

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
LEO MOGILL
OF THE
CONTEMPORARY THEATRE

INTERVIEWED BY
PAUL SPORN
AUGUST 2, 1978

English Department
Wayne State University
Detroit, Michigan 48202

Oral history of Leo Mogill, a member of the Contemporary Theatre, interviewed by Paul Sporn of Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan, on August 2, 1978.

SPORN: That will pick up normal voices. I noticed, and I made some notes here, that you played the part of Editor Daily, in The Cradle Will Rock, Busy, in Planet Of The Sun. You played the part of the playwright in Rehearsal, radio operator in S. S. Stang. These were all performed by the Contemporary Theatre, right?

MOGILL: Yes, all by the Contemporary Theatre. I also had the role of . . . I can't think of his name now. The one who exposes his brother as the fink in Waiting For Lefty.

SPORN: Oh, you played in Waiting For Lefty?

MOGILL: Yes.

SPORN: I have one of the . . . Here's a Toledo playbill, Waiting For Lefty. I didn't notice your name there.

MOGILL: No. I wasn't . . .

SPORN: Not in the Toledo one?

MOGILL: No, I wasn't on that one. Paul Olen played the part at that time. We . . . (LAUGHTER).

SPORN: Okay, we're back on again, now.

MOGILL: Right. Well, we had done so many performances of Waiting For Lefty, that the cast didn't always stay the same. I don't know whether Charlotte mentioned to you that we did a lot of Waiting For Lefty performances for the unions through those years. Changing the locale from the taxi-cab strike to whatever group we were speaking to.

SPORN: In other words, the strike would not necessarily be the taxi-cab strike . . .

MOGILL: That's correct. It could be in any of the labor relations things.

SPORN: Auto strike? Yes.

MOGILL: I don't know whether Charlotte mentioned that through those years, we also played a lot of agit-prop skits, especially during the sit-down strikes in the plants.

SPORN: She mentioned that, yes.

MOGILL: That was quite an experience.

SPORN: Now, those skits . . . That's one of the things I was very interested in. Were those skits written by local people?

MOGILL: Usually, and I can't recall . . . I'm trying to think now of his name. We have one young man, who is living now in Washington D.C. Harold Black did some writing for us.

SPORN: Harold . . .

MOGILL: Black. And I think I can get in touch with him, so that he could possibly write to you.

SPORN: Oh. Well, that would be very, very good. In other words, you know him, that he did some of the . . .

MOGILL: Yes, in fact, he has recently written some poetry, which he sent to me, and I have been doing some of his poetry readings for groups.

SPORN: Has he had them published, recently?

MOGILL: No, no, he hasn't, although they're really beautiful things. I'm sorry I don't have any with me.

SPORN: Was there anyone else besides Harold Black?

MOGILL: I'm trying to think. Yes, and there again, I can't remember his name. Charlotte might remember his name. He was physically disabled, and drove a car with special hand brakes, and so forth. I'm sure she'd remember who he was.

SPORN: Arthur Clifford?

MOGILL: Art--That's right. Art Clifford.

SPORN: Yes, he wrote a review . . .

MOGILL: He'd do some things . . . He did some work for us.

SPORN: He did a review here of Rehearsal by Albert Maltz, that the Contemporary Theatre put on for the "Hollywood to Broadway", it's called, "Midwest Daily Record", Chicago, Illinois. In fact, he mentions you in here. "Leo Mogill did an amusing and quite possibly realistic job as a playwright." And so on. I had come across his name somewhere, that he wrote two one-act plays on topical issues locally.

MOGILL: And, he also did song parodies for us.

SPORN: Song parodies. Maybe that's also how I came across his name.

MOGILL: I don't know whether you have a copy of this. I noticed you had some things. Oh. This is inside of there, too. (PAUSE).

SPORN: I don't have this particular one. Let me ask you a few questions here. Wolfson . . . Is he the Wolfson that married Fagabeth?

MOGILL: I'm not sure.

SPORN: I know her last name is Wolfson, and she told me, that after she left here . . .

MOGILL: It could very well be.

SPORN: . . . she went to New York on a scholarship for the New Theatre League,

SPORN: I think, New Theatre League, and then she wound up doing a lot of work for the Theatre Action Committee. Which was primarily a fund raising group, that put on revues to raise money for the Loyalist Cause of Spain. She mentioned her husband. She met her husband . . .

MOGILL: It could very well be the same person. It could very well be.

SPORN: . . . New York City. I wonder if it's the same man.

MOGILL: Fagabeth was with the Cleveland Playhouse, before she joined us, I believe.

SPORN: Yes, she was at Chicago, she was in Cleveland, then she came here to Contemporary.

MOGILL: Yes.

SPORN: Right. You know, when I was in the West Coast, I interviewed Albert Maltz, who knew George Sklar, just a couple weeks ago.

MOGILL: Speaking of Albert Maltz . . .

SPORN: Are you giving this to me?

MOGILL: Yes. You may have that.

SPORN: Okay.

MOGILL: Now, I don't think it's ever been played by anybody else. I don't know whether I've got all the copies there, now.

SPORN: How did you get a hold of this?

MOGILL: I played the lead in it.

SPORN: You played the lead in . . . Here in Detroit?

MOGILL: Yes.

SPORN: This would be about 19 . . . Simon McKeever came out when?

MOGILL: This came out . . . Try to remember now. I didn't have a date on that. (PAUSE).

SPORN: But, this is after World War II, isn't it?

MOGILL: What's that?

SPORN: The Journey of Simon McKeever.

MOGILL: I'm trying to remember if it was after World War II. I think this came in the forties. I think it did.

SPORN: Yes. Now, I don't know, is this . . . This was adapted by Arthur Lawrence, from the novel?

MOGILL: From the novel. That is correct.

SPORN: And the novel came out in the forties . . .

MOGILL: Yes.

SPORN: That I remember myself.

MOGILL: Yes. This, I'm sure it was in the forties.

SPORN: Yes. I read a notice, an item in the paper the other day, that Henry Fonda and Jane Fonda are negotiating for . . . To do The Journey of Simon McKeever in a movie version.

MOGILL: An, how interesting.

SPORN: Yeah.

MOGILL: That's . . .

SPORN: In fact, some of these, this review that you've given me, and here I think . . . Well, not this one, but this other review. It was a review you have here by Russel McCloughin.

MOGILL: By Russ McCloughin? On this?

SPORN: No, it doesn't seem to be.

MOGILL: No, no, no.

SPORN: Anyway, he did a review of the Cradle Will Rock for the 'Detroit News', the December tenth issue. And I noticed that he said this. He criticized the play, and he also criticized the performance. He didn't think that the play was very much, and that it's the best interest . . . Not interesting, and that whatever it had in the way of theatre was vague and taxing. "The Contemporary Theatre, in earlier seasons, has developed the most fluent acting ensemble of any of Detroit's amateur groups. And it is this department's feeling that they should severely avoid forms and types in which they are unable to display this fluency. So, he was on one hand, complimentary of the group, that the group had achieved a certain technical proficiency, but that it had gotten in above it's head on this particular . . .

MOGILL: To a certain extent, well, he was right. Of course, we didn't have the voices for an opera, beyond question. But, the reason I'm picking this up again now is he was instrumental in getting us to . . . I think this was the thing we did, and it was a flop. I think that's the one that didn't have social content. And he wanted us to try something else besides the social content plays, and we finally did one.

