

Fred Peterson
Narrator

Mary Klauda
Interviewer

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- MK: 00:00 Okay. Fred, we're recording now. Okay. This is Mary Klauda, and I'm interviewing Fred Peterson today, and it's Monday, October 10, 2002. And this interview is taking place virtually on Zoom. And Fred is in Maryland and I am in Minnesota. So welcome, Fred. Thank you for agreeing to do this interview. Can you tell me a little bit about your background and what brought you to Minnesota and to UMM back in the early '60s?
- FP: 00:36 Well, I was working for a doctor's degree in art history at the University of Minnesota, and I finished that degree and was awarded in the spring of 1960. And while I was doing that, Rod Briggs, the first chancellor of the Morris Campus contacted me. We had an interview and offered me the job at Morris. I had lots of other offers, but I wanted the one closer to home in Chicago where my mother and my aunt were. I wanted to be back to help them or whatever, because they were both quite elderly. So Morris was a good choice, and I liked the countryside rather than the city. And the environment was something to get used to out on the prairie, but it was a good experience.
- MK: 01:28 And Fred, can you tell me a little bit about your background? You went to St. Olaf, and some of your time there as a student.
- FP: 01:41 I came from South Chicago on the prompting of the Lutheran church because St. Olaf is a Lutheran college. I'd gone to a junior college in Chicago on the south side, wasn't doing much work and I was still getting good grades. But then I decided to drop out, save enough money that first summer and spring that I could afford to go to St. Olaf. At that time, the cost for everything, the transportation, the food, the tuition was \$1,100. Can you imagine that?
- MK: 02:17 That's a good deal.

- FP: 02:18 So it was affordable. It was right after the GIs went through the GI bill, and the colleges were looking for warm bodies to fill the classrooms because they were emptied by the graduating class of it must be 1949. And that was a good experience. It was transformative for me because I learned it was a good thing to study, to learn, to do well in the classroom, and it was very stimulating to be there.
- MK: 02:51 And you did spend some time in the seminary.
- FP: 02:55 That's right. Yeah. At that time, there was no pressure to get a job right away. So after graduating from St. Olaf in 1954, I went to Luther Seminary in St. Paul for three years. Not intending to be a clergy, I just wanted to learn church history and get a firmer background in theology.
- MK: 03:20 Okay. Well, moving on now, you're in Morris and one of your—the main things and main focus of your work there was the UMM gallery that you developed, the gallery in the HFA building. Can you tell me something about the inception of the gallery and how you or others made it happen? And I realized the gallery didn't start in HFA, but—
- FP: 03:47 Right. I was hired as an assistant professor and I had, I guess, threefold responsibility. I was to initiate the curriculum in studio art and in art history, and then begin the gallery program. So I was busy doing those three things the first few years and beyond. And the gallery was not too difficult at the beginning, we didn't have—we only had one hallway, and it's a hall to fill, and that took about 10 or 12 paintings. And I could contact artists that I knew in the Twin Cities and arrange a meeting for them. I went down with a pickup truck and loaded their paintings and put them in the hall, labeled them all.
- 04:35 And from there, it went from the hallway to the foyer of the restrooms downstairs in Edson Hall, and finally upstairs in a larger room when the library moved to another location. So it was one little step at a time. And it wasn't until HFA was developed and opened that the gallery really became an important responsibility.
- MK: 05:05 How were you able to—I mean, you talk about just calling your friend artists, people you knew, how were you able to convince artists, many who were of significant renown,

how would you convince them to display their works in a gallery at a college in West Central Minnesota?

