

FRED HILL

Interviewed by Eugene Smith

Transcribed by Paula Helten (12/07/2011)

[Audio begins]

FH: These are just pictures of Minor White and various times that I have known him. And so, as this little article starts out my mother saw the ad in the paper for the class in Beginning Photography being taught by Minor White on Monday night or whatever.

ES: What paper was this?

FH: It would be the uh, The La Grande Evening Observer.

ES: Ah yes, uh-huh.

FH: And so she said, as I said, "That's a strange first name. Hm, let's go take his class." Because I had been encouraged by and learned much of my beginning photography from my mother who had learned it in turn from her father who worked with glass negatives, glass plates, and so, why, that's--

ES: Was he a professional photographer? You're father-- her father, I mean.

FH: No, no. No, among other things he was a member Oregon Legislature under the Populist Party.

ES: Ah!

FH: And he was high up in the Grange and thrust of the Grange.

ES: What was his name?

FH: Charles, D. as in dog, Huffman. H-U-F-F-M-A-N.

ES: Was he from Elgin?

FH: No, he was from La Grande.

ES: Oh.

FH: He-- I guess-- I think he was basically from the uh, Lam-- from the Willamette Valley. Because my grandmother went down to the Willamette Valley to work as a domestic and work in his home when his first wife passed away, and wound up getting married to him. And they came back here to the La Grande area and took up farming over in More Park which is across the river. And then they came back here to um, Cove Avenue and um, expanded on the homestead. Now my mother's people were McAllister's of the McAllister Road--

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: _____ down there.

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: And so until my father passed away in '93 the particular piece of property which had diminished down to seven and a half acres by that time was still part of the original homestead. Anyway, mother had gotten me into the-- she ran around with a group of perhaps ten young people, and photography was the nucleus of their activities. They would go out on a weekend and find some piece of road grading machinery, climb all over it, get your picture taken. I have acquired, inherited her negatives, and there are pictures of this same gang up on the roof of a house. Everybody get up on the roof of the house. Somebody's on top of a windmill tower hanging on like this.

ES: So, was this photography mostly for fun, or--

FH: Oh, absolutely!

ES: do you think they were serious about it?

FH: Oh no, it was just for fun.

ES: Okay.

FH: Just-- just something that they-- they did.

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: Whatever, and um-- so, she got me interested. She had a-- a camera, a folding camera, but by the time I came along even the film was not available in that size. So she condescended to a box camera.

ES: [chuckles].

FH: And so she had a smaller-- a small box camera for me, and basically we never went anywhere without the camera. And so she got me interested, and so she figured out a little spot in the cellar so I could make contact prints. And she took me to Imbler to visit with uh, Garth Westenskow. Garth Westenskow was about a year older than I. And so Mom visited with Mrs. Westenskow while Garth and I went out to his little cublet corner, and he showed me the process of making contact prints. And so I--

ES: You were a teenager?

FH: I was fifth-- no, I was eleven.

ES: Oh.

FH: That's two years prior to teenage.

ES: Yes, it is.

FH: Anyway uh, from then on I increased in my camera capacities so I buy-- I finally bought, oh man, for six dollars and seventy-five cents, I bought a Jiffy 620. Now that was nothing more basically than a folding box camera. The lens would focus five to ten feet or beyond ten feet.

ES: Infinity, they called it.

FH: Yes, yes.

ES: [laughs].

FH: And they had um, diaphragm stops with three little holes in the-- in the tab that you pulled out. And I never changed that in the _____. Now, shutter speeds: I, Instantaneous; T, for Time. You had those options.

I: Mm-hm.

FH: And so, then after I got-- originally got into college over here I increased that to another same-size film. But it uh-- it would focus from four feet to six feet to ten feet. I mean you had a little gradation in the focus and the five speed shutters, tenth to-- to a hundredth. Oh man! And then, just before we met Minor I acquired this miniature speed graphic which would do all sorts of things. It was still $2\frac{1}{4} \times 3\frac{1}{4}$. But I had that then when Mr. White asked are there any classy jobs in the inter-- in the introduction to that first class. Uh, you know introductions around. And then he says, "What kind of a camera do you use?" And so here, "Box camera" and, "Box camera" and, "Box camera." Somebody had the folding roll film. And so he was getting not particularly encouraged, you know.

ES: [laughs].

FH: So he says, "Are there any classy, classy jobs?" And I proudly announced that I had this miniature speed graphic with the 3,5 Zeiss Tessar. "Do you like it?" I was shocked! How could anybody not like such a camera, you know? But anyway, we developed into a friendship that lasted. He didn't have a car, and I had access to ours. And on weekends if he was free we'd go off on some photo expedition, usually out to High Valley.

ES: Take me back to the time, if you would, when you first saw him and where.

FH: Oh! We first met him in #10 Depot which is the _____ Building now. But that was a building that was rented by the Federal Government WPA Art Center type thing. And he had photography. Somebody else was doing silk screen. Somebody else was doing uh, water color; all sorts of art activities financed by the Federal Government. And so, there would be a dark room in the basement of that building.

ES: Was that 1934?

FH: No, that would be '40 because he came in 1940.

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: And I left September 16th of 1940. So we only really had that summer together. But we went one time up to Ice Lake, and that's when this picture was taken. You notice it's-- it's one of his taken at that time.

ES: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

FH: And--

ES: You remember the conversation?

FH: Oh yeah, he was tickled to death! He laughed at this little, tiny rock that was holding up the heavier one.

ES: Yes, yes.

FH: And uh, but I can remember a comment that he was making about that.

ES: Was he particular about the way the clouds looked, and the way the light fell on the rock?

FH: No. You're there, and that's the light that's there. And we're not gonna be here all afternoon. We've got to start hiking back.

ES: So he took-- you took it the way it was.

FH: You take it the way it was, and do the best you can with it.

ES: Did he offer any comments about the composition, or whether he was pleased that it has the elements that it does?

FH: Not that I remember.

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: Not that I remember.

ES: I guess I'm just fishing for, well, whether or not you sensed at that time that he was or wanted to be an artist photographer.

FH: No, I didn't-- I didn't get that um, feeling from him.

ES: Did you have any idea what it meant to be an artist photographer at that time?

FH: Well yeah, I think so because I had taken some pictures that I thought were good enough and a little small enlargement to go on the wall. And uh--

ES: What-- what qualities at that time did you think comprised an artistic photograph?

FH: Oh, the old rules of composition that uh, once you get into it you'll learn to ignore: Of placing the primary subject in the third corner for the-- where they are, and if you want texture get the sun coming from the side so it will cast little shadows. Um, never shoot into the sun. You know, all of this.

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: Stuff like that, and um, so on. But uh--

ES: You were following those rules at that point, or trying to?

FH: Trying to, perhaps.

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: Yeah. You um-- you kind of realize that uh, you're not going to get back to this place.

ES: Yes.

FH: And you're gonna have to take what's there at that time whatever the light conditions may be and so on.

ES: At that point had you been primarily photographing natural objects rather than people or buildings?

FH: I had a lot of people, but you know just friends, kids in high school. And uh-- and uh these that would go into anybody's ordinary, uh, photo album, you know.

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: Pictures of people.

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: It's not quite like um, your early movies when somebody would be standing by the car, and they were, "This is the movies. Do something!" And they would wave, you know.

ES: [chuckles]. Yes.

