

# ALTERNATIVE PROJECTIONS

Experimental film in Los Angeles, 1945 - 1980

## ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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### INTERVIEW SUBJECT: William Scaff

#### Biography:

William Scaff was born in Austin, Texas in 1947. He began making Super 8 films as a child. His family moved to Southern California in 1960 where he became involved with the folk music scene centered around The Paradox, folk music club in Orange County, and he played in a jug band. He attended Chouinard for a short period before being drafted to fight in Vietnam. He served in Vietnam for 14 months in the Public Information Office as photojournalist and earned the bronze star. He moved to Pasadena, CA in 1975 to attend Fuller Theological Seminary, but quickly learned about Pasadena Filmforum and entered an extremely active period making Super 8 films that screened regularly at Filmforum as well as other regional venues. In 1983 and '84 he was awarded the Western States Regional Media Arts Fellowship. Scaff lives in Nevada City, CA.

**Filmography:**

*Head Pictures* (1977, Super 8, Color, Sound, 17:00)  
*In This Trembling Shadow* (1979, Super 8, Color, Sound, 16:00)  
*Rite of Passage* (1982, Super 8, Color, Sound, 17:00)  
*Searching for Planes* (1977, Super 8, Color, Sound, 15:00)

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**Interviewer:** Terry Cannon & Adam Hyman  
**Cameraperson:** Lisa Sichi & Ben Williams  
**Transcript Reviewer:** William Scaff, Ben Miller

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**Interviewer:** Terry Cannon & Adam Hyman  
**Cameraperson:** Lisa Sichi & Ben Williams  
**Transcript Reviewer:** William Scaff, Ben Miller

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**Interviewer:** Terry Cannon & Adam Hyman  
**Cameraperson:** Lisa Sichi & Ben Williams  
**Transcript Reviewer:** William Scaff, Ben Miller

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**Interviewer:** Terry Cannon & Adam Hyman  
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**Interview date:** May 2, 2010  
**Interviewer:** Terry Cannon & Adam Hyman  
**Cameraperson:** Lisa Sichi & Ben Williams  
**Transcript Reviewer:** William Scaff, Ben Miller

## **TAPE 1: WILLIAM SCAFF**

**00:00:58**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

William W-I-L-L-I-A-M, Stephen S-T-E-P-H-E-N, Scaff S-C-A-F-F.

**00:01:13**

**ADAM HYMAN**

And today's date is May 2, 2010, and we're on the fourth floor of the Academy Film Archive, and conducting today's interview is the eminent Terry Cannon.

**00:01:25**

**TERRY CANNON**

Okay. So here we go, Bill. I'm going to start off and go back to the beginnings and want to get some information on where you were born, the date, and anything that might be of interest about your growing up and some of your childhood background.

**00:01:54**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

Okay. I was born in Austin, Texas in Breckenridge Hospital on May the 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1947. That's about a month or so after Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier in baseball. Let's see, you want to know some things about early...

**00:02:25**

**TERRY CANNON**

[overlapping] Mm hmm.

**00:02:26**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

...early years, early life? There was one experience I had as a child, a small child. I think other people have had a similar kind of experience. It sort of represents a point in your development where you notice something about your existence that you haven't noticed before, and this took the form of looking at light rays coming into my room and little particles of dust moving around in the atmosphere and then seeing really that the air around me was quite full of a lot of matter.

**00:03:10**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

I sort of had a connection— I connected this to, at the time, being and listening to Johan Sebastian Bach. So I sort of had that experience of becoming, awakening to a new dimension of my existence and connected that to Bach, who is a very spiritual composer. So I kind of look at that as like a childhood epiphany. Something that I think had something to do with—I'm sure it had something to do with why I have pursued the arts, both later on learning more about Bach and seeing that that was kind of a becoming aware of inspiration.

**00:04:27**

**TERRY CANNON**

How old were you now?

**00:04:29**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

I don't really remember, but I had to have been in grade school, in pre-junior high. Then earliest developments in art... I was born in Austin. We lived there, and then when I was five years old, we were in Baltimore, Maryland. My sister was born there. We lived in Oklahoma City for a while and then came back to Austin, and I was going into junior high school in Austin.

**00:05:14**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

It was in junior high school, there was a buddy of mine in school—Jimmy Todd—who was very good at drawing, and he was making his own comic books and I kind of got interested in that, too. I remember a drawing assignment in our art class, a project assignment, where we were supposed to depict something from the circus, and Jimmy Todd did a person on the flying trapeze.

**00:06:00**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

And, of course, that was easily the best drawing. It was in color. We had to do them in color. It was like doing a painting but I don't remember what the media was. Then it seemed fortuitous for what I did because it sort of colors everything I've done since then, too. I did a bearded, turbaned guy with a crystal ball, you know. A seer, a magician, whatever. A wizard.

**00:06:39**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

So since then, the magic of film, pursuing kind of an alchemical orientation in my painting and other visual art work. I look back at that as kind of a significant moment that helped project me on my way.

**00:07:10**

**TERRY CANNON**

Let's go back just briefly and find out a little bit more information, for instance, about your parents, a little background on them, the type of work they did and their names and how they may have been at all inspirational in terms of your going into the arts.. And siblings also.

**00:07:35**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

Right. Okay. My father, William L. Scaff, Jr., went to the University of Texas and studied bacteriology. I think that's significant in the sense that I've really tried to bring a scientific element into my work. In fact, over the course of time, I got certain things that I did make use of in my work. One being, fluorescein, this orange powder that you put in water and it immediately turns like a fluorescent green.

**00:08:24**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

So I'd use that in paintings and various things, and other tools. My father gave me a hypodermic needle, [laugh] but it had a huge needle on it that is something you might give an inoculation to an elephant with. But I used it to paint with.

**00:08:46**

**TERRY CANNON**

Mm.

**00:08:47**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

My mother, Dorothy Virginia Wortham Scaff, were all from Texas. My sister was born in Baltimore, and then I have a brother, Lee, who was born in California. The family was pretty conservative, Republican, which I grew out of [laugh] and changed my evil ways. But as far as why was I listening to Bach? Well, here's an interesting thing. My parents had—this was the '50's—

**00:09:43**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

—and my parents had 10 inch LPs. They had a whole collection of classical LPs, maybe a dozen albums—10 inch LPs—and this Bach piece that I heard at a very early age came from that album. Well, I've got that album in my storage unit. So I still have that earliest inspiration that I can even conceive of. There it is. So the family was conservative Republican and Baptist, which I've also outgrown that and moved on.

**00:10:32**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

Let's see, other influences towards art... Well, my father, in his younger days, was a photographer and actually quite a good photographer, and he worked in two and a quarter and had a nice collection of photographs from the '30's and '40's. There were some great pictures from the Texas State Fair. I can remember a picture he did of Kewpie dolls. There was a great picture of guys baling hay into the back of an old pickup truck, throwing bales of hay in.

**00:11:22**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

There were some studies of architectural details and things that were nice. Then the picture that he had of some restaurant cantina in Mexico and someone sitting at a table that looks like Harry Truman. But, of course, you know, they're embellishing the story there and saying that my dad had the picture of Harry Truman. Yeah, at a Mexican cantina? Okay. [laugh] So there was some artistic influence that I latched onto.

**00:12:16**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

And then, let's see... This would be— maybe I was about 10 because I think my sister was about five, and we were spending Christmas at grandparents' in Dallas on my mother's side and my parents gave me the Kodak regular 8mm movie camera for Christmas and a couple of rolls of film. That got me going. I think there was also like a little makeup kit.

**00:13:05**                    **WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

So I made up my sister and did a little movie out in the backyard at my grandparents' house, with her running around with makeup on. This was my first movie, on Christmas day, loading up the camera and getting going. So yeah. Also I would like to mention this, too, the time frame. Where we moved from Texas to southern California in 1960, and I graduated from high school in '65.

**00:13:48**                    **WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

So I still had about a year of junior high to do in southern California before going into high school. Well, and then graduating from high school in '65, going to Orange Coast College for a couple of years. I went to Chouinard for a term but didn't have the money to continue. Got drafted, went to Vietnam in the latter part of the '60's. Now, what's really significant here is that because of the end of World War II and the prosperity that came into America in the '50's, American education reached a real peak in the '60's.

**00:14:44**                    **WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

Everybody was getting a liberal arts major. The project that we worked on or were wanting to do was a card set of the heroes of the '60's. You can see from that idea that every aspect of life, from the birth of the environmental movement to music heroes to poets like Allen Ginsberg. Also during the '60's, this was a huge enticement for me to pursue a life of making art because there was funk art, there was pop art, there was abstract expressionism.

**00:15:33**                    **WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

People were making films. Independent films were being made. So I was hitting— graduating from high school in '65 puts me at a point where American education is at its peak, and it all went downhill after that. Now, it's a disaster. [laugh]

**00:16:06**                    **TERRY CANNON**

What high school did you go to, Bill?

**00:16:08**                    **WILLIAM SCAFF**

I went to Tustin High School in Orange County. I look back to a two year period of time, which was the period of time, I would say it would be '67, '68; '66 to '68—in there. In two years things happened that branded a lot of us for life. That was the two years that The Paradox was going on, and we've been having The Paradox reunions up in Nevada City.

**00:17:02**                    **TERRY CANNON**

Can you talk a little bit about The Paradox? What The Paradox is?

**00:17:09**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

Well, this was a folk music club and many people who came through that club and played there went on to bigger and better things, like Jackson Brown, The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, Pat Paulsen was there. It was a really a vibrant, creative thing going on there. At that time I was going to Orange Coast College. I had a jug band, and we played at The Paradox, The Golden Bear and other places. My musical interests were just exploding.

**00:17:56**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

I always look back at this time and think that musically there was a huge banquet laid out before me. I originally got interested in, like, The Kingston Trio and Christy Minstrels, but they led me further and in two years time I had discovered the Lomaxes and their collections of field recordings. So when I went to Vietnam, I made field recordings. So two year period of time I'm going to school, I'm in a band, I'm making films, I'm doing paintings and having art shows. It was an explosion of creativity at that time, not just in my life, but all over.

**00:18:54**

**TERRY CANNON**

Now, can you talk a little bit about— I'm gathering that your first real explorations into film were done at this time period in the mid to late 1960's. So can you talk a little bit about what exposure you would have had to experimental works—and commercial work—and how you kind of got into filmmaking in a more serious way.

**00:19:21**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

Right.

**00:19:21**

**TERRY CANNON**

You mentioned your original Christmas day production. So where do we pick up after that?

**00:19:29**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

Okay. Right after high school, I got into Orange Coast College. Bruce Piner was the chairman of the art department, and he started a film series at Orange Coast College, a certain night, a weekly film series. Well, we got to see ORDET, Carl Theodor Dreyer's film, and many other films. But that let's you know a little bit about— that kind of pigeonholes this project in terms of the seriousness of it.

**00:20:09**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

And being able to see things in my lifetime are not that easily available to see. Then this film series ended with, I think, a program of some short films, and I got to show one of my films there. But here's what was funny about this. This was a regular 8mm film, and we set up the projector but the bulb in the projector wasn't strong enough to carry the image to the screen, so nobody saw the film even though it was projected.

**00:20:49**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

But at the time we thought this was great, you know? [laugh] I made a film in high school that was just like a kid's effort kind of thing, but it kind of got me going on putting a film together and putting music to it, and the music worked real nicely with it. It was a fun thing to do. But out of high school, the first two films that I made were what I consider to be my first films that I made from an artistic point of view, that this was what the intent was.

**00:21:28**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

So I'm pretty sure that the film I showed at Orange Coast College that didn't make it to the screen was one of those early films. The first two—from 1966 was a self-portrait film, and then from 1967, MEMORIEs—are my first two art films.

**00:22:01**

**TERRY CANNON**

Can you describe those films and a little bit about making those...?

**00:22:05**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

Right. The self-portrait film, one of the things—I don't remember where I got this camera. I'm sure I probably picked it up at a thrift store, but it had a broken sprocket inside, so when you ran the film through, the film jumped going through the camera. So when I got the film back and project it, it looks like there's something wrong with the projector because you see the bar between the frames kind of jumping in there, and you see part of the bottom of one frame, the top of another frame.

**00:22:38**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

So the image jumps around. I had made this cabinet. I had a cabinet with doors and a drawer, and from the outside, it just looks like a cabinet, but I'd spent a lot of time and made this thing that I called The Mystic Harem, and you open the doors and it's just full of things that I got from thrift stores—a mannequin's head, colored lights, angels, fake flowers.



**00:23:17**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

It was this whole mystical assemblage harem romantic kind of thing. Then in the drawer was a cassette recorder playing “Sentimental Baby” by Bix Biederbecke. So I've got this thing open and the lights are on and everything, and I'm laying kind of down on the floor and leaning up against it, but you can see it as the background. I probably was shooting this with a cable release.

**00:23:55**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

And I just started laughing uncontrollably which, when you see it and the picture flipping around, it kind of makes you laugh, too. It was kind of contagious. I did two different treatments of that, and so that's the self-portrait film. Then MEMORIES, I went around and I wanted to have every female in my life at the time, and I told them to just kind of sway back and forth like this because I was going to put the song “Memories” as the soundtrack over it.

**00:24:46**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

So I wanted them swaying to the music. My mother still doesn't forgive me for catching her in her nightgown and hair in curlers swaying, and I caught my friend Brian's mother doing the same thing, and girlfriends and my sister and all the women in my life. So that was MEMORIES. These were done in regular 8mm, and I don't remember exactly if I used that same camera for MEMORIES. I might have used a different camera.

**00:25:32**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

One of the interesting things, too, that was going on then is I was getting some stock. It was from France. It was called Perutz, which was real bizarre. If you want the worst image you can get, you use that film.

**00:25:51**

**TERRY CANNON**

Mm.

**00:25:53**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

But that was what was so interesting about that time. Oh, here's the other thing. Here's the other thing. I would go into Thrifty Drug Store, and they would have Kodak film that they couldn't sell within the expiration date, stacks of it sitting on the counter, buck a piece.

**00:26:16**

**TERRY CANNON**

Mm.

**00:26:16**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

I'd go in and say, here's my feature length, spend 20 bucks and go, oh, boy. [laugh] So, okay. This whole film thing is just something that happened in this real small window of time when these tools were available. Anybody could pick up a regular 8mm camera and buy some out-of-date film and make a feature length film. So the tools were handy.

**00:27:01**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

Oh, the other thing about my family, too, is we were big Hitchcock fans. It was when I was still in junior high school when we first moved out here that PSYCHO came out. My mother took me and another neighborhood boy to see PSYCHO and she was saying, I didn't know it was— I'm real sorry I took you boys to see that. [laugh]

**00:27:31**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

But we were big Hitchcock fans. So I grew up loving movies, just loving movies. Wanting to make movies, and getting that little Brownie Kodak movie camera, whatever it was.

**00:28:15**

**TERRY CANNON (CONTINUED)**

Now, what I'm wondering now—so you started making the films, and you obviously had some equipment together. But the films you were making were very different than what you had been seeing, the commercial films?

**00:28:32**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

Right.

**00:28:33**

**TERRY CANNON**

So were you aware of or seeing any kind of films in an experimental genre through the school or whatever? When did you start seeing what— because obviously what you were...