SPORN: Russel McCloughin?

MOGILL: Yes.

SPORN: I see.

MOGILL: We almost lost our shirts on that particular play, where as, on most of

MOGILL: the others, we did quite well, audience wise. I don't know whether you've seen this.

SPORN: No.

MOGILL: No. That's from the thirties. This particular issue came out in '39, I think, but the plays had been used previous to printing time.

SPORN: These are plays that you could use . . . Short skits that you could use?

MOGILL: Right. Something came after this.

SPORN: Are you giving this to me?

MOGILL: I'd like to get that back.

SPORN: I will give you everything back.

MOGILL: Oh, fine.

SPORN: I will either duplicate this material, or . . . I think I can without destroying it. I see you've taped together a little bit.

MOGILL: Yes. (LAUGHS). Yes.

SPORN: Alright, I'll do that. But, this is not again, material that originates here in Detroit?

MOGILL: No, no. It didn't originate here, although we used a lot of the things. I don't remember who wrote this. It might have been Arthur Clifford. I'm not sure.

SPORN: And this . . .

MOGILL: (SINGS):

At the last club meeting,
we ladies took up Socialism,
and you know it's quite nice.
We all sit around the fire drinking tea.
Last year it was art, no, technocracy.
But the Socialism is so
much more exciting.
It's so daring . . . Et cetera.

SPORN: Is this an original song, and original lyrics?

MOGILL: I don't remember. Original words, I'm sure.

SPORN: Now, you wouldn't want me to write on this?

MOGILL: Yes, you could. You could, as long as I . . .

SPORN: Just, I want to put down a note—may be Arthur Clifford. You're not sure?

MOGILL: No. Some of the original songs from the UAW, I know I have, if you don't have them. The . . .

SPORN: Are you referring to a song by Maurice Sugar?

MOGILL: Maurice Sugar, and that kind of thing. Yes.

SPORN: I'd like to see them. I have some of them, and then our archives have quite a number of them, but still, they might've missed some of them.

MOGILL: Alright, I'll try to dig them up. I should have some laying around.

SPORN: Now, these are songs that the UAW people themselves used in organizing and in meeting, and thing of that sort?

MOGILL: Yes, yes.

SPORN: But, they were not necessarily connected to the theatre?

MOGILL: No, although we did use them. We went to the unions, and so forth.

SPORN: The membership would know them?

MOGILL: The membership would know the songs, yes.

SPORN: Okay, and . . .

MOGILL: Of course, Charlotte probably told you about how we'd go into the plants, during the sit-down strikes . . . (LAUGHS).

SPORN: She told me how she felt about it. I'd like to get to hear what you have to say about it, too. How the audience responded, how you felt about it . . .

MOGILL: As far as audience response was concerned, it was tremendous. The men needed something desperately, because there they were, in the plants, hoping that something would come out of their sit-down, hoping that some benefits could come forth. And any kind of entertainment they could get was most welcome. And, of course, I'm sure you're familiar with Governor Murphy's actions about keeping the Pickerton goons from coming in to start any trouble, and so forth. For the first time in the history of this country, and probably any other country, the governor of the state set up national guard lines to protect the workers. We had special passes to go through the national guard lines. We'd climb in through the windows of the plant, push the . . .

SPORN: Who gave you the passes?

MOGILL: They came from the union hall, and were okayed by the government officials. And we'd push the tables together in the cafeteria, set up a stage, and put on the plays. Certainly, we were all very liberal minded in those days, labor oriented, of course. Jobs were few and far be-

MOGILL: tween for any of the young people, and we knew anything we could do to help the progress of labor, would help us.

SPORN: Going back to the playing in the sit-down plants, did you have any trepidations about going in, or . . .

MOGILL: Oh, no, no, not at all. Not at all. It was an exciting experience, and we looked forward to it, rather than any feelings of fear.

SPORN: Can you remember any specific responses, or that, just that it was great?

MOGILL: As far as responses are concerned, especially when we did Waiting For Lefty, when Agat's brother is exposed as the fink, we soon realized that if we played for any large audience of union men, we had to have protection for him as he ran up the aisle away from the stage. They were jumping out of the seats trying to get at him. (LAUGHS). There was a man who had fear and trepidation. They would become, especially in a play of that kind, they would join. There would be shouts from the audience, there would be comments, and so forth. They would take part in the play, almost.

SPORN: As it went along, right from the beginning?

MOGILL: As it went along, oh yes, right from the very beginning.

SPORN: Then at these high points of drama they would, you say, in fact . . .

MOGILL: Oh, yes, when . . .

SPORN: . . . they would lose themselves in the play, so to speak.

MOGILL: When Fat would get up to talk, he would be booed. And not by members of the cast, but by the audience as a whole. They wanted no part of this company union representative.

SPORN: Were you in, performing the play, did the group try to do that? Try to bring the audience into the play? Or, was that just . . .

MOGILL: Well, we . . . Well, when you say 'try', I think it was just . . . I think it just happened. Of course, the members of the cast were all scattered through the auditorium and came forward. And, naturally, that helped matters along.

SPORN: So, technically speaking, the way the play was performed, there was, whether you realized it or not . . .

MOGILL: The incentive to . . .

SPORN: . . . the attempt to break down the difference between the actors and the audiences.

MOGILL: . . . And the audience? Oh, yes, very definately, very definately. I would say so.

SPORN: Was that the way the play was originally done in New York? I think it was.

MOGILL: I think it was, yes. I think it was.

SPORN: It was. So, you were simply following the form that had become pretty much accepted for that play?

MOGILL: Yes, yes.

SPORN: Now, you did Waiting For Lefty. This was a shortened version, or was the . . .

MOGILL: It wasn't the entire play. It was a shortened version.

SPORN: And was this one of those instances where you changed it from a taxi strike to trade strike?

MOGILL: Yes, we changed it to an automobile strike. We changed it to whatever group we were playing for because during that period, not only the automobile plants themselves, but all the surrounding industries and whatever industry was involved. We would change the locale in the play. We even had department stores sales people sitting down.
(TAPE STOPPED AND STARTED).

MOGILL: Was that George?

SPORN: George, yes. Was this sponsored by the Federal Theatre, ah . . . by the Contemporary Theatre?

MOGILL: By the Contemporary, yes.

SPORN: Who are the children?

MOGILL: We used it as a money raiser for the group.

SPORN: Now, it's quite obvious that from the long time over which the group existed, that you were very serious about the theatre, as well as your social commitment.

MOGILL: Oh, very definately. We were all extrememly interested in theatre as such, besides the social commitment.

SPORN: What brought you to . . . How'd you get started in that? Your interest in theatre?

MOGILL: I personally? I personally was with a Yiddish theatre group, and members of the Contemporary Theatre came to see the play one day; came backstage afterwards, and invited me to join. And, I like the type of thing they were doing; became trememdously interested, and joined the

MOGILL: group. This was in 1934, I think. At that time, they were doing the . . . A revue of some kind.

SPORN: Peace On Earth?

MOGILL: No, it was a . . .

SPORN: Array?

MOGILL: No, it was a revue of . . .

SPORN: Newsboy?

MOGILL: . . . I'm trying to think . . . I can't think of it . . .

SPORN: I think I know the one you mean. That was something put on by the Theatre Action?