FH: It wasn't quite that bad, but uh, I did carry this second camera basically every day that I went to college. And so I have maybe a couple of hundred negatives that I took while I was going to school. And those would be people, other students in classrooms, some sport's activities, um--

ES: I have a feeling though that, maybe at that stage, quite-- quite early in your life, photography for you was becoming more of just a thing to do for fun than something that was for a more serious purpose.

FH: That's exactly right. That's exactly right. It was for fun.

ES: Were you recording history? Was that one of the purposes you might have sensed?

FH: Probably not. It was just-- here's a picture. Here's a picture of a guy, you know. And I want to get a picture of him like that, and he's on a bicycle, okay whatever. And uh, no it wasn't until after um-- after I got into the service, I guess. And that was after 1940, after I'd had this time with him-- with Minor. And then over-- overseas we were able to have cameras and take pictures. And I began to try to get some nice arty things recording palm trees and sunsets and things that could have some uh, fine art value, whatever.

ES: Were you also thinking at that point of possibly becoming a professional photographer?

FH: Oh yes, yes! I--

ES: You were already leaning that way?

FH: I was working kind of in that direction.

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: I was thinking, you know prior to this time Sears Roebuck, Montgomery Ward catalogs used drawings, and you know they're gonna be using photographs. And I'm gonna get me a job as a photographer to photograph fashion. 'Course that-- that was just a couple of years of-- of wishful thinking because uh, you begin to realize that hey, that isn't really the thrust that you want to go to. But uh, that was-- that was one thought. And then when I did get home from the service and out, I applied to probably four different Art Schools, Los Angeles and San Francisco, and they were all full. Because I got discharged from the service in the third group of returnees is whatever, and the first two had filled the schools. So there was not a space for me even though I submitted a portfolio to um-- to the California School of Fine Arts. And uh-- and uh, Minor wrote back that he was awfully sorry, but the class had filled at number twenty. And I was twenty-eighth, or something like that. And that uh-- and so was not impressed enough with what I had sent in to move me ahead any like that. And then in early September, a couple, three weeks after the school classes had started I get this telegram from him. It says, "Have open. Can you make it?"

ES: Is this about 1945?

FH: This was '4-- '46.

ES: Oh.

FH: Because I got out in '47.

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: '46. Fall-- Fall of '46. Well, I got out of the service in September of '45, and I worked um, in Tacoma in a photo studio--

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: for a num-- number of months. But um, then we got down and uh, get under Ansel's teaching. And uh, Minor taught uh, a secondary class. It was still one of the options, and you took it. There was just two teachers. But uh, Minor's thrust was that some part of you must show through in the photograph. Uh, and um--

ES: And did he say that he could tell whether it did or not?

FH: I don't know that he ever--

ES: [chuckles].

FH: that he ever did that. But uh--

ES: Was he going out on a limb with this?

FH: It sure would. [chuckles].

ES: [laughs].

FH: It sure would. But we boys, and there were some girls in the class too. But we boys got to thinkin', you know, whether we show through in that photograph isn't gonna sell the photograph to a client that wants a picture of a-- of an exploded pump for an exploded illustration in a catalog.

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: That whether you come through in that pump or not isn't gonna make a bit of difference. And so we-- we kind of uh, poo-poo'd uh, the idea, but he had us reading a number of uh-- of books.

ES: Did you kind of have an ambivalent attitude toward him at that point thinking probably he had high-falutin' ideas that didn't have much practical application?

FH: We were pretty well convinced that uh, Minor would teach you to play with it if you had some other source of income.

ES: Uh-huh.

FH: Where Ansel Adams would teach you to make a living at it.

ES: Uh-huh.

FH: And that was totally the difference, and when we--

ES: So, Ansel Adams didn't say there had to be some part of you showing through the photograph?

FH: No, he didn't. [laughs].

ES: [laughs].

FH: He did not say that! But uh--

ES: He knew-- he knew that was bullshit, didn't he? [laughs].

FH: Yeah. Yeah, he and Minor uh, exchanged a lot of letters, but uh, none of them really uh, uh, convinced Ansel to change his thrust.

ES: Uh-huh.

FH: But um, oh, I don't know. Um, there were a number of books that he recommended that uh-- that we'd read that had to do with uh, if you're an actor how you must--

ES: An actor prepares.

FH: prepare--

ES: Yes.

FH: and be--

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: the-- the character.

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: Whatever so, you're to be whatever. And then uh--

ES: Because I read in this photography magazine article journal about uh, his theories. And also in this-- this article it did strike-- strike me that he was so way up in the clouds in his theories in that probably the theories didn't make a great deal of sense. But somehow, apparently, they made him seem to

other people as though he knew what he was talking about, or that he had something important to say.

FH: I think you're absolutely right. I think so, I think so.

ES: If you had to um, summarize any of his theories in a few words, you probably couldn't do it.

FH: I couldn't, no. Because Ansel taught you quality, how to make prints that had real dynamic print quality, how to get the negative developed. But uh, Minor, that was a minor portion [chuckles] of his-- his teaching. His teaching was uh, um, some of you has to come through with it.

ES: However, some of his photographs from what I know like entire front buildings in Portland--

FH: Yes, in Portland.

ES: that he would take at 7:00 o'clock in the morning when there was no one there, would you say that they have some of the quality that Ansel Adams would have admired?

FH: Oh, I'm sure they do.

ES: So--

FH: Oh yeah, a lot of 'em did!

ES: he wasn't _____. He knew how to use a camera, right?! [chuckles].

FH: Yeah, he could, yeah! Yeah, he wasn't totally out of it as far as the mechanics of the thing. But he gave me a book one time, uh, and in it he wrote, "In hopes of improving your lousy technique."

ES: [chuckles]. He could be sarcastic, couldn't he?

FH: Oh yes!

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: Yeah. Here is another article in--

ES: Ah yes, supplement to The Observer, mm-hm.

FH: So uh, there's some more of that same stuff, and that thing's _____ be.

ES: Dick Mason.

FH: Yeah.

ES: Great. November 18th, 1985.

FH: And so here's-- here's the same picture here.

ES: Yeah, cropped.

FH: Yeah, yes. Who'd they crop out?

ES: [chuckles]. The irrelevant.

FH: Yeah.

ES: You were relevant. Oh, we skipped ahead several years here from the time that was in La Grande.

FH: Oh yes.

ES: Could we go back then--

FH: Well--

ES: when you met him in the studio and how you interacted?

FH: Oh yeah! Um, he liked me. He thought I could even be, work into being an assistant to him and help him along. And um--

ES: Do you think he thought you were serious about photography?

FH: I think, oh yeah!

ES: Uh-huh.

FH: He says um, “You may not ever be an artist, but you’re gonna be a damn good photographer.”

ES: I can live without him.

FH: You-- yeah, I could live!

ES: [chuckles].

FH: And so um, we would go out on these uh, um, jaunts, field trips, whatever. This picture that he took of me by the haystack, you know just sitting there, wherever it is, uh, was on one of those times. And we’d go out, and we’d be photographing awhile. And then we’d get tired, and we’d go sit in the shade of some apple tree out in the field, just sit there and talk.

ES: Are you almost the same age?

FH: He was born in 1908, so he was twelve years older than I was.

ES: Huh.

FH: But uh, my mother liked him, and once in awhile she’d go with us on one of these jaunts. But most of the time she stayed home, and we would end the day by coming by the house. And he’d have supper with us, and-- and uh, he called her, Ma-- Ma Hill. Whatever, and so I have--

ES: Was she living in Elgin then?

FH: Yes.

ES: And so you’d-- you’d have to drive out there each day?

