

**Oral History Interview of
Laura LewAllen**

**Interviewed by: Andy Wilkinson
September 13, 2017
Santa Fe, NM**

**Part of the:
*Creative Process Interviews***

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Preferred Citation for this Document:

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Recording Notes:

Original Format: Born Digital Audio

Digitization Details: N/A

Audio Metadata: 96kHz/24bit WAV file

Further Access Restrictions: N/A

Related Interviews: This interview was concluded on September 14, 2017.

Transcription Notes:

Interviewer: Andy Wilkinson

Audio Editor: N/A

Transcription: Elizabeth Groening

Editor(s): Kayci Rush

Transcript Overview:

This interview features Laura LewAllen as she discusses her life and her father's life as artists. In this interview, she describes her father's passion for art and how he became a jeweler as well as how she got interested in art.

Length of Interview: 02:14:03

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Keywords

Art, Artists, Jewelry, Family Life and Background

Marvin Niebuhr (MN):

Oh. [Laughter] Wait, I realize you got things there.

Andy Wilkinson (AW):

Okay.

Laura LewAllen (LL):

Hi there.

MN:

Hey there.

AW:

I'm starting the machine. This is Andy Wilkinson on the thirteenth of September, 2017, in the spectacular home of Laura LewAllen. And with us, kibitzing, I think, and maybe throwing in the odd fact will be Marvin Niebuhr. Marvin is already one of the people whose collections we hold. We will be talking today about Laura and about her father, Ross, and some, probably, about her mother, Arlene, and whatever else strikes our fancy. So thank you for letting me do this.

LL:

Thank you.

AW:

We will—what we're going to do now—for those of you listening to this, you can't see these boxes, but I'll hold up the machine, hoping that you can. [Laughter] And we're going to talk about some of the wonderful things that are a part of the archive of the work and life of Ross LewAllen. And so just chime in, Laura, when we get it—

LL:

Okay.

AW:

--So we're looking right now—we're sitting in the living room—we're looking at three large tubs, storage tubs. Big, big tall ones. One of the—we've just gone through, is principally comprised of individual pocket folders with drafts of chapbooks and then a finished chapbook.

LL:

Correct.

AW:

Along with that are some pocket folders with specific notes related to individual people.

LL:

Right.

AW:

Including some notes for things that might become a book. One, or a couple, in particular about your mother, Arlene. And there's—there are other things in there. Some—there's one, at least, that's a family folder that has images of your grandparents and great grandparents.

LL:

My grandma. That'd be my grandmother, Erna.

AW:

And would that be your grandmother, but not your great grandparents?

LL:

Correct.

AW:

Yeah, okay.

LL:

My father's mother, Erna Kausche, I think was her—

AW:

Really? How did she spell that?

LL:

K-a-u-s-c-h-e, I think. Kausche.

AW:

Oh, yeah.

LL:

German stock.

AW:

Yeah. Good German stock. And so that is a—and that happens to be a blue Sterilite ultra tub and

it's marked, "Ross books and travel folders." Well, we could've just looked at that, couldn't we?" [Laughter] I feel kind of dumb.

LL:

I know, right?

AW:

So that's a handy guide to what's in there. And then, one that we've kind of cursorily looked at was a big grey—light grey Rubbermaid tub that is apparently filled to the brim with journals.

LL:

Right.

AW:

And did he also mark that or did you mark that?

LL:

I did. It's sketchbooks.

AW:

Sketchbooks. And it's—I don't even want to estimate the number at the moment, but there are a lot of them. And there are also—besides sketchbooks, there are things that are instructional pieces that evidently, her father used in teaching classes. The sketchbooks are magnificent. Those are just some wonderful sketches. And as the people will see using this archive, what a great drawer your father was. And oh, look at that. Even the cover is part of the sketchbook.

LL:

Right. And this is old.

AW:

Yeah. What does that date from? Just—

AW and LL:

DeKalb.

LL:

So it would have had to have been you, Marvin.

MN:

Yeah. Early sixties.

LL:

Um-hm. These look like studies from class.

MN:

Is that me right there?

LL:

Is that you?

MN:

No, no, no. I wouldn't do that. I was too vain.

AW:

Now, so one of the great things about having Marvin here, beyond the fact that Marvin's introduction to Laura's—is my introduction to her is why we're here at all is that Marvin and Ross grew up together. From what age, Marvin? You were telling—

MN:

Probably, well, college. Beginning college on.

AW:

But not as children?

MN:

Not as children, no.

AW:

Okay. But from college on.

MN:

Just young adults.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

And we figured out last night that Marvin was five years younger than my dad, yet they had this connection right off the bat.

MN:

Yeah, amazing. Country bumpkin meets a city sophisticate.

AW:

Okay. And you're going to tell us which is which?

MN:

Well, I'm the country bumpkin. [Laughter]

AW:

Okay. So anyway, these sketchbooks, I would guess, several dozen. Would you not?

LL:

Oh yeah, because this third box.

AW:

And we haven't even got to the other box.

LL:

Which I marked as "Photo slides, large photo of ancestors." So these are photos and slides.

AW:

And sketchbooks.

LL:

And I was running out of room in the sketchbook box, so I had to add more sketchbooks into here. Yeah.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

And you know, something I was just thinking of—my dad really worked in series.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

You know, he would get passionate about something and, you know, just create all these—you know, you'll see as we go through these. There was the whales, there was the sailing.

AW:

Yeah. And we looked at—earlier, we looked at some wolves.

LL:

Wolves. Yeah, hawks. Fish. Anything. And so there's all these—a lot of these sketchbooks, you can see that they're the different periods of his life. [Laughs] Yeah.

AW:

And then, when we were looking, also, in some of the sketchbooks, we saw drawings related to jewelry.

LL:

Right.

AW:

And so, you would see those—the progression of the idea and the visual design and the books would be just full of those. And then some of them we saw, also included what looked like instructions on what to do for the people helping with the manufacture. Correct?

LL:

Right. Right. Yeah, yeah.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

Because he—well, he did—he started—so he invented the ear cuff. He's the ear cuff man.

AW:

Yeah. When was that about?

LL:

That would've been seventies, mid-seventies. And so he decided to go big with that, you know, and incorporate and get a—what do you call it?

AW:

A patent.

LL:

Patent. And so, he then had a whole little manufacturing of ear cuffs. And so, I—

AW:

Right. In fact, did we see the ear cuff incorporated?

LL:

Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

And yeah. And so he went, kind of, global with it. I found—I'll show you, too, like where he got his information about patenting and things like that.

AW:

Very cool. So he did his own application for the patenting?

LL:

Yeah, yeah. Yeah. And so that's kind of interesting. It turns out, though, I think, with patenting, especially a jewelry design—you know, people were saying, "Go ahead. Sue us. We just are going to take this design and make it anyway." You know?

AW:

Right, yeah. That's pretty much true of the patent anyway.

LL:

Yeah.

AW:

You have to sue them to do anything.

LL:

Exactly. And they knew that he was just some, you know, lowly artist in Santa Fe that was not going to go hire big lawyers. And so I think one of his big lessons that he passed on to me was then you just have to take that as you created a really good design and these people aren't smart enough to come up with their own designs and it's an honor that they're using your design.

AW:

Yeah. Well, the old saying, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

LL:

Flattery, yeah. Exactly, exactly.

AW:

Yeah. If you're making your living at it though, it's a little different. But still. So let's do another quick thing. There are two flat clear tubs and they're filled with a variety of things. More physical artifacts. But in one we're looking at right now, I see a little portable sketch box, a watercolor sketch box.

LL:

Yeah.

AW:

I see a jar filled with microcassettes.

LL:

Um-hm.

AW:

And you mentioned, you thought those were from his travels largely?

LL:

I think so. See, I—

AW:

Oh, and the tape recorder itself.

LL:

Yeah, the tape is there.

AW:

And the recorder.

LL:

Right.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

Which, I guess, works.

AW:

In fact, there may be a tape in it.

LL:

It might work. No, but it could even—

AW:

Is there a tape in it?

LL:

No.

AW:

Oh good. We'd want to take it out if there is.

LL:

Yeah. I'm not sure. I mean—oh, that was a woman he met in Africa. Here's Egypt and Mali

AW:

Yeah. Here's a radio interview. The gathering. September 7th—17th of 1990.

LL:

There might be tapes somewhere else. I know I found some tapes that was when he came to visit me when I lived in Africa. And these might be more interviewee kind of things. Russia. Yeah.

AW:

So there are those, and then, there are also more sketchbooks. [LL laughs] These are like pocket-size sketchbooks. And is that a watercolor box, the large black box?

LL:

Yeah.

AW:

Yeah. And a few more sketchbooks.

LL:

He—yeah. This is his little—aw, his little water spray, his brushes. He loved the toothbrush. The [rubs toothbrush].

AW:

A flick of the nail.

LL:

Um-hm, like that texture.

AW:

Yeah. What is the—what looks like a—

LL:

Stick?

AW:

Yeah. Is it—it's got paint on it. Did he use to apply paint?

LL:

Yeah. He probably—yeah, I think so.

AW:

Wow. That is—you know, artifacts like that that you may choose not to put in the archive, we would at least like a photographic record of that because as someone that uses a stick, is interesting.

LL:

Yeah. Right? That's not your normal.

AW:

No.

LL:

And he didn't drink coffee, but he liked to use coffee on his watercolors.

AW:

Oh really?

LL:

Um-hm. That, I know.

AW:

As—use it as a color, like you would a watercolor?

LL:

Yeah, yeah.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

These are things from his altar.

AW:

And that would've been a personal altar?

LL:

Yeah.

AW:

And again, this is kind of the same as the watercolor. You may not want to put those in an archive, but we would like to—if it's acceptable, we would like to photograph those too.

LL:

Yeah, sure. Coins from Africa.

AW:

A mask.

LL:

Shells.

AW:

Shell.

LL:

A little woodcarving.

AW:
Um-hm.

LL:
Stones. [Laughs]

AW:
Is that a—

LL:
Probably, somebody made that for him. I don't know.

AW:
Is that a little pipe?

LL:
No.

AW:
No. It's a piece of wood. It looked like—almost like a—so it's a piece of wood and a stone tied together with—looks like rawhide and two beads.

LL:
[Laughs] And little plastic beads. Little—yeah, who knows? And opals. Two little cab—opal cabs.

AW:
Yeah.

LL:
Hm. Yeah. He really—that's a lot of his watercolor stuff.

AW:
And a lot of these boxes—

LL:
Those are tubes.

AW:
Tubes. They're taped shut because the mechanisms have long since passed.

LL:

Yeah. Another one of his little watercolor.

AW:

Yeah. Could I see the—I'd like to see which palette—the colors have.

LL:

Oh yeah. Oh, and I have some of those somewhere else. He—he was—

AW:

Well, I just wanted to see what colors he chose to—

LL:

He—yeah—he loved yellows, browns, blues.

AW:

And alas, this is just the—

LL:

Oh yeah. That doesn't—

AW:

It doesn't have any of the colors in it.

LL:

I have that. Oh, look, here's a whale carving from Mexico. Ironwood.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

I will have that—I'll show you his palette choices.

AW:

Yeah, no. That would be really nice to archive.

LL:

I do have that. Yeah.

AW:

So there is this box with—

LL:

This is mostly—probably, more altar things.

AW:

Um-hm. And colors—I mean, watercolor equipment and tools.

LL:

This is a box that we bought a hat from when we were in Peru together. [Laughs]

AW:

The hat came in the box?

LL:

Uh-huh, yeah.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

My dad loved bags.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

And this—

AW:

Did he decorate that?

LL:

Yeah. So my adopted grandma, she lived in Utah. We bought property from her. And I—her name was Clio Nebeker. Very important person in our life. And anyway, she was a quilter. And so these are the Huna colors. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven. Kind of like the rainbow. And each color represents something. He learned about Huna.

AW:
Spell huna.

LL:
H-u-n-a.

AW:
Okay.

LL:
And that's a Polynesian—I don't think it's a religion, but ancient Polynesian traditions.

AW:
Philosophy or tradition?

LL:
Yeah, yeah.

AW:
And how would you spell her last name?

LL:
Nebeker is N-e-b-e-k-e-r. She's—family—homesteaded land in southeastern Utah, from Oklahoma.

AW:
Are they a Mormon family?

LL:
Yeah. She was kind of a jack Mormon, though. [Laughs]

AW:
Yeah. Well I think that part of Utah is mainly jack Mormons, I think.

LL:
Yeah, yeah.

AW:
What—and spell her first name, too.

LL:

Clio is C-l-i-o.

AW:

Oh, like a man's name. Cleo, except Clio.

LL:

Yeah, Clio. Yeah, yeah.

AW:

Yeah, great. Okay. Very cool.

LL:

So you'll see a lot of things that she sewed.

AW:

All right. I'm going to quickly count these tapes just to get a quick count. Three, six, nine, eleven, thirteen, fifteen, seventeen, eighteen. And there's something here that says—so nineteen. There's one in envelope. They're all microcassettes, save one, looks like a DAT, a digital audiotape.

LL:

Does that remind you of dad? [Laughs]

MN:

Oh yes.

AW:

It's actually a small Sony digital videocassette. So one of those, nineteen, is not an audiotape, but a digital video and I can't tell if this has been recorded on. But so—there's in that jar and then along with that, the microcassette recorder that I assume he used to make these recordings.

LL:

Um-hm.

AW:

And that is a Lenoxx, with two x's, sound. Pretty nice recorder.

LL:

He learned from his dad to—quality. This is a little leather pouch full of white sage. It smells very much like him. This is a flag he made. This was one of his drawings of a zebra.

AW:

Oh.

