

KENTUCKY CRAFT HISTORY AND EDUCATION ASSOCIATION, INC.

Interview with Rebecca Seigel
Interviewer is Bob Gates
July 16, 2015

() This symbol refers to an inaudible word or phrase.

. . . This symbol refers to an interruption to the speaker

Gates: It's Rebekka . . .

Seigel: Seigel.

Gates: Is that your full name? What's your maiden name?

Seigel: My maiden name was Beer.

Gates: Beer?

Seigel: Just like you drink.

Gates: Oh, okay. And we're doing this interview at your place here, what's the address here?

Seigel: This is 2545 Highway 127 South in Owenton.

Gates: Right outside of Owenton, right? And it's July 16, 2015. Okay. I always like to put that in there. So, Beer. Where did you come from?

Seigel: I was raised in Cincinnati, but central Ohio is where most of my family was from.

Gates: Is that a German name?

Seigel: I don't know. I think that my father's side of the family had a lot of English. I don't know.

Gates: Okay. You don't know about genealogy? That's fine. But you were raised in Cincinnati?

Seigel: Yes.

Gates: What part of town?

Seigel: I lived in Kennedy Heights for a long time, growing up and then by the time I was in high school, we moved out to the east side and I graduated from Anderson High School.

Gates: Anderson High School, great. You know I'm from Cincinnati, don't you?

Seigel: Yea, but I don't know what part you're from.

Gates: Delhi.

Seigel: Oh! You're a west side. Well, see I used to teach at Mount Saint Joseph.

Gates: I did too. Well, I taught an adult class. Photography a long time ago. I went to ().

Seigel: Well, Greg was a Roger Bacon boy.

Gates: Was he?!

Seigel: Yea.

Gates: I won't sing my Roger Bacon song. (Laughter, Seigel and Gates)

Seigel: I don't care, you know, that wasn't any part of my growing up.

Gates: How old was Greg? When was he born?

Seigel: Greg was born in '47.

Gates: Ok. I was '50, so same period. He was probably beating us in football.

Seigel: He was in the band, he wasn't playing football. (Laughter, Seigel)

Gates: So you grew up in Cincinnati and he grew up in Cincinnati. How did you meet then?

Seigel: We met in Cincinnati through a mutual friend. You know about when that picture was taken that you were looking at before, when you said, "Is that you?" (Laughter, Seigel)

Gates: Yea and there was one on the wall there, just like it. You've got two of them.

Seigel: Yea. That's the real photograph. The other one is just a Xerox. The friend who took them when we were young brought them to Greg's memorial service and he enlarged them a lot, so that's just a Xerox copy.

Gates: So, you're known for your quilts. Is that mainly your art form? Quilts?

Seigel: Yep.

Gates: What kind of quilts would you call them?

Seigel: Well, I call them art quilts. I started out making quilts as a young mother, because I thought that's what mothers were supposed to do and I made them traditionally based on the way my grandmother made quilts. But I soon discovered that I really wanted to tell stories rather than just work with pattern. I like pattern, but it wasn't enough for me.

Gates: Patterns are the main part of what quilts are traditionally, right?

Seigel: Traditional quilts, yes.

Gates: The patterns come from different things, don't they? Communities and books and things like that.

Seigel: Yea, you can get your patterns out of books. You can make your own patterns. You can, you know, there's a lot of work published on traditional quilt patterns.

Gates: When I was the state folklorist, sometimes we would say, and I'm not sure if it was true, but we'd say some patterns predominate because people . . . they became popular. And those people popular to that area sometimes.

Seigel: Not only the area, but the time frame too, you know. Sometimes in the thirties there were quilt patterns that were more popular than in the forties or, you know . . . And it does depend on where you are and what you have access to.

Gates: So you learned a little bit from your grandmother or your mother, you would say?

Seigel: Yea. My grandmother, I mean I started sewing as a little girl with my grandmother. Just making doll clothes and that kind of thing. But I think that was really great because it helped my hands become nimble with a needle and scissors. Things that I see in kids today, they don't know what those things are and they don't use their hands in the same way.

Gates: So what part of the day would you do this? Would you visit her?

Seigel: With my grandmother? Oh, I'd go stay for a couple of weeks and, you know, we'd just do things.

Gates: Where was she?

Seigel: She lived in central Ohio, near Indian Lake. It was a great place to get to go in the summertime.

Gates: Did you spend a month or?

Seigel: A couple weeks maybe. Yea. And I would sew at home too, you know, I'd come home and dress my dolls and all that sort of thing, so I had sewing experience, my mother sewed all of our clothes when we were kids, so, you know, I learned how to sew from her too. More functional kind of sewing. So I always had those skills and that sort of came naturally to me, to make quilts, because it was a form of sewing where you can tell a story and still use your sewing skills.

