for all new instructors.

PW: Wow.

SH: Well they wanted someone with a Master's degree in Preservation, but is also a trade's person but also has a New York teaching certificate.

PW: Yeah.

SH: And I said good luck with that.

PW: Yeah.

SH: So yeah that what's going on with that right now. So if I were to say to you; Patrick, money is no object, because obviously there always is there money component, I want you to design a programme or a system how would you set that up?

PW: Design a?

SH: Programme or a system.

PW: Let me see, money is no object. (Pause). Well, I've come to, I think I really appreciate the integrated approach, the liberal arts approach to teaching the building arts. You know one thing I would like to see; we need a master's programme. I think we really do need a master's programme. And I've been giving it some thought what would a master's programme would look like. I think we do have a good example. One in the world that we can follow. And they have been in businesses for about a hundred and thirty years. It's the Academy in St. Petersburg. And one thing I would do with more resources would probably be expand what we teach. We don't teach glass as a medium. We do one thing with metal and that's iron smithing. We don't really teach carving wood which the ornamental side of it. So I would expand the programme to cover more of the traditional crafts. The second thing, in thinking of the master's programme is that once you master what they can in four years their medium, they really do understand plaster, stone, wood, metal. But the artistic side, particularly the artistic side, takes time. And there's a programme in Southern Pines that we're beginning to work with called the Academy of Classical Design. And is basically a drawing programme. And it's a studio there's no, it's not accredited so there is no time limit. I think some of the students have been there for four or five years. And they're studying a

very traditional way of off plaster casts, drawing those, really understanding shade and shadow. They're doing drawing from life and its rigours. So to go through that programme, something like that Beaux Arts methodology that existed in the eighteen and nineteenth centuries. That rigor. Because the crafts are very much, there was a distinction made between fine art, decorative or applied art, started in the seventeenth century and really picked up pace in the eighteenth century as part of the Enlightenment. You know people like Michelangelo would be thought of as fine artist under later definitions. But to have art as part of life, you know we have an opportunity to actually bring, I think not just a pragmatic, rationale built environment, but a sensible one, one that's full of life. It's that feeling that you get when you walk into a historic peninsula of Charleston, definitely the feeling you get when you walk the some of the medieval towns in Europe. And, you know, with more resources I would say invest in our young people now. And not only teach them a trade, but to teach them art. So no matter how they manifest that after they leave, you can't, once you have that training, you're going to use it.

SH: Alright. It's funny I've had this conversation with a lot of people about this, you guys are missing out by not having a glass programme. It costs so little, probably twenty, thirty thousand to get the entire shop set up, and once those guys start glass painting...

PW: I'm sorry were missing out on?

SH: A glass programme. You know twenty to thirty thousand to set it up, that's equipping a whole shop for fifteen people and a ton of glass and glass paints and once those guys start glass painting, and making windows, I mean we crank windows out in our shop. And these little sun catchers that we make for twenty minutes a half hour, we turn around and sell them for thirty-four dollars, and its two dollars' worth of material.

PW: No argument I think glass needs to be a specialisation for us in the future. Absolutely.

SH: Yeah. Well glass blowing is one thing that we're starting in the spring

PW: Cool.

SH: So that ought to be interesting, were having a guy coming down from Pennsylvania and helping us set up our rigs. So hopefully this time next year we'll be blowing glass which ought to be interesting. My biggest concern is that they are going to start making stuff that I don't want them to make and I know it's going to happen. So inside your programme would there be an on-site apprenticeship programme?

PW: Oh yeah.

SH: Yeah?

PW: Yeah. You know for the, well technically we have the Associate degree programme. So after their freshman year they do one apprenticeship. But if they do the full four years, which we strongly encourage, then they get three because after their freshman, sophomore, and junior years they get places. And they're paid apprenticeship programmes. We found that it's not

difficult, I mean it's always a schedule issue and stuff but people are saying, well if you give them to us for free we'll take them. It's for logistic reasons that it will or will not work. No, they're happy to have them and they're at least breaking even if not making a profit off of our interns that we send out. And that's every summer.

SH: So, given the current education system, could your ideal programme operate within that system?

PW: My ideal one? No.

SH: No.

PW: Absolutely not.

SH: Why not, what would have to change?

PW: Well I mean, the current education system, I mean a lot of their requirements for accreditation, you make us take certain types of course that I think, they don't had any real value so the type of education. I mean, you could take it out and put something else in it that will give it a lot more value. So I think if the US Department of Education really wants to support the trades, they really need to understand that we need our own accrediting body completely. Because we're not preparing people to work in an office. It's just a whole different track.

SH: Yeah.

PW: In the meantime, we're conforming. Our academics conform to what they need to for those accreditation bodies. Now I'm not totally against accreditation. I think the discipline and the rigour that it takes to get through accreditation makes you organise yourself that makes you think about and answer certain questions that really make you not wasteful. It's not all bad, it's just not set up for us. The trades.

SH: So are there any existing programmes right now that you feel are coming close to your idea of an ideal programme?

PW: Did I mention the Academy in St. Petersburg? Do you speak Russian comrade? Yeah we're a little bit jealous of what they got going on but they've got, were a few years behind them. No we need to build it. That's our job. You gotta go to work Steve.

SH: I'm working on it. Well, that's all the questions I have for you. Do you have anything you would like to add to the research?

PW: I'll give some thought. No I don't think so I think you're asking a lot of the good questions, the right questions. Maybe after the interview I'll come up with a couple more questions that might be good.

SH: Shoot them over to me I'd love to see them.

PW: Alright.

End recording

Total recording time 1.08.12

Interview Form-Individual

Name: Amy McAuley_____

Current address: [REDACTED] Portland Oregon [REDACTED] United States_____

Birthdate: [REDACTED] 1971_____

Age: 43_____

Occupation: Traditional Sash Joiner-Owner Oculus Fine Carpentry_____

Interview Date: 2 August 2014_____

Interview Location: Stephen-Savannah, Amy-Portland (Skype)_____

Interviewer: Stephen Hartley_____

Generation: 3-United States_____

Consent Form Signed Date: 2 August 2014_____

Begin Recording

Stephen Hartley (SH): Alright Amy, just to let you know how this whole thing is going to work. There's going to be ten questions. Inside those questions are what we called probes. Probes are just for you to elaborate a little more about the question that was asked. Some of these that I'm going to ask, in your mind may be like, well why the hell is he asking that because that's pretty straightforward. The reason that I'm asking you this is because I'm writing for an audience that may or may not be familiar with the trades, they probably don't work with tools so it's one of those things that it may be obvious to you and I, but it's not obvious to them.

Amy McAuley (AM): Okay.

SH: The other thing is that at the end of the interview, there's going to be some questions about educational offerings in the trades and things like that, and I'm going to make this caveat. My biggest concern with me asking these questions is that people know what I do for a living, and they sometimes don't want to be as truthful as they need to be, or they want to be. You're not going to hurt my feelings.

AM: Okay.

SH: If you say know what, what you do down in Savannah is crap, that's fine. Because that's what I, I always tell people that I work with, I don't want to hear what I'm doing right, I want to hear what I'm doing wrong.

AM: Okay.

SH: And its more helpful for someone to be honest with how they feel about craft training then to hold back because I'm the one that's asking it.

AM: Okay.

SH: So, before we get started I just need some basic information. Your address?

AM: Mailing address?

SH: Yeah.

AM: Its [REDACTED] Portland, Oregon, [REDACTED].

SH: Okay, your birthdate?

AM: [REDACTED] 1971.

SH: Okay, which would make you how old now?

AM: 43 I think. (Laughs)

SH: And your occupation?

AM: I tell people that I'm a traditional sash joiner.

SH: Traditional sash joiner, okay. And you're also the owner of Oculus Carpentry correct?

AM: Yeah Oculus Fine Carpentry Inc.

SH: Alright, question number one. What is your profession, and can you describe what you do in that capacity?

AM: My profession is traditional sash joiner. And roughly what I do is I build and restore historic wood windows and doors with only hand tools. And I do that for mainly commercial; which would encompass non-profits, state agencies, city governments, Federal governments, Department of Transportation structures. So its municipalities hire me. I don't work in residential anymore. I did that for seventeen years and I got tired of that. So I'm restricted to only public or commercial structures.

SH: Okay, you said working only with hand tools.

AM: Yes.

SH: What types of tools do you work with?

AM: So I limit what I do, and this is just a personal preference, I use disston hand saws. I would preface that in saying western hand saws.

SH: Okay.

AM: I don't use the Japanese type pull saws. I do use some saws that are aren't disston, I'm not a completely disstonaite, but I am exclusively wooden hand planes. I cannot stand metal body planes. They're very cold to the touch and I have arthritis in my hands, so it makes me crazy. And all those levers and knobs and stuff that do the adjusting drive me nuts because it takes a lot of time to set that up and learn how to do that I'm not saying Stanleys are bad, it's just I don't jive with them, so to speak. I love the feel of a wooden hand plane, they're very simple tools, with just the wedge and the cap iron. And they just speak to me, you know like nothing else.

SH: Had I know I would have, there's a place in York that, the guy was going out of business, it was a junk shop and he had literally boxes and boxes of hand planes.

AM: Geez.

SH: And I bought two for the guy that staying at my house. And I walked up to the counter and said how much, and one was a huge bench plane, I think 18 inches, and he said, I don't know, twenty pounds? I was like yeah. But you can get edge sashes, or edge planes for like a pound.

AM: Wow.

SH: And the irons are great too, they just need to be re-established. Is the equipment that you use difficult to obtain or expensive?

AM: I would say that they are a little hard to locate. I wouldn't say that they're expensive because like I have a York jackplane that I got at an antique show for twenty bucks. So they're not expensive per se, but they are a little bit tricky to find. And I feel that the further west you go in the U.S., the harder that is. You know we're a lot younger out here and we did away with a lot of that because, the oldest buildings we have out here are like 1846 to 1860's, and you know there were hand planes and that sort of thing but there's far fewer. So, you know when I go to the East Coast, that's when I'm hunting for stuff that I wouldn't find on the west coast.

SH: So, when do you begin practicing your profession?

AM: When?

SH: Yeah.

AM: Let's...I began in construction, learning historic preservation in 1996. I worked with a general contractor for seven years. Summer of '96 he hired five women to work on an historic post office, and he said I'll keep one of you after the summer, and I stayed with him for seven years. He had a degree in historic preservation and, so a lot of what we're doing was historic, in historic homes or in historic structures. At some point he veered off into what I would politely call vintage remodeling. And that's where I was like this is not good with me, so I joined to union for about six months. I joined the union because I was looking for an occupation that seemed stable and kind of had a comradery about it that I kind of wasn't getting from this contractor, you know ilk. So I joined the union thinking I would find my people essentially. Which I did not find. I found a lot of... I found a lot of crap (laughs). To tell you the truth. For some people the union is great, they love it, it's their life. But, as a woman in the union it was a constant, daily fight for any sort of respect. I think I was asked out every day I was on a jobsite. And I wasn't, I wasn't actually working with wood. I was a sheet rocker.

SH: Awe.

AM: Sheet rockers' Union. And, yeah it was not good. So after six months I as like this is not for me so that's when I started my business of Oculus Fine Carpentry. And so I think I've been doing that for eleven years. I started that in 2002.

SH: Excellent.

AM: It's only been six years since I've been exclusively hand tool. You know when I first started my business I had all this stuff. I had the table saw and the compound mitre saw and all the nailers and compressors, you know all the, the whole package.

SH: Yeah.

AM: And, yeah so it's been six years since I've sold all that.

SH: Excellent. Yeah I don't like dealing with my students, and the most dangerous tools in the shop are the table saw and the drill press. And people say, well the drill press isn't dangerous. It is because you become complacent with it.

AM: Yeah.

SH: You just go oh yeah, it's going to do that. And I had one student launch a clamp, and our shop is 5000 square feet, he launched it about three hundred yards. It went out the back door and into the grass. And luckily no one was back there when he did it.

AM: That's crazy.

SH: And if it makes you feel any better, I was in the steamfitter's union, and I've never steam fitted a pipe in my life.

AM: Oh no.

SH: I was a cutter, an oxy cutter. It was terrible. So, what attracted you to your profession?

AM: Back in 2002 when I started Oculus, I put a lot of my business cards at a local contemporary sash shop, where they built windows and doors. And so all the calls I was getting were from people that's didn't want to throw out their original windows, they wanted to have them fixed. But at the time there wasn't a lot of people doing that in Portland. And so I started to do a lot of research about windows and how to fix them, and I kept getting all these calls so it just sort of found me I would say. But the hand tool bit, that was a little more complex, and I, let's see, in 2005 I was asked to do my first non-profit project, where it was a house that had been bought by a non-profit who wanted to turn it over into a house museum, you know 1856 which is early settlement for Oregon. There were grants, there was SHPO, and there was city officials so there was this whole group of people, so I was like wow look at all these people. And they were kind of looking over my shoulder a little bit. And the timber framer that was working on that project said to me, because there was some windows in there that needed to be, because they were contemporary windows that needed to be, they wanted them to be more in character with 1856 so they wanted them rebuilt. And, so like anybody I just went to the shop in town and I got a bid for these windows. Of course, they're not really, they couldn't actually make them as they were made in 1856 so the timber framer told me know you what, those windows should be hand built. You should be hand building those windows because not only would I be providing a product that would be more fitting with the building, but you're also keeping a dying craft alive. And that little seed stuck in my brain, and I as like; god how do you build windows by hand, so I was like shit I

did a bunch of google searching and talked to people about how you built windows by hand and started to collect the hand tools involved with that, and just started playing around with them, and it felt like coming home, really. And I was like oh, I was eating it up, and I couldn't imagine not doing this forever, so that's when I sold my power tools. After I built my first plane. I had to be able to make those strong sash planes, because each profile is a little different per building and I needed to be able to make that and once I did, that's when I sold them.

SH: Excellent. So would you say that working with the hand tools is the favourite aspect of your profession?

AM: Yeah and going to all the cool sites.

SH: Yeah that's always fun too. I always tell people that's the best part of the job you get to go places that no one gets to go. And people go, hey can you look at this attic, and I'm like oh yeah sure. But, what's your least favourite part?

AM: The paperwork! Everyone says that. It's awful.

SH: It is.

AM: For Lord's sake man.

SH: Did you ever consider doing anything before you decided to do this?

AM: Well I have a degree in Fine Arts. So my technical training is in scientific illustration. But, when you get out of college, what are you really going to do with that? So I stumbled around for a good many years. I did some odd jobs, I worked in politics for a while, did retail, moved to the biggest town in Oregon, Portland, trying to find my way. So I would say my art was kind of shelved for a while. And to tell you the truth when I started working for that general contractor in '96 I was out of work and I needed a job. And I mean I had been, when I was in college I worked in the wood shop as a supervisor so I kind of, and I grew up on a farm, and so working with wood is kind of in my upbringing and my dad's a logger so he told me about trees and stuff. So it wasn't a foreign thing for me to go into carpentry. So, what was the question again?

SH: Did you consider another practice before you...

AM: I mean I knew that retail was not going to be my career, but I was in my twenties and I partied every night, I went to clubs, so what was I really doing. I was making enough to pay my bills so I could party, right? (Laughs). So at some point you need to figure out I have to grow up a little bit and what am I going to do for the rest of my life. So I think it kind of found me a little bit. And I think I was open to, you know you're out there searching and I didn't want to close any doors that felt right. And you know talking with students it's kind of hard to tell to think, you know, you're on the right track. You know this, I can tell that you really love this. But for others it's just like, hmmm, I'm not this is the right fit for you. And so I wanted to, when I was feeling around you know for work, I didn't want to close any doors because oh this is construction, you know there's so many prejudices against those blue-collar workers. You know I didn't, and to tell you

the truth money, I know I want to make money of course, but acquiring wealth in monetary terms, was not on my agenda.

SH: You're not the only one. In fact, everyone said the exact same thing.

AM: (Laughs).

SH: I think I may have tapped into a reason why we all do this. Well my next question is how did you learn your practice but you've already explained that.

AM: Yeah I learned it through books, trial and error, and that's pretty much it really.

SH: Any formal training? No workshops or anything like that?

AM: In sash joinery?

SH: Yeah.

AM: No. Do you know of any?

SH: No I was hoping you would open that door for me.

AM: (Laughs). Well I want to come down and teach a workshop because I was at Edgecombe last summer.

SH: Well that's something we can certainly work out. You're actually on my list for Visiting Artisan. So would you encourage others to take the route that you took in terms of learning how to do your craft?

AM: Well, I'm a firm believer in Joseph Campbell if you know Joseph Campbell. So, if a person were to travel down my path, then it wouldn't really be their path.

SH: Yes.

AM: So I would say to students, I just try to give them broad things to consider. When I'm talking to students about whether they should go the route I took. I definitely, I definitely discourage women from joining the union just because of what I experienced. I mean I don't say, do not join the union. I say, let me tell you some of the thing I experienced in the union, and then you can make a judgement call yourself. Some, I mean I met the...I worked on a jobsite with 300 people, there was twelve women. And there was some women of the twelve, that you could tell that, you know they've been in it long enough they had gained respect, so they weren't given a lot of shit. You know you could tell that this fit with them. But for most of the woman that were on that jobsite, it was no picnic. So when I'm talking with students about their career, you know, I try not to bias them in any sort of way. And I don't tell them, you know, I tell them how I did it, as an example of you've got to be tenaciously committed to what you love. I mean you're not going to make it as a preservation trades person if you don't love it. Because it's very difficult, in my experience, it's very difficult to make it go, to make it work. And so you've got to have that tenacious commitment and believe in yourself that this is the right path for you. And it might not be sash joinery, maybe its masonry. And if it doesn't click with you, try something else. And when it clicks you're going to know it, and that's where you need to go. You need to follow, you know,

where, you know what feels right. You can't, I mean just because I seem to have this idyllic sort of profession, doesn't mean that you're going to have the same experience if you try and follow me. So, that's kind of what I tell them.

SH: Awesome. So, the way that you learned, what do you feel is the worst aspect about the way that you learned your craft?

AM: The worst aspect. Let me think a minute (pause). Well, I think that (pause). The worst aspect of how I learned. There's always that, and even still, it gets me into trouble actually, I'm very afraid of not having work. And so my mentality, that's the worst part of this whole thing is that I'll say okay, yeah, I can do that when I'm like, you know, I'm booked out for six months, and I'm like I just added that to my plate, that's not good. So, I'm so afraid of not having work that, you know I have a family so I've got to think about that, so it makes for a little crazy making. And I think it's more of a mental thing.

SH: Yeah.

AM: But it's not pleasant at all. But I'm getting better. I'm getting better. (Laughs).

SH: I know how you feel all these non-profits call us and I don't want to disappoint anybody.

AM: They build you up. It's like, God I've been waiting forever for you to call me. And they're like yeah, we've got this money now and we need to spend it by September 1 can you do it? Yes, I can do it. (Laughs) Geez. So yeah, I think that's the worst.

SH: Has the industry changed at all since you began practicing?

AM: Well there's a lot more window people that do restoration, in Portland. So, which is fine because a lot of them do residential work, and so I can always refer them to people that call and say can you work on my house and I say no I can't but here's somebody who can. So yeah there are more people that are doing it. Other than that, nothing's really changed. And even though I've been out there and people know, oh you only work with, people know that I only work with hand tools, I get a lot of gawking. I still get gawking after all these years. I've been in the paper, I've been all over and people still, they still gawk at it. So yeah, I would say not much has changed. I do, there's a lot of, I mean it's a real battle to save windows still. I feel like it's gotten a little bit worse. Because you know there was this green, you know the green movement has not been kind to windows. So there's a lot of talking with homeowners and laying it out, looking at studies of air circulation, you know looking at the benefits. So that gets a little that has not changed much. So, which is why I'm kind of glad that I'm not in that residential world, talking to those folks anymore, because it gets very discouraging.

SH: Yeah. So has, in Portland for sure, particularly out on the west coast, there's the beginning of a greater appreciation for historic buildings, has the heritage craft, or preservation trades as we call them in the States, subsection out there grown?

AM: Yeah I would not, how would you define a heritage craft person?

SH: That's a good question. Well the for the realm of this research we're going to go with the National Heritage Training Group's definition of heritage craft and that would be crafts that existed before World War One. Because that's their cut-off date over there its pre-1919.

AM: Okay so that's right at the change over to the industrial revolution.

SH: It's basically the mass introduction to electricity.

AM: Okay. Wow. So if I'm to apply that definition to crafts people out here, I would say that the preservation trades is dwindling. Out here, it's gotten less.

SH: So would you count all those people who practice what you call historic preservation?

AM: I think they are, I mean there are some definitions that are. I mean they work on windows. They can repair glass, they can fix your ropes, they can, some of them can do epoxy work, none of them can build sash. The ones, the sash company that I just spoke of before, actually went out of business and was bought by my main competitor. And that's not to say that they do historic preservation. They're total crappers. So I would say I would still stand by the fact that they are dwindling. It's more of these people can do some of these basic things to windows that residential homeowners want. You know, fix my ropes, fix my broken glass, do glazing putty, do some epoxy here and there. But I don't think too many of them can build sash, swap out parts. So, and they're 100 percent modern shops. There's nobody that does what I do. And, but I'm thinking like the timber framers, we're in serious trouble out here for timber framers. Because the guys, the two guys I kind of know, they're in their sixties, and nobody seems to be coming up in the ranks to replace them. So there's some trades that are really hurting.

SH: It's not just you. In Georgia we've got three registered timber framers. The Holder brothers and me. And I don't practice.

AM: Wow.

SH: So, question number seven. How do you feel about the future of your craft?

AM: I feel like there's no future. As far as someone coming along to do what I do, it's a little depressing to tell you the truth. Because there's not, there's been one person that I felt like had that something that might make it. I don't know if it's with sash joinery, I think it's more with metal but she has, she's got that special something for that preservation trades person. You know, and I've kept in contact with her because she's going for an advanced degree, you know and try to encourage her to go into the trades. But we'll see, she's got that family thing, they want her to get an education, so you can get a good job. So she's, and I've asked her, what are you doing in this graduate programme? You know you could start, you could apprentice under this other welder that she was working with, and at some point you know just go off and start her own company. She's like well you know my parents want me to, you know there's that parental urge or that push from the parents to not be in the trades. There's still that stigma of trades of the blue collar, the low-class worker. And I guess as a parent you don't want to see your kids

struggle and suffer and not make it. But at the same time it's through that struggle that you come out and you are a better person, you find what you love. So I'm not very optimistic for somebody coming up and actually doing what I'm doing but I am, I'm not taking apprentices anymore, it doesn't pencil out.

SH: Why not?

AM: It doesn't...I would spend eight hours a day training. Just because the tools are so foreign to these students. They don't know how to cut, they don't know how this plane works you know. So I would train all day, and I would do that for months and it was, you know at some point we've got to get the work done so I can get paid and I can pay you. It's still a business so it's very frustrating for everyone involved. And I think what I'm going to focus on now is I'm going to write a book about sash joinery and I'm going to teach and demonstrate as much as possible.

SH: Excellent. That's actually the next part of this question is do you participate in short course training?

AM: I do. I work with the Pacific Northwest Field School through the U of O, I'm one of their on-staff people, and one of their advisors. What else have I done? Gosh, I've done stuff in Washington State, I've been to Edgecombe. I've demonstrated for APT in Victoria, I've demonstrated for PTN in Charleston, that's what I can think of at the moment. I've done stuff in state for some smaller non-profits like Restore Oregon, I've done their barn heritage stuff. What else? You know like SHPO, I've done the Oregon Heritage Faire, and I just did a presentation for a new group here called Preservation Artisan's Guild.

SH: Really?

AM: Which just started up and we'll see where it goes. I'm a founding, they put me on as a founding member so.

SH: What is it?

AM: Preservation Artisan's Guild is a group of craftspeople that, you have to fill out an application, so it's a little bit, it's not as intense as the IHBC application, do you know that?

SH: Yeah, I actually taught some classes for them but I'm still not a member.

AM: (Laughs). I'm an affiliate member and I'm trying to get through the application to be a full member. So it's not that extensive, but they still want to see, it's not just about giving your money and now you're a member, they want to see what you're doing. So it's a little more selective, and I would say that, that group probably encompasses most of the preservation trades people in Oregon. So the number one stained glass person, the carver, a sign painter, a natural finishes gilder. So they are probably the ones in Oregon that encompass what you define as preservation trades or craftspeople. More than any other organisation in this state.

SH: So are there any other professional organisations that you are a member of?

AM: I was a member of AIC, American Institute of Conservators. But I felt a little, it wasn't a good fit.

SH: They're a little snotty.

AM: Yeah. And I got, I was encouraged to join through the Fresnel Lenses guy down in Florida, who I met down in Hacienda Head, can't remember his name now. But he said, you need to join AIC because they're really top-notch people, so I did but I felt a little, I mean their journal didn't touch on any subjects I was interested in.

SH: How much wallpaper can one journal write about?

AM: Yes, or paint analysis, how much paint analysis can one-person digest? So I kind of let that one go. But APT for sure. And that's definitely, that group of people are the people that I want to be talking to and the people I want to be networking with because I want to get onto their jobs, I want to know those people because they get to work on really high-class stuff.

SH: Those guys are awesome. I'll tell you, you want to talk about an on the point organisation, try organising one of their conferences, it is amazing. You have deadlines and if you don't get that deadline in at five o'clock they're calling you at 5:05.

AM: Yeah and the journal is excellent. So I can't, they're the top dog in my mind for organisations to join. What else? I'm part of a working group with Washington State who's trying to figure out the same thing as we all are, how to train the next generation of preservation trades people. But they're a little bit of a, they're a little bit loose-knit, and they don't have a goal, they're kind of flopping around. They don't have a goal in mind and they're not very organised so. It is a working group and that's just about it. So, what else, the IHBC, I don't know how I found them but somehow I did. I really like their journal.

SH: It is good.

AM: And actually their most recent one on timber is excellent I'm actually passing that around to my colleagues. I like that they have an application, like an examination where they look at what you've done and that you can put it after your name because one thing that I've found is when I go to APT or some of those architectural firms or engineering firms, I don't have any credibility you know I don't have an advanced degree, so I'm just a tradesperson. And so trying to get into that group, as a tradesperson has been interesting. And you know demonstrating in Victoria was great because everyone saw what I was doing and everyone was interested. So I got to know people that way, and then I went to New York City and so I kind of knew people from Victoria, for that New York thing so it was kind of a good, thing, segue, but it's still once they hear you're a tradesperson they sort of check out a little bit.

SH: I'll be honest that's why I'm doing this. I don't need a PhD. I could be called doctor, which is always nice, but I'm going to make a couple people at work call me doctor that's about it. But besides that, I've got a job, if they close my programme I put my tool belt on and go back to

work. But I'm doing it so, and even in the educational field, I'm one of the longest running, I'm actually the youngest Department Head in the country, but I'm also one of the longest running Department Heads.

AM: Oh, interesting.

SH: Which is weird because I've only been in it for nine years but because I don't have those letters behind my name, a lot of times, and I don't think it's intentional, I get the, it's almost patronising, pat on the head of; oh, I really admire what you do down there. Alright, would you hire me to come do that at your school? Well no, you don't have the credentials. And we need someone in this country, you see how much they revere Gerard Lynch, not because he's a hell of a mason, which he is, but because he has that degree behind him.

AM: Yep.

SH: And we need someone in this country that's going to do that. And I just happen to be in a position that theoretically, I could be that person. But it's still, I'm not the one to talk to building sash window to, go talk to Amy about that.

AM: (Laughs). That's why I am searching for my masters. I'm looking for the programme that's right for me to get my master's in conservations studies. And to tell you the truth the University of York is the number one spot, but its complex because I have a family and we have a life in Portland, you know I don't know how it's going to work but I've got to do something. I'm not just going to sit in Portland and be a contractor my whole life. I'm not going to do that. I need to do more.

SH: York's a hell of a programme, York's a helluva city. I love it there. It's definitely more policy based, but it's a helluva programme.

AM: Well it comes back to the fact that its creditability. If you say I've got my masters in conservation from the University of York, it goes so far in people's minds. And there's a guy out here in Oregon who is assessing settlement, early settlement structures, and people pay attention to him only because he has the University of York degree. He's total crap (laughs). I mean we've proven that what he's saying, like he just dreams up these fantasies of what happened to these buildings, and he's just spouting it out and it's just because he has this degree and I'm like fuck, I'm going to get a degree and then we'll talk. (Laughs). On the subject, have you heard about this doctorate in craftsmanship in Sweden?

SH: I have. I don't know that much about it. I know the Swedish have their act together in terms of craft, but I don't understand how you get a doctorate in craftsmanship.

AM: I know, and I've been talking to, going back to your question, I started another group in Oregon, it's the Pacific Northwest Conservation Group, and it's a bunch of my colleagues who, we get together and discuss issues and problems that we've come across on our jobs, and talk about neat stuff that way. And so one of them, she has a doctorate in wood science, and she's from

Croatia and I use her, and we kind of go back and forth, and I've asked her opinion about the doctorate, and you know she's pretty practical and she's like well, if you come back to the states with that you're probably the only one in the country that has a degree in craftsmanship, but what kind of job would you get with that? I mean you could work at a University, but those Universities aren't really hands-on.

SH: Yeah.

AM: And it, you know, it might be more bang for your buck if you get your masters in conservation, but then also be able to keep your business, and just have the masters augment what you've got going.