FH: Oh yeah!

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: Oh yes. So here are many letters--

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: that are addressed to my mother even from overseas where they've been passed by the censor--

ES: Uh-huh.

FH: in which he has sent home stuff. And uh, he would send her Christmas cards. I've got some Christmas cards that he made each year. And then uh, here's uh-- here's some letters from uh, Peter Bunnell who is the Director of the uh, Art Museum-- Art Institute there at Princeton, University where the Minor White Archives are.

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: And uh, so on. But uh--

ES: What-- when-- when you were in this-- I guess it was a class, in the #10 Depot Street--

FH: Yeah.

ES: studio or classroom. What kinds of-- of uh, critiques or comments was he giving to you-- giving you about your progress?

FH: He um-- he assigned one subject one time. And um, I've forgotten what-- how the terminology was, but my mother took an old floor lamp and took the shade off of it and whatever. And it has these three arms that come out to hold three lights. She took it out in the backyard, and she hung a bunch of-- of uh, exploded, or at least shot flash bulbs, when they used to be in the shape of a light bulb.

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: She hung about five or six of those just hanging down from it. And whatever it was about it, it tickled him, and he laughed and laughed and laughed about that. And somewhere, in some album, I ran across that picture the other day within the last couple months. But uh--

ES: It sounds like he might have had an eye for the impractical, or--

FH: Yeah!

ES: for the surprising.

FH: Some-- something that's surprising--

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: in the drawing. But um, shortly after I got into the Army-- well, maybe almost a year, I still get letters from him. And we had tried on several occasions to meet in Portland. He would go down to Portland for something, and he'd wondered if I could come down from Fort Lewis. And uh, one time I did make it. And we um-- I got a room in the uh, YMCA, and it was in the YMCA that uh, he was involved with the Oregon Camera Club. We met there--

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: with them. And one time there was a display of pictures, and uh, he says, "Oh pick out the best one." And so uh, there were 11x14's and 8x10's, and I picked out a small, 5x7 print by Lucia Hammer. He says, "You know, you might make an artist yet!" [chuckles]. I can't remember what the subject was. I just remember the girl's name because somewhere in some of the later stuff-- I don't think it's in this one, but the name Lucia Hammer showed up again. Whether she had not gotten married, or that she-- what she did later, I don't know.

ES: Was he presenting himself to you as being himself an artist in photography?

FH: Why I think so, yes.

ES: _____ used that term about himself?

FH: No, not about himself, but that was the thrust.

ES: Of what we've been.

FH: We should be-- we should be artisans. What-- what's in us deep down should come through in some way into the photographs that we take. And so--

ES: So, he started saying that early on?

FH: Oh yes! Uh-huh, that was--

ES: So, you think he really believed it then? [chuckles].

FH: [laughs]. Yeah, I think he did.

ES: Is it too weird to say, "Oh, c'mon Minor! Get off it, will ya?!" [laughs]

FH: I should have.

ES: Yes. [laughs].

FH: I should have, but I don't remember that I ever did. But anyway uh, we kept in contact, and then he to a great annoyance got drafted. And so he wound up also in the South Pacific, and that's where I had the opportunity to-- to meet him.

ES: Yes.

FH: I found uh-- found out where he was, and uh, we uh-- we got together.

ES: He'd lost a lot of hair by then, hadn't he?

FH: Oh!

ES: [chuckles]

FH: Yes.

ES: Yeah.

FH: I uh, enjoyed taking pictures of the top of his head.

ES: [laughs]. Yes.

FH: We went down-- well, after we got out um, and I got to uh-- got down to the California School of Fine Arts and got started. Uh, the Pepsi Cola Company wanted to put out a brochure promoting their scholarship fund, and so they

gave Minor a list of situations that they wanted illustrated. And they would pay some reasonable pittance uh, for the work, and uh, so Minor picked about six of us to serve and do the feature. They furnished a script, and they furnished a paid uh, model. And we took him from San Francisco down to Stanford to get onto campus. Uh, we took him to uh, a Post Office and just carried the life of it all the way through. And uh, well finally the uh, the book got put together, and uh, I can remember one thing in there where Minor was telling us about shooting with flash. And Dick Muffley came over to me, and he says, "That guy hasn't popped off many flashbulbs." [laughs].

ES: [laughs].

FH: Because uh, what he was theorizing on flash uh, just didn't work particularly. But uh, there was one picture in there that shows a thumb of somebody handling, and it-- it-- it was just one or two back. Anyway, it's my thumb.

ES: Oh? Accidental.

FH: I'm holding it. Yeah, here is-- here is this picture. This is supposedly uh, uh--

ES: John Norman?

FH: John Norman after he had become a successful whatever it is. I think, yeah. Yeah, this one is outstanding. There-- there's Greg O'Dell showing the graves somewhere.

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: But this has been modeled _____. Some place in there uh, I'm holding out-- here.

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: There's my film. Anyway, we worked on that, and uh, that served as a class project. And I don't know we got kind of talking about some piece of something like that. We talked about some odd thing out of town. I had a-- I got a hold of three of those magazines, and I sent one of them back to Peter

Bunnell in the Stanford University. And he was grateful for it. Anyway then when we found out that Minor was going to be the surviving teacher, and that uh, Ansel had only agreed to establish the course and teach the first year. Then there's about six of us that bailed out because we needed uh, to get into uh, industry and get to-- get to working. We had learned basically Zone System of controls and so forth.

ES: Tell me a little more about that.

FH: Well, it's a controlled measurement of light and so forth whereby you can keep the contrast range within the film's ability to hold it. So if something is way out and it would be way overexposed um, you can determine how much you have to overexpose and then short develop to reduce the contrast. Or if you've got something that's uh-- a side of a uh, a shingled wall, and maybe just a clamp coming up across it where the contrast from the brightest to the darkest is very low then you can underexpose and long develop to spread it out. So you can get the negatives into more printable ranges.

ES: You determine this just by catching it, or do you use a meter?

FH: Oh, you use a meter, and--
[Audio interruption - 6 second delay]

FH: own equipment because shutters vary. Some of them are--

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: too slow--

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: tired. You mean you want me to go for a hundredth of a second? How about fiftieth?

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: You know, shutters will say that to you.

ES: Is the term Zone System still in use?

FH: Oh, indeed! Indeed it is. And uh, even some of the new magazines that I've gotten within the last couple of months it will be somehow they're going into it. Somebody refers to using the Zone System.

ES: And do you know who developed it first?

FH: Well, Ansel is the one that uh, yeah! He's the one that calibrated the thing so that you know how much you have to underexpose.

ES: I see, mm-hm.

FH: And uh, we had these um, charts that he uh, made up into a booklet so that you have the range from one to ten because you go one, two, four, eight, sixteen, thirty-two, sixty-four, one twenty-eight. You know, it's doubling each time. And it portends on to about the maximum which can go from solid black to opaque white. And so, I went out looking for a job, and through the-- a Jewish photographer--

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: in town, in this San Francisco and I went to apply to him. And I told him that I had had this much experience and was aware of the Zone System, and he says, "Huh! We don't got time for that garbage! We've got to get the shot made and go!" And he was willing to take me on-- on a, uh-- on the job training which means that I get basically no salary or whatever. But I'm learning from him who says, "We don't got time for that garbage!"

ES: [chuckles].