**00:28:47**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

[overlapping] Well, yeah. That was in that period of time right after graduating from high school and the latter half of the '60's. If you remember at that time, there was all the things going on at Sunset Boulevard and the curfew and the big collections of young people. There was a cinematheque in Hollywood on Sunset Boulevard. I don't remember exactly where. But it was real key seeing that whole series of films at Orange Coast College that Bruce Piner had put together.

**00:29:28**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

I very vividly remember seeing THE WORD, but I don't remember what other things we saw. But I was becoming aware also of Andy Warhol's films at the time. I remember this, too! Public television at the time had late night classic films on. You could see [Ingmar] Bergman's films. I was becoming aware of Bergman and [Federico] Fellini. Boy, when 8 ½ came out, that was a big deal, and JULIET OF THE SPIRITS...

**00:30:08**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

A lot going on, a lot to see and take in. That's why I'm talking about that period of time in the late '60's as being a huge banquet laid out. So we were seeing films from India, Satyajit Ray, and all European films, and aware of Andy Warhol's work and, let's see... I'm not able to recollect if I really knew that much about any experimental films at that time outside of Andy Warhol's.

**00:30:54**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

I just can't quite remember. But there was so much to take in at the time. And my musical interests went from Ravi Shankar to all the various genres of rock that were being done at the time, from, Country Joe and the Fish to Jefferson Airplane, The Beatles, The Stones, plus Dave Van Ronk. I was getting into folk music. I was listening to all kinds of things, classical music, world music, and so boy, that was a really significant two years, was just so packed so full of taking in so much, but doing a lot, too.

**00:31:51**

**TERRY CANNON**

Now, were you living at your parents'?

**00:31:53**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

Yes, part of the time, but I lived down on Laguna Beach for a while, and I was in L.A. for a while when I went to Chouinard, the old Chouinard school in downtown L.A. That was just a real powerful two years... [laugh]

**00:32:18**

**TERRY CANNON**

At the end of that two years I'm assuming the Vietnam war began for you...

**00:32:25**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

[overlapping] That sort of— right.

**00:32:27**

**TERRY CANNON**

...so how did that all come about? How did you wind up in Vietnam?

**00:32:32**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

Well, I got drafted and went to Vietnam, but I got into the P.I.O.—in the Public Information Office—and so I functioned as a photojournalist, and so a lot of my art background, photographic background is what got me there into that unit. So I found myself getting my early publishing experience there because I actually on two different occasions took material to Tokyo to be printed and worked with the printers. So I was working designing and editing the— there was a magazine that our brigade put out and a yearbook, and so I did those things.

**00:33:33**

**TERRY CANNON**

When you were drafted, Bill, was there any thought—as many young people did at the time—thinking about possibly either getting a deferment or leaving the country? Was that something?

**00:33:50**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

Well, that was never an option. My father stayed and went into the reserves and ended up becoming a lieutenant colonel. So he was pretty pro-military. Remember? Republican Baptist? [laugh] That was not an option for me. I wouldn't have had the support of my family, and in some sense I think I wanted to serve my country but didn't believe in the Vietnam War. I was against the Vietnam War and— oh, I still don't know why we were there by the way. [laugh] Oh, I'd love them to draft me now. [laugh]

**00:34:50**

**TERRY CANNON**

So when you were drafted, you had the option of going into this photojournalism...?

**00:34:55**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

No. Actually to tell the truth, I was very naïve. I thought, first of all, they're not going to draft me. Well, and then I thought, oh, they'll send me to Germany or some place. No. [laugh] I was very naïve. I didn't really think they were going to draft me and send me to Vietnam as an infantryman, but that's what they did. When you get to Vietnam, you go through about a week of jungle training, which is like an orientation, things you need to know about being there.

**00:35:28**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

During that time, we had to do a hometown news release, and it was the P.I.O. that handled that. This is like what appears in your hometown newspaper, a picture, so-and-so is now serving with the 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade in Bong Son, Vietnam. So we were doing those hometown news releases, filling those out so they could go out, and at the end of this session someone from the P.I.O. said, Is there anybody here who has any photographic or writing experience?

**00:36:08**                    **WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

So I went up and talked to the guy. Otherwise I would have been in the armored cav unit. So, I think, this was a very fortuitous thing. It saved my skin but it also put me in—this is an irony—where a person is doing the job that they're cut out to do in the Army. Can you believe it? [laugh] Somebody actually functioning and in, you know— Well, I did my job really well.

**00:36:44**                    **WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

I mean, I became a spec four, but they gave me more responsibility. I became the editor of the magazine and the yearbook and made these trips to Tokyo. That helped me get experience that I was able to use further down the line because I became the yearbook editor when I went to college out of the Army. And I got the bronze star.

**00:37:22**                    **WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

They gave me a bronze star for meritorious service, for doing a good job. Oh, hey, here's a side light. I was at the Veteran's Hospital in Reno and wandering around, waiting for the— I went over in a van and waiting for the van to come back and take me back to Nevada City. I look in this display case where they have all kinds of artifacts, uniforms, helmets, blah blah blah. And there is the yearbook that I designed and took to Tokyo to be printed.

**00:38:02**                    **WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

So I found out who was responsible for putting these displays together and found his office. Here's a guy who was in the same unit I was in in Vietnam, and I think was there at the same time I was there, for part of it. We just didn't know each other. But there was my yearbook again.

**00:38:23**                    **TERRY CANNON**

Mm.

**00:38:24**                    **WILLIAM SCAFF**

So that was kind of fun to see.

end of tape 1

## **TAPE 2: WILLIAM SCAFF**

**00:00:38**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

So I was in Vietnam and fortunate enough to get into the P.I.O.—Public Information Office—and used some of the talents that I had and build on those talents in publishing and writing and drawing. I did an article that got published in STARS AND STRIPES. It was a humorous article called “C-Ration Cookery,” and it was how you take the canned c-rations and kind of jokingly dress them up.

**00:01:20**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

You know, you maybe you got some wine. So I did also a drawing of c-rations with fresh vegetables and fruits and things around it. That got published in STARS AND STRIPES. But the other aspect to this is I made the most of this experience of being in the Army and being in Vietnam and did a lot of my own photography there, and had discovered what the Lomaxes had done in terms of preserving traditional folk music. So I wanted to do that, too.

**00:02:07**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

And I made some field recordings, and I think one of the things that triggered this was 10 years after the end of the Vietnam War, when veterans staged their own parade in New York City. I was kind of surprised at how emotionally that hit me because I think I'd been kind of blocking out— that I was in denial about how much the Vietnam experience meant to me. So I think that was significant in the sense that it promoted me to start to think about taking those field recordings and making some selections and issuing a cassette tape of field recordings from Vietnam.

**00:03:10**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

THE BONG SON BLUES is what I called the recordings. I did a small edition of deluxe sets that had a package of photos that I had taken in Vietnam.

**00:03:29**

**TERRY CANNON**

Can you discuss exactly what the field recordings were, and what equipment you had to...?

**00:03:38**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

[overlapping] Well, let me mention this first. Lydia Fish—in fact, I just found in one of the boxes her calling card—and she was a part of a group project to do oral histories and also folklore. Many other people in Vietnam were doing recordings. There was a general in Saigon who particularly made recordings of the Montagnard [Mountain Yard] People. And there were G.I. rock bands that some did their own original material.

**00:04:29**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

And there were some who did covers. Lydia Fish got a hold of me and had heard about this tape that I released—THE BONG SON BLUES—and so I became part of that project, too, with my tape. At one time I had heard that my tape was popular with the military historians at the Smithsonian. But what was unique about my tape is that it was a sampler of a lot of different things. I had recorded some things off of shortwave radio.

**00:05:16**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

I had a friend, and we'd get together in the evening and tune in all over Asia, and I'm telling you, I often said I could go back and spend the rest of my life in Vietnam listening to shortwave radio. It was great. Some samples of this, well, just in Vietnam alone, you could get everything from Montagnard primitive music to a Vietnamese orchestra with a guy who's trying to sound like Frank Sinatra, and everything in between, including Hanoi Hannah.

**00:06:03**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

But we were also able to pick up Middle Eastern music, and I'm not sure where that was coming from. So there's a sample of that on there, and there's a sample of some Vietnamese music. I went by this church that was in Bong Son and recorded a children's choir singing in Vietnamese the Christian hymn "Up from the Grave He Arose." And there's a man I recorded—I remember him being in Bong Son—and he was doing kind of like a chant.

**00:06:53**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

But this is just a real good example of hearing the Vietnamese language in a semi-melodic way. It's just a real good example of hearing the language. I also—and this kind of shows some of the tragedy of the war—there were some young kids who were South Vietnamese soldiers, and they couldn't have been older than like 11, 12 or 13, and they're packing their M16, but they also had a funky, old guitar. They were out in one of the encampments one evening, and they were playing some patriotic songs—South Vietnamese patriotic songs—and singing.

**00:07:57**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

And then when they would come to the end of the song, they would kind of laugh and giggle nervously. But you could tell they were just kids, and here they were in the war and fighting. So I have examples of what I could get off of shortwave radio, plus some live recordings. I have a recording that was—I was up on L.Z.—well, our base was called L.Z. English, Landing Zone English—

**00:08:34**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

—but I was up on the helicopter landing pad one night and made a recording of what was coming across the radio in the control room. I made a recording of—this is a good example of G.I.s together—and one guy who's telling a joke, and other guys, you can hear them laughing in the background. He's embellishing the joke, and it's the story of the mother fucker. And that's amusing to people. Who cares about the punch line? Just the telling of the story is really funny.

**00:09:24**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

Then I ended the whole tape with “The Bong Son Blues,” which was a song that I wrote, and it's performed by me and some other G.I.s. And that's “The Bong Son Blues.” So I made the most of this Vietnam experience as someone coming from these two explosive years where I had so much going on, and yet, it wasn't entirely interrupted by the military. I did some of these things over there.

**00:10:10**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

I also acquired— I was in Saigon and ran into another journalist, and we were talking and he sold me a used 16 millimeter movie camera for, I think, 50 bucks, and I intended to make films on it. Well, I came back from the Vietnam War and stayed in southern California a few months and then decided I wanted to hit the road and go to Dallas. I had my grandparents on both sides of the family living in Dallas, and I wanted to see them.

**00:10:57**

**TERRY CANNON**

Now, you were at some point discharged then after was it a two year stint...?

**00:11:04**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

[overlapping] I was drafted for two years, and when I was in Vietnam I heard of the seven month early out. In other words, if you came back home from Vietnam with less than seven months active duty time, you could get an early out. So what I needed to do was extend my Vietnam tour two extra months, and that put me coming back just under seven months, and so I got an early out.

**00:11:40**

**TERRY CANNON**

So you were there actually only seven months?

**00:11:43**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

No. I was there in Vietnam 14 months.

**00:11:48**

**TERRY CANNON**

14 months, okay.



**00:11:49**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

See, I put an extra two months on and stayed an extra two months in Vietnam so that when I returned to the states, I could get the seven month early out. I'd be out of the Army. I wouldn't have to do any stateside duty.

**00:12:05**

**TERRY CANNON**

So when you were discharged, you're coming back into the United States in California. How were you processing? I mean, I think you're probably still processing it, but how did you start processing what you had been through? Because for most people, the idea of leaving Orange Coast College and then going to Vietnam for 14 months...So I mean what...?

**00:12:37**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

[overlapping] Well, I had to get about four haircuts in the week before I left the area. They weren't going to let you move to the next station to get out of the Army unless they gave you a haircut. And they gave me four haircuts. [laugh] Everywhere I went, they wanted you to get another haircut. I was glad to get out. Well, how did I start processing it? Well, this is the funny thing.

**00:13:05**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

When I told you that it wasn't until the veterans staged their own celebration in New York 10 years after the end of the war that that hit me, and that's what led to putting out this tape. That was tremendously cathartic. That was a big step in processing a lot of that. Other than that, I haven't maybe so much consciously addressed it. That's an interesting question. I know it has colored a lot of my life.

**00:14:02**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

But I don't know how specific I can be right now about that. But it's a real good question, and it's something that I still see these connections, like seeing the yearbook in Reno. That was a real thrill.

**00:14:26**

**TERRY CANNON**

Well, one thing that maybe you could talk about is when you finally released your compilation of field recordings from Vietnam, I remember that you referred to THE BONG SON BLUES. You referred to it as surrealism from Vietnam. So knowing your interest in surrealism, I was always curious about that, is if you saw that experience as being— and of course, I think about some of the films that have been done about Vietnam, like APOCALYPSE NOW...

**00:15:03**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

[overlapping] Well, I still think APOCALYPSE NOW is not only a great film but the best Vietnam film ever and is very surrealistic. But, yeah, you can't help but see the surrealism of that experience. You know, winning the hearts and minds, peace... Well, anyway...

**00:15:38**

**TERRY CANNON**

Well, I'm sure we'll reconnect there at some point, but before we go on to after, I want to just go back a little bit and ask you about—because you had mentioned earlier about your going to Chouinard a semester.

**00:15:52**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

Right. Right.

**00:15:53**

**TERRY CANNON**

I'd like to find out a little bit more about how you happened to go there. I know you mentioned that you left because you didn't have money, but what was that like at Chouinard, did you want to continue there?

**00:16:07**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

Well, it was a natural place to want to go by that time. Oh, here, I'll mention this. I've got to mention this. High school, when I got into high school, the first year there was an old woman, Aura Baker was her name, and she was real old school, and she was teaching art in high school. That was a huge mistake. She had long passed her time for teaching art in high school.

**00:16:47**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

But she finally retired, and then Tom Gaines became the art teacher. He was terrific, and he was someone who really got me going early on as an artist. He was primarily a ceramist, and I still have some of his ceramics. He went on from high school to teach out at Saddleback College, and a few years back died, and he was tremendously loved at Saddleback College. The students constructed a special walkway in his honor with pieces of ceramic tiled in around along the way.

**00:17:43**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

So he was an early influence. Then I went from high school to Orange Coast College and as I mentioned before, Bruce Piner was chairman of the department and he put on the film series that was extremely influential. But also I studied under Clay Walker and Donna Sharkey as painting teachers there. Clay Walker—a tremendous artist, very productive, and he was a painter but also did a lot of wood cuts. He was primarily a wood cut printmaker.

**00:18:28**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

He would organize a yearly Printmakers Society Show, and we would get to see people who were printmakers, who were doing intaglio, lithographs, serigraphs, wood cuts, all kinds of prints. Terrific show, to be able to see these top printmakers in America in a group show. And Donna Sharkey was a good painter. To his credit, Clay Walker was fired. [laugh] There was a real conservative streak at Orange Coast College in the administration.

**00:19:19**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

And a guy who was as outspoken and as good an artist as Clay Walker, you knew he couldn't survive long in that atmosphere. So those people were a tremendous influence to me. Oh, also I shared with Clay Walker a real interest in folk music, and boy, he was a real folk music purist. We shared an interest, we traded off albums to hear. I was just collecting a lot of stuff at the time.

**00:19:55**

**TERRY CANNON**

Mm.

**00:19:56**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

We shared an interest in the Lomaxes...

**00:20:04**

**TERRY CANNON**

By the time you went to Chouinard after Orange, did you get a degree at Orange Coast?

**00:20:09**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

Yeah, well, I didn't really bother with an A.A. because it seemed kind of pointless to stop there. [laugh] So, well, I was going to try to see if something would work out, maybe get a scholarship or something at Chouinard. I took Watson Cross' drawing class. He was there for many years. Watson Cross, a respected member of the faculty there. It's also at that old Chouinard school, too, that Connor Everts, who was another printmaker, he was on the faculty there.