MOGILL: I think so, I think so. It dealt with Father Coughlin and with . . . And some of the other extreme right wing politicians.

SPORN: Now, was that a revue written by people here?

MOGILL: I think it was. I think it was.

SPORN: Do you have any idea who?

MOGILL: No, I don't, and there again, I think Charlotte might be able to steer you into that. Can't for the life of me think of . . .

SPORN: Now that's a manuscript that we used to . . .

MOGILL: I think she could steer you into that one.

SPORN: When you say revue, what precisely do you mean?

MOGILL: Songs and sketches.

SPORN: Songs, sketches, skits?

MOGILL: Yes. Mostly songs . . . Let's see. Father Coughlin, think I can . . .
(SINGS);

When your hair has turned to silver,
I will see what I can do.
I've stocks and stocks of silver,
But can always use a few,
When you feel a bit inflated,
Notify me right away,
'Cause when your hair has turned to silver,
I will shear the locks away.

(LAUGHS). It's amazing how lines come back to you as you think.

SPORN: You remember that after all these years.

MOGILL: Yes. And then there was an Arthur Clifford thing on the police department in Detroit, Pickert . . .

SPORN: That's one of those plays that he did, or revues . . .

MOGILL: Yes.

SPORN: . . . I don't know. Was that a revue too, or a play?

MOGILL: Yes, that was a revue kind of thing, too.

SPORN: Whatever happened to Arthur Clifford?

MOGILL: I don't know. I was not ever really close with him. I didn't know him that well, myself.

SPORN: Do you think Charlotte might know?

MOGILL: Quite probably. Quite probably. And then, Miss Horace . . . Once I was a member of the theatre group, if you weren't in the play, you were still working at the theatre, whether you were teaching one of the theatre classes, or building scenery or doing the lighting. And, I did most of the lighting on the shows at the Art Institute. And, in fact, even some of the plays that I played in, I would run offstage, and give directions for changing . . . (LAUGHING).

SPORN: Now, just to come back a moment, but you got into the Contemporary Theatre for the Yiddish theatre . . .

MOGILL: Yes.

SPORN: . . . here in Detroit?

MOGILL: Yes, here in Detroit.

SPORN: Why were you interested in being in the Yiddish theatre?

MOGILL: There again, we go back a long way. My father had been interested in theatre way back, and had directed theatre for many of the Yiddish theatre groups in the early 1920's. I met a man who . . . I met Mosha Harr. I don't know whether you ever knew him. He was director of the Sholom Aleichem Institute here. And he organized a Yiddish theatre group here. In fact, he collected a tremendous number of books on theatre and such, which he has donated to both Wayne State and to the University of Detroit when he died. But, he was an amazing person, and he loved the Yiddish theatre, and organized the Yiddish theatre group which functioned here for quite a long while. And there was also a Yiddish Kinderteater, which we used children from the various schoolas, and I helped Mosha direct those, and worked on the staging of those with him.

SPORN: When you came . . . So, this interest was purely theatrical . . .

MOGILL: Was purely theatreical.

SPORN: . . . and stemmed, sort of, as part of a family tradition . . .

MOGILL: Yes.

SPORN: . . . your father being in it. After you joined the Contemporary Theatre group, did you maintain a relationship with the Yiddish Theatre? Or did you throw most of your efforts in Contemporary Theatre?

MOGILL: Most of my efforts were Contemporary Theatre, although I did maintain a connection, yes. Whenever there was a performance that I was particularly interested in, I . . . For instance, when Maurice Schwartz came here with Yoshe Cald, he brought a skeleton group, and there were three, I think four of us, who joined him, and played in the local performance. And Ben Amie would come in, he and his wife, and again a few local people would join him, and play with him in the Yiddish theatre.

SPORN: Did you ever have the ambition to become a full-time actor?

MOGILL: Yes.

SPORN: You did.

MOGILL: Yes.

SPORN: Through these years? All through these years?

MOGILL: Well, to a great extent, although family economics was the determining factor. And I felt that the only, really, the only real way to get into the professional theatre would be to go off where there was a lot of professional theatre. I did some television work in and around town, on and off, if I got called once in a while. More recently, I've done some more theatre. In fact, I was with Hilberry three years ago as a guest performer.

SPORN: In what play?

MOGILL: The Tenth Man.

SPORN: You were married in those years? In the thirties?

MOGILL: I married in '38.

SPORN: This theatre occupied most of your time at night, or . . .

MOGILL: After work.

SPORN: You worked? Where did you work?

MOGILL: Dad had an electrical shop, and when I said the economics was the determining factor, really on a shoe string. And the conversations would go with Mother most of the time. "Stay another six months." and "We need the help." So, you stayed another six months, and another six months, because we needed the help, and I didn't begrudge them that. But, by the same token, I didn't do what I personally wanted to do.

SPORN: When you say "Stay another six months," was your notion then you were going to leave for one of the centers of theatre?

MOGILL: I had already . . .

SPORN: Was that the main . . .

MOGILL: Yes, that was the main, that was the main idea . . .

SPORN: Like New York City, Chicago . . .

MOGILL: . . . that I would go primarily to New York, if I could.

SPORN: And really try to make a go of it in theatre.

MOGILL: Yes. But, as the years went by, and it didn't happen, I just decided that evidently, cha nu par chelle. And when I got married . . . And then the war years came along, of course.

SPORN: Did you stay in that electrical shop all through those years, or . . .

MOGILL: Yes, I did. Yes, I did.

SPORN: . . . go on ot something else?

MOGILL: And you'd come directly from work to the studio, which was at 28 West Warren. And, because there was so much work to do, besides rehearsals and so forth and so on . . .

SPORN: Everybody would do that, go right there?

MOGILL: To a great extent, and if Sophie Fordon, who was teaching her art class across the hall from us, could catch you before you got into your studio, you'd have to model for an hour while . . . (LAUGHS).

SPORN: Sophie . . .

MOGILL: Fordon.

SPORN: Fordon. Now, this must be the place that Minna Gossman told me about. She described a place where the theatre group was on one side, and the art group was on the other side, and her first husband, Maury Merlin . . .

MOGILL: Maurice was a member of the group that worked in the studio along with . . . Had a studio along with Sophie. Trying to think of who else.

SPORN: She showed me some of the work that he'd done. She had photographs of some of the graphic he had done.

MOGILL: And then, next door . . .

SPORN: Were these people in the Federal Art Project?

MOGILL: Some of them were.

SPORN: But, this particular studio was not?

MOGILL: Was not,

SPORN: Not at all?

MOGILL: The studio itself was not.

SPORN: Just people who thought they needed another place to work.

MOGILL: Right, right.

SPORN: So, they co-operately . . .

MOGILL: And they were very closely related to us. They would . . . In any way you could help each other, you did. And the new dance group was right next door to us, also at 28 West Warren. I don't know whether Minnie mentioned that.

SPORN: She didn't mention the dance group.

MOGILL: Yes. We had the dance group, the theatre, and the art studios across, and then our own studios for building scenery down the hall.

SPORN: Okay, so obviously, with all that kind of activity . . . Here were three different art forms, located in the same building, people closely related to each other in one way or another, so there was a high interest in doing things artistically.

MOGILL: Oh yes, very much so.

SPORN: But, making political things artistically?

MOGILL: Yes.

SPORN: These are . . . Here you want to check the time?

