

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Theater People from Ohio

Personal Experience

O. H. 1113

JAMES HUGH TOMPKINS

Interviewed

by

Carol Shaffer Mills

on

November 17, 1981

JAMES HUGH TOMPKINS

Mr. Tompkins began his official career at 15 when he went to the University of Kansas to study art. Shortly after attending Kansas he began illustrating for architects while preparing fine art for his various shows across the Mid-West. After a brief period of study at Hiram College, from which he was unofficially expelled for running an artist salon, he began in earnest to establish an architectural business. In the process of moving between his family in Niles and Youngstown, Ohio, and Shaker Heights, Ohio, he made Youngstown his headquarters. There he practiced advertising arts at G.M. McKelvey Company while acting at the Trumbull New Theater and the Youngstown Playhouse. Following a break-up of his marriage with Rosemary Reilly and being socially shunned in the community, Mr. Tompkins sojourned to California.

Architecture was Mr. Tompkins' main goal to establish in Los Angeles, beginning with architectural design and illustrating services. By happenstance, he was invited to design sets in television which he did for approximately 12 years. Among his greatest accomplishments as Art Director was, the "Julie Andrews Hour", the "50th Academy Awards" show, "Olivia Newton-John Special" and other musical and variety productions. He also designed the Meadows Playhouse of Las Vegas, Nevada's first regional theater under grant development by the National Endowment of the Arts. While in Los Angeles, Mr. Tompkins designed and developed a

line of educational toys with his 15 man studio. That product was never marketed for lack of final production funds after a disastrous experience with Bank America and the Small Business Administration, none favorable to Mr. Tompkins.

In the latter 1970's, Mr. Tompkins returned again to architecture, having designed a major theme building in Glendale, California. He has since gone on to design a 58,000 square feet business park in North Hollywood, California.

His current program is to survey Western Reserve Greek Revival Architecture in Ohio for a book he plans to bring out in the late 1980's.

Jim Tompkins is known personally for his droll and cynical wit, his intuitive leaps into artistic adventure and his individual life-style which many poseurs have attempted unsuccessfully to emulate.

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INTERVIEWEE: JAMES HUGH TOMPKINS

INTERVIEWER: Carol Shaffer Mills

SUBJECT: Television Art Director, Set Designer, Toy
Designer, Architect, Historian

DATE: November 15, 1981

M: This is an interview with James Tompkins who was born in Niles, Ohio who has spent the major part of his adult life involved in theater. He now resides in Los Angeles, California. This is November 17, 1981. This interview is being conducted for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program. The interviewer is Carol Shaffer Mills.

Mr. Tompkins, we will start by asking you where you were born, when you were born, if you want to tell us.

T: Niles, Ohio.

M: Tell us about your childhood.

T: There is nothing important about it to tell.

M: Something about what you did when you were little, what you liked about Niles, Ohio. What are your memories?

T: I didn't like anything about Niles, Ohio. That's why I left.

M: But you didn't leave until you were an adult as I understand.

T: Well I did leave, when I was about fifteen years old, I went to Kansas University under a program for special people and practiced theater and art there.

M: While you were in Kansas, what else did you do?

T: I discovered I was extraordinarily special, and that has been the wrinkle of my life from hereafter. What more do you want? I went back to Niles, Ohio and was exceptional. I finished and picked up my high school degree and there is some interim stuff that may flood back but I can't remember right now. But the important thing is that my next major move was going to Hiram College, where I was accepted as a second year student because I fought them on every level of credentials. So I became an assistant professor.

M: At what age?

T: I think I was seventeen, I don't remember. The nice thing about it was...The thing I enjoyed most about college and the only thing I enjoyed was the fact that I didn't do what ever they ever wanted to have done. I told them I had to have a studio, so they gave me a studio. It was in the basement of an old house, and I turned it into a salon. This is terrible, that's why I got kicked out of Hiram. At any rate, I had all these artists and people and I was throwing cocktail parties and doing terrible things, I suppose if in the vernacular, the school system, nonetheless, these professors used to...Nonetheless, so, I used to throw these marvelous things and painted magnificent pictures, however it all came to an end and I just decided that was the end of the world and I really do believe I had a nervous breakdown. I also had a physical ailment at that particular point, I never showed up for classes, but everyone was pushing me through the grades and finally I was asked to leave.

M: Why? Did they give you a reason?

T: No, I didn't fit into their program, quite simply.

M: And you became so crushed that you suffered illness from it.

T: No, I had the illness while I was there. No, I wasn't so necessarily crushed. Perhaps at that particular point I was very frightened that how much I thought I knew would be challenged and someone would find out I really didn't know that much, so it was easier to escape. I had all the reasons to escape, and I did. I went out on my own and I can't remember what I did after that, I think I went to Cleveland, Ohio, someplace in between. I went up to live with my uncle who was vice-president of Standard Oil. He had no sons. He had a bunch of flaky daughters. So I went up there and he wanted me to take over his position which I obviously didn't quite fit in to the mold, and his towers, which were the old Cleveland Towers.

M: Terminal Towers?

T: Terminal, yes, that's right; that's where Standard Oil was. The chauffeur used to pick us up and zip us over there. He and I had a few altercations and I decided to go across the street. The old May Company was there and I decided to become a window trimmer, just to get even, because his offices looked down on the windows; I knew that I could flash and do all this kind of stuff to make my uncle very angry. And it did.

I had been living with him at this particular time in his apartment. He had this bimbo, no, she was a marvelous lady. She had been his secretary for I think seventeen years and had always wanted to marry him. Of course, he had been marrying up women in between time and divorce, and she had always stuck behind him. So, she would come over and cook and do whatever. It was Valentine's Day and I had been at the May Company and with my great discount I think I bought her "Evening In Paris", all \$.90 worth, whatever it was. Well, my uncle didn't buy a present or anything; so, I gave her the present. The next day a call came in from Standard Oil to my office at May Company saying, "Mr. Tompkins, your uncle would like you immediately." So, I thought he was having a heart attack, so I went over to his office. He said, "I want you to read this." He threw this letter out and it was from his old secretary. She had split. And he said, "Did you read that?" And I said, "Yes, aren't you ashamed, Uncle George?" "No, you're moving out tomorrow."

M: You mean after you quit the job with your uncle, you continued to live in his quarters?

T: Yes, well, it didn't really matter. So he moved me out and I think he wanted me killed. He didn't have the courtesy to have me just, out, so he called a friend of his who owns half of Cleveland. He said, "I want my nephew put into an apartment of his own." "Get him into an apartment." So what is now, I guess, a disaster in Cleveland, is right across from a Park. He put me into these tower apartments, and I didn't really like it. I decided I would remodel it. I didn't realize that I had torn out some very structural things in the process of remodeling. Some of the kitchen fell down, it fell down a lot.