LL:

He had handkerchiefs made, but this one was made into a flag.

AW:

Oh, how nice.

LL:

Yeah.

AW:

And it's a pennant sort of a flag, right? [0:17:47]

LL:

Yeah.

AW:

Yeah.

MN:

Go zebras.

LL:

Go zebras, exactly.

AW:

Surely somebody has got a mascot named the zebras somewhere.

LL:

You would—

MN:

You would think so.

LL:

Yeah. Although, then you wouldn't be able to tell the referees from the—[Laughter]

AW:

Yeah, that's right. And when they started yelling at the referees, they would be all in trouble. And the other box, I'm going to walk around here so I can look at it a little bit.

LL:

Here, I can bring it—and this box—

AW:

That's very logical. Just scoot it around.

LL:

Yeah.

AW:

And this box has lots of photographs. That's what it looks like. Photographs and envelopes.

LL:

Yeah. And like you said, we could go through a couple and find some pictures where we know who everybody is.

AW:

Including—I've already picked up one package that has negatives. So there are at least some negatives—two—a couple of boxes here that look like negatives, along with prints.

LL:

Here he is in his kayaking mode.

AW:

Yeah. And where was he kayaking? Is that—can you tell?

LL:

That looks kind of California-y, doesn't it? With the—there's pelicans.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

Sea lions. I would guess—

AW:

Certainly seacoast and not a river or a lake.

LL:

My guess is California area somewhere. He didn't write on here. But yeah. That's what it looks like to me. Yeah. Tons of—

AW:

Yeah. Tons of photographs.

LL:

This is the tip of the iceberg, as far as photos go, so—[laughs].

AW:

Now, most of these we picked up didn't have a lot of annotation on them. Will these be things that you'll be able to do a fair amount of identification of relative timeframe and location?

LL:

I think so. Yeah. And you know, we can kind of—I can cull through these and, you know, just figure out—

AW:

Yeah. And that might be a smart thing to do is to—

LL:

That's Nur.

MN:

Oh.

AW:

Who is that?

LL:

Nur. The—one of the—

AW:

Oh. And how does she spell Nur?

LL:

N-u-r.

AW:

N-u-r.

LL:

Yeah. So this is Australia. I mean, yeah. We are jumping all over the place. Here's a—this is Robert Mirabelle.

AW:

Oh, yeah. That's a nice photo.

LL:

Yeah. Handsome man.

AW:

Yeah. Did your dad take this photo?

LL:

Probably, yeah. He and Robert are good friends. Robert played at his service. Yeah, my dad introduced Robert to the didgeridoo. [AW laughs] And—

AW:

I've never heard Robert didgeridoo. That must've been interesting.

LL:

Oh boy. He can do it.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

He can circular breathe and the whole nine yards.

AW:

Wow.

LL:

And he went out there for my dad's service in full on Robert power mode with the leather pants and, you know, spoke hugely and played the didgeridoo.

AW:

Played the didgeridoo?

LL:

Um-hm.

AW:

Did he play the flute as well?

LL:

No.

AW:

The didgeridoo?

LL:

Um-hm.

AW:

That is a great story right there.

LL:

Um-hm.

MN:

Awesome.

LL:

Yeah. There's a tape and I'll give you one that I think he and Robert did together of—kind of, from—because my dad went to Australia, and so part of the many journeys.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

Boats. He loved boats. Yeah. So there's—geez Louise.

AW:
Yeah.

LL:
These are always kind of my favorites. Like, who's in the secret envelope, right?

AW:
Yeah. The one that is just a white envelope with no marking on it.

LL:
Yeah. This looks like—oh, there's—

MN:
Oh, Bess.

LL:
Jim Bess. Yeah.

MN:
He and I are baseball buddies [?] [0:22:14].

LL:
These are Nur playing the cello.

AW:
Yeah. I was—I saw the cello and I assumed that's who—

LL:
She went to Australia with him.

AW:
Oh really? And so is she playing the—

LL:
I don't think that's in Australia, but—

AW:
Boy, I wouldn't want to haul that cello up to that spot on the rocks to do that.

LL:

No.

AW:

Bless her heart.

LL:

Yeah, right?

AW:

I complain about having to haul my guitar around.

LL:

Oh, and here's another perfect example of my dad getting into something. Then, he got into—

AW:

And here is you.

LL:

Yeah, that's me and Ryan. And Ryan is Dana—who I said worked with us for many years—she was married to Ryan. She's not any longer, but—

AW:

Yeah. And you said this was—in the red?

LL:

Jim Bess, who—

AW:

B-e-s-s?

LL:

Yeah.

MN:

Yeah. And Jim was—we met in DeKalb Illinois, all of us. He was a teacher at DeKalb. And a—he's a painter.

AW:

Really?

MN:

A very great painter. He lives in California now, on the coast.

LL:

Well, here's me somewhere, a long time ago.

AW:

You look the same.

LL:

[Laughs] Well.

AW:

Which is good.

LL:

And here's still part of the—from that biplane show that we did. So we were all dressed up as old pilots.

AW:

Oh, I love it. Yeah, you've got the jodhpurs and the pants tucked into them and spats [0:23:48].

LL:

Yeah.

AW:

I mean, the jodhpurs tucked into the spats and the flat jacket. Oh, that's so cool.

LL:

His openings always were little happenings, you know?

AW:

Yeah. I can see.

LL:

Oh, and so then, he got into—what is that called? The water—kind of like a water massage thing.

MN:

I did—I met—I was in Indian—

AW:

Like a spa? That sort of—

LL:

It wasn't a spa. It was like a—it's a type of, like, massage, which I can't think of the name of right now.

MN:

Hydrotherapy, or something?

LL:

Yeah. Some sort of—like, where you support the person. It's a type of healing work. And so we had this—

MN:

Yeah, I missed that phase.

LL:

What?

MN:

I missed that phase.

LL:

Yeah.

MN:

Thank God.

LL:

[Laughs] He would've had you floating in this—so we set this portable pool up in his backyard.

MN:

[Laughs] Ross.

LL:

Yeah, so—here's a picture of Marv Neber.

MN:

Oh really?

LL:
Yeah.

MN:
Where was I at?

LL:
I don't know. You can tell us that one. Here's my son.

MN:
There's a van. Let's say—I don't know. I don't recognize that.

LL:
This is a good little story that—we were in South America together in the jungle.

AW:
And what is that?

LL:
It's one of those teeny weenie little monkeys.

AW:
Yeah, it looked like a monkey, but it's so small.

LL:
And boy, that—you know, the hands of those little monkeys are about the size of a quarter.

AW:
Uh-huh.

LL:
And oh my god, it got in my head and tangled its little hands in my hair. It took like a half hour to get that monkey disconnected from my head.

AW:
Wow. That is a very—it's about the size of a little kitten. It's just tiny.

LL:
Yeah. Tiny little—yeah, so a lot of these pictures don't have any—these, at least, in this box are not organized. This is in—up near Chama. Fly fishing on somebody's private ranch.

AW:

You know, it might be a shorter list for us to make of things your dad did not do.

LL:

[Laughter] Yeah, yeah. It's probably true. He did not ever work in a—

AW:

No factory work?

LL:

Factory work or in an office.

AW:

No cubicle?

LL:

Cubicle, exactly. Never did that. But that's about it. He did about—he bike raced when he was a teenager. He was a cyclist because—and he—actually, when I took up running when I was in seventh and eighth grade, he actually ran for a little while. So yeah, he tried a little bit of everything.

MN:

You know, like speaking of bicycles, Ross and I were going to school at Northern, For one summer or something. We rented bicycles out. He got a batch of bicycles somewhere and then he rented them out.

AW:

Oh, and then you—so you rented them to other people, right?

MN:

Yeah.

LL:

Oh, really?

MN:

And then we would go—one time, we went to a bar and we were drinking and someone dropped a bicycle off, two bicycles off, and we had to go back with our bicycles holing two bicycles.

[AW laughs] And I remember just crashing. I was just kind of wobbling.

AW:

Oh yeah. Well that would be hard without going to a bar.

MN:

That's right. So but we did eventually—we made it back, but didn't like that. That business did not last that long. [LL laughs]

AW:

Yeah. They probably stole your inventory, for one thing.

MN:

Yeah.

AW:

I think they tried—they had those things in Austin. You could get a bike, you know, and—

MN:

Oh yeah.

LL:

Yeah.

AW:

And I think they wound up not having any bikes.

LL:

Um-hm.

MN:

Yellow bikes.

AW:

[Laughs] Let's check the time. It's a little before noon. Why don't we stop and eat a bite?

LL:

Okay.

AW:

And then, I would like to start back with, like, dates of birth.

LL:

Yeah. The real—

AW:

Yeah. Just get the—

LL:

The solid info.

AW:

Well, just sort of the framework information down.

LL:

Yeah.

AW:

And we can do that because we—we'll need to stop a little before three so that you can go do your coaching.

LL:

Yeah. It's an easy—yeah.

AW:

We need to say for this recording, one of—right now, that this is not just about Ross or Arlene, but also about Laura because she is a very interesting person and does very interesting things. Including—real quickly—what is the coaching that you're doing?

LL:

I coach high school cross country. So I have a boys and girls team. It's just part of my own passion of running. So, but for me, I've coached for—gosh, probably twenty-five, thirty years at the same school, but different sports. Track and field hockey and soccer. But cross country is the one that I relate to the most and probably, field hockey, but I love the kids and I love the comradery and the sense that our future is in good hands, you know? There's some really amazing young kids out there and it makes me—it makes me happy. [Laughs]

AW:

I agree. It's one of the things I enjoy most about teaching at the university is being able to see those kids.

LL:

Yeah, yeah.

AW:

And seeing what they are and know what they're going to become.

LL:

Right. And their goofiness.

AW:

Oh yeah.

LL:

[Laughs] I love that.

AW:

Well, not that you and I are goofy.

LL:

Oh no, hell no. [Laughs]

AW:

And actually, not that we don't all need to be goofy.

LL:

Right, right.

AW:

At least a little bit. Okay. I'm going to stop this segment and we'll start back up here in just a few—not very long.

LL:

Here's my son at a very young age with his own little field hockey stick. That's his father.

AW:

Oh yeah. Oh my goodness. Yeah. And your son's name?

LL:

TaKis.

AW:

Spell that, would you?

LL:

T-a-k-i-s.

AW:

Wow. Where does that come from?

LL:

It's Greek for Peter, but we liked it visually because it's got the big T, little A, big K, I, and then a fun S.

AW:

So I'll bet he enjoyed learning to write that name early on.

LL:

Yeah, yeah. And it's interesting because his dad is a woodworker and so the nickname is Teak, like the wood.

AW:

Teak, like the wood.

LL:

Right. But it's interesting that now, he's in college and his own man, he goes by TaKis. He tells everybody his name is TaKis, which is good because—right? Then, he likes it. It's not too—because at first, I was a little worried it was a little too hippy dippy for him, but he can pull off TaKis now being—

MN:

Yeah, you don't mess with Teak.

LL:

You don't. [Laughs]

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

Yeah.

AW:
Very cool.

LL:
Yeah.

AW:
All right. We're going to stop it for repast and then, we'll be back.

[Pause in Recording]

AW:
So Andy Wilkinson. Still the thirteenth of September. I'm back with Laura LewAllen and Marvin Neber after a delightful lunch in which we were forced to eat all our olives. [Laughter] And our apples and pears.

LL:
Yes.

AW:
So it was good. And you just said before I turned on the—that you're not good with numbers, but I'm going to start with some numbers. [Laughs]

LL:
Okay. I'll do my best.

AW:
Yeah. But the basic things.

LL:
We might have to check on some things.

AW:
Let me start off with your date of birth.

LL:
Okay. March 17, 1964. Saint Patrick's Day.

AW:

Yes. Where were you born?

LL:

I was born in Sycamore, Illinois.

AW:

S-y-c-a-m-o-r-e?

LL:

Correct.

AW:

And where is that? What part of Illinois?

LL:

It's near DeKalb, right?

MN:

Yeah. But why not in DeKalb?

LL:

Well, it's an interesting story because as I understand, my mother was teaching elementary school and at that time, there was the scare of mumps or measles or something like that and they didn't want teachers to be around young kids because they could get the sickness. I forget if it's—I think it was measles. Anyway—

AW:

Yeah, '64. I'm thinking I was in high school and I think it must've been mumps or measles.

LL:

I think it was.

AW:

Polio, we'd had when I was in grade school, but that had been ten years before.

LL:

Yeah. My dad had somebody who got Polio.

AW:

Yeah, it was a huge scare.

LL:

He talks about the kid in his class that disappeared and then—but anyway, so my mom was teaching elementary school and—

AW:

And you don't want to get that illness, that disease, if you're pregnant, right?

LL:

I guess that was the thinking, yeah.

AW:

Yeah. No, that's—complications are—they're problems for adults to get it, for one thing, but if you're—

LL:

Pregnant.

AW:

Pregnant, it's worse.

LL:

Exactly. And so—but she didn't want anybody know she was pregnant so she only gained like twelve pounds.

AW:

Oh my gosh.

LL:

And so she had a doctor in Sycamore so that nobody would know. This is as I've been told. So she would drive to Sycamore and go to a doctor there. So that's why I was born there and I was little. I was only like five pounds. I had to spend extra—

AW:

Wow. Were you premature?

LL:

I don't think I was premature. I was just really small.

AW:

Just tiny.

LL:

So I had to spend a few extra days in the hospital and stuff. Were you there when I was born?

MN:

No, I wasn't and that explains why, because I was in DeKalb, but she snuck over to Sycamore.

LL:

Yeah. [Laughs]

MN:

But I was there shortly thereafter at the house.

