



ED MELL
1942

Honored as a Historymaker 2008
World Renowned Arizona Artist



The following is an oral history interview with Ed Mell (**EM**) conducted by Pam Stevenson (**PS**) for Historical League, Inc. and video-graphed by Manny Garcia (**MG**) on December 29, 2007, at Ed Mell's studio, Phoenix, Arizona.

*Transcripts for website edited by members of Historical League, Inc.
Original tapes are in the collection of the Arizona Heritage Center Archives, an Historical Society Museum, Tempe, Arizona.*

PS: I'd like you to give me your full name.

EM: My full name is Edmund Paul Mell, Jr.

PS: And, how do you spell it?

EM: E-D-M-U-N-D. Then Paul. Mell, M-E-L-L.

PS: Okay. And where were you born and when were you born?

EM: I was born September 17th, 1942, at Good Samaritan Hospital in Phoenix.

PS: Just for the record.

EM: Not even three blocks away.

PS: Okay. So, you're still close to home.

EM: Yes.

PS: Well, tell me, let's do a little background about your family. How did your family happen to be in



Phoenix?

EM: Well, uh, on my mother's side, she moved to Mesa, Arizona, when she was one year old with her father. Who had a ranch on Transmission Road, which is now University. Had a 40-acre ranch there with, supposedly, some of the first citrus in the Valley was on his ranch. He... he had cows and, uh, livestock. And pigs. That kind of thing. And, so...during the Depression, they did real good, too. My father...uh...and his name was Frank Sargent (sp?). That's my mother's maiden name. Is Sargent. On the other side, my, um, grandfather, um, his name was Karl Edgar Mellquisindact. And, he was a bit of a rebel in Minneapolis, I think. He, he was...I was told.....I probably shouldn't tell this. I, I was told he was kicked out of every Catholic school in Minneapolis. But, he went on to be head of the Mazda Light Bulb Division of General Electric. And, he ran that until he had tuberculosis. In 1923, he moved to Chandler to, to recuperate at the...head of General Electric's had a...had a winter home here. In Chandler. So, he recuperated here, and then, he sent for my, my grandmother, my dad, and his brother, Gordon Mell. My dad's name was Edmund Mell, too. Of course. And so, he moved out...they moved out. Came out on a train. And my dad said, as soon as he stepped off the train, he fell in love with Phoenix. And...he, he loved, he loved this town. So, that was in 1924.

PS: How old was your dad when he...

EM: He was 12.

And then, my parents met at ASU, which was Tempe Normal then. And, uh, and....that's kind of that part of the history.

PS: So, what was...what did your dad...what did your dad and mom do? If they went to ASU.

EM: Well, my mother was a schoolteacher. And, my father was a writer. Uh, he got a...he was....he had a lot of jobs, but...the first job he had, I think after the war was...he was editor of *The Arizona Beverage Journal*, which was a liquor trade magazine for Arizona. And, he did that many years. And then, he went on to be head of the Arizona Wholesale Beer and Liquor Association. He ran that. So.

PS: Let's go back a little bit. You mentioned your grandfather's name was...(can't understand name)

EM: Well, it's funny. His name was Karl Edgar Mellquisindact. And, and, when he moved to Arizona, he dropped the Catholic religion, and he changed his name to Frank Edward Mell. He didn't want any ethnic stigma, . And...his family was from Lichtenstein. He, he claimed to be German. As was my grandmother, Anna Mell, was German, also. She was from Berlin.

PS: So, that was when he changed it, was when he came to Arizona?

EM: Yes. The Mellquisindacts back in Minneapolis, were never too happy. I...every time I sign a



lithograph, I'm very happy. He made it short and sweet, and yet, it's a unique name. . Probably cause he made it up.

PS: He didn't entirely make it up. He shortened it.

EM: Yeah.

PS: So, what did he do then after he came out here?

EM: He came out here. He was, uh, he was treasurer of the Arizona Power Company, which is now APS. Or assistant treasurer. I'm not sure. I think it was assistant treasurer. But, he was a very smart man. He started buying land and stuff, and, a lot of... He bought, um...some... It was funny. There was... some men approached him in 1942 or 41, and said, we think there's oil in Paradise Valley. And, we're buying 180 acres, and we want you to buy 180 acres. And, we're going to drill for oil. Well, they didn't find anything. And so, my uncle....my grandfather ended up buying the other 180 acres, which is between 32nd and....excuse me....it's 32nd Street between Shea and Cactus. On the west side. So. I think he paid 35 and 75 dollars an acre for those two parcels. Well, it hit 200 and he was going to sell it. My grandmother said, you're not going to sell it. I'm going to build a house in the middle of that someday. Which she never did, but, obviously, it stayed in the family long enough that it helped everybody out. . There's still some, uh, leased land for shopping centers and stuff on...the family owns.

PS: Well, did the family finally sell it?

EM: Well, we still have 10 acres. A 10-acre shopping center that's under lease at 32nd and Shea. One north of it's five acres. And then, there's an...eight blank acres almost to Cactus that's still there.

PS: But, you've sold off other parts of it?

EM: Yeah. Well, a lot of it....Shadow Mountain High School is on part of the property. Um. There was a Womack (?) sub-division during the 60s that used up a lot of it.

PS: Did you ever go out there before?

EM: I learned to drive there. On a dirt road. Right at 32nd Street. . Or, at least my dad thought he was teaching me. I'd actually been practicing with my friends, but I had to act like I didn't know what I was doing.

PS: What was 32nd Street and Shea like when you were learning to drive?

EM: It was a dirt road and just all desert. It was, uh, nothing else out there.



PS: But, your family owned it, so you could drive around?

EM: Yeah. Well, there was a road. 32nd was a dirt road. Uh. It kind of...where Dreamy Draw is, there was a winding road that went up through there. But, I remember where I was learning to drive was.....when I was 16, which would have been 1958.

MG: So, when you would shoot by there, the two guys hunting for rabbits there were me and my dad.

EM: Oh, is that right. That's funny.

PS: Did you ever think that that land would be worth something some day?

EM: Well, , I was a kid, it never.... 7:59 I, I do know that my dad told me my grandfather said, some day the city's going to...expand out here. . And, in 1960 is when they did their first housing development. So. At least the...for shopping centers.

PS: How did you get there in the 50s?

EM: I think you went up through Sunnyslope and there was a road.... I know there was two ways. You could go up to Cactus and over to....I forget ...off 7th Street, I think.

MG: It was 7th Street....7th Avenue that we would go up. My dad would take me there.

EM: Now, there was a little town called Cactus, that was basically...was at Cactus and, gosh, what was that street? Somewhere I have a....it had a...it was like a little Western strip mall. If, if you call it that. It was all wooden. And, it had had a post office, and it had a, a little, little store. And a bar, I think. And, my dad was selling, um, turquoise buckles. Belt buckles that a guy made here in town. And, and he was selling them in...doing...running little ads. So, he had a...his post office in Cactus, cause it sounded very Western.

PS: Better than Phoenix.

EM: Yes.

PS: Wonder what ever happened to that little town.

EM: Oh, it just kind of disappeared. They tore it down. And, I don't even know what's there now.

MG: There was another one right off Camelback. Where they shot movies on....

EM: Oh, yeah. Cudia City. Yeah. Used to ride horses at the stables three.



PS: Where was that?

EM: That was at 40th Street and...just north of the canal. And it was, uh...*26 Men* was shot there, and some earlier stuff, too. And, they had a little stable there. And, you...and everything north of there was pretty.... There were a few houses out there. But, it was all desert. We used to ride out there...in grade school.

PS: Where would you ride to, from Camelback?

EM: Oh, you'd ride up kind of towards Camelback Mountain, and just out in the desert, . In those areas.

MG: It was way out there!

PS: Phoenix was a lot different when you were....

EM: Go to Echo Canyon around there.

PS: So, as you were growing up...how, how many brothers and sisters did you have?