- FP: 05:28 Art artists are generally anxious to display their work, and that was the first premise I worked on. Plus the fact that in the early '60s, there seemed to be a general greater cooperative spirit, and people were willing to go out of the way to help in these kinds of programs. And the process was slow without computers, I had to write a letter longhand to the artist. And that went to the secretary and she typed it out on yellow paper and then I edited it, then she typed it out on the letterhead of the university, sent it off, and then we had to wait because nothing was instant.
- 06:16 So it was more of an ad hoc program at the beginning, I'd wait for the first response. And then when I got that, I started working on the others until we filled the whole year. It wasn't until maybe 1970, '72 that I could work on a schedule for the whole year and plan it in advance. So it was step by step.
- MK: 06:42 Do you recall how many exhibits you could manage in a year, in an academic year?
- FP: 06:48 I was too ambitious at first. I would have about maybe seven. And then finally, when we got to the larger space of HFA gallery, Kevin and I decided to reduce it to maybe two a quarter or two or three a semester, whenever we changed the schedule. And Kevin Flicker was my assistant from 1975 on, and it was about then that we really started to develop the program in a fuller sense.
- MK: 07:23 And who—so when you developed these exhibits, was it just a one-man show or you and Kevin, were you able to draw in—
- FP: 07:34 It depended. Sometimes we had three people represented according to a certain theme. Other times it was one person downstairs in the ground floor of the gallery, and another person in the mezzanine. There's usually two artists at a time. Sometimes they would deliver the work, and other times, we would receive it or they were shipped out to work on the truck. One delivery was spectacular, it was by Stu Luckman, who was a fullback for the Vikings. He was working with huge metal sculptures made of I-beams. And he brought them out in the truck, wheeled them in, and arranged them in the gallery.

- MK: 08:19 Oh, my gosh.
- FP: 08:21 And I thanked him. That was one example of the way artists were willing to cooperate and the concern they had in showing their work. Because the gallery was a really decent show place. It was like one gallery in the Walker Art Center.
- MK: 08:37 It was significant, I remember. Yeah. Did you get your— were your students involved at all in the exhibitions? Was that part of a way to get—
- FP: 08:47 Well, I had work study students at first, and they could help me with the opening of the crates and hauling stuff around and running errands. And sometimes, I sent them out locally to locate an artist in the area, send them to Fergus Falls or to Fargo. And as long as they could be authorized to drive and pick things up in that way. But it wasn't until Kevin came along, who was a really wonderful, skilled artist in his own right, a carpenter and a skilled craftsman.
- 09:25 And all of that infrastructure of the gallery came into place where he could build sculpture stands and rings, the lights, keep up the gallery prep room in terms of the permanent collection, and do all those tasks that became to accumulate the longer we were in the program.
- MK: 09:48 Right. And did you have students working on the catalog at all for each exhibition?
- FP: 09:56 Toward the end, around 1999, 2000, I had what I call gallery interns, two or three students a year, who would help with the gallery in terms of moving things around, making labels, and the peripheral infrastructure stuff. But one show in the spring was assigned to them and we knew what it was going to be because we were planning in advance. They were to write a catalog for the show.
- 10:26 So we had reproductions of the artist's work, we got information from the artist. Sometime they would call and interview or ask questions of the artist and then write a catalog. It wasn't a big thing, but it was a practice in terms of how to present the work and print to the visitors of the gallery and compliment what they saw.
- MK: 10:53 And I know that at times, and I remember from being there, that you displayed—there was art that was displayed in

other buildings on campus. Can you—and that was under your purview. Can you tell me a little bit more about that?

FP: 11:10 Well, from the beginning, we started to acquire work from artists. And at first, the prices were really reasonable. Our budget wasn't large, but we tried to get—I tried to get at least one work from each show if possible. And some of the early exhibits came from commercial galleries which would send out prints, etchings, engravings, lithographs at a reasonable cost, and we could buy those.

11:38 So from the beginning, we were slowly building up a permanent collection. But the principal, this would be not just housed in the prep room, we didn't even have one of those at first. And then they'd be framed and stationed in different places on campus. And I think the campus is fairly well-represented now in every building, and with a permanent collection.

MK: 12:06 And I recall reading that there was—you had something at the food service that had to be taken down?

FP: 12:15 No. That was a large painting, about four-foot square of a red background and a red sofa, and a red clad mother and child sitting on it, rather abstract. They were not attractive figures. So we put that in the Louie's Lower Level, which was a food service building in Imholte Hall. And it hung there for a while, and then it disappeared. Someone took it down and we didn't know where it was.

12:45 So as a answer to that, I made an op art sign which just said, big red letters, spelling, C-H-E-W, chew. And that was an insult, of course, to the Louie's Lower Level. But that stayed up longer than the painting that disappeared. And years later, one of my work study students had worked with food services and plant services, and he discovered the painting in a heating tunnel beneath the building. So we finally got it back in the collection.

MK: 13:25 And can you tell me about in the gallery, I recall reading that there was—that people thought that it was just a space that could be used for things other than art. Can you speak to that a little bit?

