

## RRFA 01: Robert Rauschenberg papers

Interviews: Rowes, Barbara / Interview with Robert Rauschenberg / People Magazine, 1983

Tape #1, 1/2/83 (Barbara Rowes, People Magazine)

- RR: They knew that I was so involved in animals. I had one rule, and that was I was not going to military school, which was Texas A & M at that time. I didn't like the direction.
- BR: Too rigid. (laugh) You're still fighting it.
- RR: And so University in Texas, and it didn't have veterinarian classes there.
- BR: That would have been a great thing for you to be.
- RR: I know, I was unlucky again, because I probably would have been perfectly happy giving shots to cows or something. There would have been other things - I would have discovered cow cancer and things like that.
- BR: That's a beautiful profession they picked. So you went for a year, and how did you do?
- RR: I didn't. I got thrown out.
- BR: Veterinary school?
- RR: No, so the only thing the University of Texas had that was closest to it was Pharmacy. Now Pharmacy is a very serious class. There's pharmaceutical mathematics; there's all those books. You know, everything has to be exact, and I thought it was really quite - one thing I actually did enjoy about it which sort of reminded me of the fears that I used to have at Black Mountain College was the fact that every day they would give you a partner in lab, and it would be a different person, and you would have to eat the medicine that the other person made.
- BR: Laughter. You would die!
- RR: Don't you think that's pretty serious? Now isn't that a gorgeous way of teaching you responsibility? And you don't even know

this person, right? And there was no way, and they changed the partner every day, in case you had a deal, you know. I got because I wouldn't operate on a live frog.

BR: Oh I read that. So you got kicked out.

RR: Then it was like, no way, with my father's respect for education, which he thought was the panacea for the whole world. Any one who's never had education thinks it is. The smart people know it's the other way, that that's what is killing the world.

BR: But now we're not going to be able to be educated, because every time we're educated, it's moving so quick. So what did you do after that?

RR: I took a job as a soda jerk in a drugstore while I tried to figure out what I was going to tell ; what kind of lie I was going to make up.

BR: Did they accept it though finally?

RR: No, luckily I was drafted! And that took care of the whole thing because they were so certain that I would definitely be one of the people who got killed.

BR: (laughing) I'm sorry, it's not very funny.

RR: I think it's pretty funny. It's certainly . They never asked what happened. And they only read it like a few weeks ago. My father can't read any more; he's dead. (laughter)

BR: So where did you serve when you went . . .

RR: Mostly in California. I was a neuropsychiatric technician.

BR: That's it, and your parents said you were going to get killed? California, and the only war was in Europe and Japan!

RR: I could have if I'd been a really straight character.

?: They stuck you in a tuberculosis ward.

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RR: Three of my grandparents died of tuberculosis, and I mean it just happened to be that particular generation where it was popular.

BR: They put you in a tuberculosis ward? (Laughing) It's a terrible story!

RR: I was in terminal tuberculosis care in the Navy until I got to be neuropsychiatric technician.

BR: This is a terrible story, and you survived it; this is heroic. When World War II was going on, you're sitting in there. When did you get to Black Mountain College? I was just trying to fill this in.

RR: I met my, in retrospect, I don't know how to talk this way, my ex-wife? Yeah, my ex-wife. She wasn't my ex-wife when I met her.

BR: And she was going to Black Mountain College?

RR: Language is schizophrenic too.

BR: You met a girl.

RR: Susan Wilde. And we got married, and we had Christopher.

BR: And all three of you went to Black Mountain College?

RR: Yes actually, actually that's true. Because he was still there too, my son.

BR: How did you get there, from the tuberculosis ward?

RR: She drove (? can't hear) (much laughter).

BR: What did you do when you came out of the tuberculosis ward? I mean out of the Navy.

RR: They finally found out, I mean I told them, and then finally I got this call. They sent me to this recuperation center, but

I'd never seen any action. I was going around with all these amputees and people with all these dreadful things going on, all these terrible experiences, you know. It was awful just to go to the dining room. Everybody else was talking about all these things, and I mean how dramatic was that? They caught me in a tuberculosis ward, you know.

BR: And when you got out, what happened? (Navy)

RR: I went back to Port Arthur

BR: To tell your parents you were still alive.

RR: I don't think they were impressed. I was offered a job in Los Angeles which I had been in and out of San Diego, and

I took it, to draw commercials for the newspaper. And it took me a week to draw a loaf of bread. This was

so they , it took me a week, and the model was dead before I finished the drawing. said, "The model was dead? You mean the bread?" I mean it was probably the only funny thing ~~they~~<sup>she</sup> ever said. And I said, "Yeah, that's right." And she said, "Oh, you ate it." And I said, "No." Then she said "You lost your job, or something?" And I said, "Ehhhh. Who wants to spend their life drawing bread?"

BR: Now how did you come to Black Mountain College?

RR: Susan, whom I married, was already lined up to go there.

BR: She was an artist too?

RR: Yes, and we didn't really have any intention of like getting married, particularly. But I read in Time Magazine, (you don't need to mention the name) that Joseph Albers (the world's foremost disciplinarian) and boy, did I need it. I don't know if I needed the world's most foremost. I might have like taken the second one.

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- BR: So you married Susan so you could go with her?
- RR: No, she already went on over there. I was there.
- BR: She was already at Black Mountain College, and you were still at Los Angeles?
- RR: No, I was in France.
- BR: So what were you doing in France?
- RR: Well, I believed all those stories that, you know, if you're going to be an artist, <sup>you have to</sup> ~~then~~ go to France. And I had gone to the Kansas City Art Institute; I met this girl
- in Los Angeles, during my bread-drawing bout.
- BR: So Susan left and you met another girl.
- RR: No, no, no, no. This is going further back to the Navy. And so she was having to leave and she was my closest friend in Los Angeles, and she worked for a bathing suit factory, and her mother got sick and she had to leave, and I just couldn't imagine that just packing bathing suits would be that interesting without her. So I decided that, she said, you could come with me, you know, you really are an artist ...
- BR: How did she know, did you show her some ...
- RR: Well, she saw what I was fiddling around with. I mean, none of it is any good, I mean most people didn't sit and draw every chance they got.
- BR: Did your parents have an idea that you might have wanted to be an artist?
- RR: No.
- BR: Did you have any idea as you were growing up in Port Arthur?
- RR: No, because you don't have ideas like that in Port Arthur.

I mean you just don't. There's no museum

Life Magazine ; you know, now it's impossible to pick up nearly any magazine without some article on art, but that was not always the case.

?: ... paintings was, they had the playing cards on the

RR: I went to see a cactus garden. It was at Huntington Library in Pasadena while I was there, and had just happened to go into the museum, and they had Pinky and Blue Boy, and was right there, and I thought, My God, just like our playing cards. And so, it's total reverse, you know, like how it could occur to anybody.

BR: So wait, so you went to Kansas City to be with this girl.

RR: Yeah, she said There's a fantastic art school there; Thomas Hart was there, Thomas wasn't there any more, but he had been. I mean it does have a very good reputation.

BR: Was it good?

RR: Well, I guess so, because I took something like five jobs because I had to make some money to go to Paris, which I thought had to be done. I never was into that suffering business. That whole dramatic idea. I don't even know how many great paintings I'd ever seen. All the jokes about artists had to do with Paris.

BR: So you went.

RR: The movies were about artists being in Paris.

BR: So you left Kansas and went to Paris. I just want the chronology.