LL:

Right.

MN:

I think when she came home.

LL:

Oh yeah? Yeah. There I was.

MN:

We celebrated. I think we drank wine, but I don't know if she did it.

LL:

I hope I—did I drink some wine? [Laughs]

AW:

One way or the other.

LL:

Yeah, right?

AW:

So did you grow up in DeKalb?

LL:

No. I actually don't remember DeKalb at all. And then, from DeKalb, we would've moved—you're going to have to help me, Marvin. We were around Chicago area, but I don't know the name of that town. I've seen pictures of that house.

MN:

Geez. I don't—I think—

LL:

I don't remember.

MN:

I think I moved away.

LL:

Or maybe I grew up in DeKalb for a few years, but then, we—when I was about three, we moved to Las Vegas.

MN:

Right, yeah.

AW:

Las Vegas?

LL:

New Mexico.

AW:

New Mexico.

LL:

Because my dad—

AW:

Went to Highlands?

LL:

Highlands.

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AW:

Did he go there as a student or as a teacher?

LL:

A student.

AW:

Okay.

LL:

And that, as—

MN:

Has a master's degree.

LL:

A master's degree. Oh yeah. What I was told is that they open the almanac and looked for the university that was highest in elevation. [AW laughs] And that's why they picked it. I don't know.

AW:

Why?

LL:

This is just things I've heard over the years, so that's how they ended up in Highlands. So my dad was a student there under Harry Lippie and all those wonderful, wonderful—it seemed like it couldn't have been a better place. I mean, maybe there were others, but the artists in the community—the art community at such a small school in the middle of nowhere is pretty outrageous at that time.

AW:

Yeah, it's—you know, the interview that—I mentioned I'd been doing interviews with Frank McCulloch in Albuquerque—who is much older than your dad. But he taught at Highlands. I think he went to school elsewhere, but he described his teaching there and he's an artist and a musician and a folklorist, but he taught science. And the way he described Highlands was in that exact way, that it was this great collection of people. Many of whom wanted to—they were professional teachers and academicians, but they wanted to be in New Mexico.

LL:

Yeah.

AW:

And so—and they loved Las Vegas because it's Las Vegas, you know?

LL:

It was just—yeah, seedy little Las Vegas.

MN:

There was a thing at DeKalb [?] [0:36:07]. There was a golden age of—at Vegas, from like '64 through '68 of great artists and creative people that came out due to the teachers, which included Jerry [inaudible], Ray Drew, and Volken [?]
—not Volken, but maybe him [0:0:36:23]. They include Elmer schooling, but anyway, Ross hated them.

LL:

Dad did, yeah. [Laughs]

MN:

And there's a book about it. I have it somewhere and it's really—and that's where I went and that's why I loved it. To me, it was an energy's place.

AW:

Did you go there at the same time Ross was there?

MN:

I came there the next semester.

AW:

Okay.

MN:

But he show—he introduced me to Jerry and I got an assistantship there.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

But all of them, Jerry West, Gather Gonzales.

MN:

Yeah. We were all buddies.

LL:

Was—did John Hogan?

MN:

Hogan.

LL:

Hogan.

MN:

Charlie West.

LL:

Charlie Southern.

MN:

Charlie Southern, yeah.

LL:

I mean, and these are just the people that I know that are still here, who are—I mean, I consider them—

AW:

Alums of Highlands?

LL:

Highland alums that are amazing artists. Yeah. So anyway, somehow, that just—he picked the right place, that's for sure.

AW:

Yeah, because they didn't have any other connection to it, other than looking through the almanac.

LL:

Yeah, yeah. Or maybe they did, but that's—I didn't know—I always heard that.

AW:

Yeah. So were you there long enough to remember growing up some in Highlands?

LL:

Yeah. We lived—we lived behind the castle there. The Arm and Hammer—now, is the—

MN:

Oh, the Montezuma.

LL:

Montezuma Castle, which is now United World College.

MN:

In Montezuma, and it was a—yeah, a Catholic retreat for priests.

LL:

It really is a castle. It's amazing.

MN:

And it was a railroad. Santa Fe had a railroad resort, on Spur 17—seven miles up the canyon.

AW:

From the—from the depot?

LL:

To this place, yeah.

MN:

Yeah, to—

LL:

So I remember things like—so we lived out of Las Vegas in this canyon called Montezuma Canyon and I remember dad made me a little two-railed ice skates for when—I think it's the Gallinas River, when it would freeze and I would skate. There was a dog named Blackie that lived there. I had my first drive there, where I got into the driver's seat and took the car out of gear and almost drove the car into the river.

AW:

I take it this was not under the guidance of the driver training instructor? [Laughter]

LL:

Certainly not. And a bat came into the house once. Me and mom—I remember the bat—my mom freaking out. And yeah. And then what I also really remember quite a bit is going to the school

with my dad. Like, in the foundry, they had that big—remember Harry had that big sandbox? Like, where you'd—like maybe if a sculpture was hot or something, you'd put it in this.

MN:

Yeah. Well, you put sand on the cement floor before you poured bronze.

LL:

Yeah. But there was this big metal and it was kind of high and I would sit in that sandbox, I remember. My dad had a motorcycle and I would ride on the front of the motorcycle and just hold the—hold the gas tank lid. And so I remember things like that. And Nancy Lippie made bug juice, which was Kool-Aid and orange juice.

AW:

[Laughs] Do I spell Lippie, L-i-p-p-e?

LL:

It's i-e.

AW:

I-e?

MN:

Yeah, I think i-e.

LL:

Yeah. Harry—yeah.

AW:

Okay. I couldn't remember.

MN:

Like, [inaudible] [0:39:50].

AW:

But with an E?

MN:

No, I don't know.

LL:

L-i-p-p-i-e, I think.

AW:

Okay.

LL:

Yeah. And—yeah, so I do. I do have three year old memories. And then, there was—and this, I think I don't really remember, but I've heard the story so many times about Laura being at various bars in Las Vegas. [AW laughs] And actually, Gather Gonzales just reminded me. And then, mom would come in and swoop me away and be all mad because, you know, my diapers were all wet and dirty and all that, but I would just hang out at the bar with dad. The Spic and Span. So I have vague little—

AW:

Yeah. The Spic and Span?

LL:

Yeah, the restaurant.

AW:

Yeah, I think it's still there.

LL:

It is. Yeah, yeah.

AW:

Yeah, yeah.

LL:

So I have little--

AW:

I played a concert in a little room attached to it just a couple of years ago.

LL:

Did you really?

AW:

Yeah. And you went—to get to—this was a weird thing. To go to the room to do the concert, you

walked through the Spic and Span and went down this little hallway like you were going to the bathroom and then there was this mysterious door that opened into this other room and they had—

LL:

Into this like theater type thing?

AW:

Well, it was—it was pretty plain. It was kind of square and it had a little stage, you know? But it was pretty—I'd never been to one where you had to take the cook's tour to get to the—[laughs]

LL:

And everybody who went to the show had to take the same route?

AW:

I guess so, yeah. Maybe they had a door that they opened later or something, but it was—

LL:

How funny.

AW:

The Spic and Span, still there.

LL:

Yeah, still there.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

Yeah, yeah. So, and then, of course, I remember the merry-go-round, right?

MN:

Oh yeah. See, that was—

LL:

What was that? My dad's senior thesis, or something?

MN:

It was—yeah. No, it was graduate—his master's.

LL:

Oh, his master's thesis.

AW:

So we're not talking about the county fair. We're talking about—

LL:

He built a merry-go-round.

AW:

He built one? Oh, how amazing.

MN:

Yeah. A big one. Not a full-size, but maybe a third-size. But it's big. Encompass this room.

AW:

Yeah.

MN:

Or this area here.

LL:

Yeah, and it turned. And then, he had the tit-twiddling machines, right? [AW laughs] And you turned the crank and the boobies would go in and out. Were they on the merry-go-round or were they separate?

MN:

I can't remember. [AW laughs]

LL:

Yeah. Anyway, they were these—

MN:

I just saw pictures. I never saw it actually assembled. I just saw the pictures after the fact.

LL:

And there's posters. My mom made a poster. Ross LewAllen's carousel. I hope to find one because it'd be good to include.

AW:

Yeah, that would be—yeah.

LL:

But yeah, so I remember the merry-go-round.

AW:

So were you there very long?

LL:

We were there probably until I would've entered first grade, which probably seven, or so. Is that right?

AW:

Yeah. Six or seven.

LL:

Is that how that worked? No. No, no, no. That's not right. We moved to California, yeah.

MN:

Yeah.

AW:

But you didn't go to grade school, or public school, in Highlands? Or in Las Vegas?

LL:

No, no. I had—I remember a lady. I'd go to her house sometimes. But no. So from Vegas to Tiburon.

MN:

Tiburon, yeah.

LL:

Yeah, Tiburon.

AW:

T-i-b-e-r-o-n?

LL:

R-o-u-n-e? Right? No, no. T-i-b-u-r-o-n. Tiburon, California. Yeah, yeah.

AW:

And what—why Tiburon?

LL:

I don't exactly know.

MN:

Was Bess there? Jim Bess?

LL:

Jim Bess was there.

MN:

He had us all there.

LL:

Was that why?

MN:

I think that's what it is. He said, "You got to come here. It's so cool."

LL:

And then, did—and then, the guy—the boat guy, Bernie.

MN:

Bernie, yeah.

AW:

So was it like an artist colony? Or like a resort colony? Like Ojai? Or was it a—

MN:

No, we just all—you know, it's a summer of love and so it drew us.

AW:

Yeah.

MN:

The magic of the summer of love.

LL:

The summer of love.

AW:

So you were there in '69? Right?

MN:

Sixty-seven. No, summer of love was '67.

AW:

Right. So you went that soon from Highlands?

LL:

Yeah. We went.

MN:

They did.

LL:

Yeah. We went straight from—so yeah. So honestly, I don't know the years. That's kind of a blur, but we were in Vegas long enough for my dad to do his master's.

MN:

Yeah. And it was supposedly a one year program, so whatever that—

LL:

Okay, yeah. And then—

MN:

Four quarters.

LL:

Four quarters at Highlands?

MN:

Right.

LL:

So it was maybe only one year?

MN:

Yeah, I would think.

LL:

Oh okay. So that would make sense. Then, we went to Tiburon and we lived there for a few years. I was still below elementary school and we lived in this house. Did you ever go to that house? And the underneath was—[AW coughs]—underneath were—

MN:

Steve Miller, right?

LL:

No. Oh, somebody who played for Steve Miller's band lived under there.

AW:

Really?

LL:

Yeah, and then there were—the most fascinating were transvestites. And I remember them—you know, they'd play with me and everything, but then at night, they'd be girls leaving. Mom says I always was a little confused.

AW:

Well, I guess. Yeah. [Laughter]

LL:

I never—you know, it didn't matter. But I was always a little confused, you know? I don't remember their names. You know, Bob was Bob and then girls would come out.

AW:

He was Roberta, or whatever.

LL:

Yeah.

AW:

Well, that—that's quite interesting.

LL:

Yeah, yeah. And so there was a big group there. Lots of—I remember parties. Dad would make

body jewelry. There's lots of photos of nakedness and just creativity and just like you would expect for that time of California in that area. My dad met Steve Miller. He met Silverstein.

AW:

Shil?

LL:

Shil. And probably numerous others, but those are the two that I remember him telling me he met. But yeah, so that was an amazing—and I had friends that lived around there and that was great. You parked way up high on this, like, platform and then you had to walk down all these stairs to get to the house.

AW:

Wow.

LL:

It was an old wood house and I had guinea pigs. Peanut was one of them.

AW:

I'd say your memory is great.

LL:

[Laughs] And then—so then, from California, we moved to Spain and that was big, right? That was—

AW:

So you were about—were you of school age then?

LL:

Yeah, because I started school in Spain.

AW:

In Spain?

LL:

Yeah.

AW:

Where in Spain?

LL:

We were in Almuñécar, which is—from the boardwalk of Almuñécar, you could see Africa.

AW:

Wow.

LL:

That high tip would've been what? Morocco? I think—

MN:

Would it be near Gibraltar, then? That's so far away.

LL:

I know. And it wasn't you could always see it, but on a real really clear day.

MN:

Wow, unbelievable.

LL:

And I had roller skates there. We lived in this house. I remember—you know, mom going through the markets. I remember her buying eggs. And then, I had all these friends that we—she would leave me on the boardwalk and I would just roller skate with all these kids. That—you know, that was—what are they? That marble, you know? So it was all just really long. Probably not as long as I really remember it, but—and I would just skate up and down that, right along the ocean there. And then, dad would paint and my mom was painting. [Phone rings] And we lived kind of out of town somewhere, I remember. And I had a birthday party and go to the bars with my dad.

AW:

[Laughs] Again.

LL:

And then, the tapas. So like, pulpo, you know?

AW:

Yeah. Right, right.

LL:

Eating all the little octopus and all that stuff. And at that point, my dad was about thirty, I think. And so we stayed—we also travelled around in Volkswagen around Europe. So we went—

AW:

Like a bus? Or a beetle?

LL:

Yeah, a Volkswagen bus that had a bed in it and everything. And I have a lot of memories of, like, going into museums and you know, somewhere exists, I hope, my sketches of the David.

AW:

Oh yeah.

LL:

And you know, things like that. And we would stay at campgrounds and I remember meeting lots of people. And the—the—one of our family stories that will be passed down for centuries is when we went to the catacombs and—is that Rome? No.

MN:

I think so.

LL:

I think it was Rome.

MN:

Yeah.