EM: I have two brothers. A young...I have an older brother, Frank, who is, uh...was born in September of '38. And, a deceased brother, Lee, who was born in October of '49.

PS: So there was the three boys growing up.

EM: Three boys, yes.

PS: And you were in the middle.

EM: We were all in the arts. My older brother got the wheel rolling because he was interested in *Mad* Comics, and did that kind of cartooning and stuff. And, was very artistic. Influenced me. My first... Maybe I'm getting ahead of you here a little bit.

PS: Well, you say your dad was a writer. Was...did anybody...did your mom or dad do any art work?

EM: No, but they were kind of aware of it. . I mean, the house was...

My dad designed our house, which is....was sort of, uh, 40s modern, or modern (pronounced mo-derne), as they called it. , a red brick house, , a round window. And a...curved boards.

PS: Where was the house then?



EM: The house was on, uh...2110 E. Yale Street. Which is...just south of Virginia. In that part of town. Over on 21st.

And, we went to Mackin (sp?) School, grade school, there.

PS: Where did you go to high school?

EM: I went to North High. And, uh, struggled through it.

PS: I was going to ask if you were a good student.

EM: Uh...I was....I did okay in art. Although I did get kicked out of art class.

PS: That sounds like a good story. Tell me about that.

EM: Well, uh, we had a teacher that was really kind of boring, and showing a watercolor movies. And, just.... And, uh, ...you really want to hear this? I had a....there was a lamp that was mounted on the wall, and during the movie, I lowered it over this girl's head in front of me and turned it on. And, uh. So me and my friend go...cause he started laughing so hard. We got kicked out of class. Kicked out of art...it was...we were like gone! And, and, we're told we'd never amount to anything in art. Well, he went on to Art Center, also, and was a partner in a, in an ad agency that at one time was billing, billing 50-million a year. Back in the 80s. So. Obviously....I think he and I were the only two out of the class... I guess you've got to be a rebel to be an artist.

PS: Started young. What about your other, uh, classes? Did you do well in other...

EM: Uh, , I did okay. I found later I, that I was dyslexic and I think that was, , a factor in... I, I had a lot of trouble retaining stuff. I'd read it and I just couldn't hold onto it. And so, I think that made me a little rebellious, because school was a struggle. But, I always liked art. And, in my early days, when I was in high school, I wanted to be a car designer. That was my thing, . Loved cars. So, uh... So, uh, I..., so, I started applying...learning how to draw through that. And then, then I went to Phoenix College and took art classes there. And, my friend Mel Avret (sp?), who was the guy that got kicked out of class with me, he and I were in, in class together. A lot of classes together. And we were about of equal talent. And, uh, he said, I'm going to go to Art Center. In Los Angeles. As so, he ended up going, and he came back after a semester or two with his portfolio. And, all of a sudden, he was like 10 times better than me. So, I said, if he can do it, I think I could. . Cause I still didn't have a lot of artistic confidence. . It seemed to kind of, kind of tough. So. Anyway.

PS: Do you remember the earliest artistic things that you did? Did you do art as a, as a young boy?



EM: Yeah. I still have some of the drawings. I, uh...yeah. I like to draw a lot. And, I do remember the first time where I got this, uh, really creative... kind of, uh, e, electricity going through me. And, I...it was.....it was funny, cause I stayed home from school. I probably said I was sick, and I wasn't. And, I stayed home from school. And I started making these objects out of mud, and then painting them with poster paints. And I made my dad some ashtrays, which he once said...and a friend came in and... He had it on his desk and his friend came in and said, , that ashtray would make a guy quit smoking. But, uh, I, I remember...I still remember the excitement of it. And, I, I enjoyed that kind of rush. And, I think that's one of the things that, uh, you remember and you want to feel again.

PS: We like stories like that.

EM: Little texture.

PS: Describe these...the ashtrays.

EM: Well, they were....I think maybe one still exists. They were, basically, just round. What I did is, I just painted these designs on them, and made them out of mud. And, I made a box for my grandmother, and painted a flower on it, I remember. I'm sure they...they were never fired, so....I was only six years old, I think, when I made these. So. But, I...it's just one of those things that I remember the excitement of making something. ? And, I think that carries on, , through....when... , as an artist, it's...the enthusiasm has to be there for it to be any good.

PS: So, it started very young then.

EM: Yeah. I think it did. . And, being a car designer is really an art. So. In its own way. So.

PS: Especially when you're talking...this would be in the 50s when you were growing up.

EM: Yeah.

PS: Cars were a lot different back then.

EM: Well, yeah. In, in...and, ...in like, in the mid-50s, all of, all of a sudden automobile design took on a whole new level of creativity and, and expression, really, which hasn't been equaled since in many ways. Because...

MG: And, now, they, they all look the same to me, to be honest with you.

EM: Yeah, they can, they can, they can....there was just... It seemed like fun to me. Ironically, I went to Art Center which was the top automotive design school in the country. In the world, really. And so, a lot of my friends were, were learning that stuff. One of my roommates was a guy that went on to work for



Chrysler and stuff. But, um....so, I vicariously got to enjoy that. And, I still enjoy automotive design, and, and, uh, and that kind of thing. . I just don't do it.

PS: Where.. as a young boy, when that was...you said you were in high school when... Did you actually draw some automotive designs?

EM: Oh, I drew some, yeah. I...but, I wasn't really very good. I used to do little tempura paintings of my friends' cars, and sell them to them for like 10-bucks or something.

PS: Do you still have some of those?

EM: Yeah. A friend of mine has one, and I have one, um, that I did of my car.

PS: What kind of car?

EM: Corvair. Was my car at that time. (can't understand word) ...were a Model-31, Model A. I was reading *Hotrod Magazine*, so I don't think my dad wanted me to have much horsepower. So I had a 25-horsepower model. Then I had a 54 Buick. Super two-door, hard-top. Which was a..... lowered in the front. Kind of...to look good going down Central. Cruising Central. And, then I had a 62 Corvair, which I drove all through art school and stuff.

PS: So in high school, you had the, the Buick?

EM: I had that...yeah. That and...the Model A and the Buick.

PS: Well, you mentioned cruising Central. Talk about that. What was that like?

EM: Well, it was kind of the center of social activity in a lot of ways for Phoenix. . You'd cruise Central and you'd go to...there was a drive-in called (can't understand name) Drive-In, clear up north. Like at Camelback. And then there was Bob's Big Boy at Thomas. And so, that was kind of the path most guys took. And, you'd park in the car wash next door and, , walk...clean your cars and mess around with them. And talk cars. . That, that was kind of it.

MG: Did you come to Dick's (??) Drive-In over here? On McDowell?

EM: Uh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

MG: It's a Chinese restaurant now.

PS: So, so for you cruising Central was more about cars than girls?



EM: Well, it's....it's the whole thing. . Girls would...., there were more boys born after World War II than there were girls. There seemed to never be enough girls around.

PS: But there were plenty of cars.

EM: Plenty of cars.

PS: Did you ever like design futuristic cars?

EM: Oh, I did. I made some, , futile attempts at it.

PS: Have any of those still?

EM: I don't think I do. Other than my predict...I think I did one of those...predicting what a 58 Chevy would look like. I think I have that somewhere. I drew a lot of hotrods and that kind of thing, too.

MG: You, you don't still have the Model A, do you?

EM: No, but I had it up until about 10 years ago. But, I think I'm going to get another one, one of these days.

PS: So, sounds like you had a lot of things you were keeping busy. Did you have paying jobs as a boy?

EM: As a kid, I really got out of work the best I could. I really didn't want to work too... Uh. Did I work? I don't think I worked in high school at all. No. No.

PS: No, no paying jobs?

EM: Well, mowing lawns and that kind of thing. But, not going to a real job. No. My first job was working in an ad agency, called McCutcheon (sp?) Advertising, that was here in, uh, it was on Roosevelt. Yeah, it was on Roosevelt. And, uh, I was kind of a.....errand boy and clean-up guy. And, delivered art work and stuff to clients to approve and that kind of thing. And that, of course, spurred my interest in advertising, too.

