

Interview with Bob Waldmire
Portal, AZ
By David King Dunaway
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Introductions – first meeting at Frontier in ABQ – growing up South Sixth street Springfield, Illinois --- Cozy Dog Drive-In, interviewed in revival --- history of family - -- father at Knox College --- Strand Bakery and the Goal Post --- parents meet at Strand Bakery --- writing book on his father’s life, “hot-dog-on-a-stick and world peace” --- Cozy Dog Drive-In and Dairy Queen --- growing up and working in restaurant --- brother Buz taking over --- Walgreens buying it out --- Bill Shea’s gas station --- tour buses, swatting flies, frying hamburgers --- Buz and second wife --- 66 Drive-In Theater --- Cozy baskets --- Dad pioneer in fast food “time motion man” --- wasted food, free condiment bar, “Take what you need, eat what you take” --- father in agricultural economics, vegetarianism? --- how Illinois 66 differs, corn flatness, railroad, cemeteries, Midewin Tallgrass Prairie, Queen City of the Ozarks, weather --- Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Museum, Springfield bypass --- Chicago --- Mother Jones, Mt. Olive --- East St. Louis reputation, mayor, Rock’s Bridge --- bioregionalism definition --- basin and range province – four deserts, benefits and necessity of bioregionalism --- route 66 eight states --- scorpions, tarantulas, kangaroo rats --- grasslands restoration --- family vacation 1st trip west 1962 --- Chiricahua --- Vincent Roth --- 66 Visitor’s Center in Hackberry --- Chiricahua Nature Sanctuary --- annoying tourists, didn’t want to do it anymore --- visiting college towns drawing posters and selling space --- funny postcard of Illinois --- poster of San Diego – 13 years with station wagon --- Volkswagen van --- changes on already commissioned map Northern Arizona University --- found 66 brochure --- idea of drawing map of 66 --- getting 40 acres in Hackberry --- a better deal --- 66 adored by foreigners for freedom and openness --- eight states w/ associations --- following crews taking down signs --- 66 designation stricken in 1985 --- stealing signs --- state associations and highway dept --- Arizona route 66 association fund run 1988 --- Steinbeck and Will Rogers Awards --- Tom Teague --- Tukumcari tourists not stopping --- 1930s 66 association --- movie “Cars” --- Emily and website for kids --- cutbacks made in associations --- artistic training --- childhood doodles --- posters filling up all the space --- strength is in proportion and perspective --- art appreciation course – course at Famous Artists School --- wants to learn watercolors and oils --- Jerry McClanahan artist --- portrait of Angel Delgadillo

DAVID DUNAWAY

Bob, this is a great pleasure for me. I've been looking forward to this for a long time. I've got to say that.

BOB WALDMIRE

It's been a few years. I think we met at the Frontier Restaurant in Albuquerque. I had camped in the van out back. If you're up and out of there by 6 am or so, you're okay. But I don't think I got up until 8 or 8:30. And then we met inside.

DD

I think we should start with your family. Maybe you could give me a little about your folks, and then take us to The Cozy Dog Drive-in.

BW

Well, I had the good fortune of growing up on 66 in the house that my father got to spend some of his childhood, and then a decade or two later, he bought that house, and us kids – me and my four brothers – and my mom and dad got to grow up in that house on South Sixth street which was just about a mile north of the Cozy Drive-In, on the south edge of Springfield.

And, my father, who passed away in 1993, enjoyed getting in on the 66 revival and being interviewed, maybe two or three times by film crews. The only one I can remember distinctly was a German film crew in around 1990, or '91 and the 66 revival began in the late eighties, thanks to Angel Delgadillo.

DD

Tell me: What was his name and where was he born?

BW

My father, Edwin Waldmire, was born in Petersburg, Illinois which is 25 miles northwest of Springfield, and he grew up there in Petersburg, and when he was about 14 or 15, he and his two brothers and his parents, my grandmother and grandfather, moved to this house on South Sixth street in about 1950, because I was about five years old, and Ed lived in this great farmhouse with our grandparents. All of us lived in my grandparents' farmhouse on the west edge of Springfield – Chatham Road, which is now just a malignancy of shopping malls and subdivisions. It's a heartbreaking thing. It was so rural at that time.

At the age of five, we moved from my grandparent's house on the west side of Springfield to this house on South Sixth Street, and my father met my mother while he was a student at Knox College in Galesburg and that was in the late thirties. And my mother was an employee of Strand Bakery their son was my father's pledge brother at Knox College, so they were very good friends. And my

dad has his very first eating place right across the street from the Knox College campus called The Goal Post and he put himself through college running that place. It was a little hamburger and coke place and he had bicycles to rent, and a little archery range for the students right there at Knox College, and he would buy his buns from the Strand Bakery which was right across the square, about a block away.

Don Strand, my dad's older friend and pledge brother at Knox, said that "we got a cute new girl working at the bakery, you should stop by." So my dad, on his next walk over to buy buns, he eyeballed her there, and she thought he was a hobo wanting free bread because he was unshaven, and it was typical in the bakery at that time, that people would come in asking for bread. And he just kind of walked past the front counter and she said, "That's private back there," and "Do you want some bread?" and he said "No, I'm here to see Don Strand," and that was his first introduction to my mom. And then she found out, soon after, "Well, he's the owner of the little Goal Post restaurant," and they began their courtship and in a year they married. 1940. Five years before I was born. And that's, in a nutshell, the brief story of my mom and dad.

I'm writing a book on my father's life. It's the one project that's most, by far, there's not even a close second, in importance to me, that I get that book done and to the printer. I've told people frequently, "If I have the book at the printer and dropped dead, and could reflect on it, I'd have no complaints." That keeps me going, getting that book done, because the story of my father I would say is in some ways.... He didn't travel as a traveling artist, like I have, I've had an easy life. But his story is a lot more fascinating than mine because he invented the hot dog on a stick, he was a genius, he could have made millions if he wanted to, he was a life-long peace activist, and a personal correspondent with Dwight Eisenhower – he helped Eisenhower get elected in 1952.

The book that I am working on of my dad will tentatively be titled The Hot Dog on a Stick and World Peace. That would be an eye-catching title. Because those were the two things that were the essence of my father: the hot dog on a stick – the food business – and his life-long involvement in peace. And of course any good traits in me, I owe to my mom and dad. Any bad traits, I don't know where they came from, they didn't come from Mom

and Dad. I was very lucky to have two exceptionally wonderful, interesting people as parents. I really lucked out.

DD

Now, he set up a restaurant that was on Route 66?

BW

Not only that, he had two dog-houses in Springfield. One was just half of a block off City 66. That was the Cozy Dog. And then he opened another small location a few blocks west of that called the Doghouse. Then, with one of the founders of Dairy Queen, the first franchisers of Dairy Queen in the Midwest, they went in together and bought an acre on the south edge of Springfield, now Sixth Street. They both knew the significance of that location, because it's right on 66, and you've got people traveling cross-country from Chicago and west, at a prime location. So they went in halves and bought that acre and built, this was in 1949, and my dad got so busy with the place that he sold his other two little dog-houses because he couldn't keep up with all three. In 1950, the Cozy Dog Drive-In officially opened on South Sixth Street, on the south edge of Springfield along with the Dairy Queen. And there was an open breezeway that connected the two sides.