**00:21:01**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

He did a series of lithographs that showed babies screaming coming out of the womb. They were real strong, real disturbing lithographs, and he showed them in a gallery in La Cienega. And, boy, they became real controversial. Around that time there was some undercover cops who would show up on campus. All right, so this was an art school campus, you know, and when a guy shows up with a crew cut and looks like a preppy jock— you could tell who these undercover guys were.

**00:21:57** **WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

They stuck out like a sore thumb. So he knew that— I mean, there was a big controversy going on. Well, the cops— he was having a discussion with some students at a local establishment, eatery or bar or something. The cops came, they got him in the back of the car and beat his legs with billy clubs and crippled him for life.

**00:22:22** **TERRY CANNON**

Mm.

**00:22:24** **WILLIAM SCAFF**

Later on, a number of years later and after Vietnam— let's see, when was this? It had to have been before I went to Vietnam, but this was after Orange Coast College. I took a class in Laguna Beach in lithography from Connor Everts. Terrific artist.

**00:22:56** **TERRY CANNON**

What were people objecting to?

**00:23:00** **WILLIAM SCAFF**

The disturbing nature of babies emerging from a womb. I guess the sexual part. You remember, too, how controversial Ed Kienholtz was at that time when they did his Back Seat Dodge at L.A. County Art Museum and people picketed.

**00:23:21** **WILLIAM SCAFF**

Anything like that that was sexually suggestive... well, L.A. blew up for these things. I mean, they're very controversial.

**00:23:39** **TERRY CANNON**

Now, when you were at Chouinard, were you starting to think then about actually having a career as an artist? Or were you just taking classes and just...?

**00:24:01** **WILLIAM SCAFF**

Yeah, I was going full speed ahead, and like I was saying about the Vietnam experience, that didn't completely stop me. I mean, I still pursued things in Vietnam. Oh, well, I made these trips to Tokyo, and when I was in Tokyo, one of the things that I did is I went to The Museum of Contemporary Art in Tokyo. I found out where that was, I went there. I went up to the offices and got a list of top galleries and started going around to the galleries and ended up hanging out at The Tokyo Gallery where I saw a great show of the Gutai Group.

**00:24:46**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

This was a really respected group of abstract expressionists primarily—though not entirely—but mostly painters who were from all over Japan. They were all there and I took pictures of them, the different artists in front of their work.

**00:25:11**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

I met other experimental artists. One guy who had put together a book in a box, all of it having to do with LSD. And there was like a ticket book where you could have a ticket for a trip, and I think each ticket was information about different kind of drug. There was an actual tab of acid in each box and various things, a whole collection of little bound booklets and things.

**00:25:46**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

There was a party for the release of this, and I went to the party. I actually have a photograph of me at the party. The next day, I had another Japanese friend who was kind of showing me around and taking me different places. And he says, oh, in the paper here, there was an LSD party last night. I said, oh, yeah, I was at it. [laugh]

**00:26:18**

**TERRY CANNON**

Did you see any film at that time, because I know there was some experimental work being done there in Japan?

**00:26:25**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

I didn't see any film there. I did go to a hole in the wall jazz club, standing room only, and went to galleries. I saw a lot of art there and did a lot of photography. I would take one day out of the week that I'd devote entirely to exploring with my camera, and so I went all over Tokyo. It was great.

**00:26:56**

**TERRY CANNON**

Would you get like a week off or something?

**00:26:59**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

Oh, no. I went there to work. See, I was there when I went there to have the yearbook—this is kind of an amusing story. I went there to have the yearbook printed, and I was working with the largest printing company in Japan, Dai Nippon Printing. At the time, Dai Nippon was doing all the printing for the World's Fair, which that year was going to be in Osaka, the Osaka World's Fair. So that is the time frame there—'69, '70 was when I was there. Early '70 was when I was there.

**00:27:42** **WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

See, these two extra months that I extended to get the early out, I ended up spending in Tokyo. Because when I left Tokyo, I came back. I had about a week before I was shipped home. I got a little more scraggly when I was in Tokyo. And so they had me doing all kinds of shaving, you know, when I got back. [laugh]

**00:28:14** **TERRY CANNON**

Now, were you doing drugs there? I mean, were you...

**00:28:17** **WILLIAM SCAFF**

[overlapping] Oh, I'll get to that. [mutual laughter] I'll get to that.

**00:28:22** **TERRY CANNON**

So you could never have done that— you would never have had that experience without being drafted, obviously?

**00:28:28** **WILLIAM SCAFF**

Right. Let's see, I kind of lost what I was going say...

**00:28:39** **TERRY CANNON**

Well, you were wrapping up talking about some of the experiences you had there.

**00:28:43** **WILLIAM SCAFF**

Yeah, so that's another experience. I was there for two months so I could take a day... In the printing process, okay. I would turn everything over. We would talk about anything we needed to talk about. Then there's a big waiting period before you get to see any kinds of proofs that you can proofread and make corrections on.

**00:29:12** **WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

And I was getting there. The hair was growing. I was there for a while, had a couple of girlfriends, [laugh] and was seeing the sights. I mean, I packed a lot in.

**00:29:25** **WILLIAM SCAFF**

I was going around, seeing things and doing things and really getting the most out of that experience and loving every minute of it. I could take a day out of the week where I just would go someplace I hadn't been before with the camera, and so I came back with a lot of pictures. And, let's see, okay. Where we at now?

**00:30:01** **TERRY CANNON**

Okay. So we're going to move forward now. You've left Vietnam. You've come back to California, and we're going to pick up where you go from there, because I know then you're going to go back to Texas just to continue your college education. So can you kind of move along that?

**00:30:21**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

Right. Yeah, I came back from Vietnam, and I took this one little job helping develop these programs for learning basic computer. So it involved making slides, doing that same kind of photographic production. This company started to not be able to pay the employees, so we were able to see that it might potentially go down.

**00:31:06**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

It was kind of going nowhere for me anyway there. I felt at a loose end, so I left and got my last paycheck. But I think people who stayed after me didn't get all their pay.

**00:31:21**

**TERRY CANNON**

Was The Paradox still going, and did you reconnect with the...?

**00:31:24**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

[overlapping] No. The Paradox just lasted that was that window of maybe two years. Of course when Bob and Helen got involved with opening The Paradox, people were telling them, oh, the folk music thing is over. Don't even bother. The folk music thing is over. Do something different. But that wasn't what they were trying to do. I mean, I look back at the menu. They have the menu from The Paradox, and, boy, things were cheap. They were so cheap, no wonder they didn't make any money.

**00:32:01**

**TERRY CANNON**

What were their last names, now, Bill?

**00:32:02**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

Sheffer. Sheffer.

**00:32:03**

**TERRY CANNON**

And they were the founders?

**00:32:05**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

Yeah, and they had another partner, Hank [Fisher], who was putting up most of the money. He was more like the business end of it.

**00:32:17**

**TERRY CANNON**

What was his last name, Hank?

**00:32:19**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

I can't remember.

**00:32:20**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Okay.

**00:32:22**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

The story of The Paradox... boy, I was there all the time. And gradually, people started hearing about it. Steve Gillette was playing there and Jim Fielder, who went on to become the bass player for Blood, Sweat and Tears, Tim Buckley started out there, who died tragically at a young age, and Jackson Browne, The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, Mary McCaslin— oh, and guess who else came by and did a show there? I think maybe more than one time, Steve Martin, playing banjo.

**00:33:23**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

Pat Paulsen, many people came through and played there. Then there was a point where they started to have more well-known people. They booked in Rambling Jack Elliot, Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee played, and it was great to be in the back room and chat with Sonny Terry, and his wife had made him a vest that had all these little harmonica sized pockets so he could have all of his harmonicas in this little vest.

**00:34:06**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

But then there was a point where I guess things did kind of wane. The interest waned, and there was this slow death.

**00:34:21**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

And it came in the form of a guy who was a hypnotist. So The Paradox with all the folk music and everything degenerated into this hypnotist act where you have people come up on stage and apparently embarrass themselves because they were hypnotized. That was the tragic end of The Paradox.

**00:34:47**

**TERRY CANNON**

Mm hmm. When did it actually close?

**00:34:51**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

I don't remember exactly.

**00:34:53**

**TERRY CANNON**

No?

**00:34:53**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

But it was in the late '60's when the rise and fall of the folk music coffee house.

**00:35:03**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

I was painting things on the wall, sayings. I was finding these quotes from Beaudelair and different poets, and I also got a job doing the same kind of thing, as well as painting the front window at The Golden Bear. Once again, getting to see a lot of live music. The Golden Bear at the time, they were doing comedy, folk music, and jazz.



**00:35:48**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

Actually it was at The Golden Bear, I had been in and done my job, and I was on my way leaving and just as the act came on stage. But once they started playing, I stopped dead in my tracks, and it was Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee. So I was getting quite an education in music and art at that time.

**00:36:22**

**TERRY CANNON**

So now we're going take it back to Dallas.

**00:36:28**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

So I was kind of at a loose end, and that was in, let's see... that was probably toward the latter part of 1970 because I didn't stay too long in southern California. If I remember correctly, I think I got out of the Army on April Fools' Day. [laugh]

**00:36:54**

**ADAM HYMAN**

What year?

**00:36:56**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

1970. I extended the extra two months, but I ended up spending those two months in Tokyo, the last two months. I came back and got out. So after this job really didn't pan out, I kind of decided, I'm going to go on the road, a normal kind of thing for a guy my age. Because of the G.I. bill, I was able to get that and go to school in Dallas. I went there to visit with relatives and then didn't know quite what I was going to do next, and ended up going to Dallas Baptist College.

**00:37:39**

**TERRY CANNON**

How did you happen to go there? Why there? University of Texas wasn't an option?

**00:37:48**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

Well, going back to the Chouinard experience I didn't have much money to work with. I could go there and pay for it with it, [but] for many kinds of practical point of view, it was not a wise decision [laugh] because I didn't get a whole lot out of it. I could have made a much better decision. But what was curious about it that for many years of my life it just seemed like, well, that's what I did.

**00:38:23**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

But later in my life I see, well, here's a connection. Well, I basically—let me just say this first—I fell in with a bunch of friends when I got to Dallas, and most of them were going to school out there, so that's why I went to school out there. University of Texas was going to be more than the G.I. bill would cover. I still had to take some loans out.

**00:38:54**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

And it took forever to pay it off! [laugh] So anyway, I went to Dallas Baptist College, but I got something out of it. Foreign language was not something I felt comfortable with, and at the time there was a science professor that was a young guy, and he was pretty exciting. He talked me into this—he was also the guy who was in charge of the yearbook, and I got a scholarship and became the yearbook editor there.

**00:39:48**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

So I had contact with this young science professor. He got me into his physics class, and I ended up, instead of getting a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in Fine Art, I got a Bachelor of Science degree with a major in Fine Art. Weird, huh?

**00:40:07**

**TERRY CANNON**

Mm.

**00:40:08**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

But yet, later when I'm really trying to make the science connection a real vital part of my artwork, it makes sense. Coming from my father's influence as a scientist, it all just sort of adds up. So here I am with my Bachelor of Science degree with a major in Fine Art.

**end of tape 2**

## **TAPE 3: WILLIAM SCAFF**

**00:00:35**

**TERRY CANNON**

Well, we're at Dallas Baptist College, so now I want to pick up again with your art and filmmaking, and what kinds of art and filmmaking experiences you had, and also how many years you were there at Dallas?

**00:00:49**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

Okay. Let's look at the Dallas experience. So after the military, here I am going full speed ahead again with the art and majoring in art at Dallas Baptist College. Now, back from those humble beginnings of making those art films in '66 and '67, I made a number of films in Dallas in regular 8mm. Some of those films—one of them, SOMEDAY EARTH—it was like a poem I had written from dust ye came, to dust ye will go.

**00:01:39**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

So I wanted this scene where a person was being swallowed up by the earth. So I did the old trick where you turn the camera upside down and film a person who's buried who's coming out of the earth. And then you turn it around and it reverses the action. So I made films there. I did paintings. I put together some shows. I did a show called—this was a project I did as an art project for credit, to design and put on a show—

**00:02:24**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

—and it was called “Aloha For Now, B.C.” And my friend, Brian “B.C.” Miller was an artist, a very good artist, a surfer and eventually moved to Hawaii and is still living in Hawaii and still making art. We would do a lot of exchanges through the mail of finding something unusual or manipulating something and then sending each other these— we had our own like mail art thing going there in...

**00:03:17**

**TERRY CANNON**

Was he based in California then?

**00:03:19**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

Yes, he was in Tustin. We went to Tustin High School together, and we went to Orange Coast College together. Then he went into the Navy, and I went into the Army. He was on the Frank E. Evans, which eventually sunk [laugh] in a fog. It ran into an Australian ship, and the Frank E. Evans went down. But even during our military time, we were designing things that would be posted in the mail.

**00:03:57**                      **WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

So by the time I got to Dallas in the early '70's, I already had quite a collection of things that we had exchanged through the mail, and so this whole show was set up to display these things, some of them three dimensional things and also envelopes that had been drawn on. So I catalogued all this material. I had an exhibit and everything really professionally put together. I had a harpsichord brought in—a church organist that I knew played harpsichord, and we had an opening.

**00:04:44**                      **WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

So this whole thing of organizing, making a show, the whole ball of wax was one of my projects. So I was continuing to paint and in Dallas at the same time, I got into a gallery. She had a gallery in her own home, and a lot of prominent Dallas artists were in there and she had an opening one night, and Stanley Marcus was there for that. So I was getting into the art scene in Dallas at the time and going to school and making films.

**00:05:41**                      **TERRY CANNON**

Was this your first art exhibit? You were having work exhibited then at the Schuh Gallery?

**00:05:48**                      **WILLIAM SCAFF**

Actually I had shows back in the '60's.

**00:05:52**                      **TERRY CANNON**

Okay.

**00:05:52**                      **WILLIAM SCAFF**

I was in Mystic Arts World, which was in Laguna Beach.

**00:05:57**                      **TERRY CANNON**

Okay.

**00:05:57**                      **WILLIAM SCAFF**

And that's where Timothy Leary would hang out.

**00:06:01**                      **TERRY CANNON**

Mm hmm.

**00:06:01**                      **WILLIAM SCAFF**

It was a real vibrant show place for a lot of different arts, Mystic Arts World.

**00:06:10**                      **TERRY CANNON**

That was your first formal exhibit where your work...?

**00:06:13**                      **WILLIAM SCAFF**

[overlapping] Maybe not because I also had a show at the Tuvell Gallery, and I was in a two person show at another gallery. I was making art and showing art in the late '60's.

**00:06:28**

**TERRY CANNON**

Now, what kinds of work were you doing then and also in Dallas?

**00:06:32**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

Paintings. I've always done paintings and collage—an assemblage, and making films.

**00:06:47**

**TERRY CANNON**

But to this point in Dallas at Dallas Baptist College, had you actually shown any of your films yet outside of just screening for friends? I mean, did you actually have enough where...?

**00:06:58**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

[overlapping] Not really.

**00:06:59**

**TERRY CANNON**

Okay.

**00:07:00**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

There was no real venue for that at the time.

**00:07:04**

**ADAM HYMAN**

And your galleries weren't including your films in your shows?