FP: 13:45 I'll give a little background, because at the beginning, people in Western Minnesota weren't accustomed to art galleries, that in itself was new. And the beginning of the

finance for the gallery came from student activity service. And the student body leaders were a little bit stingy about the funds that were going to this place, but they didn't really have much knowledge of it. And in fact, they thought we were in entertainment and they objected to the fact that we were serving small amounts of food with every opening. Why do you need food for that?

14:28 So the—it took time to keep a sense that the gallery was an important part of liberal art, and the experience of seeing original art was something that was essential because it had benefited the studio art students as well as the art history students, and it tried to appeal to the whole student body. And sometimes people wanted to hold personal family receptions in the gallery when the HFA was finished, and that fine space was available.

15:08 But it wasn't available because we didn't want to have problems with our insurance, we had to insure every work and every show, and it wasn't a kind of insurance that had a clause that you could have lots of people in the gallery at one time for a festivity. It wasn't a playroom, it was a gallery.

MK: 15:31 It's an art gallery.

FP: 15:32 So that was another problem to define the gallery for what it was, and protect the works of art and keep the space secure. Not that we're going to be wild wedding parties, but—

MK: 15:46 Right. But it wasn't your job to be a wedding planner and decorate the hall with art.

FP: 15:56 We did have to monitor the gallery closely when we had certain events on campus. And one of them was the Future Farmers of America, young women. And that was not chaperoned very well. Students were running all over HFA, they like to go up and down on the elevator because it was the only one in the western part of the state. And I had to stop a young woman who was walking through the gallery that had a lot of ceramic on pedestals and she was bouncing a basketball through the gallery.

16:33 I went ballistic and told her to get out of there, and her mother was one of the chaperones. And the mother chastised me for chastising her daughter, and it went all the

way up to the Dean's office after that because such a disturbance would occur. But I was hoping that people could use common sense.

MK: 16:52 Sure. Regarding the exhibits, was there any exhibit—I know it's probably hard to say just one, but any exhibit that was particularly meaningful to you?

FP: 17:11 There was someone—I just found a bookmark in a book I read a long time ago, it was from 1995, I think. There were three women artists, one from Maryland, one from Canada, and one from California. And we were getting possible galleries, shows from all over the place, and I saw the women's work and I thought it would work well together because they were using words, letters printed out, and imagery. So I got them all together and arranged a show to be in the spring.

17:55 They all decided to come out for the opening. It was fantastic because they came from California and Maryland and Canada. And I didn't have to arrange the transportation, they just did it themselves. The husband from the artist from California was a fisherman, so I arranged him to go fishing, ice fishing. It was in the winter, it wasn't the spring. And we entertained him in our home. That was just one of those spontaneous things that just developed and grew. So that thing was very meaningful. The artists were so willing and cooperative and generous with their work and their time.

18:41 The other exhibits were the last two, the one on African sculpture and art, and the other one was on Aboriginal Australian painting. And the African show was arranged through [inaudible 18:55] who was a collector of African art, because she spent 30 years in Africa, moved back to Minneapolis with her home. She had a three-bedroom rambler that was just full of those things.

19:08 And I discovered her art because she was selling it through a shop at Lake and Hennepin, and I was invited to her home and started seeing everything she had, and we arranged the exhibit by me going through it all, packing it up. Kevin and I transported it back to Morris and he made umpteen pedestals as I needed them, and got the show together. And Janine Ellis was the great publicist for that show. She kept telling everybody, you got to see it because you'll never see or have an opportunity like this to get so

close to these things. And I had elementary school students come up by class to show them around.