LL:

And so we went to tour the catacombs and of course, we were following a tour. And we were with some people we had met in the campground and for some reason—I don't know why—but I think the story goes that my dad and the other guy decided we didn't need any stinky tour guides.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

And so we kind of go out on our own and these were, like, caves.

AW:

Yeah, the catacombs. Yeah.

LL:

Yeah, and—

AW:

We're talking—

LL:

And skulls and holes in the ground and so we're down in there and the lights go out.

MN:

[Gasps] Shit.

LL:

And we're in there and we don't know where the hell we are and we're lost and somehow, we end up getting to one of the tunnels and they feel—dad can reach up and feel the—

AW:

A graft?

LL:

Like a chord for lights.

AW:

Oh.

LL:

And—but there were holes in the ground. I remember—

AW:

You could've fallen in.

LL:

My dad had to pick me up, yeah. And—you know, and then the skulls and everything down there. And so I think we were down there for like two hours or something and we finally found a door and opened and we end up, you know, in the big cathedral and people turn and look at us. And so that's our big—that's the LewAllen family vacation story.

AW:

Wow. That's pretty scary.

LL:

Yeah, that was a good one. And so, yeah. And so I started school there.

AW:

And was it a school that was an American school, an English school?

LL:

No.

AW:

It was a Spanish school?

LL:

Yeah, yeah.

AW:

So you learned Spanish?

LL:

I did, I did. Yeah.

AW:

Yeah. And you learned it in Spain.

LL:

I learned it in Spain. I learned—and so all my numbers and everything were European looking, which caused a little trouble. I was a little confused when I got back to the United States. I got chastised a little bit for—you know, from teachers and—

AW:

Doing a seven with a slash.

LL:

A slash and the fours.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

You know, and then, of course, the English-Spanish confusion. And so—I mean, it was fine. And sadly, it got all squelched and I had to relearn Spanish all over again in high school.

AW:

Well, it would've been—the Spanish, it would've been substantially different anyway.

LL:

Different, yeah. That's true. That's true. But yeah, so—

AW:

Wound up giving you an edge though in relearning to have had that—

LL:

I think it had to have been there a little bit.

AW:

Yeah, younger experience.

LL:

I mean, I'm dyslexic. I struggle with languages and things like that, but I do think that there was something in there that kind of helped, especially with my words. My word retention is good, but breaking down the verbs and all that—forget it. But yeah.

AW:

Yeah. So how long were you in Spain? How many years did you go to school?

LL:

Just one.

AW:

One?

LL:

So it seemed like we were there for about a year, the travelling and the living in Spain. And we might've stayed longer. I don't know. But my dad—so this is why I was saying his age. He was thirtyish. And he started something then that he had for the rest of his life. Obviously, it was—it turned out, he was bipolar, but we didn't know that. And so he started to freak out a little bit. And so it was obvious that—at least to my mom. I, clueless to this. But I do remember certain parts of this scenario because we—we had to pack up. I think about my poor mom. You know, little girl, this man who is having—you know?

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

He just would—went grandiose. He would just be so prolific and then, all of a sudden, crash and burn and everything was conspiracy. He thought people were watching him and everything got really discombobulated for him. And so I remember driving in our van and I had a little chair and we had all these paintings. Paintings in the back. And we pull over the car to the side of the road and my dad—I mean, this still just makes me cry every time I think about it. And we stopped on the side of the road and he pulls all this stuff out and he just burned.

AW:

The paintings?

LL:

Oh, he burned everything. And my chair.

AW:

And your chair?

LL:

And my chair.

AW:

Oh my gosh.

MN:

Oh no.

LL:

And we go to the airport and, you know, he is just crazed. And we park the Volkswagen van in the airport and we get to the airport and fly away from all of that.

AW:

And leave the Volkswagen van and the burned paintings?

LL:

Paintings. Yeah, yeah.

AW:

Yeah.

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MN:
Geez.

AW:
Keep talking. When we were—before we got started with the recording, your young friend, Corbin was here and he was talking about reading *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*.

LL:
Oh yeah, right.

AW:
Have you read that book?

LL:
I have only read tidbits of it. I—yeah.

AW:
Because it's—the same thing happened to Pirsig. I mean, he was a bipolar manic depressive. Whatever you call it. But he had this experience where he had—and the book was his recounting of this—of having had that experience. Your description of it just rang a bell with me after having just talked about it.

LL:
Right, right.

AW:
Yeah.

LL:
Huh. Well, yeah. It—I should read that. I mean, I've—of course, I know it and have looked at it.

AW:
So did you—did you come back to get treatment for your dad?

LL:
Yeah, so we moved back to Illinois.

AW:
So he at least knew that?

LL:

Yeah, there was definitely something wrong and yeah.

AW:

Yeah, but he knew it. It wasn't just—

LL:

Yeah. I don't know the details of—but yeah.

AW:

Yeah, right. Because you were small.

LL:

Yeah. But definitely mom and him knew there was something wrong because, I mean, it wasn't just off the wall all the time.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

You know, so yeah. So they—I guess we maybe lived with my grandparents or something. We lived with my mom's mom.

AW:

So where in Illinois would that have been?

LL:

In Chicago. My mom is from—

MN:

Suburb of Chicago.

LL:

Over by Midway.

MN:

Oh really? Okay.

LL:

Over there.

MN:

Oh okay.

LL:

Yeah. A little poorer side of town. And so then I actually started school over there.

AW:

So you started again?

LL:

And I don't remember that being all that great. I think I was a little, kind of—[laughs]—had been thrown for a loop, I think.

AW:

Yeah. Well, that would also kind of explain when earlier you were talking about starting school—when is that? Seven or eight? That would've probably been accurate for getting back to the US—

LL:

Right, right. Yeah. And see, that would've been—yeah. So kind of planned, probably, to get me back. I think it was kind of a kindergarten because then we moved to La Grange.

AW:

Texas?

LL:

No. La Grange Park, Illinois.

AW:

Oh okay.

LL:

And that's where I started first grade. So the Spain and living with my grandma Marie Clausius. That's my mom's side of the family.

AW:

How do you spell that?

LL:

Oh. C-l-a-u-s-i-u-s. I think. Clausius. I think. Yeah, I have to look at that.

AW:

That'll be good enough to help us look it up, so.

LL:

C-l-a—yeah, Clausius. Yeah, so that—Marie and—I'll think of my—

AW:

So the photographs we looked at earlier, would that have been them?

LL:

No. My—that was my father's.

AW:

That was—it was your dad?

LL:

Um-hm.

AW:

Okay.

LL:

Yeah. Erna Kausche was my—

AW:

Yeah. That's what—Erna.

LL:

--Father's mother.

AW:

Okay. And did you—how many years did you go to school in La Grange?

LL:

So I—third grade. Until third grade. So the summer of third grade we moved to Santa Fe and life as I know it began. [Laughter] So I started fourth grade at Acequia Madre here in Santa Fe.

AW:

And in a sense, other than your trips to Africa and college and those things, this has been home?

LL:

Home. Yeah, yeah. Exactly. So I pretty much stayed here.

AW:

So were you cognizant as—I mean, you mentioned the paintings, so it was clear to you as a child even that you were the child of artists.

LL:

Yeah. [Laughs]

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

Yeah, yeah. Because my mom, which hasn't been mentioned, is a painter. Yeah.

AW:

Right. She was a painter also because she taught.

LL:

Yeah.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

Yeah. But she also was a teacher of kids, like elementary kids. And then, I showed you that picture. Junior high, seventh and eighth grades. Yeah. So yeah, when you become cognizant—

AW:

Well, you probably get cognizant that other kids are not children of artists.

LL:

Yeah, yeah. That's true.

AW:

Right? More than—

LL:

That's true.

AW:
Yeah.

LL:
That's true. Although, Santa Fe.

AW:
Right, yeah.

LL:
But no. I would say, probably really kind of figured that out, maybe junior high. Sixth, seventh grade. All of a sudden, it's like, oh wait. You know?

AW:
Yeah.

LL:
My dad doesn't do what your dad does, kind of thing. Or definitely. At that time, my mom was teaching so she was an artist, but only kind of more here at home and stuff like that.

AW:
Because she had a day job of teaching?

LL:
Right, right.

AW:
Right.

LL:
But dad was always an artist.

AW:
Yeah.

LL:
Yeah. Except for, he taught. We—like, when we lived in La Grange. That period, my first through third grade, he taught at College of DuPage.

AW:
Uh-huh.

LL:
In Illinois there. And oh, I should say, we had the Yaqui village [1:00:06]. Did you ever see that?
In our—

MN:
No, I never did.

LL:
In La Grange, he turned one of the rooms—his studio—so he was making his own jewelry. But he built a—like a palapa inside our house. [Laughs]

AW:
Really?

LL:
Yeah, yeah. And that was his studio for jewelry. So I knew a lot of kids didn't have palapas in their houses.

AW:
Yeah. [Laughs]

LL:
Yeah. So I guess there was that too.

AW:
Well that—

MN:
And we, Ross and I, shared a studio in Berwyn, too, at that time.

LL:
Oh yes. The Berwyn Institute.

MN:
Yeah. Berwyn Institute of Design.

AW:

Berwyn?

MN:

Yeah. Berwyn, Illinois. Right next to Cicero, which, you know, kind of mafia. A lot of activities went on there.

AW:

That's the one you were talking about where you had the benefits of the—

LL:

What did you guys do there?

MN:

Well I was still teaching for one year in grade school after your grandmother kicked me out of the house.

LL:

[Laughs] You lived with Erna?

MN:

Yeah, and she caught me with a woman in the basement one time. [LL laughs] "You're going to have to leave. We don't do that here."

LL:

That's funny.

MN:

But anyway, we—we just—I needed a place to live and this was storefront that had a little apartment in back. And then, Ross said, "Yeah, I'll rent it." And he said, "Hey, I'll help you on the rent. We'll set up a studio front, in the store front." And he kind of taught painting to his high school—maybe slash junior college kids, and I didn't—_____ was one of my students and a couple of other people [1:01:44].

LL:

So this was when I was—when we lived in La Grange?

MN:

Yeah. Because I visited—you lived upstairs in a house somewhere.

LL:

There was—well, remember there was that really big man? That—Fred, who lived upstairs and we lived below.

MN:

I don't remember that.

LL:

See, I'm thinking that that was another time. Because see, I don't remember the Berwyn Institute. I don't remember going there. So to me, it seems like—

MN:

I don't think he took you there.

LL:

Maybe that was when—

MN:

It was a secret place, kind of. [Laughter]

LL:

Oh, the men's club.

MN:

I won't elaborate any more. Sorry.

LL:

No, I just am wondering. Was it then? Or was it when we initially first came back from Spain?

MN:

I don't—I don't remember.

LL:

Yeah, I'm not sure. Because I always heard of the Berwyn Institute of Design, but I—for some reason, I thought it was when I was younger. But I just—never sure about that.

MN:

Yeah, I can't. Yeah. It's kind of fuzzy. '66, probably.

LL:

Yeah. See, so that would've been when I was younger. That's why I don't remember it.

MN:

Okay, yeah.

LL:

That's in that place where after we moved from DeKalb that I don't know where that was.

MN:

Uh-huh.

LL:

That's when that was and I don't know that. It's awful. I don't know when that—where that was. Or—I mean, I can guess when, but yeah.

MN:

Yeah, it'd be '66.

LL:

So it would've been before we moved to Las Vegas?

MN:

Yeah, yeah.

LL:

Yeah. Because La Grange was after Spain.

MN:

Because did I—I think I went on to University of Oklahoma, and then y'all, shortly thereafter, went to Highlands.

LL:

Yeah, okay. Yeah, that makes sense. Oh see, that's a good timeline.

MN:

Or Oklahoma University, as they call it.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

Right. And—oh, I want to Segway back to that whole artist thing and knowing your parents.

AW:

Yes.

LL:

That—but this is looking back on it. His drawings, his paintings from that time period. We went to a circus there and he then became fascinated with, like, the circus and the ringmaster and stuff. And I think—and this—I think I was talking to my mom or somebody about this—that those paintings during that time, he's huge. He's big, big, big. And there's like—he's running these circuses. These rings.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

And so the paintings of him are big. He's big. And he's the ringmaster.

AW:

Of your dad?

LL:

Yeah. His own drawings. He's got these mustaches and he's like—everybody is like—he's running the show, kind of thing.

AW:

Is that—is that part of the illness?

LL:

I don't know. I mean, but I think that that was something that—I think it was my mom—that we were talking about later. About, like, the—because there are some drawings and stuff that did survive the big burn. But—so yeah. That's an interesting sort of thing that might—it might've been that he was seeing him—and it was just growing and growing this. Because as I grew up with him and his bipolarism and his—he would, all of a sudden, get—like, everything would connect. Everything was amazing and everything was just—like, he'd just go, like, fifty miles an hour. He couldn't stop and it just was just happening. He was creating and it was just amazing. And like I said, things were all just coming together and connections. And then, he would just crash and burn, you know?

AW:
Yeah.

LL:
But he got a handle on that later in his life.

AW:
Well, I was going to ask if—because one of the reasons you came back was to try to get a handle on that. And did that occur? Because that's a difficult thing to get—

LL:
He didn't get a handle on it for a while. There were—

MN:
Took another Russia trip, didn't he?

LL:
Yeah. So there was—

MN:
And crashed big time then.