SH: That would be my suggestion as well. It would be better investment of your time and effort to do that. Anyway, question, number eight, would you suggest others to practice your craft?

AM: I would, yes I definitely would suggest others to practice my craft. I mean it's definitely kept me very busy. And you know when I'm gone I don't know who's going to do it, to tell you the truth. So it would be great if somebody would come along and be interested in it, and I would encourage somebody to give it a go, at least to try it, to see if it's right for them. I mean it's not right for everyone you have to be very detailed orientated and you have to be very patient and to tell you the truth its very exhausting. Working with hand saws and wooden hand planes when building sash is exhausting. When you're at the bench and you're turning out the sticking, I mean it feels good to me, but it's not going to feel good to everybody.

SH: Yeah.

AM: It is laborious.

SH: If someone came up to you and said I want to do this, how do I start, what would your suggestion to them be?

AM: I would say start reading. Start looking at how windows are made, what tools are involved. Start looking for those tools around town. Go to antique markets, go to where they sell some of this stuff, and pick up a couple of these tools and give it a whirl. I do, I will teach someone how to sharpen a handsaw, just you know, as a day thing, because there's nobody in the state that knows how to sharpen a handsaw correctly. So it's not like you can take a rusty, or not even rusty just a dull handsaw to a shop and have them sharpen it for you, you've got to learn it yourself. So yeah read, get a couple tools, give it a go, and then come back to me for questions. (Laughs).

SH: So, are there any misconceptions about your craft that people have?

AM: You know I feel like people underestimate hand tools. They underestimate what you can do with planes. But that sash shop that went under, he would say the most preposterous things to me about like an early settlement sill for instance, he would say, oh you can't make that with a hand plane, or you can't make that with hand tools. I'm like really, I think you can. And you know people don't understand that all those complicated you know coves and ogees, even on a mantle

or something, it's just hollows and rounds. If you had a complete set of hollows and rounds, you can make just about any molding that's out there. And that's essentially what the original craftspeople did. They had the hollows and rounds of different sizes and that's what they used. And so I do find that people underestimate, number one what you can do with a hand tool, number two how fast you can actually go with a hand tool, and how efficient it is. And I get this at the job site all the time because I'm coming in, usually as a subcontractor on a big job where you've got those bigger companies where you've got the full kit of power, and I come in with my single bag with my rip saw and my crosscut saw and a couple backsaws. And they're looking at me like, you're really doing that with a handsaw? And you know as soon as my feet hit the ground, I'm ready to saw you know. I don't have to drag out the cords, I don't have to set up the equipment, I don't have to do anything like that. And once you get comfortable with a handsaw, you can cut pretty fast. So I do find that people have a lot of misconceptions about hand tools. But again, it is laborious.

SH: Yeah.

AM: You're going to work up a sweat.

SH: You can also cut off a hand pretty easily with a power saw. It takes a lot of dedication to do it with a hand saw. That's what makes me nervous in my shop. Alright, do you feel that the current educational offerings are adequate to prepare apprentices entering the field?

AM: Hell no. (Laughs). Oh gosh. We can rant all day about that.

SH: Well please do.

AM: Well, I'm really...out here, we've got Clatsop. And I've seen some of the students coming out of there. One of them came to a demonstration I was doing, and for my demonstrations I typically have my students out together a sash you know that's just mortise and tenon and they have to figure out the rails and the stiles and put it together. And then there's another little puzzle of putting together this, just a single double hung frame from an architectural plan that I provide them. And this student, who actually had his business up and running, you know he was kind of getting some jobs, so I kind of knew who he was and where he came from. So I gave him this, I wanted him to put together this frame, this double hung frame with all the parts, couldn't figure it out.

SH: Really?

AM: What the hell? This is a simple, there's nothing fancy. It's just a simple, double hung frame, just a corner and it has a little section of sill and it's just pulley style with the part bead and the plan was right there, and he couldn't figure it out. And I was like oh Jesus, what are they teaching you up there at that college. And I have seen his work on a jobsite for the state parks, and it was abysmal. Like all he had to do was replace the glazing putty, he didn't even have to take the

glazing out. He was just putting new glazing putty around the window, and it was awful. He had it all over the glass, he had it up above the shoulder which I hate.

SH: Yeah it drives me nuts.

AM: And it was raggedly. He had to use DAP. I looked at the architect for the state and I was like what the fuck happened here? Are you going to call him out to redo it? And that's where it gets me. They let some of these contractors off on crap work and so the contractors don't realise that they're doing crap work and they'll just continue to do this piddly shit. And I said you need to call him out here and fix it, because this is awful. And then they were like, oh he was kind of in a hurry and I'm like fuck that shit. I was pissed, let me tell you. So, and you know University of Oregon has the field school, but its only two weeks. Well it's offered for four weeks, so you can take as many of the weeks as you want to, but it's the only hands on they do for that programme. I think in NCPE it's listed as a hands-on programme. And you know they're at various levels of skill. Some have had experience with power tools, some of them absolutely have not picked up a power tool. And you know we're trying to teach them, in a week, we usually have them for a week, to try to do some complicated stuff and it's just like, you know for the first day, the first half of the day I'm just talking. I've got all the tools laid out and there's so much information coming at them at a hundred miles an hour. And I can see, you know I'm really shocked if they've retained any of that, of what I said because have so much information to tell them, you know it's just basic information that it doesn't work. And those people that are coming out of that University programme are not craftspeople. They are, they're heading towards Section 106 and maybe going on to get an architectural degree or something of that nature. So very, very few of them have the trades, that something that you want to see in a tradesperson. And I've only seen it one time. And she's still getting her architectural degree for some damn reason, but she's made for the trades.

SH: Is it a question of quality of educators, is it a question of you know not enough programmes, too many programmes?

AM: I would say that, how much business classes to you give them?

SH: We don't have time to give them business but we encourage them to dual enroll in business programme.

AM: Yeah that, and I've been talking to Andrea Sevonty, do you know her? Andrea is a stained glass artist working in Detroit.

SH: Yes.

AM: She's a graduate of Belmont College. Young, up and coming tradesperson. And I talked to her candidly a little bit about Belmont College, and she felt like once she had gotten out of that school, that there was no help with what to do with this degree. Either through business course or helping her find work, you know job placement or anything like that.

SH: We're required to find our guys job placement.

AM: Oh, are you?

SH: Yeah, I could have 500 graduates a year and if none of them are getting jobs, they cut my programme.

AM: So I don't know if Belmont College does that. So you know in talking with her a little bit about it, you know she felt like she didn't have the resources from the college or support from the college on where to find work, and number two there was not a lot of business, how do you start a business, that sort of thing. And I said you know, find your small business development centre, that's how I learned about business, and it saved my ass during the recession. So, you know I highly, and for Clatsop, I don't know of any business classes they're teaching the students. So when they come out there's not, in Oregon especially there's not big companies in preservation trades. Period. They're all very small. And so those small companies are probably not going to be, if they're like me you know they're not going to be hiring, because there not big enough. And number two, you know they might have one or two people, but still for a majority of the students coming out of these programmes, the number one place they're going to go is start your own business. And they just don't, either they're scared, like you know there's a lot of baggage when you say you need to start your own business. People, you know, are scared off, because it's daunting. So you know they don't really know what's involved, they don't really know where to find help, and so they're like, I need to doing work you know, it's hard to, you know you've got to get a lawyer, you've got to find an accountant, that's just the legality of it, you've got to get those things, then you've got all the other stuff you've got to do for your business. And so they throw their hands up and say I can't, I need to find work right now, and so they go down to Burger King and are flipping burgers, with their degree. For Clatsop I don't know how many of those students coming out are actually practicing in the trade. I mean you probably know how many of your students in your programme are working in the trades.

SH: One hundred percent.

AM: One hundred percent, oh boy.

SH: We have the highest placement rate in the entire state. Which is not that difficulty because we don't have that many students. Well, we do live in Savannah, which make that a little easier. Which is actually going to bring me to another question, and I'm asking this to all the American people. You know we've got these programmes; Belmont, Clatsop, and then we had College of the Redwoods, and we had the ones in Colorado, Edgcombe. Why do they end up, why do you think they end up in such rural areas?

AM: You know that's an interesting question because I had this same conversation with Ben Curran. And he, I guess he had been talking to someone I think in Arkansas maybe...

SH: There used to be a school in Arkansas.

AM: Some little Podunk college that wanted to start an h.p. programme, in the middle of nowhere, and Ben was like what student wants to go to Podunk, USA to go to school where there's no housing, where there's nothing to do, and you know kind of like Edgecombe. He was kind of like you know Edgecombe has this problem because, and I've been there, Tarboro is not the most happening spot. And it's very depressed, the economy is very depressed there. So, Ben was like I don't know why these programmes are focused on these smaller places. And he's like you should start a programme in Portland, because that's a great spot you know. And so, at the same time it seems like the community college that are, the smaller schools that seem to be attracting the hands-on trades, preservation trades programmes. College of the Redwoods is pretty rural, and that's gone now actually. Clatsop is very small, it's in Astoria, which is about two hours from Portland. Edgecombe is in Tarboro. I mean Belmont is in, I don't even know where that is.

SH: St. Clairsville.

AM: St. Clairsville, where's that?

SH: It's where Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Ohio meet. So that's a real happening place right there too.

AM: Right. And so, it would be great if Columbia would have a hands-on h.p. programme. It would attract a lot of students because you have the credibility of Columbia University, right. They have one of the best Conservation Studies programmes in the country.

SH: Absolutely.

AM: So if you got a preservation trades degree from Columbia, I mean that's going to take you somewhere.

SH: Yeah. Absolutely.

AM: And it's probably going to offer you some conservation courses like lab work, so you're going to have skills in a lab, you'll also probably have access to a fairly comprehensive business programme, support, job placement, counsellors. You know they have so many more resources at those bigger universities that can help students, post graduate, you know find their way. I mean that's not today the University of Oregon was not, and looking back on my, getting my bachelor's in fine arts, I mean they really didn't help me find what I, you know, find me work in that field per se. So the U of O may not be the most shining example of what I'm speaking of but, you know getting a preservation trades degree from a Clatsop Community College as opposed to like getting one from Columbia, I mean I don't know. I don't know why these schools, like why this hands-on approach is focused on these small schools. Maybe they're just willing to take a chance. I don't know, bureaucracy?

SH: I don't know that's a big question in my research. Why do you think so many of these schools fail?

AM: Nobody wants to go there. If you can't get the students, the college isn't going to support you. No students, no money, no programme.

SH: It's strange that my programme is, my programme and the Charleston programme are in the biggest cities. Savannah has a population of 135,000. My neighbourhood in Philadelphia had more people than this. That's the city itself, metro has about 300,000. But I always found that, and that was a big question; why the hell do you keep putting them, I mean Colorado Mountain College that was way up there in the mountains.

AM: Yeah (Laughs).

SH: Eureka's what two and a half hours to the closest airport?

AM: Yeah.

SH: You know that's, why do we continuously put them in places like that, but there isn't one in New Orleans, when there's plenty of work in New Orleans.

AM: Right.

SH: There isn't one in New York, there isn't one in Philadelphia, there isn't one in D.C. But we've got one in Ohio. We've got one in the old tobacco region of North Carolina.

AM: I know I mean I don't (pause). I mean, those universities, the bigger universities, I mean but that's not to say there aren't small college in those bigger cities.

SH: There's plenty of them yeah.

AM: I just don't know. And I don't know are there students clamouring for this programme? As in are there just not, is it just that the students don't want to go to these small places, or is it that no students want to participate in this profession?

SH: I think in one respect a lot of them don't know that they could do this. Or they get into preservation in a regular four-year school and figure this is what they're going to do. And they get there and they realise that's not what they're going to learn there, they're now locked in.

AM: Right, right.

SH: So, how do you feel about the future of training in traditional craft?

AM: I think it's in peril. I think we're definitely at, we're almost at a tipping point. And there's I mean, there's so much conversation within our community about this topic that at some point we've got to come together, as a group, to find solutions, start p.r. campaigns. You know if I have to ride on Mike Rowe's back to get some damn thing, to get preservation trades visible to the public, that you can make a career doing this, even though your parents may not want you to go into the trades, it is a worthy thing to do, you can make a, you can succeed at it, you just need to have the right tools to do that. And you know, maybe the college, maybe these community colleges are not, they're not providing all the tools that you need. And that business one is key to succeeding. Because go out with no business sense, they're not going to make it. And even as an employee, to have some sort of an idea about how this works is going to make them a better

employee and a better employer down the road. You know knowing how a bid works, what is public bidding, how does that work. You know what kind of insurance do I need. Each system is very different on contractor licensing. And so even if you are going to be an employee, knowing those things is still going to benefit you in the long run. So these colleges need to get the tools into the hands of these kids so when they come out with their degree, they're hitting the pavement running, and more likely to succeed in the trades. And you know the public image of preservation trades, we've got to work together to improve this. There's still that stigma, just out in the world that the trades are low class, blue collar, no money, struggle. You know the parents, that's all they're thinking. You need to have a four-year degree to get a good job to make your money. And so the more that the preservation trades are in the public eye succeeding, that's is just a thing for us. Because it's showing the public, the parents, the kids that if you really want to do this, this is how you do it. And I've discussed this in length with Frank Sanchez at the World Monuments Fund. And I've talked to Ken Follet as well about it. So, I mean it's certainly in peril. Something needs to be done. I don't think one group, like I don't think PTN is going to do it by themselves, I don't think Bryan Blundell is going to do it by himself with his little group, so you know, we've got to pull as a group together to do this if it's going to work. We can't, this whole bickering and bad blood in the past, we need to out that aside I think to bring this forward.

SH: Yeah, I absolutely agree. So last question. If I said to you Amy, money is no object. Design me a programme or a training system. How would you set that up?

AM: How would I set that up?

SH: Yep.

AM: Big town. A desirable city to live in. New Orleans is a good one. And has to be near, it has to have an airport. It has to have the infrastructure for students. You're going to have business course that are required. They're not electives. You're going to have the different trades; carpentry, stone. And then, are we talking four year or two year?

SH: Whatever you think is the best. Actually, that's one of the probes; how long would it take so.

AM: I think four years because if they're trying to cater to those students that's don't want to do a, you know that are not, who want to do the trades coming out of high school and they're looking at coming out of high school, a four-year university or potentially coming into this, whatever we're talking about four-year trades programme. First two years are basic stuff, but all for year that's got to have the business. Definitely some way of getting out into historic structures not just classroom, you know, mock ups. We need to get them out onto actual historic stuff because sometimes that's where you get the hook in, you know the history, god Abe Lincoln laid here or you know he carved this damn thing or George Washington spat in that corner, you know that's where we're going to hook into a lot of these history you know, gosh, you know I'm

really doing something cool here. And the last two years have them focus on a craft. You know at the end of the second year sit them down and say you know where yours heart at, what's calling to you, and then guide them in that direction. And then you know like the last year maybe buddy them up with a contractor locally, let them see how it's working. Maybe shadow a contractor through the process; pre-bidding, bidding, all that crap. Go to some meet and greet with some local SHPO's, you know historic preservation groups. Start to network, got to have the network. Look around at all the shops. One of the most valuable things I've ever learned from that general contractors was I got relationships with the suppliers. So went I go out on my own you know I knew exactly where to get lumber, I knew the materials I needed, and they already knew me because I was the gopher for a while. So building that repertoire with the suppliers and actually have them, if they don't want to live in the town that the university is, where do you want to live? Alright, you want to live in Colorado, you go and you research what it's going to take to get a license in Colorado. What are your insurance requirements, do you have to be bonded, you know, how much is the license, do you have to take a class? Like in Oregon we have to take a sixteen-hour class and then we have to pass a test to get a license, you have to be insured, you have to be bonded, and then you have to go through sixteen hours of CEU's every two years. So, but not every state's like that.

SH: No in Georgia you don't have to do all that.

AM: Like in Idaho pay twenty-five bucks and you've got your license. So, it really varies per state, so I would sit a student down and say look, where do you want to live? You want to live in the south, or do you want to live in the southwest, you want to live in Georgia? Research what it's going to take to do it there. You know if you want to be an employee in that state, have them research the big companies. What are the big companies working in your field in that state? Why don't you call them up and say; hey I'm a student I want to come out and meet you. You know, start that networking right away.

SH: Excellent. Is there anything that you think they're being taught now that isn't necessary?

AM: That isn't necessary. That's an interesting question, it's always the lacking that gets me. Is there something that's being taught unnecessarily, huh. I don't know. I don't think so. (Pause). I would say no at this point. Can I come back and add?

SH: Yeah you can. If you think of something later on just shoot me an email.

AM: OK.

SH: Well given the current education system, how we're set up in this country, could your ideal programme run in that system?

AM: (Pause). I think with the right support from a university or a large community college, I'm thinking of PCC here in Oregon. It's actually based in Portland, its Portland Community College, it has quite a few campuses around Portland, but it does have a carpentry programme at one of

their locations. I think if you found the right community college that was like yeah, that's what we need out here, I feel it, we're behind you 100%, I think it could go, but it would have to take a very, it would have to be the right school I think, and also some sort of, and this is a broad problem, some sort of accreditation for trades. I mean in Britain they have, it's very different there, they've got avenues of accreditation. It would be great if we could do something here, it's been talked about before, and it's a huge problem. I mean, I can't even begin to think about how you would go about it, you know to actually have the student come out with something that they could show a state architect that they know what they're doing. But I think if you had, in the right city, if you had the right college to give their support for something like that, I think it could work.

SH: So are there any existing programmes that you feel, you know are working their way to meeting your requirements for an ideal programme?

AM: Well both your programme and ACBA I think are the top dogs of the schools. Clatsop is off the wall, I don't know how long it will last. College of the Redwoods is gone. Edgecombe is floundering. Belmont, you know after Dave leaves, it's a little up in the air. And talking with Andrea, it kind of downplayed Belmont College to me a little bit. What else is there? I mean I was pretty impressed with what I saw when I went to Charleston for the conference. It was when Simeon was the Dean there. I mean I'm sure every school has their ups and downs and all that.

SH: Well Simeon's still there.

AM: Yeah you said he's just a Professor.

SH: Yeah, he's a Professor of Stone Carving. I actually talked to him this morning. We talk a lot. In fact, we're doing the thing that he did with Benjamin last year for NCPE at the Trust, that was actually supposed to be my event, and I wasn't there I was in the UK, so Paul Kapp from University of Illinois and I are very good friends and it was his idea, it was his brainchild. He's says do you want to do this, and I said I'm not going to be in town, so here's Ben and Simeon, and since the Trust is coming to Savannah this year, they want to do it again so Simeon and I are going to do it again, so we were talking about that. He's still there, he's actually in much better shape now than he was when he was the Dean.

AM: Oh good.

SH: It's funny that you say that, because every US person has said the same thing about Belmont; what happens when Dave retires.

AM: Yeah. Which is very soon.

SH: Is it? Is he talking about it?

AM: Oh yeah. I think that, I mean that's what's been talked about on the board. That this IPTW event is the ushering in of his retirement. I mean that's what I've heard, that he's retiring very soon. I don't know if it's his last year or what's going on. So, yeah, I mean it's been around for a while, that programme at Belmont.

SH: Yeah it has.

AM: I mean Andrea has just fed me her experiences there, and it doesn't sound extraordinary. Its sounds like Clatsop or a, it has its flaws.

SH: We've definitely got our flaws down here in Savannah too. Pictures that people see and the press releases are one thing, but we struggle on a daily basis as well. I mean, especially last semester when I had someone quit on me and I'm trying to teach carpentry and metals at the exact same time, which did not go well. Well, that's all the questions I have, do you have anything you would like to add on to this?

AM: I don't think so. I'll probably think of some things after we hang up so I'll put them in an email or something. But yeah (pause) it's an interesting topic that you've chosen for your PhD, very timely I should think. (Pause). Yeah, will I be able to read it?

SH: Yeah actually you're going to get a copy of it.

AM: Because I'd love to see your comparisons of the Brits and us. Because I have this, your fantasies of Britain as, you know, the mother country of trades, and I'll go over there and they'll be these sash joiners just all over and they're using the same tools as I am and I'm like...

SH: Yeah, don't get your hopes up on that one.

AM: Yeah I talked to that guy at Historic Scotland, what's his name, shit.

SH: Colin?

AM: No, not Colin, Roger.

SH: Yeah.

AM: Tall guy. He said; oh, there's nobody doing that.

SH: They're in just as bad of shape as we are. And in fact, in many respects, they're worse.

AM: Oh.

SH: They've got a few things they've got going on. One is that the EU has allowed, anyone can travel to any other country and work. So, when the eastern European countries got into the EU, where these guys were trained traditionally, because they didn't have a choice, they've now flooded the market, not so much recently, since the economic downturn it's gotten better for the craftsmen. So they, the price for work went downhill. They look at us in envy for how much we get paid for our work.

AM: Oh, interesting.

SH: I mean when I was working masonry I was getting, £12 an hour. That's nothing.

AM: That's, that's not even minimum wage here is it?

SH: Well in Oregon, you've got a higher minimum wage than we do, but that translates to about \$16 an hour.

AM: Okay, okay.

SH: But you've got to think, a litre of petrol costs £1.50, and there's four liters to the gallon. So, \$8-9 for a gallon of gas. I smoke, so a pack of cigarettes is £8.

AM: Ouch.

SH: I live in York and it's not expensive, but if you live in London, you can't survive on that rate.

AM: Oh, yeah. No way.

SH: And their NVQ system, god they hate it. The certification where its every school that offers stonemasonry, they have an NVQ Level One, I think up to six now, and at Level One you have to learn: x. Once you're done learning x, there's no push for you to learn y because the NVQ only says you're supposed to know this. So you can have a really good programme and a really crappy programme, but all the students coming out are NVQ Three, then what's the difference? The guys, Colin from Historic Scotland I as talking to him and he said you know, we push every stone mason, conservation stone mason in Scotland to have NVQ Three, but then it comes to a point then what the hell is the point of NVQ Three? He's like if everyone has it, then there's no point in it.

AM: Right, right.

SH: So they hate, they had the old City and Guilds system, which was around until the seventies, and all the guys who trained under it, which has a requirement for an apprenticeship, ether two year or three years part time on what they called block release, the block release is still around, but it's not as long. So all the guys that trained under City and Guilds, they look at NVQ and they just go insane, they get so angry, and they've deskilled their trades actually a lot worse than we have. So they, the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence, they've got it just as bad over there.

AM: I know. Wow.

SH: I know. They do some stuff really well, but they've also got some better connections in terms of the National Heritage Training Group, Construction Industry Training Board and all those, which are great, but at the same time they all become very bureaucratic, and they slow everything down. But they also don't consider what we consider historic in the same vein.

AM: It's the same from east coast to west coast here. It's crazy. I get that same mentality from east coasters.

SH: Well if you're up in New England, they're snotty up there. But even in new build work, they still do plastering over there, because they consider anything after 1919 new work. So they learn cement plasters, they don't learn traditional limes, no one is teaching traditional lime plaster, but they're learn how to do flat wall gypsum and cement plasters. So the idea of England being the home to the traditional craftsman, I mean they do still exist, but not in the number that we think. So our cowboy mentality of founding programmes in weird places and watching them fail and going well that didn't work, let's try it someplace else, they don't

understand that at all. They can't understand that outside, now there's Clatsop and the one that started up, for a while I was the most western programme in the United States.

AM: Yeah you told me that. Scary.

SH: They can't understand that either. But there's only one really well reconsidered stonemasonry programme on all of England, and that's Weymouth which is all the way down by Portsmouth. And then there's the school in Stirling, which is in the middle of Scotland, but there's nothing in that whole center part. So there's huge pockets where there's nothing going on. So hopefully they'll be some good findings coming out of this thing. Hopefully someone will read them and they won't end up in a drawer somewhere where no one will pay attention to them.

AM: Good, very good.

SH: Anything else to add?

AM: No I think that's it.

SH: Alright, let me turn this recorder off.

End recording

Total recording time 1:59:12

Interview Form-Individual

Name: Henry Orton_____

Current address: [REDACTED] Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire, United Kingdom
[REDACTED]

Birthdate: [REDACTED] 1985_____

Age: 29_____

Occupation: Plasterer_____

Interview Date: 8 August 2014_____

Interview Location: Stephen-Savannah, Henry-Devon UK (Skype)_____

Interviewer: Stephen Hartley_____

Generation: 4-United Kingdom_____

Consent Form Signed Date: 8 August 2014_____

Begin Recording

Stephen Hartley (SH): Alright, before we get started, I just need some basic information from you. Your current address?

Henry Orton (HO): [REDACTED] Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. UK [REDACTED]

SH: Your birthdate?

HO: [REDACTED] 1985.

SH: Which will make you how old now?

HO: 29.

SH: Getting up there.

HO: It's the last year of my twenties Steve.

SH: Look thirties ain't that much different.

HO: No, it's not.

SH: Later twenties, early thirties, not a big difference. Trust me. Alright, where are you right now?

HO: What this minute?

SH: Yeah.

HO: Cum Martin, North Devon.

SH: So, how this thing's going to work is that I have ten questions for you. Inside those questions are what's called probes which are basically designed to help you explain some of the things you said. Most of the probes you'll probably hit while you're answering the questions. So of these questions are so basic, in your mind-set, you're going to be like why the hell is he asking that? The reason why I'm asking this is because I'm writing this for an audience that may not practice the trades, so I make ask you to specify things.

HO: Okay.

SH: The whole point of this is to see if we, to see how the US and UK systems really operate, what the problems are, and to see if they can be improved. Hopefully by the end of all this find some common ground that we can get things working. Your job in all this, since you are a practitioner in the field, I need your honest opinion on your training systems, how they work and what you feel about them. That being said there are certain questions that are directly, well they're pointed at current training opportunities. You know what I do for a living, right. I don't care what you say in terms of its not going to hurt my feelings.

HO: Alright. You got thick skins do you?

SH: Honesty is more important than trying to make me feel good about myself.

HO: Alright.

SH: Right, well, question number one. What is your profession, and can you describe what you do in the capacity?

HO: Traditional plasterer would be the... That's about it actually. Plain and decorative I guess.

SH: So what do you do as a plain and decorative plasterer?

HO: Technical.... how would you describe it? Well cover walls basically isn't it?

SH: Casting, sculpting?

HO: Yeah, well yeah. Okay, you've got modern construction techniques; plaster boarding, skimming, solid plastering, fibrous plastering, sand and cement, traditional materials, restoration, consolidation work, modelling, casting, silicon molding yeah, the list goes on I suppose. Yeah. How much detail do you want me to go into?

SH: As much as you want to go into.

HO: Well, yeah the main aspect of it is the restoration of historical buildings, but you have to do modern work as well. You know from internal to external pretty much. Anything that's, yeah that's the whole aspects of plastering.

SH: So, when did you begin practicing?

HO: It will be six years ago in May.

SH: So you were twenty-three?

HO: Yeah twenty-three. Yeah I just turned twenty-three.

SH: So what company did you start with?

HO: Well I got a bursary from, hold on I have to read this out first. It was from the Traditional Skills Building Scheme. And they gave me three grand to work with Bill Sargent in Suffolk for three months.

SH: And Bill Sargent is a pargetter right?

HO: Yeah he's a lime plasterer-pargetter. Third generation.

SH: Did you work with Bill afterwards?

HO: Yeah after that bursary he, I set up a self-employ and he kept me around for about a year and a half.

SH: So why did you leave Bill's employ?

HO: He mostly sort of focused on vernacular architecture sort of plastering. So a lot of it was sort of cottage work and I sort of wanted to learn the more high-end sort of plastering, sort of high class work. And there was an opportunity that came up with Skellington Workshops to go and work with their plasterer, so I jumped ship I suppose.

SH: Why did you leave Skellington Workshop then?

HO: Why did I leave there?

SH: When and why yeah.

HO: When I was with...hold on. It's a good thing I've got my CV up here. I can't remember half of it. Yeah winter 2010 so I was with them a year and a half as well. So that's when I worked at Strawberry Hill, Chatsworth. Well it got to winter and work was getting short, and there was a whole mess with me sort of working with my dad's old boss, and they didn't like that. Even though it was only like five days' work. Yeah, they didn't like it so they sort of laid me off basically.

SH: And then you went straight self-employ?

HO: Yeah. I started picking up my own jobs from there. I picked a good job prior, where I was just doing it the weekends, but yeah since then I've just been sort of pricing and doing my own work, and sort of working with Shaun. I've been coming down and working with Shaun for about two years running.

SH: So what attracted you to the profession?

HO: My dad. Nah what it was because I was doing the art degree, it you want the years of that, 2004 to 2007. I started looking at craftsmanship as one of my projects. And my mate, his dad was a joiner, so he was messing around with stuff like that. So I thought I'll look at plastering. I lot of that was brought on due to my dad's accident. And then I came up with this idea of my final piece to replicate all the cornice work in the art school. So I drafted my dad in to sort of teach me how to do that in their workshops. And it was sort of the thing of oh I kind of like this. It hasn't got the sort of bullshit that art has and I don't know it just suited me I got it down to a tee. I found it fairly easy. So after I finished art it was a bit, the art degree it was a bit like oh what do I do, well I'll go down that road. So I'll start training. But I mean I've laboured with my dad during the summer months while I was at Uni so it wasn't unfamiliar. I knew what I was getting into.

SH: So you talked about your art degree, what kind of art did you study?