M: Was that your first brush with architectural design? That you since excelled in?

T: No, my brushes had always been there. This is interesting. My poor parents I really feel sorry for them. They had gone out for the evening. I don't know how old I

was. I had mentioned that this wall should be removed between the two rooms, I think it was the living room and dining room. I had gotten a sledge hammer. This is just terrible. This cost them thousands of dollars. This is my really first skirting with what really goes to put up a building. I decided to tear out the wall. I thought, well, this plaster is loose. By the time they came home, not only was the wall gone, the heating system for the entire upstairs, also, some of the plumbing was leaking downstairs. I had also ripped out the stairs to the upstairs, because I was remodeling. It was remarkable, because I told them when they came in and I never covered the furniture, or anything. The ceiling, everything came down, there was plaster all over the place. They came in and I said, "You know, here's what I have in mind." And, of course, they're looking and they're saying, "Oh." And they never said a word. They said, "I think your ideas are beautiful." They had to go to the bank to get a loan in order to restore the house.

M: And they never chastised you?

T: No, they told me to do it. Don't tell me to do something unless you mean it.

M: That's probably where you got that unique quality at, being very literal about what you do.

T: Well, it's not a matter of being literal, necessarily, I have ideas and...

M: And you carry them out.

T: Well, I hope you got the budget to cover me, because I ain't working on my money, honey.

M: We're talking to a person here who has designed sets for Hollywood movies, for the Oscar's for television shows for many theatrical productions, and that's what he does do, just do the designing and let the other people pay.

T: That's it, you pay the piper, you want my talent, that's it.

Remember when I was drummed out of Youngstown?

M: Yes, I do. I drove you to the bus station.

T: Where did I go? Oh, Watson, Michigan.

M: No, that was the other time. This was when you decided to run away west and you didn't have enough to get you there, so you got off the bus somewhere in Utah or something. Tell about that, when you came to Hollywood.

T: Well, I had, in order to...

M: You decided you couldn't bare the mundane quality of life anymore in Youngstown, and that you should take...

T: Yes, but I thought I went to Michigan.

M: Oh, you did, but I was reminded of the time that you finally moved to Hollywood. You did go to Michigan.

T: Yes, but I left for Hollywood. It was a choice, you know, that was an incredible choice. What was his name, that director? He had dark hair. He was at the Playhouse.

M: Baker?

T: No.

M: Then I don't know.

T: It starts with B. At any rate, I don't really know. He was in New York, and a friend of mine that I had gone to school with, Brian Pretigo, was in Los Angeles. What was the name of that man?

M: Michael Brill?

T: Michael Brill. I had gone to Michigan. I had a choice. I didn't know what to do. I decided I had to split. I had to go do something with my career, and I called Michael Brill to go to New York. He said, "Yes, you can come," and he put conditions and then I called a friend of mine in Los Angeles, Brian Pretigo, and he said, "Sure, Jimmy, I have a big apartment out here, come on out." So, on the bus, and I thought, well, we'll see America first. It was horrible, it was horrible.

M: How many days did it take, about five or six?

T: No, I think it was like three and a half. The first stop in California was San Bernardino. We stopped in front of an old hotel and it was nothing but covered with red. And then we were coming into Los Angeles and the freeways got prettier and prettier and the flowers were just everywhere. We came down Hollywood Boulevard, and some of the old studios were on Hollywood boulevard. And palm trees, I had never seen a palm tree in my life, and here are these palm trees, it was just incredible. I was able to look over at the old Columbia studio lots and I could see all these French cities, and a western town and there were these vases and I was crazy then for antiques, you know, just ditzy, and I saw all these great...I didn't know they were made out of shit. And here are all these things and I said, "Oh, I can pil-

lage, I can pillage. I'm going to move in there." So then I got to the bus station and Brian picked me up.

I was going to continue with my architectural business, because I never considered theater very important, as much as I devoted all my time to it--my social life. I never considered it important. It was community theater. Who does community theater? So, I decided I would reopen my architectural business I had closed in Michigan.

M: You were in your early twenties at the time, when you did this?

T: Is it important that we know ones age?

M: I think it's rather remarkable that's all, that you had a full-fledged architectural, successful business going.

T: Well, I don't think it was so successful. If I were successful I wouldn't have been on the bus.

M: Well, only because you didn't compromise in certain areas.

T: No, no one was hiring me, let's put it that way. It's no compromise, it's a matter of survival. And I thought, out in Los Angeles or at least in the sun belt, that's where they're building everything. That's where I ought to go. And they're going to be hungry for new talent. Well, they weren't. I went around, knocked on all these doors, and I had no credentials. Of course, I had been kicked out of Hiram. When they say, "What did you study when you were going to college?" "Well, nothing much, I just ran a salon." It was rather difficult to get a job on this basis.

M: You didn't tell about your marriage. Do you want to talk about that at all? You sort of fitted it in between productions. You got married between two plays you were directing.

T: Oh, yes "Rashomon" I think it was, and you were in "Rashomon".

M: Yes.

T: You were that terrible heridan. And the crows, remember the crows? We never had the crows, they never showed up. That horrible play. Remember I came back from my honeymoon and the lead was sick and I had sent in that poor guy who had been studying, you know, for hours and knew everything down pat, and of course, I didn't know diddly, and decided, I was the director, I guess I'll go on as a star too.

M: You threw him out at the last minute.
You had a lovely, elegant wedding.

T: Yes. You know, Rosemary's wedding gown was designed by a stripper. Oh, what's her name? The old costume stripper.

M: Jay Diamond?

T: No, not Jay Diamond. Alma...

M: Alma Sturchy.

T: Alma Sturchy, she used to be a burlesque queen. Then she opened up this little shop. I was so broke at one point, she hired me to pin feathers and all that. Alma designed the gown, no, I designed the gown, and Alma said it was impossible to build. I'm not going to say the years, but then I think it cost her father several thousand dollars. It was seeded all over with pearls.

M: It was a lovely, exquisite gown.

T: Yes, it had a fifteen foot train, of only veil.

M: It was a wonderful wedding.

T: It was show business.

M: You weren't Catholic?

T: Of course not. Well no, my family is a very old family in America.

M: Tell about that.