LL:
Well yeah. And there were a couple others. Like, my mom and I were going to go to—when I was in college—she and I were going to go to New Orleans together, but we had to fly back and that would've been even after my parents were divorced. There were probably four or five big episodes, you know, kind of throughout his life. One was he had come to visit me when I lived in Africa, but then, he and I went later together and so we're there and all of a sudden, he just starts getting really weird on me. It was kind of like this whole reliving the Spain thing, where, you know, he is—just everything is weird and connected and it's conspiracy. We're in Nairobi, Kenya. And it just so happened that there were riots and things happening there, so you would hear stuff and he's like, [makes sound]. And you know, I had to call United States and find out, you know. And luckily, he had his meds with him, but he hadn't been taking them, or something. So then, somehow I got to a pharm—I got something and it conked him out for, like, twenty-four hours straight and he just slept. And then, he got back. And then, we had to fly. We were flying to—Egypt, maybe? And we're on the plane and my dad is like, "That guy's got a knife." And I'm like, "No," you know? "It's fine, it's fine." You know? And I'm thinking, he's, you know, just kind of having these conspiracy things. And sure enough, at some point during the flight, I look and the guy really did have a knife and I'm like, how is this possible that my dad has to sit next to—you know, he's having all these problems and the magic of life, he has to sit next to the

one guy on the plane that actually did have a knife. I was like, no. But anyway, we got through that and the rest of our journey was fantastic.

AW:

Well, you know, and there's a complicating factor that almost all of us in the arts are, to some degree or another, like that.

LL:

Yeah, yeah.

AW:

I mean, the bipolar. The bursts of energy and the letdown that comes afterwards. And so, separating that out from when it becomes clinical is—that's a hard thing to do.

LL:

It is. And I think that later in life, he used that to his advantage because he figured out—

AW:

Yeah, I can produce now.

LL:

He figured out how to manage it and of course, then he got on lithium and all this other stuff. But he quit drinking. He started doing a lot of the healing work, the men's groups.

AW:

Is that—and this is rushing way ahead, but it seems to connect it—is that where the shamanism and the healing and the meditation—was that born partly as a response to controlling?

LL:

Definitely.

AW:

Oh, very interesting.

LL:

Definitely, yeah. And it just changed his whole—who he was, right? I mean—

MN:

Exactly, yeah. And he quit drinking. He and I were drinking buddies all the time. It really didn't change our relationship. It changed—I still drank, but I had to hold back. [Laughs]

LL:

Yeah, yeah.

MN:

But he just went on, and I just went along with him.

LL:

And yeah. And so, yeah. I think that's definitely where it originated and why it originated in his life. Yeah.

AW:

One of the other things that's pretty characteristic of this illness is that children become the parent.

LL:

Yeah.

AW:

And it sounds like that had already happened with you.

LL:

Yeah, yeah.

AW:

How young were you when you realized you had to be the grown up?

LL:

Well, I can tell you exactly when I realized it for the first time. Not because he was ill, but when he came to visit me in Kenya when I was living there.

AW:

And how old were you?

LL:

And so I was twenty. Twenty, yeah.

AW:

Twenty? Yeah. So, young, still.

LL:

And so, he came and he was now on my turf. I could speak Swahili. I knew my way around. I knew how to get on the buses and everything like that. And something that my dad was really good at all through life was—he was really willing to let go and let me lead. He never—and that's why we worked so well together in this business for, you know, the thirty whatever years we did is because I really feel like he always empowered me. He never—and never was like, “Well, these are my designs—you know, this is my business and you're going to have to do it the way I say,” you know? And so even at early on, you know, he just was like, “Show me the way.” You know, and I was like, “Isn't this weird? I'm taking my dad around.” You know, “I'm holding his hand.” So I remember that as a first time, but then, yeah. When he was ill, that definitely would—you know, that same feeling definitely would come up where I'd have to take care of him. Yeah, the one time he came back from Russia, boy, he was—

MN:

That was the worst.

LL:

That was the worst. That was the worst one for a long time.

AW:

Well, and how could you not come back from Russia paranoid?

LL:

Well yeah. Oh yeah. He rarely speaks of that trip. Saint Petersburg. And he—boy, no.

MN:

But he got himself on the plane by himself.

LL:

Yeah. He was travelling by himself.

MN:

And he mustered up the energy to do that. I'm still amazed.

AW:

Yeah, yeah.

MN:

Said, “Put me away now.”

LL:

Yeah. Well, yeah. He had kind of figured it all out. But then, when he did change his life and make that—you know, that's when I feel like he was able to harness that kind of energy.

AW:

So about when was that? Like, about how old was he? Or, relative to how were you? To just give us an idea.

LL:

Oh, I would've been—college. Finishing college, so early twenties, '86ish.

AW:

Yeah. Mid-eighties, yeah.

LL:

Yeah, yeah.

AW:

Yeah. What precipitated—how did he come to—how did he find that path? The way out? Because that's another problem with this kind of condition is that it's hard to see a way out for a lot of people.

LL:

Right, right. You know, I think, probably a lot had to do with Santa Fe, you know? And what Santa Fe has to offer, right? A lot of that kind of thing is here. And the Native Americans, you know? He had a lot of, kind of, connections there. Curiosity.

MN:

How about the [crosstalk] mixture—you know, the [crosstalk] people [1:13:32].

LL:

Yeah. Yeah.

AW:

The what?

MN:

Probably gave him connections.

LL:

Exactly. The men's—so that was kind of when the whole men's group thing and the drumming and all that stuff was start—

AW:

Uh-huh. And Robert Wyers [?] with—yeah [1:13:46].

LL:

Exactly. And he—boy, hook line and sinker.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

And I really think that that was a huge—you're right, Marvin—a huge reason why that then that was a platform to step into the shamanism and all the other stuff because, you know, all the drumming and the men's circles. Those are—they were all up—it was a product of all these other things. Right?

AW:

Um-hm.

MN:

And Spitz. Robert Spitz probably had something to do with—

LL:

Bob Spitz? Yeah. Although, I think, maybe, my dad kind of brought Bob Spitz along.

MN:

Oh okay. Okay. The other way.

AW:

And who is Bob Spitz?

LL:

He is our landlord. So he is the angel—

AW:

At the—at the gallery?

LL:

Yeah. Dad calls him our angel because—

MN:

Yeah, woo.

LL:

To have a place where we do in downtown Santa Fe.

AW:

Oh yeah.

LL:

Yeah, and—

AW:

And you've been there for a long time, too.

LL:

Yeah, yeah. Since the seventies.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

And it's because of Robert Spitz. I mean, I really feel like my whole family, we owe our livelihood to the Spitz family because we wouldn't—

AW:

Is he still alive?

LL:

Yes, yeah. I'll introduce—he's very interesting because he grew up in Santa Fe.

AW:

Oh wow, yeah.

LL:

So that clock—the clock that's over by the museum on the street is a Spitz clock.

AW:
Really?

LL:
Because they had a jewelry shop on the Plaza. And so, my dad started in that upstairs room, renting that one little room.

AW:
Yeah.

LL:
And over the years, Robert said, “Well, you know, my family had a jewelry store and I want to build you a jewelry store. And so, the gallery—actually, Jerry West and Blue Raven, they built that space just for my dad.

AW:
And, Marvin, you were saying that had once been a—

MN:
A gas station.

AW:
Gas station.

LL:
Right, right. And it is also the last construction building that actually has been built on the Plaza. Everything else has been a remodel. This was actually—

AW:
Really?

LL:
So that little nook that is our gallery was an open little, like, yard of the gas station. Kind of in the back of the gas station.

AW:
Yeah.

LL:
And they actually built that space. So it didn't exist.

MN:

Yeah. And correct, Frank Hall Gallery thing.

LL:

Yeah, yeah. Actually, it was Pelham Galleries and then, Frank Hall Gallery, and now, it's Bill Worrell.

MN:

Right.

AW:

Um-hm.

LL:

Who we love. [Laughs]

AW:

Yeah. Don't we all? I'll have to tell you, when we turn this off, my story about why I write on paper without lines. It's because Bill Worrell [1:16:33].

LL:

Because of Bill? Oh.

AW:

Well, I'll just tell it now anyway. So when I quit my day job—and I was in my forties and, you know, I quit a job with a suit and tie and a vest a paycheck to do music, you know? And I already knew Worrell. And so he came by one time. His ophthalmologist was in Lubbock and had been forever and so he would drive up from—then, by now, Mason or Newhart—to get his eyes checked, which was kind of interesting.

LL:

Yeah.

AW:

But so he comes by the house to see how I'm doing, you know, in this venture. We sat down, we have a cup of coffee and he says—or I think I had coffee and I think Worrell had a beer.

[Laughs]

LL:

Probably. Yeah, yeah.

AW:

So we—he said, “Are you keeping a journal?” And I was very proud. I said, “Yes, I am keeping a journal.” He said, “Let me see it.” And it wasn’t couched as a question. It was—you know, it was like an instruction.

LL:

Yeah.

AW:

So I bring it out and it’s a spiral binder with, you know, paper with lines. He picks it up and looks at it and he slams into it. He says, “Don’t ever write in a goddamn book with lines again.” And he gets up and he walks out to his truck. And I thought, I’ve made him mad.

LL:

Yeah, he’s leaving.

AW:

But he goes out and he gets a brand new sketchbook. He brings it in, sets it down, and says, “From now on, don’t ever let your life be put into lines.”

LL:

Lines, yeah.

AW:

Yeah. And I—

LL:

Oh.

MN:

Oh my gosh. No, I have a sketchbook. But I did get journals—writing lines, but—

AW:

Yeah, I know. He said, “Don’t ever do it.” And, you know, and I haven’t since. I never—I haven’t since. And he’s right.

LL:

Yeah, yeah.

AW:

He was really right. It's such a debt I owe him to that.

LL:

To—for that, yeah.

AW:

But you know Worrell so you understand that story.

LL:

Totally. Well, and look at this, there's not one lined book in three, four boxes.

AW:

Nope.

LL:

I think that that's—I think—Bill and my dad, they had a good—they had a great repertoire.

AW:

Yeah, repertoire.

LL:

Yes, that's the word.

AW:

Yeah. Well, they had a great repertoire, too.

LL:

Yes, yes. That's true. But that's a great—is he mad at me? [Laughter]

AW:

Yeah, I thought I'd made him mad. He was leaving. You know?

LL:

Lines. I didn't think this was going to come between us.

AW:

Yeah. You know, I was so proud that I was keeping a journal. I was just doing it wrong.

LL:

Right. Well, a gift, obviously.

AW:

No, it is a gift. In fact, I make my students—being a parent of kids going through college, I don't require a textbook.

LL:

Yes.

AW:

None of that. There are no good textbooks in my subject anyway. But I do make them buy journals with no lines.

LL:

Um-hm, Um-hm. No, I think that's great. I mean, I look back at some of my old college—I never could—I did have lines, but I never—you know, there was those—I'd have to circle that because I have—why did I write it over there? I don't know, you know? I mean.

AW:

Well, some people react to the lines in a good way. They circumvent them. But I was too much of a—oh, I have to write on the lines, you know? And maybe that's what Worrell saw was that it was all neat and right in the lines. But anyway, a fun Worrell story.

LL:

That's good.

AW:

A fun guy. So let's talk a little bit about you're growing up here. You graduated high school here?

LL:

Yes, Santa Fe Prep. Class of 1982.

AW:

And—

LL:

Class size, like—I think we were like twenty-eight, or something.

AW:

Oh wow.

LL:

A little small school.

AW:

How great.

LL:

And I had my mom as a teacher for seventh and eighth grade, which was really great.

AW:

You didn't think it was weird?

LL:

No, I loved it. I called her Mrs. Lew, just like everybody else and no, it was wonderful. She would—at first, though, my first couple of months, she wouldn't call on me.

AW:

Yeah, because she didn't want to make you special.

LL:

Yeah, yeah. But we got past that. [Laughs]

AW:

Yeah, yeah. So did you—had you already taken up your life in sports in high school?

LL:

Yeah. Pretty much, seventh grade. There was a girl named Sally Chapel. Well, I played soccer and all this, but there was a girl named Sally Chapel, who was in eighth grade. She was an amazing athlete, still is. And so Sally, her eighth grade year, won state in the mile.

AW:

And she's from this small school?

LL:

Yes, right. Well—

AW:

And that's pretty impressive.

LL:

It is. Although, you run against small schools.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

So they're—you're running against other small schools and then the bigger schools run against—

AW:

So is it like you're 1A, or a 2A, versus—

LL:

Exactly, exactly.

AW:

Okay. Yeah.

LL:

But anyway, impressive, nonetheless. She was amazing. And I'm still very close to my coach, Fred Mass and Debbie. And Debbie tells me that I told Fred that I wanted to be a star like Sally. [Laughter] And so, that's what she says I said. But I was very, very athletic. I was very competitive in soccer and field hockey. I loved field—I loved having a stick. I thought that was the coolest thing ever. And so I played all those sports and running just, kind of, really stuck with me.

AW:

So you have been running a long time?

LL:

Yeah. So my coach, Fred, offered to take me with his family to Hawaii the summer of my eighth grade year to run a marathon. So I ran the Hilo marathon when I was, like, whatever age you are when you're going to be a freshman. And I won my—the age group.

AW:

Wow.

LL:

And so, I have my bowl still and everything.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

But yeah. So Fred, who actually just won his age group in La Luz this summer. He's still running. I was running up Baldi this summer and there he is, still running. You know, it's a lifetime sport for me and I think I learned that from Fred, you know.

AW:

Yeah, were either—

MN:

You're going to the Boston marathon next year, right?

LL:

Yes, I hope so, if I get in. I qualified for the Boston marathon. And so, yeah, in April. I, just this morning, registered and so we'll see. I'm pretty sure—hopefully, I'll get in. But I had to qualify and so I did that. Now, it just is up to them and see how many people—other—

AW:

Well speaking of the marathon, the Boston marathon, it wasn't always a place where women were welcome.