PS: So, how old were you when you got that job?

EM: I think I was 18.

PS: So, you were out of high school.

EM: Right. Uh, huh.



PS: And, out of high school you say you went to Phoenix College?

EM: Yes, I went to Phoenix College.

PS: And, what were you going to study there?

EM: I studied....art was my major. . And, uh, took a lot of classes in lettering and design. Painting. And... remember, I brought my first oil painting home and, uh....to give my older brother the canvas, cause I thought it was terrible. And, my parents said, no, we want it. And, it's still hanging in their living room.

PS: And, what was it of?

EM: It was of a, an old town. With a...just an old town. It's, it's...I mean, it's quite primitive.

PS: But it was (can't understand rest)

EM: Yeah, pretty loose. More impressionistic, I would say.

PS: We hope to get a picture of that. So, that was your first oil painting?

EM: Yes.

PS: And that was in college?

EM: That was in junior college. Yes. Uh, huh.

PS: So, you were studying art. Did you have any idea of what you would do to make a living?

EM: Well, uh, advertising. I wanted to be an art director, was what I decided to do. And, and, which, basically, works with the writer to create the ads. . Comes up, comes...excuse me... You come up with the ideas. You come up with the concept for, uh, for a campaign. Um. And so, that's kind of, uh, that's what I wanted to do. But, the courses you took was.... You learned how to do lettering, hand lettering. You knew...learned illustration. You took drawing classes, life drawing. Fashion drawing. So, I went to New York....I basically got a degree in advertising, illustration, at, uh, Art Center College of Design at Los Angeles. And, when I was actually going to school I had a, a friend who was working at Young, Rubicon in New York, which was the second largest agency in the world then. And so, at 23, I got to go and be a summer student that worked in the agency. And, uh, it was really great, . I got to design an ad, and, , work with Push Pin Studios. Uh. On it and everything. So, it was like Big Time for a 23-year-old.

PS: Was that your first time to go to New York City?



EM: Yes. I drove back in my Corvair. Well, it's an eye-opener for sure. In 1965, New York was still kind of gritty. But, it was good. I remember, I'm driving into town, and, uh, I see this... I just get into where my friend lives...I finally figured out where he was. At 96th Street and Broadway. A woman runs across the street, screaming "I've just been stabbed!" True story. I go around the block and the medical people are there. And they've got her. And she'd been... ..I thought, gosh, what have... I never had a problem. But.

PS: But, you drove to New York City. People don't drive in New York.

EM: Well, , you did then when you didn't have any money. Plus, I wouldn't have a car there. Cause....did a lot of side trips to, , Boston, New England. And, uh..

PS: Where did you park your car?

EM: On the street. You just drove around till you found a spot. . So, it wasn't too bad. Plus, all, all the guys...none of the guys working there had cars. So, I was kind of...the guy that....hey, let's go somewhere.

PS: So that made you a popular guy!

EM: Their ticket out of town. For sure.

PS: Well, you mentioned you went to Los Angeles. Was that the first time you'd been to Los Angeles?

EM: I'd been there as a kid. My parents...we went to California a lot when I was a kid. Mostly San Diego, and Newport Beach. Corona Del Mar and that area.

PS: Where was this college?

EM: It's now in Pasadena, but then it was on 3rd Street and Highland. And, it was in an old girls' school, that turned...transformed into an art school in the late 40s. It was a wonderful school, . It just had a beautiful campus. And, it was always exciting. . I remember Walt Disney came to Art Center, cause some guy had some new idea about trains. And, Walt was big into trains. And, uh.....and then all the... But, they, they had a dress code, which meant hair and everything. And, in the mid-60s, , a lot of us really preferred to have our hair a little longer, but... looking back at it, it really didn't matter. But, it was...Because they had the three, the Big Three auto makers would come there. And, they would fund the school like a million dollars a piece a year. And, they would come there to pick their students. And, . So, Detroit was pretty straight-laced in those days.

PS: So, what was the dress code?



EM: Well, uh, you...well, I know a friend of mine got in trouble cause he never ironed his shirts. You couldn't have sideburns below a certain point. You couldn't have real long hair. . That was about it. Just, you couldn't like.....

PS: Did you wear blue jeans?

EM: Yes. Oh, yeah. Levis were fine.

PS: I can remember dressed up that didn't allow blue jeans.

EM: Oh, yeah. Well, there..., this was an art school. We weren't quite that bad.

PS: So, was your goal still...did you still want to work with the au, auto maker?

EM: No, I really had lost that interest in junior college, and so...on the...so advertising was my new, my new planned profession. . So, I went to New York....when I graduated, I went to New York, and I....got a job at Kenning (sp?) and Eckhart (sp?) Advertising. And there was a...one of the top agencies in the Pan Am Building. And, , it was, it was great. And, I was a junior art director there. And I worked on Helena Rib... Rubenstein, and Air France. And, I worked with a copywriter and we developed a campaign for Air France's cargo lines, which was called Pelican Airlines. And, I still have the illustrations I had a guy do for that here. But, uh, so their Air France...they had a, a guy bomb on a job, an illustrator. And, and so they said, well, Ed, we know you do illustrations. We want you to go home early. And, we need an illustration for this ad by....I think it was....like four o'clock the next day.

So, I went and worked all night on it. And...by the end of the.... But, I came in with it. They loved it. It was...they'd had a coupon with it, this whole campaign, and it was....they got more coupons than any of the other ads. So, it gave me a feeling I could really do advertising. And, I had a friend named Skip Andrews, who was also a friend from high school. Who was living in LA. After I went over there, he went over there. And, he and another guy started doing air brush illustration. And air brush was brand new then. This was like...well, it was used in the 30s, then it became passé, and then it came around again in the 60s. And so...I, I was getting a little tired of New York. And, I called him, I said, hey, I think I'm going to move back to LA. And he goes, no, it's dead here. He says, I'm coming to New York.

So, he came out, and we formed, uh, a studio, called Sagebrush Studios, which was basically a, um, an homage to Arizona. Being sagebrush. And, we started an air brush studio. And, there was only one other guy named Robert Grossman, a contemporary illustrator, using air brush. So, it was very fresh and, and, uh....art, art directors were all about...young guys about our age that we worked with mostly. So, it was an exciting time. We ended up doing...worked for *Esquire Magazine*. We did two covers for *National Lampoon*. In the early days as well as some stuff.....articles for them. And, a lot of advertising stuff.

Tang to TWA to VW. To..., I mean, we worked on a, a lot of major campaigns. So, it was an exciting time, ? But, I just started losing interest in it. It was...the dream still wasn't quite there. And, uh...



PS: What about the money that you made? What was your first job? What did they pay when you went to New York?

EM: Ten thousand, five hundred [a year.]

PS: That was a lot money back then.

EM: Well, it was. And, it was enough. It wasn't a lot by any means. But...It was funny. I was looking.... My brother Frank had already moved there, and was working as the...in advertising, too. And, uh, he lived in Brooklyn. I moved there. Stayed with him. And a, and a friend of mine...and he got...we were looking for a place to rent, and we looked everywhere. Well, this creative director at, at Kenning and Eckhart Advertising, said, she said, uh, I'm getting married. You might want to look at my apartment. So, we said, okay. Well, it ended up being on the 29th floor. We're at...like near, near the Lincoln Center. Twenty-ninth floor, top floor. With a terrace, two bedroom, two bath. Huge place. High ceilings. Four hundred a month. I mean, we could walk on the terrace...you could see the Hudson River. Watch the big liners come in. See the Statue of Liberty on a clear day. And, the whole...it was...I mean, I couldn't believe it. So. That was a great place to live. But, , I think high-rises are kind of hard on the psyche. I think you gotta be closer to the earth a little. So, after, a.....five years of that, we were ready to mo...or, I was ready to move on.

PS: What is it about high-rises that are hard?