T: Well, there are many branches, of course, as it goes in, but we were over here in the 1600's. Direct line: vice-president of the United States, governor of New York, chief justice of the Supreme Court, these are all the Tompkins, in the Pugh end, which some of them were in Louisiana. Then, the Thorn end, which I really identify with, they had bought land in Virginia, and they were Southerners: The war came, and the States split and all their property ended up in West Virginia. We still have 5,000 acres down there. They were farmers, not plantation owners, none of that, there's no Gone With The Wind romance in this, but they were farmers and they owned slaves. But they were Quakers and when they bought people they would turn them free. And the people always stayed and they farmed. They were great master farmers. One of my uncles split. He had big farms up around Lake Erie. Another uncle owned transportation systems for Cincinnati or someplace. Another one was a multi-millionaire before the Depression, just on cattle alone in

Ohio. So these are hard-core people.

M: These are all Thorns, the Thorn end of the family?

T: Yes, basically, the Thorns and Stuarts. So that's where they basically all came from. Government ruined their business because it came into the subsidy thing that you could grow this, and you could grow that, and it was during the Depression. They came in and said, You can plant this but you can't plant that."Well, sooner or later, the children that would have inherited the business, the government put them out of business by subsidy because they said, "You can't plant so we're going to give you this amount of money." Well, by law you couldn't plant. So naturally, the people who were used to farming couldn't be in there farming. Somehow they ended up on welfare which all of that whole area is nothing but a welfare state: Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Virginia, New York, all of it.

M: You're talking about the once rich coal mining business in the coal field areas?

T: Yes.

M: Plus the farming.

T: Plus the farming. But the farming was there first. And the Government put them out of business. So, the children and the heirs and this and that obviously. If you've grown up with the fact that hey, you don't have to plant, all you have to do is get money, then they split. They don't take care of the land. It's all sitting there going to ruin.

M: Where are these acreages in Virginia?

T: West Virginia. Below Wellsville on Thorns Run. The whole area is known after my family.

M: And no one is attending it?

T: No, it's just abandoned. Oil companies have leased it over the years for gas and exploration. The point is, it was a viable business. It was a foundation business. With that much land and that much talent and that much ability, it could have been... The family probably could have been leaders.

M: Do you think that besides your creativity, that your business sense, because you have an astute business sense, came from that upbringing?

T: No, not whatsoever. It's only something I've garnered for survival. I wasn't raised with any business sense,

are you kidding? My mother taught me paper dolls.

M: She did?

T: My father wanted a football player and he got a ballet dancer, you know, what can I say?

M: You're not an only child are you?

T: No, four sisters. Sometimes it was hard for my father to decide who was the sisters.

M: You never speak of the sisters much.

T: Because there's nothing much to speak about them.

M: I see, where do they live?

T: One is married to a vice-president of Copperweld. I don't know where they live now. Another one lives in Florida someplace and another one married a nigger and lives in New Orleans.

M: And the fourth one?

T: No, I only said three.

M: You said four but it doesn't matter.

T: Oh, well, they all look alike.

M: Three, plus you.

T: Yes.

M: Besides your doing so much with your phenomenal art...

T: Well, my art is not phenomenal.

M: Well, that opinion is held by many that it is, when you were concentrating on painting.

T: Oh, when I decided I was going to be an artist and starve to death?

M: Yes. Would you like to talk about that?

T: Well, that's how come I went to college when I was fifteen years old. I haven't painted for years.

M: May I ask you a question about a painting, that when you wanted to move away once, which you did frequently in those years. You had a particularly lovely oil painting with a moon in it. I can't think of the name of it.

T: There was a bird in front of it, yes.

M: Do you know the name of it?

T: Oh, do you mean just the little moon?

M: Yes.

T: Oh, Rosemary still has that. Oh, the little one with the bird flying away?

M: Whatever it was, I can't recall exactly.

T: Yes, I threw that in the fireplace.

M: But many people liked it and so they wanted to buy it and you kept reproducing it and painting it over and over.

T: I sold that many times.

M: Yes, and they all thought they had the original.

T: Oh, well.

M: And I was astonished at how they all looked almost identically alike.

T: Well, you know, if you're going to be a Xerox, you're going to be a Xerox. And they all were paying the same price so one wouldn't change from the other.

M: It was a lovely painting.

T: What you're trying to make me out is a fraud.

M: No, I'm trying to say that I thought that was very resourceful of you.

T: Why? All the great artists in the world always copied and recopied.

M: I never realized that until you taught me that about art.

T: Look at all of them; they ran studios, and fine, you paint the fruit, you paint the face, I'll paint the drapery, you know?

M: I love that you did that.

T: See, art in our context, right now, is a Victorianism. It became very precious and everything had to be just oh, the little individual, and this came out in the later 1800's. It was a reaction against industrialism is

what it was, and so, originality became precious. We've never gotten over that, and we still think originality is precious, and the primary thing when it really isn't. Who cares how many times that has been done, if it makes you happy, take it.

M: Well I was very impressed by that. In fact I wished I had had the money to buy one of them.

T: I'm sorry I never gave you a picture. I will give you a picture before you leave. As a matter of fact I do have something very special for you--a gift.

M: I recall, that one time you asked me if you would let me be painted as a pear in a fruit bowl.

T: Well, you had the shape. How could I resist? You know, I was looking for the perfect pear, and you had it, I didn't realize. I thought I was looking at trees. I didn't know that they were walking around.

M: I always wanted you to do that picture, I thought that would be nice.

T: I know, but that's when I really thought I was a great artist. And you know, I'm not. I have looked upon my old work and I'm so embarrassed. And I've destroyed a lot of it because it just is stupid, absolutely stupid.

M: I don't know which pieces you are referring to.

T: Well, I was going through the old portfolios. I got a bad case of mildew not too long ago and I had to open up my archives. I was going through all this stuff, looking at all these things. I just cleaned out, because I realized that I'm not a great artist.

M: Well, you took your artistic bent there, and took it into the theater and designed sets.

T: No, theater was an accident, I never intended to be in theater.

M: But it ended up that you were there doing many things.

T: Well, I'm still trying to get out of it. It's been the destruction of my life. I spend my whole life not trying to be in theater.

M: I realize that and it keeps pursuing you.

T: It's like a haunt. But theater is applicable to all things in life. It's just amazing that so few people have it. But that's what they like about me. Once they get over the shock, whatever I did in order to get the

introduction to begin with. It's the thing that they say, "Oh, yes, you're right, I guess cement blocks can be sold theatrically." And it's true, it really is true, people don't spend enough time.

M: I wanted more of your childhood, but if you want to just vanish it to neverland, that's all right.

T: Well, what's so important about my childhood?

M: Well, I think something formed your unique personality, and I think it must have come from something in your upbringing.

T: Breeding, basically, that's all. Breeding.

M: Well, that's certainly succinct. Did your mother stress good manners and...

T: My family has always been circumspect.

M: I mean, I remember when you were know as a role model of desirable behavior.

T: I am a model of it, I know etiquette precisely.

M: Yes, you do.