MOGILL: That's alright, I've got lots of time yet.

SPORN: Okay, I've got to watch the time of this tape to see if we're still running. Let me get back my train of thought. Okay, so, you have these three groups, people very interested in the arts, and who came running down from work. Minnie Gossman mentioned this to me, too, how she and her husband would come from work, he would go in one direction, she would go in another direction, and so on. You really devoted a lot of your spare time . . .

MOGILL: Oh, yes. Dinner consisted of having hamburgers sent up from the hamburger stand downstairs, because you had no time to stop your rehearsal.

SPORN: Also, you mentioned certain classes that you taught.

MOGILL: Yes.

SPORN: You were interested in improving the techniques and the craftsmanship of the people, of yourself . . .

MOGILL: Yes, we were. Yes, we were.

SPORN: She mentions--Charlotte did, mentioned that after coming back from a

SPORN: convention in New York City, where I think she said she saw Newsboy. Do you remember that play, Newsboy? It was a review.

MOGILL: Yes.

SPORN: It was so well done, so professionally done, that the people who were down there, came back convinced that they had to improve professional skills of the Contemporary Theatre. And at that point she mentions several kinds of classes were established, like body movement classes, and so on and so forth.

MOGILL: Yes.

SPORN: And these continued to appear. I noticed that, going through some of these reviews, that, for example, James Doll, D-O-L-L, conducted a class in the history of the theatre for the group.

MOGILL: Yes.

SPORN: And, I believe some others . . . Oh, yes, "There were classes in both dramatic and technical sides of the theatre, were offered," and this is from the daily "Collegian", December 7, 1938, which is an article on the Cradle Will Rock, and so on. So, do you remember this James Doll? Is he still around?

MOGILL: I don't know.

SPORN: Do you remember him at all?

MOGILL: I . . . Very vaguely, very vaguely. No. I do recall somebody coming up to the theatre once, who had written a letter to "Theatre Arts Monthly", asking for a good theatre school in the Midwest, and getting a letter back from "Theatre Arts Monthly", and I'm not sure that they have the answer in the magazine, or whether it was just a letter, telling him to go join the Contemporary Theatre in Detroit. That's probably the finest group that they could get together with to learn theatre arts in those years.

SPORN: So, there was this definite concern "Hey, we want to be top notch."

MOGILL: Oh, beyond question. Beyond question. I don't think that the newspapers would have given us the space that they did if we hadn't been that good. We were a theatre of the left, the pink, and so forth, as they called us, and yet they didn't fail to come and see every one of our plays that we did. The large newspapers, that is.

SPORN: Were there any other theatre groups here in town? Competing groups, for example?

MOGILL: There were afterwards, in the forties, not . . .

SPORN: Not in the thirties. Were there any professional theatres appearing live, like say the Fisher Theatre is today? Did anybody bring in Broadway plays?

MOGILL: Plays were brought in, yes, they were brought in through the theatres downtown, the Cass Theatre, and the Shubert, Lafayette. Plays would come in there, yes.

SPORN: How regularly would you say?

MOGILL: On and off through the year. They were dark a good part of the time.

SPORN: But, would they be as frequent as say, your performances?

MOGILL: Oh, yes.

SPORN: Yes. So your . . . The Contemporary Theatre was accorded a great deal of respect then, in comparison to these other theatres, which were . . .

MOGILL: Yes. Oh, very definitely. In fact, I wish I could have found that review, that I think either Calahan or Russel McCloughlan reviewed one of our plays at the same time that he reviewed the opening of the Theatre Festival in Ann Arbor, and we got the top billing on it.

SPORN: Yeah, I saw that revue. It's not Russel McCloughlan, somebody by the name of Holms, I think.

MOGILL: Ralph Holms, from the "Detroit Times".

SPORN: Right.

MOGILL: So, in fact, both McCloughlan and Calahan came to speak for our group on invitation, on subjects dealing with the theatre. When we'd have a small lecture series of some kind.

SPORN: Now, were you . . . Did you have your political commitment, whatever it was, I'm not trying to pry, before you got into Contemporary Theatre?

MOGILL: Yes. Political liberal commitment, certainly.

SPORN: Labor commitment, working class?

MOGILL: Oh, yes. In spite of the fact that I had a religious education, the folks were still members of the Arbeiter Ring, which was Socialist oriented, so that the commitment, the political commitment was ever present.

SPORN: It was ever present?

MOGILL: Yes.

SPORN: So, then when you joined the Contemporary Theatre, encountering that political tendency so prominent . . .

MOGILL: No, it wasn't strange at all. There was no problem what so ever, I didn't have to veer one way or the other.

SPORN: Fay Wolfson describes how she was apolitical before she came to the group, and it was in the group that she began to . . .

MOGILL: That's interesting.

SPORN: . . . learn some politics, and she was sympathetic to it, and agreed to it, and seemed to . . . And so on.

MOGILL: Because when you speak up . . . You see, I did stay with some form of theatre, on and off through the years, right up to the present. As I mentioned, I played with Hilberry three years ago, I've done things for the Jewish Community Center through the years, with their theatres. And, earlier, when the voice was younger, a lot of chamber opera with the Detroit Opera Theatre.

SPORN: Oh, really? When was this?

MOGILL: Oh, the early sixties, with Margie Gordon and Marilyn Cotlow.

SPORN: The present Detroit Opera Theatre, is that what it's called?

MOGILL: No, they're presently called the Piccolo Opera Group.

SPORN: The one that performs in the Music Hall?

MOGILL: No.

SPORN: There's a Detroit Opera something.

MOGILL: Yes, there is, but this is not the group. Margie Gordon is the director of it, and they are funded and do a lot of work for school systems. In fact, way back in the sixties, we did a . . . We would do the chamber operas in English.

SPORN: Did you belong to the Federal Theatre at all?

MOGILL: No, I didn't.

SPORN: Never did?

MOGILL: No.

SPORN: I spoke to Hy Fireman, do you know him?

MOGILL: Yes, I know Hy. I know Hy.

SPORN: He said he was in the Federal Theatre Project . . .

MOGILL: Yes. Hy was a member of the Federal Theatre Project.

SPORN: Well, as a . . .

MOGILL: In fact, he'd come from one rehearsal to another very fast,

SPORN: Do you remember anything that the Federal Theatre Project put on was adequate?

MOGILL: The Living Newspaper, that I recall.

SPORN: That was like One-Third of a Nation?

MOGILL: Pretty much, yes.

SPORN: They put that on locally.

MOGILL: Yes.

SPORN: Local talent, and so on. Do you remember any other people who were in the Federal Theatre Project?

MOGILL: No, I don't. Not right now.

SPORN: If you do, would you sort of . . .

MOGILL: I would be very happy to let you know, and as far as the other material is concerned, if I can find those songs, I'll certainly see that you get them. I'll put them in the mail to you.

SPORN: Yes, I'd like to get those. I'm not trying to finish this, I just want to make sure this tape . . .

MOGILL: Yes, certainly. I can do that at twelve o'clock, or we may finish by then.

SPORN: What time is it now?

MOGILL: It's about eleven minutes to.

SPORN: No, I don't think we will. Do you mind coming back?

MOGILL: Not at all.

SPORN: For a little bit more?

MOGILL: No, not at all.

SPORN: Finish the other side of the tape.

MOGILL: Alright.