HO: Pardon?

SH: What kind of art did you study?

HO: What kind of art?

SH: Yeah.

HO: Well the degree was fine art which basically you can do anything you can, from video to sculpture to painting to mixed media, anything. But I was always more on the sculpture side of things.

SH: Did you ever consider doing anything else besides plastering?

HO: Yeah. Plastering at school was the third option. The first option was an artist. The second option was an archaeologist and if they didn't work out, I figured plastering would kind of be alright.

SH: Why did you decide not to be an archaeologist?

HO: I didn't like the exams. I don't know if I'm sort of slightly dyslexic, but I didn't like the history exams. I couldn't be in there writing it so. Which is good because plastering sort of ties them all in. You know especially when your taking out old work and sort of figuring out how they did stuff it's pretty much archaeology.

SH: Yeah. So, what's your favourite aspect of plastering?

HO: I think the favourite aspect of it is that it's a trade, but it's got, it's very varied. So you can be one minute you can be sort of thrashing a load of stuff on the wall and being very active. And then you have be like very delicate, in the decorative work where it takes a lot of patience. So it's not like you're a sort of banker mason where you're just like chiseling stone on a banker all day. It's like you can be doing a vast, vast amount of things. That's my favourite aspect of it.

SH: What's your least favourite part then?

HO: I can get a bit monotonous.

SH: It can?

HO: Yeah. Especially, yeah, especially the sort of fiddly stuff and yeah it can get a bit...

SH: I can imagine flat wall being.

HO: That's where your speed comes in. You have to go for it to make it interesting. So yeah it's like, yeah you have the have the right sort of mind-set where you will its repetitive sort of trade isn't it. You just sort of doing the same thing over and over again. But that's what's good you can mix it up a bit.

SH: So you talked about labouring with your dad during the summer months while you were at Uni, did that affect your education at school?

HO: Only in the way it gave me more time to do my degree rather than having to take on another job. But, I guess it opened my eyes to what my Dad did so that would have affected me. That's probably why I chose doing the cornice work for my final piece. Because I was exposed to my Dad's work.

SH: When you told your instructors you were going to do a cornice piece for your final exam, what did they say about that?

HO: Some of them, well because of how it worked is that you had a tutor that you sort of have one on one with, he really liked it. It was a bit of a risk because it was very, not very contemporary with what everyone else was doing. Very sort of straight forward; this is what I'm doing, bum, bum, bum. This is why I'm doing it. It was like; tick, tick, tick. You know it was a bit of a homage to the building I studied in for three years. Yeah, some of them were a bit apprehensive of how it would work. None of them, there wasn't anything technicians that knew how to do it, so that's why I had to bring my dad in. But yeah, I know when they, my tutor said when they examined it, it was a straight sort of, first. It was, yep he's done everything. Because typically they have to deliberate for quite a while whether it's clear on what they're trying to say but he was like no it was fairly clear. I think it went down fairly well.

SH: What school did you go to again?

HO: It was Birmingham.

SH: Birmingham?

HO: Birmingham School of Art. I think it's, they've changed the name it did used to be call UCE, University of Central England, then it I think it's Birmingham City Uni now. It was the first purpose-built art school in the country.

SH: Yeah?

HO: Yeah real nice Arts and Crafts building. Real nice. Nice terracotta work on the outside. It was like a miniature Hogwarts's. What is was like it was like a really beautiful building, but no one paid real much attention to. Especially like with the cornice work and things like that, no one stared, looked up and had a look at what was up there.

SH: Yeah, it's like everyone talks about the Glasgow School of Art and things like that.

HO: That was my other choice.

SH: Yeah?

HO: Yeah.

SH: I know a few people that went to school there and they said they didn't even notice the building while we were in there because we were too busy working. And then the fire happened, and they showed all these pictures of the background and they said, shit that's where I used to sit look at that work right there. It's like yeah now you recognise it, but if you're busy doing other stuff it's like, I don't realise here how spoiled we are while I'm walking through the city.

HO: Yeah.

SH: I'm on my way somewhere all the time, I'm not. I don't notice what I'm walking under.

HO: Yeah I think that's the ironic thing, I realised while I was at arts school I'm really not that interested in art. I get more pleasure looking at buildings. I liked sort of installation art and I thought buildings sort of create that anyway. They create an environment for you to enjoy.

SH: Good buildings do that. Bad buildings just make you angry.

HO: (Laughs). Well that's good too.

SH: Like my building makes me angry. My lab makes me angry because it's a terrible building. It's a great lab, but it's a terrible building. Water's flowing all over the atrium right now because it's been raining.

HO: Really?

SH: Yes, got so much rain that the waters just flowing in everywhere. Alright. So would you encourage others to go the route that you did to get into plastering?

HO: Yeah, I often wondered why certain trades didn't pick the art schools. Because you had folks there that had a bit more about them, and they went into art because there was really much of an option to go into the building trades. That was usually considered for the dropouts at school. So like anybody that any creativity, that were good with their hands tended to go into the arts. And I've often wondered why they didn't sort of target graduates coming out of art schools, sort of push them in. But on the other hand, you've got your typical sort of artist is a bit airy fairy. In a way, yeah I would say get some good folk in art schools.

SH: What was the best aspect of that training?

HO: Art school?

SH: Yeah. Well in your training all around would you say?

HO: Well, at the art school it trained me to be critical and observant, yeah.

SH: What was the worst part then?

HO: Well feeling like three years might have been a waste of time. (Laughs) Nah it kept you in a bubble for three years. You really like had this worst of idea that yeah, I'm going to be an artist when you leave school. But at the end of the day you need to earn money.

SH: Has the industry, the plastering industry changed since you started?

HO: I think they're trying to push the apprenticeship schemes more from when I left Uni. And then when it started to kick in I was over twenty-six, so I was out of the age bracket. But to be honest I'm probably not, because of the way I gone I've sort of kept away from the sort of conventional style route of training to be a plasterer. I've gone in a completely different direction I suppose.

SH: So you do think the growth of the conservation industry in the UK has affected the plastering trade?

HO: Yeah. I would say that they're taking the work away from the plasterers. Partially because of the stigma that people think plasterers just go in and spread a load of pink stuff all over the walls. But yeah, they do tend to take the work away from what a skilled plasterer could do.

SH: What about this growth in the heritage crafts?

HO: (Pause). It's a tricky one. It's a lot of people jumping on the bandwagon I think. I mean I

suppose with the conservation thing it's opened more people up to properly preserving these structures.

SH: So what do you feel then about the future of traditional plastering?

HO: I think it will still go on. They'll always be a need for it. But its, you've got to face the facts that it's, you can't really train masses of people for it because there's not the work compared to new construction. Which, well that's where your colleges are aimed at, which make sense. But, I, yeah I think it will still go on as long as the skills are passed down but that's more likely going to happen with people working with each other. There might be a few colleges doing it but yeah you learn much more working alongside, shadowing, you know.

SH: So are there enough practitioners in the field?

HO: (Pause) I would say possibly yes. Yeah.

SH: How about your suppliers, any issues with your suppliers?

HO: The suppliers, I know from when my dad, it my dad's day especially in the eighties there were hardly any but now they're quite plentiful. You've got three big suppliers and they're fairly competitive with prices and things. I have noticed with one that they are getting a little too commercial and standards are dropping a little bit. But no suppliers, supplying is fine. I mean lathe is much more plentiful, so there is the demand for it.

SH: So are those entering the field, that you see, are they properly trained? The new guys?

HO: You see some dodgy work yeah. I lot of it is down to, because everyone is coming from the modern aspect of the trade, they can't seem to comprehend that lime plastering is a lot harder work, it takes a lot longer. I know the recent job I did at Cromfort Mill that there were some plasterers there and they couldn't seem to grasp why you'd want to put yourself through that, when you can easily do the same finish, quite easily, but it's not the same standard of work. So, yeah you'll get people doing bodge jobs. But you got it in the past anyway. You see old work where they've stamped on stuff so it's nothing new Steve I don't think.

SH: Well if that's the case and you have all these new build plasterers that are saying well we can do a cement coat or gypsum coat, are you confident that the lime plastering side will survive?

HO: On a small scale. The thing is to do it properly, it's going to be more expensive. And everybody's out to undercut everybody so it will only be people that are in the know. Members of SPAB and those types of organisations that have done the research and know what they want, know that the sort of costs are. I mean I'm always saying to Shaun and Adrian back home that it almost should be standardised that lime plastering should cost about this much. Because you get people charging like £150 per square metre, and then Shaun was telling me that somebody's charged 45, and it's like well how's that possible?

SH: How is that possible?

HO: I don't know. They basically aren't doing the job right. They're sort of cutting corners and you're getting a substandard job for it. But that's just down to people not knowing you know.

SH: Do you ever train apprentices?

HO: Only at Savannah. And colleagues. But not an apprentice, an official apprentice no. I mean it's when you're working with folk you're always sharing like, you know you're always talking about the plasterers artwork. Plasterers are obsessed about plastering. You're always sharing techniques you know.

SH: You plasterers I swear. Every plasterer I talk to they're just so obsessed with it. Stained glass people love stained glass. Timber framers love timber but at the same time it's not a foaming at the mouth love that you plasterers have.

HO: Yeah, I think you have to have a bit of a screw loose to do it I think. Its hard work Steve. That's what it is you know.

SH: Slopping lime plastering all day is not for someone who doesn't want to put that effort in.

HO: Yeah you really have to want to do it.

SH: So do you participate in any short course training, either doing it or either being to tutor?

HO: I have done in the past, yeah I with my dad and Shaun and another guy up north named Malcom Utley in Manchester. I think we did four years running. That was a SPAB sort of course. I think that was over three days, or two days short course. And yeah then I've done demos and things like that.

SH: What's you Dad, and this is off topic but, what's your dad going to do when you move over to the States? Who's going to do the secondary?

HO: Emigrant maybe (laughs).

SH: What?

HO: Emigrant maybe. Well Adrian, who's in Melton will probably sort of...

SH: Yeah I met him.

HO: Yeah, he'll help him out and stuff. So I'll, yeah he'll still be calling me won't he, and he be like well can you just do this.

SH: Well I noticed when we were at your house it's like the second you got home it's like, it was plastering talk time for like for a good forty-five minutes.

HO: Yeah.

SH: I don't know what he's going to do when you're not around. He's living vicariously in the plastering trade through you.

HO: I mean that was sort of the reason I went into plastering because I thought well here's my dad, whose got all this knowledge, and all these contacts, I'll be sort of daft to turn that down really.

SH: Yeah. Well Katie said we're probably going to need a guest bedroom in our house and I'm like, yeah I think you're going to.

HO: She'll regret it though if he's coming over.

SH: Do you participate in any academic programmes?

HO: What do you mean by that?

SH: Going into schools and demonstrating or teaching in schools?

HO: Well yeah only Savannah Tech.

SH: Charleston too.

HO: Oh, in Charleston. Hold on. (Pause). I think they're the only ones.

SH: You haven't done any in the UK?

HO: No that's what I'm thinking of. I think we did a demo that was part of a college, Barnfield College down in London at the Excel Arena. We did two days down there. But that wasn't really training at a College. We've done a lot of training for like the National Trust, gone up and trained like a group of maintenance lads on how to run cornices. And then there was St. Helena, but that was more training the local workforce. So that wasn't really in line with any sort of, oh no saying that there was some lads from the local Technical College that came with us.

SH: See you've done a lot more training that you think you've had.

HO: Yeah you sort of forget about it.

SH: It's alright someone asked me one time, didn't you speak at this organisation? I was like, no. Then I thought about it and I was like, shit I did. So are you an active member of any professional organisations relating to your craft?

HO: I've applied for the Worshipful Company of Plasterers, but that's a bit of a waiting game to get into that. Yeah, I'm a member of Building Limes Forum and SPAB and that's it.

SH: Do you have any, do you take on any roles in those organisations.

HO: No. Only for like doing my dad's articles, that's about it.

SH: Which he wants to write another one for Building Limes Forum about this research.

HO: Oh, that would be good.

SH: Do you think those organisations, SPAB, Building Limes Forum, Worshipful Company, do think they are adequately addressing the needs of your profession?

HO: Not so sure about the Building Limes Forum because it seems a bit in house there. Like it's a bit of a club, but Worshipful Company I'm not too clued up on them. But I mean SPAB is always raising the awareness is it. Especially with they've had some exposure with Grand Designs. Have you ever watched that?

SH: Yeah.

HO: And I know I went with Bill to Grand Designs Live, big sort of convention thing and SPAB had a big presence there. Yeah, they are promoting the use of traditional skills and things so.

SH: Would you suggest others to practice plastering?

HO: Pardon?

SH: Would you suggest others to practice plastering?

HO: Yeah. Yeah if they like hard work.

SH: So if someone said to you, if they came up to you and said Henry I want to be a plasterer, where do I start? What would you tell them?

HO: I would probably tell them to try and contact a plasterer that they like they're style of work and know what they do and sort of try to get with them even if it's on a voluntary basis to try to work with them, see if they like it. Going down the college route over here, not really worth it. If you want to get in the traditional thing, fine if you're wanting to get into modern construction. And then yeah you've got your courses. I would say the courses are good but you're just going to learn more about it if you just see if you can get on-site with them. Even if you're just standing there in front of the mixer like and labouring. You're get a better idea I think.

SH: Alright. Well you already answered the next one. Are there any misconceptions about your craft that people have?

HO: Yeah, I guess so. When you say you're a plasterer people automatically think you just skim with gypsum pretty much. So, you always have to specific, yeah I work on old buildings or sort of do the decorative sort of stuff. Yeah, I guess there are.

SH: Yeah. You know the walls that were done at Tech, they're still up...

HO: Any cracks in them?

SH: No, No. They're holding pretty well actually. Considering how much stuff we have running around. I threw something at Dennison from across the room because he was mouthing off to me. So I threw it from in front of the stained-glass window, over the other stained-glass window, he was standing inside the wall, and it missed him, and it bounced off the wall and didn't dent it at all.

HO: Is that so?

SH: Yeah. As soon as I threw it, as soon as I let go I went fuck that's going to mess up the wall. And it just, it wasn't even close to him, and it bounced off. I was like oh dammit now I've got to fix that. And I walked over and was like, oh. I mean it had a little, it was a glazing knife, a putty knife, and it hit the corner of the putty knife and it made a little dent, so I just took a little lime putty and just, with a small tool put it on. The only one that noticed was Sinisa. He was like who broke the wall? But we were talking about the cornice work one day with my President and a couple of people that she had by and she said until I saw this up here I didn't know that in old houses, that cornice wasn't wood.

HO: Is that right?

SH: Yeah she thought it was painted wood. I was like no that was all plaster. She said is that heavy? I said yeah.

HO: Yeah there's a little bit of weight up there.

SH: Because we moved the small mock-up out and set it up for this AIA thing, and there were three people moving that. And she walked past and said, why is it taking three people to move that? I said you know how heavy that is?

HO: Yeah you think it just sand effectively.

SH: Yeah, it's like a hundred and fifty pounds of plaster and if they crack it they're in trouble. So, last two questions and they're all about training...

HO: Steve can we take a quick break so I can pop to the toilet?

SH: Yeah.

Break

HO: Steve I was just thinking about that first question, I've written a few reports so they may be worth...

SH: What your reports?

HO: Yeah

SH: I mean, what kind of reports did you do?

HO: Well it's I mean most of it was with Shaun so sort of documentation, drawings, write-ups. I've written a few write-ups for English Heritage and architects. Things like that. It's usually to help them apply for funding, things like that. You know so basically how it's constructed and what needs to be done to repair it, stuff like that.

SH: Perfect. Alright, question number nine, do you feel that the current education offerings are adequate to prepare apprentices entering the field?

HO: (Pause). No. I wouldn't say so. Not like how they used to be with the seven-year apprenticeship. It's nothing like that. And even then it's not like you're still like, you know, working on site, you still needed to work on site with the seven-year apprenticeship. No, no I wouldn't say it's adequate. I don't think it ever is. You still need the on-site experience. You'll struggle to come out of college and set up as a practitioner.

SH: Alright. Are there enough programmes to supply the need right now?

HO: (Pause). Well I know when I left Uni, I struggled to find a course to give me what I wanted in regards to traditional plastering. There wasn't any. There was one down in Portsmouth, but the only way I could get any decent training is that my dad knew the Professor, the guy who did the course. He knew him fairly well so I knew I could corner him and get more out of him but yeah for traditional work I don't know any. I always took the attitude that you got far more working with them. You don't get the qualifications, but you get the hands-on experience.

SH: So, within the current educational offerings, I know a lot of them are new build type stuff, are there any advantages to those systems? Even if it's a tiny thing like learning how to hold a hawk.

HO: Yeah well, the thing is I was speaking to one of Shaun's lads, they've all been put through college, and he was saying it's a waste of time really. They teach you the bare basics and you find the colleges pass them anyway purely to get the numbers so they can keep on getting the funding. So you hear no end of stories that the lecturers are depressed because they just have to pass these people through, but I mean yeah, the colleges will teach you the bare basics, but I think just like anything it depends on like what type of student you are. I think if you're willing to go the extra mile and learn more it is possibly there.

SH: What do you think the, well you talked about the instructors having to pass everybody. You should hear some of the stories that people have told me that are field assessors and they're like who passed this guy?

HO: Well there was a lad at Cromford's that, he was twenty-three and I think he did two years at college, useless, absolutely useless. And you think, I sussed out in the first couple of days that we wouldn't make a plasterer. It's like why are they wasting their time sending him, just didn't have the mind-set and you think, I think he had an NVQ Two and I think he was going for a three and it's like it sort of devalues the quality of the actually education.

SH: So, and were going to get to NVQs here in a second, so if there's no programmes then we don't have to worry about if they're sustainable or not, what do you feel is the future for training people in traditional lime plaster?

HO: Well it is a bit worrying partly because what I've heard from the likes of my Dad and Gerard, they are the last sort of generation that have gone through the sort of traditional training but gradually it sort of filters less and less and less you lose it gradually. So I don't know if they should set up one school that sort of collects all that information from those old timers now. Even if it's some sort of video or something to record it. But yeah, it's a tricky one with plastering because it's not really standardised anymore like people tend to make up what works best for them but it's probably not technically correct.

SH: So, I'm asking this to all the UK people. I've got a different question for the US people but, what do you feel about the NVQ system?

HO: The NVQ system? Well, the fact I haven't got one speaks for itself I suppose. From what I've heard, it's a waste of time.

SH: Yeah?

HO: Yeah. I would like to think, that's one of the concerns that I've got, because I haven't gotten one, any qualifications as such I'm just going the strength of the buildings I've worked on, hopefully they speak for themselves and but then you get all these things with the CSCS cards or

the gold cards and the fact that you need the NVQs to get them. But that's a load of nonsense because I've only been asked two or three times if I've got a gold card, which I have, but you can always say I'll bring it tomorrow I haven't got it with me, and you're not asked again.

SH: How did you get a gold card without an NVQ?

HO: Grandfather Rights. When they brought it in they said you've got until this date to apply, so I just got, sent the application in, listed all the stuff I do, had an architect give me a reference and it came through so. But once that runs out, I think that's this year or next year, I won't be able to get a new one I don't think.

SH: So wait a minute, so how are all the old fellas that went through City and Guilds...

HO: It's not valid apparently.

SH: It's not valid?

HO: No I don't think so.

SH: So that's basically going to run, because City and Guilds shut down in the '70's so everyone that City and Guilds is going to be out of work because they can't get a card?

HO: Well you would have to check with the people that actually sort of do it but that the impression I got.

SH: I went to the National Heritage Training Group in October for their meeting, and CSCS came up, as soon as they did and they starting railing about it, I said I'm dropping CSCS from my research, because I'm not getting involved in this mess. It was all about the National Trust and saying that we're going to, we have to have critical mass in order to require a CSCS card. Because the joiners were like you know you've bugged us and bugged us to get these cards, and you're not even using them. And they're saying well we need critical mass and the joiners are like well that's great for this year when you've got two buildings that need to be fixed, what about next year? What goes on then? And they didn't have the answers.

HO: Yeah. I know when they brought it out there was a lot of scaremongering going on. You know you won't be able to work on any historical structures if you don't have this card and it's a joke because it's like, a lot of the work you do for private clients. And its small scale so they're not going to, they're probably just ask for reference, and that's good enough. And on the big sites you can just, yeah I've done it quite a few times where I have generally forgot that I've had my card with me, and they've said well it just, you're fine.

SH: Well someone said it was very, what's the word I'm looking for, England-centric, like it will get all the Poles and all the Eastern Europeans from working on the sites and undercutting everyone and if we have these cards, and you could only get the card if you're, like I can't get a CSCS card. Because I don't have, according to the Border Agency I have NVQ Level Nine, which I don't think actually exists.

HO: Well yeah, that was the thing with the NVQ's I don't know how my degree would fit in against it. If that counted towards it.

SH: I think you're Level Five.

HO: Because of my degree?

SH: I think you're a five yeah. But they said NVQ Level Nine and I said great. Then I looked it up and I was like there's no such fucking thing as an NVQ Level Nine. But I couldn't get a CSCS card because I don't have it from a UK school.

HO: Oh right. Well that's interesting. But as regards to the NVQ's though, I mean they are trying with it I think but you often find that the assessors don't know what they're talking about. So that's what my dad was involved with, with the training of the trainers. But yeah, no I've never done it. Never gone down that route and if I done it would have been purely just for the paperwork. You know I wouldn't have learned anything.

SH: And know it's too, because your schools have cut-off dates don't they? The Colleges have an age date?

HO: I don't know about that. I haven't heard that.

SH: Because I know some of them well sixteen to eighteen you start. I know the apprenticeships have cut-off dates.

HO: Yeah. Yeah, I know they do.

SH: So what do you feel about, like you, you went to Uni then you said I want to be plasterer, but now it's too late to get into the apprenticeships...

HO: Yeah, it's a bit unfair. Well I know some people know at seventeen-eighteen or sixteen they know what they want to do but most people have got that figured out in their early twenties and they're probably going to be more dedicated. So yeah, it's a bit frustrating if they're cutting all that generation out.

SH: Especially now when many of them went to College for jobs that don't exist anymore.

HO: Yeah. Well that's the, well I suppose with our generation, yeah, you're about the same age as my brother. Yeah from my brother to a couple of years younger than me it was like yeah go to Uni, go to Uni and it's like, there's not the work.

SH: So many people I went to high school with that went to college I was like why the hell are you going to college? I mean they didn't make it. The dropout rate in the US is, because you get more money every year from the Federal government in terms of loans as you get into it. So your freshman year you get bare minimum, and then every year it goes up and I asked somebody why and they said do you know what the dropout rate is after freshman year? Fifty percent. Because everyone is pushing school, and these are people who barely got through high school and now there in college, they're not going to make it. Especially those who don't have any self-control.

HO: Yeah I know in my programme you only had to pass the first year, it didn't matter what score you got. You know so you could get through to the next year. But yeah you kind of wish that, because I think A-levels now I think they've made that compulsory, that you have to go into you're A-levels or go into a vocational qualification. But I always sort of wish that they sort of pushed the sort of trades when we were younger. It's not just for dropouts and things like that. You can have a successful career.

SH: Yeah it was like insulting to say when I was getting out of high school oh I'm going to be a plumber.

HO: Yeah, I can remember like when I was finished Uni and saying I was going to be a plasterer, people didn't get it. They didn't understand.

SH: There are so many people out there, and I think that worm is turning, as they see all these people in this country defaulting on their student loans, you know SCAD, which is a terrible example because it is obnoxiously expensive, its almost \$45000 a year to go to SCAD.

HO: Jesus.

SH: Yeah.

HO: I think my, for a year, mine cost 1200.

SH: Yeah I've got no sympathy for you UK people pissing and moaning about how expensive school's got.

HO: I can remember when they bumped it up to 9000. Because when I was there it was 3000 then 6000 and I thought why would you want to pay that for this, but?

SH: Well do you remember Megan, short little Megan was in with you and your dad? Well she \$150,000 in debt as an undergraduate.

HO: It's crazy to think that people think that's okay.

SH: It's what it is. It's a whole generation investing or basically marketing their future on getting this degree that they're required to get a job to pay back the loan that they took out to get the degree.

HO: Yeah and how does that affect like getting a mortgage and things like that?

SH: It's tough.

HO: Yeah, I know that over here, first time homeowners from their twenties to thirties they're hardly in properties. A very small percentage.

SH: It's the same here. Alright, last question. If I were to say to you; Henry, money is not an object, design me a programme or a system to train traditional plasterers, how would you do that?

HO: Holy Jesus. (Pause). Well my style would probably be more practical than academic. I think you would have to mix on-site so like maybe have a project or house somewhere than maybe needs doing to it, but, yeah and sort of have a space like Tech where you can sort of practice and

practice and practice and it doesn't really matter about making mistakes. But yeah, I would probably focus it more on the, yeah basically base it on how I've been taught at work, rather than sort of lectures and sort of, those would probably sort of come in while you're talking to the students while you're working. Sort of, I think it would be important to fill in historical and sort of architectural backgrounds and things like that, so you can put things in context and recognise what needs doing when you're looking at the building and reading the building. But yeah, I think it would be important to have an onsite at the same time as college. Whether you could take your students to a building and work on it. But yeah, to be honest it would start from you basic like mixing and sort of basic spreading techniques and sort of make sure you've got those covered, before you start going in into the more decorative sort of high end. But I think you probably have to be quite good at picking out who's going to be best suited to what and pushing them in that direction or flatly telling them that they won't make a plasterer. Some people have got it and some people don't. And you can usually tell.

SH: So you talked about the lectures and everything, is there anything that is currently taught that you don't feel is necessary within the plastering trades?

HO: Probably some of the Health and Safety stuff could probably got rid of. (Pause). No, I think they've, like I think it's important to have an understanding of modern techniques as well just the traditional because you never know what will come up in a project. Money may be tight, so they have to go for modern techniques you know, and I think you need to know all aspects of the trade in that regard. Because you can apply traditional techniques to modern you know. Its simple things like filling in chasing from electricians. Like most modern plasterers would probably just use modern gypsums with modern finishes. Which is slight which is sand and lime and putty and plaster you can do it in a couple of hours. It's a lot quicker. You need to be aware of everything to sort of mix it about.

SH: Given the current educational system in the UK, could your programme operate in that system?

HO: (Pause) I think if they had sponsorships from people like SPAB, Princes Foundation, National Trust, that sort of thing. Yeah like with Prince Charles and that sort of thing it's probably more likely. Yeah or even from companies that sell, the suppliers, they put on courses and things, whether they would go down that route of having a proper programme. But you get into the issue of the qualifications.

SH: What do you mean in terms of...

HO: Well it would be how you would qualify them. What qualification would it be? Would it be like, would you go down the NVQ system or would it be something completely different?

SH: What if you had someone like your Dad, you doesn't have the NVQ he's got the old City and Guilds, could he teach in that system? Could he teach in a UK system now?

HO: (Pause). As a visiting sort of lecturer, I would imagine so, yeah.

SH: So do you feel that there are existing programmes that currently exist that meet or the requirements or come close to your ideal system?

HO: Not that I'm aware of but to be honest I haven't been looking for them. I mean I've been fairly comfortable that I don't, sound a bit arrogant, but I don't really need to know much more. But it's like I feel that the best for me is working with them. No, I can't think of any. But there probably are. I mean you've got that one in Italy that my Dad teaches with. But there down more the conservation side of things whereas I'm not really all that interested in that. I mean yeah there probably are Steve, but I wouldn't know where they are.

SH: Well that's all I have for you on that. Is there anything you want to add?

HO: (Pause). Not that I can think of. I probably will think about it, but yeah, the way I've gone about things has been a bit different then say the lads that work with Shaun. He's you know, gave them a job and put them through college and now they're doing the sort of traditional plasterer sort of things, but they've gone through the system as well. But yeah I think the only reason I've gone about it the way I have is through my connections with my Dad. But yeah I'll have a think if there is anything but I think that's it.

SH: Yeah just shoot me an email if you think of anything. Well fantastic let me turn this recorder off.

End Recording

Total recording time: 1.02.55

Interview Form-Individual

Name: David Wilkins _____

Current address: [REDACTED] Swindon, Wiltshire, [REDACTED] _____

Birthdate: [REDACTED] 1975 _____

Age: 39 _____

Occupation: Architectural Carving student at London City Arts _____

Interview Date: 23/11/14 _____

Interview Location: David-Swindon Stephen-Savannah (Skype) _____

Interviewer: Stephen Hartley _____

Generation: 4-United Kingdom _____

Consent form signed: 11/24/14 _____

Begin recording

Stephen Hartley (SH): So, before we get started I just need some basic information from you, your current address?

David Wilkins (DW): Yep it's [REDACTED] Swindon in Wiltshire. Would you like the post code as well?

SH: Yeah post code would be great.

DW: It's [REDACTED].

SH: Fantastic. Your birthdate?

DW: Its [REDACTED] 1975.

SH: Alright, and that would make you how old now?

DW: 39.

SH: Alright. And your occupation?

DW: I am a student at the moment at London City of Guilds, London Art School studying historic carving, and architectural carving.

SH: Architectural carving?

DW: Yeah.

SH: Okay. So, how this is going to work is that there are actually ten questions. Inside each one of these questions are what are called probes. Probes are just there to have to elaborate a little bit more on your answer. Some of the questions I'm going to ask you're going to be like; why the hell is he asking that, that's pretty straightforward. The reason why I'm asking is because I'm writing for an audience that may or may not be familiar with the trades.