RR: Well, yes, after I got enough money to.

BR: And what did you work at to get to Paris?

RR: They still did, in between movies, they had these commercial cuts that were filmed. I made sets for those. I did window displays in another place because this girl got pregnant and didn't want to lose her job. And so what it was was traveling. I did work for her, because she knew she was going to lose her job. Isn't that terrible, but that's the way it was. And somewhere it still is too.

BR: Yeah, most places.

RR: And so, at the movie sets I did seasonal equipment for, it's a big, like Sears-type, Nellie<sup>?</sup>Dawns, at one point it was the world's largest cheap clothes that they did all these kinds of company parties and things, and I designed bicycles that went by themselves and animated people. I didn't know anything about mechanics, but you know, if you need the money. Had to get it one way or the other to go to Paris.

BR: How long were you in Paris?

RR: About ; it didn't take me but three months to figure out that it was the wrong town.

BR: What was it about it that wasn't right?

RR: Because all my misinformation was based on the great men-- Picasso, Matisse, and Roget, how's that? But by the time I got there, the whole place was filled with nothing but imitators who talked too much. I mean, I wanted to really work, so I strangely enough took to the streets. But, you know, I didn't do landscapes and things. So there wasn't very much there for me.

BR: So you came back to Black Mountain with Susan?

RR: No, then I had to get enough money to get there, back.

I getting enough money to go there.

BR: So did you pack bathing suits?

RR: Nope, they didn't have any bathing suits along the

Anyway, I did get back. I was a little late, and I don't think that Albers ever forgave me for having the audacity in my state of ignorance to come in mid-semester.

BR: Now, how did you decide to go right there ?

RR: Coming from France too. Because I read this article. I had heard of it too. I don't know if I would have just done it if I hadn't known that somebody else was going, so that made it real, instead of just reading.

BR: And that's where you met Mercen John and all those people?

RR: They passed through all the time. Buckminster Fuller and Aaron Siskin, photographer, Calahan, photographer.

BR: Interesting people were around. And that's when you knew you would be an artist?

RR: They'd come in and for the center. It was a really fantastic time. It will certainly not be the same ever, because there are no places like Black Mountain for them to even do it. I mean you don't drop in to Bard or something.

BR: And that's when you knew you were going to be an artist, or you knew it already in Kansas City?

RR: At Kansas City. I mean I decided. That was it.

BR: And her you are. Was it worth it? Would you do it again, or would you be a veterinarian?



RR: I sort of am, I still stuff my own animals. (laughter)

BR: Why is that funny?

RR: No, because there's the goats and the chickens, I'm still trying to take care of all my children.

?: We're working on a goose now.

BR: You're going to get a goose?

RR: No no no, it's a casting of a goose, and it's four geese and four bicycles. This is, I told you earlier, remember what I said that I've only had about three or four ideas that came actually from dreams.

BR: Two, you said.

RR: Ok, this is third then. Riding the bicycle.

BR: Okay, let's hold, let me work on this, and then I'll clarify anything I don't think I have, I'll call and clarify. You know when they talk about instant gratification? Instant hysteria for me and instant gratification for you.

RR: You have enough non-sense, throw in on that other thing. Why don't you do something like two different kinds of ti s, or something?

BR: That's John Cage you're talking.

RR: No, no, that's everybody.

BR: I have to just do something that's a little bit different and more interesting, I don't know, it'll be okay. No, I haven't had time to have fun on this. If you could have seen me, I was calling and trying to get through; I was in tears. You know, you want to do your background, you want to be able to come here, and having read the right books and so of course you know, and you

can't even do that, right? Because otherwise you come so stuffed up, you couldn't ...

RR: To prove that the other stuff was right.

BR: Well no, but you could know enough to get it.

RR: get these weird questions that have nothing to do with two people sitting down and talking, you know, about "And what about that?" and say, "The what?" Got that little rock in the head up there, all these little jellybeans or something shaken around, that are all supposed to be facts, that might be interesting, instead of actually just, "Where you going, Mike?"

BR: Right, look at that. What channel is this, is this a cable station?

RR: No

BR: It's a real station? It's wonderful. My whole life is taking my dog someplace and they say No dogs allowed.

RR: He's there to run them off. It takes one to know one, if you know what I mean.

?: Let's talk about our photos. Is the gallery going to close tomorrow?

RR: Yes, we can open it.

BR: I'm sorry about this being last minute. Incidentally, one of the reasons I apologize to you because it's

fault, so don't look at me. But the point is he kept saying Are you interested? First I have to know what I need. Why are you laughing?

RR: I said if you come tomorrow, I'll give you some more lies.

BR: I only need lies that are entertaining.

- BR: I want more dogs, but I can't have them. I have two dogs, 58 pounds each, and this is in an apartment. If I had five, they'd think I was crazy, so you can't do that.
- RR: I only have two, I lost one this summer, that was one of the great .
- BR: I'm emotionally getting ready for that. I don't know how I'm going to take it. What did you do with it, did you bury it?
- RR: I have a tree that I want to put him under, but I still can't. It's been months and months, still can't .  
It won't be fertilized. It won't be fair to the tree.
- BR: Look what they did with Janice Joplin, they spread her on the ocean, what she wanted done.
- RR: She was an old dog. It just took me years to get over that.
- BR: Except that the point of it is, there's so few good homes for these animals, they think that they don't have feelings. When people tell me their dog died and they can't bury it, I say Please get another one because you need it.
- RR: not to get another one until three was unbelievable. Two is better.
- BR: Two is what I have, male and female, they love each other.
- RR: The thing is about three, that's when you'd like another arm. You can pet two, and then they have some kind of competition going on. When you get three, then they get a little bit crazy.
- BR: I'll call tomorrow. You going to be here this week?  
(chit chat - several people talking)

?: (talk about where to put the camera)

(RIKI SIMONS INTERVIEW, January 3, 1983)

(W = Woman)

RS: ... one of the most important museums in the world. And I have to because they certainly were, in the first two, like my work and Jaspas Johns, only second possibly to the Music Moderne in Sweden, in Stockholm.

W: Yes? I've never been there.

RS: They had the gold and they had a piece that I don't think they keep out, and I almost can't blame them, but I certainly wish they would, and that's a mud piece which plays to sound, to itself.

W: Oh yes, I read about it.

RS: So it performs, you know, as a cycle. It listens and responds, you know, and in that response then triggers another response, and it also has to then listen to and respond too. And I only had to trick it one time to get the cycle started, to make artificial perpetual motion. And I had to make a tape that I made a mistake to listen to because I got tasteful about it and then I turned it over to somebody else, and I said you know Just cut it into as many sections as you please. But don't listen to it, and then I played that to it once, and its computer mind had to listen, you know, because it had all this equipment attached to it, and so the piece just started. And ever since then, it makes its own tapes and plays itself to itself. I think it was blind though.