SPORN: Because what I want to get into now, this is all very interesting and very useful for what I'm after. What I'd like to get into also now . . . So, okay, here we have you with a record now of interest in theatre, with an ambition to go off to try to make a go of it in theatre as a career, but on the other side, was an economic conflict where you needed to make a living, and your family needed to have this small little business running, and so on, and these two things conflicted with each other. In fact, I would say the economics won out over the ambitions.

MOGILL: Yes, they did.

- SPORN: Okay. At any rate, you still stayed with the theatre, and you still wanted to be very serious about it in terms of perfecting your professional techniques. You aren't just happy to do anything.
- MOGILL: No, no. If it wasn't . . . If we felt, or I personally felt that artistically, it wasn't good I wouldn't do it.
- SPORN: Alright. At the same time, you want to use the theatre in a way that would be socially useful, and that would reach an audience that, for a whole number of reasons, had not been reached by the theatre. The reasons of high price, for reasons that the subject matter was not of great interest to that audience, great moment to that audience and so on. Okay?
- MOGILL: Yes, and yet in certain aspects, we failed really, and I don't know why or how. We went into the union halls certainly, hoping that we could gradually interest these people in live theatre. We played in their union halls, did plays and skits and yet, didn't get much of an audience from that group when we played professionally. It was the middle class audience that gave us our substance.
- SPORN: This is in the Detroit Institute of Art of . . .
- MOGILL: Yes. I'm speaking . . .
- SPORN: . . . are you also referring when you moved over to your own theatre on Temple and Brooklyn?
- MOGILL: Both.
- SPORN: Was it Temple and Brooklyn?
- MOGILL: Yes.
- SPORN: Okay. You felt that they didn't come out to see you, although they were perfectly happy to have you come to them.
- MOGILL: That's . . . Yes.
- SPORN: When you did, they were enthusiastic,
- MOGILL: Oh, tremendously excited about the performance and such, but nevertheless . . .
- SPORN: Why do you think . . .
- MOGILL: I don't know. I don't know.
- SPORN: Think about it. Maybe on our next interview you could offer some ideas about that.
- (TAPE STOPPED. END OF SIDE A. BEGINNING OF SIDE B).
- SPORN: Do you recall, in those years, any discussions that went on within

SPORN: the group about the effectiveness of the plays if done a certain way rather than another way, about the politics of the plays, whether objection to the politics? I don't mean now, from the right, but objections that they perhaps, weren't sound politics from the perspective of the, say, left labor liberal point of view, any conflict between what might constitute an effective, dramatic way of presenting the material as against a very direct and clear statement of the politics?

MOGILL: To a certain extent, there was always discussion of anything that you do, and we did discuss the plays in that respect. Very often, before a play was done, we would sit down and talk it through, because, for more than one reason, we were interested in audience response. And it was questionable, very often, as to whether we would do a play because we were sure that we couldn't or could draw the audience to help us defray our expenses, because, more than once, cars were mortgaged, so that you could produce your play. And then, of course, redeem it afterwards. But, there was always the fear that you might not be able to do so. (LAUGHS). Although, we played to full audiences at the Art Institute, constantly. SRO on occasion. But, I think, part of that was due to the commitment of the group, to a great extent, and the name that we had built up for ourselves artistically, as much as being the socially oriented group. But, I think artistically we were beginning to really get a name for ourselves, so it didn't make much difference what we played, we thought, because we did one play, and I can't recall which one it was, that was not . . . That had no political leaning what so ever. It was a story about a -- it was a bank story. I think it was Classic 29, I'm not sure, and almost fell on our faces. The audience didn't show.

SPORN: Was that because of the social content?

MOGILL: Yes, strangely enough, it was. Because the play itself, we felt, was as good as anything we had done artistically.

SPORN: But, the audience was accustomed to seeing . . . The audience you were attracting was one that expected and wanted . . .

MOGILL: Yes.

SPORN: . . . Some social or political . . .

MOGILL: Yes, the audience . . . I would say that the greatest part of our audience, the greater part of our audience expected something with

MOGILL: social content.

SPORN: And, this was still primarily the . . .

MOGILL: Yes.

SPORN: Okay, coming back, though, to the discussions you had about what you were doing, what kind of audience you were trying to reach, and so on, did you ever find a conflict between politics and the craft?

MOGILL: I personally never did. I always put one ahead of the other, even though . . .

SPORN: Which did you put ahead?

MOGILL: It was the artistic element which took the forefront with me.

SPORN: Now, I've asked this question of a number of people that I've interviewed, like Charlotte Shapiro, Fay Wolfson, Minna Gossman, and even Hy Fireman, and since I gather your answer and theirs is that there was not much conflict between the two.

MOGILL: No.

SPORN: In fact, Fay Wolfson put it this way that you know, it was a pretty simple matter unlike the complexities of the sixties. People pretty well had the issues very clear . . .

MOGILL: Oh, yes, very much so.

SPORN: . . . and so on. Another sense I get is that since the group wasn't doing very much original stuff, it was taking plays that were written by other writers, say, in New York or California. For example, list of plays you have here by John Howard Lawson, Paul Greene, John Wexly, Albert Maltz, and so on, the substance of these plays were already there. There wasn't much to argue about, because there were the . . .

MOGILL: True, the plays were there, they were well written, and they were available to us.

SPORN: But, there were debates going on say, in New York City, I know, because Albert Maltz and George Sklar, for example, told me about some debates that went on there for your union. I'm sure you know that.

MOGILL: Oh, yes.

SPORN: Put on Mother by Bertold Brecht, that's an adaptation of the novel. It's a novel about Madame Curie. And there was . . . Brecht objected terribly to what they were doing to the play, and others . . . And, there was a big debate, controversy about that. That was one debate and controversy. There were some others that George Sklar described

SPORN: to me. Also, I think he described to me a play that either he had done, or Albert Maltz had done, in which . . . I guess it was Peace On Earth. George did that first play, Peace On Earth. And it was a story . . . An anti-war play. I don't know if you remember that. I think it's one of the plays . . .

MOGILL: Yes, it's one of the plays that we did. Yes, yes.

SPORN: It was an anti-war play, and one of the characters, I think the main character was a pacifist, and the pacifist somewhere along in the play says he's opposed to all wars. George Sklar described to me a debate. You can't have somebody saying in the play that he's against all wars. There are some wars that are good wars, there are some wars that are bad wars. So you have to make a differentiation between wars against imperialism and other kinds of wars.

MOGILL: Yes, and yet Bury The Dead was a play that dealt with wars as such that . . .

SPORN: Didn't differentiate? Okay, he described the kinds of debates that didn't alter his play. The play stayed the way it was, but there was a debate going on, and so I wondered, did those kinds of debates ever reach you, or that is, your group or you yourself? Were you concerned about those things? If so, in what way . . .

MOGILL: If they were, I wasn't caught. I'm trying to remember now when you mentioned Sklar, or when we did Stevedore. That was already later, wasn't it?

SPORN: Stevedore was a couple years after Peace On Earth.

MOGILL: Yes. I don't know whether Charlotte mentioned to you, we brought in a large group of Negroes into the group. Previous to that, we had no Negroes in the group, but we brought a large group of Negroes into the group when we did Stevedore, and there was one Negro, one black theatre group that worked in the Department of Recreation. And we coached them in their plays, and when the competitions were held, I think it was either the second or third time that the group we had coached won the first prize, they stopped holding the competitions. (LAUGHS).