FH: And then I applied to uh, the uh, Southern Pacific Railroad. They have a photo department, and they said, "Well, we'd love to have you. Your background is great, but until somebody dies there's not gonna be an opening because nobody that's on staff wants to leave this department. It's too goosey a job." So, I finally accepted a job in Oakland with a guy who had delusions of grandeur. This is 1947, and the aircraft travel was still novel. See uh, '47 you know, the DC3's were. So he rented a room at the Oakland Airport and made it into a darkroom. And he wanted somebody to be out there on the field when people got off the planes to take a picture of 'em, give them the card and say, "You had a picture taken as you deplaned, and uh, cash with order we'll send you one for five dollars." I don't know.

Anyway, you'd have to uh, pre-number the film because you're using 4x5 individual sheets of film. Pre-number them and have a number that matched that on the card, and you had to be sure. And he did not sell one picture and so forth. And so finally he closed that down and brought me into the studio in downtown Oakland. And I was doing all of the darkroom work. And I knew that there wasn't enough work going through that plant to feed both of us, so I was not surprised when one day on a Wednesday he called me in. And he said uh, "I've been borrowing money from my wife--" because she was working as a secretary somewhere-- "for the last two weeks to pay your salary." He says, "I can pay you through Friday." He says, "And then I have to-- to forget it somehow." So, he sent me out looking, and I went to the uh, Bureau of Employment. And they had two openings. One at the Payless Fish Market cleaning fish, or if I could speak Portuguese I could be up on the sales counter and make ten cents an hour more. Or the other one was at Nordstrom Valve Company for an industrial blueprint reader that could read the blueprint and determine the specifications for the valves that were shown, whether it was a hospital plumbing job or something like that. And of course, I didn't qualify for that, and so then uh, he says, "Well, why don't you go out and check with the grocery stores?" Well, I had worked in a grocery store in Elgin, and there was nothing that was further from my interest--

ES: [chuckles].

FH: than working in a grocery store. But you're getting to the point where you have a home that has monthly payments, and you have one son. And so uh, I went out, and I looked at three different grocery stores. And one of them was hiring in Richmond, and we lived San Lorenzo which is the extreme other side of the city. And uh, Safeway wasn't hiring. Hagstrom's wasn't hiring. Purity Stores weren't hiring. And so they said, "Well, did you try Lucky Stores?" And I said, "Well, I thought I did." But apparently I wrote down the wrong address because there was nothing there. And so this salesman that was in there, another office occupant of this uh, Cade Building, he says, "Well, who did you see at Lucky's?" And I said, "I didn't find it." And, "Cah! Let me pave the way for you." So he gets on the phone, and he calls the office manager at Lucky's Store. And he talks for about five minutes telling him that these uh, Atlas Adding Machines that they have ordered, two of them I suppose, were gonna get there on time. They were gonna do everything that they expected of them. They were going to be absolutely trouble-free. "And by the way, I have a favor I'd like

to ask. I have a young man here that would like to learn the grocery business.”

ES: [laughs].

FH: So anyway, he sends me down to meet the office manager, and I went down to _____ and met the office manager. And he thought the-- “We don’t have anything at the stores.” But he says, “We do have a job running a printing press.” He says, “The uh, the man that was running it has given his notice that he’s quitting. I don’t want you to go back and talk to him. He’ll give you some wrong ideas. I don’t want you to see the equipment. Just come back.” But he did give me the name of the distributor and the service man that had set up this thing. So I went down to a corner phone booth and called San Francisco, and uh, they told me that um, they were surprised that uh, he was leaving. They were also not able to supply anybody that already knew how to run it because the office manager said that if we find somebody who knows how to run it we’ll take the line of least resistance of course. And so uh, I talked for about half an hour, and the fellow says, “Well, I think you can handle this.” And so then I went back the next day and uh, checked in with the office manager at Lucky’s. So they sent me on company time over to San Francisco for three days to work on the demonstrator press and learn how to-- how to run the thing. And then came back and I got the job back here running this press. And uh, the service man came in every day of that week to see how I was getting along.

ES: These were just the inserts that they used for advertising?

FH: No, no, no, these are producing forms.

ES: Oh.

FH: Forms, forms, forms, and uh, because they had been farming them out. And they had an order book, a catalog type of thing that was specialty built, and we ran that off. And that was the prime job of it. But we expanded it at every opportunity because my theory was the more that we were self-contained and the more that we can do it ourselves the more secure our jobs are gonna be. And so all the way through for thirties-- eight and a half years there I worked on that theory. And we expanded it to where it was quite a printing shop. Anyway, so finally then um, it came time to um, sign up for a Union. It was office workers which is fine. Or it was warehouseman, or it

was a truck driver and so forth. And so I put in this application to office workers as a printing pressman. And in those days the Unions were not quite so greedy, and so they sent back a notice that they don't have a category of printing pressman. So they had referred my application to the Pressman's Union. And so in the next day or two the uh, organizer for the Pressman's Union came down to talk to me. And I thought, oh man! This is the end of it because they're not gonna want one more union represented that has just one man in it. And so the then office manager came back with the man to talk to me. And I was dragging my feet a little bit. And he said, "Well, if you really don't want to join the Pressman's Union you can wash windows for Lucky Stores if you want to, and we'll send somebody down from the Union Hall to run this press." And so the office manager then said that, "Well, were not bothered by the fact that there might be one more Union represented." And so then I, you know was willing to safely join. I-- I was not a great Union enthusiast, never have been particularly. But uh, the first meeting that I went to where you're sworn in, where you stand up and vow never to stand by and see a brother wronged-- they _____ all that stuff-- that was the night that they started to organize the need for a pension plan. So I got in on the ground floor of that one, the _____ motel. But uh, anyway, I got through much of Minor and whatever. And that a number of these letters that are censored were written to my mother, and in there I got Christmas cards that he made and sent to her and so forth. And so-- but uh-- when we got down to uh, San Francisco we were pulling a twenty-four foot house trailer with a little six cylinder Dodge. Anyway, we got there. We made it, and went on through and went down towards Daly City to uh, an auto court where we could park a trailer. And uh, they had a waiting list of about fourteen names ahead of me. And then Martha was in the trailer parked parallel along the Mission Boulevard there in Daly City. And I'm gone, and I'm not coming back. And I don't come back, and I don't come back. But in that interval of about forty-five minutes I had talked my way from fourteenth down to second. And they said, "They'll be an opening for you in about eight days. There's-- there are two people that are leaving in a week."

ES: In Auto Court?

FH: In the auto park place _____.

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: So then I called Minor, and he says, “Well, come on up, and you can park in front of Ansel’s house.” Now Ansel Adams’ folks lived next door. And they’re out in the Sunset District in San Francisco basically right near the south end of the Golden Gate Bridge. And Ansel had moved in with his folks. His wife was still in uh, Yosemite operating Best’s Studio which was a retail outlet up there. And so Minor had taken over the house, and he had um, I think three, no, four other students that were living there. And Minor says, “You can park the trailer in front of the house, but you can’t live in it. City won’t allow that, but you can sleep on a davenport in the front room for these seven days, eight days, whatever it was. And by the way, would Martha cook for the group?” We had just been through two flat tires and all day long driving with a six week’s old baby pulling a trailer that is pulled by a totally underpowered unit. She was totally exhausted, but I don’t know. She didn’t have any idea would food-stuffs were there. He said, “The gang will be home in about half an hour, and we’ll eat in about an hour. Eat about 6:00 o’clock, they’d be home by 5:30. But whatever it is, she found enough variable food-stuffs to prepare and got-- got something fixed for ‘em. And uh, worked-- it worked out fine.

ES: What does this say about Minor White’s personality?