- W: They have the same thing and Charlene.  
They have it out a lot, almost someone's always on it. I think it's out now. They're very proud of it.
- RS: People make pilgrimages practically to go see it because nobody saw it here. They weren't paying any attention when it was here. That's what I mean.
- W: You had (can't hear)
- RS: I had people all day yesterday, seemed like all day. It was actually all afternoon, and today the photographer. They very rarely do, it's a real cheap magazine. Do you know it?
- W: No. People's Magazine?
- RS: Yeah, it's just gossip, has nothing to do with the people, but it has to do with ...
- W: (Question, can't hear)
- RS: No, no, I was a bio once, not even just an audience, but I was a biographical thing, and the editor, I was just told yesterday that the editor really hated me for it because he thinks that art, they have these categories, like the three places beautiful and the importance to the world, you know. Maybe the and so artist is absolutely way off the table, you know, there, and so the guy was furious
- . No people?
- : No people,
- RS: Do you have a pass or anything in there? Anyway, it's not even, doesn't have the quality of jet set gossip, something lower than that. If they could figure out, like a cover story might be

, if they suspect you of having an illegitimate child, you know (laugh). Almost English. The English are the worst. That's surprising. Their newspapers are just horrible to read. I mean, they make up things, they focus on just the seediest side of things, and yet usually my response you know, like too English because they own our language. They think they do. So it's a kind of a parental feeling there, necessary with respect, because any time I make a mistake when I'm talking means it's bad English. But if I'm bad English, then they must be good English, right? And so, it should be comforting to see them making such assholes of themselves, you know, like writing about all this trash. But I prefer that they remained in my image, which was all very proper, because they're not very interesting. For the most part, it's very boring to be there. Don't you think?

W: Very gloomy.

RS: Yes, even if the weather is good it's boring. (laugh)

has some good stuff; the museums have some good stuff, but I mean, you know, they're<sup>not</sup> interested in eating or barely even talking to anybody. A bunch of middle-class pedantics. I mean, I'd rather have the New York crazies (laugh), even the Los Angeles crazies. You travel in the United States much?

W: Yes, I traveled it once, two <sup>years ago</sup> ~~weeks~~, very fast, from Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, New York. I've never been in the South though. I would like to go there. You come from Texas yourself?

RS: Yes, Texas, but on the Louisiana side, so I come from the wet Texas. That's hard to say. It wanted to come out West Texas, but it's a wet Texas, the one that's on the swamps. So there's very little difference in that part of Texas and Louisiana, in the bayous, and the cooking is sort of the same. Would you mind telling

W: ~~What, you must tell~~ me something about China and Japan?

RS: No, I wouldn't mind.

W: I like the ,

RS: Oh, they're here. You got to the ? Alright. I had trouble sitting down because I fell down the stairs the same night, having too much party. (he he he)

: Got off the jet and went to the show.

RS: Oh really?

W: I saw the big gallery and things

RS: Didn't you go to the others?

W: I did go to the others, and I looked at things

RS: Tomorrow everything will be open. We're getting back to normal now. Thank God we all survived the holidays one more year. I think so, except for one bruise is a bit right over here. It's getting bigger. It's not a sore, though, but it looks worse.

: Did it turn green yet?

RS: It's on its way. It's just settling into that purply green, you know, when everybody says What in the hell happened to you? But by the time it does that, it almost doesn't even hurt anymore. It just looks worse, you know.

: The time we need the sympathy is past.

RS: I know, like nothing is showing

W: It doesn't hurt                      you had the openings                      .

RS: Of course. It's an insane accident. (laughter) It was very difficult to arrange because most of the galleries are closed anyway, you know, and of course some of the galleries, everybody has families, and then they get their bonus checks and so everybody wants to go on a little vacation. So we had to do the whole thing. And, very seriously, it was touch and go. But part of my attitude about the function of art is very sociable --sociable, political, adventurous, diplomatic, you know. And I still believe that art is our most viable, uncorrupted communication, form of communication.

W: What was it like to work with the Chinese people?

RS: It was extraordinarily moving. I was so, they made me so sympathetic, and they moved me so much at the same time. As a whole nation. Because you know there are very small degrees of differences within their society, and from the fact that my making work there, I think that I actually touched, I think I came in the back door, and they were going to see how I might perform. And as the weeks went by, we were there 5 weeks working, I finally got spiralled up to the top, yeah, and ended up meeting the Deputy Minister of Culture, who agreed that I should have a show there, and actually showed me space. And I'm not sure that politically that we're going to be able, that I'm going to be able to maintain that date because since then, in just a few months, the American relations to China have just really deteriorated. I don't know if they were anything before. <sup>but hope</sup> I don't know if there were any concrete feelings, but



there was the possibility that we could be great friends. And what I see now is just really very depressing, and that is that I wouldn't mind as they call it, M de Trois, with Russia and China and America. That might be better than nothing, but the fact that when I was there such a short time ago, I was well aware how much that the Chinese still hated and were terrified of the Russians. And now, something that we have done, I mean like our administration, they've put these two forces back together, that were just a few months ago terrified of each other. And now they're ~~quoting~~ <sup>courting</sup> each other.

W: You always hear culturally, they're very interested in the West now.

RS: China, really, it's new changes are dependent on getting ahold of some technology. They have a really terrible situation there because they don't have enough food, but they're very attractive because they have all the minerals that the greedy countries want. And the resources. And their nearest neighbor also is not their best friend--Japan, because they still have very bitter memories of the Japanese occupation. I don't guess any occupations are done very diplomatically or gently, but it seems that the Japanese occupation was particularly brutal. But they have the technology, and they're right there. And so they have to make a switch. They've done some amazing things--one of them was to make all the leading members, the administrative members of the Communist Party to reregister because during the revolution, they're now publically apologizing. Yesterday's

the  
paper said, in the New York Times, that/Peking Express or  
Daily News or something, apologized to the entire country  
for having lied during the revolution, and that they promised  
to never do it again. (laugh) So what they did was like they,  
it was very chic to be an illiterate. I mean, if you had no  
education and were a power monger, you know, you could be in  
charge of thousands and thousands of people. And all the  
scientists and the doctors and lawyers and the artists and  
musicians and the writers went and worked on the farm, if they  
lived, if they survived. And so it's just now that they are  
trying to make this very difficult move back into the real  
world. In the meantime, of course, the real world has gone to  
hell too, but you know. And so they had all these illiterates  
in charge running the country, and as long as they were actually  
running it, well then there was no way to get them out. And  
so they did that, and then the apology through the newspaper,  
and the fact that they are interested in having a show of mine  
that would be a collection of works through various periods of  
the last like 15-17 years. I don't want to make it a big,  
retrospective kind of thing because it would be such a drag,  
but I mean if somebody's noticing your work, you know, you could  
show them something you did yesterday or tomorrow, you know if  
they're not used to seeing that sort of thing.

W: Did they know your work, the people ...

RS: Strangely enough, they let me do this too. I don't teach. And  
I went, but there I would do anything for them. They needed so  
much, and so as I was leaving, as I said I spiralled up; I came

as a total stranger, you know, and they allowed me, weirdly enough, the last hour of the year's semester, which meant that the instructors couldn't talk to the students again and tell them how I was wrong. Beautiful, huh? I mean, that's very generous. And also, the students, I said I was willing to spend more time with them, and the President of the National Academy there said, I'm sorry if you do that, we thank you, but if you do that, then the students will (students, you're talking about professional people 50 years old, 60 years old, plus 14 and 12, you know very talented people) they said they will miss their lunch. Whereupon the entire auditorium stood up and booed the professor down (laugh), and my last thing was they didn't go over any of my material. I didn't have any material. It would have been difficult if they had wanted to go over my material. They would have had to have done it by oral x-ray or something, because I hadn't the foggiest idea about what was going to happen when I started talking to them. The last thing I said, because there was a lot of like commentary, there was a whole period for questions and all of that, and one of the questions was even how do you think that your work was influenced by Dada. When I heard that, in China, you know, I knew that there must be some sources of information that is coming through. And, so I don't know, I gave them an answer for that, mostly about that I really think that Dada was not so much a visual movement, but that it was a literary movement, and theatrical. But if I were to tell you that something was Dada as an object or was not Dada, I don't think that you could tell the difference.