EM: Well, I think you're not...I think it's natural to be closer to the land, and the dirt and the grass. And....I, I think being up there...after awhile it just seems kind of surreal. . I mean, it's beautiful, and, and I loved it. But, I was ready to...to leave. And, uh, I had a friend in 1970, uh...I moved there in, uh, 68. And, about 1970, a, a buddy of mine who I had met here, named John Cordellas (sp?)...he had a rock band. And, uh, we became buddies. And, he, he, uh, decided to get his teaching degree. And he called me. He said, I'm up, teaching up Hotevilla. On the Hopi Reservation. And he said, how would you like to come out and do a summer arts program? Like two and a half months. I said, if you can cover my rent, which is 400-dollars a month, I can, I, I'll work it out. So... And so, going from New York City to the Hopi Reservation for two and a half months is when the wheels started turning. And when I started sort of seeing what I thought I might want to do. It was still a little vague, and I wasn't sure. But, I kind of thought I could bring something new to the landscape. And, and, uh...so, that's what happened.

PS: What was it about the Hopi Reservation?

EM: Well, you had....there was such beauty here. Landscape. And just the people. The wide open spaces. The sense of freedom. Which..... We had a couple motorcycles. And in the afternoon we'd go out across the desert, and just.....explore. And, and the people were wonderful. And it was just... I think my social life in Hotevilla, a village of 200, was more interesting than my one in New York.



PS: What were you actually teaching?

EM: I taught art. And I was teaching...I remember one of the class...we taught kids during the day and adults in the evening. And, I remember, I started doing silk- screening. And I had two students. And, my friend John was doing ceramics, and he had 20. Well, these ladies made these curtains for their kitchen. And, they silk-screened these beautiful designs on them. The next class I had 10. They, they figured out what silk-screening was all about. And, uh, it was fun, cause we'd do silk screen during the day. And, and, a kid would finish one, and we'd be... They'd usually just take their shirt off, and we'd silk-screen it. And, pretty soon, there'd be a line of kids coming from nowhere. We were screening tee-shirts. By the end of the summer, they'd go to a, a dance, and there would be our tee-shirts everywhere.

PS: Did they do the designs, or did....

EM: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

PS: What kind of designs did they do?

EM: Well, they did, uh.... , a lot of kind of Hopi designs. . Basic designs that they would do. But, they'd...do words and stuff. And things for their school. And things like that, too. So, that was fun.

PS: But, it was the, the land up there that sort of inspired you?

EM: Oh, the land and the sky. . I mean, it, it's just so marvelous. And, John and I took side trips on the weekend. Go to Monument Valley. A lot of places, as a kid, I never went to. We could have stopped at, uh...Flagstaff and White Mountains were our sort of vacation trips. , a lot of that was dirt roads. In those days, too. So.

PS: How about the Grand Canyon? You said you'd been there before?

EM: Yes. I was at the Grand Canyon when I was a little kid. I remember going. I have a picture of it...the family, my dad.... The beauty of my dad's job was, he would go out and do stories. And, he would shoot two-and-a-quarter, black and white. And, uh, at the end of the day, if he'd of had to develop it, he'd have four or five shots, he'd shoot stuff that normally fathers wouldn't shoot. . So, he's got.....see...he just took these amazing pictures. , 1950, all of us laying on the floor watching TV. . Stuff like that that, in those days, I don't think fathers thought about shooting much. But, uh.....so, yeah. There's...I have a lot of good child...I'll have to round some up for you guys.

PS: I was just thinking, some of your pictures of canyons and things.

EM: Oh, yeah. Yeah.



PS: But, it is true. Most of your pictures focus on sky. So...

EM: Well, it's both. I did both. . Some of them are definitely more focused on sky. But, uh, the land, too.

PS: Sort of just discovered that? From the Hopi....

EM: Yeah. That's when I first started thinking about it. But, I... And then, I taught again. That was in 70. I taught again in 72. And then I moved back in 73. And, that's when I, uh, was driving.... My brother and I had rented a house in....and driving through the neighborhood...and this place was for rent. So. That's when I had...well, actually I had another studio. I was doing some air brush painting. Kind of holding on to my illustration strengths, . And, uh, did some kind of photo realist stuff. But, I quickly got tired of that, and wanted a more tactile, more inventive.... . I didn't want to be tied to a photograph.

PS: Was that a big decision? To leave New York, and, and....the center of advertising was in New York.

EM: , I was ready to go. I, I saw guys living the dream. It wasn't my dream. It, it was just..., I just missed the West. There, there's a frontier feeling here. It's, it's...a spirit that people have. And, you can kind of...I had the feeling you could do anything here. New York is kind of...I don't know. It just wasn't right. It, it...But, on the other hand, it was the greatest education I could ever have. The greatest museums to go to. Study paintings. And, , develop an attitude about what you want to do. and...My very first paintings were very minimal. Very modern. And, uh, they kind of...they just started evolving into having more involve..., more complexity to them.

PS: So, were you painting when you were in New York?

EM: No. No. This was after I came back.

PS: You didn't...

EM: I a lot of drawings and thinking, , but I didn't have a painting studio. And, really, a place to do it. And, and I was still making a living as an illustrator, which is almost a full-time job. So.

MG: Did you ever paint that view of the river from, from your 29th floor?

EM: I never did.

MG: Isn't that something? Now, that says a lot, I think,.

EM: Yeah.



MG: It didn't inspire you.

EM: Right. I used to look at the sunsets across New Jersey, and thing...now Arizona's back there somewhere.

PS: Did you...how did New York sunsets compare to Arizona sunsets?

EM: They don't compare. But, you get a little color on a bad pollution day.

MG: Once in awhile.

EM: Yeah.

PS: When did you come back to Arizona?

EM: January of 1973. I drove 900 miles the first day. By myself.

PS: Still with the Corvair?

EM: No, I had bought a, a Volvo Wagon. 72 Volvo Wagon.

PS: So, did you have a plan to come...what were you going to do when you got here?

EM: Well, I thought I would still do illustrations. I tried to hold onto my rep in New York, but, . In those days, you didn't have the computer. So, there was usually a time situation. You have to do a drawing; mail it to New York. Get approvals. Get it back. By the time...it just didn't happen. It went away very quickly. So, my brother and I...I'd messed around with doing stuff with glass a little in New York, and my brother and I started an etched glass business, called City Glass. And, we did Dr. Munchie's (sp?) in Scottsdale. We did.....I can't even remember. What we did. Avante's (sp?). We did all these...etched glass with design and stuff in it. And, we made a few bucks in it. . But, it still wasn't me. I, I just..... I just didn't like that. I wanted to get back to painting. So, I started experimenting. . And, somewhere buried deep in the studio is my first kind of land...it's horrible. But, it, it set in motion what I was going to do. And I, and I, I think my first one was...a couple were in acrylic. And, I realized that oil is really the master's medium. And, it's much more....well, it doesn't dry on...you move color. And the richness of color is so much better in oils. So. Early on, I started doing oils. But, I did my studies in pastel. Because I...um...because you had the ability to blend a lot. And, and to develop your color...my...for me to develop my color sense. Worked better. And then, at one point, I just put those aside. And now, all my studies...I can see on these shelves here...are all oils. .

PS: Do you always do a study?



EM: On anything of any size, I did. Yes. Definitely. And most of the stuff I did was kind of larger in those days. . This big. But some of....But now, I do a lot of studies. Uh. Sometimes I'll just grab a canvas and just start messing with it. See what happens. ? Let the happy accidents take you somewhere.

PS: But, you always do a kind of a small study? Rather than on canvas?

EM: Yeah, I do. Or, or small pieces. . I mean...and they may just...that may be it. . They may not get any...go any further than that. Some paintings are good...small, intimate pieces. Some are better...uh..., some of them cry to be a large scale. So.

PS: Do you remember when you made your first major sale? Or a piece of true art that wasn't just an illustration?