**00:07:14**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

I can't quite remember. I might have incorporated film into a show in a gallery. I don't remember.

**00:07:23**

**TERRY CANNON**

A screening of a film [unintelligible].

**00:07:27**

**ADAM HYMAN**

What was the nature of the painting that you were doing at that time?

**00:07:32**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

Let's see... well, I've always worked fairly small, although I did some really huge paintings. I'd had a ten by five foot painting that was kind of influenced by the Peter Max kind of those flowing colors that were kind of like that. I started doing colored pencil drawings using Prismacolor pencils, that you could get a real hard-edged thing if you were real careful.

**00:08:22**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

So I was doing colored pencil drawings that looked like they could have been serigraphs. I was working on wood cuts and serigraphs at the time. I started working with photo silkscreen. Oh, in Dallas I made some postcards, silk screen postcards.

**00:09:00**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

So that mail art thing was beginning to get more steam as well. I'm trying to remember when I first started doing jars. It may have been prior to Vietnam that I did some of the first jars. I'm trying to remember this in terms of the contents of the jar. You owned those little— there's a trio of jars that have like round objects in them, and those are some of the first ones. Now, I know I was doing jars in Dallas, but I'm a little fuzzy on did I do some of those before?

**00:09:53**

**TERRY CANNON**

Can you talk a little bit about how you came up with the idea of doing those jar pieces? What inspired you to do that? Because I know you did those for quite a few years, so it was something you...

**00:10:01**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

[overlapping] Yeah, right. Well, okay. So that is significant because I know that the Ray Bradbury short story, THE JAR, was significant. Seeing the influence— seeing jars of things in formaldehyde in science class, the mystery. And Ray Bradbury's story is really about the mystery of what is it you're actually looking at in this jar. It's a mystery. People can't quite figure it out.

**00:10:42**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

So the idea of creating something that was mysterious and you don't really know quite what it is you're looking at, and something that appears gory and turns your stomach might really just be art supplies. [laugh]

**00:11:08**

**TERRY CANNON**

But also those objects take on their own life and have a change and evolve...

**00:11:14**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

Right. Well, that's an aspect of all of how things change in time, and of course a lot of attention is paid to getting acid-free papers and permanent colors, permanent dyes or inks or paint to preserve the life of the work of art, and yet you're still faced with the normal aging of things. So here we are talking about preserving films and yet if the film disintegrates, then you don't have anything left.

**00:11:57**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

But with painting and with the jars and other assemblage work that I do, I try to cooperate with the way things are and accept the way things are, that they are going to age and try to build that as an aspect of the work so that you're making peace with the way things age.

**00:12:34**

**TERRY CANNON**

Mm hmm. Now, let's go back to Dallas Baptist. You're there, you eventually got a degree there in art.

**00:12:42** **WILLIAM SCAFF**  
Right.

**00:12:42** **TERRY CANNON**  
That would be a Bachelor's in Art then?

**00:12:44** **WILLIAM SCAFF**  
Right. A Bachelor of Science degree with a major in Fine Art.

**00:12:50** **TERRY CANNON**  
Okay. When did you finish your studies there? What year would that have been?

**00:12:57** **WILLIAM SCAFF**  
I think that would have been '74.

**00:12:59** **TERRY CANNON**  
And, of course, during this time you were involved with an arts community. You met your first wife, Mary?

**00:13:08** **WILLIAM SCAFF**  
Right.

**00:13:08** **TERRY CANNON**  
So you should probably talk a little bit about that.

**00:13:11** **WILLIAM SCAFF**  
Okay. Well, that was a good period of time because I fell in with a lot of friends there and was getting into the art scene there. I was making films, regular 8mm films.

**00:13:29** **TERRY CANNON**  
Hadn't gotten into Super 8 at this point?

**00:13:31** **WILLIAM SCAFF**  
Not yet.

**00:13:31** **TERRY CANNON**  
Yeah. Still using the same— you've got a different camera by now...?

**00:13:38** **WILLIAM SCAFF**  
[overlapping] Well, I got a better one that doesn't have the broken sprocket holes. Right. I don't remember what kind of cameras I had prior to going Super 8.

**00:13:54** **TERRY CANNON**  
Did you consider yourself by this point, now that you were starting to make films on a more regular basis, filmmaking was becoming a really integral part of your art making? Whereas before it seemed like it was just something you had kind of dabbled in a little? Now, you were actually...?

**00:14:13**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

Well, I might have said that until I looked in the box and saw just how many regular 8mm films I made. Also particularly telling in this story is when I graduated, I actually graduated in absentia. I didn't hang around to get the diploma because I wanted to split for California. I was ready to come back to California. We were going to cruise on out to Cal, and prior to moving to Pasadena, I lived out in Upland around Claremont for a while.

**00:15:01**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

I don't remember how long, not that long. Here's what significant thing happened there. Remember the old 16 millimeter camera I paid 50 bucks for in Vietnam? I used that and some cash—a down payment—on getting a brand-new Braun Nizo Super 8 camera. So I was making a step up, you know. I was not only serious, getting more serious...

**00:15:33**

**TERRY CANNON**

[overlapping] [unintelligible] in California?

**00:15:35**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

Yeah.

**00:15:35**

**TERRY CANNON**

The [unintelligible]

**00:15:36**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

[overlapping] Yeah, in Upland.

**00:15:37**

**TERRY CANNON**

In Upland.

**00:15:38**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

And this was after graduating in Dallas and making a bunch of regular 8mm films in Dallas and coming back to California. So I was ready to graduate up. So I knew that filmmaking was in my future. Okay. So this is what's really significant here—arriving in Pasadena, and the time that I did arrive in Pasadena, I missed the first show of Filmforum.

**00:16:23**

**TERRY CANNON**

Was this '75 when you moved to Pasadena?

**00:16:26**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

Yeah.

**00:16:27**

**TERRY CANNON**

Okay.

**00:16:27**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

I actually moved to Pasadena because I was intending to go to Fuller Theological Seminary, and I did for a year.



**00:16:39** **TERRY CANNON**

To do your Master's work?

**00:16:42** **WILLIAM SCAFF**

I didn't really know what I was going to do. I took a great class there in aesthetics and I also took a class in Hebrew, but some really interesting classes that were exploring contemporary religious ideas, and I was trying to see if there was a place for the arts in that milieu. And there wasn't, [laugh] so I moved on, but it was valuable, particularly the class in aesthetics.

**00:17:26** **WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

But when I got in to Pasadena, it wasn't long—and I'm sure I found out about Filmforum through FOLLIES. So when I found out about Filmforum, I found out...

**00:17:39** **TERRY CANNON**

[overlapping] FOLLIES? What was FOLLIES?

**00:17:43** **WILLIAM SCAFF**

FOLLIES was a monthly newspaper that was edited by Terry Cannon and was a great meeting place, a venue for writers, poets, artists, photographers, and ended up doing some writing and work for and covers, designing work. I had a hand in FOLLIES and then later on GOSH, which was another monthly publication mostly dealing with the arts and things going on around town and of the creative people, by the creative people and for the creative people.

**00:18:40** **WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

So when I came to Pasadena, I missed the first show, which I think was NANOOK OF THE NORTH. Was that the first show you did?

**00:18:53** **TERRY CANNON**

No. It was an ethnographic film.

**00:18:58** **WILLIAM SCAFF**

An ethnographic film.

**00:18:59** **TERRY CANNON**

I can't remember what it was. It would have been in January of 1976...

**00:19:04** **WILLIAM SCAFF**

Yeah.

**00:19:04** **TERRY CANNON**

...at the old neighborhood church.

**00:19:06**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

Okay. Right. So, I mean, I just missed the first show. But I'm landing in Pasadena with my newly purchased Super 8 camera and finding out about Filmforum. Well, looking back, I think, yes, I would have continued to make films, but I probably would have been a painter who made films. But because of Filmforum, I became a filmmaker who also made paintings. [laugh] Well, I did a lot of both, but, I mean, Filmforum was so vitally important to have a place to show your work and to become a part of a film community and artistic community in Pasadena.

**00:20:01**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

The latter half of the '70's was a very creative time in Pasadena, and before a lot of the gentrification has taken place in Old Town Pasadena, when rents were real cheap and you could have a loft for real cheap, you know, 200 bucks a month. There was a co-op of Pasadena artists that put their money together and had a gallery, The PAC Gallery. I mean, this was a time when there were a number of people doing poetry, writing, doing photography, making films, painters, a real rich time for the artists in the area.

**00:21:03**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

And one significant thing that took place back around that time—'76 or '77—is Michael Thornberry brought the first espresso bar to Pasadena, and it was in the—there was a restaurant at the Pasadena Inn, and Lisa, I was going to tell you this story—the Pasadena Inn had a little diner, and the diner would close up fairly early, and Michael Thornberry would come in, and they weren't using their liquor bar. It was just sitting vacant to the side.

**00:21:44**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

That became the espresso bar. Then Michael would, in the wee hours of the morning, would be making his excellent cheesecakes, which he was selling to local businesses. And he ran his espresso bar. But the espresso bar was the hot spot. That was the place where creative people came and ideas were exchanged. It was a meeting place of creative people, and ideas and plots were hatched and this was the creative thing going on at the time in the latter half of the '70's in Pasadena.

**00:22:39**

**TERRY CANNON**

Now, to go back to the films, when I first met you in probably late '75, early '76, you had just finished, I think, SELF-PORTRAITS.

**00:22:52**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

Right.

**00:22:52**

**TERRY CANNON**

Which I think that was kind of your first kind of major film with— your first kind of Super 8 film?

**00:22:57** **WILLIAM SCAFF**  
[overlapping] Super 8. The new Super 8.

**00:23:01** **TERRY CANNON**  
Can you talk a little bit about that, when that was made and what the subject matter is and why that?

**00:23:10** **WILLIAM SCAFF**  
Well, if you kind of look, at some of these, the idea has come from art itself. You know, people have done self-portraits, so it's a legitimate theme to make art with. It lends itself more easily to painting than it does to film, but why not make a—and really this was what originally encouraged me to make the bathing film, because bathers—you can think back, it's a tradition in film.

**00:23:52** **WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**  
You can think of a western where there's an oak tub, and someone's taking a bath in an oak tub all through film, bathing scenes and painting—Matisse's Bathers. So the idea of doing SELF-PORTRAITS, and I did a number of different self-portraits. They were just little odd things that I did. It was playing around with what can I do that is a self-portrait, but is somehow not a self-portrait.

**00:24:35** **WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**  
Like, one of them, you're looking at a street scene and nothing is going on. Then all of a sudden, I appear and vanish real quick. And it's a self-portrait, but I'm only there for a split second because we stopped the camera, I got in, ran it a few frames, and then I'm gone. Using all these little tricks, and so I did things to obscure my face, too. I had a woman's stocking over my face. So it was self-portraits, but I was playing around with the concept of what a self-portrait was.

**00:25:16** **TERRY CANNON**  
And was that a sound film?

**00:25:20** **WILLIAM SCAFF**  
No, it's silent.

**00:25:26** **TERRY CANNON**  
Because for some reason, I'm seeing your notes that that was sound. For some reason I'm thinking that there was sound on that.

**00:25:32** **WILLIAM SCAFF**  
Sound... Well, I don't remember. Maybe I selected a piece of music that I ran. That's possible. I possibly could have used— now, that I think about it, I probably used a John Cage prepared piano piece for that.

**00:25:55**

**TERRY CANNON**

Mm hmm. Mm hmm. Actually I take it back. Because I'm looking at your first self-portrait film. This one was silent.

**00:26:06**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

Okay.

**00:26:06**

**TERRY CANNON**

But you had had some earlier sound films with the regular 8mm work.

**00:26:11**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

Well, I may say sound because I used maybe what...

**00:26:19**

**TERRY CANNON**

[overlapping] Pre-existing material.

**00:26:19**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

I never got regular 8mm sound striped, or I never made prints of any of the regular 8mm films. But I might have selected a piece of music that—I've got a collection of a bunch of old cassette tapes and then I could kind of cue it up and play the music but with the projecting. So most of my films do have sound.

**00:26:57**

**TERRY CANNON**

Well, it seemed like now you were going to enter into a period where almost all of your films had sound. In fact, it seems like that SELF-PORTRAITS may have been your final silent film.

**00:27:11**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

Maybe so.

**00:27:12**

**TERRY CANNON**

It looks like from here on out, you were utilizing sound so your work was...

**00:27:18**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

Well, that was working well for me. I was able to find music that fit the image pretty well, and I liked doing that. I liked what the effect that music had on the visual image. In some cases, I made my own music—created my own music to go with the film, or worked with other people and we collaborated to create music. Then the Bathers film, in retrospect, I've often thought of it as partly a tribute to some of the roots music that I really came to embrace, like early jazz and folk-oriented or roots-oriented music that is in that film. It's almost like part of the experience is that I'm paying a tribute to music that I really have come to love and embrace.

**00:28:31**

**TERRY CANNON**

Let's go chronologically now because 1977— you release SELF-PORTRAITS in '76. '77, you had a very productive year. You released three films that year, WAY INSIDE, SEARCHING FOR PLANES and HEAD PICTURES. All fairly long films, too, each from 10 to 17 minutes. So now you were really starting to very seriously work in film.

**00:28:58**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

Right. That rough 15 minute to 20 minute range, a lot of films fall in—or let's just say 10 to 20 minute—a lot of the films fall into that frame of time.

**00:29:16**

**TERRY CANNON**

Let's talk about each of these films.

**00:29:18**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

Okay.

**00:29:18**

**TERRY CANNON**

Because they're all quite different and unique. WAY INSIDE being really kind of a found film. So can you talk about that? That was your next film then?

**00:29:29**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

Gee, I don't remember when exactly that came in. But, yeah, WAY INSIDE was a found film, and it was just taking the whole concept of that film one step further. This was a film that the pornographic film community, it was like one of their experiments in a way. You know, just a rough experiment. At the beginning, a voice comes on—this is the person off camera—and says, we wanted to make a film where we don't actually show sex taking place.

**00:30:17**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

But we have someone talking about it. This is a woman who is naked on a bed, and the whole film, you see maybe three or four different shots of her, some of them just close-ups on her face. So she's talking about her sexual experiences or what she wants to do, and this guy is off camera making comments every now and then. The whole idea is that her talking will get you aroused.

**00:30:55**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

It's shot in San Francisco because you hear the cable car go by outside. [laugh] So what I did is I bleached the image of the film. As I recall, it attacked maybe the red dye first because I remember some of the images having blue and yellow. But a lot of the image is gone, so what you're hearing mostly is the soundtrack but with these broken up bits of image that come on because I attack the whole film with bleach but was kind of selective. I wanted some of the image to remain. So that just takes it a step further. You're seeing the image being deteriorated.

**00:31:57**

**TERRY CANNON**

What was the reaction to that film when you began to show it? Again, you were at this stage pretty much just showing the films privately? Or had you had a screening at Filmforum by this point in '77? Had you shown any of your own work?

**00:32:16**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

I don't remember really when I first had a show or what I showed early on. I don't remember if I showed any of the regular 8mm films that I had been doing.

**00:32:36**

**TERRY CANNON**

I don't recall that you'd ever showed any of the regular 8mm at Filmforum.