Because it just looks like art or a thing.

W: Do they have books on Western art?

RS: Not yet.

W: You showed slides of your work?

RS: I showed slides. I was traveling with Gemini, which is an art publishing house from Los Angeles, and I just took what they had, and I threw half of it out, and I kept the other half, something that I had some personal relationship to, you know, some story. But the last thing I did, so there was a lot of conversation going on, and I said Okay, the next thing that I want to do is I want to show you photographs, color slides, taken in America, and I don't want there to be any conversation about it. (This was all translated) Just look. If you have any question, just let it be a question, you know, don't look for the answer.

W: Um hum. They were slides of ...?

RS: Just like a (side of a car?) or a reflection in something, or a house in a poor part of town, or a tree or cactus or, you know, no organization whatsoever, but I just thought that would be a good idea, you know, and seeing as how they'd already missed lunch, you know, they'd have all summer now to think about a whole world that they had never seen. I mean, there were shots of New York, but I don't mean like commercial shots, you know what I mean. And they let me do that.

W: Did you see any of their work?

RS: I did, and in the lithography department there was even, for the first time in probably years and years, a breakthrough. There were some nudes--very academic, of course. But still, I mean

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that was almost, and had been for so many years, unheard of. Also, while I was there, it came out in the papers that a new ruling had been passed for the artist, and that was that they could not, artists should not use political slogans in their work any more. And the artists got together and put together a show for some of their prize antique work and some of the newest things, so most of the live artists showed up. And in some of those cases, I didn't notice--I was very self-conscious--but Terry noticed it, that in the silk-screened ones, or the wood-blocks, that some of the language had been blocked out, but by the artists artistically, so they were already beginning to do that, and like one of the only times that I got into anything that resembled serious trouble was when I was photographing, which is in the big photograph, one of them is, (I have several others too) heads of the Chinese leaders that were political posters, like on walls and things, frescoes, and they tried to paint them all out, but actually they made them more interesting to me because they weren't so obvious. And they were busy doing a census for the first time in many years, (counting how many people there are in the country), and they employed something like 5 million people to do that. They had a good start there, right? (laughter) Let's just see the personnel here!

W: Can you describe the work you saw? Is it what you think, I mean what you saw?

RS: Most of it was fairly traditional. And, because you see, the period of relaxing, the responsibility of the artist, and it goes

with photographers too. I didn't talk to writers so much. Or if I did, I wasn't aware of it, but because I took my books on photography with me, and then I prepared a notebook on about 200 pictures in color representing my work, because I didn't want them to be confused about who they were talking to. I mean, I'd just as soon not be there if they think that I'm somebody else. Because, you know, I didn't want to be Andrew W to them, thinking that I was painting pretty farms or something. And I showed them like the hardest pieces or some of the cardboard pieces, and those pieces remain today, some of the most difficult pieces, you know, even here. So that's the period that I'm starting as far as going retrospective, and then it goes into the silk things that have no imagery whatsoever, and like that hoar frost thing next to the mummy over there, and then through constructions, and like I will continue making works in each country as I go, and I guess if they will accept it, I mean they probably will, if they would allow me to have the show, I will like leave them a piece also.

W: Did you get any response?

RS: I'm having response, it's just that I need too much money. It costs a lot.

W: When you were there, the people ...

RS: Okay, oh yes, what they did was, I was already worrying about Rocky again because we had a big meeting (that's the name of a Rauschenberg overseas cultural interchange) and so we had a big meeting with/~~the~~ a bunch of Japanese people all morning, and I had to hide because I'd seen them over and over again and they never say

anything. But they don't stop talking, and I'm getting really impatient, you know, with that. I talk a lot too, but I do everything I say. That's different. I thought that's what you meant. The response was very guarded, but they did have a few expressions that I heard a lot more than once, and that was, I can see you are very serious, or You certainly do a lot of work. I admire your curiosity, (which is almost not in their language-- the word curiosity), and well that's about it, those three things, which is I think means that they haven't gone blind you know, after all this time.

W: And the people you worked with in the mill?

RS: I was not ever allowed in the mill. I was allowed to send the president of the artists' association, who was an artist. He also was the one who cut my wood blocks for me, and was the sole negotiator. They were so terrified that I might take a secret, because their paper is considered, particularly if they're an oriental society, the very best in the world. You know, maybe to my use or their use or something, it wouldn't be that sensational because its particular appetite is about its absorbency, and it depends on what you're trying to do, right? But for the calligraphy and the ink work and the drawings, you know, to do a rooster's tail, it's super! Feathers, it's great. Waterfalls, rocks, pine trees, you know, all these things that need that. It's incredible. But it seems that just before I was there that there were a couple of Japanese (boy, I'm really dumping on the Japanese today; they shouldn't come by so early) that three Japanese, like one of them had come in legitimately

as a buyer, and somehow or another, later that night he was still there, and there were two other Japanese climbing a fence to get in to steal the secrets of the fine paper, and so they were particularly cautious there. And I've made paper all over the place--I've made paper in the Gandhi ashram in India, in the last remaining French hand-made paper mill from Amb , where there used to be this valley, they used to have 100 paper mills, and there's only one left. You've been there (yes). Now these guys sit around and cut up little flowers and things and you can take it home and frame it. I mean, one would almost wish it would have a normal death, you know. Anyway, I gave it a little push. You know, I mean what I decided is that there are so many ways that you can make paper that the old idea about there being a secret, that's the secret. No secret. But they don't want anybody to find out that there is no secret. What they tried to do then is that they moved the paper mill to me. I said, I'm collaborating, I told you collaborating from the very beginning. I mean collaborating should really be a good communist word, you know, it means working with, sharing egos or anything, responsibilities. I said, I don't have an idea, I can't move until I have ... (end, side A)



Tape #1 (Side B)

RR: ... what didn't work and what I wanted to do, and it finally worked out, and they're very proud of it, and it's the first time that they have ever put their own seal, not only on the piece, but on the front of the piece. I said, This is fantastic, and I want you to share it, you know, like help celebrate this work and this accomplishment, and I said like Where's your seal? and they said, We have this seal, and it says "Made in (On-Hui) Province, and I said, But that's not the factory, I know the factory has a name. I mean, you know, I wasn't allowed to go there, but it has a name. And so finally they got involved in that, and I don't know if they needed permission or just that it was such a strange idea that they weren't used to. But they were gorgeous, signature there, you know ...

(garbled, several people talking)

I'm not really crazy about being interviewed!

BR: It's horrible! It's essential. Both of us have to. I've ... It's the worst thing I've ever been through. I know this person. Bob, the guy who's the head of Opera News. That's who that is. I don't know what he's doing on tv.

: You must know nearly everybody.

BR: No, I know no one. No, I'm bad and good at it. Basically I was a dance critic for the LA Times, and then I came back and struggled, and I got a Ph.D. in Renaissance Lit, and I taught, and by a quirk People Magazine needed a "intellectual". I did a piece on Marshall McCluen. You know the peter principle where

they promote you to the level of incompetence? (laughter)  
 Well, I've reached it and gone down! Then they gave me the entire arts field. I'm not there full-time; I refused to be in their cubbyhole, so I signed their contract. You were put in last minute. Can you picture doing you last minute? It's a lot of work! We're doing Mr. Montebello, I just interviewed him, Piggy Zuckerman, who's a violinist, Elisa Montaine, who's a really wonderful , and by the way New Year's Eve night, and you have superseded all of this. I've been working on these pieces, you know, in a way; and they said, Chuck them all, you're going to do Rauschenberg next week. That's why I can't handle this! This is a big piece. You didn't know that?