LL:

I know. Have you seen that footage?

AW:

Yeah, I have. What—did you experience any of that sort of thing as a young girl in your sport?

LL:

I think I just—what was Title IX, '79?

AW:

Yeah, so you were—

LL:

I just was on the other side of that and so there was nothing but praise and go out there and be tough.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

And so I was really, I think, to—

AW:

Were either one of your parents athletic?

LL:

No. My mom, not at all. She's like, "I never know where she got that from."

AW:

Yeah. [Laughs]

LL:

And then, like you and I were saying, he—my dad, he bike raced as a young—but never—not any—

AW:

Not any other thing that was competitive.

LL:

No team sports.

AW:

But we have lots of pictures of him hiking and kayaking and all sorts of other—

LL:

Yeah. Bike—fishing and stuff.

AW:

Yeah, outdoors kinds of activities.

LL:

Yeah, yeah. So never a lack of activity type things, but not organized sports. Neither of my

parents did that. I came up with that all by myself.

AW:

Yeah. Was that—you know, when we're young, that's kind of a cool thing to have something that's our own and not—

LL:

True. Yeah, yeah. And I think that's kind of true. I think, you know, I—it was like, when I got to college, what are you going to major in? And I thought, you know, I am art. I grew up in art. I don't want to do that. I mean, I want it to be a part of my life, but—so I have a physical education major.

AW:

Yeah. Marvin and I were talking about this on the way up. Talking about drawing, how I grew up in a family that everybody drew and so the last thing that I was going to do was take a class in drawing. I wanted to play music because nobody played music. [Laughs]

LL:

Right. Yeah, yeah. I think, yeah. I think that's—and it wasn't out of a bad. It's not like I had bad art experiences. It was just—

AW:

No, no, no. It's not. No, it's just—you—I don't know.

LL:

You had enough of it, like you don't need to be taught it anymore.

AW:

And I kind of took it as, well everybody does this. You know, because my family does it. I didn't think about it just being unusual. Was it that—especially, by the time you got to Santa Fe, you would've been around lots of artists.

LL:

Yeah. Oh yeah.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

A ton. And I think that about my son, too, who, you know, I mean—

AW:

Who is playing baseball.

LL:

Who is playing baseball, yeah. And is very artistic. You know, went—tried out to go to an art school, but I think it was too linear. I don't think that he expected—because he's always been presented art in such a nonlinear—it just is there, you know? Here's a paintbrush. Here's a chisel, son. Chisel a piece of wood. And, you know, all of a sudden, you got to—

AW:

Have a project and a class and do an exhibit. Yeah.

LL:

Yeah, exactly. Yeah.

AW:

Where did you go to college?

LL:

Lewis and Clark in Portland, Oregon.

AW:

Very nice school. Why did you pick that?

LL:

I picked it for a lot of reasons. First of all, I knew I didn't want to stay here and I knew I didn't want to go back east. It just seemed too crazy. I got up to Portland to look at it and the campus is beautiful. The size was nice because my high school's small.

AW:

Yeah. And so you wouldn't have wanted to go to a thirty-five thousand enrollment.

LL:

Exactly. I loved the track coach. David Fix was a fantastic man. They served orange juice and ice cream at every meal and it just—I just could see myself there. It sort of made sense and it was the right choice. I feel like I—you know, I never felt like I wanted to be at any other school. They have the overseas program, which is how I got to Kenya. It was just right. Good school.

AW:

Yeah, and you graduated with a degree in sports science?

LL:

Physical education.

AW:

Physical education.

LL:

I think now, they call it sports science or exercise science.

AW:

Right, yeah. Because no one wants to call it P.E. Right.

LL:

No, yeah. Exactly. But yeah, so that's—

AW:

Did you go to graduate school?

LL:

No.

AW:

Tell me about your—the study abroad program that you were in.

LL:

So it was a six month program that you had to apply. Lewis and Clark is an amazing school for the fact that—I think it's about three quarters of the student body at some time go on a program.

AW:

That is pretty amazing. That's a huge percentage.

LL:

It's huge. It's one of the selling factors of the school. And so because I had lived in Spain and I could see Africa from my little roller skating vantage, I decided, why not sign up for that trip?

AW:

Yeah. So you could pick different countries for your trip?

LL:

Yeah. And Africa just seemed great. And I am still—the group that I went on is one of the

tightest—you know, this was in '84. We still have reunions. Dale and Helen Smith were the leaders of that trip. They still keep in contact with us. It was a great trip. We were set up where we went to Kenya, different sections. So we were in Nairobi for a while. We started actually in Lamu, which is an island on the coast, where Swahili is its purest. It's kind of where the—because it was a trading language. That's where it kind of started. And so then, we had intensive classes and lived in this island village, an amazing place. And then, we had classes in Nairobi. Then, we went and built a medical dispensary near Lake Victoria. And then, throughout that, we also had a lot of time to free travel and do our own things and our projects and things like that.

AW:

So you had a mix of class and individual studies is what it sounded like.

LL:

Right, yeah.

AW:

And you were there for six months?

LL:

Yeah.

AW:

Is that—was that two semesters? Is that what that amounted to?

LL:

I guess, yeah. It was—it was a winter-spring.

AW:

Were you on a quarter system or the semester?

LL:

Semester. Is that how that is? I always get confused. Yeah.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

Or trimester. Wouldn't that have been?

AW:

Yeah. Well, the quarter system or trimester at different schools have different—

LL:

Yeah. That's one of those things that my dyslexic brain does not commute—compute—very well.

AW:

Yeah, well that—still, that's a long time. That's—

LL:

Yeah, yeah. I missed winter and spring.

AW:

Yeah. So that's about a fourth of your college career you spent in Africa.

LL:

Yeah, yeah.

AW:

Yeah. So—so that—you said, while we were having our sandwich, about how much you really enjoyed Africa. I asked where you'd been and it was like, you'd gotten out the atlas and went through a dozen.

LL:

Yeah, yeah. I went back to Africa two other times.

AW:

Yeah. And it was one of those other times that we were—you were talking about where your dad had the episode. Right?

LL:

Yeah, yeah.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

Yeah.

AW:

So you are now grown and out of college?

LL:

Yeah, right. Exactly.

AW:

So—and this is kind of skipping ahead, I guess—but how did you get back to Africa? What'd you do? How did you—do you just show up with a ticket and say, "I'm going to Africa?"

LL:

Yeah.

AW:

Really?

LL:

Yeah.

AW:

So what do you do when you get there?

LL:

Well—

AW:

How do you know what to do and where to go?

LL:

I know. Isn't that interesting?

AW:

It is interesting.

LL:

Well, yeah. Because most people, like, have a—we had a little—

AW:

A destination, or a friend to see, or a job to go to, or something.

LL:

Right. Well, dad had a program that he did in Egypt, so we went to Egypt for some shamanic thing. So we were in Cairo for a while. But then, you know, we just had places that we wanted to go and we would just get on buses and get there and find out who could—you know, we went to Mali, the Dogon. You know, we found tour guides and things like that. I did—when we did—Don, who I went and snowboarded down Kilimanjaro. We just showed up in the town and went to the local YMCA and started asking, “Well who takes people up to Kilimanjaro?” And—

AW:

So you might just mention a little bit about snowboarding down Kilimanjaro. And you were the first, is that right?

LL:

Yeah, yeah. It was in *Snowboarder Magazine*. [Laughter]

MN:

It was illegal, right?

LL:

Yeah. We—we kind of had to—we did not go up the—what they call the Coca-Cola route, or the tourist route. We went up just on a different trail, mainly because that’s where the glaciers were. Arrow Glacier, which is not even there anymore.

AW:

Global warming?

LL:

Yeah. That glacier we snowboarded on doesn’t even exist.

MN:

Wow.

AW:

Oh, that’s—

LL:

And it wasn’t like some—I mean, it was really more the adventure of getting snowboards to Africa, bringing them up to the top of this mountain. You know, it wasn’t like epic, big powder snowboarding like you see in these movies now. It was pretty—pretty calm snowboarding, but the journey was really the—you know?

AW:

Sure.

LL:

And then, strapping these guides in, you know, and seeing these African—Tanzanian men trying to snowboard and falling on their faces and just giggles. It was fun. A pretty amazing experience. And then, the guy I was with got sick. He started to get pulmonary problems and so he left because I'm one of those people who, like, has to summit. Right? I can't—

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

So I was like, "Sorry, dear. You just go. I'm going to the top." And so we went to the top, me and this one other guide."

AW:

The pulmonary problem was because of the altitude?

LL:

Yeah, yeah. And when you start feeling that little bubbly in your chest, they tell you, "Go down." And so—

AW:

You better—yeah. Otherwise, you get the equivalent of the bends.

LL:

Yeah, exactly. And so he was supposed to go down and around and meet us on the Coca-Cola route, but he was so sick that he couldn't. So me and the guide got down and we had nothing. I had gummy bears, my camera. [AW laughs] You know, I didn't have tampons. I had no sleeping bag. We had nothing. So I had to sleep with the—all the porters. You know, we shared a—I walked around and found this German guy who had a sleeping bag liner. He lent me that, so me and the guide were under this thing, you know? And I think the two of us were, like, so, like, scared that any movement we would make would be, like, sort of maybe taken the wrong way. You know? We didn't quite know how to handle this. So both of us were like—

AW:

So no spooning?

LL:

No—yeah. [Laughs] And—but it was freaking cold. And, you know, no money. Nothing. I had no food or anything. And then, of course, before cell phones. I had no idea, then, where was he? Did he go to the hospital? And we had driven halfway around the mountain. So then, I had to, like, somehow convince some guy to take me around the mountain where I promised him there would be money, hoping that that's where Don was and luckily, he did. He just stayed at the trailhead and—because we had no plan because he was supposed to, you know.

AW:

Right, be with you at the summit.

LL:

Yeah, yeah. So anyway, it all worked out fine and dandy, but that's one of those times in my life where I had to just fend with nothing and it worked out.

AW:

Yeah. Well, you mentioned you had no money. One of the questions that pops into my mind, is how did you support yourself travelling?

LL:

Well, I did have money on the trip. But just on the mountain, I didn't. I saved.

AW:

So you would be bankrolled by your own savings by the time you went over for your trip?

LL:

Exactly.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

So I saved. So what I did was the second trip to Africa with my dad was a part of around the world trip that I funded for myself. So I saved ten thousand dollars on my own and I bought around the world ticket and took off. And so—

AW:

Very cool.

LL:

The beginning of it, though, was with my dad. And then, from there, I went to Paris and met a friend. And then, from Paris, I went down to—into Greece. And I went to Turkey, and then into Indonesia, Bali, Sumatra. Singapore, first. And then, Australia, New Zealand, and then I came home. So it was—

AW:

So you went around the world?

LL:

Yeah, yeah. All by myself. It was my big thing. I don't know. Don't ask me why I thought—why I did that. I don't know. I just did.

AW:

I don't know that anyone has to be asked why. [Laughter] To be honest, it sounds like a cool thing.

LL:

Yeah, so I saved my money and did that.

AW:

Yeah, very cool.

LL:

Yeah.

AW:

So you mentioned that you grew up in this art—I'm just checking our time. Make sure I don't encroach too much on your—

LL:

Oh, we're good.

AW:

One-forty, yeah. But the first time I met you, you were in a gallery with your stuff. In fact, you're wearing some of your stuff right now. Right?

LL:

Um-hm. [Laughs]

AW:

So when did your getting back into, or making art a part of your life?

LL:

So, I live—so after college, I stayed in Portland for a year and, you know, had a cool life. Had a wonderful man that I was with, Charlie Brown. An amazing person. I was working at a YMCA. And all of a sudden, I had this feeling like, this is not my life. This is not my—

AW:

So you were in a YMCA, meaning you were a—

LL:

I was working. Just—

AW:

But that's your degree.

LL:

Right, right.

AW:

So you were actually—

LL:

So I was helping. It was brand new. Helped open it and was doing some, like, fitness training and running their childcare thing and everything. But there I was in, like, a neat little old house, but it was suburbia Portland, Oregon. And I'm thinking—this is—no. You know? I felt like I was playing house too early, you know?

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

And so I came home. I came back to Santa Fe and dad said, "Great. Why don't you work with me?" And so I started with him.

AW:

Now, by this time, he already had the ear cuff work underway?

LL:

Yeah, that was in—yeah.

AW:

That was in the seventies, correct?

LL:

Yeah.

AW:

So it was kind of an established thing for him to do?

LL:

Yeah. The ear cuff sent me to college.

AW:

Oh, there you go. So paying homage to your college support.

LL:

Yeah, exactly.

AW:

So when he said, “Come to work with me,” that meant in the gallery and the shop as well? Both things?

LL:

Um-hm.

MN:

The gallery wasn't open yet, was it?

LL:

It was.

MN:

Oh, it was? Okay.

LL:

Yeah, that happened when I was in college, I think.

MN:

Oh okay. Okay.

LL:

Yeah. So it was still pretty new, but yeah. So the gallery had been built by that—by the time I came back. And Dana was the manager.

MN:

Yeah. Of course, I remember her. I fell in love with her, but I didn't approach her.

LL:

Dana Cooper. Yeah. [Laughs] She was married to Ryan, who we saw a picture of. Yeah, so I said, "Okay," because I didn't really have anything else to do and I never left.

AW:

Well, you left and came back. Left and came back. I mean, you still did your travelling.

LL:

Yes. Exactly. Yeah.

AW:

Because your around the world was after you'd come back to Santa Fe, right?

LL:

Yeah, yeah. Exactly.

AW:

So have any of your other sojourns been of that length?