FH: Oh, he was easy-goin’. He uh, sometimes was a little low on compliments which a teacher should be ar-ar-ar-ar-[clap]. Whereas Ansel you were never afraid to have him critique your work in front of the class. Hold it up like this, and he might suggest uh, where you might have improved this a little bit, but this is a good idea so don’t give up. Go back and try it again. And he was encouraging all the way along. Where uh, Minor was uh, oh, a little less in the encouragement part. But uh--

ES: I have the sense that he was self-taught. That whatever he thought he knew about photography and come from him, and not from some other authority.

FH: I think so. He um-- he was impressed with uh, Weston’s nudes, impressed with Stieglitz, and uh, Paul Strand. Some of the old, stock names in photography at that time. He referred to them from time to time. But uh, yeah, he was pretty well self-taught. He graduated from the University of Minnesota or Michigan, one of those back there. And uh, had come out to take this job in Portland, and I guess it was one of the first major jobs. And then he came to La Grande under the WPA or PWA, whatever.

ES: Did he ever say anything to you about what he thought La Grande would be like and what he would do here?

FH: I think it was just a stepping stone. I think he was just looking forward to where he could go on to the next bigger city.

ES: He needs a check every now and then.

FH: Yeah, you betcha!

ES: Yeah. [chuckles].

FH: You bet.

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: But uh--

ES: Well, you said there was an ad in the La Grande Evening Observer for his classes.

FH: Yeah.

ES: I suppose there were other people besides you who took--

FH: Oh yeah! Yeah, Morris--

ES: came to the class.

FH: Morris Gekeler for one, and a guy named uh, uh, Jim Chandler.

ES: Um, Gek-- Morris Gekeler that's a famous name in La Grande.

FH: Well, yeah. Uh, he-- he said something about Morris the Mice, and he should have said, Morris the Mouse. But he said that he would make a good helper, but he talked so low that nobody could hear him. And he's absolutely right because even as late as having been up here uh-- before my dad passed away we would go out to the Senior Center for a noon meal once in awhile, and Morris would be there. And you could walk up to him, and-- and talk from across the table like this, and you could hardly hear him. You

know, he just didn't have his volume control hooked up! But uh, somewhere in here, I-- I've got a-- a letter that uh, Minor wrote to my mother saying something about uh, Jim Chandler. "I'm returning--" here, this is October of '41. Uh, "I am returning some unused preserves and jellies," that mom had given him. "They are much too good to let get out of the family. Also, I'm returning the bathtub." That was a, uh-- a big, deep, hypo tray. It would hold about two and a half gallons instead of the little shallow one. We'd call it a bathtub. "And a light fixture," which was a safelight. "And I left the printing box because Fred says he's built a better one. The print roller has to stay because the one Fred has is the government one, and the one here is on inventory, and it's placed if you can make sense out of that. Thank Jim for me for returning them. I hope to see Fred once in awhile while I'm in Portland. Perhaps, I can get up to Pomeroy. I hope so anyway." And then here is the one that I wrote to Jim Chandler, uh, commenting about this so that was one of the other fellows that was in the class. And I guess there were several women, but I don't think they stayed more than two or three classes. But we had a class twice a week, I think. Um--

ES: What do you think these other people were hoping they would learn there?

FH: Maybe how to expose with a box camera?

ES: [chuckles]. Something pretty elementary, huh?

FH: Oh, definitely elementary.

ES: And Minor wasn't too keen on talking about _____.

FH: Uh no, not really. Here's a, uh, something else that came along.

ES: Did he have people in the class critique one another's photos?

FH: I don't remember that we ever did because, except for the second class which I went to which was on darkroom techniques, uh, we never saw anything except what went to the drugstore to be finished. But it-- the guy's commenting about that one, and-- and he's-- he's not really impressed. Here is a letter that was sent out in April of '41 to mother announcing that the uh, classes are gonna resume, or he was gonna have a lecture or somethin'.

ES: So, he didn't like this photograph of a farm. Or he-- he-- he thought its okay, but it didn't receive any communication from it emotionally.

FH: [chuckles].

ES: That's the critique.

FH: Yes.

ES: Yes.

FH: And I--

ES: And do you think anybody could make head or tails of that comment?

FH: Not really. Here is a very-- Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays.

ES: Cove! Mm-hm.

FH: Those are-- those are the instructors and what they were teaching.

ES: [coughs].

FH: Some place _____.

ES: All men?

FH: No.

ES: All male teachers?

FH: No, no. Uh, Purim was a woman.

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: And uh, I think that uh, Isabelle-- Isabelle-- she was the girl's physical ed. teacher here at the-- at the university-- at the college when I went there. And uh, she and uh, Minor didn't date as you'd call it, but it was her influence that got him to join the Catholic Church. But uh, uh, she was down there once in awhile working with uh, silk screen. Whatever they call that now.

But uh, it-- it was kind of a fun time. And uh, I can remember one time I was developing some infrared film. And in the darkroom they had a safelight that consisted of a square box with a hole in one side, and you had a cover that would go down so you had the option of three different safelights: One that was light yellow that you could use for prints. One that was a dark red that you could use for developing autochromatic film, and then you had a blank side that would shut it off. And so I was developing some infrared film, and uh, when I got through the fixer and to turn the light on, it was solid black. This safelight had been on, but the blank side had been down, and it had put out enough heat it had-- it had fogged the infrared film. And uh, so this was something that I was doing on my own, probably before I met Minor, because of the reference to it in the article that I wrote to Peter Bunnell in Princeton, uh, about that. And he was-- came back with the question, "Was Minor teaching or experimenting with infrared?" And I said, "No, that was entirely at the time of mine. We hadn't got into anything that um, exciting," by they were-- by the time they was through his classes.

ES: Now he scheduled for two classes a week--

FH: Uh-huh.

ES: here.

FH: Yeah.

ES: I suppose they were for cup-- couple dollars each, typically?

FH: Yeah, probably.

ES: Well, 7:30 to 9:30 in the evening--

FH: Yeah.

ES: for Beginning Camera. And then um, 7:00 to 9:00 in the-- I guess also-- yeah, in the evening--

FH: Also at two hours.

ES: for-- yeah. What did he do with his days then just bum around and take pictures?

FH: I don't know 'cause I was in school. Or if it was the weekend and he was off, and we'd go off some place together many times. So uh-- there isn't a date on this, is there? Un-for-terrible, isn't it?

ES: Would it have been probably 1940?

FH: Oh, it was 1940. That whether it was April or May--

ES: Yeah.

FH: whatever. And so--

ES: I can't imagine he was paid much for teaching two, two-hour classes a week.

FH: Well, he was the Director of--

ES: Okay.

FH: this thing. So he was responsible for all these other teachers.

ES: I see. He was Administrator too.

FH: Oh, that's correct! That's right!

ES: Oh, I didn't know that!

FH: Oh man, I'm tellin' ya!

ES: I don't imagine he had his heart in it-- in Administration though?

FH: No.

ES: [chuckles].