RR: I just thought, you know, it's like you mentioned like the other day that somebody went, you know the last page ...

BR: Saying that you're now , and now don't panic. Here's a New York magazine article, read it and rewrite it. So that's it.

RR: Actually got a nice one to read. I thought she was really .... and I really was surprised, actually her editor said that he thought, and he's barely up to Steinberg, I mean he thinks Steinberg is way out. And he said that he thought, well T K called and said that he thought that she did a pretty fantastic job. He said, Well, it's not only that, that it's a good article on Rauschenberg, he said it may be the finest piece of writing this magazine has ever had. But don't tell her!

BR: Oh no. Because we'll have to give her money. I just got the news, my first piece since my negotiation which had me in tears; this is wrong and that's wrong with you ... and then it was just Okay, just do two a month, because we want more precise, you know, and then all of a sudden, And you do Rauschenberg. I said, Have someone else do it. And they said, No you get down there and do it. So, don't tell her she's any good.

RR: He said that the editor was almost proud of the fact that he's never given her a compliment.

BR: You know when I was on the other side, I had done a series of books, so I had to go around and be interviewed. And I've never met worse people in my entire life than my profession. I was in tears with every interview. And I thought, My God, so I make this as painless as I can.

(coffee talk) Then you know what I want to talk about, which is funny, is the race horse, Rauschenberg. That ought to be a good lead for, you know, that everything is happening plus, and he said he's a winner. He always wins.

RR: And we could get you some photographs too. You mean this is going to be more than a little note? This is going to be a major article.

BR: Two or three pages. Plenty, you threw out Piggy Zuckerman; you know, he's the violinist. A wonderful man.

RR: I don't have the photographs here, Rauschenberg, do I? I think I always carry them with me. Want to call , see if they have some down here?

- BR: Except that the truth is, if they say Rauschenberg the Horse, this is what I was talking about earlier, and you say they called you Rauschenberg the painter, that's inexact. It should be Rauschenberg the Man. Unless you the racehorse.
- (laughter) Okay, so we're going to make this as painless as possible. Since she's already written it, all you have to do is do some . . . doesn't want to be misquoted.
- RR: What you're getting in there is Argentina and a few chocolate things. (coffee) Let me get my wine now.
- BR: There's nothing I'm looking for; I'm giving it to you straight. I'm doing the horse, because I think that's a good thing since he's a winner, and then I can say Rauschenberg the Man.
- RR: You can write that--you remember the story.
- BR: Yeah, but I want to embellish it a little, because I don't remember what you said. I have an almost photographic memory, which is a shame from my personal life. Did you ever have a conversation with someone saying What year was that? It's ruined my life. But I can't remember the name of the patrons who got the horse or when, you know, little details like that.
- RR: How old is he now?
- BR: How do I know? I just heard about him.
- RR: I'll find out the exact date.
- BR: Very important, and they didn't put that in the New York article, right? Do me a favor, if you're going to tape this, just don't use this before we use this.
- RR: I won't use it at all really.
- BR: I mean, I don't really care. The only thing I get nervous about

is that you'll hear my perceptions, I'm generally a little bit off.

RR: You know, I told you about like working, going to places, and not knowing what I was going to do, and making the work, I mentioned Israel and France and on the deserts and things, and I think that what I'm up to now is a very natural development when I refused to be an expressionist, and declared you know, the whole world a potential palette. And I said, in those situations, that I wanted my work to look more like what I saw out the window, than what was in the studio, and I criticized politically. I mean, this isn't that interesting, but I was put in a position, in the 50s, because I was not one of the artists that worked in secrecy with his doors shut. I mean I always worked with my head hanging out the window. So, it's just a natural, I mean it's just my appetite, has always been outside of any extremely introverted self-like attitude.

BR: But of course there's a big difference in going to China. I mean, that's a whole ...

RR: I know, instead of coming back, you know, the next day I found myself in Japan.

BR: Well, what did you do there?

RR: I said that, this is not a \_\_\_\_\_, is it? I said that when I got to Japan and people said like what was the difference from like China to Japan--I don't know why anybody thinks there's any similarity in the world except for hatred, you know, that's the one thing they have in common. And rice.

- BR: Where are the coming from, are they yours too?
- RR: No, they're Sashkas and Agats.
- BR: Oh, I thought they were just coming in from the street. Somebody left the door open again (laugh). It was a real shock, , that no one would say yes. I'd go to another place where the only thing they would say was Yes. That was Japan. They all said Yes.
- BR: When did you go to Japan?
- RR: The next day, whenever I left; I flew from China to Japan. All this was set up, and it's more economical. If you're in the neighborhood, you know, drop by. So then I went to Japan, and everybody always says Yes, but in either case, nothing ever happened. They didn't say yes in China--nothing happened. They said yes in Japan, and nothing happened. You know, so they had more in common than the rice.
- BR: And where did you stay in Japan?
- RR: Chigaraki, for three months I didn't say it right. (Well, it was raining all the time). We were there through two typhoons, and actually I had a sort of a joke that I took more seriously when I came back. We went away for I think about three weeks, and then came back.
- BR: Went away where--home?
- RR: Well, to a project in Los Angeles or something. And I went to see my son. My son had a retrospective in Portland, and an opening in Paris.
- BR: Wait a minute. You went to China, to Japan, for how long?
- RR: The first trip was four weeks.

- BR: Thank you. Four weeks, and then you came back, went to Portland to see Christopher's retrospective, went to LA to drop in on your friends.
- RR: To continue working on the Chinese prints that were coming back by that time.
- BR: Then went to Paris, for dinner?
- RR: Actually, it was a marvelous dinner; it was on my birthday too. It was at the Tour d'Arjon.
- BR: That's impressive that you remember that. I can't even spell it, so it will never get in.
- RR: I probably would have had a block if I'd had to pay the bill.
- BR: Can you spell that for me?
- RR: Which ile is that? (just across the Seine).
- BR: Do you feel now, what everybody's been writing about, that there's <sup>great</sup> a/new impulse in your work, and a great new this and that ...?
- RR: Yes, I think there is something going on. I hate the idea that I'm a reactionary. But I'll tell you what I think it is. I really think, I felt really completely touched with the 70s.
- BR: What do you mean?
- RR: I think that it was outside my attitude of physicality and involvement. I think it got very inbred, and I think it's taken me a few years to do something other than criticize, because I don't like criticizing, I mean, anybody else's attitude. Because the difference that's in all these attitudes is what really makes the world so interesting anyway. But the arts, I felt that, with the exception of a few people, that it was suffocating<sup>itself</sup>. I mean,

It's something that's a combination of like galleries, success, and culture, meaning even financially, you know, somehow had really stifled any semblance of innocence and adventure.

BR: It was all materialistic, in a sense.

RR: Well, that was part of it, it was a combination of everyone taking themselves so seriously.

BR: As opposed to the vision. Do you know what I mean? What's happening in the 80s that's enabling again?

RR: No change. I'm going to change it.