SPORN: So, you brought some black actors . . .

MOGILL: Yes.

SPORN: . . . in to play the various parts that needed to be played.

MOGILL: Yes.

SPORN: Did you know that Paul Wilson played the lead role in Stevedore in London?

MOGILL: No, I didn't. No, I didn't. I think, who was that, Lloyd Richards who played it . . .

SPORN: Here?

MOGILL: Here.

SPORN: Lloyd Richards?

MOGILL: I think so.

SPORN: Is he still around?

MOGILL: I don't know.

SPORN: Did he stay with the theatre group?

MOGILL: He stayed with the group for a while, yes.

SPORN: So it was intergrated?

MOGILL: Yes, it was. After Stevedore.

SPORN: So, at any rate, one thing you might say is that Stevedore did contribute to the intergration of the group.

MOGILL: Yes, it did.

SPORN: At any rate, you were saying about Stevedore, Peace On Earth, you were going to make some point about Stevedore, I believe, in terms of it's theatre and politics.

MOGILL: Well, there already . . . I think there was some questions there about the play itself, and the stereotyped characters in the play, really.

SPORN: Of blacks?

MOGILL: Of both, and the whites. Stereotyped bosses and such, which was just a little bit too harsh for some of the people, and there was discussion on it, and yet we did produce it as it is written.

SPORN: And there was some discussion locally . . .

MOGILL: Yes.

SPORN: . . . that whether this was really effective portrayal. Is that it?

MOGILL: Yes.

SPORN: Do you recall any of the . . .

MOGILL: No, no, I can't to that extent, but I know that there was some feeling among a few of the people. That they felt strange, and yet went and did it.

SPORN: Did they feel strange, say, purely on grounds of accuracy of portrayal,

SPORN: or did they also feel somehow or other, that that created difficulties in actually portraying the parts on the stage?

MOGILL: Maybe both.

SPORN: Maybe both.

MOGILL: But, no, I can't, I can't think of any . . .

SPORN: How about yourself? How did you feel about these characterizations?

MOGILL: The only problem I had, I think, at that time, I was not familiar with blacks, to that extent, and found it a little bit difficult communicating at first. But gradually, as we worked together, that disappeared.

SPORN: Now, this is relationships you had with other actors in the group?

MOGILL: Yes.

SPORN: What about the play itself, and it's portrayal of the stereotypes of blacks, whites, and bosses, and so on?

MOGILL: I felt that even though they were a little over done, that I could live with it. I thought that possibly, from the audience point of view, it made it much more clear cut.

SPORN: You mentioned you know Saul Sniderman. Can you remember any other people who were in the Federal Writers' Project?

MOGILL: I can't . . . No, I can't think back to . . .

SPORN: He was in that, right? Do you know, off hand, what kind of writing he did?

MOGILL: No, I don't.

SPORN: Did he write short stories . . .

MOGILL: I really don't . . .

SPORN: Well, he'll be able to tell me that.

MOGILL: I was more familiar with the work of the art group that I was with the . . .

SPORN: The FAP, Federal Arts Project.

MOGILL: Yes.

SPORN: Minnie Gossman gave me this photograph of a mural her husband did, which she says was placed in a Highland Park public school. Did you

SPORN; know anything about that? Mainly if you do, do you know which school?

MOGILL: No, no, but I can . . . I wasn't familiar with this one, I'm trying to remember, he did some post office murals.

SPORN: He did? Here locally?

MOGILL: Trying to remember . . . Was it Flint?

SPORN: Flint?

MOGILL: I think so. I'm not absolutely certain though. But, I'm almost certain that he did some post office murals.

SPORN: So either here or Flint?

MOGILL: I think so. I've got to get the little wheels turning to think back to those days. (LAUGHS).

SPORN: I know. You probably haven't had anybody question you about these things for a long time, and it . . . It may come back, by the way. You may find suddenly a week from now, you're thinking about it, something suddenly . . .

MOGILL: If so, I'll put it down on paper.

SPORN: Jot it down, yes, jot it down. Because that could be useful to me. I've got to get to know more Federal Writers' people, I've got to find out where some of this art work is, and where some of the manuscripts produced by the Federal Writers' Project is.

MOGILL: I'm trying to think.

SPORN: I also, of course, am very interested in, as I've said over again today, in any materials from the theatre, whether it be song parodies, skits, sketches . . .

MOGILL: I may be able to dig up some more of that, I certainly will try. I don't know whether I . . . Let's see.

SPORN; Now, this material is the Maltz play?

MOGILL: No, part of it is the Maltz play.

SPORN; Oh.

MOGILL: These are . . . Try to remember now. A big problem is, I don't remember whether they were local or . . .

SPORN; Is this a play?

MOGILL; Well, skits, skits.

SPORN; Yes.

MOGILL: Yes. And, I don't remember who wrote this.

SPORN: I wonder who would. You think Charlotte might remember?

MOGILL: She might. She might, because Charlotte handled most of the script work for us in those days.

SPORN: Now, who's that?

MOGILL: I don't remember them.

SPORN: Are they the players, or . . .

MOGILL: No, those are the . . .

SPORN: Writers?

MOGILL: Writers.

SPORN: But, you don't know whether they're local or not?

MOGILL: No, I don't. The man on the street, I think that came out of the . . . I think this one came out of there, skits and sketches.

SPORN: Out of where?

MOGILL: Out of the skits and sketches.

SPORN: Out of here?

MOGILL: I think it did. I'm not sure.

SPORN: Well, I can check it there. Are you going to leave this with me?

MOGILL: I can if you wish, if you want to look it over.

SPORN: Well, yeah. Let me do that. In fact, what I want to do so I don't misplace anything . . .

MOGILL: Alright. This is the Simon McKeever thing, so . . . And, beyond that . . . Yes, I think that's it.

SPORN: I want to keep all of this together and label it. Let me give you back this envelope, and I'll get a fresh envelope.

MOGILL: Let's see. I think there was one sheet there that didn't belong with the . . . Right. That's the Simon McKeever.

SPORN: Simon McKeever. So that Simon McKeever thing was put into a play form and you performed the lead role?

MOGILL: Yes.

SPORN: I'm just curious . . .

MOGILL: It was very interesting. The reason I . . . I don't know whether you've read the review . . .

SPORN: I'll read it in a moment.

MOGILL: . . . Because this was in the days when dinner theatre was unknown. Wasn't really dinner theatre, but it was done tavern style.

SPORN: This had little to do with our project but . . . Mike Mogill, Michael Mogill?

MOGILL: Mike, yes, my son. My older son.

SPORN: Is that your son?

MOGILL: Yes.

SPORN: Oh. My wife met him in an art class that they took together, or some art class that they took together here at Wayne State years ago.

MOGILL: Oh, yes. Michael was an art major here, yes.

SPORN: What's he doing?

MOGILL: Mike's a . . .

SPORN: I met him, in fact.

MOGILL: Ah.

SPORN: Yeah.

MOGILL: Mike's a jewelry designer for Jacobson's.

SPORN: Oh, really? And how's he like it?

MOGILL: Oh, very much. He doesn't do much painting any more, but jewelry turned out to be his . . .

SPORN: Jacobson's, you mean the . . .

MOGILL: The department stores.