- MK: 19:54 Excellent.
- FP: 19:56 It was fun.
- MK: 19:57 And it was truly serendipity how you actually met this woman, it sounds like.
- FP: 20:03 Yeah. Just going by her shop and being acquainted with her. And she was anxious to have a show at the university because it would give more prestige to her collection. And I spent two and a half days at her home selecting things and wrapping them in bubble wrap and getting them ready to ship. And she had a standing figure of about five feet tall, an African, more representational, realistically. She wanted that in the show, but it was evaluated at a million and a half dollars. And I told her, there's no way we can do that because we don't have insurance like that, we cover it up to a certain amount.
- 20:46 And she said, well, I guess we can't do it then. So I said, I wasn't going to unwrap everything I wrapped already. But when I visited her, I always brought bagels. There was a great bagel shop in St. Cloud. That's what I brought, a dozen of bagels. And once she said that, I said, well, let's stop and just have a bagel. And I persuaded her to continue.
- MK: 21:10 Well, I'll think of that next time I eat bagels.
- FP: 21:14 It's a lot of public relations with this. It was all interesting.
- MK: 21:17 Yeah. And it sounds like you really were able to pull it off. Can you—just moving back on your teaching, can you share some stories about your colleagues at UMM or students or just people in the community that you worked with? I know John Ingle I think is one that—when I think of the art program at Morris, it's Fred Peterson and John are the names that come to mind.
- FP: 21:53 At the beginning, back in the '60s and the '70s, I was pretty much totally in charge of the gallery, I just did everything. But when HFA came along and by mid-'70s, the whole art faculty became a committee that reviewed the submissions and my plans for the gallery. We would meet and we would—I would show slides of the submitted work, and we would decide which ones to take and which ones not to

take. In fact, toward the end, we were getting 40 submissions a year for just maybe nine shows, so we had to weed things out.

22:37 So everybody, the art historians and the studio people cooperated and contributed to the gallery program. And so we finally narrowed it down to the ones we wanted in the gallery time and space available. There were no big contentions with that, that went relatively smoothly. Everybody had their own point of view, and sometimes an artist either really wanted to represent—I had to compromise and say, well, we can't do that because nobody wants him or nobody wants her work.

23:18 I began the studio art department or curriculum in the '60s, and for six years, I was teaching sculpture. And again, when HFA came along, it introduced welding and ceramics, metal casting. I didn't know anything about that. So I resigned against the wishes of the administration, and they hired Butch Jack on a two-third basis. I don't know if you ever knew Butch Jack, he was a Vietnamese vet, a strong artist and strong-willed, and he really built up the sculptor studio until Jenny Nellis replaced him.

24:06 So the succession of people, faculty that participated, and I related to. You relate to your other faculty through committees, through acquaintances and socials. And some committee work was contentious. Nothing went—

MK: 24:30 A given, I think.

FP: 24:33 Yeah. Right. It's hard to reach compromise on some issues, especially when the budget was involved, that sort of thing. That's inevitable.

MK: 24:43 Sure. Can you talk about working with John Ingle?

FP: 24:55 He was a colleague and a friend. I worked hard to get him tenure because John was eccentric enough, I think, to alienate people. And he was difficult. Even as a friend, he had his own way and he came from an aristocratic background, which always didn't mesh with the casual style of West Central Minnesota. But he was an excellent artist and he taught on an almost tutorial one-on-one basis. And he influenced a lot of students in his class go on to other areas in the arts. And he was a great contributor to the

campus despite his eccentricity. There were other eccentric colleagues on campus.

- MK: 25:55 Oh, certainly. Not just in the art department.
- FP: 25:58 Yeah. So I remember when we populated the HFA, Butch Jack moved into the big sculptor studio and his students started decorating the walls with graffiti. And it was all—and the division chair saw it and was really upset because he wanted the building to be pure and not lived in. That was an incident again where—going through a difficult situation.
- MK: 26:35 Sure. Can you talk about the students, what helped—what were the students like when you first came to UMM and how did they change during your time while you were there? I know you mentioned some excellent students that you had back in the '60s.
- FP: 26:54 Yeah. I learned after being there for a while, we were really immediately serving an eight-county area, counties, eight counties around Morris, around Stevens County. And the students came because the college was there. I don't think otherwise they would've been able to afford a college education. And they were most appreciative and they were very responsible and eager to learn, and that was a really a thrill to get students like that. In the first graduating class, Don Sherman was a major in studio art, very strong personality. He was also the captain of the football team.
- MK: 27:43 Oh, interesting information.
- FP: 27:45 That helped desissify visual arts as being feminine.
- MK: 27:48 Absolutely.
- FP: 27:51 And his work was as strong as his personality was. And we're still in touch. He got a master of fine arts degree from Arizona. He came back to help on a special grant at Morris when we were beginning the ceramics program. And he contributed greatly whether he was here or there. And in art history during the first years, I had four students go on to get a PhD degree in art history from Penn State. One was Dick Munson, he was from Morris, and the other two were Jean and Bob Weston, and the last one was John Driscoll.
- 28:35 And John Driscoll went on to be a curator for a great American art collection in Pennsylvania, and then he went

to New York and bought the Babcock Gallery, which was the oldest gallery in New York City, and built that up to a multimillion dollar—