BR: Don't say a word. This is my nightmare. Did you ever sit in a bathtub and you say, I'm going to change it, and then you know a million words that you need, and they're gone. I mean, that's a nightmare. Go ahead.

RR: I think that our openings New Year's Eve set a new example, which reminded more than a few people of how interesting and lively the art world can be, and even friendly. And I think that Roy Lichenstein and Rosenquist, ...

BR: They were there? And tell me, David Bern and John Cage?

RR: Right, I mean I can't imagine another situation that wasn't just maybe except for Warner Bros. music awards or something, you know, that would possibly have gotten socially John Cage and David Bern in the same room together.

: designed the cover for the of his album which is coming out in February.

BR: Now that is very important, you see.

: They accepted his design, and it cost them a fortune.

BR: Why would it cost you a fortune? Oh, cost them a fortune.

RR: No, my fees go to Change, which is my foundation for emergency funds for artists.



- BR: Yeah. So this is a big breakthrough in your career, right?
- RR: I don't know what they're going to pay me, but it all goes there.
- BR: This is very important to people. Wait a second. Do you see this as a major breakthrough in your career, this album cover?
- RR: You betcha.
- BR: Okay, I just want to say one more thing. (And then you can do some pictures, if you're waiting for that, I'm feeling guilty). If you're saying to me, So we're going to change it, but isn't there a point that the exploration, the idea of your going to Japan and China, that the world is moving more like that? It's a change--it's not the 50s, 60s again.
- RR: No, and it's, the world seems to be very busy destroying itself. And I think that the last remaining independent profession is the arts. It used to be sports and the arts. But now the athletes have been used politically, and they were very unfairly turned into, and I am sure reluctantly, into a weapon. And so far I think that people, like particularly in America, the prejudices against being an artist, that we are able to do more because nobody really takes, in America, takes an artist that seriously, and so that gives us some extra freedom, which is sort of a funny kind of advantageous warp.
- BR: Then debate me, because I'm thinking on what you were saying and pulling it together. I guess because I spent so much time  
so recently, talk frontiers and curiosities,  
that there is so much curiosity underlying, and you aren't  
Washington, that's right! In fact, I know that.

RR: Oh, that was another one of my little trips.

BR: And you went down there when they had that show in September?

RR: The end of October they had an opening.

BR: In the fall, it was a big deal. I wanted to cover it; they wouldn't let me.

RR: Because, what other unifying thing could bring, like out of 50 artists, 35 of the 50 artists showing up for the opening?

BR: It's a really important thing. Do you think, and then you can shut me off, because if I write this, I want to make sure-- that the world is, I think, in general, so interested in exploration--what's China like? What's Japan like? You know, it's closing in on us. That to see it through the eyes of an artist like you, I mean of that stature, of that interest, of that perception, becomes more important, or more interesting to a large public than it was before. Do you think so? Or have you not thought of it?

RR: I'm not sure. I think the climate is just like at a point of acceptance because I think that the politicians are sort of exhausted all possibilities, so that now, okay, let me tell you this too--that Pom Hulton has just accepted a job as the Director of the 1984, 86? No, you can't do 84, then 86. for the Olympics. Paris is the next.

BR: It's '84 is the next one.

RR: No, no, that's in Los Angeles. 1988, it has to be. And the whole French government to the tune of billions of dollars for organizing the Olympics around the arts. You wanted a little scoop here, didn't you?

I don't want you to go off and rewrite an article. That's a good one. I won't tell you how many billions either!

BR: And I won't ask. But you're talking about the artist as a politician. I'm asking you about the artist as an explorer, because I think from what I've studied and read and been involved in that we're in an age of exploration more and more, and so it would seem to me when I heard that you had gone to China, people were getting all excited about this, it was very natural, because people are all excited about China

anyway. It doesn't seem to you--it seems more politician.

RR: No no no. I said that, I mean I didn't even think of the word explorer, but I do use the word adventure, you know, which is a little more selfish, but like going to Japan to work with the ceramics, there was just as unpredictable as China; and the <sup>who</sup> people/invented the ceramics, the high-tech 3000 year old material, that refuses to ... so much so, it's so highly developed that the material that they have invented almost has lost its family ties. It's almost restricted by its perfection, so that an artist who has the advantage of creative ignorance can come in and discover what it now can do.

BR: What I was going to say to you was another thing. When I go look at a place, I don't like sitting there, at ballet companies or people's feet. It's an interesting dance. And when someone else goes, maybe he looks at pictures or people's faces....

RR: Did you like my shoes?

BR: The gold shoes? I noticed them right off.

RR: For somebody who likes to look at feet.

BR: No, they matched your shirt, because you had gold in your shirt.

RR: That shirt was from India, it cost \$2.

BR: No, you bought the material and it cost \$2 to make you said.  
I remember that. But is it, do you think in some way, that when you go to places, that here's something that I never see, that you're talking about the materials of the place, you're talking about the resources in a different way than most people go to places. Do you do this most places, or is this a beginning?

RR: I do it everywhere.

BR: So what you do, as an artist, is look at the materials.

RR: I'm surprised. It's actually if I was spending more time in New York City, you wouldn't have all this trash on the street.  
(laughter) I really apologize, I'm sorry, I've been busy. I've been out of the country. I should have come back a little earlier and cleaned it up for Christmas, don't you think?

BR: Well, you didn't pick up any trash in Japan or China?

RR: Well, sure I did. All kinds of scraps of things that I could find. That's the human being. So it's almost like archeology.

BR: So you're bringing our vision, meaning <sup>from</sup> , into China, into Japan, /almost the fundamentals, so it isn't both as an explorer and an archeologist and artist. And if you were going to learn about these places because the world <sup>is</sup> tricking like this, I'd want to see it through your eyes. Maybe there's a real thing happening here. When did (and this is my ignorance,

but remember I just got this assignment the night before so I had no time), the exploration, I mean, the traveling, when did you start knowing inside that this was what you were going to have to do, travel to that degree? It wasn't in the 50s.

RR: Yeah, you know, when I was at Black Mountain College, when I was just going to be a photographer. I mean, that's why that article is just a little bit wrong there, because it gives my son a break, so ...

BR: That was nice actually they did it, because it got an interest in him.

RR: And, so I took one of my, when I decided that being an artist-- painter type--or being a photographer, were both absolutely full-time jobs, and I had to choose particularly like when they, there's so much experience that you have to have in either one of them, that I had to choose arbitrarily. And I don't know, I'm a genuine Libra, which sets me up for being schizophrenic. You know, I'm very slow at decisions, because I can go either way, all the time I have that problem. And I can re-rationalize nearly ending, either one. So I had to really this arbitrarily, this either one or the other, and what decided that was that my next project in photography was going to be to photograph the entire United States; that was going to be my life's work, you know, inch by inch. But that also frightened me a little bit.

BR: Where was that? That was at Black Mountain College? Way back, yeah. But so you put it off for a while.

RR: Well, I decided I'd just be a painter. I went ahead taking photographs.

BR: You were so frightened about what you would do as a photographer, you ...

RR: Right, so that did it, you know. And sometimes I have a sort of a superficial nightmare about, Let's see, Bob, I wonder where you would be today, you know, and I bet I wouldn't be ten miles outside of Ashville. Thirty-five years later I'd still be ...

BR: there by trash by trash. It's harder than the trash of ...