FH: Not really, not really. But uh, one time at the school-- now I mentioned this book of uh, Pepsi Cola-- he also got a very select group to go down to Point Lobos to spend a weekend with Edward Weston. And so we're out on Point Lobos, uh, and Edward is wandering around. He would come, and you had uh, a set-up. He would get under your dark cloth, and look at your ground glass and make some comment, compliment you, or make a suggestion,

whatever. And uh, then that evening we went to his home, Weston's home on Wildcat Hill. And uh, in a darkened room he was showing us his prints on a lighted easel. At that time you could buy any of them for twenty-five dollars, 8x10 contact prints. And I think that uh-- that he and Minor, um, were going along on the same wavelength. Because I don't remember that there was more than one picture of maybe twenty-five that he showed that night that I would have wanted to acquire to put on our wall. Because Edward's stuff was gloomy, depressing, um, experimental. Um, he would take a pepper or a dozen peppers and spend days photographing peppers, or seashells. Or he'd go down and uh, do the sandstone concretions where the surf has washed in and out and in and out and worn these different forms--

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: into being, or the windblown cypress.

ES: I imagine he liked texture.

FH: Aye, that he did.

ES: Didn't he also like to uh, uh, photograph nudes?

FH: Weston?

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: Oh, not only photograph 'em. He'd sleep with them, you know.

ES: Oh, well, why not?

FH: Yeah!

ES: Good way to understand texture. [laughs].

FH: Hey now!

ES: [chuckles].

FH: Anyway, I just recently acquired this book this last year.

ES: Mm.

FH: As you kind of look through those you can see the kind of gloomy stuff.

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: Yeah, there-- one of the girls in our class, Ruth-Marion Baruch. And okay, here's Edward Weston, and this is Phil Knight, and they're taken by my buddy, Muffley.

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: Muffley's the guy that said to me that White hasn't popped off many flashbulbs. [chuckles].

ES: Mm-hm. Oh, here's one of his nudes, 1945.

FH: Uh-huh. But he and Edward were friends.

ES: Minor and Edward?

FH: No, uh, Ansel. Oh well, no, it wasn't-- I'm sorry. Ansel Adams and uh Edward Weston were friends. But anyway, in the class was this Ruth-Marion Baruch. Her father was a neurosurgeon in New York City, and uh, she had wanted to come out and-- and interview Edward Weston. And I'm pretty sure that there's another book that was written by his wife, Charis. Uh, she called it, Through Another Lens, and she mentions this girl that was uh, out there. And uh, I'm sure that uh-- I'm sure that it was Ruth. And uh, I guess she posed for him in the nude like that.

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: And I guess he slept with her that night. And the wife says, "How was it?" And he says, "Nyeh."

ES: [laughs].

FH: "Nyeh."

ES: What do you mean the photograph, or the funny thing with the sleeping?

FH: [laughs].

ES: Well, by that time I'm sure he'd become a connoisseur.

FH: Oh! Uh-huh, absolutely!

ES: [chuckles]. Yes. [chuckles]. But see-- well, I guess I see what you mean by gloominess. Although that's not the first impression I get. [chuckles]. That's certainly--

FH: Yeah.

ES: anything but gloomy. [laughs].

FH: True, true.

ES: [chuckles].

FH: True enough, but uh-- Ansel had rather cryptic comments about uh, Weston's lousy technique as far as darkroom work and so forth.

ES: Uh-huh.

FH: His seeing may have been fine, but uh, he didn't produce the print quality that uh, you got from a course with-- with Ansel.

ES: This um, _____-- Gerald Robinson says that when he came to La Grande in 19-- June 1940, he, in addition to teaching and supervising the Art's Center he-- apparently he made his first attempts to teach photography. Um, did it seem to you that he was an amateur at teaching, or he was just trying to figure out how to do it-- how to conduct classes?

FH: Um, no because it was my first experience with anything other than a manual training shop teacher--

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: that would be teaching a craft.

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: And so um, he would-- he would try to get people to-- to thinking and here, let's go out and for next time bring back pictures that will indicate this. And that's when my mother brought in the one of the burnt light bulb.

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: And so, it was in the um, oh--
[Audio ends]

[Audio begins]

FH: begin a little bit more of how-to, you know. Don't short develop. Be sure your temperatures are right, you know.

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: Basic elementary because I guess that's what he had to work with. He was with students that were totally inexperienced at what has to go on in a darkroom. And uh, what the developer does, and uh, what--

ES: Did you say he stuck with this only until about the end of that year--

FH: Uh, no.

ES: or that was because you left early?

FH: I-- I left.

ES: Did he stay on then for--

FH: Yeah, he did.

ES: awhile after that?

FH: He did. I got some letters in which he says that uh, he's getting terribly depressed. Uh--

ES: With La Grande?

FH: With-- well, with the activities at the Art's Center--

ES: Mm.

FH: that uh, was just uh, not enough when you've mentioned that uh, Morris might make a helper for him, but he talked so low that you can't hear him. Well then, he-- he was just kind of depressed. And then we he got drafted into the Army he was really annoyed.

ES: And that was-- that's what got him out of La Grande?

FH: That's right, yes.

ES: That was '42.

FH: Right, right. So, he stayed on through '41 then.

ES: Mm-hm. Do you think there are any other people still living who might have been in some of those classes with him--

FH: Well uh--

ES: around La Grande?

FH: JohnTurner.

ES: John was?

FH: Oh yes!

ES: He didn't tell me that!

FH: Well, nail him!

ES: I will!

FH: Do that.

ES: Very.

FH: Yeah, because I had forgotten where the darkroom was. I knew it was in the back of the building and off to the left behind the bar area. But uh, John says, "Oh no, it was downstairs in the basement."

ES: Hm.

FH: In that relationship to the building, but one floor further down--

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: and so forth. And then he had his studio down there. He took uh-- he took this picture of me and-- and signed it. I'm not sure it's of great value.

ES: Well, something is to you.

FH: Well, I don't know. My wife hated it. She says, "What in the world is he trying to do?" You know, uh, gets me all smoothed up. I have a-- had a little liver spot by my face.

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: And he was very concerned that he take some of his uh, panchromatic make-up and get that covered up so I had a smooth face, and then I'll put the flower--

ES: [chuckles].

FH: in here _____. And uh-- and here--

ES: Oh, that probably expresses his emotion.

FH: I'm sure it did!

ES: [chuckles].

FH: I'm sure it did.

ES: This is a better one.

FH: Why, yeah _____. New York.

ES: Do you think you were a student at Eastern Oregon Normal School at that time?

FH: When it-- when it was a Normal School? No, the next year it was Eastern Oregon College of Education.

ES: Right.

FH: And then it went to Eastern Oregon State College or something like that.

ES: Mm-hm. Did you have the idea at that point of being a teacher?

FH: No, no, no. I went through it because it was a, uh-- a junior college, and I had the idea at that time of uh, working for uh, DuPont. _____ DuPont _____ or something like that doing research chemistry.

ES: Hm.

FH: And then the uh-- the chemistry teacher, a Dr. Albert Logan had come to us from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Prep School. And he did not go back far enough to pick us up. I had come out of Elgin, class of '17.

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: They don't have chemistry then, you know whatever. I had no chemistry background whatever. Get in there and they don't have any uh, advisors! So I signed up for Chemistry, Physics, Math and English. No way in the world that you could carry all of those, so I finally dropped the Math and stayed with Chemistry and Physics. And then I took a second year of Chemistry. And it was in that year that I got a job in the Chem. Lab, uh, under the NYA, National Youth Administration. And at that same interval of time I had joined the National Guard. So between the National Guard and the NYA, and being a representative for the Chemical Rubber Company which sold on consignment, rubber aprons, rubber gloves, uh, Handbook of Chemistry which uh, it's a book about-- about fitness in you. Uh, the commission that you would make off of those, I had enough money to pay the tuition. Now when I first went there the initial tuition was twenty-seven fifty. It was two dollars and fifty cents for your initial paperwork. After that, it was twenty-five dollars a quarter or semester, whatever they were then.