DW: Okay.

SH: So if you say a pitching chisel, I know what a pitching chisel is, but someone who's reading it that may be an academic might say; what the hell is a pitching chisel? And since you don't

really know me just to give you a caveat, I have spent the last ten years teaching. And there's going to be questions about the current training system. I don't want you to hold back on your thoughts just because you're talking to a teacher, I really need to know what you think, it's really important. And I'm pretty thick skinned so you can come out and say every training programme in the world is crap and it's not going to offend me at all.

DW: Okay (laughs).

SH: Alright, question number one. What is your profession, and can you describe what you do in that capacity?

DW: My profession until October was a stone mason, I worked for the National Trust. Now I'm a student at London City of Guilds Art School studying architectural carving. I can elaborate if you'd like about the National Trust.

SH: Yeah, the National Trust would be fantastic.

DW: National Trust yeah. So, having been to college, well basically to start from the beginning, I was a career changer, I worked in the retail industry in a DIY head office and I decided to change careers. So obviously I wanted to have a career in stone masonry. Once leaving my job I started at college, Weymouth College to study stone banker masonry, and then after a year at college an advert came up for the National Trust on their apprenticeship scheme, and I applied and was fortunate to get the position. So after, well getting the position meant that instead of studying banker stone masonry at college full time, I worked with the National Trust in approximately six-week blocks and attended college in three-week blocks and then after two years I gained my NVQ qualifications and then worked for the Trust for a year. And sorry you might have to repeat the question again because I'm going off scale.

SH: No you're not trust me. I was just asking was is your profession and what do you do in that capacity?

DW: Okay, yeah. So as an apprentice essentially I worked with the team on National Trust properties in the East Midlands area on the National Trust estates which meant working on properties mainly pre-1919 buildings, essentially work varied from all aspects from repointing buildings, making repairs, mortar repair on buildings, ashlar repairs through to working on boundary walls. So there was all sorts of repairs and some more on the lines of restoration of boundary walls and that was the bulk of the work but there were instances where new work was involved. One instance that can recall I made an ornate piece of masonry which was a replacement piece on a column in an Italianate garden at Melton House and also there was a major project that I was involved with here we were required to do fixing, working on stone, removing coursework above, it was an arch, archway that we replaced, so it involved taking off courses and replacing courses on stonework as well. So the work was varied; mainly repairs,

building repairs and maintenance of buildings, but there were aspects of fixing work which banker masonry was required as well. I hope that helps.

SH: It certainly does. So, how old were you when you started working stone?

DW: I was, I would have been thirty-four at the time.

SH: Thirty-four, boy you are a late starter on that one.

DW: Yeah.

SH: So what, I mean you talked about working for the Trust, what had you decide to leave the Trust and go back to college?

DW: Well, yeah okay we're being honest here. So essentially, when starting at college I wanted to work stone and when starting at the Trust, there has been historically work at, the building we are based at is called Hardwick Hall in Derbyshire. And throughout the years, National Trust apprentices have gotten high, a really good reputation because they get to work on the historic building and work on all aspect on stonework. That's from quarrying, being involved in sawing stone as in working out dimensions in the primary and secondary saws to be cut, working the stone through to fixing the stone into the building and obviously removing stone. You get a whole experience of conservation, restoration, and also maintenance, building maintenance through working on one property. In my position when joining the Trust, work had actually stopped at Hardwick Hall and from that perspective the work that we were required as stone masons to do had changed to more conservation work on more National Trust properties as in more maintenance work to, well repairing buildings and maintaining them and kept them going. So essentially what I'm getting at is the training through working there had changed and I didn't feel like I was getting the level of experience that I had hoped for compared to other positions at the Trust. That's not to say I don't enjoy conservation work but there a lot more skills that I experienced through working stone that I would have liked to have got. And when it came to the end of my apprenticeship I had to really decide where do I want to go because I changed my career and I was getting a bit older I want to essentially maximise my broad range of skills. And this is through talking to my master mason as well so it's not something I've kept to myself. Repointing buildings, I can repoint buildings, repairing walls I can repair walls. That's essentially the work that's going to happen with the Trust in stone masonry at the Trust essentially for the next three years until work begins again at the Hall or, which we don't know is planned, or when I say we don't know its planned there's always various other buildings, we're not aware of that at the Trust. So, essentially we could be working piecemeal on small repair jobs for those three years and knowing I've got those skills already I want to improve on gaining some new skills in that time and that's why I moved to City and Guilds to study carving because a: I think I've got skills in carving and b: I think I would resent myself for not going to the college if I was working on jobs where I think I could be gaining new skills rather than just potentially going through a

routine of work that I do know who to do it to a high standard and efficiently as well. So, that's the reason why I changed. And speaking to my master mason, even on reflection he said to me that if he knew the level of work that was coming through when I started my apprenticeship as in when I started for the next three years, he probably wouldn't have set up an apprenticeship for stone masons because he doesn't feel I left with sufficient banker experience and fixing experience that he would expect a qualified mason to have.

SH: Excellent. So what attracted you to stone masonry?

DW: Well, I've always been interested in history and have been a member of the National Trust and interested in our culture and how buildings are historical, and impact us culturally. And for a while I studied archaeology for a career change, but there was an element of me that wanted to work with my hands in creating something, and I wanted to create something with the precept, that would be able to say; I've done that, and in some way help maintain our heritage. I sort of wrote a list that I wanted to have to be satisfied in my work, and stone masonry, and archaeology as well were one of the two aspects that came up, or potential jobs that came up. But like I said as of archaeology was book and study based whereas stone masonry was practical, hands on and it really was the one I'm happy with the decision that I made to go down that route. Yeah, it's bizarre and really I think if I can preserve our heritage for people to enjoy like I enjoy and to admire it and appreciate it, and this is even going back to wall and repairing buildings and working stone to go into these buildings, anywhere I can contribute, that's the reason I went into stone masonry.

SH: Excellent. So what's your favourite aspect of the profession then?

DW: I think, wow, you know what, it can vary at any point, especially working with the Trust, by working outside and repairing walls for example, I found that can be very satisfying. But at the same time when set a challenge to repair, the area I'm thinking of, which comes to mind, to get the measurements to look at the skills and the quality of work that would have gone, knowing that I am replacing a piece of stonework to the degree and the measurements of what was there before and replacing it, I think my favourite aspect is the challenge of thinking logically to replace something of the same standard and the problem solving approach that goes to it. And partially banker masonry is applying to skills to create a piece of masonry and stone that will last at the same level and it's the challenge; physically and mentally of working it out, applying those skills and seeing it in place so I think, yeah, that's my favourite aspect I guess.

SH: Awesome. So what's your least favourite then?

DW: (Laughs). My least favourite, well okay yeah. If I'm applying it to my experience at the National Trust, it's not knowing work's coming in, and in the capacity of the Trust, and I'm not trying to belittle the Trust because I've got a lot of respect for the Trust, but in the position that we were at, it's almost finding work to do, rather than being given work. And it maybe clearing

out drains, gutters, etcetera. But specifically to stone masonry, (pause) that's a really good question, I generally like it all to be honest. I think the part of to that, if you're working on a repair project, such as working on a repointing project that's going to last for three months for example, there is a point where the monotony can get to you. But, that's clutching at straws a little bit to be honest with you.

SH: So, you talked a little bit about you worked retail before went into masonry, why did you decide to leave that profession and approach this one?

DW: Yeah, my position, the role that I had before becoming a stone mason was I worked at a DIY retail in the head office and I was what was called a visual merchandiser, so I used to design the stands that used to display the products in the stores, and I used to work in the seasonal department and decorative department for a long period of time. But they, they demanded long hours of you at work, the projects were temporary as in the time invested in them that ranged, especially in seasonal it would change every year, and the quality of implementation, having been there and working on the same job for ten years, they wouldn't learn their lessons on how to make things smoother, and the same problem arose every time. And it's going back to what I said why I wanted to move into stonemasonry, for all that hard work, it was only incredibly temporary to maximise sales for a corporate company, and I was really of the opinion that my time invested could be better suited to something that I can almost give something back that can last, rather than being temporary and almost, you never get praised for your work, it's not that I look for praise but it's almost, looking back and saying; I've done a good job there, like I can get from stonemasonry, whereas in retail it's so short, short lived, that it never gave me the satisfaction at any stage to say: I've done that, and I'm proud of doing that, and yeah that's why stonemasonry appealed as well.

SH: Excellent. So, you talked about going to Weymouth College, coincidentally, every stone mason I've interviewed from the UK has gone to Weymouth College, can you explain that programme a little bit?

DW: Yeah, Yeah. One thing I will say is I've had experience at two colleges because originally I was at Weymouth College, as a full-time student for the year and for the second year of my apprenticeship, and the following year of my apprenticeship I went to York College in Yorkshire. Would you like to know from the full-time diploma perspective or from the apprenticeship or both?

SH: Well yeah, your experiences at both Weymouth and York College, I've very interested in what's going on at York College too.

DW: Yeah, okay. Weymouth College, from what I gathered actually, I'm pretty sure, well I am sure of this, is the curriculum as regards to practical pieces of banker stonework were consistent between York College and Weymouth College, so I assume its constant throughout the rest of the

other masonry colleges. So, in three weeks, York and Weymouth were in three-week blocks. So there was practical time to work on stone. The first and second year of the apprenticeship you start on flat surfaces and move on to working test pieces, which is returns and castellations and then moving onto a sill as well. In between those there were class lectures and again it was obviously focused on stone masonry. Geometric drawing of molding that you were going to tool, so technical drawing, and also aspects of understanding different types of stone, and also stone masonry tools. So there were lectures that were really, very focused of stone masonry in particular. Also, there were aspects of surveying as well, so the bigger picture of working on site. And classes on health and safety as well so working on site. One aspect that I really found between York and Weymouth, not saying it was wrong or right to be honest, Weymouth focused on the use of CAD for technical drawing, and when setting out your drawings and making your drawings, CAD would have been used by the students. Whereas at York College the main difference is that they would have been drawn my hand. And based on that experience between the two, I would say that Weymouth is more focused on producing almost I would say brand new pieces of stonemasonry, that would be more suited to new build, whereas York College went onto the approach more on restoration work as in elaborating that you need to draw, you need to understand drawings and the approach to drawings and understand how to replace a like for like piece of stonework on building because if it were made clean, absolutely square and perfect, then that stone may not actually fit into that building, or that may not be correct.

SH: Yeah.

DW: Which is one main difference between York College and Weymouth and honestly it depends on where you are and what company you're with and honestly for me I would say I got a lot more out of York College than Weymouth from that perspective because I was in the conservation field. And so, with the NVQ side as well the studio work, which I found in some respects, in the UK, well I'm assuming it's the same for a lot of apprentices, is you do get apprentice stonemasons who were going to college for three-week blocks and technically they aren't apprentice stonemasons. They're working with stone in a granite workshop where there making worktops for people in their kitchens, and in some respects, especially in York College more than Weymouth, you get the impression that students are being put through to get a qualification for their apprenticeship, which is fine and great, but those skills will not be used by those apprentices going forward because they're not required for the companies that they're employed at. They could change careers obviously into stonemasonry and that would be useful but, I get the impression that businesses are given the opportunity to get subsidies to hire an apprentice and get them trained and to get them qualified but in effect, that individual having that qualification they can't apply in their normal working life unless they change jobs, and the schools are having to put through, have to have the pathways required for those students, when

their not really interested in what they're doing, they just know they need to get the qualification, but there not working with it every day. I sometime think from that perspective there's a bit of a battle to complete coursework from an NVQ perspective and almost ensuring that aspects of the NVQ are completed without necessarily allowing for, so basically what I'm saying is; you can fill out your NVQ, take pictures of your work, and you can go out on your NVQ, but to, it's almost that experience is just for an NVQ filling out a form and piece of paper to get your qualifications, it's not actually doing the work day in and day out that the NVQ expects. If that makes sense.

SH: It does, it actually makes complete sense. A lot of people are saying the same thing about the NVQ. So do you feel that your instructors or your tutors at the College were properly equipped both in knowledge and the tools they needed to teach?

DW: Yeah. Yes, at Weymouth College the senior tutor was an ex-stone mason and he had been a stone mason for many, many years so I had full confidence in him. The Head of the Stonemasonry Department at Weymouth, I can be blunt here can't I so, he wasn't a banker stonemason and there were instances that he tried to show me how to work a piece of stone and actually made mistakes on it I couldn't correct. So that was unfortunate. So from that perspective I know I'm right in saying that confidence levels were with the senior banker mason at Weymouth not the head tutor. He was involved in stone masonry he comes from a fixing background rather than stonemasonry, so yeah full confidence from the senior one in that perspective. York College there was three tutors at York College. The technician used to be a banker mason, the, one of the tutors used to be a banker mason, and one of the head of the stonemasonry department was a stone mason and a carver as well. And the difference between the two for me is, being at Weymouth College, at times you were felt as though asking questions was taking time out of the tutor's time and it wasn't welcome basically. And you felt you were putting them out rather than getting some help. The main surprise for me when I got to York College was a tutor would go around asking if anyone needed help. And they would help and know what they were doing as well. So, you got a balance of how you approach this, have I got support if I need it, but only if I require it where at Weymouth, I guess in some respects you had to work it out yourself, but you never actually felt, well I personally felt as though that support wasn't there. Another, I sound like I'm trying to beat up Weymouth here, and I'm not trying to, they've got a really good reputation as well. I think one important thing about Weymouth actually is the quality of masons that come out, at the top level that go to skill build, and UKskills and Worldskills, they get a lot of focus because obviously its Weymouth's reputation, and justly their reputation for being there. And they get a lot of attention to build up those masons to be competitive. And going back to reasons for pushing people through to get past is that there are a lot of people who aren't interested, but they want to pass through get the attention, and the block of people in the

middle, such as myself missed out. Whereas at York College the office was one training people to be good stone masons and it doesn't matter if you're, if you're better than anyone else, the perspective was to get everybody up to a certain skill level and skill base so they could have a career in the crafts so that was a big difference for me.

SH: So would you encourage others to take your route of training?

DW: To go to York? Would you say that again sorry?

SH: Would you encourage others to take that route that you took in terms of your training?

DW: Yeah, yeah. And I think this is the point actually. I think apprenticeship schemes are excellent because the one thing, the most important thing, is you can do a full-time course at a college to get your skills, but you're not prepared to do it in the work environment. When you're in the work environment you should be learning from people who are experts in their fields, which I was lucky enough to have the National Trust. And no job is every the same, no piece of banker masonry is ever the same. It may be measurement-wise potentially when you're working it, but even fixing, just the slight adaptations of the stonework, the tooling that you need to blend into the stone, nothing is ever the same. And the only way you can experience what is required on a job, why you approach a job in a certain way, you can have it in the theory, taught to you over and over again, but until you see it put into practice, see it applied correctly with the right methods, understanding situation and scenarios and difficulties that you're put in and the best approaches, you cannot beat that as an apprentice. And going back to college is important, I feel that college work is important a: because you're building up networking, and I hate the word networking, but it is networking of people who are in the same boat so as an apprentice you get to know other people, you set yourself up for a career by knowing others that are working at other companies. But at the same time if you are pointing during your six week block you do have the opportunity to go back for your three-week block and work a piece of stonework so whatever happens while you're an apprentice at work you will get banker time and you will get the time at college to improve your skills without having the pressure to not make mistakes, which I think often, and I'm one of them as well, who can, you know there's a fear factor isn't there of making mistakes and by going to college you can make mistakes on a piece of work and you can get your confidence and build your confidence by working with others and understanding what's going on in their worlds. But the one thing I would say is the NVQ, I would advise others to go down my route because it is pretty much the only route as well to go down and get a stonemasonry, a banker stonemasonry qualification, I would say the NVQ process is, it's not a waste of time, but I think it could be done better, and applied, the approach to getting your qualifications could be better suited to the workplace and better measured but yeah that is the best way. The only other thing I would say is that if you are doing an apprenticeship, find the right conservation maybe, or stone working firm that you know over those three years you will get the skills you will need to

continue your career or experience to continue your career. And this is one thing I have to say about the Trust that in some ways I didn't get as much banker masonry experience as maybe my boss would have liked, the course they sent me on to understand conservation and the whole aspect of conservation principles within the UK and methods towards heritage masonry as a two week course, practically working on a heritage masonry course, have made me more rounded in the field of conservation and that's one thing that is really missing I feel in the NVQ process in that you can work a piece of stone, but you're almost blinkered into that's how you work a piece of stone. In the NVQ and health and safety environment, you can be safe doing your work, you know how to set out, but it's so specific to banker masonry, that's there's very limited areas in regards to fixing, and the reason why your approach work is done on different properties, and it is done in different properties rather than just filling out a form to say you've done this. But if you have done the work, I think there could be a lot more scope for conservation and approaches for building, restorative building work for the conservation field rather than it feels that in respect to banker masonry.

SH: Excellent. Well, the next question is how has the industry changed since you first began practicing, but you've only been practicing for a few years.

DW: Yeah.

SH: So, is there anything you've noticed in those few years?

DW: I think, yeah, I haven't had too much experience with it changing massively. One thing I have noticed that, on my course in London there's a chap who was there, there's been quite large companies closing. And the guy I'm with at London he works for a company called CWO in Chichester, a large masonry firm who had large banker shops and worked on site as well. And they closed and they brought through that I know of five apprentices during my time and those guys would have gotten a very broad experience in stone masonry, and quality time in the banker shop as well as significant properties with repair work and maintenance work. And I think my worry from that perspective is that those large companies going under provide that capacity I believe for good apprenticeships and my worry would be that those opportunities for apprenticeships are being reduced. I might be wrong there might be other companies that still are training for apprentices but that one instance is a worry. Like I said those five apprentices in two years at Weymouth College that are getting trained up, and those five apprentices potentially in the future is a company that are bringing people through. That's a worry.

SH: Yeah we have a lot of companies that, well they have scaled back, starting in 2007. Some of them are starting to hire back up but not as many and not at the price that they used to be hired at. So, how do you feel about the future of your craft then?

DW: (Pause) Yeah, okay. I believe there will always be a need for stonemasonry as in heritage stonemasonry, as in the repair of buildings and structures. But I think the one worry that I do

have is with technology, CNC machine technology in regards with banker masonry specifically, with, this is again conversation that I've had with my master mason, and it's part of the reason I wanted to join the course to become a carver as well, with businesses, organisations such as the National Trust, English Heritage, if it comes out that the building is handcrafted, then it's going to be handcrafted repairs, so that's reassuring. But with regards to projects that those companies, those organisations don't have those conservation principles, and money becomes a factor which obviously it always is, with technology being around at the moment, and with technology improving and products being brought through, that could be sold on to masonry firms, that CNC technology, and I'm a bit concerned that the level of craftsman, away from cathedrals, away from the National Trust, could diminish quite significantly because I think technology will start to take over at some point but, its having faith and trust that charitable organisations, conservation organisations and cathedrals and the like will continue the craft, but in the world it will diminish away from the banker perspective.

SH: Interesting. So, do you participate in any short course training, either taking or teaching?

DW: Have I participated? Yeah. Yes, with the National Trust there was a NVQ Heritage Masonry course set up specifically to, and this is a different direction to what I was talking about with the banker masonry, focused on conservation principle, use of traditional materials, and repairing of buildings in the best way to preserve structures and understanding what were originally used to construct and the techniques required to repair or rebuild. And that was a two-week course with classwork, but it was essentially hands-on, site experience of using traditional materials the right way. And the interesting bit for me was the NVQ perspective instead of having to write out reams of words, tick boxes that relate to the NVQ process like I've experienced before is you were given on-site visits and had a series of pre-recorded questions you had to give demonstrations to get your qualifications. So in effect you were being tested on your knowledge rather than writing out a form to tick boxes that you would never get questioned on. And I found that course was excellent in that perspective.

SH: Good, good. So, are you an active member of any professional organisation relating to craft?

DW: No.

SH: No?

DW: No.

SH: You'd be surprised how many people aren't. So, if someone came up to you and said; David I want to be a stone mason, or I want to be a banker mason, or a carver, but I don't know how to do it. What would you tell them?

DW: I would say (laughs). The one thing I would say, the first thing I would point out that there is definitely a romanticism associated with stonemasonry and using old hand tools and very old

techniques. And I think, including myself when I got into when I started, but the reality is that it's hard, physical work, you're working for, you're working to make money, and there will be pressure to produce work at a high level, so you will have an element of pressure, and you'll be working in an environment where you get cold and dirty. And first of all, you need to think of that in that perspective, and there will be a period of time when your body can't sustain the lifting or the repetitiveness you know through tendonitis, and I'm speaking from my own perspective I guess you know. And just be prepared for the physical aspects of it. I would say go on a course, a couple of days course, see if you can use a mallet and chisel, see if you enjoy the process, working stone, speak to other people including myself about becoming a stone mason and have a really serious think about where your career needs to go to before taking the leap. If any, but after, if someone goes on a course and enjoys it and can handle it physically and environmentally, as in the environments that you work in, then they've got my full backing. And I've got a friend who's being doing this right now, so he started his career as a stone mason going to college and I think it's one of the most rewarding things, most exciting things that someone can do so I would encourage them, but I would put them straight on a few realities of the job. And repetitiveness as well.

SH: Fantastic. So, I only have two more questions for you, and there all about education offerings, so like I said before, don't, and you haven't so far, don't feel that you have to hold back because you're speaking with someone who is a teacher. So, the next question is; do you feel that the current educational offerings are adequate to prepare apprentices to enter the field?

DW: (Pause) Okay. (Pause) Education wise, I feel it's sufficient, is my honest answer. Sufficient as in the education to, if I just take it from the banker masonry perspective, banker masonry you understand how to work stone, how to set out, you understand how to make templates. Education side you get to understand stone sedimentary, igneous rock, and you understand stone tools and health and safety. They're the important aspects of stonemasonry, banker stonemasonry to understand. Where the education lacks is ensuring that the employers are able to provide the experience at work to gain to support the qualifications that they are getting through the NVQs. By doing work at college and not doing it in the workplace is pointless. With regards to, from the education perspective, the NVQs, I don't think the NVQ educates, I just think they're there to tick boxes, to the point where you can write anything into the NVQ's with a photo image that is not checked. It's not regards to a person for example, to a person that is not doing the work, which could potentially happen, it's a question of, the industry so cheating itself out of experienced, qualified, to a good standard, individuals for the long term, and that's, that's the worry for me with the NVQ process, as opposed to the other course I was talking about earlier where an individual has to earn their stripes I was going to say, they have to earn their

qualification because they know what they're doing, and I don't feel the banker masonry NVQ does that at the moment. So, yeah in regards to education, with the quality of education, with the experience I got at Weymouth College, it's been good, it's been very good actually. Yeah I don't know what else to say besides what I said already in the other questions to be honest with you.

SH: Yeah it's interesting, there's a caveat in here for the UK people; how do you feel about the NVQ, but I think you've answered that pretty well. And it's interesting to see someone that's gone through the NVQ because a lot of the guys, especially the older guys have done City and Guilds, or other people have come from the art background, and don't have an NVQ at all and are out there working. It's interesting to see someone who's gone through and experienced the NVQ feels about that system. So, last question then. If I were to say to you; David, money is no object, design me a programme or a system for training stone masons, how would you structure that system?

DW: (Laughs). Alright wow. Okay, that's pretty on the spot isn't it? Okay, the system, I'll probably think about it after I answer the question, but I'll go for what's off the top of my head. The system, by going to college I think is still important. I still think in training perspective it's important for apprentices to learn together, even if they're not working for the same company. So, I would say college is important and it gives people the opportunity to learn in an environment that they are comfortable to not be afraid to make mistakes, which is vital. And when I say learn the practical side of masonry and also the academic side, but if you are wanting to become a stone mason in your employment you'll need to, yeah I'm thinking of stuff, I'm saying what I'm thinking out loud and then I can, basically what I was going to say was, if you're an apprentice, you need to be gaining the experience at work. I'd like to think there would be a vetting process that says you're getting that experience because you're going to have an NVQ Two and NVQ level Three, you should not be able to just finish teaching stonework at college, and fill out a form, a whole document, a whole file of documents saying you've done this work when potentially you haven't. Or if you have done the work, and it hasn't been in a workplace scenario. So what I'm saying is basically, I think work based evidence is incredibly important, but it has to be realistic, as in can it be applied in the workforce, and will it be applied in the workplace. So, it's the two aspects to this for me. There are aspects in the NVQ process with regards to complex setting out and complex masonry molds, there are some businesses that don't, they have specific people to make templates and sections if you like and do the setting out process. Now, I would like to think that employer would ensure that that apprentice gets experience, but there may be companies where they don't allow that. The perspective I'm getting to is the company has to be one hundred percent involved that that apprentice gets the experience and does it practically at work rather than taking a photo of a molding and saying; I've done that and filling out how you've

done it when potentially you may have done a little bit to it but you have to have the experience and the employers have to be on board with this. But there is almost a caveat to what I'm saying there as well. York College and Weymouth they have people who are making worktops and are getting banker stonemason qualification skills. And I think it's great that their getting banker masonry skills, but it's a question of, if that individual, as a student, if that individual actually get those banker masonry qualification because he wants to get into banker masonry or is that individual getting those qualifications specifically just so he can get an increase in pay. So there's a vetting process that I'd like to think is in place. In regards to figuring out problems with the NVQ, work-based evidence has to be genuinely work based evidence. The best example I can give is the heritage masonry course I completed where you give exact examples of how you did the work that you have done. You write about it and you talk about it. And you take photos, you can do videos of what you're doing, so you're actually demonstrating exactly what you've done and being honest. Because, if you are lacking, then there will be support for you to get those skills. And it will either be through discussions, demonstrations, or put onto an improver course in that perspective. So that is not far off the way I would run, I would like to have a banker masonry course set up like the heritage masonry NVQ. So, going to college, learning as much as you can in an environment that you haven't got the work pressures on, gaining the knowledge and skills at the college as well to take back to work so you're more comfortable in your approach to work and your gaining the exact skills that are expected from you as a stone mason at work, and at college, and then I feel you would be better places as a stone mason.

SH: Excellent. Well, given the current educational system, could your ideal system operate under it?

DW: (Pause) No (laughs).

SH: No?

DW: I think with my approach, by having a dedicated person to, I can't think of the word off the top of my head but, to evaluate and assess, if that person has the qualifications I think would cost a lot of money and the scope for understanding that an individual might need to improve those skills, somewhere where they can't get those in their work environment, taken on courses, again that would be more expensive, I don't think it could be justified and just experiences from looking back, with regards to work placement, with regards to NVQ, people who were working at the college, they were taking trips out to visit masons, apprentice masons, who weren't potentially going to get their qualifications, they were making sure they were getting their qualifications but, going back to my point, it's making sure that they get their qualifications but, are they actually skilled enough to have a long term career as a stone mason, I don't know. And that's what I worry about and that's why I don't think it could be financed because the time element for one dedicated person at each college to get people through would actually I imagine

would require more heads to do one that and try and more organisation of course. Conservation is another aspect I would put in my course criteria as well. But yeah, I don't think it would happen. I don't think, yeah. Academically I don't think there's money in the pot to do that.

SH: Yeah people always think schools have more money than they do trust me. Well, that's actually all I got for you. Do you have anything you would like to add?

DW: No, I don't think so. I guess there be probably plenty of things I will think of the chat. But if there's anything you want me to elaborate on or anything like that Steve or anything just let me know I can get back to you on that.

SH: Absolutely, and if there's anything you think of later, just shoot me an email and I'll add it to the end of the interview transcripts. Let me turn off this recorder real quick.

End Recording

Total Recording time: 1.05.54

Interview Form-Individual

Name: John McRitchie_____

Current address: [REDACTED] Crossford, Scotland, United Kingdom_____

Birthdate: [REDACTED] 1984_____

Age: 29_____

Occupation: Joiner/Carpenter_____

Interview Date: 22 June 2014_____

Interview Location: Stephen-Savannah, John-Crossford (Skype)_____

Interviewer: Stephen Hartley_____

Generation: 4-United Kingdom_____

Consent form Signed: 22 June 2014_____

Begin Recording

Stephen Hartley (SH): Alright John I got this thing recording. Before we get started, what's your current address?

John McRitchie (JM): [REDACTED], Crossford.

SH: Crossford?

JM: Yep.

SH: Your birthdate?

JM: [REDACTED]/84.

SH: Your age?

JM: 29.

SH: Occupation?

JM: Joiner. Carpenter and joiner.

SH: Alright. And you have read and understood the consent form?

HM: Yep.

SH: And do you agree to be videotaped for this interview?

JM: Yep.

SH: Alright simple as that. Alright question number one. What is your profession? What do you do?

JM: Conservation carpenter and joiner.

SH: Okay, can you describe what you do in that capacity?

JM: We restore timber structures back to its original form as well as training youngsters with skills to be able to take on them jobs. As well as supplying them with work.

SH: Okay, what parts of the timber buildings do you restore?

JM: All of them.

SH: All of them? Anything wood.

JM: Yeah.

SH: Is it physically demanding?

JM: Yes, it is. And mentally demanding.

SH: Is it dangerous?

JM: Sorry what did you say?

SH: Is it dangerous?

JM: Yes, it can be.

SH: What are some of the dangers involved?