**00:32:40**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

Yeah, I don't either. So I'm sure the SELF-PORTRAIT show— well, I was already juiced to start making films anyway. I'd just gotten the Super 8 camera. But having a place to show it,... I'm pretty sure I think what you may be trying to get at here, too, is that was there any venue prior to Filmforum? Well, I think that this is what makes this so fateful to arrive in Pasadena at a time when all I did is miss the very first show of Filmforum.

**00:33:21**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

To me, it's enormously important that Filmforum was there. It was a place where I could be encouraged. I would have shows. Like I say, I became a filmmaker who also made paintings, rather than a painter who also made films during that time, primarily because— well, not only Filmforum showing my work there, having that outlet but a stepping stone to beyond, having a show in San Francisco and then having Carmen Vigil take a film to Brussels for a Super 8 Festival.

**00:34:08**

**TERRY CANNON**

Which film did he take to Brussels? Do you remember?

**00:34:12**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

I'm thinking it probably was IN THIS TREMBLING SHADOW because that was a film that I had a print of. See, I didn't have a print of everything. I only had a print of what the pocket book would allow. Some of the major films that I had that were in a pre-finished state, I would get a print made and have it sound striped and then through my projection system, transfer the sound. It was really a crude operation but it allowed me to have something to show.

**00:34:47**

**TERRY CANNON**

Now, after WAY INSIDE, your next film, I believe, was SEARCHING FOR PLANES, and that was about 15 minutes. Can you talk a little bit about that film? And by now, by the time you got into SEARCHING FOR PLANES, I think you were getting into a far more sophisticated process of editing and production.

**00:35:06**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

Right. Yeah, really the self-portrait film was like an appetizer. [laugh] That SEARCHING FOR PLANES really was the first of more serious work to come, and actually is the first of what has become The Dream Trilogy, which are three films that I made that had a very dreamlike quality. Boy, I must have done a lot of exploring in a short amount of time.

**00:36:00**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

Because one of the things with SEARCHING FOR PLANES is I was using black and white film that I was subjecting to toners that were the Edwal tints and toners. The tints would color the white part of the film—black and white film. But the toner would actually eat away the black and replace it with that color.

**00:36:29**

**LISA SICHI**

Mm hmm.

**00:36:29**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

And I was putting film in toner bath for several days. One of the things this caused is for the image to start breaking down, and it looked a lot like it was solarized. It had that kind of solarized edge to it because the edge of the image was starting to break down from being in the toner so long. So that's one of the things that I was experimenting with. I remember at that time, too, Craig Rice—we were both like bathtub gin makers, you know.

**00:37:11**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

Only we were making bathtub movies. We were processing these crazy things that we were doing in our bathtubs. [laugh]

**00:37:21**

**TERRY CANNON**

Now, in terms of the images here, were you out just filming things in and around Pasadena? At what point did you get to start putting this material together and composing SEARCHING FOR PLANES?

**00:37:45**

**WILLIAM SCAFF**

Yeah, well, the San Gabriel Mountains are at the very beginning of **SEARCHING FOR PLANES**. Well, most of that black and white film that I shot that was subjected to toners, was shot out at The Arboretum. This was something with their pollination or whatever they were doing, they had trees and they had paper bags over the limbs, which was really kind of bizarre. You're looking at a tree with paper bags tied on to the limbs, and it was something having to do with pollination or whatever they were doing. So, yeah, I was scouting out around the territory here and shooting all over town, getting out on foot.

**00:38:43**

**WILLIAM SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

This was when there could still be something like—I don't know if you remember this or not, but on Union Street kind of back there where Café Santorini is now. I remember for a long time there was like a vacant lot with ruins. You'd have to step through all these ruins. Course it's all been cleaned up now, but there was a big hole where there had been the hotel fire on Colorado. That was all gutted and taken out. So there were funky areas around town that were photogenic. They were interesting.

**end of tape 3**



## **TAPE 4: WILLIAM SCAFF**

**00:00:51**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

One thing I want to mention about **SEARCHING FOR PLANES** is I had done the self-portrait film which was really like a variations on the theme, but **SEARCHING FOR PLANES** is really the first film that I really tried to explore the idea of a film being a visual poem. Exploring poetry as a film as opposed to what we normally see, mostly narrative film as a novel or a story telling a story, or a documentary. But looking at film as poem or essay. When I think about that, I think about some of the things—books that influenced me, like later on in my life I read a lot of Henry Miller, and really enjoyed Henry Miller for a period of time. Two of my favorite Henry Miller books are **BIG SUR AND THE ORANGES OF HIERONYMOUS BOSCH** and **THE AIR-CONDITIONED NIGHTMARE**. Some of his other books were novels. I also really like **THE WISDOM OF THE HEART**, which was a collection of his essays. But **BIG SUR** and **AIR-CONDITIONED NIGHTMARE** were a little harder to pigeonhole into a particular genre.

**00:02:35**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

They were collections of writings, his experiences around Big Sur and **AIR-CONDITIONED NIGHTMARE** was his trip across country from New York to California when he came to Big Sur. But, as a literary form, I don't know quite what you would call it, but I kind of like that idea of having a film or a book that's can't hard to pigeonhole into whether it's a novel or what kind of writing it actually is. Another film that comes to mind is Fellini's **ROMA**, which was his initial impressions of Rome when he went to Rome in World War II and then his modern impressions with the great freeway traffic jam and the Papal Fashion Show. So I enjoy seeing a film that steps out of the traditional narrative or documentary form and becomes maybe like an essay or largely what I was trying to do with a lot of my films is make a film that was a visual poem. In some cases I worked with poetry a little bit.

**00:04:06**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

Nothing even close to what [James] Broughton did, but a little bit. I was trying to see if I could make poetry and film work together. But **SEARCHING FOR PLANES** was the first real effort I made with that idea of making a visual film poem, and it became the first of The Dream Trilogy of films that were like a dream or has a dream-like quality.

**00:04:40**

**TERRY CANNON**

How about the editing of these films? Because I think your films always were wonderfully edited. And I know you kind of turned to a more kind of an intuitive approach to editing. How were you thinking about editing at that time in terms of your connections you were making through images? Because it seemed like your editing was really starting to evolve then, and what we saw with **SEARCHING FOR PLANES** we would see now in other films. So what were you thinking about at that time? Because this was at least, I saw film as a big jump. It was really intuitive.

**00:05:20**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

It was a big jump. I'm going to do a little jumping around here and talk about the editing. The one film that I spent the most time editing and it was really an intense two-month period of time and I was just on this [makes gesture] constantly. I had a closet that I converted into my editing room, so I'd open the doors and had a table and did the editing there. I was just on it for two months and it's the most strenuous editing job I did on any of the films, and that **IN THIS TREMBLING SHADOW**. Which is the second of The Dream Trilogy, the one that came after **SEARCHING FOR PLANES**. And I'll mention this because this was really a significant film in terms of showing me that I should rely on my intuition, and that was **BATHERS**. To make **BATHERS**—this came from the original Espresso Bar too because I met a lot of my victims; people who I asked to do a bathing scene.

**00:06:50**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

The idea being that Matisse did bathers and a lot of movies have bathing scenes. So this is a bathing scene and I would for the most part go to their location or where we would have some other location picked out where we would have the bathtub, we would do the bathing scene. It was up to the person **OR PERSONS** to decide whatever they wanted to do and then I would film it, and this is another variations on a theme. There were a number bathing scenes that people did and they're all separated by a strip of black film so there's a pause between each one and each one can be seen separately. The film also became a tribute to roots music because I used a lot of roots music for each bathing scene. A particular piece of music for each scene. What really struck me as I put the film together and was editing putting the whole thing together is I looked back and I thought it was really curious that each one was handled differently from my point of view from the way I photographed the scenes.

**00:08:27**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

So I was responding to a person's bathing scene without any kind of plan. So I was responding to what they were doing, and so how I handled the camera and the kind of thing that I did, and to see the bathing film you could see that each one is treated differently and handled differently and this was done as a response to what the person was doing. So there was no prior planning here really. So that taught me something. It showed me that my intuition was working and that I should start paying more attention to my intuition. I'll say now that generally how I make a film is I don't have a script. In fact, I will start shooting film, I'll collect film, I'll start seeing it move in a certain direction, then I'll start maybe responding to that, and then a film eventually evolves out of that process. The experience of making the BATHERS film got me so aware of my intuition that when I moved to Colorado at the end of the '70s and 1980, I set out to do a project where I would rely more on my intuition.

**00:10:01**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

What I had is about 50 rolls of film that I would shoot a roll of film and then I didn't want to remember what I shot, and I would put it away in a drawer and not get it processed. I did this and did this until I collected up a drawer full of rolls of film that had been shot but not processed. So I was trying to consciously forget what was going on in the filming I was doing so that later I'd come back and assemble a film and see where my intuition led me. So that film was DIET OF WORMS that I made in Colorado. Some of the footage that I collected was of people I knew in Boulder. There was a Baptist Minister and there was a woman in the church there who had been a former Miss California. What I didn't know at the time I making and editing the film and found out later is, well it ended up being the demise of the Baptist preacher.

**00:11:30**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

Because he was attempting to have an affair with the former Miss California. He wasn't far off. Boy, she was a beautiful woman, and he actually was living with his wife and her mother, and they were like two spinsters. So the poor man, you could see easily why he might attempt to have an affair with this beautiful former Miss California. Well, I didn't know all that was going on until later, but there was some things that I did editing wise where he's getting out of a car and he shuts the door and as soon as the door slams the screen goes black. There were things that suddenly let me know that my intuition was working. I was capturing on film some things that were going on that consciously I wasn't aware of. Well, DIET OF WORMS wasn't that great of a film. It wasn't one of my better films, but it was I thought a noble experiment in trying to rely more on my intuition.

**00:12:37**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

So with all that in mind, I think it's appropriate to talk about the third film in The Dream Trilogy. So we had **SEARCHING FOR PLANES** was the first one, and like you say, that was like a big step ahead from what I'd done before. Then came **IN THIS TREMBLING SHADOW**, and that title came from an Elizabethan song called **IN THIS TREMBLING SHADOW**. That was the one that I really did a huge editing job on. I don't know if you remember this, there were some people in San Fernando Valley who were doing something, I think it was involved with television and experimental film. I don't remember what the whole situation was. But this afforded me the opportunity to take a film and have it on a video screen, on a television screen. **IN THIS TREMBLING SHADOW**, I was working with Super 8 and you have the cartridge, and on the cartridge is an opening where the film is exposed. So you may see four, five or six frames exposed to light. So what I was doing is maybe I'd shoot— with my camera I could shoot a frame at a time.

**00:14:15**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

Or I could do a little five frames real quick. I was getting these little snippets, but then periodically I would open the back of the camera and close it, or open it and pull the cartridge part way out and close it. So I was getting flares on that little strip of film. That became like punctuation, visual punctuation, and it's used throughout the whole film. So there's that happening, things that I was doing in camera, but then I came down to where I was cutting little tiny bits of image, a little six or seven frames of Pegasus, things found here and there. I know my film description—you might have it there. See if you can find it. Oh here it is. Okay. **IN THIS TREMBLING SHADOW**, here's the description: “Ants, bras, bushes, cages, crates, diamonds, drawers, flaming fountains, flowers, glass, hearts, hog's heads, holes, painters palette, Pegasus, plywood, pool, religious articles, sea captain, self-portraits, star lights, statuary, tar, tiger, time travel.”

**00:15:40**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

What was really a thrill was seeing this on TV, because there are all these flares and punctuation, little snippets of images. Seeing it on TV, you immediately think there's wrong with your reception, something wrong with the television set. So I thought that was kind of a cool thing, seeing how that translated on TV and it looked like there was really some problem going on.

**00:16:18**

**TERRY CANNON**

I remember soundtrack for that film, which was quite extraordinary. Can you talk a little bit about that, because I think you utilized what, exclusively The Glass Orchestra?

**00:16:25**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Yeah, it's exclusively a piece by The Glass Orchestra. I think they were out of Canada. The record—I had an LP—and the record was clear plastic, relating to the glass idea. It was a great piece of music and went just really well with the film. That's a film that I got a print made and had it sound striped and transferred the sound to it. It's probably, I would say, one of the best films I've made, and one that's pretty accessible to people. I loved seeing on TV.

**00:17:15**

**TERRY CANNON**

By now, 1979, *IN THIS TREMBLING SHADOW* comes out. By now you will certainly have had first show at Filmforum.

**00:17:24**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Sure.

**00:17:24**

**TERRY CANNON**

By now you've got a body of enough of work that you can do a show. Do you remember that first program, any recollections of your first screening at Filmforum of your own work?

**00:17:44**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Well, I know at one point I kind of fell into the pattern of having the last show of the year, and, well, that meant that I was able to come up with new work.

**00:18:02**

**TERRY CANNON**

How did that happen, you get into doing the closing show of the year? Because I know that happened for several years.

**00:18:09**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Corruption and graft and knowing someone inside the organization, the Filmforum. Well, we became like a family, you know. And well I was doing enough work that I had new film work at of each [year.] Well this was for a period of time, because at some point the film started to wane and I made fewer films. But I don't remember the first show.

**00:18:58**

**TERRY CANNON**

Now I know at this time by '79 you had screened in some other venues, and I remember several of the films being shown I think in Anthology Film Archives because there was a catalog that came out in the latter part of the '70s, An 8mm & Super 8 show at Anthology, do you remember seeing...?

**00:19:22**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

I really don't.

**00:19:23**

**TERRY CANNON**

You don't remember that one. Yeah, because I remember you having some work in that show and a filmography in the catalog at the time. Because at that time there weren't that many Super 8 filmmakers.

**00:19:36**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

You got my resume there?

**00:19:37**

**TERRY CANNON**

Yeah, somewhere I have that.

**00:19:40**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

It should say the first year that I had a show at Filmforum on there.

**00:19:56**

**TERRY CANNON**

No, I don't see here... Okay, here was the program at Anthology. "Homemade Movies: A 20 Year Survey." Anthology Film Archives. Actually that was 1981. As far as your film shows, I don't know. This doesn't look too comprehensive. 1979, eight Southern California filmmakers, Filmforum. Yeah, I'm not seeing it here. Well, actually: a one-man shows, Filmforum 1978, '79, '80, '81 and '82.

**00:20:37**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

This is an attempt to condense.

**00:20:38**

**TERRY CANNON**

So actually '78 would have been your first show, and then you did a show each year for five years.

**00:20:44**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

That sounds about right.

**00:20:47**

**TERRY CANNON**

Then there was a gap and then 1985 you started up again. So you were usually producing at least one or two new films for each of those shows. I know that eventually those shows also incorporated performance. So maybe this would be a good time to talk about when the performance became kind of an element in your work.

**00:21:12**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

When I did the DIET OF WORMS show— well that was after I came back from Colorado because I shot in Colorado primarily. The Doo Doo ettes did live music for it. They were some of Pasadena's experimental music people. Tom Recchion being involved in that group. I sort of played around some I guess, my memory is kind of fuzzy about doing something where I maybe there was performance and utilized film as part of it. That kind of thing wasn't as important as just making a good film. I didn't explore that kind of thing too far. Shall we'll go back to the editing?

**00:22:22**

**TERRY CANNON**

Yes.

**00:22:22**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Because I found several things happening on that. One is it was sort of always my style to maybe have a fuzzy idea of what I wanted to do, and then I would just start working towards that and see where it went. So I've got things like *The Dream* films, which are pretty carefully thought-through and edited very carefully. Two films I did in Colorado that are black and white and are both primarily edited in the camera. All I had to do to put the films together for the most part with just minimal cutting involved, and they are two films that I have a fondness for.