Gates: You went to Anderson High School? Did you have some strong interests there in a career or anything?

Seigel: Music was what I was interested in and then I went to school in Bowling Green in Ohio. I studied French and Music and Sociology. None of which I use today. (Laughter, Seigel) But, you know, some people take longer to find themselves than others.

Gates: Sociology might have helped you a little bit ().

Seigel: Maybe, I don't know. I'm sure it all helped, but.

Gates: was College a good fit for you, you think? Did you feel like you . . . ?

Seigel: Socially, it was a great fit for me, you know, and it was the sixties and it was a great time to be on a campus, but I don't think I ever really knew what I was doing there, you know, in terms of a career or a focus in life.

Gates: What years were you at Bowling Green?

Seigel: '66 to '70.

Gates: So there were student protests going on there, right?

Seigel: Yea.

Gates: Did you get involved?

Seigel: Yea, I went to the March on Washington, you know, I did all that that we were interested in at the time. Maybe that's why that quilt, that's a good quilt to talk about because that really is . . . These are yearbook pictures from my high school graduation class. And it's about those young people that we lost, because of the war and every generation, it seems to me, has this same problem with us sending our young men and women off to be cannon fodder or whatever. This one reflects the sixties and camouflage which was invented in the Vietnam War.

Gates: Let me ask you again, you were talking about this earlier, those are yo-yos in there right?

Seigel: This is a yo-yo, yep. That's a quilters yo-yo.

Gates: And that holds things together?

Seigel: For this piece, it forms the structure of the piece to hold these little portraits together. This is not a traditional way of making a quilt. This is a Rebekka Seigel way of making a quilt. Traditionally, if you made a yo-yo quilts, it would only have yo-yos and all the yo-yos would be sewn together in all different colors of fabrics.

Gates: Could you have a bed quilt made of yo-yo ().

Seigel: You could. I don't, but yea.

Gates: But that would be traditionally what . . . you're kind of picking things out.

Seigel: But a yo-yo quilt is called a novelty quilt. It's not a real . . . because it doesn't have three layers like a real quilt. It's not made in the same way that a real quilt is made.

Gates: Would it keep you warm like a real quilt?

Seigel: No. Because there are all these holes in them, you know? The space between the yo-yos.

Gates: So if somebody made this for a quilt it's more decorative . . .

Seigel: Yea, it's a decorative. You might lay it on top of your bed as a bedspread or something like that.

Gates: But the Rebekka Seigel way would be . . .

Seigel: Is to make art, you know, to use the yo-yo as a way of holding together the other elements of this quilt.

Gates: What's the significance of a yo-yo in there?

Seigel: I just like them. (Laughter, Seigel)

Gates: Well, they're kind of camouflage-y.

Seigel: Yea, turned these into the camouflage because camouflage was an important part of this . . . camouflage was invented for the Vietnam War.

Gates: Was it?

Seigel: Uh huh.

Gates: Oh okay.

Seigel: And this is the war that we're talking about here.

Gates: So it's kind of a background to their life.

Seigel: Yea, it's another element of the story of these people and what happened to them.

Gates: It's a beautiful quilt. When did you do that?

Seigel: Oh gosh, I don't think I put the year on these pieces. Oh, wait, here it is, 2006.

Gates: Ok, so pretty recent. Kind of going back and looking at things.

Seigel: Yea, I did a whole series of quilts that I marketed to museums around the country that were called Paper Doll quilts. You're going to have to look at my website to look at these Paper Doll quilts. But my favorite toy when I was a child was paper dolls. And I was delighted that my first child was a girl and we were going to get to play paper dolls. I remember being, you know, like I don't know how old I was, maybe 10. 11. Realizing I was growing up and I wasn't going to be able to play with paper dolls anymore and how sad that made me feel.

Gates: I'm a boy. How do you play with paper dolls? I kind of remember them, but I never got into it. What does a girl do with paper dolls? Those things that clip around?

Seigel: Yes.

Gates: The little tabs that go around the body. Cardboard person, right?

Seigel: It's a person with a wardrobe and my sister and I would play together and we'd create families and they would, you know, have to put different outfits on to do different activities. (Laughter, Gates) You know, they would go places. (Laughter, Seigel) They'd have families and, you know, it was like playing life, I guess, but with these little paper things. And you also had to have good skills with scissors, because they weren't punch out in my day, you cut them out with scissors.

Gates: Out of a book? Somebody would buy you a book?

Seigel: You bought a book and you . . . yea.

Gates: So a doll has the same profile all the time, right?

Seigel: It's only one doll, yea.

Gates: And it's always standing straight ahead or something.

Seigel: And she doesn't move.