EM: Yeah, I do. I was working on this, and I met a woman named Elizabeth Burns. And, Elizabeth Burns was an art, uh, consultant in a, ...and she worked with, uh, placing art work. And there was a place...a new building called Scottsdale Financial Center. And, they needed....she had....I think she was going to do some tapestries, and then she saw my work, and she said, well, maybe I'll use you. And, uh, so she commissioned me to do four....three paintings...that were four foot wide by nine foot high. So...quite large. . And, I got 18-hundred dollars for those, which paid for my summer vacation. With my (can't understand word)...., part of the...I...I...part of the thing, I should mention is... What really kicked me into gear was, my wife had gotten pregnant. And, I realized, that I...it was time to turn, turn on the steam and get it going. . And, uh, , painting is a.....it doesn't....It's got a high fatality rate. So. I, uh, I was rolling the dice, and fortunately it worked out.

PS: Well, you haven't talked much about your personal life.

EM: Right.

PS: When did you meet your wife?

EM: Well, uh, when I moved back here, I, I met...Gail Peterson was her name, And, uh, we have two boys who are now 27 and 30. Uh. Taylor lives here in town. My oldest. My youngest, Carson, still lives in Los Angeles. And, just got a film in the Sundance Film Festival. A short. And, he's, he's a budding filmmaker, a writer. And, he's a very creative young man. And, Taylor's a painter. And, uh, he kind of more...he's spending more time with his career to make a living right now, but he's, he's a very good painter. In a whole new direction though.

PS: You got that one commission. The studies were four foot by nine foot?

EM: Yeah. In tall, vertical pieces. Which...



PS: What were they of first?

EM: They were three really modern landscapes. And, ironically, I met a man that had...actually, I know where two of them are. And one, one man was building a multi-million dollar home in North Scottsdale. And he designed his kitchen area around this painting, and invited us over. And I said, how much I got for that? I said, I got 600-bucks. He said, I paid more than that for it!

PS: Well, I was just thinking, most all of yours are horizontal. (can't hear rest)

EM: Oh, yeah, but I've done, I, I've done some other. I have a...I have a horizontal painting, almost that same scale. Three and a half by nine foot. And, uh, the Killens (sp?) Commons Hotel... Killen...Killen...what's it, West?

MG: West.

EM: Yeah. Killen West. In the bar.

PS: (can't understand)

EM: What's that, now?

PS: The History Maker Gala, I believe...

EM: Oh, is it really?

MG: (can't understand)...work that in.

EM: There's also an Ed Mell Suite. Along with a Bob Boze Bell Suite. A Barry Goldwater, uh, Presidential Suite.

PS: (can't understand) Arizona theme.

EM: Yeah. They....

PS: So, you, you had that, that commission. And, were you still doing illustration and commercial work?

EM: Sure. A little bit. . But, I...But, I started focusing on painting...there...in Phoenix, , the illustration business was pretty thin. So there was a lot of down time when you could develop something else. And so, I started painting a lot. And, uh, , it's amazing how quickly things got good in my career. First year I painted, I made three-thousand dollars more than my last year as an illustrator, which wasn't much. But. And then, my work had a real graphic strength that really appealed to art directors. So, way before I should



have, I was on the cover of *Southwest Art Magazine*. *American Artist Magazine*. A lot of other ones that I can't remember. But, it was a...So that kind of established my name pretty early on. And then, posters were the rage in the early 80s. And there was a poster company called Davis (can't understand name) out of Los Angeles that started picking up my work. And so, , a poster's a big beautiful image, with your name nice and big. So, that was really a....an unplanned good ad, advertising....

PS: Did you feel like you were at all selling out by putting your art on posters?

EM: Oh, no, not at all. I, I.....I kept them off, uh, matchbooks and napkins. And...

MG: Paper towels.

EM: Paper towels!

PS: One of the first Ed Mell's I have, is the "Goldwater's" poster.

EM: All right.

PS: Do you remember that one?

EM: I do.

PS: How did that come about?

EM: Well, ironically, I had been working with "Goldwater's" as an illustrator, and, and so, I had a friendship with these people. And, uh, one of the art directors' husband was a painter. We showed in the same gallery. And, and they'd, they had done the "Goldwater" posters with other artists. And so, she was aware of my work. Liked it. So that... Yeah, that was...that was kind of like great, because, , I had this poster signing and there was actually a line of people that wanted this...a signed poster. That was very nice.

PS: Arts....I guess....authors have books, book signings. Is that unusual for an artist to have book signings?

EM: Yeah, I think it is. I mean, at, at some of my..., I've done book signings, when my book came out. And stuff. But, uh.... Yeah. . I mean, it's usually a...I mean, "Goldwater's"....we went to Vegas and did it, too. I forget where... Tucson, I think.

PS: Because, for the record, "Goldwater's" was a department store.

EM: Right. In Scottsdale. It was the...where we started.



PS: Those in the future might not realize what “Goldwater’s”...

EM: That’s true. Started by Barry’s...great-grandfather, I think. Or, or grandfather.

MG: Grandfather.

EM: Yeah. Grandfather. Yeah.

PS: So, you actually were working with them. Doing some of their advertising work? (em – can’t understand) What they knew of you (em – can’t understand) first.

EM: Right, Right. Exactly. And, I met....one of, one of the guys I met when I was still doing illustration here, was a photographer named Tom Grisinski (sp?) (MG laughs) I had a feeling you’d know Tom.

MG: Oh.

PS: Tell me about him.

EM: And, Tom introduced me to Jerry Foster. Who was the helicopter pilot for, at the time, Channel 12. NBC affiliate. And, uh, in passing I said.....Jerry saw my work, and, in passing, I said, hey...boy, it would really be an amazing advantage to see the landscape from, from a helicopter.

And, he called me up about three weeks later, and said, we’re doing four days in Northern Arizona. Pack your bags. Well, I’d only been in a helicopter, and it was a big one, once. I remember walking out on that roof at Channel 12, and seeing this little thing sitting there. Which seemed so fragile and (can’t understand word) and getting there and flying with Tom...Tom and Jerry...which I called the Tom and Jerry Show. Uh. To.... My first day in the helicopter was..., of that size... was...landed in Sedona. On some rocks. And messed around there. Then, we took off. Refueled in Flag. Dropped down to Two Gray Hills Trading Post. Had breakfast. Oh, no, first we went...landed on top of San Francisco Peaks. On the top! In the snow. Dropped....then, then, then Two Gray Hills, and then, into the Grand Canyon. And, when we went into the Grand Canyon, you fell into the Grand Canyon.

MG: That was the way Jerry always got into the Grand Canyon.

EM: Yes.

PS: That was the days when they let you fly below the rim.

EM: Exactly. Exactly. Part of it...and he had, he had a friend who’s a helicopter pilot, named Andy Laird (sp?), who’s a doctor. And, he brought his helicopter, and part of the time, I flew with Andy, too. He was a great guy.



PS: So, what was the purpose of all....

EM: Well, they did a North Country television show. And, uh, they did it once a year. And we went to, uh...that.... That day ended up by, uh, going into the Canyon, and following the Colorado River all the way to Lake Powell through Marble Canyon. Then...so that was pretty exciting. Uh. To say the least. Then went out for a sunset shot at Lake Powell. So, I'm seeing all this amazing landscape from such amazing perspective, . And, I'm shooting a lot of reference, of course. Which is....the more, the longer I've had it, the more valuable it is to me. Just...Cause it was..... I remember, they had those Miller Life commercials, where the guy is living like this! And doing this stuff. . He's like... Here, we are! We live in a Miller High Life commercial. , land right at the hotel. And.... Feel like a king.

PS: Did that influence your art work?

EM: Very much so. First of all, you...after seeing the landscape that way, it's so invigorating. I mean, you've got adrenaline pumping through your veins. You come back...you're excited about it. And, you look at the reference you shot, and then, I would take that and re-invent it and put it on canvas. Yeah. It was very exciting. Very exciting.

PS: Do, do you have certain ones that you kind of think of as aerials?