**00:23:33**

**TERRY CANNON**

What are the titles of those two?

**00:23:33**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

There the two Party films: *KITTY'S PARTY* and *VERA'S PARTY*. If you see them in tandem, it's kind of interesting because *VERA'S PARTY*, this is a group of senior citizens in Boulder who call themselves *The Over-The-Hill Gang* and they got together socially for different things. Well, I went to their Halloween party and filmed them in black and white. Part of the reason I love these films is because they're in black and white. I just loved using black and white. Plus-X, you just got really a nice rich black and white. So here are old people who are doing all the things that kids do. They're blindfolded, feeling [for] spaghetti and a peeled grape and they tell you it's an eyeball. You know, they're playing these kids' games but they're all real old people. So that's the charm of that. It's a real human portrait, and it's a lot of fun.

**00:24:47**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

Then *KITTY'S PARTY* on the other hand are a bunch of young people for the most part. This was at night and there's an old house that you can see in the film and a big hole in the ground where something had been and it had been removed. Musicians—jazz musicians came from Denver to this party. They haul a piano down into this hole, and this is the orchestra pit and everybody is sitting around this big hole smoking hash. It's just a real contrast to parties. So those are the two Party film and both of them required very little editing. It was mostly edited in camera. Then I wanted to talk about the third of the *Dream* films, and that was *RITE OF PASSAGE*. I have another alternative title, and still to this day I can't decide on which title I liked better, so maybe it's both titles. But the other title I had was *POINT CONCEPTION*, or *RITE OF PASSAGE*.

**00:26:16**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

This is the film that Carol is in. It's kind of like *THE INCIDENT AT OWL CREEK BRIDGE* where a man is being hanged and then in this split second his whole life goes before his eyes. So the idea of this film is you see Carol...

**00:26:43**

**TERRY CANNON**

Can you mention who Carol is? Her name and tell us who she is.

**00:26:43**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Yeah, Carol Lewis—Carol L. Lewis—was my wife at the time, and you see her at the beach and she closes her eyes at the beginning of the film, and then the film takes you through these various landscapes that are kind of dreamlike and she is present throughout this to where she's brought into this forest where you see a dead deer carcass. Then very quickly from that, you pass back through the former landscapes back to where you're at the beach and she opens her eyes. So it's like a point conception of facing death. Carol contracted Hodgkin's disease and died of cancer in 1985, and we couldn't help but see this as kind of a premonition of her death. The film was made before we knew she had cancer. So I have to as an explanation think that my intuition was involved in that in some way I was able to maybe pick-up something intuitively that came after.

**00:28:35**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

Now what did I begin with? I wanted to make a ghost story, and so I was setting out to make a ghost story film. I didn't know exactly how I was going to go about it or what I was going to do. I started collecting footage and as I moved along on this project I was assembling a lot of footage, this ghost idea—this ghostly ghost idea, because it was just a rough idea I had—wasn't working out. Something just wasn't working, so at some point I abandoned telling the ghost story idea and let the film just make itself, and that's what happened. Which ends up did have a sort of ghost story-like effect to it. But the idea of her in a dream having to face death and then quickly come back out of the dream, it just seemed like a premonition of what was to happen.

**00:29:51**

**TERRY CANNON**

That film also was notable, I believe that may have been the first film where you actually— up to that point most of your soundtracks had been albums and pre-recorded materials that you fit to the film.

**00:30:12**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Don Kirby and I collaborated and made the soundtrack for the film.

**00:30:16**

**TERRY CANNON**

Can you talk a little bit about that collaboration and also what was the sound you used?



**00:30:22**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Pretty much experimental. I mean, he had on hand some material that we listened to and it seemed— well I haven't seen this film in years now, so I can only remember he had some kind of a sound that sounded like foghorns which we had at the beginning of the film. It was not like a foghorn blatant but sort of created that image and was in the background and so it kind of gave you that beach, that you're at the ocean, you know? We just experimented and made an experimental piece of music. It wasn't the first time we had done that or the last time that Don Kirby and I collaborated on music.

**00:31:12**

**TERRY CANNON**

But that was your first collaboration on film. Did you do anything following that on film?

**00:31:18**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

I don't think so.

**00:31:19**

**TERRY CANNON**

What about Keith Ullrich? Did you do any work with him on any of your films? I thought he was involved a little bit with that RITE OF PASSAGE soundtrack.

**00:31:33**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

He might have been. Keith and I did the master tape for THE BONG SONG BLUES. Of course, we were collaborating on other things, with FOLLIES and GOSH and then later with SPIRAL. Carol and I were both involved with SPIRAL MAGAZINE, the film publication. From the point of view of being the art editor people. And Carol—well you've got that one poster, and I discovered that Filmforum poster—that we adopted the moth as like a logo for Filmforum. You know, being attracted to light. Carol did a collage and I think she used some elements of movie projectors and other mechanical things to create a monster projector that kind of had moths flying around it as an image for one of the Filmforum posters. So we were involved in Filmforum. Graphic arts as well. And also doing graphics for SPIRAL.

**00:32:58**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

Then later I was involved with LITTLE SUN, and that was from the LITTLE SUN publishing that you [Terry Cannon] started up that Keith did the music for “From the Pole to the Equator.”

**00:33:16**

**TERRY CANNON**

He did the soundtrack.

**00:33:19**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Soundtrack for that, and THE BONG SONG BLUES. Then also there was an issue of SPIRAL MAGAZINE that came out on cassette tape, and that featured a lot of people who were either experimenting with sound and film, or had done soundtrack work for their work films.

**00:33:43**

**TERRY CANNON**

What did you have on that tape?

**00:33:45**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

I don't remember. I don't remember. Did I have anything on it? I don't remember.

**00:33:53**

**TERRY CANNON**

I don't remember. Now I want to go back for a bit though, because you've got a period where you've left Pasadena in 1980, approximately, and you've gone to Boulder. So I want to find out what precipitated that?

**00:34:09**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

I left in '79.

**00:34:09**

**TERRY CANNON**

'79. How did you wind up going to Boulder? How long were you there?

**00:34:11**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Okay, the '70s were a significant period of time for my family. I pretty much was on my own during this time. But my father, he got his degree in science and he got into working for the industry that was— he worked for Hughes Aircraft, for North American. When the contracts for the Vietnam War started drying up for these big companies, well it sent my dad scrambling for work elsewhere. This was also the time at the end of the Vietnam War when Texas Instruments, which had been supplying the war effort, they came out with the pocket calculator, saving their skin, keeping their doors open. So my family in the '70s, they lived in Southern California. My dad got a job in Hialeah, Florida, so they were on both coasts. Then for a time he was in Los Alamos, New Mexico.

**00:35:42**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

I visited there and visited Hialeah. Then they were in Boulder, Colorado. I moved up to Boulder for a year-and-a-half, just to check it out, get a change of pace.

**00:36:13**

**TERRY CANNON**

So you had transferred to Boulder. Were you working in Boulder or what was happening there in that year-and-a-half that you were there. You made a couple of films, obviously.

**00:36:24**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Yes, that was where I did the editing on *IN THIS TREMBLING SHADOW*. So I was making films and surviving as best I could. It was lean times. I eventually came back, but during this period of the '70s, my family was all over the place. So when I got to Pasadena and almost immediately I'm falling in with creative people and Filmforum, and we lived a number of places growing up I think I was really to settle down somewhere for a while. I ended up staying for more than 25 years in Pasadena. So this is where my extended family is.

**00:37:25**

**TERRY CANNON**

Now obviously at this time, you were regularly attending Filmforum screenings, you were involved in some of the graphic look of Filmforum. So can you talk about some of the work that you saw, the filmmakers that you met that were inspirational to you, that you became involved with, whose work you really admired...?

**00:37:55**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Well, going back for just a minute here. Really what ends up being a really small window, historically speaking, when these tools were available and I could walk into Thrifty Drug Store and buy out of date film for \$1 a roll and make movies. Back in the '70s getting started in Filmforum, I thought, okay I'm working in Super 8 now but some day I'll graduate up to 16. But ten years later in the mid-'80s, people who were making 16 are graduating down to Super 8 because of the way the market changed. Now you pretty much have to be in making video or digital, I guess. I don't know. Are people still shooting film? So the market all changed. The whole scope changed, so that's why I think that these two decades—the '70s and '80s, mid-'60s to mid-'80s, that small window of opportunity—what was going on? Well, Reading, Pennsylvania; El Paso, Texas; Boulder, Colorado; San Francisco.

**00:39:28**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

There were film venues, film showcases for experimental films all over the country. A person who was making films could come to the West Coast and hit a number of the venues. A person from the West Coast could go to New York and do a number of venues there. In fact, one of the memorable shows that I had was a two-person show with Buddy Kilchesty and it was in El Paso at Willie Varela's showcase. Buddy's stepfather, who was a pilot, flew us to El Paso and flew us back.

**00:40:17**

**TERRY CANNON**

[laughing] What year was that?

**00:40:18**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

I don't remember.

00:40:19 TERRY CANNON  
Early '80s, would that have been?

00:40:22 WILLIAM S. SCAFF  
Probably. Yeah.

00:40:23 TERRY CANNON  
Flew you out to El Paso.

00:40:27 WILLIAM S. SCAFF  
To have a film show.

00:40:28 TERRY CANNON  
Dropped you off there to have a film show.

00:40:28 WILLIAM S. SCAFF  
Yeah.

end tape 4

## **TAPE 5: WILLIAM SCAFF**

**00:40:34**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Going back to what Filmforum meant to me and what it did for me. Well, here was this historically, just a little tiny window of time when there were the tools available, and people could do whatever they wanted to. Pay for this film out of their own pocket. One of my big heroes at this time of course was George Kuchar who, with a film class in school, made a feature length film and halfway through making it, dug into his own pocket to help finance it. I suppose now is a good opportunity to say something about this idea. One of the things I learned from my aesthetics class at Fuller Seminary was this idea of God creating "ex nihilo"—out of nothing—and that what I've come to admire are artists who come as close to creating "ex nihilo" and putting up a pretty good run. A guy who makes films out of his own pocket. That in itself is like creating "ex nihilo."

**00:02:15**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

But one of the prime examples and a film that had a big influence on me and then I noticed just—I think it might have been last year or the year before—I saw in ART IN AMERICA that Anthony McCall's films and his work was enjoying a European—that there was new interest in his work and he was getting shows in Europe, and there was renewed interest in his film work. But his film LINE DESCRIBING A CONE, you can see as something that has just the least amount of elements and produces a wonderful filmic experience. So those of are the kinds of things that I'd come to really admire are the people who are real pioneers and nothing's going to stop from making their artistic expression. Well, I think Pasadena Filmforum was a great place to see work from all over. Not only this country, but Anthony McCall was from Britain and Yervant Gianikian and Angela [Ricci Lucchi] from Italy.

**00:03:50**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

We were seeing films from all over the world, and then with this Brussels Film Festival I was able to have a film go to Europe. I can't begin to even remember how many different kinds of things we saw. I used that idea before of a banquet laid before you, and it was like that. It was extremely valuable to me as and my develop as a human being to have had the opportunity to see what artists doing all over the world when they made their own films. I think as I looked around too I think that probably Filmforum was the most open, the most truly a forum in that no one was excluded. If you went to the trouble to make a— if you could put on an hour, a hour and a-half show, a body of work in film, then that pretty much would guarantee a person an opportunity to have their work shown. Other places were not so democratic and in some cases I know that there in Boulder, Don Yannacito at first seemed a little cautious.

**00:05:30**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

He was not really— maybe it was because of his position with the University of Colorado and that probably would explain a lot as to why he had to be careful about what he showed. But it seemed that films had to have the stamp of approval from Jonas Mekas. But, Filmforum was independent of any college. There were no trustees to please and so Filmforum could be a true forum and invite film work from all over. It was great having the traveling filmmakers and we had at Filmforum at different times, a different haunt we would go to. We would take the visiting filmmaker to a restaurant and be able to sit and talk about the work and about their life as an artist. There was the tradition of putting a nickel on the railroad tracks right outside of Filmforum, which train ran right by the building where Filmforum was. I remember there was one evening where a person had their films there and I don't remember what the film was or who the filmmaker was, but I remember that after the show, the filmmaker was saying, that train came by and shook the building at just the right time in his film show. It corresponded with something that was on screen.

**00:07:22**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

I guess there were some people who were particularly interesting to me. Owen Land—or George Landow—same person, different name. I'm not going to even begin to remember names that should be named. But what a valuable treasure in my life to have had a chance to see all of this work which your average American doesn't even know that it existed. I think the oral histories is really important because I think there was a significant contribution to American historical cultural life that came from filmmakers making their own films. You saw the diary film being explored by various filmmakers. There were people doing more conceptual work, there were people who were concerned with dealing with the basic elements of cinema. Light, darkness, sound, silence. Filmmakers wanted to let you know you were watching film

**00:09:01**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

So you saw sprocket holes, you saw edge numbering on the screen. You were made aware that you were watching a film. I think that's extremely important because the media is so important, and we almost come to think about people that we see in the media as being someone who we know in a flesh and blood relationship. But really the story is that our relationship to this person, we're three-dimensional because they're two-dimensional because they appear on a TV screen or in a newspaper or in a movie. Yet these people are in our daily vocabulary. We talk about them as if we really knew them. So this probably is one of the most important things that I have to say about the experimental film is just how important it is to know the nature of your relationship to the media, and as a good example, I think OJ Simpson. It seemed a real shock to me when we saw the Ford Bronco going down the freeway being chased by cop cars because the guy who leapt over suitcases and was such a congenial warm TV personality, well we don't know the three-dimensional person, we know the two dimensional person. The person whose image is projected.

**00:11:04**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

Given the power of the media, this is where I really see the experimental film being really important, a real important addition to our education of our relationship with media. Boy, like I say, it would be impossible to name all the influences.

**00:11:30**

**TERRY CANNON**

I want to mention Bill, because he also worked in Super 8. I know you had a number of dealings with him on the Super 8 issue of the CINEMA NEWS, which you did the art design on, he was one of the co-editors, and I think he screened your films, and that's Willie Varela.

**00:11:53**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Willie Varela, right.

**00:11:52**

**TERRY CANNON**

It's the guy who cinematically was probably more prolific than you in terms of the quantity of his films, but I think there's a lot of parallels between the two of you. What was your relationship like with him...?

**00:12:14**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Well, you see I think that an extended family situation grew out of this. People that I met in Pasadena back in the '70s, I still get together with. This is a homecoming for me, you know. This is my extended family here. Willie would come out here. I remember one evening, this was when Filmforum was located in the bank, and this is got some stories. Dr. Roth was the man who put up the money to have the Bank Playhouse, an old bank converted to a stage and a playhouse for drama, and Filmforum was able to get in and have a Monday night showcase and utilize that space too. I remember we used to keep the projection equipment in the vault. Dr. Roth's only stipulation was that he could act in one or two of the plays every year, and the word I heard is that he was outstanding. Well so what was amusing about this is that we would have Filmforum there and have a screen but there was a set. The stage was decorated for whatever play they were putting on.