JM: Working next to unstable structures, being able to consolidate those structures in order to make them safe for people to work in. So it's a case of with me being the manager I have to make a plan of attack to be able to keep that job safe for the boys to work on that structure. And obviously since we're dealing with structures that are under repair, there is an element of danger there with unstable masonry and unstable timber works, but yeah. But it's always going to be there, that's why we're there to repair it.

SH: When did you begin practicing?

JM: 2010 is when I set up my business. Sorry when I began practicing carpentry and joinery I was twenty-one years old. So I've been a carpenter and joiner for eight to nine years. Previous to that I've done four years as an architect technician. So it was completely relevant to me taking on the management role in carpentry and joinery.

SH: What company did you begin your career with?

JM: As a carpenter and joiner?

SH: Yes.

JM: It was, in fact no it was called CSJ Joiners. It was CSJ Joiners and it was carpentry and joinery. Colin Cray Joiners I think it was consolidated. I don't know if they're still trading, but it was just me and one journeyman, and we were taking on full house extensions and doing old joinery work including building work, block work, cement work. It was obviously small jobs but we got to do finishing and we got to fit the windows, we got to build the kit, we got a good variety of trim level all the way to the roof. And joiners are the main trade in the UK, so we were on site all the time. So you learn a lot from seeing the whole structure being built. After CSJ who put me through my ticket I went to Taylor Wimpy House Builders, so I was building full houses again on a quicker pace. On a lot quicker pace, but still seeing the whole structure go up again so, from being at the architects before all that to being at a small house firm then to a big house firm, I've dealt with a lot of buildings basically from start to finish. And that's been since I left school at the age of seventeen.

SH: Okay. So what exactly attracted you to carpentry and joinery?

JM: I don't know just, I can remember when I was a little kid I was hauling out pieces of wood from my dad's garage and trying to build go-karts and ramps. There's an old guy who's a joiner across the road and he used to come in and do work for my mom and dad, so I used to see him build walls in my house and fit doors. And it was just the fact that he had power tools and I was like that's for me. But then, yeah, hauling out those bits of wood from the garage and my dad used to get annoyed at me because he used to get punctures in his wheels in his car all the time. So, yeah so I just learned from there. And the scouts did pioneering so it's like poles that you done latching and bindings when you were building A-frames and we would be building tables or tents or gazebos, stuff like that. Bridges, we built bridges in the scouts. I like that backwoods sort of craft as well. I've looked at how buildings developed from that, way back in the day up until the big structures we see today. I can't remember the question anymore.

SH: That's perfect. What's your favourite aspect of carpentry and joinery?

JM: I don't know. Standing back and looking at what you've achieved or what you've done. It's not even about the money at this level. If you can do a carving, if you can restore a structure to the best of your ability and you get the most out of yourself. When you look back at it and see that, like on the old buildings the art that you've created. It's art. That sort of, I don't know. The feeling that you get knowing that you've achieved that, that self-accomplishment. That's probably the best thing about the job.

SH: What's your least favourite?

JM: There's lots of them. (Laughs). I don't know, paperwork. I'm a craftsman, eh. I feel like, well the reason we're doing this interview because there's a shortage of skilled tradespeople, eh. So I'm feeling like I've got to do the paperwork to make sure that the boys that I know that can do this work can be recognised for doing it. Because there's a difference in tradespeople that will deal with conservation to there is to new build. And there's plenty of people that want to fire stuff up in new build, but there's plenty of craftsman out there that want that challenge that we set ourselves in the conservation sector, because they know they're doing hard, challenging work. So you know it's a case of me now going on the paperwork, to go out and try and collect those boys and girls that want to do that line of work and separate it from the industry, the new build industry because that's not where they really want to be. These people are too creative and want more from their abilities and skill in building. And I believe them people will build better buildings. And a better environment if they're left to do it.

SH: So you said you were an architectural technician before you were a joiner.

JM: Yep.

SH: Do me a favour and explain what an architectural technician does.

JM: Right. Well basically you've got an architect. An architect technician can't call himself an architect because architects know all the, he's got the Royal Institution etcetera. So an architect

technician is one of the support architects for the main architect who likes takes the drawings and makes sure they work. What I was doing was door schedules. We were doing pretty big commercial builds. So I was doing door schedules, window schedules, toilet layouts for big commercial buildings, making sure it complies to building standards. You've got the CDM regulations as well, Construction Design Management, so basically the maintenance of the building is it going to be a workable area for maintenance staff. Is it going to be safe, so we had to do fire escape routes, design a fire escape route, we had to do electrical installations, service installations. So the architect basically deals with the client, and he does all the arty stuff, so he goes the building is going to look like this. Then he passes it to a team of technicians. So there was a head technician, I was just a just like the trainee technician working at the time, working to be a technician, but yeah, I was doing load of work, but it was just drawings on the computer. Using AutoCAD, sort of yeah, doing loads of sort of layout designs. I also designed, I got asked to design a conference centre ceiling, and I was asked to do a barrel vaulted one. That was the best thing I've done, in that job, because they left me to create one ceiling so I did this big barrel-vaulted ceiling and I put the lighting design in and shot all the blue lights in the centre of the barrel. And that was in my accountant's building who's now the accountant for my business, so I get to go in and look at my lovely ceiling that I designed.

SH: So why did you leave being a technician?

JM: Because I don't want to sit at a desk all day man. (Laughs).

SH: That's good enough that's why I do what I do. But I end up sitting at a desk all damn day anyway.

JM: Yeah. No, I felt that, the main reason if I'm being perfectly honest, which is a good reason to understand craftsman, is because when I came out of school at sixteen, seventeen, when I was challenged with an HND, a Higher National Diploma in Architectural Technology, I was good at the work and being trained on the job, but when it came to college and they handed me a big, thick folders that size, of paperwork, and I was dyslexic, I was like, nah. At sixteen, seventeen years old I'm thinking, paperwork-booze. I think I'm going to drink. So yeah, sixteen, seventeen-year-old to be handed folders like that and you're challenged with your reading, then I felt I was learning loads on the job, but I wasn't learning enough about building services. I wasn't learning enough out of books. So basically what I decided to do was stop the architect, well I can remember saying to myself while I was at the architect's, I'm either going to spend the rest of my life struggling being an architect technician or I know I can be possibly a great joiner. So I was like, the career advisor at school sort of swayed me into technician work because I got higher craft and design, he was like oh you don't just have to be a joiner, because what the school, and the school's problem is here is they think that like people that are dumb should go to a trade and that's not the case, eh. And people, different people are challenged in different ways in life eh, so

I've got my dyslexic reading, sort of that's what's challenged me. But then what I've found that if I went onto site, if I stopped architecture and I said right okay I've always wanted to be a joiner, let's go be a joiner. I left architecture I went to go be a joiner. And then by building the stuff on site it made me relate to what I was trying to read in the books, when I was actually seeing it getting done in front of me. So I learn twice as fast building it onsite from what I had trying to learn it from books. And I believe it's, it's the way to learn if you're a builder. It's the best way, it's the quickest way as well. Well, that depends if you get a good trainer.

SH: Yep. Well you just rolled into half of my next question, you talked about your school programme in architectural technician, but can you explain the Prince's Trust programme for me? Like explain the structure, how long was it, all that.

JM: Yeah, it was an eight-month apprenticeship programme in traditional building crafts. The reason I applied for it was obviously, well the reason I applied for it was I was at the architect's and I knew how to design buildings and the design process of how to get buildings off the ground. So, I'd seen that. And then I moved to actually building them myself so, with the tradesmen. So we're then building them, sorry what was the question again?

SH: How did you, well explain the Trust structure of the programme.

JM: Oh, aye. Yeah, so I've basically seen how modern building was getting built. And I was quite disgusted to be honest. We're no longer building for the people, we're building for profit. And when you build for profit and not people you're going to destroy the planet in my eyes. We're just building loads of rubbish, boxes everywhere that's just getting people depressed etcetera. So I started looking at buildings where I wanted to spend the rest of my joinery career. So I started looking at churches, cathedrals, etcetera. Obviously my mom and dad had taken me around a lot when I was younger. A lot of historic properties. And then I started realising that actually, the places that I enjoy socialising and being is in heritage sort of, heritage communities. So I started, well I wanted to then understand design of heritage communities, the additional crafts I needed to learn, wood carving, wood turning, oak timber framing, all those different craft trades that relate to historic properties that I hadn't had working in new build, sent me to the foundation. So then the foundation was an eight-month course, an eight-month apprenticeship programme, where I basically got to study all them crafts that I wanted to be able to study, on the foundation. Plus the design, we got to work with architects, we worked with loads of different people within the conservation industry, and it just inspired me to keep going, and chase my passion like. And stick to the traditional crafts rather than the modern house racket.

SH: So were you employed while you were on the apprenticeship programme?

JM: No. Basically what happened was we had hit a recession before we went to the apprenticeship programme, and even I was still a trainee, apprentice joiner, even though I was in my last year. And all these big companies were shutting down, apprentices were getting paid off,

I also had my daughter, and basically I was about to come out, serve my time, and then get paid off. So I was expecting to not have a job. So when my college lecturer came and got me and gave me the flier for that and said John I think you'd be interested in this, because I'd been talking about traditional crafts for a while, so I knew when I got that flier I had to get on that course because there was a bursary with it from the Heritage Lottery Fund. So that was my only way of making money that next year. But it was everything I built myself up to do as well. So I mean that package that the Prince's Foundation had sitting there, I remember in the interview speaking to Edith saying look if you don't let me on this course, I'll pay for it if I have to. And she likes like it's probably a £10 or 5 thousand course, I was like well I don't have that money, but I need to be on this course. (Laughs).

SH: So do you feel that your instructors on that course were properly equipped in terms of like knowledge base and tools and materials?

JM: Well for me coming from Scotland where people were saying that the timber, historic timber, is non-existent here, which I know is rubbish. Coming from Scotland I hadn't seen any of the traditional tools I had seen in England. So the lecturers that they got for us on the Prince's Foundation course I would say were the best of the best. Especially for what I wanted to learn and everything that they taught me was relevant and it's exactly what I'm doing now, but in Scotland like bringing old carpentry tools and showing the old techniques is stuff that's completely been lost. And even, when I showed up down in England, I looked like had a toy tool set. Whereas up here it was a completely professional tool set. But it's completely irrelevant when you come to traditional building, you need to understand the traditional ways of building these buildings, which were done by different tools. So yeah, you've got a whole lot more to learn if you're working in traditional.

SH: Would you encourage others to take the Prince's Foundation programme?

JM: I would encourage everyone to apply for it. I loved it and I wish it was longer. I even said to the people who ran it, I'll come back next year if you accept me for next year. Aye I loved every minute of it and it's still, honestly I'm going to remember it for the rest of my life as one of the best things I've ever done. And it certainly boosted, it boosted my career. I got to meet people like yourself all across the world. I was just sitting one little joiner in Fife with a passion that I didn't think was going to go anywhere and now it opened up I mean a whole lot for myself and others.

SH: What was the best aspect of the course?

JM: Well I really wanted to go and do the traditional timber framing. So that job at we done in Ellen, again with a barrel-vaulted sort of dome, traditional timber frame roof, that's what I was really on the course for because I eventually want to build my own house with traditional

timber frame. And that was the skills that I was chasing to get on the course. So that was my best part of the course was that whole project.

SH: What do you think the worst part was?

JM: (Pause). I think the worst. I don't want to say it.

SH: Go ahead and say it man, it's alright.

JM: I can completely understand why it happened right, but the programming like sometimes we were getting told one day before, like I live in Scotland, so I'm sitting in Scotland phoning them up and saying where am I going tomorrow, where am I going? They've not confirmed your placement yet. And I'm like well you want me there tomorrow and it could be at the bottom of England, and then they'd phone me up after and say yeah you're going to Suffolk or something. So I'd have to make my way to Suffolk. But I mean in America, you think that we're moaning for driving four hours, you're like (laughs). But it's a different perception in the UK, aye we've got the drive four hours, we need to get prepared and blah, blah, blah. I'm a bit more used to it now so, I mean it wasn't really a big issue at all, and it certainly didn't put a damper on any of it. It's just, that's the phone call, get up, get on with it. That's what tradesmen are supposed to do.

SH: That's part of the rule.

JM: Yeah. So I mean other than that, for me it wasn't ever a big issue. Sometimes you were just a bit shocked to have to drive that on such a short notice. But I mean with the amount of organisation that they had to do, I don't fault them in any way. I mean Ken, I don't, it's not a big deal.

SH: So you've been practicing now for a while, how has the industry changed since you first started?

JM: (Pause). Massive (Pause). I don't know I seem to be by myself in Scotland, eh. I don't speak much to Historic Scotland. Everything they do, a lot of people are busy, in the conservation sector everybody's busy because everyone has loads of work. Mainly the reason that people are tradesmen in conservation it's because they're good. So if they're good, they should have a lot of work. So I really feel like I'm by myself, but the work doesn't stop coming in if you're a good tradesman. It's just piling up, piling up. And it's just getting bigger and more elaborate, which is everything that we want. And it allows me to create more opportunities for other people in this area. But I'm still, honesty I'm, I don't know maybe it's self-belief, but I don't think four years ago I sort of thought it would happen, I don't think I would pull it off, but it seems like we're actually doing it so. As long as there's work we're happy eh.

SH: So basically you work entirely in the conservation, so you're working in that little niche area of heritage craft?

JM: Yeah. I mean when I came back from the Prince's Foundation I was told not to just stick to heritage. But that wasn't what I was going to do. I set all my logos up, all my signwriting,

everything was like aimed at heritage and restoration. And there's actually that much about that it just came flying in anyway.

SH: Have there been any new products or tools that have helped or hindered you?

JM: We have, well yeah. The best tool that we could use is the Fein saw. The multi tool. That's definitely helped us speed up sash window restoration. And we have to, as contractors we have to use that to provide a reasonable price. Either that or you'll just be mucking about. That's definitely a tool that's helped us. It's then trying to get the younger guys to understand old tools because in Scotland they're all doing this new build, and then I'm trying to pick the best of them and say look, try this and understand this. And I lot of them will cut it like, but then you have to understand old tools so it's a case of you have to expand your knowledge to include old tools to be able to deal with conservation and restoration. Plus you need to understand, you need to understand different techniques of working. Because one day we could be working on an 8x8 beam. Which means we're working with big heavy tools. And sometimes you can't get power tools in or you can't get hand tools in, so you need to use a power tool or whatever. And then sometimes we could be using woodcarving tools where you need to understand not to be properly bashing. Like of I've got some stripping mortar, cement mortar off a wall one day and they going for it and then I put them on wood carving the next day they need to understand to claim that technique. It takes a while but they do eventually get that. Rather than just whacking big chips off the wood carving.

SH: What's the biggest repair issue you see in terms of material? Someone putting something on that's not supposed to be there.

JM: We find silicate everywhere.

SH: Yeah.

JM: Everywhere. What else. Cement. Cement in the render. That causes us a lot of issues around the windows because obviously the windows have been attacked, the buildings been a hundred years old plus. Cement that, normally there's cement pointing around it, around the windows. So if that's the case there more water going back through the stone and hitting the wooden paneling, then it rots the back end of the paneling. But then the customers go that's the window or that's the paneling, and I go look I can't fix that problem unless the stonework's done, because I understand how the building works. But obviously the customer goes that's the paneling that rotten, but the wall and the stone in relation to our timber paneling's completely relevant, the moisture just travels through the whole wall. So you have to understand what happens and how to repair it, etcetera so. You need good tradesmen to be able to do the repairs effectively.

SH: How do you feel about the future of your craft?

JM: Well I just set my life mission to revive it so I don't really care I'm just going to push and push and push it. That was like, and hopefully people will help me because to me these buildings are

sustainable buildings. And if we want to create a future, we'd be better building like that rather than cement eh. We know to, we've got too much knowledge to understand that we shouldn't be building how we're building, and the older buildings are actually better than what we're doing so it's a case of taking a step back to take two steps forward. I'm not saying build loads of sort of ancient Greek buildings or whatever eh. I'm saying look natural materials is what works. It's what's healthy for people so if we're going to leave a mark for our future generations, why not build healthy structures. And went I went to Austria and seen the passive house standard I'm just like well why shut people in airtight boxes with ventilation systems? I was like this is a natural world, it's a natural planet, why not embrace nature eh? It's maybe a weird thing to say but.

SH: No. Well are there enough practitioners in the field for you?

JM: No but that's a good thing. At this moment in time that's a good thing.

SH: Are any of your suppliers for materials or equipment facing any difficulty? Have you lost any suppliers that you would normally go to because they don't have enough business?

JM: No. Because we're in this bespoke, niche market the suppliers that I've got get loads of business because there's not that many of them about. Plus because we're doing bespoke heritage jobs, we could be ordering materials from anywhere. I mean we went and got, we went and done an inspection on a stair handrail, it was Honduras mahogany. Instantly I was like I don't have a clue where I'm going to get Honduras mahogany. So then its straight a case of figuring out, we found a place called Exotic Hardwoods down south, phoned the guy up, he told me, he confirmed that he thinks its Honduras mahogany, and then he ordered us all the parts and he sent it up to us so then we could start mucking about with stains to try and then rematch the stair. But because it's a bespoke piece of work that we're working on, we could be ordering materials from anywhere. It a case of having versatility as a craftsman, and knowledge about how to go about doing your job. Because you could be up against anything, so you have it understand how to carry the job out.

SH: Are those, are people entering the field, and this is going to be bad because you've got your new guy sitting right next to you, are they properly trained, are they ready to go?

JM: Not as in conservation philosophy. Because it's in Scotland, there's a lot more heritage in England, so there's a lot more people having to do their daily work on historic buildings. Up in Scotland there's a lot more joiners going into new build industry so there's even more of a shortage up here than there is in England. And there's even more of a skill gap in terms of what knowledge has been lost from the former generations on historic properties. So there's probably more ineffective repairs done in Scotland more of the time than there is in England. But that, it's not saying that the craftsman aren't good enough to handle it. It's not a case of their hand skills, there's nothing wrong with their hand skills or their initiative or whatever, well there is in some of them. The ones that I'm picking there's nothing wrong with their hand skills etcetera. They're

more than capable of to come into conservation but then it's not about teaching them any sort of trade skills, its more about teaching them conservation practice, conservation philosophy, sustainability, why you would do the job that way and not just rip the whole thing down and rebuild a new one, controlling carbon emissions, tackling climate change you know what I mean. As a joiner, some joiners think it's completely irrelevant, but you just missed a brickie that thinks it's completely irrelevant. He's just been here and he refuses to use lime. He still uses stone and cement and I mean I can't tell him because he's older than me and he's stuck in his ways. But he's a great brickie and he does great cement work, but I wouldn't let him on a heritage building at all.

SH: My mason, my masonry instructor, he's a hell of a mason, but he is a Type N, cement-based type mason. I mean he knows block work, he's one of the fastest masons I've ever seen, he's about seventy years old, but man trying to get him to mix lime. I've got to mix his lime for him every time. I'm like its three and one man it's so easy, and he's just like I ain't doing this shit. Well, you answered my next question which was do you ever train apprentices but how many do you normally train a year?

JM: Well, we seem to be expanding a bit faster now eh, but because we're in a niche market and the buildings are bespoke, we're looking at setting up training mangers just now eh. So when I took Johnny on, Johnny is already an advanced certified carpenter and joiner. I had to then train him in heritage and conservation. So I mean I need people at that level so Donnie the guy who's sitting there he's also an advanced carpenter, he hasn't got his heritage ticket. But I know that, well if he buys into the conservation philosophy, then we'll have a good heritage joiner there eh. But I mean people who are that highly qualified with their advanced certificate sometimes don't care about a heritage certificate. They know that they can do the work eh and wondering why you're trying to retrain them in a different, well in the same trade when they know they can already do the work. So this a case of saying look right, we need to try to split the industry in two; it needs to be new build and restoration to make sure all our historic structures get repaired correctly. Because we can't knock down the new build, some of it is fantastic, and we can learn from it as well, but we need to keep our historic buildings as well because there's so much stories that go along with them that are great for future generation to see. Ken, we need a preservation store and a new build store, but everything just muddled right now. And that's why modern, I mean modern building has been simplified to be able to mass produce things, so you don't need to train someone at the level to do modern building as you do to come into conservation. And it's the difference between the Scottish and English system as well. We've got a lot more into our training. Like somebody in England can do one year in college and go straight out and have an NVQ 2, and work on site. You're not going to be able to do that in Scotland, you have to do a four-year apprenticeship to become a joiner. And you have to do the four years. So obviously the system is a bit different so we're producing different type of tradesmen in different areas. But I'm

focused on training the elite, I want to train the best of the best so. But the thing is there's plenty of great people out there who are in competition with me eh. But they're all in their own little area, so I've got Scotland right now. (Laughs)

SH: Just so you know, Scotland's not a little area. I've got three counties, you've got a whole country.

JM: Yeah but your counties are way bigger than my whole country.

SH: Well maybe, I don't know. There's a lot less people though.

JM: Eye, totally (Laughs).

SH: So, are you confident that your craft's going to survive for another fifty or a hundred years?

JM: I would say that I'm doing a lot of it out of passion. It's not like I, it's not like a get rich quick scheme. I've got to take a lot of knocks to pass these skills on. I've not actually used much support to be honest. The only support we've had financially is, well no I'm lying, and the Prince's Trust gave me three grand to start up eh. I knew that because we're, we need to try to keep the costs down eh. And I'm trying to get people to use hand tools, which makes the hours, the hours stack up, rather than using machines. But you can't get handcrafted wood from a machine. So when you're trying to make something fit back into the original structure it doesn't need to look new but obviously the boys still want to get paid the same rate as somebody on a machine as they are using their hand skills. So do I think they'll survive, I'm trying to set up a whole new system eh, I'm not, I'm being completely brass necked, and I'm charging an hourly rate now. And if the price goes out of the price range than I'm sorry but you're paying for a good guy with good skills. And I have to pick the best tradesmen so I as their contracts advisor, that I can stick up for them and say look they are great tradesmen, you've had a great tradesman at a great price, we're sorry that the buildings listed, it wasn't us that listed it. We would like to look after it properly for you, but there's so much bureaucracy tied into this building now that it makes it uneconomic to actually try to look after it. But it's like we're doing our best, by keeping our prices as low as possible, so as soon as I've got competition, they won't beat our prices either. Because I've found that basically balance that we're just making enough profit to survive, but then there's that many people working and doing hand skills that, it's more sustainable and carbon friendly. Ken, more people are employed eh and were trying to beat the machines here eh. And it's, you can say that machines have taken over the world and out everybody out of work eh. But get into conservation and you're back with hand skills eh.

SH: Where you go. Awesome. Do you participate in short course training? Do you teach short course? And if so, how often do you do it?

JM: We're that busy on site that in fact I, well do you mean the Scottish Lime Centre courses?

SH: Well any of them.

JM: Alright. Well, for you as well so.

SH: Yeah.

JM: Sorry what was the question again?

SH: Do you participate in short course training?

JM: Yeah, Yeah. Yeah, I do. (Laughs).

SH: Alright. Are you a member of any professional organisation relating to our craft?

JM: Yeah I'm a member of the Institute of Carpenters in London and the Scottish Builders Federation, which are two highly recognised industries. I don't know if I'm in perfectly good standing with the Princes Foundation. I've not actually paid any membership from doing all my stuff. We do have, I hope we have a good relationship with them because they really helped me out. Picked me up from nowhere sort of thing.

SH: There's a new guy, I don't know if he's new; Simon in the Prince's Foundation. Harriet told me to start talking to him. Not Edith.

JM: He's just emailed me through some stuff asking if we would, well I suppose we've been asked to take on two 16 to 18-year olds within our local area to train up. Problem I've got with that is that we've just had two 16 to 18-years olds that we had to pay for, and they were absolutely useless. I can remember when I first started, and I hope because I'm older I'm not being as tough. I mean I needed to, I remember some of the mistakes eh, I hope I'm not being too tough because I'm older, but it's like there that, they come to work with mobile phones. Everybody's got cell phones and Facebook and everything's different these days, that I mean, the passion for a traditional craft I can see might be lost a lot more on the younger generation because they would rather sit at a computer because they're used to doing that, having play stations and all that. But it's because as a child I was always an outdoors child, my main passion was to stay outdoors. So I mean all the buildings that we work on now are in their natural surroundings, so I love it for that reason. But then what we need to find is the young guys that like to go out fishing, and, well hunting or whatever eh. I don't necessarily say that because there's plenty of young girls that I've met that can be fantastic at some of the things that we do. But yeah it's a wee bit rough and tumble in this job so you've got to expect it, that's what you've got to do.

SH: Do you think that the organisations that you're involved with, do you think that they adequately address the need? Do they really do the advocacy and promotion that they should?

JM: Nope.

SH: No?

JM: I don't, well I'm not going to say all of them, I'll say within Scotland, my area, I feel like they could be a lot more proactive. Especially within the trades but when we went to the last sort of meeting down at Dumfries House they were like; we need more employers, so I can understand the situation they're in. They're looking back to me to go well, you set up a business doing this stuff, none of us can do it, you need to start employing. But then the risks of me setting up a

construction industry and employing with all the Health and Safety that goes on and the materials that were used back in the day are actually quite dangerous, so they don't, I mean modern materials and using that yeah health and safety we can get past it, but when we start stripping lead-based paint with a belt sander, we're needing facilities that we just can't afford. And Ken asbestos was put in thirty years ago, it wasn't by us but where I see my position, and I should not feel like anyone should take my perception in this, but somebody's going to have to take that out for stuff to get better in the future, so that's why we've got asbestos companies etcetera. But what they're doing with traditional buildings, because there's that much bad materials in it, the price of actually removing those materials are never going to help that building survive. It pushes the actual renovation works out way past. Like three times more than the value of the building. You'll never get that money back so the only way we're going to keep historic structures is by having a value to them that's not just money. But then you come back to culture eh, and you should value culture more than money.

SH: You'd hope.

JM: Eye, I hope. We have a lot of people that wear suits that don't see it that way eh, so.

SH: Well would you, we're almost done by the way, would you suggest others to practice your craft?

JM: I would, well obviously I do woodcarving displays. I think everyone should, even if they want to take it up as a hobby, why not? They could be selling little crafts at fairs. Yeah it's totally a productive thing to do.

SH: How would you guide somebody, if someone said I want to get into heritage joinery, how would you guide them to approach their trade?

JM: With what sorry?

SH: How would you guide them to approach their training? Like how they get trained? What would you suggest?

JM: Well it's a bit, well if they say they wanted, people have come to me strictly because its traditional building crafts. Because like I said when I set up my business I was doing listed buildings only full stop and it worked Ken, the sort of listed buildings we were getting. People that are out there that are creative youngsters that want to do what I do, but when they come to me and say where do I get training, I'm like well there's a complete lack of training providers within these crafts. Everything's geared towards new build, sustainability but I mean when I talk about sustainability relative to new build my vision of the future is completely different that what's going on. Like solar panels and wind turbines everywhere is not as productive as taking the fabric first approach eh. So I mean more people want hand skills, and employment in creating natural structures that's more my vision. But that's people who are coming to me asking for training that's also their vision. So it's like, they're like how to I get into that because they know

they'd enjoy it. They're not coming to me because of the money anymore, they're coming to me because they want a job they will enjoy. Because you get no satisfaction in throwing something up as quickly as possible. That's the problem with the building industry, the modern building industry, is that it's run by accountants and courts. So if they guy at the top of the line doesn't understand materials or craftsmanship, the builder feels abused, so he's just in there to make his buck and he doesn't really care about his craft anymore. So he's just like yeah, I'll do my 9-5 jobs and take my money. But then nothing's getting built properly because nobody cares about anything. And it's only money eh. I don't believe that the world should revolve around money all the time.

SH: What are some of the misconceptions about your craft that people have?

JM: I don't know. Me, well everybody that works for me like especially me and Johnny, when me and Johnny set out to be carpenters and joiners we thought that this, the traditional side of things like oak timber framing. Like sort of geometry and being able to do geometry, being able to do woodcarving we thought we'd be able to do that but we never really got shown it that much in depth so even when me and Johnny were advanced carpenters and joiners, we still weren't being challenged enough in our craft eh. I mean don't get me wrong there were boys that were capable of doing what we were doing in the advanced craft but still got their ticket but because colleges have to put people through. But yeah there will still boys that were like we want more from this because we want to build, we want to build bespoke, to create structures eh. We want to be able to stand back and say we'll I've done that. Then again, like money can't buy that. The sort of feeling that you get when you've done a good job.

SH: What kind of soft skills do people, I mean you've talked about the hard skills you need in the actually, physical craft but what about soft skills what do they need to enter your field? You know like communication...