EM: Most of them don't take on that aerial perspective. Because, , a lot of times, you're only flying 40 feet off, off the ground. So, the distance is... Yeah, it's been said that, in my book, though, that some of them have. , I did Three Sisters in Monument Valley. It has an aerial feel. And some of the pieces do. But, uh.....I mean. The influence seeped in there in the excitement of it all.

MG: That sunset over there? I photographed what looks like that sunset off of Second Mesa.

EM: Is that right?

MG: Yeah. And, and...with the clouds exactly that color. I...it's one of my favorite shots that I, that, that I've gotten. You don't see something like that very often.

EM: No.

MG: And that has the aerial perspective.

PS: Talk a little bit about, um, as you got involved in your paintings, did you get more involved in the community here, too?

EM: Did I...yeah. Well...I...let's see, I'm trying to think how to..., I, I... It was interesting. I was



showing at the Marilyn Butler Gallery in Scottsdale. A good little gallery, but it was small and their stars were Fritz Sholder and Earl Linderman. So, I, I was...I just kind of felt like people couldn't see my work much. . And, I was trying to raise these little boys. And, uh, so, I decided I was going to try to go to Elaine Horwitch Gallery. Well, Elaine never showed up to my studio. In the meantime, Suzanne Brown...I don't know how she found out, but she knew I was looking. And called me. And so, I went with her. And I was with her for 20 years. And, it was a great relationship. Their gallery just treated me great. And, ...and that's kind of where my career started to rise, was being with her. And, that exposure on Main Street. , a lot of people came through there and stuff. So.

PS: Well, you did great things for their gallery, too.

EM: Well, it was a mutual thing for sure. And, and then I got involved with, uh...yeah. Over the years, I've been involved with a lot of charities. Um. I'm trying to remember them all now. Free Arts. I'm still involved with doing stuff with them from time to time. Botanical Gardens. Uh. Why am I drawing a blank?

PS: Talk about...what is Free Arts? What do you do?

EM: Well, Free Arts is, is...it's basically providing art, some kind of art education for, uh, children that are...are taken away from their homes and are living in a, in a group home. And, my present wife, Rosemary Stremmel (sp?) is one of the teachers for that, too. So, uh.....just a coincidence. But, uh....let's see. You....you...oh, we're getting back to charities.

PS: Botanical Garden. What did you do?

EM: Oh, well I do....I've done about four years where I do a, a large painting. They auction it off. And it's...it benefits that. And, uh, New Mom, New Day, which is a (clears throat)...excuse me. Is a, uh, a charity that, that takes families off the streets. Homeless families. And provides them with lodging, food, education. Helps them get jobs. It's the most amazing charity. And, it's down in an old motel, down on Van Buren. And, they just bought two more they're renovating. And, it's really growing. And it's, and it's really helping a lot of people help themselves, which is so important. A lot of people end up there....kind of just...how did I get here, ? Circumstance.

MG: People losing their jobs?

EM: Sure.

MG: Or, usually it's a health reason. , just go to the hospital one time. You're broke.

EM: Oh, yeah. The father all of a sudden has a disability or something. I mean... So. That is to me, a really good charity. And then, I...the Phoenix Art Museum has the Copperstate 1000, which is a, a vintage car



rally that I've been involved from the beginning. Before Jim Ballinger (sp?) knew I had an old car, even. He said, hey, would you do a (can't understand word) I said, yeah. I said, I have an old Corvette. Can I take it? He goes, yeah, we can work something out. So. I'm sort of their resident artist. I have been for 17, 18 years. Whatever it's been.

PS: Combines two of your loves.

EM: Exactly. Exactly. So.

PS: Let's talk some more about your art work and how it evolved.

EM: Were we... Well, just the early years. Kind of developing it. So, I, I think I mentioned I was...I went with Suzanne Brown Gallery. And...After being in Suzanne Brown for...just a couple of years, uh, I was approached by Ray Dewey of, uh, Dewey Caffrey (sp?) Galleries of Santa Fe. And so, I started showing in Santa Fe. Which has now evolved into Owens-Dewey Gallery, which I'm still with after over 20 years. So, that was a nice expanse, as to, to find a, another market, which was vital in the summer. Which this one was dead in the summer here. So. That helped my career quite a bit. And, uh... At a certain point, I just kind of started to feel a little bored with landscapes. And, I wanted to change my palette and perspective, and everything, all at once. So, I started doing flowers. And, that seemed to take off immediately. And, it kind of grew into...uh...it kind of like doubled my audience, .

PS: Why did you choose flowers?

EM: 1:48Well, I felt then...another...I chose landscape because, there's infinite color...experimentation you can do with it. Uh, , you got all...And, and, and flowers. So, it's experimenting with shape and color, is really what I enjoy painting. Finding something new within those bounds. And, I think you can find that with flowers, as well as you can with landscapes. So, , nature itself is, , always kind of appealed to a great many of the old painters. And, and it still does to me. . I mean, I was in New York, and...the conceptual art movement was in full swing. And, what I stated doing was almost a reaction against that. Cause, I, I get tired of dirt...piles of dirt on the floor...as art. And, maybe it is. It just didn't work for me. I kind of held to the more of the, uh..., the old standard of, um, a beautiful object. Really. So.

PS: Seems like your work has gone through some phases though of being almost...pretty realistic and then more abstract.

EM: Yeah. It, it started out very...kind of minimal. And, it evolved. It got...slowly became more complex. And, it evolved into a more natural look. It still has, uh, kind of an edge to it. But, it's not...anything like my earlier paintings. And, at a certain point, I decided to re-visit my older, more angular works, with a little more of an abstracted feel to them. And, uh... So, , I'm one of the few artists who can paint in two styles, and everybody's okay with it. . It's kind of breaking the rules. But... I, uh...if I get..... The abstracted stuff is using more of a, a kind of a.... It's sort of like automatic writing.



Where, I do these studies, and I don't know where they're taking me. And, I try to break my own rules and see what happens. But, , that uses one part of the brain, and the other part of it is, I like going back to something that's very...figure it out in my mind...and very, kind of academic almost in the way I paint. And, and the two really are a nice balance for me. And, I like going back and forth. And, it keeps me... As soon as I get bored over here, I can go back here. As soon as I get bored with landscapes, I can do...flowers. Or, figurative stuff. So.

PS: One thing they seem to have in common though is that sense of, of light. Of, uh, the sun coming through the clouds....(em – Right.) What don't you talk about that?

EM: Well, it's a...that's a... Color is a very hard thing to talk about, because it's hard....it's.... A lot of it's very intuitive. The more that you study the landscape, or photograph some of it. Or, or, or flowers. The subtleties of tones, , are something that is so exciting when you get it working right. And, and, uh... , I had a friend over here one day, and he said, so, how did you mix that color? He watched me mix a color, . And I said, I don't know, . I mixed it. It looked like it needed to be a little cooler, so I added a little blue in it. . Or I, warmed, warmed it up with some.....and, it, it becomes intuitive like, like playing guitar does for a guitarist. Uh. Or...any other art thing. But, uh....To me, it's trying to find that illuminating elements...is one of the exciting parts. I like muted things as well. I like..., I've done night paintings. Uh. I've done very soft things. I've done very electric, , things which are..., some of the stuff I learned at art school. A lot of the stuff I just figured out on my own. I studied the Masters, really. And, there's a lot of great painters that have painted the West. . That I studied. . From Maynard Dixon to the Taos Ten and the, the New Mexico Modernist painters (can't understand last word). There's lot of great influence.

PS: In your book, you also...I don't see too many of them here...but, you have pictures with horses and cows and....really mores like the Western...What period did you do those?

EM: Well, that's a good question. 6:43 I started those in the late 80s, and I still do them occasionally. I mean, I...maybe with a little different slant. Little less realistic now. But...I go back and forth. . I might paint a realistic one tomorrow.

PS: Well, what made you start doing the, the horses?