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: And so to acquire twenty-five dollars, uh, from these three sources it was possible and so on.

ES: Then you were squeezing in the night classes with Minor White along with your Chemistry and Physics.

FH: Well, yes and no. If-- if he didn't come here until June--

ES: Oh, that's right. It was mainly the summer then.

FH: It was mainly the summer with him, but um, I still went from college during the week to being free on the weekend where we could walk on some exploratory trip for photographs. So that couldn't have happened very many times because school probably ran until 20th of June.

ES: In the early Fall you could have done it.

FH: Oh yeah!

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: Yeah, back in September we were doing it--

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: for awhile. When we went up to um-- to Joseph, spent the night in the hotel in Joseph--

ES: Uh-huh.

FH: two-story wooden frame building. And the next morning we drove up the trailhead and hiked up to Ice Lake and then back. And there's a picture of him with his feet in the water, the one at Ice Lake.

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: And it was that time that he took this picture of a little rock holding up the big one. But um, then after-- after he got out of uh, California School of

Fine Arts, I think he went back to Rochester to be wit-- uh, an Assistant Director of George Eastman House running back there.

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: And uh, I lost track of him. And then finally-- oh, I don't know. Twenty years later, I guess, I found an address in a photo magazine. And I wrote him a long letter bringing him up to date, but I never got an answer to it. So uh--

ES: This uh, Gerald Robinson article refers to workshops that he gave in Portland, and I guess in the 1960's after he had become-- he had become fairly well established in other parts of the country. And he said, uh, "Over the years a workshop-- workshop remembered in Minor White's held dialogue about his photographic theories in letters, tapes, discussions, personal visits, and subsequent workshops. One issue was the extent to which an expressive photograph actually contained spirit as opposed to what a viewer brings to it and infuses into it, and infuses into his or her mind." So, in view of what you remember about Minor White, what do you think a little later in his career he could have meant by spirit in a photograph?

FH: Just the spirit of a photographer himself coming through the picture to say something about what he was thinking to whatever the viewer might have been.

ES: Not possible to define in any other way?

FH: I don't think so.

ES: We either had it or thought or--?

FH: That's right. Either you've got it, or you don't have it. I don't think-- well, he would kind of get us to-- to uh, read some of these books. Uh, The Story of a Face, uh, whatever-- if you want to shut that off, I'll go get a _____. Other than photography that developed when you screwed up somewhat, and so we had to do some research for other artists: Picasso, Matisse, Deraine, G____, Georges Rouault, and so forth, and Nolde. Ah, a whole bunch of stuff like that, and uh, whatever.

ES: These are your notes from that--?

FH: These are mine. This is my school notebook. Photography, Ansel Adams: "An enlargement is another expression of photography" and so forth. Here is an example of-- so here you've got Zone _____--

ES: Uh-huh.

FH: _____ nine--

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: which is the expanse of it. And so, if you have something here, and this is what it reads which you wish it would there, then they would tell you uh, how much development: Three-quarters normal, uh, with that.

ES: Pyrocat.

FH: Oh, Pyrocat is in-- that is one where you can take a picture and have a light bulb on in the room and yet see the film, and then the light bulb, and also see uh, all the detail in the room. Pyrocat is in plenty of uh, uh, sitting Hydroxide. You wear rubber gloves and all that other stuff.

ES: So this exposure record and all of the numbers and abbreviations and other symbols on it makes photography look like a highly technical operation. Is it possible that Ansel Adams, by these kinds of calculations, was somehow carrying out Minor White's idea of how you get spirit into a photograph?

FH: No, I wouldn't say--

ES: Or otherwise you have some kind of psychic control with a camera it seems to infuse spirit. [chuckles].

FH: I don't know.

ES: This seems-- looks to me--

FH: Might be!

ES: like you control the camera! [chuckles].

FH: Yeah, right here-- “January 6th, Minor White, Assignment D1. Description: A written outline of your mental approach while photographing creatively. An outline of the essence of Chapter’s One, Two, and Ten of The Story of a Face by Bailey.” And then here, my student’s critique of his work: “I think I have very briefly selected the essence of each chapter in the book. I have stated the matter in which I make a photograph. It will possibly change in time, but at present this is it.” [chuckles]. Man!

ES: If you’re told to figure out what your mental attitude is when you take a picture what do you do?

FH: Yeah! [chuckles]. Ah-uh, let me see--

ES: Do you say something like, “I hope to Hell this turns out right!”

FH: Yes!

ES: [laughs].

FH: Exactly! Now here is um, a night class that Minor taught which was different than the stuff to the regular students. And these were some guys that were working that would come in. And this is on developing agents, the preservative, the accelerator, the restrainer, what all of those do in the uh-- in the process of developing.

ES: So he would get pretty technical about that?

FH: Some, yeah. Yeah, because he’s talking to uh, probably um, photographers that are out working it.

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: “White, Special One and Two, Description: Two prints requiring flash-fill. Two prints of contrasting subject requiring Pyrocat and development. A technical problem to be done without losing sight of the aesthetic requirement of the picture. A picture of a person in a location where sunlight only on one side with flash to fill in the shadowed side.” Okay, then here are, I think, pages-- “Ansel Adams. To increase exposure by 50% a solution, developing agent B and A, water at a 125, down in there _____. Overexposure of a negative will flatten the highlights, density below Zone

Three has no detail. Normal exposure including reciprocity failure are acceptable. It is very easy to get too much exposure for detailing the shadows.” And so on and so on and so forth-- and just books and books and--

ES: Well, that sounds like a lot of explanation of technique that would be completely comprehensible intellectually. It wasn't-- cut some kind of magic that White otherwise seemed to talk about.

FH: That's right, that's right. Ansel would teach you to be able to measure the light on a subject and record it because the client wants detail in the shadows, and he doesn't want overexposure in the highlights. And yet you need a good uh, what we choose to call, print quality.

ES: Mm-hm. You referred earlier to the Mrs. P_____, I think it was who was teaching at the uh, Art's Center on Depot Street. And you thought that she was the one who influenced--

FH: No, no. Isabelle--

ES: _____ Church.

FH: Isabelle Kane.

ES: Kane?

FH: Isabelle Kane.

ES: Okay.

FH: And Isabelle Kane married a guy named, Bailey. And in New York City, she was killed in an automobile accident.

ES: But I'm-- I'm wanting to focus on White and the Catholic Church. Did he ever talk to you about--

FH: No.

ES: why he--

FH: No, no, no, no, he wouldn't.

ES: What-- what did-- what did you-- what did you uh, suspect was the reason that he wanted-- was interested in that religion?

FH: Only that Isabelle Kane was because from there he went to Zen, and he went to uh, Eastern Religions, and uh, basically to nothing, you know.

ES: Was he interested in them um, romantically or just uh--

FH: Uh, I don't think so. I think he was totally homosexual.

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: And uh--

ES: What was her attraction for him?

FH: Not being a woman, I don't know. [chuckles].

ES: Well, by that I mean--

FH: No, I don't--

ES: the-- the Catholic Church connection, you-- you said he-- you thought he was interested in the church because she was there. What-- what might--

FH: No,--

ES: he have been seeing--

FH: he was interested in the church because she was influential in saying, "Why don't you join this? You'll get the satisfaction that you need." Ah, it wasn't something that he uh, uh, did to appease her. I think she was just seeing that he was kind of floundering, and she said, "There's some stability in the Catholic Church." And that was her-- that was her church. And um-- and so--

ES: He may have been looking for that stability?