T: I know courtesy. And etiquette is only courtesy and courtesy is a form of loving other people. I had been taught that, and the rituals of it. There are rituals, most of which I think are absurd. I've lost a lot. Do I seem discourteous to you?

M: No, I don't see you as discourteous. I have seen you absolutely mortify people with some of your replies that you've made, very honestly to their questions.

T: Well, don't ask a question unless you want an answer.

M: That's right.

T: Like what?

M: Well, I don't recall, there were so many I can't be specific right now. But only because someone asked you something then didn't like the reply that you honestly gave, in many instances. I'm thinking of theatrically and artistically, as well as personally to some people.

T: Well, I've never...See, I don't see myself as that.

M: As what, honest?

T: Well, yes, I try to be honest. We all have our little

secrets. I've never seen myself as being disarming. I've always found myself as being kind of shy and retiring.

M: You are shy and retiring. But you put on a great act of not doing that when you're out, when you're being defensive.

T: Do you want to know the actor or do you want to interview me as to really what I am?

M: I want Jim Tompkins.

T: Pennsylvania decided they were going to form a lottery, to raise money, so I was invited by a friend of mine who was a producer/director type, Mark Good. He said, "Jimmy, come to Philadelphia to help me." I said, "Philadelphia, for what?" "For the lottery." Well, it made me an awful lot of money, not the lottery, but I mean just the job. I was paid regular money to design their lottery program. They had already figured it out mathematically, but they didn't know how to present it. The entire thing was being funneled through an advertising agency.

M: This was to do with the government.

T: Yes.

M: In what aspect exactly?

T: The government created this program in order to shill people to make money to keep the bureaucracy going in Pittsburgh.

M: What was the umbrella name of the project?

T: "Lucky Logo." I don't know, it was some gambling tidbit. "Lucky Lotto" is what it was.

M: Alright.

T: I was in Philadelphia and I designed their entire show and their entire complex; everything that ended up on television, I designed.

M: Why was it six months to do this project?

T: Everybody that was involved in the project, that had initiated the project, wanted to make money and they were all probably on a weekly, monthly draw. So they just kept dragging it out and dragging it out.

M: When you talk about that, when you started your early days in Hollywood, you had some incredible things happen that you became a set designer for television. Remember

when you were just living on hominy, and you were looking for art design work and set design work and you had a cupboard full of hominy because somebody told you it was a "total" food. So, will you talk about that wonderful stay in California? That was the year of the flower children in California. Haight-Ashbury in Los Angeles was having the love-ins.

T: The only thing I remember...I don't know that I was involved in any of that. Are you talking about the time Brian and I decided to paint bodies?

M: No, what it was, you took me as a visitor to one of the love-ins where everybody rolled around in the grass in the parks, that was the big thing for the college people.

T: I don't remember that.

M: And they all had flowers painted on their faces and I said, "I would like to have a flower painted on my face," and you said, "I'll put it on with eye make-up." So you painted a whole bouquet on my face and NBC television came...

T: Oh, that's right.

M: And they started filming you painting my face.

T: I haven't thought of that, I've never thought of that.

M: So since we were very poor at the time...

T: Well, you know, with the step off of that conversation, we were really broke, so the Renaissance Fair, which is world famous now, the second year, no, it was the first year, I decided to take a booth. It was the same time I was there trying to make money, and made all the paper flowers and created a booth and went in and Brian had stage make-up. I painted flowers on peoples' bodies. I made a lot of money off of that.

M: That day, after you did that, you and I took my eye make-up. We didn't even have the \$15.

T: You know, I don't remember that.

M: It took \$15 to rent the booth at the fair and we scraped this up somehow, made flowers in butcher paper.

T: That's right you were there.

M: You painted my face and then you painted Dick's face.

T: Yes, it was the Renaissance fair.

M: People lined up.

T: I know, they were standing in line to have their bodies painted. I made a lot of money off of that one. I didn't realize you were out there then.

M: We used my eye make-up, because that was all we had until we got some money to buy some.

T: Brian then went and bought some. That's right, it all flashes back. Carol, I didn't realize that.

M: And from those very flowers that you drew on that booth, you drew sort of surrealist flowers made out of tissue paper, you later used those on your design on the Dating Game.

T: Oh no.

M: The same type of flowers.

T: No, the "Dating Game" had been pre-designed. I'll talk about that in a few moments. Well, I didn't intend to be in show business, because I was out there working on my architectural business, and it didn't fly. I did not intend to be in show business, in Los Angeles, I intended to reconstitute and recreate my architectural business. But I went across the street, I lived at Cirano, which is just down from Western, just a hedge below Hollywood Boulevard. I went over to buy some beer. I was walking across the street and this big white Jaguar stopped in front of me and he said, "Do you need a lift?" and I said, "Yes." So, I got in the car and he said, "Where do you live?" I said, "Just turn down this street." We went down, and within seconds I said, "Well, here I am; this is my house." Obviously, he was looking for a boy and so I said, "Do, you want to come in?" No, there's some back up to this story.

I had been watching television and as I told you before, I never owned televisions, and I turned to Brian and said, "Who designs all the scenery on television?" He said, "I don't know, I have a friend that's doing 'Andy Williams,' here's his number." So, I called up this guy and said, "I'm going to design scenery for television. What do I have to do?" So, he gave me a list of names. And he said, "do you have a portfolio?" I said, "No." And he said, "Well, you have to have something to show." So, I spent the weekend, I copied everybody, every show I had ever seen, designed all these, and drew all these pictures and I went to the union, I went to ABC, NBC, CBS, all this and that and haunted them, it took about six weeks.

The one guy at ABC, I can't remember his name right now, he was a thief, I can't remember his name. He said, "I'll call you on Monday." So I waited, and he didn't call, so I called and he said, "I'll talk to you on Thursday, we'll set an appointment." So, I started calling him on Tuesday and said, "Don't forget." I got a way into the studio and I would hide in the executive restroom, not doing anything. But I figured, as long as I'm hiding, and looking like I'm pooping, nobody's going to...I had my portfolio, my drawings, and waiting for him because I figured, sooner or later, you're going to have to piss. And he did. "Hi, here I am." So, he gave me an interview in his office, it didn't happen that day when I caught him. So, I went the next day. And he said, "Remarkable portfolio." It was all that jack-off shit, that you're not going to get anything. I didn't realize it then. I thought I was big hot stuff, because the biggies are talking to me. It was a bunch of crap.