LL:

No, that's the longest one.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

But not the last long one. [AW laughs] I'll do that again.

AW:

Oh good.

LL:

But dad and I travelled two times for three months. We did the Africa trip. Well, I guess the Africa trip was part of my six months so that doesn't count. But then, we went to Peru and Ecuador and the Galapagos and that was a three month trip.

AW:

Wow.

LL:

Yeah, yeah.

AW:

When you would come back from those trips with your dad, I get the sense from just what little I've seen in the journals that there was new work and new things?

LL:

Yeah.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

And so he kind of taught me about that. You know, taught me about—

AW:

Yeah, and that was true for both of you. Is that correct?

LL:

Yeah.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

But him, in a—he's so much more prolific in the sketchbooks.

AW:

Well, that's because he was one of those up and down guys.

LL:

Yeah, yeah. Because his—you know, his production after one of those trips was, you know, hundreds of pieces of jewelry, you know?

AW:

Yeah.

MN:

And it would be a show at the south end, wouldn't it?

LL:

Yeah, yeah. Like a phenomena. We had—for the Galapagos, for the Ecuador, South American—we had the—I don't know if you know, in the Galapagos Islands, there's a mailbox that sailors would leave letters in. It's still there. And then, if you—you'd go and you look in the mailbox and if it's a letter to where you're going, you would take the letter. So we actually had a mailbox.

AW:

Yeah, cowpunchers do that on the trail.

LL:

Yes, yeah.

AW:

Same thing.

LL:

Right. And so we had one of those with postcards of dad's drawings. So people could take the postcard and of course, it said LewAllen Jewelry on the bottom. But you would write, you know? And then, you'd leave it in there and then people, other tourists, would come by and take it and mail it. So that was kind of fun. We had just—there was always a real—and he is so much better at doing that kind of thing. Kind of creating an event, you know?

AW:

I think in one of these packets we opened, I saw this invitation that said, "Of course I'm going to come to," and it was something about turtles.

LL:

Right. The turtle show. Right. Yeah, yeah.

AW:

Yeah. It was quite a nice and clever—an invitation that was sort of a commandment.

LL:

Yeah, right? Right. Yeah, exactly. Kind of like, “Use this journal.”

AW:

Yeah, yeah. Yeah. “Show me your journal.”, “Would you show me your journal?” “Well, yes. I have to.” So we also talked before the tape was on about your—and I don’t know if this is your signature piece, but the bracelets made of the climbing—

LL:

Oh yeah.

AW:

Do you call it cord or rope?

LL:

Climbing rope.

AW:

Rope?

LL:

Yeah. So this was kind of—

AW:

And they are quite attractive and I don’t know a thing about climbing rope, except I’m sure it’s useful. [Laughs]

LL:

Yeah, it doesn’t stretch.

AW:

Yeah. So—and it’ll hold a good knot, I bet.

LL:

Right.

AW:

So what—what—talk about the inspiration for that. Would you?

LL:

So I was at a Grateful Dead concert in Monterey, California, and I had some people sitting behind me. It was an outdoor concert. And they were melting, like, a piece of nylon cord. Not climbing rope, but just nylon cord around their wrist to make a bracelet and I had this, like, a-ha moment of, oh my god. I could make a clasp and decorate the rope because I am a—I was doing a lot of rock climbing then. So it just—the two things just came together. Like, oh, climbing rope's pretty and why melt it on you when you could actually make it into a piece of jewelry?

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

So that's during some Dead rift, what kind of came to my mind.

AW:

Perfect.

LL:

Yeah.

AW:

Perfect. So how far long in the Dead chronicle was this?

LL:

[Laughs] Yeah, yeah. I think—

AW:

Jerry was still alive?

LL:

Jerry was still alive. Yeah, yeah.

AW:

You didn't happen to meet my friend, Laura _____ from Denver, Colorado [1:43:58]? She was a Dead head for—she teaches school now, but she was a—

LL:

No.

AW:

Tiny small cute person like yourself. And she actually—she and her husband at the time travelled and they—

LL:

Oh, they—yeah.

AW:

And did the grilled cheeses and all. I mean the—

LL:

Oh yeah. Yeah. I did not dive that deep into it.

AW:

Yeah. They were pretty far down it.

LL:

But I definitely enjoyed it and went to a few shows, but not as extensively. But I definitely thought it was a neat thing.

AW:

Yeah, it was a neat thing. I mean—

LL:

Still kind of is.

AW:

Yeah, it still is. All right. Cool. So what is your dad's date of birth?

LL:

So he was born—

AW:

In 1940, right? In my—

LL:

Thirty-seven.

AW:

Thirty-seven?

LL:

Tomorrow. September 14, 1937. And he was born somewhere near Wrigley Field. [MN laughs]

AW:

Oh, that's a cool thing.

LL:

Right?

AW:

Hence, your son's interest in baseball.

LL:

Yeah. He liked to make that connection.

MN:

That's cool.

LL:

Yeah. Although, my son is a huge Red Sox fan.

AW:

Oh.

MN:

Gosh.

LL:

I know.

MN:

And then, you're Steelers. What is the deal?

LL:

I know, I know. Poor grandpa Ross. He didn't get the Cubs love. But I have a really interesting—I have—can I just tell this story?

AW:

You bet, you bet.

LL:

So I have a very good friend of mine, Marty, who I visit every summer. She lives—well, she doesn't live here now. But she lived here and then has a second home in Michigan. And so I would fly into Chicago and she'd pick me up, and she bought tickets for us to go see the Cubs play. So this was last year. The year they won. And I—knowing that I was going to Wrigley Field, I brought some of my dad's blue corn, which is a whole other little—but my dad started using blue corn as a blessing and giving it to customers and it was kind of a thing that he learned from a gentleman, a Native American man. So anyway—which is why I have blue corn growing out there. I took blue corn to Wrigley Field and I said, "Excuse me, can I walk up here?" And went to the field and I dropped blue corn onto Wrigley Field and if that's not—it was the start of their—that game was the start of their winning streak.

MN:

[gasps] Oh.

LL:

And that's the year they won.

MN:

That blue corn magic.

AW:

So blue corn undid the course of—

LL:

Yeah, I'm positive. I'm positive.

MN:

I'm sure it did.

LL:

Nothing else, just dad's blue corn.

MN:

Awesome.

LL:

Yeah, so that's—

AW:

That's pretty remarkable.

MN:

That is great.

LL:

Yeah, and that's the first time—only time I've ever been to Wrigley Field, which I thought was an amazing place.

AW:

That is.

MN:

That needs to be shared to the public.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

[Laughs] Yeah.

MN:

Blue corn miracle.

LL:

And I was so worried—they thinking I was throwing trash out or something like that.

AW:

Yeah. That's pretty remarkable. That's a great story.

LL:

Yeah, I know. He loves it. I know he does. So yeah, 1937, September fourteenth, Born to Ross Earl LewAllen and Erna—don't know her middle name—but Erna with a 'N.'

AW:

E-r-n-a?

LL:

Yeah. LewAllen.

AW:

And did they spell it L-e-w-capital A, also?

LL:

Yeah, yeah.

AW:

What is the genesis—the beginning of that name? That's an interesting spelling.

LL:

I know, and I don't really know so much. I think that there's—some of my family came down from Canada. I think there's some in Oklahoma. But I need to get on the genealogy side of things.

AW:

Oh, that's almost like buying into Facebook, though. It's kind of hard to—they won't let you leave. It's a hotel California, once you get into the—

LL:

Right. Is it?

AW:

Yeah. The genealogists, they're another group. But it still is nice to know about that. But it's just an interesting spelling.

LL:

Yeah. And why did it get capitalized? I'm proud of that capital A. I like it.

AW:

I love it.

MN:

It's unique.

AW:

Oh yeah. No, I love it. It's just—it's great.

LL:

And when dad got older, I started noticing, not in his signature or anything, but his computer stuff, he wasn't capitalizing the A and I got on him.

AW:

Well, probably, autocorrect was doing away with.

LL:

He said, "But it's just," he's saying—yeah. He was like, "Well, it just takes extra to put that extra—make it capital." And I was like, "No, but that's important."

AW:

Yeah, yeah.

LL:

Yeah, so.

AW:

I like it quite a lot. In fact, it's so cool that you think, well you did it on purpose. Not you inherited, you know? That's why I was curious.

LL:

Right, yeah.

AW:

That's why I was curious.

LL:

Right. No, no. That's how I got it, with the big A. But it's one word. There's no space.

AW:

Right. No dash. No space.

LL:

Yeah, yeah.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

And so, it's so cool, I think, I had to give my son it as his middle name. So that's his middle name.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

Yeah, yeah. Because I'm the last one.

AW:

Well, not now. He's got—

LL:

Yeah. So yeah. But there—

AW:

Yeah, he'll at least have it with him.

LL:

Yeah, but there's—I'm not—there's no one else to pass on that—

AW:

Because you had no siblings?

LL:

Correct.

AW:

Did your dad have siblings?

LL:

He had a sister named Erna and she was thirteen years older than him, so big gap between the two of them.

AW:

Yeah. And so there would still be no more LewAllen's?

LL:

That's right. So they are—my cousins are Bryant's and I have three cousins from Erna. They all

live—one lives—Ron Bryant lives in Maryland and David Bryant is in—where was Wayne's World? Somewhere in Illinois. They were in Carbondale? No, that's not right. Anyway, and then, Judy, who I'm not—I'm in contact with my cousin—boy cousins. And then, he had a brother that died, I think, in infancy. So I don't know. That would've been between, I think, him and his sister. Yeah. Right? I think so.

AW:

One question that pops into my head looking at all these sketchbooks again and just the ones I've looked at was again, what a terrific—and I hate to use the word draftsman, although in the old way, it's a very high honor. You know, but drawer is what my contemporary friends say. But your dad was so good at that. And—but what I know of him is of jewelry.

LL:

Yeah.

AW:

But I've seen some prints. You had some prints in the gallery. But why jewelry? Why? What is the draw?

LL:

Well, maybe Marvin can answer that better than me because—

MN:

I really don't know. I mean, I was drawn into jewelry, too.

AW:

Yeah. Well, I mean there's nothing wrong with it. I just—I'm wondering why.

MN:

Yeah. It was sculptural and it was easy—not necessarily easy to do, but it was convenient. And you could sell it. Whereas sculpture, you make these God almighty things and you look at it.

AW:

Yeah. I know my distant cousin, Veryl Goodnight, is doing fewer and fewer of the big things she got so well known for because of the financial circumstances that you tie up an extraordinary amount of money into a few very large pieces that take a long time to sell.

LL:

Right, right.

AW:

And so you'd be eating beans until something sells. Whereas smaller things, whatever they are. Paintings, or—it makes a lot of sense to—

MN:

Yeah, and you can make a lot more designs small than great big things, or big things that takes more time.

LL:

Yeah. That's a good question. I'm not really sure, except for probably, livelihood, that jewelry probably, I think—I do know that later in his life, when he went back to painting—because then, he just got—he just really—the last, maybe, five-six years of his life, he really decided that he wanted to do watercolors. You know, and he just got really prolific with the watercolors. Always had been there, but he really bumped it up and let go of the jewelry a little bit, you know, and kind of was like, “All right, Laura. You do that. I'm going to do more—kind of step away from that—a somewhat retirement thing. And do more of my painting.” And he definitely wanted to go back to that.

MN:

And I think, he—in college, he just mainly interests were jewelry and painting. He took sculpture because it—it gives you a chance to make more three-dimensional. You couldn't take jewelry courses all the time. So I think we both loaded ourselves up on jewelry. Did what we could. Sculpture, what we took. And then, independent research, which I loaded up with more sculpture and I think he probably took painting to do that. And he was more into jewelry—painting.

LL:

Who was teaching painting?

MN:

Ed Serick [?] [1:53:48].

LL:

Oh, Ed Serick. I remember that name. Yeah.

MN:

I used to be his upright bass player, playing jazz.

AW:

But the—the meditation and shamanism, those things were not connected with a medium choice in art. They were—because that could've been anything, right?

LL:

Right. Exactly. Yeah, no. The shaman—although, he, you know—and you'll see, some of these sketchbooks are definitely where he's combing the two.

AW:

Yeah. You pointed out—yeah.

LL:

And a lot of the jewelry that he created was healing jewelry. So like, the rule changers, for instance.

AW:

Describe a rule changer.

LL:

So a rule changer is a piece of jewelry that, for the most part, many of them were animals and so say the—there's a buffalo and the buffalo, you look on the one side and it's a buffalo, but on the back of it, there's an extra little horn that has a—it flip flops back and forth. There's a turtle that has, like, a U-shape flap that goes from head to tail, up and down. And those are all reminders of—that you can change—the wearer can change their rules. So the whole idea was, you know, oh. I don't know. I'm afraid of snakes. Well, no. Why are you afraid of snakes? You can change those rules. So it's just a reminder that you don't have to adhere to your own rules, sometimes silly.

AW:

Yeah, yeah.

LL:

So that's what the rule changers were all about. And timeless watches.

AW:

Timeless watches. I love it.

LL:

That came from our trip to Kenya. The Messi men, as decorative, they would make bracelets out of beads that look like watches. So it had a little face, you know, but they were all beads. It was just a design, I think, that came from seeing people wear watches. And so, that clicked into my dad's mind that, well, timeless watches. So we made all these beautiful, you know, whales or animals or designs and they all had the little—what do you call it? The thing that you turn?

AW:

Like a stem.

LL:

Stem.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

And, you know, but they, of course, weren't a watch. But they looked like a watch. And so, you know, you got to create your own time.

AW:

Yeah. I don't wear a watch, but I would sure wear a timeless watch.