RR: I might also either be in jail or an insane asylum, after that, because I am quite hell-bent, and if I decide that I'm going to do something, it's with like the determination that I personally feel, usually that obstacles just slowly start melting away, because that kind of arbitrary, not confidence--what's another word for determination--directness, that you don't see what's stopping you. You just sort of walk through it in some kind of Zen-like fashion. Right now, there are three extremely serious difficulties that are trying to handicap the Rauschenberg Overseas Cultural Interchange, and only twice I've really gotten discouraged about .

BR: My original question was when does the exploration start? Did you always see the world as a kind of campus?

RR: Well, I think that at Black Mountain College I must have already been thinking this way. I also am still, right now, that there's less difference in painting and photography in my development, you know.

: All the magazines are still covering that whole thing ...

BR: Do you want to hear how that happened? Do you want to hear a funny story? Is anyone a good friend of Mary Boone? Okay Fran and I, it's my editor, are sitting there, and I know nothing about art. I've proven myself, and this is his baby, so he doesn't want to give it over, right? So he says, Here's a pretty picture of a girl. He was trying to think of how he would do So . Do you want to do her? I said, Well she's young and she's pretty, sure. No one else was doing her. We start doing her, and then people might take you out for lunch, and New York Magazing says, And who're you doing? And I said, Mary Boone. Metropolitan Home said, who I was working for at the time, said who're you doing? I said, Mary Boone. Whatever. You know, I don't like Mary. I'm having a hard time. And so I'm trying very hard to like this woman, and her artists hate her! Did you ever call an artist who tells you she's had 3 nose jobs and a completely made-over body? (laughter) I won't tell you which one. But anyway, so we go through the whole thing, and then they start coming out, all these people who have spoken to me, and I know I've given them our story, purposely. And we're watching all these things come out on Mary Boone. Life had killed the story on Mary Boone two years before; heard we were getting it, had gotten there before. So Kran says to me, What did we do? I said, We killed the story, so we had story we never ran ..... (laughing and talking). That's how the Mary Boone sensation came. And I had a fight with her. She called me up and said I want approval. And I had all my quotes

by then, and I had had it with all her shoes! So I hung up, I said integrity, you want to hear integrity? And I hung up on her. Oh, she was hysterical. So that's why the Mary Boone thing happened. So when did you actually start getting out of New York?

RR: Actually, I had to get quite affluent to get out of New York. I probably had the cheapest places in the history of New York, all the way back. I had \$15 a month rent down on Fulton Street, and in the wintertime, I had 20 foot ceilings and holes in the roof (giggle), but it was a gorgeous place, you know, old building, and I couldn't afford more. And I got, in the winter I went to my landlord and I said, Listen, you've got to do something about my rent here because in the winter it's \$5 a month for kerosene, and I said I've got to take that \$5 back. The guy looked at me, and I didn't realize it, that's what I mean, you know, like there's a certain amount of like genuine innocence that just can't be tolerated, you know; I mean, it's worse than obscenities! You know, and I'm looking straight at him and this guy obviously can't believe he's hearing this, you know. He's just going up and he said, I'll do it under one condition. Don't you ever tell anybody of this. (ha ha ha)

BR: And so you told him it'd be \$10/month.

RR: I'm sure he'd be proud of it now. So in the wintertime it was \$10 and in the summer it was \$15. This was for years. All the paintings, like incredible--the bed was done there, the piece with the chicken , , you know, and all that stuff.



- BR: And what did you eat? Bananas?
- RR: No, I had 25¢ a day ration for food, which its basic was Essex Market 2 or 3-day old onion (and I hated onions) buns. I don't know; they always made the most of those, so there were always a lot of those left over. Peanut butter and milk. That's a pretty good diet, you know, isn't it?
- BR: But it never occurred to you to take a job as a postman or take a job as, you know, taxi cab driver?
- RR: I was busy. I painted every day.
- BR: So it didn't bother you very much ...
- RR: What kind of a job could you get? See, now they hire artists without college degrees and you don't even have to go to highschool I don't think.
- BR: To be \_\_\_\_\_ of nuts. That's what I just heard? You heard of that too, didn't you?
- RR: \_\_\_\_\_ of mine got run over by a bus, running from one \_\_\_\_\_ to another between rehearsals. You really hit \_\_\_\_\_ are you that one. What are you doing, /reading my mind? (laugh)
- BR: I didn't know that people were spies for \_\_\_\_\_ until I interviewed some dancers the other day, and they said Everybody's been a spy for Cho \_\_\_\_\_ Nuts.
- RR: I think it's a traditional \_\_\_\_\_ avocation of \_\_\_\_\_ very talented dancers.
- BR: I just learned that. So that this has always been inside you, the idea of the world \_\_\_\_\_ campus, or is that too cliché? You were saying at Black Mountain, you thought of doing the whole United States. Now you're doing the whole world.

- RR: Now I am! I stopped talking then, but now with Universal Limited Art Editions we're doing books on different cities. Have you seen some of those?
- BR: Los Angeles you've done? Does it say Rauschenberg's Loa Angeles?
- RR: No. It says In and Out City Limits. And we've got in publications, I just have New York and, (what was the other one?). We don't have the Port Myers published. No, no, I've done Charleston with exhibitions, and Boston and New York are in print.
- BR: Here's an important question: How do you travel. You're always traveling - how do you travel? In other words, how many suitcases will you take?
- RR: This is the old Mary Boone, how many shoes do I have, I think. To China, we had 25 pieces. (suitcases?) Well, amongst other strange things - some of them were trunks and boxes, video equipment, audio equipment. See we video everything now too, all the places tha we go. And <sup>that's</sup> ~~then~~ part of the cultural interchange is that by the time, you see, we get to Mexico City, we hope that we'll have at least five other countries videoed, and so that my work will end up as my dream to be absolutely obsolete.
- BR: Why obsolete?
- RR: Well, it will function as a catalyst to provoke other people to use their own eyes and their own sensibilities, you know. And I don't think, (I musn't say that one), I almost screwed myself out of the Metropolitan! (laughter)

- BR: What kind of clothes do you take with you when you travel?  
How many suitcases of clothes? 2 tee-shirts, 1 pair of pants?  
I mean, this is really crucial. Do you take toothpaste? Do  
you use mint toothpaste? You know, real, this is People!  
I didn't read a thing about that in the New York Magazine.
- RR: They give you a little toilet kit on airlines.
- BR: That's what you use?
- RR: Sure. Actually, I'm in bad shape now because I lost my Air  
France comb. JAL toothbrushes are great! No, Japan is  
terrific because you get a new toothbrush with every hotel room  
and a tube of toothpaste, every day. In India they gave you a  
stick to chew on.
- BR: What else about traveling, the actual thing? How was it on  
a plane? Do you sleep on a plane?
- RR: Usually tired. I'm fine on the plane. Actually I enjoy  
flying very much.
- BR: Do you travel first-class or tourist?
- RR: First, I guess for seclusion, because I have some of my best  
thoughts, they are most unique. There are several places that  
I can go and have these kinds of thoughts. One is cooking,  
when I'm cooking, I have half my back to the world or something  
like that, or half my world to the back, but I'm still doing  
something. And another one is fishing. I feel that way about  
fishing - in Captiva - and the other is plane rides, because  
on a plane you have left where you were, and you're not where  
you're going yet, you know, and so it's like between fish or

something if you're fishing.

BR: So you sleep mainly on the plane? Think and sleep?

RR: I don't know if I sleep so much, but I can sleep.

BR: Do you watch the movie?