So, I laid around and worked in the bookstore. Then this is where it picks up, when I got picked up by the guy in the Jaguar, going to buy some beer. He came into the apartment, and Brian had terrible taste, I mean, everything was gilded furniture and cut velvet, it was all dago shit. So, my friend came in and he looked around. Brian had some pictures on the wall from Stratford Ontario, in Canada, costume designs. He looked at those and he said, "Is this your furniture?" And I said, "Are you kidding?" And he said, "What do you do?" I said, "I'm a television art director." And he said, "My name is Jim Tridapo, and I work for the Hollywood Palace." And I said, "I've never seen the show," which I never had, because I had never owned a television. And he said, "What studio do you work for?" I said, "Well I don't work for a studio." And he said, "Fine." And he was walking around and he looked on the walls and said, "You're a designer, did you do these?" I said, "No, those are from Stratford Ontario, I don't know who designed them." He said, "Yes, I know the designer." And I thought, well, we must pay more attention. And he said, "Well then, you're free lance if you don't work at a studio." And I said, "I guess you could say that." And he said, "Well, what shows have you done?" And I said, "Well, I haven't done any." He said, "How can you call yourself a television art director?" I said, "I can call myself anything I want. I decided I'm going to be a television art director." And he said, "You don't know who I am." And I said, "No, I guess I don't." And of course, he had won all the Emmy's up to this point for art direction in television. And he said, "I admire your spunk, I'll give you a job." And I said, "Yes, I've heard that routine before. Do you want me to tap-dance too; do you want to see my legs?" So, he said, "I'm serious. I know your not going to believe this, it sounds like a come on, but my assistant, who is Hud

Braggin, had fallen off a mountain, mountain climbing. He said, "I'm desperate because the Palace opens in August to start the taping. If you're interested, if you work a week for free and you can cut it, you've got a job. But I must tell you, I'm interviewing someone else." I thought, another little trick you picked up someplace, right?

So we spent the evening and made love and had a very nice time about it, so I thought well, that's the end of it. But I thought I would pursue it, so I showed up the next Monday with everything I owned and there was the other trick there in the office. So Jim said, "Well, here's what we have to do." And he started designing. Well, I immediately understood what he was doing, because he was very architectural and he was also very art nouveau type thing and I understood all the lines. And this other little guy who was trying to get my job. he said, "Do you understand what this is? How do you figure this out?" And I told him all the wrong things, so obviously he never made it through. Out the door with you. Jim and I went on and we won four Emmy's together.

M: Tell what those were for.

T: The first one that I was associated with was Fred Astaire, "The Man and His Music;" the next one was Goldie Hawn, a special, and the next one was "The Family," a CBS show of...Who's the man who sells coffee now on television? What's his name?

M: Marcus Welby? I don't know.

T: Well, he's the star of...

M: Robert Young?

T: Robert Young, yes.

M: Robert Young's, "The Family." that was it, only three with Jimmy.

M: When that happened overnight, your life changed then.

T: My life changed overnight all the time.

M: From hominy to...

T: And here I am sitting here. All I have left is a house-keeper and a gardener. I'm wiped out.

I had done the "Julie Andrews" hour. And to me this was just something beautiful for me. I had been called in; the first show had been designed by Brian Bartholomew, and he had promoted one of his boy friends out of the

shop and made him art director, co-art director. Well, Nick Vanderoff is a very difficult man, he bought Columbia Studios. I designed all of his offices. He just wasn't getting along and business was getting very heavy, too much for Brian who was British and liked to pontificate out every little tiny detail. You're down there, down dirty, get it out and let's go. Business is business.

So at any rate, I was called in; I came in on the third show, and the three of us, Brian, Keaton and myself, we worked our butts off round the clock. I worked for twenty-six weeks, seven days a week, twelve to fourteen hours a day. I took half a day off for Christmas. We worked our buns off. The most magnificent show in television history, aside from the Hollywood Palace--brilliant, beautifully designed, money no object. Came time for the Emmy's and I wanted my Emmy for the "Julie Andrews Hour." Because I hadn't worked on the first shows, I put in for the Christmas show, which I had designed. Brian and Keaton put in for the first show. The first show won.

So, I didn't get my Emmy. I said, "Okay, that's alright, I knew that before." The insult of the academy is that I knew I wasn't getting the Emmy a month before. They had the audacity to turn around and say, "Although you're not a winner, would you like to be a judge? Okay, now you start this way, now my heart is already... So, I'm there and the Emmy Awards are on that night and Rosemary said, "Do you want to..." I said, "No, are you crazy?" I'm in there drinking my brandy, and hiding in my library. I was very happy. She said, "'Julie Andrews Hour' won." That's fine because I knew I wasn't going to win. Well, the fuckers had the audacity to call me right after they were given the award and said, "You know Jimmy, it couldn't have been done without you." And I said, "You miserable cock suckers! You miserable trite tit pickers!" And I slammed the phone, and I got so outraged.

M: Did this start a tempering fall from grace?

T: I've always been falling from grace. I spend my life falling from grace.

M: A giant slide?

T: Well, if you really want to know the truth, it was. Then I opened up my toy company, and that didn't work, unfortunately and that's something I just don't want to go into right now.

M: You don't speak about it because it was an innovative and masterful creation. Three dimensional paper dolls,

they were.

T: And houses and circuses, just everything.

M: Done architecturally to scale.

T: I had retired from show business because I decided that was the end of it and opened up the toy company and that was a crash. Then I was invited back to design the "50th Academy Awards," which to me, I didn't get an Emmy for Julie, but I was privileged to design the "50th Academy Awards."

M: Well, I saw your name on the credits and I was so happy, I was in New York and your name was flashed on the credits. It made me so thrilled.

T: From there I then went and did "Olivia Newton-Johns' Special." But then after that I said, "That's it. I don't want to be in show business any more," which isn't quite true, because I've designed some stuff.

M: But it never really leaves you Jim. It's always hovering around like a vapor throughout your life.

T: It isn't the fact that I work in show business that's so much important, it's the fact of everything that I do has that quality, not show business quality, show business absorbs a quality that I have given it, whether you like it or not. Whether I am successful in it or not is not the point. It is something...I am me. I showed you the building on Glendale I designed, and you saw that. That's me. Is that show business? No. It's Jim Tompkins. It is me.

M: But it's dramatic. And isn't dramatic part of show business and theater?

T: Well, frequently that's where it happens, but I never want to get back into show business, it hurts. Although I did design a good, beautiful show. I did some marvelous things. You should research the Los Angeles Times. They have tremendous stories of me.

M: I will, I will do that. What are your plans right now? You're sort of in a reflective period.

T: No, I'm dying, frankly. I think I have cancer and I think this is my final good-bye.

M: I see. You seem very serene. You seem more serene than you used to be.

T: That's because I'm older. My arteries don't work as rapidly.

M: No, not older. More, not so hard on yourself.

T: I'm always hard on myself.

M: You used to be relentless.