LL:

Yeah. Right?

AW:

I sure would.

MN:

Do you—you'd no doubt will have their catalogs, which documented all that?

LL:

Yeah, I've got all the catalogs and yeah.

AW:

Oh, that would be very good. Yeah.

MN:

It's the whole history of the shows.

LL:

Yeah.

MN:

You know, a catalog came out with each show or each year. Or probably not. It's expensive.

LL:

Yeah, every few years there would be, you know. There's an Africa one. Egypt one. Yeah, yeah.

AW:

When did your father pass away?

LL:

He passed away on January 21, 20—this is where I'm really bad with numbers—12?

AW:

Oh, I do the same.

LL:

Oh no. Not 2012. Are you kidding me? No. Let's see. So it's '17 now. This will be, I think, the fourth year. This January.

AW:

So '13?

LL:

I think '13, yeah.

MN:

Yeah, I think.

AW:

That's all right. We can look that up. It just gives me a—

LL:

Yeah. I'm so bad at that.

AW:

No, I can't—

LL:

It's weird. The date that my mother—the year my mom died is also a myth to me. I think it's '02, I think. But for some reason, my brain won't remember the year.

AW:

Now, I am exactly the same way about both my mother and father. And I was the first one to find

my mother and I remember every detail about the thing, but I cannot remember the date. I have to look it up. I have it written down.

LL:
Yeah.

AW:
Isn't that odd?

LL:
Yeah, yeah.

AW:
I know there's got to be something working in the brain.

MN:
Some psychological thing where you choose not to remember that.

LL:
Exactly, yeah.

MN:
They're not gone.

LL:
Exactly. I found my mom, too. That's a whole other story. With my son curled up at her feet.

AW:
Oh my goodness.

LL:
Yeah, yeah. Date, June fourteenth. But yeah. My son was here for her—she was unconscious, but pretty much, that was—

AW:
Yeah. How old was he?

LL:
Five. And he—he is amazing. He's been a witness to both of his grandparent's passing's. And his grandpa, my dad, died on his birthday.

AW:

Oh.

LL:

Yeah, so. He's an amazing young man. He's witnessed a lot.

MN:

Yeah. He's a chosen to witness.

LL:

Yeah.

MN:

And bring the spirit further.

LL:

I feel so strongly—I mean, I don't know. This is totally a segway, but I think you're—I feel like my mom was so loved by so many people, me too, that the unconditional love of her five year old grandson—that that was the only person that she could've actually let go with and who would've let her go.

AW:

Gave her permission.

LL:

Yeah, yeah. Because nobody else would've let her go.

MN:

Yeah. Don't go. Please don't go.

LL:

Exactly. I really believe that deeply that that's what happened. I mean, I ended up, then, having to actually really let her go, but she had already gone, you know. And I had to make that choice, too, with my dad, but he gave me that permission.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

He gave me that permission.

AW:

So he was able to do that?

LL:

He told me—because the idea was to put him under and hope, then, that that would breakup—

AW:

Because he had a clot. Is that right?

LL:

Yeah, yeah. And what do they call that? The induced coma?

AW:

Um-hm.

LL:

And so before the induced coma, he told me, “I don’t want to live on machines. I have no regrets. There’s a thousand dollars in the tire kit underneath my car seat and I love you.” And you know, I mean, really, those were the—and of course, I was like, “No worries. We’ll see you on the other side. It’s all going to be fine.” I just had—actually, with both my parents, I had no idea that that was going to be it. I was convinced that this wouldn’t happen again with my dad, as with my mom. I just was so convinced that—you know—that wasn’t to be. But when he said “No regrets and no machines,” I—

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

And then, he came to me in a dream.

AW:

After?

LL:

No, because I slept day and night. I stayed at that hospital.

AW:

Oh. So during the—

LL:

And I had—I had a dream that he was in the desert and he was, like, laying out in the desert just all dry. No water. Nothing. Just nude. And I got this blanket and I put it over him and it was a Pendleton blanket, which there's more to this story about this Pendleton blanket. But he—so I put this blanket and somehow propped it so he was in the shade of the sun. And when I kind of woke up from that dream, it was like, what's the purpose here? What is the purpose? And I really think he was trying to tell me, you know, this—"I'm dying and you have to let me go." And so I went out and I talked to the people there, the nurses and the doctors. And they were like, "Well yeah. You know, I mean, if he does come back, he's going to be--" you know.

AW:

Not the same.

LL:

Right. And I thought that, wait, that's not what he wanted. You know, and then, I started like, well what if it was just like a backpack and he could decorate the backpack and breathe through the—you know, and they were like well, maybe, but maybe not. And so then, we had—you wouldn't believe the people that came. So then, I was lucky in the fact that a good—a very good friend of mine who I ran with through high school and worked at a running shoe store is a doctor and he actually was there and helped me unplug my mom and was there again to unplug my dad. And so he was there a part of—and there were probably thirty people in the room. And Sandra Ingerman, who is one of—an amazing shaman—kind of led the ceremony, and Teak and I. We just sang him out and he went. And Bob Capun was one of my dad's students in College of Dupage, who kind of moved out here with us. There's a whole Utah phase of our life that I haven't even talked—told you about. He owns Rainbow Man right next door. He and his wife, Mary Anne. And Bob and Mary Anne and Zach and Katie walk into the hospital room and they're holding that Pendleton blanket.

AW:

The one that was in your dream?

LL:

In my dream. A brown Pendleton blanket. It's on my bed.

AW:

Really?

LL:

In the dream, the blanket was brown and it was a Pendleton and they walked in with this blanket.

AW:

Not a blanket you'd seen before?

LL:

No.

AW:

Wow.

LL:

So that was—so I think, really, my dad was communicating to me.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

And then, the story doesn't end because my dad, I really feel like, was so tuned in that he could communicate and shift. And so, when my mom passed, a woman named Judy Bowls did a ceremony for the cremation. And this is the coolest thing ever, except I was so devastated. I did not go, but his—but her sister went and my cousin, Michael, and I believe, my dad. They decorated and told stories about my mom. Well, this time, when my dad passed, I was ready for it and I did go and we—it was amazing. It was really great. And my son came. We all drew and painted and brought things to—like, my son brought a baseball. I brought other things. And then, we wrapped the coffin in cloth and twined it up so all of those things went with him. And at the bottom of the stairs, that goes up to the studio, right at the t-shirt shop, at that time, a hawk appears.

MN:

Oh my god.

LL:

On the ground. This is the Plaza, downtown Santa Fe.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

This hawk. And it's hanging out right there. Johnny Kinsolving, who owns a t-shirt shop is there and he's like, "What's this hawk doing?" And he had been—they sell chili ristras—and he had been watering the ground to get the little seeds out of the way and this hawk is thirsty. This is

while my dad's being cremated. Bought—Johnny puts a bowl down. The hawk hops up onto this bowl, like a little cereal bowl, and drinks out of this bowl. There are people taking photos because this is—and it's not flying away.

AW:

Now, that's pretty remarkable for a hawk to tolerate people at all.

LL:

Yeah, yeah. And there is, like, footage of this hawk. A lot of people took photos of it that day and it was at that time. Right at the stairway to the studio, right there.

MN:

Oh, golly.

LL:

I know, so yeah. Dad—he moves.

MN:

Yeah, powerful.

LL:

[Laughs] Yeah, yeah. So that's—

AW:

Well, we can't top that at this moment.

LL:

No. That's about all. That's pretty supercharged.

AW:

This is—this is a time to break. But tomorrow, I would like to—we're going to reconvene out here.

LL:

Yeah.

AW:

And I would like to—you mentioned the Utah phase. We need to talk about that. And then, I'd like for you to also talk about your mom some tomorrow.

LL:
Okay.

AW:
Is that all right?

LL:
Yeah, I'd love to talk about her.

AW:
And then we can do whatever else we need to do with stuff and then we can go to the studio and gallery and, kind of, do what we did with this material and get a little closer—a little better assessment of what's there.

LL:
Okay.

AW:
Is that a good plan?

LL:
I think that's a great plan.

AW:
What's a good time tomorrow? I can be here earlier. It's not—I didn't want to make you get going too early or too late, or whatever, so.

LL:
Yeah. No, I think that worked out fine, I think.

AW:
Nine is good?

LL:
Nine, yeah. Eight-thirty, nine is—we are all, kind of, moving right around that time.

MN:
Yeah, we are.

AW:
Okay.

LL:
And even if you are—if you come a little earlier and we're having a little breakfast, that's fine too.

AW:
Well, I may not eat the fifteen dollar bad grade school buffet breakfast at the hotel and stop at this—

LL:
You should go to San Marcos.

AW:
Yeah.

LL:
They open at eight.

MN:
Oh yeah. It was ten bucks including the tip, so.

AW:
Wow. Yeah, that's half.

MN:
Save you bucks and—

AW:
It's half of what it costs at the—

MN:
Great, yeah. And characters come through.

AW:
Perfect.

LL:
Yeah. It's—

MN:

We met tin can Johnny—

LL:

When did you meet Mike the Can Man?

MN:

Yes, yes.

AW:

Mike the Can Man?

MN:

He sat with us. What a character.

LL:

Isn't he? So he's a—he lives out here and he's the most beautiful human being, right? And he is kind of a special needs person in his forties, I would say. He lives about four miles down the road. He used to ride a bicycle that had a thing on the back that he would put cans in.

AW:

To sell?

LL:

Now, he walks—no, like, pick up aluminum. Yes, yes. To sell. Right.

AW:

Yeah, to sell. Right.

LL:

And now, he walks. And he—and he just always is picking up cans. And then, he does, like, odd jobs. Like, he came and mowed our lawn. But he pushed his lawn mower.

AW:

Four miles.

LL:

Four miles down the road with a can of gas. You know, and he's just—he's—as many folks like him are, they're just so endearing and he calls me—can you do his voice? Right? He's like, “Mama, mama.”, “What?”, Can I spend the night?” He always wants to have sleepovers. “Mama,

mama.” He’s just so sweet. He wants my son always to know that he’s been over and so we always have to take a little picture of him and send it to—

AW:
Yeah.

LL:
You know, so he’s sweet. And he sings. And he sings—so Joe, Jerry’s son, brings him up on stage sometimes and he has a cowboy hat that lights up and he loves to sing the midnight cowboy song. “Rhinestone Cowboy”—like a rhinestone cowboy.

AW:
Perfect.

LL:
And he sings and sings. And you know, gets—sees all the love. And then, Jarrett pays him because he loves to dress up. And at Christmas, he stands on the corner as Santa and passes out candy canes and Jarrett will pay him for the job. And then, at Easter, does Easter Bunny. And Jarrett loves to tease him. Like, we’ll say, you know, well, “Okay, so we’re going to go get you the cupid outfit, right?” “No, no, no.” [Laughter] And the shamrock. “No, no, no.” Yeah, that’s Mike the Can Man.

MN:
Oh, that’s—yeah, that was great.

LL:
And there’s a song. Joe West has done a song about him.

AW:
Oh really? Mike the Can Man. I’m going to have to remember that.

LL:
I’m pretty sure Joe’s coming tomorrow night, so.

AW:
I hope so.

LL:
He’s—

MN:

What is Joe related to the family tree—West family?

LL:

Jarrett, you mean?

MN:

Joe, Joe.

LL:

Joe is Jerry's son.

MN:

Oh okay. Okay.

AW:

Now, is Jarrett Joe's son.

LL:

No. So—so, there's two sides of the family.

AW:

Okay.

LL:

Hal West, who maybe you've heard of. An artist. He was part of the—

MN:

Santa Fe's band.

LL:

Yeah. But I just found out that he was—what was the project when—back—

MN:

WPA.

LL:

Yes.

AW:

Yeah, the—

LL:

He was one of the WPA artists. Hal. And Hal was Jerry's father. Hal had a brother named Gene, who was more of a rancher and Gene is Jarrett's lineage.

MN:

Okay.

LL:

So Joe, who is Jerry's son and Jarrett—they're kind of cousins, right? But they're—

MN:

Yeah. They would be.

LL:

They have—their grandfathers were brothers.

AW:

So Joe and Jarrett would be like—

LL:

They're contemporary.

AW:

First or second cousins, or something.

LL:

Right, right.

AW:

Yeah.

LL:

Yeah, yeah.

AW:

Okay. Yeah. A lot of West's.

LL:

Woo. There are tons of them.

MN:

West, I mean. And then, that other side moved to Montana, right?

LL:

Yeah. Up to Wyoming. So that's where Jarrett gets all of that kind of ranching thing.

MN:

Right, right.

LL:

But I think that—you know, and he definitely took to that quite a bit. But there's that part of Jarrett that's very artsy.

MN:

Oh my god. Yeah. [LL laughs]

AW:

Oh yeah. Yeah.

MN:

I went, How did that cowboy clan become a guy who became an artist?

AW:

Well, my cow punch friends will tell you they're all artists.

LL:

Right. That's what you were—yeah.

AW:

They'll say that, so.

LL:

Well did we do good? I don't know.

AW:

All right. You did great. This is terrific.

LL:
Okay.

AW:
And the best—not the best thing—but one of the best things was all of the sidetracks.

LL:
Well, you talked—we talked more about me. Like, you—

AW:
I told you we were going to. I warned you.

LL:
I know you did. So I went with it. I'm glad you warned me because I would've kept trying to bring it back.

AW:
And it's a worthy topic. And let me tell you, I'll warn you again. We're not done with you either, so.

MN:
Not done with you.

LL:
Not done with you yet, missy.

AW:
All right. Thanks, and we'll take this up tomorrow.

LL:
Okay. I'm so curious about all these pictures.

AW:
Yeah.

End of Recording