EM: I, , I just....they're part of the land. And, uh, I just felt that they were something that I wanted to bring to that subject matter. . So, I just started doing it. For no other reason than for the fun of it.

PS: Did you ever do things just because you thought they would sell?

EM: Well....I mean, it's.... The, the painting world is, uh..., I, I, I... A lot of my contemporaries felt that anything you put in a gallery that sold was a sell-out. But, I think a sell-out is really when there's a lot of red dots in the gallery. No. I'm just kidding! But, I...I read Andy Warhol's book. And he said, , first I was an artist, then I was a business artist. To, to stay in that profession, you have to make a living. And, in



my case, it was to also feed my children. And, ... So. And, it just so happened that what I loved to paint has a very, it's very salable work, . I love the beauty of things, and people like that. I like bringing something new to it. I, uh... To say I haven't...of course, I've done paintings. to sell. . But, it's, it's not like a compromise. It's just...cause it's the stuff I love to do anyway.

MG: One of the, the things that strikes me. In, in your landscapes, what I always see is texture. And I really....it almost looks like I want to touch it. But, there's....that it's three dimensional. Do you work at that? Or, is that something important to you?

EM: Uh, yeah, sure. I do. I mean, , especially with the land, you want it to have a, have a texture to it. As it does. , whether it's velvety, or...I mean, I, I, I eliminate a lot of, uh, unnecessary information, I think, in my work. Uh. Trying to get down in the raw bones of it. Uh. Sort of what you remember in your mind, almost rather than what your eye really would see. Sometimes. .

But, uh, art is an evolving thing. And... In 1985 I did my first sculpture. And I did...uh...I think I did about four or five of them. And I got that....the large piece at Scottsdale...uh...in Scottsdale, at Main and Marshall Way. In 93 I did that piece. And, it was...I felt very fortunate to get it. It was....it was really fun to do it. I cast all my stuff there, sort of bronze out (???) in Tempe. I've worked with them from day one. And, ...it's been a really good thing. I'm about ready to build a new, uh, sculpture studio. A separate building that's just, uh, down the block here. That I bought. And, I'm going to build a studio in the back. Maybe a place to put a couple of old cars.

PS: Those are sculptures, aren't they?

EM: They are. They definitely are. I mean, did you see "Curves of Steel" at the Phoenix Art Museum? I mean, yeah. Absolutely.

PS: That was an amazing exhibit.

EM: It really was. And, ...it's really... One of my collections is, uh, is vintage streamline touring cars and trucks. And, uh, I, I thought it have been a nice thing... We, we...I talked to Jim. We talked about putting in the Children's Museum. But, it never happened.

PS: So what kind of sculpture will you be doing?

EM: Well, it'll be a larger sculpture studio. And those don't happen until somebody tells me they want a large one. But, I...I'll be....I still do the smaller, kind of table top size pieces. And, uh... , once you build a big studio, you're sort of committed to do something big. . But, , just the cost of doing a piece is really a lot of money, so you gotta have somebody that wants to buy it.

PS: So, what is it that makes you want to do sculpture? As well as painting?



EM: , I, I just...have always enjoyed sculpture. And....I... My first one....I thought, well, I'll buy some clay. I don't know if I can do this. I don't know if it'll be any good. But, I'll give it a shot. And, the beauty of clay is, it's forever forgiving. . It's not like marble. You can just play with it until it's right. And, uh... So, I, I.....Cause that's probably the only way I could do sculpture, I think. Because I'm always playing with angles and trying different things to make it work.

But, I find it very...uh....It's another discipline. When you're tired of painting on a two-dimensional service...surface....it's really nice to just, , grab a piece of clay and see what you can make of it.

PS: The ones I've seen have a real Western feel.

EM: Yeah. I've used mostly Western subject matter, . Figurative things. Everything is. Inanimate objects don't work too good in, in metal. I mean, some guys do!

PS: (can't understand)

EM: Well, I, I haven't....I've done a few pieces that have pushed that abstraction. And, uh, those...it's an area I just wanted to, uh, spend more time looking at. . See what I can find in it.

PS: One thing I see in all your paintings...we talk about the light. But, you can always tell where the sun is coming from. And, and the flowers have that quality.

EM: Well, I think flowers...I think one of the fascinating things is the translucence of it. And, and the light coming through them is what was...something I have enjoyed playing with. And, see if I can make it work.

PS: You were showing us your book. How did that book come about?

EM: It was an interesting story. There was...my....the guy that wrote Maynard Dix....he's...well, Don Haggerty is his name. Don Haggerty is a, is a writer and he's done...uh...he did the Maynard Dixon book. And, he became a friend of mine. He called me up right after he saw my first article in *Southwest Art*, which was in 81. He said, you heard of Maynard Dixon? I said, yeah. And so, we became close friends over the years. And, he said, I think it's time to do a book. And, I said, okay. So, he had a publisher who was interested in doing it. And, it was kind of the plans. But, it just never happened.

In the meantime, I received a...Dave Channing (sp?) of Northern Publishing in, uh, Flagstaff had sent me a sketchbook if Maynard Dixon. He said, hey, I found this. Thought you might like it. In the archives from 1968. And, uh, sent it to me. And, uh, he, uh...I...I called and thanked him. He says, how's your book deal going? I said, well, it's kind of not happening yet. I said, are you interested? He goes, oh, yeah! I'm interested. So, uh, Don flew over and we met at my house in Prescott. And, just cut a deal that day. And, and, . And so, in opening the book, Scottsdale Center for the Arts wanted to, uh....well, I talked to Robert



Knight. I said, I said, I got this book coming out. Would you be interested in a show? He goes, yeah. So, we did a... It was really fortunate. It was the height of the season. I think it opened in, in February or something. It was to be a two-month show they did for me there. The artist that was scheduled next, uh, they, they... It didn't work out, so they...uh.... I was there for four months. So, it was absolutely wonderful, . And, great people to work with. And...and, so...it's nice. . Robert's now running the Tucson Museum of Art. And, we're talking about maybe doing something down there.

PS: The book looks like it does more than just talk about your photography though. Does it talk about your whole life?

EM: You mean my painting? Yes. Yeah. I haven't read it. Believe it...it's 10 years old. I only read the transcript of it. I've never read...sat down and read the book since. It's kind of hard reading about yourself. So, I forget what the hell's in there. Don will be mad. I better read it again.

PS: You better not tell him.

EM: People will quote me. I said, I said that?

PS: Well, let's kind of....we'll wrap up on the tape part of it. I've got some sort of general questions I try to ask everybody. Talk a little bit about how you've seen Arizona change over your lifetime.

EM: Well, anybody's that been around as long as me in Arizona, has seen an amazing change. , growing up here, it was a small town. By the 60s, , you had Sun City. Things were starting to happen. But, it still felt like kind of a Podunk place. I hate to say it. But, I couldn't wait to get out of here. But it is.....in 10 years, returning in the 70s, it was much more vital Much...., a lot more interesting things happening. And now it's an explosion. I love looking at downtown. I love the energy that's happening. I like those positive things about it. The urban sprawl, I hate to see the desert go away. That's the sad part about it. . And, I think, of course, some day we're going to have a real water problem if somebody hasn't put the brakes on something. But, uh, I love it. . I love seeing downtown bloom again. Cause it was kind of a... , when I first moved back, I was working with a guy that had a penthouse on top of the San Carlos Hotel. You remember Wally Roberts? And, uh, that was like my little piece of, of New York. It was kind of nice, but, uh... It's....I just like seeing the vitality of downtown happening. I like... I, I think the light rail's cool. I think all those things, even though they're a major inconvenience for people, will bring a new energy here that's.... Don't you?

PS: And, you kept your studio here. Almost downtown.

EM: Oh, yes. Yeah. And, and I love being here. It's just out of the, the rush of it all. Being in a, in a little neighborhood close to downtown's great. .

PS: Looking back at, at the things that you've done, is there anything that you want to talk about that



you're proudest of?