T: You see, I still do believe this, that if tomorrows were gone, what would you do? You have to continually always want to fight, because tomorrow you may be dead. If you don't live it now and you don't take everything by the ring, it ain't going to happen.

M: I learned a lot working with you when I met you and you gave me a job working in your architectural studio. I would like to talk more about your early work, when you were designing, in Youngstown, your concept of artists going to work when they feel the urge to create something, which is now being employed by many large corporations.

T: I know, I was the front runner in the country. I used it on the toy company. I had a studio of fourteen or fifteen artists. I said, "When do you function? When do you like to work?" "Well, I don't like to get up early." "Fine." "What do you like to do?" Everyone created their own time. And do you realize that out of a forty hour week, I got fifty hours out of these people? It was incredible. I was one of the originators of this whole program. I don't like to be disciplined myself. I'm a creative person, I was working with creative people. I suppose an assembly line type situation...Although they're finding out that doesn't work either. Of course, the unions have ruined everything. If people work, if they trust their company, trust their employer, they work so beautifully, at best, at the times they want to work, and then you get a maximum.

M: You used to go do architectural renderings at 3:00 in the morning a lot of times.

T: I always work late at night.

M: The thing was that you worked out of town in Canfield and you lived in Youngstown.

I want you to talk about how young you were when you embarked on your seven or eight careers at one time at the Youngstown Playhouse.

T: Alright.

M: Please tell us some of the work that you've done that people don't do when they're twenty. That is not normal for a person.

You know, talking about hippies, would you mind talking about that era? That's when you first moved to Hollywood, when the flower children were in bloom out there.

T: Flower children were very important. They were very important to me at that particular time because it was a reaction against the bureaucracy, against the government as it was. I'm older now, I fight in different ways. It was a beautiful time, when people really did, truly love one another.

M: It started here in California.

T: Yes.

M: By the time it watered out to the East coast...

T: Well, the drugs destroyed it.

M: It had deteriorated, but it was very naive and innocent.

T: It was gorgeous. It was absolutely gorgeous, to walk down Hollywood Boulevard in the evening, with friends and wife, or whoever it was, everyone, "Hello. Peace." And people were so courteous and so kind. It was a lovely, warm, warm, point of life. I've never lost that. I regret the movement became disoriented.

M: Well, in that summer of 1967, that I spent out there with you, we went to that giant sheep meadow or some big meadow where they did the Renaissance Fair.

T: That was Defenshire Downs.

M: That's it. Everybody was sharing their bread and really sharing their food.

T: It was an incredible period of communion, and it was lost. The only thing I have to say that may be still, perhaps I'm part of that...I think it's coming out now, because we are all much older people than what we were and I think we are reflecting it in the voting systems, overthrowing the bureaucracies, which we have done. In California we have overthrown the bureaucracy by Proposition 13. That's all part of the movement. It was to control the federalism and to control the control. And we have done it, and I hope it isn't going to quit. We worked very hard for that, some of us became enemies, some of us became workers.

Jefferson, to me, is the most important man in American History, just from all stanpoints of view. I think I basically am a Jeffersonian. I believe in the ideals that we have. I believe in what our country should function as. Also, because of him too, he was a great

architect. He was a great horticulturist, he was a great furniture designer, he was a great writer, he was magnificent. If I ever had my life to live over again I would like to live it underneath his shadow while he was walking.

M: You didn't say you wished you could become him. You would just like to bask in his shadow.

T: Of course. He is a master.

M: He's your idol.

T: The older I get...I've never really had idols. I've never tried to because I've always figured I was my own idol, I didn't have to worry about it. But now I'm beginning to disappoint myself. Yes, he is my idol.

M: You've always incorporated your views on history and contemporary events into your work. I think it shows. You don't channel anything you do into one narrow area; it's all sort of blended.

T: No, Everything has to be blended.

M: And connected.

T: Yes. How else can you survive? And I feel myself, is a very limited, narrow person. I don't have enough brains, enough time, enough fingers, enough eyes, to do everything I want to do. I've tried, but I've become selective. I've always been selective. And I have said, "Okay, fine, I am not going to do this. "One of the great shames in my life is, the fact that I made a decision when I was very young: I am not going to waste my time on fiction. I will waste only time on fact if it is to be wasted. So, I don't read novels, although I'm surprised, I was thinking about it the other day. I have a library of 10,000 books and none of them are novels. But I was in my own mind, cataloging how many novels I really have read. The greatest writers to me are Montain, Edgar Allen Poe. I don't have time to spend a month on a book. I'm a slow reader, so I like short stories. But I have read a great deal. But because of my discipline, I've said, " You must learn first, before you can fantasize." And I've spent my entire life trying to learn.

M: How do you reconcile that with, at least former and with the background music that's playing right now, your preoccupation with the Civil War era and the gallant gentlemen and the gracious ladies of Gone With the Wind which you seem to know all about? Do you know about that only from the movie, you've never read the book?

T: Oh, yes, I've read the book. I read the book about thir-
teen times.

M: Well that's a novel.

T: Well not to me. To me it's a fact of life. I identify
with Scarlet O'Hara. I do believe, "Goddamn it! God is
my witness." That has been the story of my life. I don't
know what I've been trying to prove. If I were really
into extraterrestrial visitations, I don't...Somehow,
some way, it's been confused, because I don't think I'm
successful. I think that my intelligence isn't here as a
human being in the human race as we may identify. For
some unknown reason, there is an association with another
place and another time. I haven't quite made it. I am
here to say something, and to gather something and I
haven't done it.

M: And take it to this place.

T: I don't know that.

M: You don't even know that much about it.

T: I just know...

M: That you're a link in a chain of steps somehow?

T: Yes.

M: Would that be the proper way of putting it?

T: Yes, perhaps. More eloquently than I could do.

M: More grand, really?

T: What do you mean more grand?

M: A more grand design, I would imagine.

T: I am part of a grand design. I'm not the grand designer.

M: No.

T: I am part of a grand design. And I don't know what it
is. Someday maybe the veil will be lifted. But I do know
for the insights that I have done with myself, there is
still a veil that has not been lifted. Something has not
been told to me yet. And I know it is going to be told.

M: You wait for it. Or you've just resigned yourself that
it's coming.

T: I think I wait for it and I think perhaps that might be
part of the reason why I've always believed that if you

don't do it today, you don't have the chance tomorrow. I know that I am not allowed, I am not allowed the luxury of waste.

M: There are those people that would call you a heathenist.

T: How wonderful.

M: You know, I mean, the ones that use it in a decretorial manner. And I find them amusing, because you've always lived every minute of your life to the fullest, and given much to so many other people. Some of them didn't even know they were absorbing.

T: Well, I don't know that. I hate crusaders, so don't put me into that.