The Dairy Queen had a little carry-out operation counter in front and my dad provided the seating and the dining room and I won't get too side-tracked with details of that, but ultimately, things went along fine through the '50s and the '60s. My dad had an expression for how phenomenal the business was and at some summers he kept the restaurant open 24 hours a day because there was this traffic – this was way before the interstate. And I can hear him saying, "Things went like topsy." And what he meant was business was so good he could hardly keep up with it. And of course my mom worked there in the restaurant, and all of us kids, my four brothers and me, got to grow up in that restaurant. And my dad would pay us, a penny a fly, to swat flies, and two cents per table to clean the table. That's when we were little kids.

And Buz, one of the five sons, who took to the restaurant business and wanted to continue it, and did, for decades, loves to tell the story that when Dad wasn't looking, he'd open up the screen door in the back to let more flies in, so he'd have more flies to swat. And then Buz took the restaurant over. He started by leasing it from our dad, that

was in the mid-seventies. And he ended up buying it and meeting his second wife there, and they had four sons together. And since that time, my brother Buz and his ex-wife Sue negotiated their divorce, and – as I like to say– she got the dog, and he got the dough. Because she bought him out. And they had four sons together and all four sons are involved with the restaurant which is just next to the original location. That’s another long story about how Walgreens bought out Dairy Queen, in an adjacent historical property, at the A. Lincoln Motel which was built in the thirties. And they came to my brother Buz with an offer, and his wife Sue at the time, that was before they were divorced. And they accepted the offer because they would have lost in court anyway because Walgreens already had the Dairy Queen half of the property, and they offered to build a new restaurant for Buz and Sue on the site of the A. Lincoln motel, so they could built their giant Walgreens on the location of the old Cozy Dog.

And I’ve often thought, “I’m glad my dad did not live to see that place bulldozed.” My mom lived to see it. I was out here in Arizona when that happened. I was at my Visitor’s Center in Hackberry then. It was the spring of ’96, they bulldozed the original Cozy Dog, and the A. Lincoln Motel, and the new Cozy Dog went up and Sue owns and runs the Cozy Dog now and things are going great guns because of this built-in iconic status. And she doesn’t have to spend a dime on advertising to get all this free advertising and publicity and the city of Springfield promotes the Cozy Dog on Bill Shea’s gas station. Bill Shea is about 90 years old now. And those are the two most famous landmarks in Springfield, besides the Lincoln and stuff. But the 66 is a real landmark, so it’s common for the Cozy Dog to get bus tours stopping by. Sometimes they’re announced in advance, sometimes they’re unannounced, so it’s a great place still, even though it’s not the same as the old building.

DD I’d like to take you back to when you were swatting flies for your dad and have you describe what you would see when you walked out the front door.

BW Of the restaurant?

DD Yes. Back then.

BW I’d see cars with license plates from other states, and that really kindled my curiosity and interest, before I ever

traveled. Our first trips, family vacations, were not down 66, they were down onto the Gulf Coast and to Florida. I love to travel, and of course those early family vacations would have been in the fifties. But, I can remember being excited when a tour bus would pull in unannounced and my dad would say “Load up the grill, get the dogs going, draw drinks in advance.” It’s an unannounced bus, and you’ve got 40 people walking in. So, I was the bun boy, originally. I was so proud because I could stand next to the guy I really looked up to: the guy who could fry hamburgers. And not everybody can fry a hamburger that you mash out on a grill, and then you have to slide the spatula under it a certain way to peel it off. A lot of people couldn’t get the hang of doing that.

I ultimately learned it, and was a good hamburger fryer; I just didn’t have the inclination for the food business to stick with it. My earliest memories would have been just of the fun of being there. And of course, it’s my dad’s place, so it was a family operation, and a lot of my friends were in the neighborhood down there, a mile south of where we grew up, and then, of course, as I entered the teen years, it was ripe for harvesting cute waitresses. One of my dad’s biggest headaches was his sons interfering with the waitresses there. He couldn’t really do anything about it, but ultimately it worked out best, because the best girlfriend I ever had was one of my dad’s employees, and my mom always described her as “the one that got away.” And of course, in my brother’s case, he met his second wife there at the Cozy Dog, and they raised a family of four sons. They ultimately got divorced.

DD

What else was on your block? What would you see past the cars?

BW

Well the 66 Drive-in Theater was a hot spot. And that was just about two blocks south of the Cozy Dog on South Sixth Street which was City 66. And that was a big deal on Friday and Saturday nights because my dad had specials for people heading for the drive-in theater. And they’d be Cozy baskets, or hamburger baskets, or fried chicken. Back when my dad had that restaurant, for decades, I mean he created it, but before my brother Buz took over, my dad’s emphasis was on homemade stuff and he hired people that knew how to make pies and puddings, mostly older women that really knew their stuff. And we had a salad bar case.

Anyway, for the drive-in theater, that was a tradition, people head into the drive-in theater on Friday and Saturday nights and would stop by and get a Cozy basket or a hamburger basket, and at that time – you couldn't do this now because of all the ridiculous health regulations – but at that time, Dad would use bun boxes to prepare a burger basket: four hamburgers and a big order of fries. Or five Cozys and an order of fries in this cardboard bun box.

The great thing about that restaurant – he tried carry-out for a while, with the waitresses that would go out to the cars; that didn't really work out because people really liked to come inside the place because they got their tray when they walk in the door and place their order, and by the time they're ten feet down the line, their order's there on their tray. My dad was a pioneer in the fast food concept. He designed the front of this restaurant for a skeleton crew to operate efficiently without stumbling into each other. And my dad frequently described himself as a "time motion man." His phobia was lost efficiency, or lost time. People duplicating or getting in each other's way. So he had the fryers on one side, the drinks in the middle, and the grill on the other side. And he had a carry-out window on one side, so all of my memories are a blur, but they're all fond.

Of course, back then we had an outside incinerator where you just take the garbage out and burn it. And that's really where I got my start in doing doodles and signs, and striping the parking lot; my dad would pay me to do a lot of the graphics that he would otherwise have to pay a professional a lot more money, and my dad didn't care whether it looked professional or not as long as it was legible. And I can remember a point being reached at some time, and I would guess it was the late Fifties into the 1960s, when the public's habits about wasting food began to change. The first few years, people didn't waste their food. They weren't in that big of a hurry. But it really bothered my dad in later years when people would waste so much food. And he had a garnish bar, with relish, some things homemade, like pickled onions or pickled cucumber, that were delicious. It was free. People would pay for their food and then come down here and they got carrot sticks, celery sticks, cucumber, relish – and people would load up on this stuff and waste it. So my dad had me make a sign, "Take what you need, eat

what you take.” Which was a firm way of reminding people “don’t be so wasteful.”

Another thing that bothered my dad was the phenomenon of factory farming. I could never really talk to my dad comfortably about the issue of animal rights and confinement and factory farming, but it really bothered him. He graduated in agricultural economics. He worked for Purina for awhile. His father had been a farm manager. So he was very interested in the field of agriculture. But when he started his food business there weren’t factory farms. That was something that evolved right after WWII, and the earliest ones were in Quonset huts, WWII army surplus Quonset huts, the earliest primitive factory farms. He never really embraced vegetarianism, but it really bothered him how things had evolved, and the confinement of chickens and pigs and cows. But it was a great place to grow up there at the restaurant.