Gates: So every dress or everything fits that. But you can make as many . . . did you make new ones yourself?

Seigel: Yea. Sometimes. A common thing to do was to get the Sears catalog and cut dresses out of the Sears catalog, because a lot of the models stood the same way and you could make a paper dolls from the Sears catalog. You could also draw your own, but we didn't do that as often as we cut things. We liked to cut. (Laughter, Seigel)

Gates: Cut them out of already made, right?

Seigel: Yea. Pictures and stuff.

Gates: So you made an exhibit out of that. How'd that go?

Seigel: Ok. Yea. So, I made a quilt probably in the '80s for an exhibit at the Folk Art Museum in New York City it was called Childhood Memories and they took entries from all over the county. And you had to make a quilt that was . . . they gave you the dimensions. Every quilt was the same dimension, but it had to reflect something about your childhood. And so I made myself a paper doll and I made all these little dresses that were attached to the main quilt with Velcro, so that you could actually play paper dolls with the quilt. Each little outfit was a quilt itself. It had three layers. It was a quilt.

Gates: How big was it?

Seigel: It was the size of a baby quilt.

Gates: Ok. And then the doll was that size?

Seigel: No, she was in the middle of the quilt. There are pictures of it on . . . I brought my website up just in case. Let's see if she's on here. Nope, I don't have her on there.

Gates: That's ok. They can go to the website and look at it.

Seigel: Then I made a quilt for Phyllis George. She put me in all those book that she wrote and when she had put me in the third book, I said . . .

Cameraman: You should probably start that over.

Seigel: I'm sorry. Phyllis George came into our lives as craftspeople here in Kentucky and she started writing books. One about Kentucky and then she wrote one about American Craft and wrote one about quilt making and she kept putting me in all these books. She was lovely to all of us, but when she put me in the second book I said, "Phyllis, I'm really flattered, but you don't own any of my pieces and don't you think you should?" (Laughter, Seigel) And so she said, "Yea". And I said, "I have this idea where I want to tell a woman's story through garment and I want to make a paper doll quilt that tells a woman's story". And she would be a perfect candidate because she had all these different roles in her life. So she agreed and I made this quilt about Phyllis George's life. She a doll in the center of the quilt and then they're all these garments around her. That got me to thinking about all the women that I admire and have

admired. Most of them in my grandmother's generation who I thought were kind of trendsetters in the world of what it is to be able to be a woman today. They are groundbreaking women. And so I created a series of quilts. There are 13 of them. They profile women that I thought were important to the development of women. They're all paper doll quilts and this is the Lucille Ball quilt, which I thought I'd just bring one down so you got an idea of what these were like. And these are all big, huge, quilts. And so, Lucy is right here. That's the doll. And then these are all Lucy's garments.

Gates: You were actually a member of the fan club, huh?

Seigel: Well, I am on this quilt, but . . . (Laughter, Seigel) The garments, you know, attach to the quilt. Somewhere. Where ever there is a place. You know where all the spaces are.

Gates: But that's her and you're going to put those overtop of her.

Seigel: So you can, actually, if you want to, like this would go right here on this quilt. You could actually play paper dolls. I don't want anybody to do that, of course, because you don't want people's handprints all over your quilts.

Gates: How's it sticking? Velcro?

Seigel: Velcro

Gates: Ok. Is there a place in the quilt for all those pieces?

Seigel: Yes.

Gates: Oh, I see.

Seigel: Every place where you see kind of a silhouette here, one of these pieces goes there.

Gates: And that would hang up in the gallery like that. And each one of those . . . Wow.

Seigel: And it took me 6 years to make this exhibit.

Gates: How many women were in there?

Seigel: 13.

Gates: 6 years?

Seigel: Yep. I had help with the quilting. With, you know, actually . . . this is the quilting, the part that . . . those little stitches that look the same on the front as on the back. That join the three layers together. That's not the artwork. That's pretty much grunt work. And I had a women here in Owen County who helped me quilt about half of them, so that I could be working on the tops while . . .

Gates: The artwork.

Seigel: Right.

Gates: So this one here, this I Love Lucy one. How big is it? Big enough for a queen size bed or something?

Seigel: Probably. Yep. They're all major quilts. It's a major exhibition and it traveled all over the country for about 5 years to museums. The museums paid me for the exhibit. So that was another plan, you know, how to make money as an artist is to build an exhibit and market it.

Gates: Who arranged all that for you?

Seigel: I did.

Gates: So you sold the idea to them?

Seigel: Uh huh. And mostly they went to quilt museums and went to one of the presidential libraries in Iowa. Would it be Herbert Hoover or . . . I can't remember which one it was who lived in Iowa.