RR: Well, sometimes I do, sometimes I don't.

BR: Do you eat the meal?

RR: Sometimes I do, sometimes I don't.

BR: Do you have a favorite plane or airlines?

RR: They change so much. (say JAL) We're trying to make an exchange.

BR: Maybe we could say American Express now.

RR: That's another one of our possibilities for Rocky. That would be so natural. I don't know why those guys don't just get off their asses, or whatever they're on, and do that. What would you think of an around-the-world tour, like an in-depth tour, that like say sort of National Geographic, American Express and all those people, would just be perfect. I mean, we'll do anything for them. We'll paint their fucking planes, you know.

BR: I'm sure you can get one of them to do it.

RR: Well, right now JAL is ~~considerably~~ seriously considering it, but don't say that. Because then what does Pan Am do?

: Pan Am is out of business. Forget Pan Am.

BR: Just tell me what you don't want me to say. This is isn't very important, like asking you how much luggage you bring!

RR: What would you think about that? About JAL.

BR: About putting it in? Cindy did that some time ago.

We had pieces and picked the favorite - I think it Argentina -

something in South America, but for a reason.

RR: My favorite was Braniff, but they screwed around so much.

BR: What else? Would you mind saying when you cook. You don't seem to cook very much.

RR: We're not eating. It's not dinnertime yet. You want some leftover mushrooms and rice? I do incredible Texas chili. Actually the First National Bank (another little scoop), Ex-First National Bank on Proctor Street is now being renovated to become Museum Port Arthur Texas, and they're using Janis Joplin and myself as like, for the plaque on the outside of the bank, and they're trying to raise the money for it. But you know, any other town in the world, they'd probably make a fortune. Not in your home town. I mean, not too many people like me there. They're really rough on Janis.

BR: They killed her in a sense, mind-wise.

RR: In a sense. But also that's negative appreciation.

BR: It really keeps you moving.

RR: It does. It makes you strong.

BR: There's no critic like the ones at home. You're not going to take any pictures?

RR: We want the one with the, don't we; oh, I don't know. I was so disappointed with that other People's thing, that you took so many great pictures, for crying out loud.

: Then they put them back in their morgue and got out pictures of Bob in 1976.

RR: We had such stuff. Three out of five photographs was the one night I grew a beard. But my life didn't happen in one night!

BR:                   Kran                   Kran  
 Was there ~~erayen~~-on it? No, ~~erayen~~ wouldn't do it.

RR: I shaved my beard off; I grew a beard for the opening, I shaved it off the day after the opening, and that was it, you know. But three out of five pictures -

BR: If it was a bio. The person who loves the arts is in charge of the arts - Kran. And if it's a bio, that means it's ~~raw~~ ~~straight~~ R Strait, and he is not into the arts, he hates arts. So that when it's an artist, he would hate to do, nothing personal. But any artist. And I have convinced him that an artist should not be a bio. In other words, if it was the copy, he'd change it completely, pictures he'd throw out, you know, just to be, so that's why.

RR: So you had thousands, you know, in all kinds of situations.  
 : Well, it would happen in the art class.

BR: I think this will be fine, though.

RR: How many times do you hit it like that? I felt really badly for you. I didn't know what to do about it, but it's your job.  
 : It's shocking when someone really does the picture well.

BR: It depends the editor. There are certain editors you don't work for.  
 : I've got an idea for a spectacular picture though.

RR: We have a little bootleg job here too.  
 : He wants to do something in the gallery, either tomorrow or the next day.

RR: No no no, I'm talking about like we had this bicycle ...  
 : I want to do a triple exposure. I want to set up a camera in the gallery - takes a long time to set up, but it only takes

a half hour once it's set up. We'll set up a couple of areas that we'll black out with some paper. I'll shoot the gallery first, I think the large one of Costella Gallery, and then I want to do like a triple exposure, with three different spots in the gallery, but I think it would be beautiful. Can see the whole gallery with three shots of you. Does that sound nice to you?

RR: On three pages?

: Well, that's what I've got to find out, how they're laying it out.

BR: I think it will end up being three pages. It's Art section. It'll be out the 24th of January, and I think it's going to be three pages.

(everybody talking at once!)

BR: In other words, write and make it small, so they have no extra stuff, so they have to use what you give them.

RR: I discovered that one too. You don't give them jokes. That's a most important thing. I liked doing it because I hadn't done it before, and that was the Bonnie and Clyde cover for Time Magazine, and it was the first time that they'd had left something other than a person, you know, that would be a cover, something as abstract as a movie for the cover story. So that was interesting. And I got into it, and I really enjoyed Warren B . Talking about the traffic thing reminded me about that story. We nearly managed to drive one of the executive secretaries to suicide. We were up in the top in the penthouse, and we were the only ones, like hadn't gone yet, you know, so she had to stay there with us, and we

started explaining to her how the traffic patterns were, how they worked really, and things, and we just went further and further and further you know until like tumbled maude reality. And she couldn't handle it.

BR: Can we do something on Port Arthur Texas from the beginning. Is that ok? You don't want to go back over your life? No one wants to go back over their lives. It's interesting, isn't it? Because we need the bio part of it. Did you always know you wanted to be an artist?

RR: I always drew, but it wasn't til after I was mid-way through the Navy that I discovered that there was even such a profession as being an artist.

BR: What did you think you wanted to be?

RR: I was going to be just like everybody else in Port Arthur, Texas, you know, go to work for one of the refineries. I was going to do that, and my family was disturbed about, actually I think they were almost certain that I was going to the war, that they'd never see me again. So that's what kind of clutz I was.

: Anybody could kill Milton! (laughter)

RR: And so I went to college, University of Texas, and the idea was that, you know, because you could get certain deferments if you went to college. And so I said I don't want to be anything. That shows a certain kind of premature wisdom, doesn't it? And I said, I will go to college, because it seems to be essential to your plans.

BR: This is to your parents you're saying this?



RR: Yeah, and I said, You know me as well as anyone. You just pick what you think that I would like. And I'll do that for a year, and at the end of the year, if I don't like doing that, well then I'll just go ahead and do anything I want to do.

BR: That seems fair to me. Did it seem fair to them?

RR: But I thought it was a very sophisticated thing for them because my father was like I don't know, went through the third grade or something, my mother went to the 6th or 7th grade.

BR: Your father wasn't an artist of any kind.

RR: No no, utilities company, Gulf States utilities. But they had a practice that you can't hire relatives. That was my luck!

BR: So what did they pick for you to be?

RR: Other kinds of animals were mostly my best friends.

BR: Like turtles?

RR: Like turtles, rabbits, ducks, goats - they're very expensive pets though. You have to use ten years of your allowance to pay for people's laundry they pull down.

BR: Did you have a goat?

RR: If you didn't have a goat, you wouldn't know that.

BR: I know it, because R.T. Jones is the man who invented the wings of a plane, I just did him when I was out there, and I got friendly with him, and they have a goat, Alfred, in the back yard, so he had this posh area of Los Altos hills, and you walk inside and there's a goat! And I spent a lot of time with them.

RR: I couldn't with mine, I don't know why. But I mean he hated me.

BR: No no, they always say that with men. It was a male goat, right?

RR: Yep.

BR: Oh, well I'll tell you about R.T. Jones. Territorial. Now had you acceded the household to him immediately, so that it indicated to him ~~that~~ that he was boss, it wasn't hostility, it was macho, yeah, territorial.