DD You must have traveled in Illinois on Route 66. I’ve got your postcard of Illinois 66, let’s see I can almost put it this way. Maybe you could give us a sense for what makes Illinois 66 distinctive from other states.

BW The cornfields, more than anything else. Corn, corn, corn and beans. The flatness. But of course historically, that was the heartland of the tall grass prairie. And the only tallgrass prairie that remains in Illinois is something like one-hundredth of one percent of what had originally covered much of Illinois, is along railroad rights of way and old cemeteries. Except for prairie preserves, actually one of the largest in the country that’s being developed is up near Joliet at the old army ammunition plant. It’s called Midewin Tallgrass Prairie. Eventually they may have bison there. But for starters, it’s 3,000 acres and they’re restoring tallgrass prairie there and it’s on 66, right up near Joliet.

Illinois has, of course, the connection with Abraham Lincoln and it’s got a lot of landmarks. I never have spent a lot of time in Chicago. My familiarity with 66 historically is closer to Springfield. The flatness of the land is what is most distinctive about Illinois 66 as opposed to the land further west. Once you cross the Mississippi River, you enter the Ozark Plateau, and then it’s up in the mountains for 300 miles, and you drop down the plateau around Joplin. Springfield, Missouri calls itself the Queen City of the Ozarks, but actually the

Ozarks continue a bit past, but it's the biggest city in the Ozarks there. And then you enter the Great Plains. But, the further west one goes on 66, the more dramatic and exciting and alluring the land becomes. That's the consensus I've got from talking to a lot of travelers from all over the world. And that's my own opinion too. I'm biased against Illinois because for so long I had not been able to tolerate the climate except briefly: in the spring and the autumn it's tolerable. The summers and the winters in the Midwest, for me, are intolerable. They're murder.

DD What are the things that people visiting Route 66 today in Illinois that are really important for them to see and to know about?

BW You're asking me what is there? Well, I would say the most famous, not really directly connected to 66, but it's the history of Abraham Lincoln and Springfield, Illinois, which is the capital of the state, now has this Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Museum which has been a phenomenal draw. They already have a huge amount of worldwide tourism because Lincoln is buried there. And his home, the only home Lincoln ever owned, is right there. I just read the last issue of the Pulse that they've already had discussions about establishing a Route 66 interpreter center right at the Abraham Lincoln – it's a National Park Service facility. And Lincoln's home is on Eighth Street, which is just one block over from the earliest bypass in Springfield which is Ninth Street; so people didn't get caught up in the clogged up square downtown on Fifth and Sixth Street. So before they built a bypass around the edge of Springfield, it was routed over to Ninth Street. So that was an exciting development.

Other things of course are Chicago. What was that, "the hog-butcher of the world" and whatever, by Carl Sandburg, wrote about Chicago. The people that you meet traveling 66 from other countries, usually if they can, they start in Chicago, which is one of the world's great cities as far as cities go. And the other famous landmarks, well. Mother Jones is buried at Mt. Olive. She lived to be about 100 and was like a mother to the early miners. And it was a rough life and it was a labor dispute there that resulted in many deaths. And that was near Route 66 at Mt. Olive. It wasn't in Mt. Olive, but you would know about that, near Mt. Olive, and of course Springfield, the capital city, and then of course, at the other end, from Chicago, when you cross the Mississippi River you see the gateway arch,

which is called the “Gateway to the West” and they’ve done a lot of... Well that’s an understatement. The downtown part of St. Louis, it’s a world-class historic district there.

DD Have you spent much time in East St. Louis?

BW No, but enough to feel sorry for it: it still is saddled with its reputation. It’s based on truth. It’s a dangerous area. You don’t want to go through that area in the dark, really. But I’ve read and heard about some urban renewal there. I don’t know if Carl that’s been mayor for decades there. Carl is somebody that really plays up East St. Louis. And they do have a bike route that’s on both sides of the river that are connected by Rocks Bridge which is another world-class destination because that carried Route 66 traffic until it closed in 1968, and a few years ago, it was refurbished and opened up as the world’s longest, pedestrian bicycle bridge. I think that before that the longest bridge was in Chattanooga, now the Chain of Rocks Bridge, which is almost a mile long. It’s great. In the winter they have eagle-watching there, and on clear days you can see the skyline of St. Louis maybe ten miles to the south, and the arch from the chain of Rocks Bridge.

DD To shift the conversation just slightly... You have influenced my own thinking about Route 66, and a lot of other people by discussing bio-regionalism and looking at this great old road from the standpoint of this concept. Would you explain to me what you mean by bio-regionalism and where you learned it?

BW Well, I think I got acquainted with the term from John Seed, who’s a rainforest activist from New South Wales in Australia and I think that’s where I got introduced to the term, but I’ll just read briefly: Bioregions are geographical areas whose boundaries are determined by nature rather than by man. Distinguishable from other areas by characteristics of flora, fauna, water, climate, geology and human settlements and cultures, shaped by these characteristics. Bioregionalism is a – and I like this word – radical, political, cultural and spiritual world view that combines a deep reverence for nature and an understanding of ecological principles with a commitment to decentralized, non-hierarchical politics: a vision for a sustainable future. I see bioregionalism and embracing it as crucial for human long term survival, for us to be able to somehow in our thinking and actions, transcend our nationalisms, and there’s like 200 nations on the planet,

and our sense of boundaries and the need to have militias to defend boundaries, political boundaries.

For instance, in this area, this bioregion, the Sky Island part, which is located centrally, and what I would call the Basin and Range Province, and that name was coined by the one-armed explorer geologist, John Wesley Powell, of Basins and Ranges of the Great Basin, and it contains all of North America's deserts: four deserts. The Great Basin, the Mojave, the Sonoran and the Chihuahuan. And I'm even more excited about bioregionalism here, than up on 66, except at Hackberry where I had my visitor's center, because that's right where the Colorado Plateau drops down and enters the Mojave Desert, where Hackberry, Arizona is. But down here you have two great mountain systems, the Rockies from the north and the Sierra Madre from the south, and two great deserts, the Sonoran in the west and the Chihuahuan in the east, that all converge here in southeast Arizona.

But I see this as a way that we are going to need to embrace for relating to other peoples and our own environment, is bio-regionally. Because we really should be – and I have a good friend who used to say “don't should on me” – because I used to say “you should do this, you should do that” as a species we should be more sensitive to the carrying capacity of our given environment. And there's a new book out: What Would the World Be Like Without Men? I need to get a copy of that book. And his conclusion is, what the world really needs is a lot fewer humans. Six billion plus now, and who knows how many – nine or ten billion by 2050. We've already surpassed the healthy carrying capacity long ago on much of the planet. This is a way of getting away from our – for lack of a better word – Provincialism. They're constraining our sense of boundaries: county, township, state, national.

DD Can you apply this approach to Route 66 as a whole? Or, I guess starting with Illinois?

BW The Route roughly goes through about five so-called bio regions that are distinctive. And I like to refer to my role as a 66er, as introducing people to the nature along 66 and leaving to others the highlighting the significant roles of individuals and architecture, because I'm most familiar with the nature.

Roughly, it's the tallgrass prairie region of Illinois, which is a part of this huge bio-region or province called the Central Lowlands, and that encompasses the whole heartland of north America. It goes all the way up to the Artic Circle. And again, it's distinctive and defined that way as far as its borders go, by these other factors: climate, rainfall, soil types, flora, fauna, etc.