JM: Yeah it. I don't know. I think I could honestly, because I know so much about building, not trying to build myself up or anything eh, but I generally knew about the whole structures but about the crafts and skills and materials that went in the structure. Plus the design, I reckon I could pick someone and go alright you'd be good at that, just stick to that, like woodcarving. But then that person with a small frame like me, I can't lift big 8-foot beams myself, whereas Johnny would probably give it a shot. But then you've got health and safety so it's like, right we need two of us to lift that but I would expect it, but still they're so many jobs that could be split up and be diverse, but the only reason were succeeding right now is that I've got guys that can do it all and I've been able to train them to do it all. And that's why we just took on the plasterer as well. Because we've got plastering to do, and none of us can plaster. But we understand lime so now we've got a plasterer on board he's just going to do it for us so we can keep going with the carpentry. But we need to build up enough profit to make sure whoever we get in to be able to

train, even if they're useless, we're still going to make money. But the thing is, if a boy comes in and he's useless, it could cost us more money than what we're earning in that week. Like the young seventeen-year-old that came in, painted my brand new carpet. So that's a £200 carpet. If that was a customer's house he would have wanted the carpet replaced. Now what he was painting, he was only going to get £25 for. So instantly he's cost me a hundred and seventy-five quid. So if he does that every hour, I'd be shut down by the end of the week. But its, honestly the youngsters like, I'm not going to say they're all like that because a couple of years ago a pretty keen seventeen-year-old on board and if I can get him back, I'll be getting him because I was like, I had lost my pencil one day, and he pulled out a box of pencils from his pocket. I was like, you are awesome. (Laughs)

SH: We'll keep you around.

JM: Totally. Now I know I'm not going to find him all the time but there's those guys mucking about that should be working in heritage because they want passion and achieving the craft that they're in. You don't get that in new build, because nobody cares that much. But I've never got that when I was working in the new build sector.

SH: Alright, I've got the last two questions and they're the ones are going to get you fired up.

Do you feel that the current educational offerings are adequate to prepare apprentices to enter the field?

JM: No.

SH: No?

JM: I think it's getting worse as well. Because when I got put on the SQA panel to validate the carpentry and joinery course for this year, I sort of had a wee tiff with the guy who wrote it because I think he's deskilling the workforce. I think skills are doing it as well eh. Just as I said earlier, basically they're trying to dump people into the trades. But if you value trades like that, you're not going to get good tradesmen. Luckily though I stepped back and went back into the trade and said nah there's good people here that are getting abused eh. And I feel they should be taken out of the new build sector. Don't get me wrong there are plenty of people in the new build sector that can stay there, and I don't want them touching a heritage building don't get me wrong. Because we'll lose our heritage just as quickly, and money fast. But there's plenty of good guys in the new build sector that don't want to do the job that fast. It's not about how much you can build it's about how good you can, well is quality or quantity. That's how I suppose is that economically viable in the heritage sector eh, that's the question.

SH: Why do you think, I mean is it a push to get more numbers out, of graduates out, is that why they're dumbing it down?

JM: Well, I'm saying their dumbing it down, but I suppose it's just, I don't know. Honestly it's a vicious cycle eh. There's good people that will take a lot from it, there's bad people that will

always be stupid. Because it's just their attitudes not in the right place eh, and I suppose there different contributing factors to who you get that but when we've, I don't know. For my training purposes, if I'm going to take someone to train them, they expect to get paid. Because they're working on site, so they expect to get paid, but the margins are that tight in conservation that actually training money is really its tight like. Its then like colleges, aye I don't know. The colleges, you don't get that much conservation in colleges. The only way I could have gotten into this sector was through the Prince's Foundation. There's obviously Elgins in the north of Scotland. They've got the traditional skills centre. I can remember when I was leaving school that I applied to be a stone mason at the Scottish Lime Centre where they take like one every two years or whatever. There were that many applicants, honestly I wish I would have gotten picked for it, but I was unsuccessful so I mean instead of me being an architect technician, I could have went into stone masonry. But the places are that limited, nobody gets the opportunity. But then I see, well I don't know its...there's people that come out of high school that are involved in art that I think could easily come into this trade. There's people that are involved with craft and design. I think art and craft and design, there's people that are highly dyslexic that I think would come in here and be brilliant. And obviously they're going to get a hard time at school because they're rubbish at reading and writing. But then when you're training in a craft, it's about the master and apprentice so I mean I'm showing you what to do and you're copying me and you're doing it yourself. So I mean you can learn so much quicker. I mean I'm good with visual spaces, I'm good with measurements, luckily I'm alright with numbers but then I'm not great at reading and writing. I've managed to battle and sort of overcome that sort of wall but of course I'm labelled as well. Dyslexia is a label as well in a way. I mean you're only dyslexic if you keep telling yourself you're dyslexic eh. I've never thought myself as dyslexic, so I just bash on anyway. But at somebody at a young age says your dyslexic you've got problems with your reading, blah, blah, blah, they're going to think they've got problems all the way through life. And then, I don't know, if you're coming into the trades it's totally different, you could learn a hundred things in a day. It's like I can show you how to carve a leaf, like I've shown loads of people how to carve a leaf in a day. Genuinely when you show them the thing in the morning and say you think you can do that, no. Right, okay, watch this, and then they're carving a leaf.

SH: So what do you think the future of training for the craft is then?

JM: I think I've got it difficult up here. I think the great thing is that international community of conservation. I think that conservation has to be a family and everybody has to work together to try and provide these crafts to help historic structures eh. See I think as long as there's people in all corners of the globe discussing it and trying, and willing to fight for it, I think, I can't, as long as people fighting for it, it's not going to die.

SH: So if you were to design, if someone said to you John, design me your ideal programme or system for training heritage carpenters, what would you want in it?

JM: I would want them to have done it my way. I could probably condense the course down eh. I could condense my architectural technology. I mean, you have to understand how to design a building, to be able to pull it apart and put it back together again eh. There's no point, I mean even when I was on the Prince's Foundation course, I was looking at cathedrals going how did they build this? Like really, how did they build this? I wanted to know how they built it. So that was sort of what I was chasing in my mind eh, then I ended up sort of figuring it out. I'm like oh, now it makes sense. And that's exactly how we build modern building eh. You've got, you split it into sections. And then you've also got like, you've also got to work off the rules so, I mean, you've got a plan, it's in stages, you've got building techniques etcetera. I don't know. I think I could design a pretty good course right. But it depends on how long you've got. I'd like to teach everybody what I've learned in the past, what am I twenty-nine? Thirteen year or whatever. But obviously I would have to condense that down.

SH: Well like if you had the time, how long would it be? How many instructors, how many students could you take you know? What would be the ideal number of students in the class?

JM: (Pause) I don't know. You know what I worry about when I, you what I'd be worrying about if I was setting it up right, the fact that I was banging on about stuff that people didn't understand eh. Because I feel like it's a learning process, you have to grow it. There's stuff that I could talk to people about right now that they're just not going to get. Like Jamie, one of our younger lads eh, there's stuff that I can tell him right now when we're building, and he's not going to hit that level for a while. Even when I'm talking to him about stuff it's just going right over him. What's he's interested in is actually cutting, cutting sort of joints and splicing it in and etcetera. So, I think it's, I think there should be different training shift schedules for different people in industry, but they need to be prepared to work together. And they need to value each other for the skill that they have. It's just I take a realistic view of the whole thing and to figure out where we were going wrong and why we were losing historic structures so fast and why nobody could repair them properly and then we've hit a brick wall that actually the skills have nearly been lost. So we were failing because the skills have not looked after. So yeah if we're reviving a course, I think, I think that honestly the Prince's Foundation done it perfectly. Really. If anything, I would have made it last a year, but they had to do eight months to prepare for the next year. They need like a couple of months off to get the next course started eh, so I appreciate why its eight months or whatever. But yeah you should set up there could be apprenticeships like that, but you know what I think people should go out and do a spell in the modern building industry first and then come into heritage because they, I honestly believe if someone can't use a sweeping brush you shouldn't be allowed a screwdriver eh. So until they prove to me that they can clean up effectively, because all

of us have had to do it, everybody, everybody's equal. If you can use a sweeping brush I'll give you a screwdriver. But then you've got a class, as a craftsman you've got to be prepared to do paperwork, or do any of that side, you should still value your craft. So you should still want to be the best at what you do. So it doesn't matter how you plane that door down, if you've got a blunt, if you're going to be that joiner with a blunt plane, then you've got the other joiner with a razor sharp plane next to you, then the guy with the blunt plane's not getting a job with me because he doesn't value his craft enough eh. And if he refuses to do paperwork etcetera as well, then he can go work at MacDonald's for all I care. And that's how, well the people I pick value their craft because it's what they want to be.

SH: So do you think that the Princes Foundation could be duplicated enough times across the UK to...

JM: Oh, definitely yes. I think, I think, yeah it could be duplicated around every county on a small scale. It could be in every country. I think, I don't know, it was a fantastic opportunity like. I got, like what we were talking about last weekend in York at the York Consortium, like the French sort of do that the Champa...I can't remember.

SH: Campaign.

JM: Aye. I mean that sounds good. That sounds sort of like, we're close to that in Scotland, along the process that I've taken has made me close to what they've done. But then there's other boys in Scotland that are not getting my opportunities, so that's why I came back here to try and set that up. Because I know there's plenty of people here wanting that opportunity. The thing is what they don't like is I sacrificed a wage to go and do training, although I was just about to lose my job anyway, I still had to take a knock in wage to be able to do the training. And that put a lot of strain on my life at the time eh. But then I knew it was going to benefit me in the future. But trying to get people to see that, like not everybody thinks about the future that much. So to try and say look well, I've just done interviews and there a guy that was on £16 an hour as a joiner and because we're restoration carpenters he thought he was going to be on the equivalent or more. And I'm like no, no the price is, us in the private sector in the restoration because like the job can fly, the money can like go way past the affordable price, if that guys sitting there going yeah I want £16 an hour, and I actually pay him that and he's rubbish, then it's alright if you're shoveling in concrete for £16 an hour and you're on a contract and you're only there for two months, and then you don't have a job. But when you're in conservation and you learn these skills, you stay here and you sort of honour your abilities. With what you can do with, well, in sort of the conservation sector or conservation trades eh. So I mean the plastering that I, we're taking on, he's the best lime plasterer that I know of within this whole area. Johnny's also one of the best carpenters I know eh. It, we've got Donnie sitting here as well, he's pretty good (laughs).

SH: Donnie you sure you want to go to work on Monday because I heard nothing but horror stories from this fucker.

JM: Aye. No the thing is, life should be a challenge eh. I like getting challenges thrown at me and there's loads of guys that are a bit rough and ready to be thrown a challenge eh, and they'll have a more productive day in conservation than they will going to new build. But then if you ask them they prefer working there than working on new build sites. They prefer that area because it's a natural area and natural materials eh. The actual buildings blend in with the landscape. There's sort of, there is a sense of place and a feeling that you get working there that when you go back home to a concrete like battery eh, every house is the same sort of concrete jungle whatever, like you feel better going to work than coming home sort of thing eh. Luckily we've got kids and they put a smile back on your face etcetera. I mean when you look at the modern buildings that are getting built; it's getting worse and worse and the areas are getting worse and worse because even as soon as they're built like the railings are falling down because they're plastic, they're not as good as quality as what's built. Then people are like aw, I hate this place. And they're genuinely fighting with the house that they're living in because there's that many problems and its brand new, it, and they can't believe it. I'm just, I can really go on can it? Something has to change and I feel like I'm in a pretty good position to teach people a different way of building so like you're in a great position too, but it's a case of I love restoring old buildings and I can see the importance of that, but again we should sort of embrace them buildings and bring that building philosophy forward because it's completely lost in modern buildings. And I think, I think people are completely disconnected from the places they stay in, and the communities falling to crap. When I was a wee boy, there was a least some sort of community spirit. Everybody just seems to be everywhere, using cars and like my kid doesn't seem to, I don't think she's getting as quality of a childhood as I got because we're having to drive everywhere and she can't get out and play because everyone feels unsafe and places aren't built properly. In fact the development in our town centre is just like, the shopping centre just looks like a really badly designed football stadium or car park it's just, it's just a complete monstrosity, it's like an elephant in the middle of our town with no perspective, like if anything all that says to me is that the council, the councilors that are working here don't care about anything except for their pockets. And if you speak to anyone in the local community, they'll probably feel the same and it's because of the buildings that are being built and the roads that are getting built, everything's just crap. So everyone's going to feel if it keeps going on. So that's why I made the switch into heritage because at least I get to feel good for some of the day, even though I'm working. In fact at least I get paid for it, I feel even better. I get to work on a lovely property, in lovely scenery, doing a job that I enjoy, and they after I made the perfect job that I've done, I can stand back and go aye look at that, I've done that, and it's on, look at that property. It's like I don't really care that it's that much bigger

of a repair bill because I don't own it, so it's sort of that Aladdin sort of feeling eh, you're looking at the palace. But I think I'm one up because they have to pay me to restore it. And I'd rather stay here and look at that and, I don't know. No I'd rather own one. (Laughs)

SH: Well cool man. Well I'm done with the questions, is there anything you want to add to it or anything you know you think I missed?

JM: No, I think we've got through a lot. And it's pretty much how I'm feeling about everything Steve. So yeah, when you feed it back to York and that I hope they take note.

SH: I hope they do to because I hope I'm not wasting my time here. So let me turn of this recorder here.

End Recording

Total recording time 1:09.52

Interview Form-Individual

Name: John Ecker _____

Current address: [REDACTED], Savannah, Georgia [REDACTED] United States _____

Birthdate: [REDACTED] 1983 _____

Age: 30 _____

Occupation: Project Supervisor-Tidewater Preservation _____

Interview Date: 4 August 2014 _____

Interview Location: [REDACTED] Savannah Georgia [REDACTED] United States _____

Interviewer: Stephen Hartley _____

Generation: 4-United States _____

Consent Form Signed Date: 4 August 2014 _____

Begin Recording

Stephen Hartley (SH): Okay, some basic information before we get started. Your current address?

John Ecker (JE): Savannah, Georgia. [REDACTED].

SH: That's 01 right?

JE: Yes

SH: Birthdate?

JE: [REDACTED], 1983.

SH: And that will make you how old now?

JE: Thirty this year.

SH: Alright, and your occupation?

JE: Historic Preservation.

SH: What about it?

JE: I'm kinda involved in all of it, but my current position would be project supervisor here in Savannah.

SH: Project supervisor for Tidewater Preservation. Alright, question number one. What is your profession and describe what you do in that capacity.

JE: Like I said I'm a project supervisor. I kinda have my hands in all our projects in the south but I'm also a mechanic so a lot of times I'm doing a lot of specialty stuff where I'll go and actually be the mechanic so I'm not a supervisor all the time, but I'm involved with all our projects. A good example today we had a small repointing job and it just made sense for me to go and do it and get it over with instead of sending a mason out to do it. So, my job title is sometimes hard to describe because I'm moving around so much I don't tend to stay as a dedicated supervisor even

though if I come on a project its kind known that I'm there to either move things along, get things done, or bust ass basically.

SH: So, what kind of projects do you normally take on?

JE: My company is...we only specialise in historic preservation so we don't do any new commercial work. Really anything new. Besides there are the rare instances that we do actually real restoration which we could be putting an addition back or tearing an addition off or something like that, so it mostly involves all the traditionally historic trades, masonry and carpentry and then we have little subsets off of that that we specialise in. Lead work, copper, slate roofing, and a lot of underpinning and foundation repair. Stuff like that so it's kinda all over the place.

SH: Alright. So when did you begin practicing?

JE: I was kinda born into the industry. I was working at a very young age. I think a few years ago they checked on the payroll and I was twelve or thirteen when I started sweeping floors and emptying trash cans. And I did that for a long time. Summers in between schools and holidays and anytime my dad could get me out of school to go with him basically.

SH: So you've been with Tidewater your entire career correct?

JE: I have, yeah.

SH: So the next question is was this a family business. Don't think we need to ask that. So, what's your favourite aspect of what you do?

JE: I think in my eyes is the variety of architecture I get to work on. I get to work on some of the most prominent examples of American architecture all over the country. And it's not just remodels and stuff like that. The mundane that can drive people to insanity and drinking. I really get to work on beautiful plantations and churches and courthouses and just some of the finest examples of architecture in the country so it's my favourite.

SH: Great. So, what are some of the more prominent projects you've worked on?

JE: Some of the more prominent projects in my eyes are the Octagon Museum in DC. I've done a lot of work there it's kinda started my career there. One of the most beautiful Federal buildings in the country. A lot of, so my favourite buildings were some of the early eighteenth century river plantations in Virginia, in the Tidewater area. The Georgian houses I had a lot of fun on. Kinda started really enjoying architecture on those. But there's the odd ones I've worked on that just stick in my mind. I worked on some Pueblo ruins in New Mexico that were phenomenal. I mean those are by far the, I mean they're like twelfth century adobe and stone buildings so they're kinda, it varies so much. It's really hard to pick a favourite.

SH: So, what's your least favourite aspect of the business?

JE: My least favourite aspect is probably having to bend to a client's wishes. And we a lot of times will put our foot down if it's something that we don't feel, that we feel is morally wrong and we

won't pass that line. But there are some things, you know if we come to a house that we're restoring and its already gutted and you know they want to put drywall back instead of plaster you know I understand those types of things. It's a money thing. But having to do something that we know is historically wrong is something probably one of the hardest.

SH: So did you ever consider doing anything else besides preservation?

JE: I've tried. I've gotten out of the field briefly. I worked at a ski resort a few years ago for half a winter. No, I don't think so. I don't think I could ever do anything else. Like I said I was born into this and it's in my blood so I don't have a choice (laughs).

SH: So where did you learn how to do all this?

JE: Honestly I learned ninety percent of what I know from working with some of the old-timers that I grew up with. From some of the old carpenters we had, an old Italian mason we had that I worked with you know straight from Italy. Some of it I learned from schooling. I've been to some vocational schools, some tech schools, some of the more specialised stuff that I've focused on.

SH: So, what are the schools that you went to?

JE: Historic preservation wise?

SH: Yeah

JE: The major one that I spent the most time, money at is Yestermorrow in Vermont. I've taken a dozen or so classes there. Most of those were on my own just trying to get ahead and trying to expand my horizon a bit. I've taken some various classes for manufacturers and don't really consider those as training but you learn different techniques and stuff you know. Jahn is one of those. The class I had was actually a good class. I learned a lot of techniques that I could carry over to some other products in the field. I didn't go the traditional four-year college route even though I tried a couple times. I kept, you know I would get a phone call from my dad saying oh we started this amazing project you know and I'm stuck in a dorm room and that just drug on me and I couldn't do it. Honestly, in the field that I'm in I learned a helluva lot more in the field that I did in the classroom. You know some of the business aspects I kinda wish I would have stayed in school for but as far as actually getting out there and doing work for me it wasn't beneficial.

SH: Can you explain a little bit about how the Yestermorrow system worked?

JE: So the Yestermorrow system was started by a bunch of architects and they kinda, they're very preservation minded in a sense but not just that they have a green building model that goes along with it. And preservation and green building as you want to call it kinda go hand and hand. I mean, historic preservation is the original green. It's re-using and rebuilding what's already there. So basically Yestermorrow teaches short classes. Some are a day, some are two days, some are a week or two weeks and they kinda immerse you in different trades; carpentry, blacksmithing, timber framing. They also have some architectural ones some design, planning. So when I was there I tried a little bit of everything from blacksmithing to design to timber framing and stained

glass. I tried to get as much out of it as I can. So most of it was good some of it you would never use in real life you know. But it was still fun you know, a lot of those guys they don't make a lot of money they do it because they love it and that's the one thing I really like about it because you're really there with people who really want to be there so.

SH: So, do you feel the instructors were properly equipped both in tools they needed and their knowledge?

JE: I did because most of the classes I took, all the tools the instructors brought in. Like the timber framing classes, I took several timber framing classes, and that sticks to mind and the instructors would come with their own tool chests and let the students use. And a lot of them were old tools that you can't buy anymore and they were, like I said they loved what they did and so they were great teachers, they loved the students and it was a lot of fun. Really good.

SH: So, would you encourage others to take the route of training in traditional crafts that you took?

JE: That's a hard question and I'm going to start off by saying this is not an easy life. It's not. I mean it tears you up. You have long hours you know, I learned to get up at 4 o'clock at a very young age you know, and I think my dad tried to get me out as many times as early as he could but, I think school is great for a lot of people, a traditional four-year school. And I think that you if can do that go for it, but honestly if you know you want to be a carpenter, if you know you want to be in the trades, really the hands-on stuff is the way to go. You know, that's a hard question to ask. But I think my route I took I did it, I did it the right way for sure.

SH: So has the industry changed since you first started working?

JE: A little bit. I think I've seen a surge of kinda more preservation minded people in the last couple years. From what I hear in the early nineties it was almost, I'm not going to say dead but it was nowhere near what it is now. I think a lot of historical societies have kinda caught up and realised the potential for these old buildings and that's kinda pushed them to make new laws to save these buildings and that benefits us. The preservationists.

SH: Have there been any new products or tools that have helped or hindered what you do?

JE: You know I get asked that a lot, there's definitely products that hinder, you know, what we do. We're still cleaning up messes from the Fitz Kimball era. You know he was in love with Portland it seems. You know were kinda cleaning up some of that which was deemed to be a horrible thing for a lot of historic masonry structures. It has its place but not a whole lot in our field. Honestly the best tools and methods are the original ones. I mean they really are. Sure there's some power tools that make things faster. There's no miracle cures. There's adhesives that work a little better. And there's adhesives that work against you and destroy things. So, there really isn't... the best tools and materials are methods are most of, ninety-nine percent are the original ones.

SH: So how do you feel about the future of traditional crafts?

JE: Well, ten years ago is probably was looking too bleak but nowadays it's definitely looking better you know. There's a lot more classes available than there was even five years ago. So I think the young, my generation has realised what's out there and what we need to do to restore it and to protect are, you know, relatively young architecture we have (laughs).

SH: Are there enough practitioners in the field?

JE: Enough good ones? No. (Laughs). There's plenty of bad ones and very few good ones and I don't mean to boast but ninety percent of the work I do, maybe even higher than that is fixing bad repairs. That is, most of my time. So it's...yeah.

SH: So are those entering the field now, are they properly trained?

JE: Yes and no. I don't think you're ever properly trained. It's one of those things were you just have to be in it and experience it and learn. You never...even the people that we hire that have been in the field for, or claim they've been doing this for twenty years a lot of times are awed and wowed and I'm teaching them new things. So, some are better equipped than others. Some will go to a trade school and they learn a lot, and some will kinda pick something that they are interested in and kinda exceed at that whether it be plaster or carpentry or whatever. But to be really good you have to kinda have to have a broad spectrum of skills. And that's really hard to do without the experience.

SH: So are you confident that the crafts will survive in fifty to a hundred years?

JE: Yeah I'm pretty confident. Like I said our methods, we've gotten a lot smarter with our methods. I think a lot more people are being trained. And I think I lot more are informed and I think knowledge is the biggest part of it and so I'm not really too worried.

SH: So do you ever train apprentices?

JE: I like to think I do. Me being only thirty I have a hard time training somebody because I'm learning so much as I go. I think I have enough good skills and knowledge that I can pass along what I know is right to other people. And I try you know the younger guys. It's hard on me being younger to talk to the older guys, you know, they don't really appreciate it even though some of their methods are wrong. So I try my best because you know since I started so young in the industry as a kid I know a lot of mistakes I took and I try to teach you know some of the younger guys to avoid those.

SH: So do you participate in short course trainings in teaching others?

JE: Not officially. No. You know one day. Yeah not yet. If someone would have me I'd love to. Like I said I'm not proficient enough to teach I think a lot of things but I could definitely pass my knowledge on from what I've learned.

SH: I mean your tabby work, there's not many people that know how to do that.

JE: Yeah that's one of the things; tabby, that I, we've kinda started from the ground up and I've done a lot of research and a ton of work in the field with recipes and I've probably put a hundred hours just in tabby alone and it's definitely something I can pass on and try to get the word out a little more for sure.

SH: So, you don't do an academic training. Going into schools or anything like that?

JE: No, just some of your stuff that's it.

SH: Are you an active member of any professional organizations relating to craft?

JE: Let's see, I think my card's still good at HSF. I don't know if they want me anymore. Let's see, maybe at one point I as part of the Timber Framers' Guild but I don't know if I paid my dues. Maybe I did for a year or something. No in those aspects I'm kinda lacking I don't I'm not as involved in the field as I should be. But now that I've moved to Savannah and I'm here full time and it's where I'm going to stay put, sort of putting roots down a little bit, I'm trying to become a little more active in the community and I guess, I think as I get more settled it will get easier. Really the past ten years I've moved around so much and all our traveling projects it's really hard to do like that you know.

SH: Yeah. These organisations that are out there, Timbers Framers Guild, PTN, APT. Do you think they're adequately addressing the needs of the profession?

JE: That's another hard question to answer. I don't think any of them are really adequate. But I don't think they're doing any harm. I mean like the more the spread of knowledge in our small field the better obviously. I don't have enough experience with PTN and APT and all those guys you know I've been to a conference. My dad was a member years ago and was very involved until the spilt you know and then it was just kinda more politics and really. So I, you know, I'm always interested and always looking I'm not against any of them until they get too full of themselves and politics take over, I'm all for it I guess.

SH: So would you suggest others to practice these crafts?

JE: Yeah I definitely would it's a very satisfying field to be in. Its, at the end of the day, you know you really can show your work and say that you did a good thing and it's a lot of fun. I wouldn't have any doubts trying to get people signed up for it.

SH: But if they came up to you and said John I don't want to get into crafts but I don't know anything. How would you tell them to start?

JE: You know if I couldn't personally hire them, I would try to point them in a direction either a-some companies that I know about or a great way is to get classes you know. Whether it's just a single class or some tech classes or vocational classes or something like that. That's a great way to start because you get a hands-on experience and you get immersed, you know instantly and it's kinda a great way to go. Another way is you know, like me I started at the bottom and that

could be humbling at times but sweeping the floor for a construction site. It could be a new construction site you know that's still a foot in the door.

SH: So are there any training facilities or programmes that you feel are adequately preparing those to enter the field.

JE: Well if I didn't say Savannah Tech (laughs).

SH: You don't have to say Savannah Tech. Yeah the next three questions are all about training and education offerings. Don't feel that you have to say Savannah Tech because I'm sitting across the table from you.

JE: This is what I will say we've hired numerous preservation...people with preservation degrees over the years. And all but one or two of them did not last more than a couple months maybe a year or two. And the reasoning is because they didn't have any hands-on training. They could be great schools and they could be great working in a museum and they know how preservation should work they just don't know how to do it. That kinda goes back to my philosophy of starting young and just starting in the field and experience is key. But, I'm definitely all for the trades schools. I think that's a great way to go. Any school with a real shop where you can get your hands dirty is a great way to go.

SH: Are there any misconceptions about the traditional crafts that people have?

JE: Yeah that you have to be old and have a beard to really be a part of it.

SH: Yeah but you've got a beard.

JE: Yeah I do, I do. I think that...none besides that I really know of except of, you know, there's the new school of people that think if you're not using a power tool you're doing it wrong. And that's the wrong way to go. Yeah for sure.

SH: Alright, the last two questions are all about educational offerings alright. Like I said, do not feel obligated to talk up Tech because I'm sitting right here.

JE: I won't.

SH: I know you won't. I won't expect you to. So, again going back to do you feel the education offerings are adequate to prepare apprentices entering the field?

JE: I think. Like I said the Tech schools are the best option. It's a great way to go. Do they teach you everything? No, but like I said you can't learn everything in the classroom no matter how well equipped your shop is, no matter what classes you take. You might get a general understanding of how something works but you can watch a video on YouTube about how to cut a board with a saw all day long but until you go and try it it's a completely different thing you know.

SH: Are there enough programs to supply the need?

JE: No I don't think there really are. There's very few actually. We could probably count on one hand the best in the country. Right?

SH: Unfortunately.

JE: So I would say that's a no.

SH: Those that do exist, and you've been to a couple of them now, do they have what they need in terms of shop space and trained instructors.

JE: The couple that I've been to they seem to. I guess the great thing is that you can be really adaptive you know. If you needed to teach a class outside you can and that's sometimes preferably. Some of my best timber framing classes we did all our work outside and you don't need to be in the shop for that. And a lot of time your tools can be minimal. A lot of times it's just a hammer and a tape and a pencil, really a pencil and a tape is all you need. So sure you can have an amazing shop with duplicates of every tool like Tech does, but you don't need those you know.

SH: You do if they keep dropping the damn chisels on concrete.

JE: That's why you should work outside.

SH: So what are the biggest advantages of the current educational offerings?

JE: The biggest advantages, and I'm just going back on its knowledge. If you know what a framing chisel is that's a step above you know a framer that's only worked with a big claw hammer and a nail gun before you know. If you know what a jack plane is, if you what all these tools are definitely gives you a foot ahead when you're starting out. It makes my job a lot easier. I don't have to show them how to use a tape you know. I don't have to show them how to sharpen chisels or use an epoxy or something like that. So it's definitely helpful for sure.

SH: So what are the biggest drawbacks?

JE: I think the biggest drawbacks unfortunately if they go through the school and get a degree they instantly feel that they're going to come into the field and make a ton of money and be really good at it and that's just not the case. Unfortunately. I wish it was. You can have a shiny degree hanging from your wall but you still might have to start out at \$10 an hour or \$12 an hour and that's unfortunately just part of our field and you probably will advance a lot faster because like I said you have those building blocks to move up from.

SH: So, are these programs sustainable?

JE: I think they are you know our buildings, they're not getting any newer you know. They're ageing every day, there's problems happening everyday so absolutely they're sustainable. As the public stays informed on how important are then I think they'll always be classes for sure.

SH: Well, this question I'm asking all the US participants. If you look at where we put our schools, where the training schools are; Edgecombe in Tarboro North Carolina, Belmont in St. Clairsville, Ohio, College of the Redwoods, which is now gone in Eureka California, the two schools, Colorado Mountain College and Lamar in Colorado.