**00:14:07**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

And Willie Varela, there was like a bedroom scene for when Willie came out to do a show, and so he came out with his bath robe on to do a show. You remember that. Well, and then Willie had Buddy and I—we were all friends—Buddy and I flew with his stepfather to El Paso and did a two-man show in El Paso. Willie later became involved in South By South West (SXSW), wasn't it? Did he become involved, or he was involved with some independent film thing going on in Austin or somewhere? Or he may have been involved in that SXSW Film Festival in its earliest inception maybe.

**00:15:03**

**TERRY CANNON**

Well, he had his own organization in El Paso. He of course came to San Francisco for a few years before returning to El Paso. I was going to ask you, you've talked at some length about Filmforum. Can you recall any programs that you attended at any of the other venues? Like the Los Angeles Film Oasis, Theatre Vanguard and Encounter Cinema, any recollections of attending those during those years?



**00:15:38**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Yeah, I know I did go. Probably what was more important to me at the time of the '70s— because I think if I were going to see one of the shows at one of those places I would, chances are see, see that work at Filmforum too. But it was really valuable to me to get the passes to Filmex and go see films at Filmex. That helped really fuel the whole process. In fact, Doug Edwards, who was big in the experimental film scene in L.A. and also on a board with Filmex, he was another person who was instrumental and encouraging to filmmakers. But going to Filmex was real valuable. It helped to stoke the fire. I remember at the time I was carrying around a bottle of Visine. I also took a class that was real valuable at Fuller Seminary. There was a guy, I can't remember his name, and he taught a class in film at Fuller Seminary. I took that class and he encouraged me to audit his class at USC in horror and science fiction film. That was great. We got this syllabus that was that thick of reprints of articles about the significance of the robot in science fiction and all kinds of things. [Editor's note: This professor may be Drew Casper.]

**00:17:31**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

So at one point I was going to Filmforum one night a week, I was going to the horror and science fiction class one night a week, and I was going to Filmex, and I had a bottle of Visine in my pocket at all times because I was seeing films everyday.

**00:18:02**

**TERRY CANNON**

Now I'm looking at your filmography and I see a number of films that were released in 1982. I'd like to ask you about a few of these films because there's a number of interesting films and longer films. You have one called NIGHT POOL for instance, which is 11½ minutes, released in '82. Can you talk anything about that film?

**00:18:38**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Yeah, this was shot at night in a swimming pool, and the film actually could vary in length. I had a projector that would project at six frames per second. I think I actually shot the film in slow motion. I think I shot it in slow motion in the camera. It's a lot of images of seeing everybody went into the pool naked, but it's seeing the body being broken up underwater by the way the water changed it. Seeing it slowed down to six frames per second made it really interesting seeing the visual images. What else? Shoot, get some more there.

**00:19:46**

**TERRY CANNON**

Well, that's listed as having sound on tape. Is that something you would play a tape?

**00:19:54**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

A tape, right. A lot of the films, if it was a film original that I didn't have a sound stripe on. Whenever I made a print I would get it sound striped and then in my crude fashion with my sound projector would transfer the sound onto the mag stripe by stop watch and stereo...

**00:20:20**

**TERRY CANNON**

That's one thing you probably do not have. You've got an original but probably not a print.

**00:20:26**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Right, and it's in this box too. I saw it in there. I don't even remember what the [sound was.]

**00:20:36**

**TERRY CANNON**

Yeah, what the sound was. How about BLACK MAMBA?

**00:20:40**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Okay, BLACK MAMBA was a short film I made. As I continually made film, one idea I came up with was—because I noticed that there were varying degrees of black—and so I was saving a collection of black footage. Some of what was maybe towards purple, some of it was grayish or whatever. Also, I was maybe interested in some flares or whatever. But what I ended up doing too is [at] the art supply store you had these very thin tapes that have various patterns on them. So when you're doing graphic arts and let's say you want this little wavy line to be a border and you're going to put some copy in, so you make the wavy line with this tape. Well, I used that tape idea by putting the tape right on the film and used different kinds of patterns of tape. So BLACK MAMBA was just a little short film was comprised of different grades of black and these tapes on it. Primarily a black film with varying patterns coming in.

**00:22:20**

**TERRY CANNON**

How about another one? This would be a slightly longer film, MIXIE PIXEL.

**00:22:28**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Yeah, MIXIE PIXEL. This was definitely a product of Pasadena. It was just a quirky little film of stuff I had collected that was colorful and I remember some of the people involved. There was a party in Highland Park that I went to and I shot scenes from this party. People dancing and Commander Yowell, who was a Pasadena luminary at one point, was in the film, and Christie Becker was in it. She was also in the bathing film. I don't remember a whole lot about it. I just remember a few little things about it. So what's next?

**00:23:22**

**TERRY CANNON**

Well, the only other film that I think we have not brought up, and actually we have to go back a little bit and that's 1977, a film that you made called HEAD PICTURES. I don't think we discussed that at all. HEAD PICTURES was a film that...

**00:23:46**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

You're going to have to refresh my memory. I don't remember what it is. [laugh]

**00:23:47**

**TERRY CANNON**

Your description is: "A colorful assemblage filmed entirely in L.A. with a cast of half-breeds: Half Angelino, half primitive. Included are portraits of Shirley Christie, Christie Becker, Cheryl Jones, two guys at the Carver Hotel, and narrated by a local brawler. Music by the Los Angeles Free Music Society.

**00:24:10**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

All of that and I still don't...

**00:24:16**

**TERRY CANNON**

Okay. [mutual laughter]

**00:24:17**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

I'm drawing a blank on that. I need a head picture...

**00:24:21**

**TERRY CANNON**

17 minutes, so you put some work in on that one.

**00:24:25**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Geez, why can't I remember that? Let me see that. HEAD PICTURES. I remember the title.

**00:24:33**

**TERRY CANNON**

Yeah.

**00:24:32**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

L.A. Free Music Society.

**00:24:39**

**TERRY CANNON**

So a lot of these films Bill...

**00:24:42**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Oh yeah, I remember there was a person doing a poem that I had on matte board with wording on it, and the person was flipping. That's about all I remember.

**00:24:56**

**TERRY CANNON**

Yeah, wow. So a lot of these films you haven't seen in 25 years? It's been probably a quarter of a century.

**00:25:04**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Well, I do remember this, that there was one guy who was one of the big Pasadena alcoholics. I forget his name but he was seen— I drove by, what was the bar down there?

**00:25:35**

**TERRY CANNON**

Island Joe's?

**00:25:39**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Down in Pasadena, the one where the Doo Dah Parade was born.

**00:25:43**

**TERRY CANNON**

Cromos.

**00:25:44**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Cromos, right. One of the Cromos guys. I drove by there one night and he was in a fist fight with a guy right out in the middle of Colorado Blvd. in front of Cromos. It seemed like for a long time, for some people in Pasadena the fact that he was in the film lent a certain amount of authenticity to my film. To the Cromos crowd. They thought it was cool that he was in my film, you know. But beyond the Cromos crowd, that didn't make a damn bit of difference. So yeah, a few vague things are just coming to me right now, and I should know about it. I mean that was like one of the early— and then of course the Carver Hotel was a hotbed of activity. Kevin Brechner lived there. Kevin Brechner was one of the first persons I met when I moved to Pasadena.

**00:27:00**

**TERRY CANNON**

Well, now I want to ask you about your last film. Do you remember what your last film was that you worked on and the approximate year of that? We've gone through your films in '82. Did you mention ISLE OF LESBO?

**00:27:19**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

I haven't mentioned that yet.

**00:27:18**

**TERRY CANNON**

So can you tell us a little about that?

**00:27:21**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

I think that may have been the last film I made because that was sort of a point where... I think probably what happened is that for a number of years I was really intensely involved in filmmaking, and I think I had reached sort of a logical conclusion to the film work at that time. So in the '80s, I moved more into painting, in the latter part of the '80s, and then in the '90s is when I did a lot of collage work. But it was a logical conclusion because I had done all this intensive work and I had finally come to a point where I wanted to do something different. But I had really put the equipment to use, and the projectors were starting to fail on me, and the camera was starting to develop a problem that I was going to have to have serviced. So the equipment was failing me also at that time. But historically speaking, it was also at a time when 10 years before I thought I would graduate up to 16mm.

**00:28:57**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

And this was happening towards the latter part of the '80s when people who had been making 16mm, some of them graduated down to Super 8. So there was a logical conclusion I think at that point.

**00:29:13**

**TERRY CANNON**

Can you describe that last film?

**00:29:18**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Well, actually this morning I wanted to confirm something that I didn't remember about it, and that was did I shoot it in black and white or did I shoot in color? I did shoot in black and white. Gosh, I loved working with black and white. ISLE OF LESBO— it has two titles. It's Isle, I-S-L-E of Lesbo, or I LOVE LESBO. ISLE OF LESBO, I LOVE LESBO. The title has nothing to do with the film. I showed this film one night at the espresso bar, and I think probably throughout your life there are times when somebody says something about your work that ends up being something you remember, and there was a woman in the audience who when the film was over she said, I need a cigarette. So that was one of the best comments I've had for a film. But it's a difficult film to watch, and it's sexual in nature. It's black and white, it's disturbing, and what I've really come to regard the film as is a clumsy, inarticulate statement about grieving because this came after Carol's death.

**00:31:27**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

So when you make art like I've tried to do—I've tried to work from an intuitive point of view—things come out. Things appear from inside of you. I think of ISLE OF LESBO as a very peculiar thing. It's a thing that, first of all, where do you show it? It's disturbing when you see it. I can think no other work of art that I've done—painting, film, or anything—that is such a raw energy of grief. SO THAT'S ISLE OF LESBO.

**00:32:51**

**TERRY CANNON**

And all of the films that we've talked about on Super 8 were shot with that one camera?

**00:32:55**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Yeah, the Braun Nizo was a real workhorse for me. You could do lap dissolves in it. The film would, if you pushed the right button and you're filming something, it would fade out and stop, and then you point the camera to something else and it would fade in. So you get a lap dissolve in camera. You could shoot at six, five, two frames per second, whatever. You can shoot one frame and then go and shoot another frame. Some of the [films]—like the film *IN THIS TREMBLING SHADOW*—I'd take a roll of film and I'd be shooting a few frames here, a few frames there, flashing the little strip of film. So that you'd have this real staccato kind of thing of images and light going on when you project it. So yeah, the Braun Nizo was really a workhorse, and I put it to work. It had a nice lens on it. It was a good camera.

**00:34:12**

**TERRY CANNON**

But did you start having problems with that toward end then?

**00:34:16**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Yeah, I noticed that I was pushing it. When I'm talking about how I was using these features, it go to the point where you could see I had manipulated the lap dissolve thing a lot. That was the whole idea of making art with cameras is to manipulate the tools too you know. And the broken sprocket in that old camera that produced a certain effect.

**00:34:51**

**TERRY CANNON**

So it wouldn't be outrageous to say that your major body of work extended through the life, if we can call that, of your equipment.

**00:35:07**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Right, right.

**00:35:08**

**TERRY CANNON**

The camera, the projector, the editing equipment. It's like just a finite period of time, approximately eight, nine years....

**00:35:22**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Yeah. The life of the equipment too, right. Well, there's the box of film. A lot of other film. There's also the film ended up on the cutting room floor, which is long gone.

**00:35:42**

**TERRY CANNON**

Well, so you've graduated, you've moved out of film. Then let's talk a little bit about what kinds of artwork followed the film. Obviously while you were making films, you were still working in other mediums. But now you've left film and you've gone into I'm gathering continuing to paint, collages. So can you talk briefly about some of the work you did from about '85 on?

**00:36:11**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Well I'll start a little earlier than that and say the '80s because Carol was an artist too, and we actually had in our apartment two doors setup on saw horses, and we had supplies down the middle, and she had a work space and I had a work space. We encouraged each other to work and have shows. So I was doing a lot of painting, and really what was up to that point, what I think is the strongest painting I've done is the Cancer series of paintings, which is ten small 9x9 inch square canvases that were done during the time before we knew Carol had cancer, and during the time she had cancer, and then also after her death. You talk about the medium being the message, or the end justifying the means. Well, I think I've always tried to make art that the journey, the making is really part of the end process. So what I was doing with the Cancer paintings I was building up layer upon layer upon layer of paint, and using glues too

**00:37:55**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

Then I would come back and scratch off, and the painting would emerge from removing parts of it. There's a Biblical reference talking about the seed will it grow in arable ground, but a seed planted in hard rock is not going to have a very good chance of surviving. Well, the analogy of scratching out a living, and these paintings were pretty laborious. I would use an X-Acto knife to scrape away and scratch away. As I was doing these painting and often times I would have to stop and rest my arm. So what a perfect thing for working out a person's grief to be scratching away, laboring away on these paintings. They became an expression of the cancer experience, but it was a way to workout my grief, artistically.

**00:39:31**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

Just the nature of how I was doing it, it was laborious and tedious. So my painting became more and more organic. There were some paintings I did at that time in the '80s, the Tide Pool paintings that evoked the idea of what a tide pool was like. They became more textured and heavier applications of paint. Which I've continued on that with my work up in Nevada City. It's becoming more organic, more connected to the earth, to earth processes. It's about earth processes, like erosion. Oh I'll say this too, even as far back as high school, I was in a group called The Searchers, and this was a Southern California gem and mineral society. We would go on field trips to dig fire agates or quartz crystals out. Gems and minerals have always been a heavy influence on me as an artist, partly because minerals really fascinate me, their structure. You'll see crystals as opposed to something like mica with these very thin layers to other minerals that may appear like hairlike, feathery structures.

**00:41:25**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

So I would go to a natural history museum and I'd always want to check out the gem and mineral collection. So a lot of those geological processes are mimicked by some of the processes I used to make a painting.

end tape 5



## TAPE 6: WILLIAM SCAFF

00:01:01

WILLIAM S. SCAFF

Well, for the most part, they were funded by me. It wasn't really until the '80s that I got two grants from the Western State— It's on the back of my resume there, Western States Media something-or-other. Two years in a row, I got grants.

00:01:20

TERRY CANNON

Western States Regional Media Arts Fellowship, 1983 and '84.

00:01:26

WILLIAM S. SCAFF

Right. Those grants would have been much more helpful to me in the the latter part of the '70s when I was really working. They didn't really come about until really things were on the wane. I was working on a film that had a lot of footage of Carol, and it was what was going on with Carol and the cancer that really aborted that film and was partly responsible for me not being able to do any film work during that time. But what I was working on with something too, that I didn't have a clearer picture, but I was assembling some footage and not sure where it was going to lead. So those grants were useful but they came about kind of late for me in terms of really being useful to make [something], I needed them earlier. But still I managed to do all of this on my own money.

00:02:42

TERRY CANNON

So in other words, those two grants were for films that were really never completed.

00:02:46

WILLIAM S. SCAFF

Right.

00:02:47

TERRY CANNON

Okay. I'm going to play this name game now Bill with you. I'm going to throw out some names, these are going to be some people involved with the Filmforum.

00:03:00

WILLIAM S. SCAFF

I'm going to be able to play this game back with you too, aren't I?

00:03:02

TERRY CANNON

No, no, not this. This is going to be one way only.

00:03:08

WILLIAM S. SCAFF

All right.

**00:03:07**

**TERRY CANNON**

And these are some people who I'm sure you remember or were involved with in some ways or another. So I'm just going to start pulling out some names and you could tell an anecdote or recollection. I'm going for people that we haven't talked about yet. We're going to start off with Wilbur George.