So, you go through from Chicago to St. Louis, the tall-grass prairie province, then you climb up on the Ozark Plateau like a roller coaster for over three hundred miles, drop down, go through Kansas, and begin to enter the Great Plains province although you still have scattered stands of forest. The land opens up more and more and by the time you get to Oklahoma City, it's obvious that the annual rainfall is a little bit lower, you have more grasslands, rolling land where the forests are more and more restricted along waterways and little patches.

So roughly as you cross the Great Plains – which is also a part of this Central Lowlands – that goes all the way up to the Appalachian to the east. So the tallgrass prairies of Illinois merge into the mixed prairies or midgrass, and as you get closer to the rainshed over the Rockies, the grasses get shorter, you get into the shortgrass prairies. So once you reach the Rio Grande, you drop down into the valley there, in Albuquerque, you cross the Rio Grande and then you climb up on the Colorado Plateau. It's rather a round region that encompasses the Four Corners area, where the four states meet. And this Colorado Plateau is a very distinctive area, geologically, biologically.

And you cross that for about four hundred miles and it's full of spectacular mountain ranges and mesas, it's got the Painted Desert, the Petrified Forest, the Grand Canyon, the tallest point in Arizona, Humphrey's Peak, of the San Francisco Peaks. And then you drop down off the Colorado Plateau shortly before you get to Kingman and you enter the Mojave Desert and you cross the Mojave Desert for maybe two hundred and fifty miles to three hundred miles to just past Victorville, and then you encounter these great forests of Joshua tree.

This is another thing that you can't apply to states. But, these different regions have indicator species of plants and animals. For the Mojave Desert, it's the Joshua tree. But it's not in the interior of the desert, it's on the fringes. So, that kind of defines the boundaries of the Mojave Desert, where you see these stands of Joshua trees.

So you climb up to Cajon Pass, and you drop down into the L.A. basin, which is a Pacific Coastal Basin, which would be, bio-regionally, what is generally called the West Coast Provinces, for lack of a better name, that extends all the way down to the tip of Baja and all the way up and encompasses the whole of Alaska.

There's a lot of differences between northern Alaska and the tip of Baja, but for lack of a better name they just call that the West Coast Provinces. I say "they" – whoever came up with these titles: the Canadian Shield, which encompasses about a fourth of the American continent, and the Appalachian Highlands and the Atlantic Coastal Plain, and the Great Plains, Central Lowlands, Colorado Plateau, basin and range province, Rocky Mountains, Columbia Plateau and the West Coast Provinces for North America.

I like to think bio-regionally and I like to use that expression, bio-regionally, know your bio-region. In addition to knowing the standard boundaries that everyone knows.

DD

That's very well said and I appreciate the energy to take us all the way across the country in a bioregional context. Today we think of Route 66 as a place where we have these eight distinct states. Maybe we could talk a little bit about the other indicator fauna that you find as you move across these regions.

BW

Well, you'll encounter some of the precursors of some of what you'll see in the desert. You get to encounter as far east as Oklahoma and maybe even Kansas, and that would be your first scorpions and tarantulas and in Western Oklahoma your first kangaroo rats and pack rats and of course your first cactus that you'll encounter, that are noticeable would be in Texas, in the panhandle. And you come into the first stands of cactus which are tree cholla or staghorn cholla in the western part of the Texas panhandle and eastern New Mexico, but I could also say state by state there are distinctions that would include flora and fauna. Some are coincidental and they overlap, but the transition of species of plants and animals is more gradual.

And of course, it doesn't abide by either political boundaries or bioregional boundaries, and really I've always remembered an analogy of, say, in Illinois, where there's always this ebb and flow between forest and

grasslands, on and off cycles of drought or rainfall. You've got the grasslands advancing and pushing the forests back, the oak hickory forests and at other times you've got the oak hickory forests invading the grasslands and pushing the grasslands back. There are a lot of restoration projects going on to eradicate invasive species which is really a global phenomenon and a global problem of both plants and animals that are threatening native species of plants and animals. But, state by state, there are very noticeable, sometimes glaring, transitions. For me, the most exciting of all is kind of a little bit left of center in Oklahoma.

And I have always remembered from my first trip west. It was a family vacation in 1962, we went to Disneyland, 1962. I noticed, the land opened up west of Oklahoma City, all of a sudden I was out of the Midwest. I'd never been out of the Midwest except down to where it's even worse in a way, you've got even lush vegetation. But it did. The starkness, and the sparseness of the vegetation appealed to me, and the further west I traveled on that first family vacation, the better it got. And we dropped down at Amarillo, visited my dad's brother who was stationed in Amarillo at the Amarillo air base. We dropped down through Palo Duro Canyon. My first exposure to a canyon arid environment and we went down US 60 through Saltwater Canyon to Phoenix and visited other friends and then went on to LA on US 60.

I've often said, "I got bit by the desert bug on my first visit back in '62." Likewise with the Chiricahuas, ten years later, after my first exposure to the west. I visited southeast Arizona in 1972, and it was love at first sight. I fell in love with the Chiricahuas – maybe I didn't at the time, but that's what I started to say, and I always came back here until I got sidetracked and swept up in this great 66 revival, which was kind of begun in 1987 by Angel Delgadillo.

And for a few years there, I forgot all about my dream and plan to end up in the Chiricahuas. And I even lost contact with my good friends down there. I'd made several good friends, including my best friend who was the director of the research station: Vincent Roth. He passed away ten years ago. But by the time I remembered my dream of ending up here, it was too late. I already had my visitor's center at Hackberry which my dad bought for me with the mortgage on a part of our family farm in Illinois, and he bought this great property: 22 acres of

Hackberry, with a 1934 gas station long closed and a 1931 house and other out buildings, and I thought, “I can handle that. It’s a different desert but I can learn to love it, and it’s right where two bioregions meet: the Colorado Plateau and the Basin and Range Province.” And I created the 66 Visitor Center, but within a year or two, this would have been around ’95, it hit me: “Wow. I don’t want to spend the rest of my life here, on the edge of this road that I love so dearly.”

And it had become my yellow brick road. Economically it still is my main source of income. My main source of subjects for my artwork is stuff along 66. And I love anything old. It doesn’t have to be a forest or a species of animal – if it’s old I love it and feel protective of it and want to draw it. So I called Vince Roth down here. To make a long story short, I have fulfilled my dream and I moved from that place nine years ago. I sold it to a couple that still continue it, the Hackberry General Store. And I bought a place down here and it’s my piece of the farm. I bought it with the money from the Hackberry place which my dad had bought for me and I’m creating what I call the Chiracahua Nature Sanctuary about four hundred miles south of 66, but eventually I’ll have a little Route 66 room with my own Route 66 archives and mementos and souvenirs for display for the trickle of visitors, like you, that I get way down here, way off 66. And I love having a trickle of visitors rather than a flood. And that was one of the problems of Hackberry.

I had the place by myself. I got other projects, I’m trying to work on the book on my dad’s life, and I hear the first car doors shutting at maybe seven or eight o’clock in the morning, gotta get up and play “roadside host” to these fascinating people from all over the world. And sometimes I would have visitors stop in after dark, and I never had so much fun in my life, as during those five years, but things changed and I realized, “I’m not cut out to be a roadside gas-bag icon proprietor.” And I honed my skills and learned to give good interviews while I was there because there were so many people doing interviews along 66.