- MK: 28:55 Amazing.
- FP: 28:56 Yeah. And unfortunately, he died early on in with COVID in New York City.
- MK: 29:02 Well, it's quite a testament to Morris and to your teaching, I'm sure.
- FP: 29:10 Yeah. And these people were—well, they were fresh, they were open. Later on in the '80s, especially the '90s, we were getting students from urban areas. And not to make everybody in the rural perfect, but there was more of an emphasis upon, well, I'm going to get as much as I can out of this occasion, but it's going to be for me and not social contribution or some professional role. And I almost got the sense that it was their right to get an education no matter what, they were less grateful or open. So it became a challenge, and towards the end I was burning out.
- MK: 29:59 Disillusioned. Yeah. Do you have anything—any comments about any controversial topics during your time at Morris? I remember reading in your papers that there were some negative reactions to representations of the human body in art.
- FP: 30:26 The basic problem was the representation of the nude, which is not a undressed human body, it's a form of art. It began in prehistoric times and carried through Greek art antiquity and all the way through. The nude is a form, it's not necessarily an erotic subject, it is a form. The first problem came when Don Sherman, in his senior year, painted a large painting in the style of German abstracts and German expressionists of the 20th century. Very crude and unaesthetic, but it was a nude.
- 31:12 And people in town told Rod Briggs that he must take that painting down on the wall. And as a tribute to Rod Briggs, he said, no, we can't do that. And that was the first incident, but it was quite a fuss. And after HFA, we were just having a variety of shows and some of them had the nude human figure. In fact, some of the student work had nude figures in their drawings because we had nude modeling in the drawing studio.

- 31:46 And some thought—the argument would be we can't let children in the gallery to see this. And there were some activities that invited students, younger children to campus, and these people objected. And so I think it was about somewhere in the late '70s, I arranged an exhibit in the upstairs of the gallery, there were photographs of nudist colony, nothing really terrible. And then down below, we then invited contemporary artists in the area from Fargo to Twin Cities and further, to contribute paintings and prints and sculpture of nude human figures.
- 32:30 And I wrote a catalog for that and tried to explain what I'm suggesting to you that it's a traditional form in the visual arts. And I don't know if that can—that didn't conclude the whole controversy, but hope to hit it off a little bit.
- MK: 32:55 Yeah. Well, thank you for that, Fred. Now, I'm going to move on to your publishing activities. You published extensively about vernacular architecture in Minnesota. Can you talk about your research and particularly your field work? I've enjoyed building community that the historical society published, and so—
- FP: 33:22 That began in part because of the gallery program. By the time I started these in 1975, '76, that's two exhibits, one was what you would find in a farmhouse of about 1880, 1890 in rural America, especially on the prairie, and the other one was the architecture itself. That was from Wright County area we got the photographs and the examples. But I was living in the farmhouse, I was acquainted with rural neighborhoods among farmers. I actually was doing some help with bringing in the hay and doing other labors to help my neighbors.
- 34:07 So I was integrated with that and much involved. And from there, that first exhibit of what you found, pot-bellied iron stoves, handmade washboards, furniture that was popular and affordable at the time, all fairly simple. And that was the first show, and the second one was to try to interpret the small scale and larger scale farmhouses in the area, from the simple, to the fancy, to the very economical, to the more expensive.
- MK: 34:46 So these exhibits led to your—
- FP: 34:50 Then I got into the field work. I expanded—every time I took a trip in a different direction, I had developed a survey

sheet to check off the different kind of farmhouses I saw according to the classification I made, and every trip became an adventure. Until I finally got a single quarter leave and sabbatical to do it every day or whenever the weather permitted. And almost every farm yard I stopped at to inquire about a house that looked interesting were cooperative and friendly.

35:29 I would come in and introduce myself, nobody ever asked for a card or anything, told them what I was doing. And if they seemed friendly enough, I would say, would you mind if I do a floor plan of your house after I'm given you permission to photograph it? And that meant measuring the outside and then going in every room of the house and measuring the inside and do a floor plan as I was trying to collect as much data as I could, and nobody objected to that.