M: No, you've never done that. You were throwing it off by accident, all this energy.

T: If I have done anything for anyone in my life, believe me, it was by accident, because I am truly self-oriented. I've never tried to harm anyone, and if I've really helped someone, that's very nice. I'm flattered.

M: You were a great influence on me. Of course, I'm in the twilight of a mediocre career.

T: You've always been a twilight. No, not a mediocre anything, Carol. You've always been in the twilight of anything you do. So, don't flake this one out on me.

M: I always felt we were suitable companions.

T: We are. We're destined, we've always been destined to be together.

M: It's so true.

T: I don't know, Carol, I really don't know. If I could have my chance to live my life over again, I know the cruel things that I have done, I certainly would try to correct those, but I don't know that I could do any better.

M: I know what you mean. I think I feel the worst, not so much about cruel things I've done unintentionally. I haven't done too many cruel things on purpose; I don't think you have, but I have done some awful things by...

T: Oh, just stupid, asshole things.

M: Yes, by lack of thinking.

T: Whatever, yes and you go, "Oh, you idiot. How could you

do that?"

M: That's disturbing.

T: And particularly when it involves other people. And that's what appalls me. I'm sorry that I'm not a better person. I wish I were.

M: How do you think you become a better person?

T: I don't know, go to Rome and get blessed. I have no idea. You know, what is the solution? I do know. I've gone into body separation of when you concentrate and you can remove your body. So I've been doing that. I've always been able to do that, even as a child. I was able to... In a classroom, snap right up to the corner of the room and watch myself, watch the teacher, watch the people, just watch everything.

M: Do it in an instant?

T: Yes.

M: Without any preparation?

T: No preparation. I hadn't done it for many years, because it wasn't correct to do I suppose. Jesus Christ why do I always try to be right when I've spent my whole life being Mr. Wrong?

M: That's a strange part of you. You have a very, I don't want to say puritanical, but a very New England, gentlemanly quality that comes out.

T: It's America, and it is what I was taught, and this is what I expect out of my life and out of my country. It is that, yes, you do this, and you do that; yes I am a white Anglo-Saxon Protestant and I believe in all those ethics that made it, that made this country where it is and that's why I get almost maniacal over what is happening, when I try to start a business, and I can't get the money when they're giving it for free to niggers who haven't earned a dime.

M: You're talking about when they're making the loans to...

T: SBA.

M: What's that stand for?

T: Small Business Administration.

M: Oh yes.

T: I was ruined. I put how many tens of hundreds of thou-

sands of dollars into that toy company, and because I wasn't a nigger I couldn't get my money. And that's even what they told me. That's what caused it all...

M: They didn't couch it to you in those terms, did they?

T: Oh yes they did. That's what caused the big scandal here in California. Mr. Jim Tompkins, I was on NBC.

M: Talk about that, if you would.

T: I will at another point.

M: I know it's painful, but that's important, that's a thing that people won't believe right now, a lot, and in history, as time goes on. A lot of us aren't permitted to speak out the truth anymore even about what happens.

T: I have had to go underground, Carol. I don't know who is going to hear these tapes, but I've had to go underground. Somebody is going to go after me because of what I have to say, but I don't care. Nothing has been done to me, that they cannot improve on it. Believe me. All they do is look and they put me on probation. I had to go to court because I was turned into a criminal because I tried to start a company and paid my employees. I almost went to prison.

M: I don't understand. I missed that part.

T: Oh yes, there's a lot of my life that no one knows about.

M: I do know that you had to crusade to get the business started.

T: I had to crusade to get the business started, I had to crusade in order to keep it going, and I crusaded in order to keep the people paid. And when I finally couldn't do it, I used their withholding monies because I was going to get money from Bank of America. They promised me money, that they were going to give me on an SBA's thing.

M: Didn't they also tell that to you on television?

T: Yes. I did all of that and when I spent all the monies I had even withheld, in order to pay my employees, and then I couldn't go any further, then the government wanted to put me in jail. I had to go to court. They were going to put me in prison. I was on probation. I was a criminal.

M: You know something, you call that a toy company. However

it was an innovative, educational device, what you invented, the concept of the...

T: I researched.

M: I would like you to tell, just tell the pretty parts.

T: No. I don't even want to talk about it. It just, you know...I will before you leave. I will talk about it. It has been so destructive. Frankly, I was a very rich man before that. I have never got over it. It destroyed my marriage, it destroyed my career, it destroyed my confidence and I hate the people despicably, that did to me what they did do.

M: Who would those people be?

T: Bank of America, SBA, the federal government, the state government and the bureaucracies involved. They have destroyed me.

M: And you're just being able to articulate it. They do it to multitudes that can't even understand what is being done.

T: Precisely. The people that don't understand what's being done, they fall into the little slot system, like the little one guy that owns a shop. Okay, fine, he can function very well. But by God, you get out there and try to do something and you try to create something and you try to pull something together, they don't allow you to do it. The amount of paperwork I had to go through. I didn't have the personnel to fill out the paper work.

And do you want to hear a joke? Right now, again, the state of California is charging me, I don't know, \$5,000. I took out a "doing business as", DBA, James H. Tompkins Associates. They sent me stuff for employer information. Well I have no employees, so, I filled those all out. But in the process of transferring my business around and all this and that, the papers didn't get all back. They have fined me now, because I won't report how much money I take from my employees. I don't have any employees. I've never had employees in this context, and now they're after me, they're going to arrest me. If I take a legitimate job where they take out taxes, they're going to come and seize every nickel I have. I have had to go underground because of bureaucracy and their computers have formed a little system because I didn't return the paper. Now I'm fined. I was never there in the first place. They create their own rules and laws that I don't know about, and they expect me to answer to them. I don't know how to answer to those.

M: I want you to talk about what you did when you were such a young man in the theater.

T: Why is that so important?

M: This is an umbrella, theater project, and I would like them to know that you designed sets, acted, wrote plays, painted, did costumes, improvised, hired people, and was the vice-president of a huge community theater when you were twenty-two.

T: I was a catalyst, that's all I was.

M: You did that all simultaneously.

T: I've always considered my life a fraud.

M: Why is that?

T: I've always know what I've wanted, but never really had the backup to do it. So therefore I found ways to tap-dance around it to get everyone to agree to it. There's nothing wrong with that.

M: Why do you call that fraudulent?

T: Because I didn't know what I was talking about.

M: I don't find that that's certainly capping the criteria for many solid acts. You don't mean to say that you were a charlatan?

T: I never considered myself a charlatan, but that's lovely. Yes, I am a charlatan.

M: I would have to disagree with you.

T: At twenty-two, how in the world could you get the background to do what I did do?