DD

So you have this period from ’72 when you first saw the area to the time in ’95 when you bought that place in Hackberry. How did you spend those years?

From '72 to '95? It was actually '93 when I got the place in Hackberry, right about the time my dad passed away, and actually we all came out on Amtrak to close the deal: Springfield, Illinois to Kingman. Cold as hell. January '93. And after my dad had passed away in August of '93, I moved out. But between '72 and '93, was the greatest, longest chapter in my life: going from town to town drawing posters. Mostly college towns, including Albuquerque – which I wouldn't call a college town, except there's a major university there. But mostly the college towns or smaller towns with bigger universities there, like Athens, Georgia, University of Georgia; or Iowa City, University of Iowa. And, I traveled from town to town drawing these student-oriented calendar posters that were sponsored by merchants.

And I'd get the posters started, and then go to the town, frequently a town I'd never been to before. I'd arrive into town cold, didn't know anybody there, and I'd have the poster started. I'd go door to door, and explain: "Here's my poster. I'm making a poster of your town and university and I'm selling space on it. If you'd like to be on it, \$35 to draw your logo, or \$45 to draw your building." It changed over the years, but during that thirteen-year period, actually from 1970 to about '82, I managed to make posters of 34 different towns in 15 different states.

I was pretty much on the road continuously and my itinerary was tailored to the seasons. So, get the hell out of the Midwest when winter approached and head south. And in nice weather, be up in the Midwest. I say that was thirteen years, till about '82, my dad had an idea from a postcard he picked up in Florida, of making a humorous postcard of the state of Illinois. He and my mom and I sat around coming up with these Illinois place names that were slightly different and humorous. The postcard my father had bought had place names like the Gulp of Messy Cola instead of the Gulf of Mexico. And what transpired, because I wanted to draw natural features like rivers and hills, which there are a lot of in southern Illinois, it turned out to be this large birds-eye view poster of the whole state of Illinois. So that pretty much marked the end of my college town calendar posters that I was making.

It went on to give me something that I could sell to buy gas and food with in the Southwest, I went ahead and made posters of Arizona and New Mexico and then California. I started one of Missouri many years ago and

never got it finished. And it never will be finished. My era of traveling from town to town – the hey-days were from '70 to '82, and around '72, when I first visited the Chirachahuas, I was on my way to San Diego. I made a poster of San Diego which was a big mistake in a way because I spent most of the money that I made from selling space on gas because I was selling space all the way up the coast of La Jolla, like 30 miles north of San Diego, so I probably covered a thousand miles to put that poster together. But what a blast. What fun.

Those first thirteen years were in my little Volkswagen station wagon, which I had bought in 1972, and we were a pair for thirteen years. I retired it in '85 when I bought my van, which I've now had twenty-two and a half years. And I found that van in an Auto Trader in the Portal Store. This was in 1985, looking through, specifically, for a Volkswagen van with a fixed fiber-glass top, not a pop top. A pop top wouldn't work for me because I need to be in and out of the back of the van many times on a given time. So there's a whole page of these vans with fixed tops. And I spotted this one and I thought: "That's the one." I called the guy up in Phoenix and the rest is history. Twenty-two and a half years together.

DD

Now over that period, it seems like that's the period when you're getting interested in Route 66 again.

BW

Okay, here's the story on that. I leave San Diego. I'd been done there painting signs at Swallows Sun Island Nudist Resort. That's another whole story and a great chapter in my life: sign painting on the side. So I left the San Diego area, headed up to Flagstaff where I'd been in phone touch with a woman in charge of student publications and campus maps. I had been commissioned to do a birds-eye view map of Northern Arizona University a couple years before. I did it. It was a great gig. They put me up in their little executive house there, and I did the campus map which is no longer used but initially it was printed and used. I get there at Flagstaff and she's gone. She's somewhere in Alaska, but on the phone we had arranged for me to show up there to make some changes on the campus map, and I walk in to this office on the campus and find out she's gone, and I'm on my way to Illinois anyway so I thought, "head on east."

Traffic was so heavy on the interstate from Flagstaff I'm looking for exits to get off and follow along. I know that's old 66. And just a few days before I had picked up a little

brochure at the Cozy Corner Restaurant which is on what they call the longest curve on 66. It's not really six miles long, but what they advertise is that it's six miles, between Hackberry and Kingman, Arizona. I'd stopped in there and sold them a few Arizona posters and I picked up one of these brochures: "Wow, this is interesting. 'Organizing meeting for Route 66 Association.'" So, I got 66 on the brain, and here east of Flagstaff – I hadn't met the Delgadillos yet – I'm getting off the interstate on my way to Illinois, and a light-bulb lights. This is in the fall of 1987, and I think: "I've got to make a map of 66. I'm a map-maker, that's the road that took me out of Illinois all these years, all these trips." And my mind is just spinning with thoughts and ideas, I'm working on the rough sketch, I'm starting to realize how much of Old 66 is left.

And before I get to Illinois, I'm thinking: "As soon as I get home and settled in briefly, I need to turn around and do a thorough research trip all the way to Santa Monica," which I did, and that was around November of '87, and I did my research, started my map, which took four and a half years to complete. So it wasn't done and printed until the spring of '92, and of course by that time, the 66 revival was well under way. But the thinking on 66 didn't really begin until the fall of '87, and I would say one of the little twists on that light-bulb for it to flash on was that little brochure I picked up, and that would have been the first little mimeographed things that was put out by Angel and these other people that got together and decided to do something about being bypassed by the interstate. So, the rest is history. And that's kind of when I forgot about my dream of ending up in the Chiracahuas, and it was replaced by ending up somewhere on 66, and a friend had sent me a copy of a story out of the Arizona Daily Star, Arizona's newspaper, this was about a half-page story on Route 66 and there was a color picture of the old Hackberry station, and I'm thinking: "That's the place. I've seen that place. It's abandoned." And on my next trip west, I spent an hour there, I walked all over the place. This was in '92. Actually it was a sales trip of my newly printed maps. It went all the way to Santa Monica. And I left a note on the door, and all the time inside the door, I can't believe I didn't see it: a note with the guy's name, **Bill Rohn**, and number, **Bill Rohn**, retired Santa Fe worker, and the note said "please call" my parents' number. And I checked in with them and they said "You're supposed to call Bill Rohn, the guy that owns that general store." Again, the rest is history. I got in

touch with him. We bought the place and... Bless his heart. He died around the same time my dad died. The same year: 1993.

From '72 on to '92, I still made regular trips down here. I managed to swing through southeastern Arizona on a regular basis and hang out here. And there was no anxiety about buying the place because I was in the midst of my career as a traveling artist. And my best friend in the area, Vincent Roth, was saving four acres for me. I knew I'd have a place when I was ready to get ahead. It turned out he and his family decided not to sell that four acres so I ended up getting an even better deal: forty acres, further down the road. And I shouldn't tell that story... But I wouldn't have been happy on the four acres because it's right on the edge of Portal. There's too much traffic and urbanization up there compared to my place which seems like it's in the middle of nowhere even though it's only five miles down the road from Portal.

DD

Tell me a little bit about this revival movement. Can you kind of document the stages in it.