SPORN: But, he does his own designs, then?

MOGILL: He does his own designs, yes.

SPORN: What does he have, a sort of . . .

MOGILL: He does some custom work. And he does antique repairs for them, and what they do, they take repairs into all of their stores and send them to the one place.

SPORN: So, he does that . . .

MOGILL: So he does that . . .

SPORN: . . . and he sells some of the stuff.

MOGILL: And he does do work on his own, whatever he can.

SPORN: Private customers?

MOGILL: In fact, he has an agreement with Jacobson's so he can do his own work in their facilities.

SPORN: Well, it's good to hear that he's located that way, and has a good job. It's a good job, I guess?

MOGILL: I guess it is, although I think Mike had hopes of gradually branching out and . . .

SPORN: On his own?

MOGILL: Doing his own.

SPORN: That's a curious coincidence, isn't it?

MOGILL: Yes, it is. Very much so. When was it, a few years ago, he entered five pieces in the Michigan Artist Show, and they took all five pieces.

SPORN: Oh, really?

MOGILL: I have a younger son in the arts, too, although he's in the movie medium. Just graduated from the American Film Institute as a fellow.

SPORN: Oh, I'm sorry, I lost . . . I was reading this, I sort of lost . . . Now this Journey of Simon McKeever, this sounds like a revue, with songs and sketches . . .

MOGILL: Well, no. The songs and sketches came afterwards. It's a short play.

SPORN: Oh, you did the play, and then you did the . . .

MOGILL: We did the play, and we did the other things afterwards, yes.

SPORN: And, you did something called the Herecoming Mr. Higgins, by Arthur Miller?

MOGILL: Yes.

SPORN: And, I suppose . . . What would you say? Before Arthur Miller's . . . Well, he'd already achieved his . . .

MOGILL: Yes, but it was still in the early days.

SPORN: Had he done All Of My Sons?

MOGILL: I can't recall, I can't recall.

SPORN: Alan Nailer is Alan . . . That was a stage name.

MOGILL: Yes. Nickarman.

SPORN: Nickarman, yes. Is he the Nickarman who's married to the woman who now lives in Cleveland?

MOGILL: Rose . . .

SPORN: Rose Nickarman?

MOGILL: Yes.

SPORN: Okay. He's fairly ill right now, I understand?

MOGILL: Yes, very much so.

SPORN: I wonder if this version, this play version of The Journey of Simon McKeever is the one that Henry Fonda and Jane Fonda are digging for.

MOGILL: I honestly don't know.

SPORN: So funny, because I had interviewed Albert Maltz, he never mentioned anything about this. There's no reason why he should have.

MOGILL: No, because he wrote it as a novel and . . .

SPORN: Yeah, but negotiations apparently have been going on for some time

SPORN: now, and when I came back here, I called Charlotte because she was the one who told me that she knew him fairly well, and to go out and see--if I'm out there, to see him. So I did, and she wrote ahead to tell him I was coming. So, when I got back, I called Charlotte, and I said, "Hey, I read in the paper today, or the other day, that he's negotiating with the Fondas for a movie version of Simon McKeever." She said "Oh, yes. That's been going on for quite some time." In fact, negotiaions should really have been concluded, and it's putting him in a little bit of a bind. But, it's nice to know that he's, you know, has something that might . . . Now, I've asked you about Arthur Clifford. Now, Carl Miller, he did some, he was the . . . In some of the plays, he is listed as the musical director.

MOGILL: Yes,

SPORN: Not in any of these?

MOGILL: No, when we did the Cradle . . .

SPORN: Cradle Will Rock. Here it is.

MOGILL: When we did the Cradle.

SPORN: Musical direction Carl Miller, set and costumes designed by James Doll, choreography by Edith Segal . . . In fact, I wrote to her, by the way, in New York. I want to go down there to see her, and speak to her. Piano accompaniment by Carl Miller and Norma Kroll. Do you know if Norma Kroll is related to Irving Kroll, who, by the way, I understand was in the Children's Yiddish Theatre? Irving Kroll. He's an attorney here.

MOGILL: Yes, yes. I'm not sure about the association there, but he did play in the Children's Yiddish Theatre.

SPORN: You have no idea about Carl Miller? It lists Carl Miller . . .

MOGILL: No. He was a fine pianist, just a fine pianist.

SPORN: I've seen references to him in one of these articles as a local composer.

MOGILL: How much he had written, I really don't know. I lost touch with him after we did the performance. I don't know if Charlotte mentioned that Blitzstein came to Detroit to our dress rehearsal, before we produced.

SPORN: Yes. Ray Watson tells me that he played a whole score . . .

MOGILL: Yes, he did.

SPORN: . . . at her house.

MOGILL: At her house.

SPORN: She remembers that.

MOGILL: Yes.

SPORN: And she was describing that. Is this one that you gave me . . .

MOGILL: Yes, I did.

SPORN: You see, I want to keep all of this material in one place.

MOGILL: Yes, it is. That's the one that I gave you. Leaving the great Bernstein to play a single piano for the New York company, because they were producing simultaneously. (LAUGHING).

SPORN: You mean Leonard Bernstein?

MOGILL: That's correct.

SPORN: Really?

MOGILL: Blitzstien and Bernstein were the two pianists when it was produced in New York.

SPORN: Really? That's with one '1', right?

MOGILL: Two.

SPORN: Two '1's. Okay. I read somewhere that it was put on for the Federal Theatre Project in New York City. And then it was yanked, for some reason, and they tried to put it on elsewhere, and Orson Wells put it on somewhere, and they were having trouble with Actor's Equity . . .

MOGILL: Yes.

SPORN: . . . They wouldn't allow the actors onstage, and Blitzstien was on the stage playing piano all by himself, and Orson Wells placed the actors in the audience, and they would read their lines from the audience, until they finally settled up the Actor's Equity thing and then it went on again. So, that was a rather interesting little anecdote.

MOGILL: Yes.

SPORN: Some of these things are very fascinating. Let me ask one other question, and I think maybe we'll be kind of exhausted today.

MOGILL: Kind of covered it for . . .

SPORN: Where do you think . . . Who else do you think might have some of these songs and parodies and things? Charlotte's going to look for some. Minnie Gossmin thought she had more than she could locate when she was here.

MOGILL: I do know that I have some of the . . . I don't have the words for .

MOGILL: those things, but I do have some of the recordings that Min made.
And I'll see that you get to hear them.

SPORN: Well, maybe I can go over to your place, if you don't mind?

MOGILL: Possibly.

SPORN: Or, you coming to my place and play them on my record player.

MOGILL: The records have to go, I think . . .

SPORN: 78's?

MOGILL: They have to go backwards, too, I think. If I remember correctly.
They were cut on a peculiar machine. I'll have to check it out.

SPORN: You could do it at home?

MOGILL: I'm not sure, and if I can't play it at home, I think it would have
to be played on one of the manual operated machines.

SPORN: What I can do is, I can get from audio-visuals here, a very sophisti-
cated equipment, so maybe that would be the best way to do it.

MOGILL: I think so. I think so. And I'll dig them up. Because Min and I
and Al Nickarman had gotten together one evening, and Min sang them
for us, and we put them on the recordings.

SPORN: How long ago would that be?

MOGILL: Oh, it's a lot of years.

SPORN: It goes back to the fifties, sixties?