M: Well you were in college when you were fifteen.

T: That doesn't mean anything. I didn't learn anything there.

M: I mean you got a head start somewhere.

T: Yes, I am a charlatan. But at twenty-two, if you really believe in something and you don't have the credentials to back it up, then I guess you just really have to get out there and tap-dance and convince everyone to do it.

M: So why would you berate that?

T: I don't have any credentials to back any of it up.

M: Credentials, your not really telling me that you...What do you call a credential?

T: \$1 million.

M: Right. I'll accept that as a legitimate credential.

T: Don't argue with me after that point. I didn't have \$1 million.

M: I think your credential for talent and genius is the possessing of it.

T: I have visions and I have understanding and I know where I want to go. I wish I hadn't been such a fool at twenty-two.

M: In what ways a fool?

T: I think I destroyed a lot. It's back to that good old WASP background, that if you do something right then that's what you should do for the rest of your life. Perhaps I should have stayed with that. I think that I'm like a failure, in a great extent is because I can analyze and look at a problem, and cure it before it ever occurs. It's like designing a house. If someone calls me up and says they want me to design them a house. I have it all designed before I'm ever over there. There's a little bit more than that to it in the involvement, but basically, I have it all designed, finished and complete. You start a sentence, I know exactly where you're going to go and where you're going to finish. I don't have to listen to the rest of you. If I create a program, I know it's going to work. I've already analyzed it, and I know it will work. My problem is: I don't stick around to make sure it does.

M: There it goes.

T: That's it.

M: Toddling off.

T: I gave you the idea.

M: Brand new high top shoes.

T: I never thought of it that way, but it's true. So, a lot of people considered me a butterfly. Early in my life I justified my existence, only to say that, only the rats survive the sinking ship. They were the first to get off. And I've always considered myself as a rat.

M: Really?

T: Yes. I'm a survivor.

M: I don't think all survivors are rats.

T: No. To me, I have great respect for rats. like pigeons. I love pigeons, because they are survivors, and cockroaches.

M: Cockroaches have been around for a long time. There's some human essence.

T: I have no human essence. You see, I was born without human essence. So don't even talk about human essence. I frankly don't understand human essence.

M: I know, but you know what to do with it in others.

T: That's manipulation.

M: Call, the verb what you will. You have vision.

T: I have vision that few people would really ever understand. And I'm going back. I'm searching very hard. As I told you I'm into the body removal, and I did it last night. I visited something. So, I've been doing that. Reinspecting. I allowed myself to lose that, and now I'm coming back.

M: You could probably just sit there in that kimono, for another two or three decades and think about some of the things you have done, in your work as well as personally, and say you lived a full life, for someone your age in your thirties.

T: I presume, yes, you could take it apart that way. It isn't to me. I just feel right now that I am a failure, absolute failure. I'm not being constructive, I'm not being creative, I'm not being sought after. That's important. You can be the best actor in the world, but if nobody shows up for your play, what worth are you?

M: How do get sought after when you're being semi-reclusive?

T: I was remarkable because I was an incredible person when I was very young. For some unknown reason--I really don't know--I was a catalyst, and I was a great flame for a lot of moths. I don't know, Carol. I've thought about that a lot. A lot of it was youth, and I've lost my youth. You can see that.

T: Well that's just the way it is. What more can I say?

M: I certainly will if you tell me to though.

T: You better believe it. I just feel that I have lost some important element in my life that was the elixir. I've lost my elixir.

M: But how do you know that it's lost forever?

T: Well, nothing's happening.

M: Don't you think it could be regenerative?

T: That's why I'm sorry. That's why I've decided to leave my body, to go back to where I think I came from, in order to rejuvenate myself.

M: You don't want to talk about how you do that?

T: Well it's simple. There's no problem.

M: Tell about it then.

T: It's something that comes very naturally. I know that I have always been guided by another voice. Even as a child, I was guided by another voice. Where it came from I don't know. I do think at one point that someone tried to contact my family. I didn't realize this as a child. I knew I was peculiar, even myself I knew I was peculiar. As I've gotten older, the control fate, was so channeled in my direction, every opportunity that you could wish for, I had. It still exists, even now. Rolling the dice, I can say, I want a six and a seven and I get it. It's incredible. There is command. There is some kind of power that has been vested in me. That's what I use then. I don't know. Maybe there's a greater voice now speaking to me. As I said as a child I could leave my body. I could be anywhere I wanted. Now, and as I experienced last night, it's still there. I only need to lie back and say, "You're going to do this."

M: Do you choose the destination?

T: I never have. However I'm going to begin to choose my destination.

M: To channel it. To attempt to.

T: Yes. I want to go to Versailles. I really want to go and live in the apartments of Marie Antoinette in Petite Trianon. I think within a week I will be there.

M: Within a week?

T: Yes. I'm doing this with you, and I hope that you're going to stay.

M: I really wish that you would wait for three weeks and let me try and go along.

T: But you can do this in a moment. Like last night I know I went to the Grand Canyon and I lay on the precipice there I looked over and I watched it. It was so beautiful, and I've never been to the Grand Canyon.

M: This was last night? November 15?

T: Yes. And I do know that people do speak to me. There are other voices. This is incredible. It's the perception. Remember when I used to read poems? I never read poems, I read you. I didn't have to read your poems. It was only a vehicle to hold your hand in order to begin to make contact. I never read your poem I don't believe. I could tell you what you did in your past and what would happen in your future. And I quit doing that to other people, because I was too accurate, too many times. It was too frightful.

M: It scared them.

T: Yes. And they couldn't control it. I think that if you have voices, and people believe in fate--I don't believe in fate you have control of your destiny--if you believe in voices and when the voices speak to you, and you do this or you do that, you do have control. Voices do speak to me.

M: I don't know where they're from. I don't care where they're from.

T: I don't know where they're from and do you know, before I die I do want to find out. Part of going back into the soaring is that I want to find out who has been controlling me and who has been running me all of my life, because I know I have been, I know that it is just not me. I didn't arrive here on my intelligence. I'm not where I am today or nor have I accomplished all of the things that I have accomplished based on my intelligence. There was a propelling thing and there was also a controlling thing to allow me to do what I had to do and to make and say what I had to say. Those doors aren't open right now, but it wasn't because I had talent, it wasn't because I had intelligence, it wasn't because I had money, it wasn't because I had anything. There was a reason and there was a design, that has still yet to be revealed. That's what I meant earlier when I said there has been still the veil.

M: Could we stop this now?

T: Yes, let's conclude this. I don't know unless you have anything more to ask about me, this is all I have to say

of myself.

M: You've gone into some real deep things here for a little boy from Niles, Ohio. We will stop right now.

END OF INTERVIEW