EM: Well, uh, I did a painting for Kartchner Caverns, and, uh, that was an interesting story, too. I was on a vintage car run, and we were down in Patagonia. And, uh...and one of the guys that worked on the rallies had...was in Kartchner Caverns with, uh, Ken Tavers (sp?), who's the head of the parks department. And Ken said, hey, have you ever heard of a guy named Ed Mell? And he said, well, yeah. He says, well, I want him to do a painting for this Visitors Center. He said, yeah, he's over here 20 miles away right now. So, Ken came over, he goes..., I'd had a few cocktails. He goes, hey, I want a real...I don't have much money, but I want a...I got a great big (can't understand word). Sure, I'll do that. But, anyway, Ken and I became real good friends through all that, that process, too. And, uh...so, so I'm very proud of doing that. I like...I really like... 19:49 And, one of the reasons I did it is, I look at other painters that have done murals and things, and are part of the, the history of the state. And that's what I really want. I want to be part of that...some of that history. And, uh, that's also...my bronze in Scottsdale. And, I just did a Phoenix Bird for the City of Phoenix. It's a 40-inch one that they have over in Caesar Chavez, uh, Mall there. So.

PS: When you did the Kartchner Caverns...did you go into the cavern before it was open to the public?

EM: Yeah, we went in about...within a month of...they'd drilled the tunnel. Cause, , to get in there with cameras, prior to that, was a nightmare. Crawling through mud and everything. Plus, that didn't appeal to me anyway. So, yeah. We went in there. I took my son, both my sons. And, a friend of mine, his...uh...yeah, one of his sons. And it was..., that's pretty exciting to walk in there. And, it's brand new. And, it's..., the trail is two pieces of white tape on the floor. That you had to stay in the middle of.

PS: Of course, you didn't have the lights and things that it has now

EM: They didn't. No. And, and, in fact, when I finally did the piece, they had just put some lights in. Because, it had to be lit correctly for me to.... A flash just makes it a flat thing. And so, I went in there with 800 speed film and shot some things and then kind of invented it from there. So, the painting's 10 and a half... (clears throat) ... seven by 10 and a half foot. To my...I think.

PS: And, you did it on a budget for the state?

EM: Yes I did.

PS: Would you tell us how that they paid?

EM: I think it was 10-thousand dollars.

And it was amazing. I had to have this...they had a niche. And so, we went down and measured the niche. Where it went. And, a good friend of mine, James Robeson (sp?), built the stretcher for me. And, uh...we took it in there...and put a little frame on it to...a narrow frame. Took it in there. He had it all figured out



, with the....and it just went in there and locked down perfectly. It wasn't even an eighth of an inch off all the way around. It was...worked out great! And the thing weighed close to 200 pounds!

PS: Transporting something that big isn't easy!

EM: Yeah, we had to rent a big U-Haul. To do that.

PS: And sort of in the same vein of questions...is there anything that you...looking back...that you wouldn't (can't hear rest)

EM: , I've, I've been so fortunate, it would be really hard to say that..., there's... You, . Things are great. I mean... Yeah, I'd probably....in, in my life or in my career?

PS: Both.

EM: Well, I probably wish I'd never smoked! But, that's..., . That's probably it. I think.....when you're young, you don't take care of your health like you should. But hopefully you can over..., get past all that. But, no, . I have a, I have a, I have a great family. I got two great boys. I have a wonderful wife. I have a good life. I have great friends. I have a career where most people, when they meet you, they're glad to meet you. That's...it's a, it's a positive thing. So, , I don't think a man can ask for anything more there. And, I have a great city that has embraced my work. And...and...well, and beyond that...so.

PS: I think one of the turning points was when you made the decision to come back.

EM: Oh, absolutely. Yeah. Returning to Arizona was the best thing I ever did. I know a lot of people that stayed in the illustration business. And, the computer killed them, too. . And, it...just that business just went away. So. It was not only good spiritually and economically, but, it..... staying in that business would have been a, , a disaster I think, too.

PS: How would you like to be remembered?

EM: Oh, that's a good questions. As a pretty good painter. As a pretty nice guy. . I, I think that's about it.

PS: Pretty simple.

EM: Yeah. I can't think...those are questions I really have a hard time with.

PS: One other one....do you have any advice for young people today that are just starting and trying to decide what to do with their lives?

EM: In, in the arts?



PS: In general.

EM: Well, I think you really gotta focus on one thing. It's like my son is, um..., he was, he was doing cartoons that were really funny. And, Jerry Scott who writes *Baby Blues*...that's...told him he was good. He said, we need new (can't understand word) He did 60 of them, and, and then he was painting. And, uh, he wanted to do film. And at one point I said, Carson, what you need to do is focus on one thing for now. Till you get the ball rolling. And so, he put everything else aside, and put his focus on film. Which I think is a good thing. , I think you gotta...you gotta put in long hours. You gotta work hard. When I first started my career, I was working.... When I realized what I wanted to do, I realized that I had to work hard, uh, and keep focused on it. And, to get that...especially in the arts...to get that ball rolling. And once you get it rolling...it's...life's great, .

PS: But, it is work.

EM: It, it is work. It still is. But, it's fun work, most of the time. I would say, , 90 percent... my work is enjoyable. , there's always 10-percent. There's paintings that don't work. That you fight. But, , I've started paintings that...I sat down. I was totally enthusiastic. And, uh, they died. I've started paintings where I really didn't even want to be here, and they ended up being some of the best stuff I ever did. So. It's..., you just push through it and you make...you can make things happen. Believe in yourself. Get a vision. , they say, in a career, if you can visualize your career, uh, that's the first part. And I visualized my career early on as being what it is now. I, I didn't know if I'd get there, but.. I had a plan! And, it worked out. So.

PS: And you've gotten to see a lot of wonderful things, too.

EM: Oh, I've met great people. Uh. I've seen a lot of things. , I've got, , wonderful clients that have shown us stuff. Uh. . Travel. Meeting people. It's great. It, it opens doors, . Being a painter...people enjoy that. Because, I think it's a....I think there's a frontier in this...to being a painter...finding new stuff. It's kind of a frontier. So.

PS: (can't really hear question)

EM: Right. Not yet!

PS: You take your photograph. But, that's not the same. Your paintings are not photographs.

EM: Right. Right. Sometimes I work from photo reference, and sometimes it's kind of memories. . And sometimes it's a combination of both. . So. Just trying to find something new each day is always an exciting thing. Making something out of nothing.



PS: It's great that you can say that after this many years. So.

EM: Yeah. I know. I'm glad I've...and...And, I think I chose subject matter and stuff that's always... there's always something new. . I mean, I, I paint with a couple painters, uh, Gary Ernest Smith, who shows in my gallery. Shows in Overland Gallery in Scottsdale. And, a, a guy named Larry Clarkson, who has a home right near Capitol Reef National Monument. So, we go on these painting trips. And they are more fun. You're dealing with the elements. Sand. . We got snowed on once. But, it's...it's really fun. It's like, uh, play. .

PS: It's work!

EM: Everybody's out there, okay....and I...who can do the best one?

PS: Competition?

EM: Oh, well, we don't actually talk about it. But, sure.

PS: How do you see your future?

EM: , I probably will.... , Philip Curtis...I know he had a neck injury in his late 90...in his early 90s. And, he told a friend of mine, Mark McDowell... He says, I still have three more paintings in me. He did those three paintings, I understand, and then he passed away. I'd like to paint until I die. , and do art. And, It's, it's one of those things that old men do after they retire anyway. And, I've already got the looks down, so. . It's, it's relaxing. It's fun. It's demanding. It has a lot of aspects to it that are great. . Tiring. , you do a big painting, it'll wear you out.

PS: And those are big ones!

EM: Yeah.

PS: I think I've asked you most of the questions I have.

EM: Okay. , I can't think of anything else to add to it.

PS: We'll look at some of your work here? Now these are all studies?

EM: Okay, okay. Most of these pieces are studies.