36:02 One farm wife said, well, you might find some dust bowls in the closets, things like that. Or when I pulled into a farm yard, I would otherwise watch out for dogs because not all the farm dogs are friendly. And I remember this one farm in Western North Dakota, I pulled in and the yard was full. They had geese and turkeys and ducks and chickens growing around. And I said, is your dog friendly? They said, our dog is, but watch out for the goat. And the goat was just coming around the back of the car. You had a whole menagerie of that. And then I would greet raccoons in the abandoned farmhouse. And I was chased out of one house by a badger.

MK: 36:57 Hope your tetanus shots were up to date.

FP: 37:06 Yeah. And another instance, I wanted to do this farmhouse in North Dakota that was abandoned and it was in a pasture. And I asked if I could go in and do that. He said, yeah, you can do that, but watch out for the bull. So I left most of my equipment outside the fence so in the case I had to jump the fence when I got back. But the bull was meandering in my direction, but he never made it by the time I got done with the work. That's why it was really an adventure. Everything was new and just seeing the countryside. That took 20 years.

MK: 37:45 So we talked a little bit before, Fred, about your research in Meire Grove. And, yeah, I remember you telling me a story, and I'm wondering if you would share it, about the

families that—they brought their traditions from Germany and bricks were king and there was—can you just talk a little bit about that particular bit of research?

- FP: 38:16 I guess I became sensitive to ethnic origins when I started researching a whole history of the upper Midwest. There's something like 35 different ethnic groups in the region, from German-Russian farmers, Ukrainian, of course, Norwegian and Swedish and German. And then early on, I started realizing similarities between large Norwegian farmhouses like in Lac qui Parle County or in Steele County, North Dakota. They're modeled after the big mansions or the country mansions in Norway called herregards, the house of the lord, like an English mansion only they were mostly frame houses.
- 39:06 When I started working in Meire Grove, I selected that community because there are so many brick houses, really large and elaborate. And that seemed to be a characteristic of German vernacular. And when I started getting permission to look at those people's houses, I started discovering a common floor plan. You walk into the front door, you think it's a front door, but it's really a big room. And then behind that room, there were two smaller ones. And that particular floor plan came from the ninth century, from the time of Charlemagne. They carried that tradition out all those that time. Because I was able to travel back to the area in Germany where these people came from. And sure enough, the plan was there and it was transferred all the way to Minnesota.
- MK: 40:09 Minnesota.
- FP: 40:11 And it just shows the way those things persist and you've taken for granted and you don't know it until you discover it.
- MK: 40:20 Right. Well, thank you for that. So back to Morris in the gallery, what did you enjoy most about your time at UMM and in Morris, academically or even in the community? What made you stay there, I guess.
- FP: 40:53 I went through a very difficult time at the 1967, '68 where I had to abandon my home in Morris and my wife and children because of medical psychiatric reasons. And that was an agony that went—that I finally came to that decision after almost seven years, and that's when I moved

to the farmhouse. And of course my children were quite young, I wasn't going to really abandon them, I was going to be there when they needed help, and it was a precarious situation all the way through. So I've lost track of the question.

- MK: 41:39 So that kept you there.
- FP: 41:42 That kept me there. Yeah. And I probably would've stayed anyhow because I really enjoyed the environment. I eventually started exploring the landscape and the communities around Morris by doing the architectural research, and I began doing more and more studio work of my own in the late '60s. And I would—I had discovered abandoned farmhouses and did drawings and paintings of them. I trucked around the farmer's land looking for interesting landscape, motifs to paint and draw. And the marvelous thing, nobody bothered me. I could be on a farmer's property and they didn't mind.
- 42:25 I think they learned that I was that strange person who did things like this. Because I rented the house from a Norwegian patriarch of the house north of Cyrus, and I was out one day near his pigsty drawing pigs that were laying in the mud. That was an interesting—
- MK: 42:45 You're that eccentric person.
- FP: 42:47 Yeah. And he came by and we talked a while, and he said, well, I got to go. You got your work, I got mine. And I think the rural neighborhood finally realized that this was okay, I could go anywhere without walking in their homes, of course, but I could appear studying the abandoned farmhouses or doing different drawings and paintings that was open. So there was that. That's one another reason why I stayed, I fell in love with the land then.
- MK: 43:24 Do you miss it now that you're no longer here in the western prairie?
- FP: 43:31 I miss the space. Our house is unique in our area. It is a suburb, but most of those places have a front yard and a backyard. Our backyard is woods and not a big one, it's got towering pine trees that are over a hundred feet tall and a couple oak, about three oak trees at least a hundred years old. So when we look out, we're in a forest, and I can't see the horizon. In both farmhouses, they could look out and

you see for miles, and you could watch the weather. You can't see the sky here either.