FH: He may have been looking for that stability.

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: And yet, perhaps, not finding it as quickly or as thoroughly as he thought he would then he experimented with the Eastern Religions--

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: and got into them. I don't know. I saw a picture in a magazine much, much later. Oh, in the late '70's, I guess. Shortly probably-- only a few years before he died where he has two or three students on each side, and they're walking away from. And his head is about this big. It looked like he got his hair totally white in an afro. It looked just like that. And uh, he was uh, one that would get these guys up, and they would go through calisthenics or something first thing in the morning. To get themselves loosened up, and to get the mind flowing so that they could spirit into their picture. I don't know. It's just something that uh, I'm glad really that I've had the experience of knowing him, of working with him, of uh, having the friendship. But also of being able to get away from it--

ES: Hm.

FH: to the point where I was able to do the photography that I've done--

ES: Yes.

FH: which is much more closely related to Ansel's work. Um, I used a lot of the techniques that I learned from Ansel because I was working for Lucky Stores, and once in awhile I would get something besides printing to do. And they brought in a display rack for Lifesavers, gums, things like that. The rack may be uh, thirty inches wide, and it was floor mounted on legs. But it started as about uh, maybe uh, eighteen inches off the ground and went up. Wow, and all these things. And so I took it into the uh-- the darkroom area where we made the photographic plates which is possible to darken, and uh, set up my camera, got it focused, turned off the lights, opened the shutter so it was total darkness, and so then I'm taking a quarter light in my hand and just painting that thing with light all the way around like this. And then go around behind it, light off, around behind it, and-- and do this so that you fill in all the openings. And that's a trick that I did not

learn from Minor White, but we learned that from Adams. And it-- it has worked, you know.

ES: What would be the total exposure time with something like that?

FH: Oh man, you'd stop it way down, and you might have uh-- you've got somebody that's keeping time.

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: You may-- you may calibrate that it's going to take you uh, twenty seconds. You're gonna have twenty seconds to do this thing _____, and then you shut that off so that doesn't count against your twenty seconds. Then you go around behind it, and that doesn't count any of it because that's just filling in the gaps. But you-- you did it, and start as a _____ exposure, uh, going by the intensity of that one particular light held at one spot. And calculate that that's going to give you-- you're gonna drop it down to where it's-- it'll take twenty seconds for that. And then you figure that uh-- well no, you'd-- you'd figure about-- about five seconds because in twenty seconds you're gonna be off that two-thirds of the time. You know, it would. But uh, and we'd used Polaroid film that you could see immediately where you're at. And while you're still all set up then you can modify it. Polaroid film is wonderful for that kind of stuff.

ES: Do you hope with that technique to come out with a photograph that looks like art?

FH: No, you are after a photograph that will come out that will satisfy the client.

ES: But-- yeah! It doesn't look entirely realistic, does it?

FH: Yeah, it does! It does! You can see the label. Uh, there's no highlights that block out. You can read the labels on each of those packages of gum and whatever, and that's exactly what they want. And then they send that out to all the stores.

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: "This is how we want you to fill this rack."--

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: when they send it to you.

ES: As you describe it though it sounds to me as though the photograph would be unusual, eye-catching in a--

FH: Well--

ES: way advertising needs to be.

FH: could be, could be. One of the big um, assignments it took the entire Spring. Uh, Ansel was on the Board of Directors for the Community Gas and Electric Company, and he got approval to take his classes through many phases of the utility, not the _____, just the electric part of it. And so some of us opted to go up into the mountains and do the hydro-- hydraulic, you know, turbine thing. Others went to uh, gas-fired place. Another one went to-- there was an oil-fired generator in-- in San Francisco. And then there was distribution, and there was maintenance. And I got into a place where they were uh, overhauling, repairing the electric meters. And they'd had this master meter, and they'd got these others in. And they're getting them calibrated to where they-- just anyway, and there getting those out. And that-- there was one in which I used seven different flashbulbs. And there weren't too many of us that were too uh, experienced with a flash. But I had-- I had a battery. It was flashlight batteries, you know. I had about uh-- able to screw on and get about seven flashlight batteries which could run you through a whole lot of cord because we didn't have the uh, uh, little electric uh, eyes that would uh, trigger and fire a flash.

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: You had to power each one.

ES: Mm-hm.

FH: And so you'd have to have enough power to set 'em all off. Whatever, and uh, so on. And so that type of thing is the kind of stuff that Ansel was getting us able to comprehend and able to come through and produce prints from being assigned such as that and so on. So that was one of the great opportunities.

ES: Now, we-- we'll only take a couple minutes more, but I want to ask you whether you encountered in all of your photographic activities another well-known photographer of the 20th century, W. Eugene Smith?

FH: Um, leaving out the W, I've met you.

ES: [laughs]. Yeah, but not him?

FH: Not-- no, I haven't met him.

ES: He was a very different sort from me, I know.

FH: Yes, and was different from-- he was a um-- a journalist type--

ES: Yes.

FH: and so forth. No, I-- I have met Weston. I've met Imogen Cunningham, and uh, one of Weston's boys, uh Brett. And uh, so on, but uh, um, Eugene Smith had a uh-- a journalistic approach. He uh, was out with a Leica. You know, his own head given to the black cloth. He could get things done quickly.

ES: He came to University of Oregon in 1967, according to Robinson uh, in Eugene, to um, teach a workshop for-- with Ansel Adams and Brett Weston.

FH: Well, for goodness sakes. Huh! I didn't know that.

ES: Because you weren't there.

FH: No, I was-- I was among those who wasn't.

ES: [chuckles]. Yes. And Brett Weston was Ansel's former graduate, Edward's son?

FH: Edward's oldest.

ES: Uh-huh.

FH: Now there's an ad in the newspaper-- in the photo magazines of Cole Weston which was his third boy.

ES: Huh.

FH: And its advertising Ries tripods. And it says, "Why do I use Ries? Because it's the best there is!" And it shows a picture of him with an 11x14 view camera that's way up here, and he's-- he's got his hand the relay making an adjustment on it. I don't know. But uh, I didn't-- I didn't meet him. But uh, Imogen Cunningham lived on Green Street which was not too far from the school. And once in awhile she would come down and uh, sit in on one of Ansel's lectures. And they just delighted in annoying each other! And uh, it was much to the enjoyment of the students because they would-- they would hassle each other and so on. I wish I could have met Dorothy Lange. She lived in Richmond, and I lived in San Lorenzo which was forty miles or so. But uh, I never, never got up there to uh-- to meet her. How-- how do you meet a celebrity going, "I'd like to meet you!"

ES: Yeah, right. That's hardly uh, the um, opening line I'd find.

FH: Yes, it sure is.

ES: So um, I'm not at the point yet where I know which of these things might be most appropriate, but at the appropriate time I'd-- I'd like to seek your permission to use some of these things.

FH: Whatever.

ES: Um, the other part of this project is to produce an encyclopedia of Union County history, and the-- one of the articles will certainly have to do with photography. And you and Minor White and maybe John Turner will be uh, pride--

FH: John Turner! Sure, sure!

ES: and honorably mention. And some of these details here about-- like this letter announcing the lecture, two lectures on photography--

FH: Yeah.

ES: he was going to give, and this schedule here, and maybe the picture of him with his feet in Ice Lake, a few things like that might be--

FH: Absolutely!

ES: might be of interest.

FH: You are certainly welcome!

ES: Yes.