JE: I know where you're going with this.

SH: Why are they in the middle of nowhere? Why don't we have one in New Orleans or New York City or San Francisco but we have them in tiny little towns.

JE: Well I think because that's where the history is. I mean sure there's tons of history in the big cities, but they don't have room for that, they don't have time for that it's too slow of a way of life you know. And it would be hard for me restoring you know a sash window in downtown New York City you know just looking at skyscrapers. Big metal and glass skyscrapers and I'm working on two-hundred-year-old wood you know. I really don't have a real reason why but you're right most of them are in the middle of nowhere and a lot of them are run by a bunch of hippies you know. Which isn't a bad thing I guess but it just seems to be the case you know. I don't know why, I really don't.

SH: So, what do you feel is the future of training in traditional crafts?

JE: I think I right now, like I said the big movement is going back to more traditional skills and methods it seems like there's a big surge in building a chest without power tools, you know Chris Ward's (laughs). You know using planes, jack planes and scrub planes rather than an electric planer you know I think, you know, a rip blade on a handsaw rather than a table saw you know, it seems like that is the direction. Even though its more work, I think it's more satisfying you know.

SH: So if I would say to you; John I want you to design a program or a system to train craftspeople, how would you set that up?

JE: How would I set that up? (Pause) That's I tough one. I don't know how I would set that up. I guess I would start someone with a broom you know. You start at the very beginning you know and I think I would have a required tool list. And that would be small you know it would be, historic preservation, if you looked at my tool belt, my main tools are a utility knife, five in one, a hammer, a tape, maybe a utility chisel, you know and a pair of pliers for pulling nails and that's it. And that's a great way to start. You know, I would have someone pulling, you know de-nailing a thousand board feet of flooring, you know. Because you learn so much from that how, you know, from the tongue and groove to the old nails to how to use a bench correctly you know that would be a great way to go (laughs).

SH: You wouldn't have many students after a while.

JE: No, you know after a couple hours your hands are so blistered but you know what that what it really is, you know it really is.

SH: So, would you require, in your ideal system, would you require an apprenticeship?

JE: Would I require it? Yeah I think it's a great way to go I mean, I think it's hard to do that without paying them obviously, but you know the word labourer and apprentice don't unfortunately go hand in hand and labourer is such negative connotations, but that's really what you are when you start out. You're a glorified labourer basically you know. That's where, you've got to look at it like that. I try not to use the word labourer with my guys because no one wants

to be called labourer but if you're one of those guys that's just going for a pay check, and this is the most important thing I try to tell all my guys, if you're here just for a pay check than you're not going to go anywhere. But if you're here to help with the project and to learn as much as you can and if your day consists of trying to finish goals, then you're going to go a lot farther than just getting your eight hours in.

SH: So, what skills do you feel need to be taught in these programs?

JE: Well besides just general carpentry and general masonry, so of the best ones are life lessons. Being respectful, showing up on time, being trustworthy, you know, being dependable.

Dependable is one of the biggest words that you don't see as much as you should and those are all kinda, you know you can be the best carpenter in the world but if you're not dependable then you're worthless. You really are. So, kinda all those things go together.

SH: Well, given the current education system, could your ideal program fit within that system?

JE: (Pause) I think it could better in a non-traditional school you know. It would probably fit better in a tech type school. I think a University setting, no I don't think it would work too well but you know the smaller mountain schools that we were talking about I think it works really well if those guys could get accredited in a way, you know some of them are, you know more recognition instead of having to do the traditional math and science and all these classes that, you know public speaking classes, that, some of those things are great, math definitely, but I think that structure is wrong for our industry. It just doesn't work very well.

SH: Great. So are there any existing programs out there that you feel are working their way or meeting the requirements for your ideal program?

JE: If Yestermorrow could get accredited. They're accredited with AIA, which is a big step I guess and they have like two-week intensives and stuff.

SH: They just signed something with University of Vermont.

JE: Yeah they've been doing that for a while. I think, what's the school in Boston that we were talking about?

SH: Bennett Street.

JE: Yeah Bennett Street. I think they have like a six-month intensive or something like that. You've got to pay impossible prices for it, you know, something like that, you know. Six months or a year, you know is a little more on par with real life you know. Sure going four years is a great way. It's just a lot harder I think. There's too many distractions. You're not getting enough hands on. You know the two-year tech stuff is much better much more the way I would try to go.

SH: Cool. Well, that's all I've got. Do you have anything to add in terms of your thoughts on training or craft itself?

JE: I think I've pretty much told you everything.

SH: I know you've got something else mulling around in your brain.

JE: No, I.... I think I got everything out.

SH: **Alright. Let me turn this off here.**

(End recording)

Total recording time: 38:51

Interview Form-Individual

Name: Michael Laurer _____

Current address: _____, Charleston South Carolina _____

Birthdate: _____ 1975 _____

Age: 39 _____

Occupation: Ornamental plasterer _____

Interview Date: 15/12/14 _____

Interview Location: Michael-Charleston Stephen-Savannah (Skype) _____

Interviewer: Stephen Hartley _____

Generation: 4-United States _____

Consent form signed: 2 December 2014 _____

Begin recording

Stephen Hartley (SH): Alright, well thanks for sitting down with me I appreciate it.

Michael Laurer (ML): Sure.

SH: Simeon and Patrick that if I had to talk to anyone about this, you would be the one to talk to.

ML: Oh wow.

SH: That's why I've been hounding you. So you can thank your professors for throwing you under the bus.

ML: Well Simeon was the only professor I had so.

SH: Well what I'm doing here is I'm actually looking at the way we approach heritage craft training in the US versus how it's done in the UK, to see if we can find a little bit of common ground, and ways to improve both systems. And as a graduate of a trade programme in the US you know how few there are and the problems that they face. So what I'd like to do is get your opinion on what you feel about the system, again being a recent graduate. And basically the whole thing is that there are ten questions, inside those questions are what we call probes, probes are there to kind of elicit a little more of a response from you. Some of the questions I might ask are actually, they seem pretty commonplace to you, to me, but I'm writing this for an audience who may not be very familiar with the trades.

ML: Okay.

SH: So that's basically it, nothing too painful I promise.

ML: Okay.

SH: Just a little caveat before we get started. I know you and I have never met, but Simeon may have said my name a few times, or that crazy Orton clan. I'm a teacher for a living, it's what I do. And sometimes some of the interviewers may hold back their opinions on what teachers do

or how we're doing it, please don't do that. I, not that I don't care, because I do, but it's not going to offend me in any way. I really need, honesty is the most important thing. We won't get anywhere if we just tap people on the head and tell them they're doing a good job.

ML: Right.

SH: If I'm not doing a good job I need to know about it, otherwise I'll just keep doing a bad job. So, does that make sense?

ML: That makes perfect sense.

SH: Awesome. Well before we get started I just need some basic information from you. Your current address?

ML: Home address is [REDACTED].

SH: Alright. That's in Charleston?

ML: Correct.

SH: 29?

ML: [REDACTED].

SH: Your birthdate?

ML: You really need that?

SH: Yeah it's all about the generational responses.

ML: [REDACTED]/75.

SH: Alright. And your occupation?

ML: Ornamental plasterer.

SH: Alright. Question number one. What is your profession, and can you describe what you do in that capacity?

ML: I am an ornamental and heritage plasterer. And heritage meaning basically restoration of historic plasterer. And I do everything from the design and fabrication of plaster, to the installation, repair and replication. Anything there is to do with plaster, I'm the guy that tries to do it. To the best of his ability (laughs).

SH: So you do lime or gypsum mainly?

ML: Both. I started off mainly with gypsum but the more I experienced lime the more I prefer lime plaster. It's just an incredible material.

SH: It is. When I started doing some plastering work it was always gypsum.

ML: Yeah.

SH: But once you learn lime, it an amazing material. It's great for doing cornices and things like that. It just gives you more time to work.

ML: It is when run in place, for what we call inside, its best to use a gauged lime plaster, but anything that's ornamental, its primarily gypsum based. There's not a whole lot of room for lime

in ornamental work. Just because the gypsum just seems a little more durable, it can hold together a lot better.

SH: Absolutely. So when did you begin practicing your profession?

ML: I began in 2007.

SH: 2007?

ML: That's when I started the programme. And with the programme you're responsible for doing internships. And during those internships they kind of rolled over and developed into side jobs as well. So as I was going through the programme I was practicing the craft on the side, so.

SH: Excellent. So, what company did you begin with what was your first internship?

ML: My first internship was with a company called Metters Construction in Charleston. And I was working on an old house in downtown Charleston, historic house on Legree Street. And, it was a rehab. They were, they essentially kind of gutted the entire thing, and I mean they kept as much historic plaster as possible, but they were updating it for modern use. Which, you can run into a lot of problems when you're trying to do that with an historic house because they weren't meant for the material, not the material but the, they were never intended to have air conditioning. They were never intended to have electricity and what not. So you obviously run into some problems in trying to modernise an old house. And so what we were to do was basically to consolidate all the plaster walls that were not coming down, and I'm actually doing a house very similar to that right now. So a lot of crack repair, a lot of whole repairs and missing chunks of plaster and whatnot. But it was primarily all flatwork. And flatwork meaning walls and ceilings. Not too sexy or appealing. Just (pause)

SH: Get the wall flat as possible.

ML: Exactly.

SH: So, you're now self-employed correct?

ML: I am.

SH: What led you to be self-employed?

ML: The desire not to leave my family. Of the internships that I've done and the people that I've spoken to in various companies, I learned that the profession of the plasterer, specifically an ornamental plasterer is not one where you're likely to stay in one place. You're mainly, or primarily traveling with a company to different parts of the United States or wherever. And I just had a son when I started the programme and after I finished the programme I had another son, so I had no desire to spend 200 or 300 days on the road and leave them behind, it was not, I wasn't going to do that. So it was out of necessity basically that I started my own company.

SH: Okay. So, what attracted you to plaster?

ML: (Pause). I had originally gone through an undergraduate programme, I graduated from the University of Dayton in 1997. And my degree was in visual communication, or graphic design. And

after I graduated from there I spent two years in a corporate environment and five years in a, working for the chamber of commerce, and another three years working in various companies, little design boutiques in Chicago. So I was an art director for about seven out of the ten years that I was practicing graphic design. And sitting behind a computer wasn't doing it for me. And I had a pretty strong art background and I didn't feel I was really utilising those skills to the best of my ability by sitting down at a computer. And I saw an article on the American College of the Building Arts and decided to check it out, went down there for an interview, fell in love with it, and I knew that plaster, specifically ornamental plaster, kind of fit within the realm of what I was looking to do. You know it was hands on, it was artistic, it was, there was some mechanics behind it, there was a little bit of engineering, all types of aspects to plastering that really made it appealing. And it just made sense.

SH: Fantastic. So what your favourite aspect of your profession?

ML: (Pause) I'm trying to think of the best way to describe it. I love sculpting. Doing the sculpture and design of the actual plaster and watching it come to fruition, but honestly I like problem solving. So it was finding something that looked simple that was actually complex and finding the best way to do it. And the most effective and cost efficient way of doing it. But it's finding unique ways of solving the problem. It's not always straightforward and cut and dry. I think that's what separates the technician from the craftsman or artisan. And being a technician, there's a set way of doing something, but by analysing the problem at hand you're able to come up with really bizarre ways of solving the problem. For instance in creating a fibrous piece and what I mean by fibrous piece is a piece that's not run in place, it's usually created in a shop and then installed, you have to create odd little mechanisms in order to make that happen that a lot of time are only one-offs. So it's not like you're creating something that's going to last forever. You're going to have a really bizarre, ugly looking tool that serves its purpose, but serves it extremely well, and come up with the exact output that you anticipated. I don't know if that makes sense.

SH: It does, it makes perfect sense. I do, my specialty is stained glass.

ML: Okay.

SH: And we're always making little tools that will fit under this piece of came and only this piece of came and at the end of the job you just go, and I have all these felting knives that are all different types of shapes and sizes and I don't know what the hell I'm going to use these for. So, what's you're least favourite aspect then?

ML: Dust. Honestly it's the nasty demolition portion of plaster. Because a lot of time you try and save, when you're working with the heritage plaster you're trying to save as much of the original as possible, but if its dead plaster, I mean you just can't save it, You can't reuse it if it's not adhering correctly, it's just beyond salvage, you have to remove it. And with doing that you run into all types of problems from lead, asbestos to just decades, centuries of dirt. Yeah that's one

thing that I just don't like about it. But I mean who does? Who actually says; oh, I love rolling around in the dirt and the dust.

SH: Not many. So, you talked a little bit about the American College of the Building Arts, could you explain the structure of that programme a little?

ML: The structure has changed dramatically since I've been through it. Mainly in that when I went through you declared what your trade was from the very beginning. Do I need to tell you what those six trades are, or can we just leave it at that?

SH: No, that's okay, I know what they are.

ML: Well basically now the stone carving, masonry and plaster are all trowel trades, and so they're kind of lumped together as the trowel trade programme. You don't really specify what you want to do until your junior or senior year. But when I went through it, you knew right from the get-go what you were going to do. So, when I first started in the plaster programme it was pretty fundamental material, but you didn't get a solid grasp of the other trowel trades which I kind of wish I had. But I don't regret it. I'm glad I went through the programme the way I did. But, it's a liberal arts education. Not only are you learning how to do something but you're learning why you're doing that and how it relates to the particular time period in which something was created. So if you're working on a piece of Gothic architecture or neo-gothic architecture, you're trying to figure out why something was created in that manner or why would they choose to create something the way they did. You can understand not only the design aspect but what lead to that. I know I'm not being clear.

SH: It makes complete sense to me.

ML: Yeah but it's not coming out of my mouth the way I want it to (laughs). (Pause) Yeah basically you learn more about the trade from an academic perspective than you would just approaching it from a technician's perspective.

SH: Awesome. Well you talked about being employed while you were in school. Did that affect your training at all?

ML: No.

SH: No?

ML: I mean, you spent a lot of time in the shop so there wasn't a whole lot of time to devote to outside work but when you did it was reassuring because you, it emphasised exactly what you were doing in the shop on a practical level.

SH: Fantastic. Well do you feel that your instructors were properly equipped both in physical plant, what they had in the shop, as well as their knowledge?

ML: No, not completely just because when I went through, the Plaster Professor, the full-time Plaster Professor decided to go back to Belgium. And in doing that he left a gaping hole in the plaster programme. I mean we had visiting instructors and visiting professors that came in a filled

the gaps where they could but you were lacking that core backbone of the programme that could lead you from, all the way through the year from the very beginning to the end and although you learned quite a bit from the visiting professor you didn't have that, they didn't know each other and what they were, how do I describe it? It wasn't cohesive. But, you get to learn different techniques from different countries as well. I mean I had an instructor that is still a mentor of mine from England, Jeff Orton, he came over and that was phenomenal. And to this day I still talk to him. He's an incredible plasterer and a really decent guy. So I learned the English method of plastering, but I also learned from a man named Thomas Lebiekke, he was from Germany, so we learned some German techniques as well. So that was a unique perspective to learn from the different countries but yeah I kind of missed that cohesive unit from one particular professor. And then towards to end, it was mainly self-taught. So, it wasn't until two years ago when Patrick came on board and I think he's filled that hole that the original professor left.

SH: Excellent. So would you encourage others to take the route of training that you took?

ML: Sure. Absolutely. I think it's (pause) I think if you have another degree there are other ways of going about learning the trade. I would always encourage others to go through the programme, it's a phenomenal programme, and I'm not going to talk bad about it in any way. But, I was, I already had an undergraduate degree, I was an older student so the mind-set was completely different from someone coming in straight out of high school or someone who hasn't had formal education in the past on a collegiate level. And I don't think it's necessary to take all of the classes involved if you have an undergraduate degree, but they do help, there's no question about it. I learned a lot more probably this time around than I had the first time I went to college but, yeah I would definitely recommend anyone that want to learn one of these historic trades to go through the programme.

SH: So, if you could pick one aspect of your training that was the best, what would that be?

ML: (Pause). Maybe the (pause) the historic and chemical nature of plaster. Knowing the, how it was done in the past. I mean doing the research and discovering just how they used to do it, and what made up the material, the chemical makeup of the material. Learning how it interacts with other material as well. So it's that type of thing that you get to explore through the training that I don't think you would if you had just worked myself with a plaster company, was an apprentice with a plaster company not having gone through the programme, I don't think I would have learned all that. I wouldn't have learned the history, the chemistry behind it. So I think that was pretty vital in the training.

SH: That being said, what do you think was the worst?

ML: The worst, I mean it's hard for me to say that because my experience was so different than what it is, what a student would experience going through the programme now. There is a full-

time professor there. The worst part of the programme was not having that full-time professor there.

SH: That makes it hard.

ML: Yeah. I mean Simeon was there. Simeon was basically the plastering instructor even though he really didn't know how to plaster. I mean he did, but he wasn't a plasterer. So, he provided a level of instruction that kind of filled the gap but not really.

SH: Well if you ask Simeon he'll tell you he's not a plasterer.

ML: (laughs) I'm sure.

SH: That's the first thing he'll say; I'm not a plasterer. Well, you're kind of new to the field in terms of the long term, but I have to ask the question anyway.

ML: Sure.

SH: Has the industry changed since you first began practicing?

ML: (Pause) No. I mean I don't see how it could. We're talking about a profession that has been around for eons. No, not a whole lot changes after five years.

SH: So, how do you feel about this growth of heritage craft or preservation trades subsection within the construction industry?

ML: I think its great (laughs) I don't know I think it's kind of a loaded question. I don't know anyone that would say; oh, it's horrible. It's great that people that people take pride in the heritage that we have and to find methods of preserving that. And it's, I think it's vital.

SH: It's funny that you said that. If you ask Jeff Orton what he feels about conservation, he becomes, if you ever want to get Jeff mad, this is how you do it. If you ask him what he feels about conservators, he goes insane.

ML: Right.

SH: It's just taking jobs from the poor old plasterers. These college kids they think they know everything.

ML: (Laughs) I do, the preservationists I have a, you can argue your way for or against anything from preservationist point of view, and I guess in that sense I don't like that. For example, the Federal building in Charleston. People can say; let's preserve it, let's hold onto it because it's historic and it demonstrates the 1950's era of architecture. And other people are like; to has nothing to do with Charleston it's just an ugly, ugly building, let's just get rid of it. So it's, yeah you can argue for or against it and still make a valid case. In that sense I don't care for preservation but wanting to strength or preserve heritage through our buildings, that's important. I just contradicted myself but.

SH: No, not at all. So, how do you feel about the future of your craft?

ML: (Pause) What do you mean exactly?

SH: Where do you see practitioners working are there enough practitioners?

ML: I think there will be a resurgence in the use of lime honestly. In that I think more people will need to be trained on how to properly use it. So hopefully I think that aspects of plastering will take off a little but more. I think architects are starting to realise the importance of ornamentation as well and what that can mean for a house. That's not to say that haven't in the past but being able to communicate a feeling through plastering ornamentation I think is becoming a little more accepted, so hopefully it will be used a little bit more, almost like it was in the past. I don't think it will ever be to the same degree as it was in the past, I don't see that happening. Different technologies will make it so people will find different way to replicate plaster cheaply, they'll do it in order to save money, but it won't be done right. They'll just, I don't know I've had people say to me, what about 3D printing, don't you think that will kind of eliminate your, the need for your services? I'm thinking, no, if someone wants to have a McMansion and decorate it with a bunch of crap that's been created by a computer, then they're going to do that. But if they want to do it right where it has some character and a little bit of flaws, natural flaws that look decent that actually help the piece rather than hurt it, then I think they'll continue to use traditional plaster. I think it will get better. Again, I don't think it will get to the point that it was in the past, but I think it will get better.

SH: So are those entering the field then, are they properly trained?

ML: (Pause). It depends on what avenue they take. It depends on how they got to where they are. If they started off with a drywall company and sort of tooled around with old plaster walls and said; hey I fixed this, and not knowing truly what they were doing then, no, they're not properly trained. They're employed by a company to do one thing and they've fiddled around with something else and called themselves a plasterer by fixing a hole then no. I don't know it's hard to say if people are being properly trained or not. They're certainly not being trained the way they used to be, but that's where the College is coming into play.

SH: So, do you ever train apprentices?

ML: I do. I've had interns from the College for the past two years during the summer and I try to utilise them whenever their schedule permits I'll try to use them on particular jobs. Yeah, I try to train them as much as I can. I'm still learning but I try to pass on as much knowledge as I can from the experience that I've had, but I don't consider myself a master of my craft in any means and I probably never will. I think there's a certain degree of modesty that you need to have in this journey of being a plasterer because you'll never going to learn everything.

SH: So, do you participate in any short course or academic training in terms of taking or teaching?

ML: Me myself?

SH: Yeah.

ML: I'll go to conferences when I can. I mean a lot of times, especially with starting my own company, if there's a job, I'm going to take the job rather than go to the conference just because I need the money and I need to build my client base, but I have taken classes since graduating. But they've been with programmes that kind of expanding the knowledge that I know. During my time I'd never experienced marbrino or tatilac or various decorative plaster veneers. Since graduating I've been able to learn those techniques and play with those materials.

SH: So are you an active member of any professional organisation relating to your craft?

ML: Building Limes Forum, National Trust, Historic Charleston Foundation. I was a part of the Institute for Classical Architecture, but I think I let my membership lapse on that. To say I'm an active member, that I participate in all their events, no. No I'm just a member right now. I think I will start to be more active in those particular organisations once I have a solid footing in my business.

SH: So do you think those organisations adequately address the needs of the professions?

ML: (Pause) Some of them do. I think with the Institute they're just now paying a little more attention to the craftsman rather than looking just at the architect. Then understand that someone actually has to build what the architect develops. And I think they're starting to understand that a little more. Don't quote me on that because I haven't been to one of their meetings in a while and I don't want to put my foot in my mouth. The others probably don't do as much as they could, but I don't know how to rectify that.

SH: So, if someone came up to you and said: Michael, I want to be a plasterer, but I don't know how to start. What would you tell them?

ML: Depending on their background and where they live. For example if they're still in high school I would recommend that they visit a plaster shop, talk to a plasterer to get a better idea of what it is exactly that they do. If they're in college, I would probably still steer them towards the American College of Building Arts. I mean if there, again if they're in high school I would do the same thing. I guess if they're post-graduate (pause), I would probably tell them to visit a plasterer, take a plasterer to lunch because we all need someone to buy us lunch (laughs). There's a lot more to it than what people may think. You know I've seen people go through the programme, I won't say what trade, thinking that they want to do that particular trade and they go through it and they realise; oh, maybe I'm not really qualified to do this. Or maybe this wasn't exactly what I thought it was. And so they complete the programme, but you never see them again, they never follow through with it. And I've seen a couple people go through the programme that aren't practicing that trade, but I would say just start off talking to a plasterer.

SH: Well, the last two questions and its only two questions left, are all about education so again, you know that caveat from before, don't hold back, like I said you're not going to offend

me. So do you feel that the current educational offerings are adequate to prepare apprentices to enter the field?

ML: (Pause) Not unless they go to the American College of Building Arts. No, I just don't know of any programme like it. You can be an apprentice for any type of company you want but if you're not getting the formal training, again you're learning how to be a technician.

SH: Yeah. So, this is interesting, and you may not know much about this, but if we look at the programmes, the preservation programmes that exist, or have existed in the states, we put them in places like Belmont in St. Clairsville, College of the Redwoods in Eureka, California, there's one in southern Oregon, there were two in Colorado in the middle of nowhere, and now there's one in Montana. The only two-year programme that's in a city is the one here in Savannah, and I grew up in Philadelphia and my neighbourhood in Philadelphia had more people in it than Savannah does. Why do you think that the schools start up in these tiny little areas, but there isn't a school in New Orleans or San Francisco or somewhere in the Northeast?

ML: (Pause) Maybe more of a financial reason for that. Maybe, I don't know, starting a programme takes some money and maybe developing that capital is harder to raise in a city. I don't know. Maybe people are more open to it in smaller communities, so there isn't as great of a risk. Does that make sense?

SH: Yeah, absolutely.

ML: Honestly, I don't know. I don't know why they wouldn't approach it in a larger city. I think New Orleans would be a great place to start a programme like that. (Pause). I never thought about it actually.

SH: Most people haven't. So what are the biggest advantages of the current educational offerings?

ML: Current disadvantages?

SH: Advantages and disadvantages.

ML: I know one disadvantage of the American College of the Building Arts. People just don't know about it. It's the marketing behind programmes like that, letting people know they are out there. That there is an avenue for people to pursue their idea of following one of these trades or maybe the disadvantage is the stigma behind being a tradesperson, being in construction, being in (pause). I don't know. I can't tell you how many clients that I've had that they, pretty well-off clients. And you go through the general contractor as a subcontractor, you just happen to meet the client, and the way they look at you as just another worker, another construction worker. You're not seen as a professional. A guess the disadvantage is that why would someone want to go through a programme in order to get the same respect as someone who hasn't gone through a programme. I don't know, I'm starting to lose my train of thought right now.

SH: So, are these programmes sustainable?

ML: I think so.

SH: Yeah?

ML: I think there's going to be a movement toward more, I think I've already seen it. My wife is a big knitter. And I've seen knitting in general kind of explode. Everyone and their sister, and I'm sorry to be sexist about it, but a majority of knitters out there are females. So wanting something that's handmade, something that's not created by a machine, I think people are wanting more of that, and I think that's carrying over into these trades as well. So yeah it's nice to have a mantelpiece that is cast and looks perfect in its own way, but you can tell by looking at it that it's a cast piece. But if you have something that's hand carved or developed by a plasterer you can tell the difference and I think people are starting to recognise that more. So I think those types of programmes are going to be a little more sustainable once people start realising that they could have things much better than what's mass produced.

SH: Great. So, last question, if I said to you Michael, money's no object, I want you to design me a programme or a system to train plasterers, how would you structure it?

ML: (Pause). Honestly a lot of the ways we did things at the American College of the Building Arts. The way that Jean Lemanure our former plastering professor who created the curriculum, and it started with the fundamentals. And building on to that, what is more marketable for the plasterer. And that sounds almost the opposite of what I've been saying. I apologise I'm starting to melt down.

SH: It's alright.

ML: (Pause). That's a heavy question. (Pause). I might have to get back to you on that. Honestly I don't know how I would do it. I would have to sit down and think about how I would create something that would meet the needs of both the builders out there and the plasterer himself or herself. I think when I went through the programme it was more about how do you become a plasterer not how do I become a marketable plasterer. (Pause). I apologise I don't have an answer for that.

SH: That's alright. I was going to say the last thing on here is given the current educational system could your ideal system operate, but let's change that up a little bit. Do you feel that, given the current educational system that ACBA or a programme like that that could operate under that system?

ML: (Pause) Say that again.

SH: Well, given the current education system that we have in the states, you have a programme like ACBA which is so unique, can that really work within the educational system that exists in the states?

ML: With the way things are going now (pause) I think so because it gives someone a different avenue in education. And it's not just about name recognition. For example I've been told several

times, I don't know if this is true or not, in Ivy league education you can still get the same level of education the only thing that you're not getting is the name and the contacts associated with that name. For example a Harvard degree will take you places just because of the name, not what you've learned from that education it's the fact of the connections you made. I think the price of education as well is, I think there are different... (Pause) Will it work, yeah, I think it will work. (Pause) Sorry I'm thinking about Common Core and stuff like that.

SH: Yeah Common Core scares me a little bit.

ML: Yeah and how that relates to the whole education system (pause). I'm not giving you a very good answer.

SH: You know what you actually are. There's no such thing as a bad answer because all of this matters.

ML: Well actually, I think of a programme like the Compagnie, I don't think a programme like that would work in the United States. Which I think is an incredible programme, I think it's very well established and I think it's an incredible programme, you now you start at a very early age and you're trained three months on, three months off, three months within a learning environment, three months with a company like doing an apprenticeship. You're doing that for what seven, eight years and I just don't think that would fly here in the United States because I think again the stigma is that which no you're not going to go through that much education just to learn to be a tradesperson.

SH: Yeah we just don't have that mind-set.

ML: Right.

SH: Well that's actually all the questions I have for you. Do you have anything you would like to add?

ML: I apologise for my mumbling, it's just at the end of the work day my mind is not straight.

SH: No, no it was incredibly helpful and I appreciate your time. I know how it is at the end of the day.

ML: Well if there's anything else I can do, if I can provide any more comments or if you have any more questions you would like to ask, just let me know.

SH: Fantastic. Thank you. Let me turn off this recorder real quick.

End recording

Total recording time

1.02.06

Interview Form-Individual

Name: Katherine Purcell _____

Current address: [REDACTED], Savannah, GA [REDACTED] United States _____

Birthdate: [REDACTED] 1987 _____

Age: 27 _____

Occupation: Maintenance Worker-Fort Pulaski National Monument National Park Service _____

Interview Date: 3 August 2014 _____

Interview Location: [REDACTED] Savannah, Georgia 31401 _____

Interviewer: Stephen Hartley _____

Generation: 4-United States _____

Consent Form Signed Date: 3 August 2014 _____

Begin Recording

Stephen Hartley (SH): Ok, First off. Current address?

Katherine Purcell (KP): Mailing or physical? Mailing address is [REDACTED], Savannah, Georgia [REDACTED].

SH: What was the zip code?

KP: [REDACTED] It's [REDACTED] Street

SH: Ok. Your birthdate?