- MK: 44:13 Right. I guess other things, you can see other things.
- FP: 44:17 Yeah. The weather is generally less traumatic. It's either hot and humid or it's raining. And there you could have tornadoes, earthquakes, windstorms, whatever.
- MK: 44:31 And big temperature shifts from one day to the next.
- FP: 44:35 Yeah. Right.
- MK: 44:38 We didn't talk about this in advance, Fred, but you're an artist yourself and I know I've seen your work. I actually saw a piece when I was there just last month and it was hanging in the admissions area. Are you still painting?
- FP: 44:56 Oh, yeah. Well, this is my studio behind me, and I work in it almost every day. And there are two places here I exhibit, one in Salisbury and one Ocean City, the work has been recognized. So I did have a gallery in for Fergus Falls for a while, but then their program changed and I was dropped out of their representation, which was a disappointment.
- 45:25 But, yeah, I still work, it's really essential. I haven't done any art historical research. Although recently, looking back at my work with the settlers of the upper Midwest, that I consider them now as intrusive because what they did was they moved in on Native American land, and there was that big Sioux uprising. I don't know if you knew about that.
- MK: 45:54 Yeah. The one down near Mankato.
- FP: 45:56 Yeah. And a couple farmhouses I researched were directly involved, one of them near Glenwood, which the family had gone to Paynesville to get provisions for the winter, potatoes and molasses and all that. And then the outbreak came and they fled back to Pennsylvania and some Indian Braves found their place, and they drank the molasses, which they gave them dysentery. And it stalled the attack at that part of the county. That was the story attached to that farmhouse.
- MK: 46:38 Interesting. Yeah.
- FP: 46:39 And at that time, they could take it as a interesting story, but you forgot about the serious foundation for the uprising.

MK: 46:50 Right. Well, Fred, that's end of my list. Do you have anything that you want to add that we haven't talked about? I don't want to put you on the spot.

FP: 47:09 No. The whole experience there was a long one, obviously, 43 years.

MK: 47:14 Forty-three years. Right.

FP: 47:16 Yeah. And it was formative for me. I was optimistic and idealist and naive to some extent. I just did what I was expected to do and I kept doing it. And all of it was very satisfactory except for some of the real conflicts that occurred in my personal life, too.

MK: 47:45 But you were there for 43 years, it must have been mostly a good thing.

FP: 47:52 Yeah. It was exciting.

MK: 47:54 Exciting. Yeah.

FP: 47:56 And things never got boring.

MK: 47:58 And that's how—it's hard to convince people that haven't been there that it was an exciting place to be. As a student, I felt that way. But it's just very—people think Morris and they think that harsh landscape, and they don't think—

FP: 48:19 For many—and there were years now Morris has been given the ranking of one of the best small liberal arts campus in the country. And this part of naivete, you just work, work, work, and then that happens. You realize that altogether, not just you, but the whole group, including the plant services and the secretarial work, and everybody. Everybody cooperated to the best they could, sometimes in adverse situations.

48:48 Because there were periods when it was rumored that we might have to shut down because the budget got so tight and all university didn't have the funds. Jack Imholte once announced in an assembly, he said, if you see a for sale sign in my yard, you know we're done.

MK: 49:05 Yeah. I remember that.

FP: 49:06 Well, it was a real possibility. Yeah.

MK: 49:10 Well, and they did close down the campus in Waseca at one point, in my—since I—I think maybe 30 years ago, but it was—

FP: 49:19 I think that became the penitentiary of all things.

MK: 49:21 Yeah. It did. Yeah.

FP: 49:24 That's the opposite of a liberal arts campus.

MK: 49:26 That's right. Well, Fred, I think I'm going to stop recording now and we can just chat afterwards. So let me see how I do this. Stop.