BW

I would say that what it became, early on was an object of affection, almost worship, and adoration from people from all over the world: Route 66, and what is associated with it, which is the freedom, going west, orange groves, a better life, great distance, which is especially appealing to people from tiny nations, like Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, France: compared to the U.S. they're tiny nations. Japan. And these visitors from other countries, can't cross it in one day, whereas over there in Europe, they can cross two or three nations in a single day. So what people associate with 66, this sense of freedom and openness, appeals to everybody, people from this country and other countries. And I realized early on, especially once I had my place by the side of the road that I opened up the International Bioregional Old Route 66 Visitor's Center, right there at the station. I had banners hanging right there out front.

And I had visitors, during the five and a half years I was there, from sixty different nations and all fifty states. I'm sure that's been surpassed by a lot of stops along 66 now, but I realize, hearing other people's stories, so many of them, they saw the series, and their dream was to come over here and travel Route 66. It's a bond that is shared. Even people that don't speak English, they're still a part of this great, global, 66 family, that have this one object

that is central to them, and it's touching that so many people from other countries, are members in the 66 associations here, and each of the eight states has 66 associations, and other associations and publications, like the latest, which is the Route 66 Pulse. This is the most timely news along 66 because all the other publications are quarterly, and this is monthly. But the sense of family and connectedness and kinship is a wonderful thing. People from all walks of life and all over the planet, they get on 66 and they're home. That's their "Mother Road."

DD That's splendid. The story goes that Illinois was the first place to officially lose its Route 66 status. And that people were following the crews who were taking down the signs and putting up new ones.

BW You say "following the crews who were taking down 66 signs and putting up interstate signs"?

DD No, they're putting up 66 signs. That's the story I've heard.

BW I haven't heard that. But I would say, Illinois has more of the commemorative brown and white reflective signs up than any other state, but they were the last state to get them up. All the other states were ahead of the game. Illinois was the last of the eight states to designate Historic Route 66. Do you know what decade or year?

DD I thought this was in the early eighties as they were pulling it out.

BW The 66 designation which was officially stricken from the record in 1985, is that right? Well, in '84, the last stretch was bypassed in Williams. The following year, in 1985, the Route was officially de-certified. I need to find out the exact date of that de-certification. I didn't know. I'd like to find out the sequence and the order in which the signs were removed in each of the eight states. I did hear that a huge quantity of these original 66 shields... there were entrepreneurs even back then, and they bought up these signs, they got them free from the highway departments and some of the highway department employees, knowing the significance of this, hoarded them and shared them, and I know that a lot of these new signs that are up are also stolen, periodically, and usually the state associations had to maintain the signs.

The Highway Departments in each state would put up these commemorative signs as long as the state

associations paid the money for them. And they quickly realized they're going to have to use steel poles because people were cutting off the wooden posts and taking the whole post and the sign. But I don't know about that "following behind them putting up signs," except I do know that Illinois was the last state to re-sign 66, but they did the most thorough job with even multiple alignments that I still don't know that much about, some of these alternative alignments of 66.

DD Well, in 1985, you have Angel Delgadillo forming this association of people who are interested in Route 66.

BW '87.

DD '87. Okay. What happened next in the revival of Route 66?

BW The first ever event occurred, and that was the Arizona Route 66 Association Fun Run, and the first one was in 1988. And I got to attend it, and the governor, Rose Mafford was there, and also Will Rogers Jr. was there, and Angel and Jerry Richard who was killed in a plane crash, tragically, flying back from Phoenix to Kingman. He was one of the main spark-plugs in the early 66 association. That was the first-ever Route 66 event. And that was in the spring of '88, and they held the twentieth Route 66 Fun Run up there. And it's a weekend event that starts in Seligman, Arizona and ends at Topock on the Colorado River, which is the longest, continuous alignment of 66 that you can take. You don't have to get on the interstate at all. Although I found a longer one, but that's a whole other story.

This is a great weekend event, and it's the granddaddy of all the Route 66 motor tours and has continued now for twenty years. And after that, let's see, '88... Michael Wallis's book came out in 1990, and right around that year was the first ever Steinbeck Award event, and it was organized by David Knudson, who founded the Route 66 Federation in California. And they held that first ever Steinbeck Awards at an unusual place, in Landergin, Texas, halfway between Vega and Adrian. This is about fifty miles west of Amarillo. George Rook opened this place up called the 66 Neon Soda Fountain. One of the biggest collections of vintage, authentic 66 signs anywhere. That first Steinbeck Awards banquet where Michael Wallace received the first ever John Steinbeck Award, was held in a big tent there at Landergin, Texas,

which is kind of out in the middle of nowhere. That was right around 1990, and then successively the next state, (I don't know the sequence of the other states, but within a few years, the other seven states had associations and I got to be in on some of the early discussions on forming an Illinois Route 66 association, which Tom Teague was mainly the main impetus in getting the Illinois 66 Association established, along with others up and down the road. And Tom Teague passed away three years ago, and then in short order, all eight states had associations. And then France and Belgium and Germany and Japan and maybe some other countries, had their own 66 associations, so it kind of snow-balled and of course Martin Milner – he was a big celebrity draw at a lot of these 66 events, but he's no longer in good enough health to attend them. Michael Wallis still shows up, and there are plenty of other icons now that the torch can be passed to that have made their own significant contributions to 66, like you, for instance, or Shellee Graham the great photographer in St. Louis who has since moved to Oklahoma.)

DD

Where are we now in the revival of interest in Route 66 in 2007?

BW

Well I would say things are going great guns here and there. On the other hand, talking to Marty Blitstein – the treasurer of the Illinois Association, he recently told me that membership is way down in the Illinois Association, and according to merchants along 66, you can hear good news and bad news, where business is way down here, and I talked to Dawn Welch at the Rock Café and they're as busy as ever. So it's spotty. Of course there are people like Mike Callens at the Teepee Curios in Tucumcari – poor Tucumcari, they just get too many 66ers that are passing through, and they'll stop and take pictures of the famous Teepee Curios and the famous Blue Swallow Motel right across the street, but they won't stay, and sometimes they don't even go in to buy a little trinket or souvenir, which I can remember well from my years at Hackberry, wishing that I could just charge money for the times that people would stop and take a picture and then roar off in their car. Here I am waiting on somebody to come in and buy something.

Of course, one of the developments recently is the plan to establish a Route 66 Association, kind of tailored after what was established in the 1930s, that Jack Cutberth was real active in. He was the barber from Clinton, Oklahoma,

and he and his wife Gladys traveled not only up and down 66, but way off 66 to promote tourism on 66. So at the International 66 Festival in Clinton last June, I wasn't there but I've read and heard about it, there was a get-together including Michael Wallis and I believe Michael Taylor, to discuss the need for yet another association that would not be competing with the state associations or the federation which still puts out its quarterly publication.

So, that's exciting news and I would say the future of 66 is assured because there's no way the significance of its role in the history of America is going to be diminished. It's going to continue to be a significant role. You've got the Dust Bowl era, decade, and the World War II era, and the first time that the whole nation had good enough roads, and affordable vehicles that they could hit the road right after World War II. And of course people all over the world, if they have the wherewithal to come to the U.S., that's top on their list of choices. What have you got? New York, and Disneyland, and Mt. Rushmore, the Grand Canyon, which is close to 66, and then 66. That's one of the highest priorities for visitors to this country, is Route 66. And there are young people coming into the fold, and one of the people most responsible for that is the 66 hippie chick, and she moved from St. Louis, or rather, Edward or Alton, Illinois. She and her husband moved to Tulsa. I can't think of her name.