KP: [REDACTED], 1987.

SH: Make you how old now?

KP: 27.

SH: 27 alright. Okay. So how this is going to work is there are ten questions. Inside those questions are what's called probes. Probes are designed for you to give a little bit more information.

KP: So it's not just a yes or no question?

SH: No there are not yes or no questions.

KP: No I'm just saying so you don't end up with them.

SH: Yeah.

KP: I don't think that would you doing any good in your research.

SH: No I don't think it would. So what going to happen is that we are going to ask questions and inside the probes some of the stuff I may ask you may seem sort of....

KP: This isn't smoker's gum isn't?

SH: No the smoker's gum is locked in the bathroom so I don't use it every day.

KP: Just making sure before I eat it.

SH: The questions are all about craft trades and things like that and sometimes I'll ask something that may seem obvious. The reason why I'm asking you is because I'm writing this for an audience that may not...

KP: You're addressing your audience I see.

SH: Right. So, first question is what is your profession and please describe what you do in that capacity?

KP: Well technically I am a maintenance worker for the National Park Service, but I'm starting to work on cultural resource management basically that's...yeah that's my title. What more do I... I do better when I have the questions in front of me to I can reference them.

SH: Yeah, we can't do that.

KP: Well why not though? Then you won't get a full answer. You're gonna be like uh that's half the question.

SH: What do you do in maintenance?

KP: In the maintenance department. It kind of depends. Like I said I'm still listed as a maintenance worker, but I've been basically doing small project compliance. Well it's not really compliance. Actually, I'm going up to Atlanta to get training for that. But anyways, it's more like documentation of small scale projects and material research and then establishing historic contexts with structures and then data capture and entry for the Park Service for the FMNS system. It's the facilities management system, it's the database that make the historic structures, well really it's not just historic structures, it's anything that maintenance is responsible for but historic structures data also gets put into that same system.

SH: Do you still do masonry work and carpentry work?

KP: Very little. Very, very little.

SH: Since when?

KP: Most of the time since I've been there. Which has been six and a half years.

SH: So when did you begin practicing?

KP: Practicing what?

SH: Preservation.

KP: Well I went to school for preservation and worked for the Coastal Heritage Society for about a year on their masonry team doing repointing and small-scale brick repair. Not rebuilding stuff just repairs and like...what am I trying to say here? Profiles and stuff like that like repairing and replacing stuff that's already existing. And I did that for about a year and I had a summer internship at the Park Service and did a good bit of repointing there as well and a lot of grounds care and that sort of thing so.

SH: Do you remember what year you started?

KP: My degree or working at CHS?

SH: Working.

KP: I think it was 2010.

SH: Okay. How old were you?

KP: No it couldn't have been 2010. How long ago was that? No, 2007.

SH: 2007.

KP: It would have been 2007 because I started working for the park in 2008.

SH: How old were you?

KP: How old was I in 2007 (laughs) 20. I would have been 20.

SH: Alright. So what attracted you to preservation?

KP: I like the idea of re-using things that already exist. There's no point in throwing away something...stuff that we can re-use and a lot of things that end up in landfills construction related so there's that aspect. The other thing is that I really like buildings. My minor is in Architectural History and quite frankly I found that more useful than my degree in Historic Preservation. So...

SH: So what's your favourite aspect of preservation. Or what you do?

KP: To be honest a lot of the research and archives for me right now. I really enjoy doing hands-on stuff but I just feel there's been a real lack of comprehensive training or the desire for that occur where I'm at so in the capacity that I work right now, I would say primarily doing research and archives, To me it's interesting because the site that I work at and I know it's not directly topic relevant but its contextual but the site that I work at its primarily resource is a 3rd system fort but the island that it's on and, well the island it had a lot of other things there as well it's not just the fort for forever and ever. You have the quarantine station that was here, the Coast Guard that was there, the CCC era, World War II there was a navy base there, so to me it's really just interesting to look at the history and stuff like that and see kind of how the site evolved and changed and what was there. And to why the decisions were made as to what to keep and get rid of others and was there before. To me that's probably the thing that I enjoy most about my job right now.

SH: What's your least favourite?

KD: Sitting in front of a fucking computer. Oh wait I'm kind of doing that now. No that's probably my least favourite, my least favourite thing right now. And part of that is my fault to be fair. I mean I could have pursued something and pushed something but to be honest I've never really had a lot of confidence in my abilities and it's been really hard to find people that have been good mentors to help segue into that and I've said with the Park Service because its secure and because I...(pause)

SH: Go on.

KD: I do generally enjoy doing research. My minor is in Architectural History so that's primarily what that is but, yeah, so.

SH: Did you ever consider doing anything else before you decided on preservation?

KD: Yep actually I did. The other two options that I had looked at were metals and jewelry. I actually did go to SCAD for two quarters to be a metal smith but as it turns out I'm allergic to copper dust, so that is just not going to pan out. That and a lot of the really small-scale stuff is really sedentary which I actually don't like. And then I, my second choice was marine biology but to be honest I can't work with environmental stuff because I would end up pissed off all the time. So I was like, oh preservation that would help save buildings and the planet etcetera, etcetera, and I like old buildings so maybe that's my next choice so.

SH: There you go.

KP: I could do that and not want to drink copiously when I get home.

SH: So did you attend a school programme?

KP: Yes I did.

SH: Which was?

KP: Which one are you talking about? Are you asking about my degree or otherwise?

SH: Well, both.

KP: Okay. Well my degree is from the Savannah College of Art and Design and it is a Bachelor's in Historic Preservation with a minor in Architectural History. Quite frankly the preservation degree is not worth the paper it was printed on and the architectural minor is what I should have majored in because their Architectural History Department is amazing. That is my formal degree. I also took classes at Savannah Tech off and on for what I think it was like two years? Two years as a non-degree seeking student. Basically after hours, well after work. After hours that sounds questionable. (Laughs). But anyway, after work I did that for two years. And then through the Park Service I was an attendee and graduate of their PAST programme and that is in the Park Service and it stands for Preservation And Skills Training. The only real flaw in that program is that it really is designed for people who already have a trade or a skill and they need preservation theory. It's not designed for people like me who know preservation theory and need help with the trades. Having said that though I think it's really a good step in the right direction. I would like to see that specific program be developed. I think it could be a real asset to the Park Service. But like I said it really wasn't, it's not geared towards, I mean it just wasn't, I mean I went to school for theory so I already knew a lot about that. But we did get to do a lot of hands on projects and that was good. I got to do some pretty cool things with that and that was probably the highlight. That was really awesome I really enjoyed it.

SH: So can you explain the structure of your SCAD programme?

KP: What exactly do you mean?

SH: How long was it, what kind of stuff did you learn?

KP: Ok. So basically curriculum and time. Basically it is a four-year bachelors program. The first two years are kinda more of an art foundation core where you have to take your regular academic core classes your math and sciences whatever and you also have your art foundation classes like 2D and 3D design, colour theory. But anyway, basically you have your academic foundation and then your art foundation then after that you spent the next two years doing your major and for our curriculum a lot of it was based on documentation and research and to be honest I really don't think it prepared us very well for the field.

SH: Were you employed while you were in school?

KP: Yes I worked full time and went to school part time for most of my academic career. Not all of it but most of it.

SH: How did that affect your education?

KP: I would say it negatively impacted it in some ways and it was a positive thing in others. I was one of the few students who had a job when I graduated and had any sort of field experience whatsoever and that was really good. But, it was, working full time and going to school is not conducive to spending as much time, committing as much time as you should to your studies. And to be honest I was a good student you know, I had good grades all the way through school. My projects were in time and everything but I don't feel like (pause) I don't know how to say it. I don't feel like I really got as much out of it as I would have had I not had to work.

SH: *inaudible*****

KP: Thanks from the peanut gallery. Yeah to an extent. It's not like I was out partying all the time either. I would get up at 6:30, go to work, work from 6:30 to 10:30, go to class, go home, sleep, get up at two, go into the lab, and work, just because it was quiet and nobody was there. It's not that I wasn't committed to getting an education but it was like I didn't really have an opportunity to do stuff that other students did whose parents paid for their education. They didn't have to work a summer job. They didn't have to have to worry about rent they didn't have to worry about car payments or insurance or yeah living expenses. They really could just pick up and go and do a summer internship for three months. And the sad thing is that a lot of them didn't which is kind of a waste. There are a lot of opportunities, things that I would love to do, but the reality is that I still have to pay my bills and quite frankly a lot of those internships don't give you the opportunity to do that. But not all of that is because I worked. I mean a lot of that is about choices I made. You know I don't have to have an apartment but it's cheaper to live than living on campus by a freaking quarter of the price. For what I paid for a meal plan for a year, that was my living expense outside of school for a year. And when you are looking at factors like that and the fact that I already had a good job with the government and that's steady, you know it's like, I could take the summer internship and come back and not have a job for, you know, the next nine

months out of the year and I had to pay for all my own school and stuff and I'm just not comfortable owing people oodles of money. So like I said there are some shortcomings that are mine, and there are some shortcomings that are not.

SH: So do you feel that your instructors were properly equipped both in knowledge and physical aspects?

KP: In some cases yes and in some cases no. I feel that some of my professors were not as on point as they should have been. I also feel that some of them were kind of abusing the system. They shall remain nameless. But when you are financially profiting from the work your students do and they get no returns from it I feel that that's a conflict of interest. The other thing is that I feel that some professors really did try to go the extra mile and they were not just available in office hours because they were required to but you could call them and say hey I have x project could you look at it and you know they would take the time to do that outside, you know their requirements and those sorts of things. It really was just hit or miss on who your professor was. I had a real issue though with the facilities because they redid the Poetter Hall, no it wasn't Poetter. Why am I thinking Poetter? Because it's the flagship building isn't it?

SH: Yeah.

KP: I'm sorry I misspoke on that one. They redid the preservation building. The Clarence Thomas Centre for Historic Preservation. And it had one lab. And no place for lumber storage. Absolutely no... we didn't have saws we didn't have joiners, we did have any of that stuff. Absolutely no real practical space in which to do anything other than documentation and lab analysis which is a huge failure on their part. In my opinion anyways. Some people would say not.

SH: So would you encourage others to take the training you took?

KP: No I would not. It's not. I would encourage people not to take the Historic Preservation degree that I took, but I would encourage people to take the Architectural History degree. My Architectural History Professors they really knew their stuff, they really were wonderful, and I kick myself in the pants repeatedly for not having finished that instead.

SH: What was the best aspect of your training?

KP: Which part? The architectural history, the stuff with the government or any of it?

SH: Any of it.

KP: Any of it? Again, the architectural history part of it. My professors were really, really good at, I mean they were just good professors. They knew their stuff and they were actually interested in their students and to be honest I can't brag enough about the Architectural History Department. But other than that, probably the PAST programme. It was really good for multiple reasons and then going to Savannah Tech was a good thing as well. So...it was nice to get a hands-on experience so that was a plus.

SH: Was the worst part then?

KP: All that wasted money. And I had scholarships so that should tell you something.

SH: Well. Has the industry changed since you first started in it?

KP: (Pause). From what I see of it, not so much. But I feel like I have a very limited view of that so I don't think that would...I don't think that would help you much with what you're pursuing. I don't if I can honestly give you an educated answer in that regard. Within the Park Service I see there are some parks that have better programs than others, but I have not seen a huge change in them really pursuing supporting the trades despite the fact that their, the whole point of their existence is to support the American legacy and preserve that and the trades themselves are part of the American legacy, yet they have no school to train historic tradesman. They have almost 400. I believe its 400 historic sites and no school to address that and to me that's a huge, huge flaw in the system as far as that aspect is concerned.

SH: What about the training centre in Williamsport or Frederick, excuse me?

KP: Yeah in Fredrick. They used to have an exhibits specialist programme, but it no longer exists. I know because I looked into it and if it does they don't take on new people. They say it's because of funding issues. The other problem they had about that programme was it was really good, it was one of those programmes that was really good in theory but the problem was they had problems with job placement. The idea was they would train people for three years and they would get a job somewhere else but the problem is...and I don't know all the details about that but the problem is, was having job placement after it was finished you know, there weren't any positions open for them or they liked it so good they stayed and those positions didn't open up for other people to come in. But like I said I don't understand all the nuances with that and you would probably need to talk to someone who was much more familiar with the programme than I am to get the little nuisance details of that.

SH: So how do you feel about the future of heritage crafts?

KP: I have mixed emotions about it. I mean I think that there are people that are truly are trying to, trying to change it, trying to figure out a way to make it work in a new and modern time that sort of thing. But, I don't know how that will go because I do know that there is support for that. People don't understand, and I hate to say that. That's really general and blanket. There are lots of people who do not understand quality versus quantity. And they don't understand that it takes time to do things well they're more interested in their turnaround time than they are that they have something that is going to last for the next hundred years and, or longer, and that is a problem with society that I don't see that changing anytime soon.

SH: Are there enough practitioners in the field?

KP: No. Absolutely not.

SH: No?

KP: Nope.

SH: Are those entering the field properly trained?

KP: I would say that's hit or miss because I know some people that they know what they're doing. Myself I didn't feel like I had a clue in hell.

SH: Are you confident that the crafts will survive in fifty or a hundred years?

KP: I think that they'll survive in small pockets where there's support for them but as a general thing? No. The only way I see that happening is that there's an apocalyptic. (Laughs) And people aren't dependent on the trades as freely as they once were.

SH: Within the Park Service, do you train apprentices?

KP: I think they do in some parks. One of the, I have an acquaintance who, is a mason in I think it was the Grand Canyon there for about twenty years and they would have new people that come out on their trail crews and stuff like that and I don't know if it was a necessarily formal apprenticeship but he, having been there for been a stone mason forever he, I guess it was kind of an informal system but in terms of a formal system I don't know if there is one. An apprenticeship programme. There's not one that I'm aware of.

SH: Do you participate in short course training?

KP: Please define. Please clarify.

SH: In terms of teaching or taking short course. Less than semesters.

KP: I... actually I don't think I have. I've taken a few things through work like I said I'm heading up to Atlanta next week for a like its Section 106 compliance stuff, so I've done things like that and also have done workshops with PTN and things like that but as far as through a university like what's it called ACBA, they have their like one-month class like come and do documentation that kind of thing or something like that no I haven't.

SH: What about academic training programmes?

KP: Other than my degree? No.

SH: Are you an active member of any professional organisation relating to your craft?

KP: I've been a member of the PTN for about four years? Yeah four years. Other than that, no.

SH: Do you have a role within that organisation?

KP: Not really. I've been a student for most of that time so besides helping out with the education committee, but that's not really in the large capacity whatsoever. To be honest, I am interested in it but it's one of these things that I wanted to see how things work before I jumped in with both feet.

SH: Do you feel PTN adequately addresses the needs of the profession?

KP: I think they try to but I think that there are some fundamental issues there. It's one of those things that's really good in theory but there's no, there's no.... I don't know how to say it. There's really no benefit for a business to be a part of the PTN other than because they feel like they should be. I mean there are networking stuff and I feel like they are trying to do things but the

other thing is that everyone is doing this in their spare time and while that speaks volumes about the commitment of those that are on the staff and making these things happen in their spare time I feel that there's a lot of undeveloped attention there, and there is kind of a lack of, it's a full time job for somebody, and I don't feel they can necessarily afford to have the personnel they need to really make a huge impact. But I do think that they have, they have tried to address things and to be honest they're one of the few organisations that have scholarships and stuff like that for students and that's a huge deal, but yeah, so. That's my response about them.

SH: Do you suggest others to practice heritage craft?

KP: Yes and no. I think there are definitely, it's just a really cool profession. I mean you see a lot of things you get to do a lot of things or at least there's potential to do those sorts of things. As far as the financial stability of it, I don't really, I mean it seems like there's a really large I guess I'd say learning curve and if you make it through the first few years that you feel like you know what you're doing and get embedded you know that sort of thing, it's seems like after that it's no, it's not smooth sailing, but it just seems like there's a lot, it seems like once you get past a point, there's a huge market for those sorts of things but there doesn't seem to, there's seems like a lot of disparity between the top of that and then the lower, like starting out and having been in the business forever.

SH: So if someone came to you and said...

KP: That wasn't at all articulate.

SH: No it made sense. It made sense.

KP: Once you get past that threshold you're golden but until then you're screwed.

SH: Well if someone came to you and said I'd really like to learn a traditional craft how would you tell them to approach their training?

KP: I would really encourage them to research different heritage trades and then pursue either internships or like for instance Neil Rippengale who works with the dry stack. Dry stack stone conservancy in Kentucky. Like if you're interested in that call him and hey man I'm really interested in this like I would like to work with you for like six months or a year whatever, and if you try it and it works out great then keep doing what you're doing and if not then maybe that's not for you and you should look at doing something else, a different trade or something entirely different. But I would really, really encourage more of a hands-on apprenticeship type of programme than I would an academic one. There's a time and a place for both, and one can't exist without the other. You can't have just pure training without some of the theory to back it up and you can't have science with no training and that's a huge flaw.

SH: Are there any training programmes that you feel are adequately preparing those for entering the field?

KP: I think that would probably be a question better suited for who knows more than I do.

SH: Right.

KP: Well I know a couple people here and there, but I don't have an all-encompassing, you know I don't know graduates from every trade school in the country so I could answer you but it would be a bullshit answer so what's the point.

SH: Are there any misconceptions about the crafts that people have?

KP: I think a lot of people go in expecting it to be something other than it is. I think maybe it's just because of where I went to school. I think a lot of people expected the programme to be more hands on and it wasn't. But I think there also a I would say a clique or whatever or a contingency of people who are not really interested in getting their hands dirty and that's fine you know it takes all kinds to make the world and you know someone has to do the paperwork and business aspects and applying for grants and that sort of thing and someone actually has to fix the building but, I think there was definitely.. People expected different things than out of it and I think whether or not they were satisfied depended on what they were expecting when they went in.

SH: So do you feel that current education offerings are adequate to prepare apprentices to enter the field?

KP: No, I do not.

SH: Are there enough programmes?

KP: No there are not.

SH: Okay.

KP: We have very few on the southeast and there are very few in the US as whole. They are not well integrated in a system which already exists, quite frankly some of the better ones I've seen are extremely cost prohibitive for students. If you want people to go into a field, you have to train them well and you have to make sure that they have jobs when they get out and its really more of an okay well you have to take it upon yourself and figure it out as you go and have that much faith in yourself that you're going to make it. And while that can be a really wonderful thing, because only the strong survive, it can also be a really detrimental thing because you don't have enough survivors.

SH: What's the biggest advantage of the current educational offerings?

KP: There isn't one.

SH: No?

KP: Well I mean, like if they're not adequately preparing people then they're nailed. So that's pretty much in and of itself. I mean I'm not saying that for every program. I'm not, I don't know enough about every program to say that but just as a general...sousing. You know there doesn't seem to be, it's not like anyone saying oh yeah there's this program that you do everything, like there not a paradigm I guess, of excellence.

SH: What's the biggest drawback then? Or what are the biggest drawbacks?

KP: The lack of comprehensive training and an insufficient job field. When you're starting out in a job you've got to be at least paying your bills and quite frankly like, I know a couple people that have gone and done trades stuff, but they still don't really make enough to compensate for their travel expenses, they don't make enough for their housing, that's kind of a big deal. And I'm not saying I'm the most brilliant person in the world but I'm smart enough, I could go back to school and get a different degree and make more money. And it's really you know there need to be something more solid to provide for trades and tradespeople than the love of the craft. The love of the craft is necessary and it is, you can't take that, I mean if you have a craftsman who does love what he does it's not going to work. You have to have a love and a passion for it but at the same time it also need to be feasible it doesn't need to be oh well I'll do this as a hobby because I can't afford to do this in real life. Not if you want them to survive.

SH: So, I'm asking this to all the US people.

KP: But not the British?

SH: Not the British because they don't know this answer. But I've got a different question for them.

KP: Oh right. I am curious about that one.

SH: If you look at the schools that we have that train craft education, or they do craft education, we have Belmont in Ohio we had College of the Redwoods in Eureka, California, Clatsop in southern Oregon...

KP: I was not familiar with that one.

SH: It's a brand new one.

KP: Oh that's why.

SH: There's one in Bozeman, Montana now, there were two in Colorado, in rural parts of Colorado, Edgcombe Community College...

KP: I thought Edgcombe had gone under.

SH: Not yet.

KP: Not yet?

SH: No. They're still on life support but there still there.

KP: I know enrolment was way down.

SH: They're all in these rural locations. In the middle of know where. But we don't have one in places like New Orleans or San Francisco, or New York City, Or D.C.

KP: Actually, yeah what you're saying is true but I would be curious to see, the Park Service recently opened up a trades based high school.

SH: Yeah Mather.

KP: Yeah I would be curious to see how that pans out.

SH: They just laid off all their instructors.

KP: Oh well there we go. I'm saying I would be interested to see how that pans out in a city but...

SH: Well they wanted was.

KP: That killed that one didn't it.

SH: No, no, no it's still going. But the idea was to have these students work with the Park Service people and they did they kept pushing for it and pushing for it actually the professors kept pushing for it and they finally did it one day with Steve Elkins actually, whose now up in New York.

KP: I don't know he was in New York.

SH: Yeah he got transferred out of Smokey up to New York. Working on Governor's Island. And they loved it so much that they said well we don't need these teachers and so they laid off all the teachers, but now they want someone with a master's degree, in preservation, that's trades based and also has a New York state teaching certificate.

KP: Yeah, they don't ask for much do they?

SH: Yeah good luck with that.

KP: And therein lies the problem you want all these things and yet there's no system to provide those.

SH: Yeah. Well why do you think they put them in these rural areas and not in cities.

KP: I think that this is going to sound really great. I think rural people have more respect for the trades. They're more directly linked, in a lot of ways they're more directly linked, to the environment they are dependent on. And maybe I'm biased. My grandfather was a mill worker, but his second job was running the family farm for a number of years and I routinely see people like that who just out of experience and, or out of their experience they have more respect for that's sort of thing and interest in that sort of thing. It's not saying there aren't people like that in the city, I just don't think it's as prevalent. The other thing is that there a lot for space in the country. Renting a studio to do large scale timber framing in New York City, one there would need to be a need for it, and two you can't be like oh yeah, I'm just going to rent this out and tinker with it from time to time. Whereas out in rural areas one thing you definitely got is space and a lot of times you have lot of extra time, so you can be like oh I'm just going to set this up in the barn and you know tinker with it here and there. And I think that's how a lot of these things have kind of...you know it's something you grandfather did and you got interested in it because you followed him around when you were little. And that's something. And I think that it's part of the reason that they're successful and that you see these things on more rural areas than you do in urban setting.

SH: So what do you feel is the future for heritage craft training?

KP: Money and apprenticeships baby. You really need, well not you in a literal sense but, in order for the trades to be successful and in order for them to go anywhere, you have to retain the

knowledge that exists. And there are a lot of people, older craftspeople that are dying off or retiring. And we've already lost a lot of that information and were about to lose a hellacious amount of someone doesn't follow these people and say; hey man how do you do that, teach me what you know. And learning all that back is going to be really, really difficult because they have so much knowledge from years, and years and year of practice. And if the trades are going to go anywhere one we need to tap into the resources that we still have, and the you need to prepare a younger generation to fill that void. And I really think the apprenticeships are a huge, they're a necessity. You know Malcom Gladwell says it takes ten thousand hours to be really good at something, how the hell are you ever supposed to be remotely decent at something if you don't spend a lot of time addressing it or of you don't spend enough time with it. You know when you do the same thing over and over and over again you can figure out what is the best way to do this, what's the most efficient way to do this, how did this work better than last time, why did that do better than last time, why did this fail and the last time it didn't, and the focus on the ten thousand hours, you really need that time if you're going to develop good tradesmen. The other thing is again with the jobs, there needs to be support for those entering the job market so that it's not as much of a struggle as it is seems to be now.

SH: OK. So last question for you. If I would say to you; Katie, money is no object, I want you to design a programme or a system to address craft education, how would you set it up?

KP: I might have to think on that one. Part of the rules I am allowed to have more than one interview (laughs). I'd have to think about that one. (Pause). If money was no object. I think a good way to start would be with firms that are already in existence or people that have the need for traditional trades. People that run, and it doesn't necessarily have to be large jobs but ones that are specific to the trades like the need will only come from the industry and supporting interested parties and guess you include students whatever, supporting them through an industry that already exists would be the best way to address it. I mean obviously there would need to be an educational component in it, you can't just throw people to the wolves, but at the same time if you have a firm that deals specifically with let's say architectural metalwork, saying hey; we'll give you a stipend of x number of dollars to cover or to help train these new employees and we expect to see them progress in this field through this grant or through this support that sort of thing, and part of the requirement is that would have to, in order to receive the funding they would have to train these people on how to do this sort of stuff, it's not just a pay no attention to the man behind the curtain kinda scenario of I know how to do this and I'm not telling you. You know because they're are such things as trade secrets, you don't want to give it all away, but at the same time I think doing that through the needs that already exist through industry would be the best. The other thing is that the people that run those jobs know they need the tradesmen. And to be real blunt supporting those sorts of things, in the motherland (laughs),

that sounds bad, but having traditional trades folks that are local are also really important. Yeah you can probably contract this stuff out of China to send you these molds and do all this stuff and I think people need to really start investing in their local tradesmen and not just those overseas.

SH: So, in your ideal programme, how long do you think a student should be in to learn this stuff?

KP: That one's kind of a hard one because everybody learns at different rates and I would say that it doesn't necessarily need to be a set, I mean there's an equilibrium point in this. I mean obviously you would need to spend some time in order to get the skills but I think once you get the skills and reach the benchmarks in order to move on to the next thing, I mean it would definitely require years or wouldn't just be a I'm just going to do this for two years and get out unless you're doing something very, very specific for two years or worked ridiculously intensely for two years, but I think that's kind of a grey area I don't think you can say yes it has to be three years or five years or seven or ten. I think perhaps benchmark skills and then number of hours committed to projects you know if you're really committed you can get it done in three years and you've put in how ever many hours are required then get you can move onto the next thing or certification or whatever, but if it takes you a little longer to reach those benchmarks skills or if it takes you a little more time to develop those skills, I mean you can't have one without the other there has to be a balance point between hours spent and developing those skills. So, again that was not that articulate, but you know what I mean.

SH: So would you require an apprenticeship within this system?

KP: Yes I would.

SH: Alright

KP: I think that is definitely something that is needed.

SH: So, given the current education system, could you're ideal system operate in that?

KP: That depends on the school system. We all know how interesting that can be. I depends on whether or not the school system wants it to work because my mother is a teacher and has been for nearly thirty years, my grandmother was a teacher more than thirty years and serves on the school board and was a principal so we're not really foreign, you know I don't have as much experience obviously. But I'm not foreign to schools systems and the differences between them, it depends on the school system, it depends on whether or not there is support from the outside, you know everyone wants to talk about oh were training for the future, were training for jobs, were training for jobs, but if they are not supportive of the jobs that trades do than they're not going to be supportive of them it depends on that but the other thing is industry tends to be needs based and if you established good jobs that pay well and are steady and that sort of thing you will see a lot more people going into the trades. Everyone always talks about retaining the best and the brightest you know the thing of it is that the best and the brightest are going to go

where the benefits are good and where it's something they love or they make good money. So if you can provide them those two things then you will get the best and the brightest and it will be a naturally competitive field.

SH: So are there any existing programs you feel are meeting your requirements or are on the right path for your ideal type program?

KP: Again I think that would be a better question for someone who is more familiar with more of the trades education programs than I am. I hear good things here and there about the ones that I know of and I also hear about things which don't work within those. I think that ACBA, which is the American College of the Building Arts in Charleston, I think they have a really good start towards that. I think one of the things that would be beneficial because they do a bunch of hands on stuff, but I think it would be beneficial for them to have more hours. More hours is what, and I mean I've heard that from students and professors that they need and want more hours in the studio, and they do some really cool stuff, and they're, I got to work with them at the PTN in Charleston in 2012, and you know the students and staff really were spot on. But it's just again with that particular system it's more...it's expensive to go to school there so funding and then also the availability of studio hours. Of course some of those students, they never sleep, there's only twenty-four hours in the day how are you really going to fit more in but I was much more impressed with their school.

SH: Alright. Well that's as actually all I have for you is there anything you want to add?

KP: Not really. I just hope I haven't come off as too mopey and....

SH: No trust me compared to some of the other ones, you're quite cheerful compared to some of the other ones.

KP: I think there's potential, it's just one of those things that society as a whole is going to have to look at and invest in. And if there's support you know and sometimes there has to be a perfect storm and you have to have a bunch of little things come together to make it work when other times it wouldn't have. It's nice to see that there is kind of a slight change in certain sectors of society that they're realising that these things are important and perhaps shouldn't be forgotten and that's just you kind of feel that you're rooting for the underdog, but you're still pulling for them you're like come on. So we'll see, but it is something that needs to happen and should happen but whether or not it will in the capacity that it needs to is the question. You'll always have the diehards who, god love them, will always be there through the end of time, but it's just the overarching support of what's needed from another source. If it's going to flourish. Like I said you'll always have the diehards that are tougher than everybody else but if you want it to have a wide following and to be successful at in a general sense to have the number of trades people you need, there's going to have to be some more support.

SH: Fantastic

KP: And that's it. That's a wrap.

SH: Thank you.

End recording

Total recording time 1.01.43