MOGILL: No, I think it goes . . . Oh, it goes back a lot more than that.

SPORN: Back in the forties?

MOGILL: Yes, it would go back to the forties.

SPORN: So, that was shortly after she left the group?

MOGILL: Yes.

SPORN: Alright, so you have that as a collection. Do you think you might
have other songs, the UAW songs?

MOGILL: Possible, I'll go through my material that I have.

SPORN: Yeah, I wish you would. I know it's a lot of trouble to put you to,
but it's the only way . . .

MOGILL: It's sort of fun going back on some of those things. I've dug up a
lot of music in the meantime, which I had laid aside and not used.

SPORN: Music of that period?

MOGILL: Music of, well, almost any period, yes.

SPORN: See, one of the things that there . . .

MOGILL: You see, since I retired, I retired two years ago. And I had been

MOGILL; singing in synagogues all my life, through the High Holidays with the cantors here in town, and so forth and so on. And, after I retired cantor Barkon called me one day, "Leo, they're going to call you from Windsor, don't say no." I said, "Well, what's it all about?" He says "They'll call you." Well, I did get the call, and took the job at the Windsor Temple as their cantor there, that was two years ago.

SPORN: In Ontario, in Canada?

MOGILL: Yes. So, I commute weedends now.

SPORN: Oh, you still do that?

MOGILL: Yes.

SPORN: I see. But, you consider yourself a dramatic actor as well as a singing actor?

MOGILL: Oh, I . . . Yes, yes. I'm a . . . In spite of the fact that I've had musical training, a lot of musical training, a lot of voice training, and worked in opera and so forth and so on, my dramatic ability is better than my singing ability.

SPORN: Did you stay in the electrical business?

MOGILL: Yes, I did.

SPORN: You took over your father's business?

MOGILL: For a very short period. I was not and am not a business man, and closed it up just as soon as I possibly could.

SPORN: So, then what did you do?

MOGILL: I worked in the trade.

MOGILL: I worked in the trade, started working for some of the bigger contractors on commercial and industrial work.

SPORN: I see. And retired from that a couple years ago?

MOGILL: Yes.

SPORN: I see. So, well, that sounds nice, You look to be very alert, and bright and happy, and so on.

MOGILL: I certainly am.

SPORN: Yeah, well, I really appreciate your coming down, and . . .

MOGILL: I hope that I've been of some little help.

SPORN: Yes, all of this is of help. You supplied me with some material, you've given me some of your ideas. I was going to say, there are three things that I hope to do with this. When I gather enough material, I want to

SPORN: publish some of it, okay. An article, or even perhaps a book if you fit together with a larger seam. About which I'll ask you another question before we quit. The other thing is that I am working with some of the people over at the Detroit Institute of Art. They are very interested in doing the same in the visual arts that I'm doing in the theatre arts and writing. If we gather together enough material and murals and easel paintings, and so on, and manuscripts, we hope to work up maybe a year from now, a year and a half from now, an exhibition of this material of visual arts, a display of the manuscripts, and maybe we'll put on a couple of plays.

MOGILL: It would be fun.

SPORN: And maybe, who knows, you might be called upon to act a part again.

MOGILL: It would be fun. I, when was it, last year, I did some readings from some of the theatre in the thirties with Saul . . . I always think of him as Paul Winter . . . (LAUGHING).

SPORN: Saul Wineman?

MOGILL: . . . Wineman. In the College of Lifelong Learning.

SPORN: Lifelong Learning?

MOGILL: And a few years ago, there was a symposium on the theatre in the thirties here.

SPORN: Yes. I have some of that information that Charlotte Shapiro gave me. At any rate, the third thing that I want to do, is I want to develop a course to offer for credit on this material. And that's one of the reasons . . . That's another reason why I'd like to get my hands on material, because I have to have something to teach it on. It would be a kind of unusual course to teach literary culture, art culture . . . That is part published, and part unpublished. I think it's worthwhile for people to understand that there was really a great deal of cultural activity, and it doesn't always come in traditional forms of, you know, the standard forms of publication, and so on and so forth.

MOGILL: Oh, no. Because we were the theatre of . . . We'd go out, we'd get calls from various organizations, especially the lawyers in Detroit. The liberal lawyers who worked with ACLU, and so forth and so on, used to call on us to entertain very often, and so that we would do entertainment at some of their meetings, and they'd use us as drawing crowd to bring their members in.

SPORN: During the 1930's?

MOGILL: Yes.

SPORN: The liberal organizations?

MOGILL: Yes, the liberal organizations.

SPORN: Not only the trade union organizations?

MOGILL: Right, not only trade union organizations.

SPORN: I see. And, for them what would you do?

MOGILL: Little skits and sketches, that last club meeting type thing that I gave you, songs and such that we put together. Unfortunately, so much of that material, I don't have.

SPORN: Would you say, if you were doing it for an ACLU, it would be a little less . . .

MOGILL: Well, it certainly wouldn't be . . . It would be less labor oriented. It would be politically oriented.

SPORN: It would be, but not . . . More of a liberal kind of thing . . .

MOGILL: That's right.

SPORN: Yes, more than anything else. Well, I have one other question I wanted to ask you, but it escapes my mind at the moment. Well, we'll come back to it. I'm sure we'll get together at least one more time. And, in the meantime, if you can find any materials, or if you can think of anybody . . .

MOGILL: Besides the records, I'll certainly look and see what I can find.

SPORN: Anything on the Federal Writers' Project, people who might know who might have any . . . Anyone who might have some records,

MOGILL: There's one other artist that I can't . . . Teaching at the University of Michigan.

(Frank Cassara is the artist, and he teaches printmaking at the U. of M.)

SPORN: I think I know his name. I don't have his name with me here, but somebody else told me about somebody teaching at . . . Well, one person teaching at Michigan State University, Charles Pollock.

MOGILL: I don't remember.

SPORN: But, then there was someone else who is teaching at U. of M. who was in the Federal Art Project.

MOGILL: Yes, he was in the Federal Art Project. In fact, to draw a blank . . . Because, he gave us one of his pictures as a wedding gift.

SPORN: Well, when you go home will you look?

MOGILL: (LAUGHING). Yes, it's a picture of a group of Federal Workers on a . . . Working on a road project.

SPORN: I see. Well, that's interesting. And you have that?

MOGILL: Yes.

SPORN: And that was done under . . .

MOGILL: That was done . . .

SPORN: . . . did that when he was on the . . .

MOGILL: . . . when he was on the Federal Art Project.

SPORN: So, you have . . . He did an easel painting? It's a painting?

MOGILL: It's a . . .

SPORN: Wrap? Lithograph?

MOGILL: . . . a print, a lithograph.

SPORN: He did that as a . . . While he was on . . .

MOGILL: He did that while he was . . . Yes.

SPORN: . . . the Federal Arts Project?

MOGILL: And, if you want to photograph that, I . . .

SPORN: I don't know how the museum people would feel, maybe they would want to some day borrow it to put in the exhibition.

MOGILL: Possibly, but I do have it. And I just can't for the life of me . . . Well . . . (LAUGHS).

SPORN: Well, you'll look at home. Sure, you'll . . .

MOGILL: I'll look it up, and see that you get the information.

SPORN: Yeah, well, thank you very much. It was nice to meet you.

MOGILL: It was a pleasure.

(END OF TAPE SIDE B. END OF INTERVIEW).