**00:03:28**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Wilbur George. Yes, Wilbur was involved with Filmforum for many years. It seemed to me that he was a guy who might have been looking for a volunteer opportunity. Kind of an older guy who maybe was looking for some way to fill his time, because I think took tickets, sold the tickets, and performed a little duties for Filmforum. I think it was kind of surprising when we learned that Wilbur had made some films. I remember how surprising it was when we saw his films. He had 16mm films. We coined the term the boy-boy genre. Wilbur... who was his partner?

**00:04:45**

**TERRY CANNON**

Carl.

**00:04:46**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Carl. Wilbur and Carl lived in Sierra Madre and shared a space, and they were two gay men who, at that time, it was not as easy for them to say that. But what we were able to glean from seeing Wilbur's films is that one, he had some experience in making a professional looking film. He was I guess living in Hollywood and would find some of the young gay men in Hollywood who were good-looking young guys, so some of his films would picture these young gay guys wearing like a pair of Speedo underwear in various settings. I think there was one where a guy was in a tree. They weren't pornographic, but they were films that kind of celebrated young male bodies and young gay men. It was a quirky thing too, because the production values, they looked very professional. They didn't tell a story or show sex or anything, they just were celebrating young men in Southern California.

**00:06:29**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

So we called them the boy-boy Films. I don't know if this is true or if I'm remembering things correctly or not, but maybe you can clear this up. Is it true that Wilbur felt later in his life ashamed of those films and destroyed them?

**00:06:58**

**TERRY CANNON**

No. I'm not aware of that. I don't think so.

**00:07:00**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

I don't know how I heard that.

**00:07:01**

**TERRY CANNON**

No, no, I don't think so.

**00:07:04** **WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

But they were delightful films.

**00:07:07** **TERRY CANNON**

He took a lot of pride in those, even though he didn't show them very often.

**00:07:12** **WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Right, yeah.

**00:07:15** **TERRY CANNON**

Okay, here's another name. M.M. Sarah.

**00:07:17** **WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

M.M. Sarah. Yeah, she was a nice little girl until she moved to New York and became a porno filmmaker. Next name. [laugh] No, she was a good friend of Filmforum for a long time. What did she do for Filmforum?

**00:07:36** **TERRY CANNON**

In the mid '80s she did a variety of things for Filmforum, everything from taking tickets to maybe working on some of the shows. She worked a little bit with Trish, there's another name.

**00:07:49** **WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Oh Trish, right.

**00:07:53** **TERRY CANNON**

But any other memories of M.M. Sarah?

**00:07:58** **WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

I can't think of any right now.

**00:08:01** **TERRY CANNON**

How about Trish Knodle?

**00:08:03** **WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Yeah, I remember Trish took over Filmforum, and this is when Film Forum was down in the toy district in downtown L.A. It was all those downtown—there was that location and then there was another location for Filmforum that was out by the Greyhound Bus Depot. Both locations were dicey neighborhoods. I remember one night coming out and Trish's car had been broken into right in front of Filmforum. These were some of the occupational hazards of running a film forum in downtown L.A. at the time. She came on and did I think an admirable job as I recall, running Filmforum.

**00:09:00** **TERRY CANNON**

How about Albert Kilchesty?

**00:09:05** **WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

I don't know him. I know Buddy.

**00:09:07**

**TERRY CANNON**

**AKA Buddy.**

**00:09:08**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

**Yeah, Buddy Kilchesty. Well, he's family. Buddy made films. Buddy's been involved with a lot of different aspects of Filmforum and has gone onto become the historian of The Baseball Reliquary. Oh, in case you're wondering, The Baseball Reliquary— I'll tell you all about it if you'd like to know.**

**00:09:41**

**TERRY CANNON**

**Yeah, we'll save it...**

**00:09:42**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

**Save that for another time.**

**00:09:43**

**TERRY CANNON**

**Save that for the baseball documentation. How about Richard Amromin?**

**00:09:52**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

**Richard Amromin. Well, Richard is someone who has been involved in the arts and started New Town Pasadena, which is an arts organization, And putting on some very energetic shows in the Pasadena area. He's been involved in the arts for as long as I can remember, and been involved in the Baseball Reliquary. I guess it's accurate to say he's a gourmand to a fault. As Helen says—he and me—Helen has pigeonholed us as being people who suffer from gourmand disorder, and we should be getting help for it.**

**00:10:55**

**TERRY CANNON**

**How about Helen Cooper?**

**00:10:56**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

**Helen Cooper. Well, I just talked to her on the phone this morning. She is someone whose life has been characterized by— she's taken the stand, she's been on the front lines of political and social causes from her early college days to the present day, and you could say she's earned her stripes as an activist. Oh, she's a friend of mine too. [laughter]**

**00:11:42**

**TERRY CANNON**

**Margaret Schermerhorn.**

**00:11:45**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Okay, let's go back to the bathing film. Now, I don't know if I said this, the espresso bar was the meeting place. I would meet people there, ask them if they would do a bathing scene. We would agree on where to do this and a time. This was almost like the office for the bathing film. So a number of people did bathing scenes. Margaret for a time was running the Espresso Bar. I don't remember when exactly she took over. Michael Thornberry stepped out. He originated the Espresso Bar, but then at some point he took the job of cooking for the Star Gazers up on Mount Wilson and Margaret took over the Espresso Bar. Margaret and renown Pasadena artist and painter Jack McIntosh became an item. Jack and Margaret did a bathing scene. Now, when I put the film together, I had to obey the muse. I had to make the film that conformed to the aesthetics that the material was demanding.

**00:13:43**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

So what ended up being the final bathing film, I don't remember off hand how many various bathing scenes I did, but each one had its own unique thing about it. It all fit nice and neatly into a package. When it came to Margaret and Jack's bathing scene, there was just nothing that really set it apart and established it as a unique bathing scene that fit into the group of the others. Margaret was really pissed off at me because she wound up on the cutting room floor. But hello Margaret, your bathing scene was boring! [laughter] So, I was afraid I was going to bit back then. Anyway, her bathing scene didn't make it into the film, strictly on aesthetic decisions that I made for the strength of the film. I'm damn sure not going to put a bathing scene because so-and-so wants their bathing scene in, you know? It's just the way it worked out.

**00:15:03**

**TERRY CANNON**

Was that the only bathing scene that did not make it in the film?

**00:15:07**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

No, there was some others that didn't make it. I can't remember which or who they were. Cupcake did one that didn't make it. What I had is the collection of bather scenes, and they all seemed to work together. They were all doing something different from one another. I think of it as being a whole finished film with what it is. Anything else would I think take away from the finished product.

**00:15:47**

**TERRY CANNON**

That's your longest film isn't it?

**00:15:49**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Yeah, it's something like 50-55 minutes.

**00:15:51**

**TERRY CANNON**

Wow. That's long.

**00:15:53**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

It's the longest film. Right. Closest to being a feature length. It was nearly an hour long.

**00:16:01**

**TERRY CANNON**

How about Don Kirby?

**00:16:02**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Don Kirby. Well, we did talk a little bit about him. But he was a music guy and so we did a number of things together. There was some project that took place in downtown L.A. having to do with that plaza over by Little Tokyo or something, and we did a sound piece that potentially was going to be played from this outdoor speaker. I don't know what all happened, but we put a lot of effort into making the piece that never got played. But we did a lot of music things together. Don, for many years, ran the Espresso Yourself Night at the Espresso Bar, so he had full contact with poets, musicians, etc., etc., from around the Pasadena area. And he's one of the persons I first met when I came to Pasadena too.

**00:17:24**

**TERRY CANNON**

How about Zeke the Sheik.

**00:17:24**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Zeke the Sheik. I had forgotten that I have this, but I have a reel of film in my box here of [a] film that I made up at Zeke's garden. Now Zeke the Sheik, well known in Pasadena. In fact, getting into the newspaper in Pasadena, being on trial in Pasadena for growing marijuana on his property in his garden. This garden was "something else." Oh, he was also in the paper when his compost pile spontaneously combusted. He would appear in Doo Dah Parades, he would appear in Cromos and other nightclubs with his Sheik outfit on, pulling a roller skate train that had these huge zucchinis that he grew. He would mount the zucchinis on roller skates and cart them around town, and he would rhyme. Always rhyming things, talk in rhymes. So I shot a lot of film up in his garden.

**00:18:49**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF (CONTINUED)**

You could be walking down this trail and see a lot of growth and then sort of look through some of the growth and all of a sudden see the top of a car and a window, and then see inside of the car with plant growing inside. This was a mystery place, Zeke's garden.

**00:19:14**

**TERRY CANNON**

How about Gerard Zorthian.

**00:19:19**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Gerard Zorthian, one of the more well-known artists from the Pasadena area. The Zorthian Ranch up at the top of Fair Oaks. I remember seeing some of his really large drawings once. He took me on a little tour of this place one time and he was, a very good artist. Keeping up the image of his machismo, this drawing I saw were like life size drawings of young girls who were naked but had like six guns and holsters and cowboy hats. It was crazy stuff. Later in his life he became a fixture at our Mardi Gras parties. So for a long time, he was quite a celebrity in Pasadena.

**00:20:36**

**TERRY CANNON**

Have you got some names there, Bill?

**00:20:38**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Oh, you've run out of names?

**00:20:38**

**TERRY CANNON**

I'm running out of names. There's probably some more. How about Doug Edwards?

**00:20:50**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Well, we did mention Doug. I remember there was a screening that featured— I think this was the screening that had Lori Anderson, was that her name?

**00:21:10**

**TERRY CANNON**

Yeah.

**00:21:12**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Lori Anderson involved it. It may have been that screening, it may have been some other screening, but Doug came out at the beginning of the screening wearing I think it was like an all white outfit. Then later he emerged with like an all black outfit, so there was some costume change going on that night. Do you remember that?

**00:21:35**

**TERRY CANNON**

Yeah.

**00:21:35**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Where he came out in two different outfits?

**00:21:38**

**TERRY CANNON**

Yeah.

**00:21:41**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

I almost did that here today. [mutual laughter]

**00:21:44**

**TERRY CANNON**

How about David Wilson?

**00:21:44**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Oh yeah, David Wilson. Well, he was making films at the time. I remember the pre-Jurassic Technology Museum days when some of the things that he was creating, which were like museum pieces, were shown in galleries. I remember going to an opening at a gallery that David Wilson had some of his constructed pieces in. Oh, one year Carol and I took the Amtrak to Denver to go spend Christmas with my family in Boulder, and we went over the Rocky Mountains at night in a snow storm. It was very exciting. But just by accident David and Diana Wilson were on the same train, so we spent some time together on the train. He went on to the Museum of Jurassic Technology, and also I believe it was the fellowship...

**00:23:08**

**TERRY CANNON**

MacArthur.

**00:23:11**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

MacArthur Fellowship. Right.

**00:23:16**

**TERRY CANNON**

How about SHOW FOR THE EYES? The compilation film. Didn't you have a space in that?

**00:23:27**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

I had a Super 8 strip of film [in] SHOW FOR THE EYES.

**00:23:28**

**TERRY CANNON**

Do you remember what that was?

**00:23:29**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

No, no way. Something I submitted a strip of film for SHOW FOR THE EYES, yeah. Well, one of the real memorable things that came from Filmforum was Films Found in a Box. You had been out in the neighborhood and you saw a yard sale I believe, and they had a box of films. There was all kinds of crazy stuff in that collection. Films Found in a Box. Found footage films.

**00:24:16**

**TERRY CANNON**

How about Mark Cantor?

**00:24:17**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Mark Cantor, one of the nicest guys you'll ever meet. His shows of his collection of jazz on film would always bring out Tom Waits in the audience to see his films, and now he's been showing under The Playboy Jazz Festival. His name is big in the jazz world and his films were really, really wonderful. Such a nice guy. I could make requests. I could say, hey, could we see that? And he'd bring it. He was a real nice guy.



**00:25:02**

**TERRY CANNON**

How about Michael Guccione?

**00:25:05**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Michael Guccione was making films. He was working in 16mm and made some real nice films. I remember, living in Eagle Rock and his little studio he had going over there. Michael's been around on all these projects. He was involved in the card sets, and I believe he did the illustrations for the Minor League Set, and responsible for the Jackie Robinson icon. So Michael's been around and been involved in a lot of the same things I've been involved for a number of years.

**00:26:00**

**TERRY CANNON**

Sara Arledge.

**00:26:03**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Sara Arledge. Boy, someone who could have gotten a whole lot more of her due. Back in the 40's was beginning to make films, and an artist and filmmaker and poet all her life. For Sara I say, rah!, rah!, raw reality! I remember riding the Amtrak with her up to San Francisco where she had a show at the Cinematheque and I accompanied her up on that occasion. That was toward the latter part of the '70s. Boy, things were sure different back then. Amtrak was like a drug train. You get any kind of drug you wanted. LSD was available. At that time, they had these cars that had a restroom—that was like a restroom. It was just a one person thing, and it had some benches in there. So people could go in and hang out in the restroom and smoke pot. So that was Amtrak in the later '70s. Okay.

**00:27:44**

**TERRY CANNON**

Well, now how about you Bill? What have we not covered that you think is important? Anything else that you feel important to cover now that we haven't touched upon over these approximately four hours of material that you think would be important to include on this documentation?

**00:28:26**

**WILLIAM S. SCAFF**

Gee, I'm kind of drawing a blank right now. Is there any other area...?

**00:28:37**

**TERRY CANNON**

I think we've covered most of the films and most of your film experiences. That was the key, of course. Well one thing we could talk a little bit more about that we never really brought up much of SPIRAL, because that was a project that you were very vehemently involved with from about 1984 to '86. That was the quarterly film publication. I think you even probably may have given it its title. So do you have any recollections about that? I know you did a lot of the art design work and conceptualizing on that. Kind of an important now long-gone film journal. Any thoughts about that?

00:29:29

WILLIAM S. SCAFF

Well, Carol and I were both doing the graphic design on it. It was a lot of fun to do. We had an unconventional binding and everything, and did unconventional things with paper stock. We would use multiple stock, so we were really trying to have fun with the look of the whole thing. The SPIRAL name came about from the way film is wound up on the reel and the way a film unfolds to the viewer. Well, these things had a certain life at a certain time. This is what is beautiful about trying to preserve things from this time, is that it's just a remarkable thing that existed just for this short little window in time and history. The idea that you could take your Super 8 films on tour and go all over the country and show your work. Although I never really did that because I didn't have the finances to do that kind of thing.

00:31:07

TERRY CANNON

But in terms of taking your work, we know you went to El Paso. Any place else that you went to do any screenings?

00:31:18

WILLIAM S. SCAFF

Well, really just the Cinematheque in San Francisco. Those were the only real setup showcases that I showed my work at.

00:31:33

WILLIAM S. SCAFF (CONTINUED)

Also, I couldn't just have a package of films that I could send out because I only had limited number of prints that had the sound on the film. I'm guessing that probably almost everything in this box is original work, and I'm guessing that what Mark [Toscano] has are the only prints that I have.

00:32:16

TERRY CANNON

Well, but there may be a print of BATHERS. That may be the only thing that you wouldn't have in there.

00:32:24

WILLIAM S. SCAFF

Right, yeah.

00:32:29

TERRY CANNON

Well, I guess we pretty much covered it, Bill.

00:32:31

WILLIAM S. SCAFF

I guess so.

end of tape 6