DD

Emily.

BW

Emily. Who has done this Internet thing for children. And there are other children-oriented 66 coloring books. I'm working on... I shouldn't say that. I have an idea to someday work on my own children's coloring book that would feature the nature along 66, I don't know when I would get to that project, but it's heartening to see... And the *Cars* movie really helped, and I've read many stories about how that influenced families to change their plans. Kids would say, "I want to see 66, I don't want to go to Disneyland." So the families take 66 because the *Cars* movie was placed along 66. And of course John Lasseter received the first-ever Will Rogers Award for producing that movie. And Michael Wallis received, just last June, the second-ever Will Rogers Award, so he is unique among the recipients, which includes me. I got a John Steinbeck Award too. There were seven of the John Steinbeck awards given, I believe, and now it's the Will Rogers Award, but Michael is the only one to be the

recipient of both the Steinbeck Award and the Will Rogers Award.

DD One of the problems that I'd like your opinion about... You've referred to the difficulties with the Illinois Association – it's the same in New Mexico. There is an association on paper, but they suffer from what a friend of mine called "Founder's Disease," that people that started these associations are no longer, to an extent, able to carry them forward.

BW They're either burned out, or, in some cases, they're deceased. And it's also bad in California, where one couple pretty much put out the whole newsletter on their own, and membership is way down. There's two Route 66 museums next door to each other. One in Barstow, and one in Victorville. But membership to the Association is really down. Who knows what can be done about that. Each association just has to do the best they can and cut back wherever it's necessary. Say, if they have to go to a thinner quarterly news magazine, so be it.

DD I'd like to talk a little bit more about you and your own artistic training to understand a little bit, eventually, about art on Route 66. How did you learn to illustrate and make maps?

BW Mostly it was when I would call "on the job training." I would say, when I made my first poster of my hometown, Springfield, Illinois, which was printed in 1970, I didn't know how to draw. I can look at that poster and think, "Whoa, that is really awful. Little trees that don't look anything at all like trees, little cars with the perspective way way off." But as I went from poster to poster, I got better, and I've always been intrigued with great detail. I don't know where it started. When I was little, my favorite toys were matchbox series, and we had a sandbox, so I could create these little roads and my mom would save things I would do, and one thing was on a sheet, just starting out on number one: 2-3-4-5, I don't know what I got up to, like 1,000 on one page, and a few little doodles that my mom saved that go way back to the fifties. I didn't draw big, I always drew small, so I kind of took to my specialty, which was micro-detail, from the start.

And to make a poster, and most of my early calendar posters were twenty-five inches across and thirty-eight inches tall, that's a lot of room to fill up. So I was able to

get a few hundred thousand strokes and draw maybe fifty or sixty different buildings and little roads, and print these little quotes, political and environmental quotes sprinkled all over the poster, and I had friends, including the one who got away – Carol, my old girlfriend – she’d say, “Can’t you just leave a little space here” and I told her “no, that’s wasted space, I’ve got to fill it up.” All the way out to the edges. The printer always had to reduce my posters two or three percent so as not to cut anything off because I’d go all the way out to the edges. It was mostly on the job training. Before I dropped out of college for the last time. That was SIU at Carbondale. I’d taken a drawing course. And I think I got a C-minus in it. I didn’t have a real good rapport with the teacher, and I don’t think I got a whole lot out of that course. I still have a lot of the stuff I did during that course.

And I took Art Appreciation and I enjoyed that because you get to see the artwork of the great masters and then I made it halfway through the Famous Artists School, which is this correspondence course, and I talked my dad into it saying, “Yeah, I’d really like to do that.” And the guy came into the Cozy Dog and he’s talking about this course: seven hundred bucks, and you had to sign up for it and then you get your lessons to do and then you draw your lessons and you send it into the headquarters in Westport, Connecticut, and you wait a week or two weeks and you get it back with little comments and critiques and a grade from these professional artists that work for famous artists. There’s also a Famous Photographers School, a Famous Writers School. I say halfway through, because I kind of gave up on it out of the boredom or monotony. But someday I want to take a watercolor class from a professional watercolorist because I’ve really been getting into watercolor but I don’t know what the hell I’m doing. That’s fine, because at the scale I work, I can wing it. Without knowing what I’m doing, I can create these little watercolor compositions that seem to please most people. They’re impressed by them.

My strengths as an artist are a good sense of perspective and proportion. One of my favorite practice exercises is to do a watercolor without any pencil layout because you can’t erase the watercolor. So, I concentrate on my strength which is getting it right the first time as far as proportion and perspective goes. I can’t change it too much once it’s down there. So, I play up my strengths and I love to study the works of other artists and try to pick

out what their strengths are. Of course from a distance, just about any drawing or painting, it looks better, more “right-on” and the closer you get, you see that doesn’t really look like various plants and rocks. But you get that effect the further back you get. Of course with my stuff, it’s so tiny, it looks like a gray area from a few feet back, you’ve got to get up close to see the detail. But I do plan to expand my abilities as an artist and work larger in the different mediums including oil paint which I haven’t gone into yet.

DD I’m going to have to change tapes here, so we can take a break. Could you characterize a little bit the kinds of art that is made about Route 66?

BW Well, I have a favorite artist along 66, and I affectionately refer to him as “the other Route 66 artist.” You would know his work.

DD Jerry?

BW Jerry McClanahan. Who is a master of making watercolor look like oil point. Now he paints in oils also, but he paints in watercolor, and he does larger subjects of landmarks along Route 66. And the classic vehicles, and there are some other artists. There’s one I got to meet in California, just about three years ago, and I can’t think of his name, but he is a master. Great guy. You may see one of his compositions, because he did a portrait of Angel Delgadillo, smiling right there in front of his place. That’s by this artist in California. I’m actually not familiar with too many other artists’ work. Two or three other artists have created note cards and prints that I see in stores along 66. I don’t personally know those artists, but I’m an admirer and a fan and small time supporter. I’ve bought a lot of postcards and note cards and small prints of the work of other artists on 66.

DD Why don’t we take a break here, and you can stretch and we can come back and finish up our discussion.

BW It’s probably been over an hour.

David Dunaway All right this is the next tape. As we talk about art on Route 66, we could talk about the art that was done long ago that still is there. Such as the Merrimac Cavern signs from the classic period of Route 66, that’s the kind of commercial art, isn’t it?

Bob Waldmire

Well and what would be called the Society of Commercial Archeology: commercial but significant historically. Like the Pops Hicks sign that was found and purchased and donated to the Oklahoma Route 66 museum. Several people went in together to buy that sign. But I forgot one significant thing concerning the art of Route 66 -- the murals, and murals are making a big comeback all over, maybe even in other countries. But I know along Route 66 there is a big emphasis on murals. And the two towns that come to mind are Cuba, Missouri and Tucumcari. Doug and Sharon Quarles -- I call them the Rembrandts of mural art. They've done about 15 murals in Tucumcari.

Then there are different artists that have been doing these wonderful murals in Cuba, Missouri. And that's outside my realm of expertise. Although I have my own 50-foot-long mural map of Route 66 in progress. And that's in downtown Kingman. That's an ongoing project. I got a few other small ones; I call them mural maps because they've not really composition as much as they are line maps. But that is a real significant component of 66-related artwork. Of course they don't all focus on Route 66 historically, but other parts of a town's history. Like in the case of Cuba, that's a famous grape-growing area. So most of the murals there pertain to the early grape and wine-making history.

DD

What kinds of different approaches do people take to art on 66? How would you say what you do different than Jerry or some of this new generation of muralists?

BW

Well I know with Doug and Sharon who do the mural in Tucumcari, they're looking for sources of income and grant money. And people should be willing to pay them. Because they are master artists of doing huge ones -- one of their murals is a hundred feet long. And they've been doing them for peanuts because the money isn't there. In Jerry's case he has quite a few outlets along 66 for his postcards. But he is trying to get moved up to 66. He lives quite a ways off 66 in Texas. But I've got it made in the shade as a 66 artist because I've got my stuff in places all along the road, all the way out to the Santa Monica Pier Bait and Tackle Shop, on the end of the Santa Monica Pier. They sell my postcards and color maps of 66. And I'm a one-man operation where I don't have anybody else involved with the marketing or the distributing of my work except my customers who sell them. I'm working with my friend Mitch Webster here of the Portal Store in

Portal, Arizona. We've got several ideas of marketing my artwork via the Internet. And as far as others, I say I don't know any of the other 66 artists besides Jerry McClanahan and Doug and Sharon Quarles. I haven't met any of the muralists that do the wonderful murals in Cuba. And each time I've traveled on along 66, I see other murals popping up that I hadn't before seen. And I get greatly inspired and excited. Not only for the possibility of me doing a large mural. But there is somebody else doing stuff on 66. And as far as the other artists, that I know there are a lot of authors. There are endless new books and videos that are coming out on 66. And I can't keep up with them all.

DD

One of the things that has posed me some difficulties about this road is that it seems to some that it's a road that goes only backwards in time. That it's about capturing the good old days. And I think in my work, as you listen to it, you'll hear that I have tried to suggest that there is more dynamism to grow. There are the good old days, and there are also bad old days. And there are communities that have been displaced along the road. And people that have been displaced along this long road. And that as I think about route 66, there may be more to it than nostalgia. And do you see this coming up in to the art of Route 66? People who want to look at it perhaps critically?

BD

Well a lot of what's happening on Route 66 is very progressive and visionary and looking forward. I would say, like Pops, this place that is brand new in Arcadia, Oklahoma. Which is going to be a world, architecturally, one-of-a-kind structure but as far the nostalgia goes, what I've always thought is that if people get into 66. It should be able to help people slow down in their own lives. To take something from the good old days and nostalgia of 66, and let it alter their own lives as far as figuring out ways to slow down and maybe embrace these old slower ways. I had a slogan, "Old is beautiful, small is beautiful, slow is beautiful," associated with 66. Yeah, it became a dangerous highway really quickly. Traffic was way too heavy and every curve on 66 has been called Bloody; or every stretch, whether it's a hill or poor visibility, Dead Man's Curve or Bloody 66.

And we can't bring the past back, of course, we have to go forward. But I think it would behoove us to slow down in any way we can but how do we do that? It's the global economy. And you're either in it or you're left behind.

Lucky for me, I'm a rare one, because I don't even know how to use a pocket calculator. I don't need to know. I have friends like my friend Mitch Webster, who knows how to use the Internet, so I let that expertise fall to others and I'll just keep to my old-fashioned drawing. But I think there are ways for people to take something from learning more about the old days. Yes, there were bad old days for sure, besides good old days, like the Dust Bowl era and people having nothing; not even a vehicle to drive to California, but going on foot or hitch-hiking or walking all the way. But there's so much that the road has to offer historically when it was certified the whole network of roads in 1926. You've got these roughly different decades, and the great old era when it was safe to hitch-hike. And everybody was honored to pick up a soldier in uniform. That's how soldiers got up and down the road. They didn't have to ride a bus or a train. They got out there in the road and they were pretty much assured of a ride. So people were all kind of stuck in the present and can't really change the destiny or course they were on, except personally.

People can change their own lives, to some extent, but I think this exposure to 66 is a good thing, even if it's just fun for people. And they got their photos to take and I see so many... these wonderful albums that people make along the way. And they have people sign them or they take Michael Wallis's book The Mother Road and have people autograph where they are. And it becomes a valuable keepsake and memento that they share with other generations. I think any historic entity has the potential for great significance in an individual's life, influencing a person to either slow down in some way or take stock of the past. And for years I religiously would not get on the interstate except when it's unavoidable, where there is no 66 left to drive, for fear that someone would see my van upon the interstate and say, "Aw, you're on the interstate!" But quite a few years ago, like everybody else, I don't have time to take every piece of 66 anymore. I decided time is money.

But on this upcoming trip in early November it's gonna be a caravan of 2. And it's my Mustang and this U-haul truck that I have an in-progress ten-foot-long mural map of route 66 painted on the side. And we are going to take just about every drivable stretch of 66, from Springfield, Illinois to Santa Rosa and then cut off there 'cause that's the quickest route down here to Portal, Arizona from 66.

So that's gonna be great fun and I'm getting the word out in case anybody happens to see the Mustang and this little truck with a mural map, they can join in and tag along or take pictures or wave or honk or whatever.

DD Do you worry ever that Route 66 is becoming too much like a theme park, too much like the commercial undertaking?

BD No, 'cause there's too many varied individuals that are in on the action. But I've always remembered this concern expressed. I don't remember who expressed it, but it was back towards the beginning of this revival. One person said if we are not careful, 66 will end up being a two-thousand-mile-long theme park. And in a way it is that, but there are so many differences and now you've got the National Park Service involved with dispersing grant money. The individuals vary so much: you've got the well-heeled individuals. I haven't met the guy that's built Pop's, but it's a multi-million dollar endeavor he is creating there. (It's just a block from the Round Barn.) Then you've got Butch, bless his heart, who grew up in the station right beside the Round Barn. And he is the main curator. There's another artist on 66, and Butch has kind of Parkinson's disease. His work is distinctive cause you can see the jaggedness of his lines, but he is master of proportion, plus he cartoons. He draws them on these pizza cardboards, the round things he's got them on display and the round baronets, that's folk art there.

And there is another guy near the Rock Café in Stroud, Oklahoma, who I only met him briefly in Clinton but one of his projects; he does sculptures in Styrofoam, of various icons and landmarks. But he's got an old Volkswagen van and he has created Fillmore Van from the movie Cars. He has replicated it with the flowers and peace signs. I haven't seen it yet, but I'm going to soon on our way to Illinois – but there is a great diversity of individuals that are in on the action. Like the guy that saved Amboy in Roy's Café. He's an entrepreneur. He's got a chain of these chicken restaurants in the L.A. area. So he had the money to buy the place. I think he paid \$400 and some thousand. It was on the market for a million and they dropped the price down. So Roy's couldn't be saved without somebody that had the wherewithal to save it. And so many other people like Bob Audette, what a treasure of history. That guy, he was born in '26, when 66 was certified -- and what a guy.

DD: Thank you for very much for taking the time to go through all this. Do we have your permission to transcribe this interview and deposit it with the research collection?

BD I would be honored.