Gates: So they'd have to schedule for that exhibit to go to their place and they would pay you to have that exhibit. Kind of like the Smithsonian would I guess?

Seigel: Yea.

Gates: But they pay you directly. How would you get them there? Did you have to set up yourself?

Seigel: For the most part. Like Evansville Museum showed them in Indiana and I drove them down there, but there was a place in Tennessee I drove them, but I also shipped them in cardboard boxes.

Gates: And give them instructions about how to put them up?

Seigel: Uh huh.

Gates: They had to have had a lot of wall space, didn't they?

Seigel: The Frazier Museum in Louisville showed them.

Gates: Really? What year was this?

Seigel: It was probably around the beginning of the 2000s. What'd we say? That was 2006?

Gates: Yea.

Seigel: These were made before those because I got tired of handwork. These are all done by hand. That's done by machine except for the yo-yos. This is 2001. This was halfway through my making the quilts. This was, I think, number 7.

Gates: What do you do with all these quilts when the exhibit is over?

Seigel: They're upstairs on my bed. I need to, in some point in my life, decide where these quilts are going to go. But I haven't got the energy right now to do that.

Gates: But they weren't to be sold.

Seigel: Someday I would like them to be . . .

Gates: But when they were moving around they all had to stay together.

Seigel: Yea. It's a body of work. There are thirteen women that you would recognize, you know. They're all very famous women.

Gates: Could you name a few more?

Seigel: Eleanor Roosevelt, Ella Fitzgerald, Margaret Meade. I just sent pictures of the Margaret Meade quilt off to a textbook publisher in Canada. They're writing a book about sociology and they're going to use the Margaret Meade quilt as some kind of illustration.

Gates: Sociology. It came back. You used it.

Seigel: Yea. (Laughter, Seigel) That's not sociology, that's anthropology. But I did take a class in anthropology. (Laughter, Seigel)

Gates: Yea. There you go. Which is the same discipline as folk lore. Brother sister kind of disciplines. Well, that's interesting. So now you might now . . . it was all together as an exhibit, toured for how many years?

Seigel: 5 or 6.

Gates: 5 or 6 years. You made money on it. It came back. Now you have it here and you're going to keep it together or maybe sell individually?

Seigel: I don't know. I haven't tried to market them at all. I would love for it to stay together as a body of work, because it was created . . .

Gates: Maybe Lucille Ball's family would want this.

Seigel: Well, I did contact . . . there's a museum in Jamestown, New York, where she is from, but they don't have any space. You know, it takes up a lot of wall space for something that big, so.

Gates: So when you hung 13 of them up, did people when they first came in realize that those were velcroed on and those were all part of a . . .

Seigel: Well, it was part of the signage, you know.

Gates: Ok. To explain what the exhibit is about. Ok.

Seigel: Any woman in my generation would know what a paper doll was.

Gates: Yea.

Seigel: I can't say . . . maybe a few in my daughter's generation.

Gates: Did a lot of people come up and say, "I loved them too"?

Seigel: Oh, of course.

Gates: Yea. That's neat. I guess I want to step back a little bit, for the video, and kind of can you talk about phases of your career? Did you ever look at it that way? How you started out and how you . . .

Seigel: I started out making quilts for bed for my children, really. I took a class in batik at Kentucky State way back in the '70s and that allowed me to make pictures. And I liked the idea of cloth and pictures and so I did a lot of dying for a while and then that wasn't doing it for me. I couldn't get the . . .

Gates: Was that a photographic material on fabric that you were doing? I remember my girlfriend doing that one time. Getting into this idea of taking a fabric and making a photograph on to it. Is that what you're talking about?

Seigel: Well, some of this is the photos are a transfer technique on this. Like that's a photo Xerox transfer, but batik is a dye process, where you create picture with dye. And that's what I was doing then. I didn't really get into photographic processes until much later.

Gates: Batik inspired you?

Seigel: Yea, but I couldn't get the depth of color that I liked. You know, the hand dyes were just not as vibrant as chemically induced (Laughter, Seigel) commercial dyes. So I just found that I liked working with fabric better. And I've always loved fabric. So the quilts went . . . you know, the themes of the quilts were based on what was going on in my life or what I was looking at or what I was interested in. Ducks. I was interested in ducks for a long time. I loved ducks. We had ducks. I loved the image of a duck. I made a whole series about trains because Greg always loved trains.

Gates: Did the ducks have a symbolism for something else?

Seigel: I don't know. (Laughter, Seigel) If they did, I don't know what it is. One of the train quilts is at the Kentucky History Museum. They have a few contemporary quilts that they rotate and it's one of those.

Gates: What kind of train?

Seigel: The one that's there is about the exuberance of a trip. It's a mother and two children standing on a car waving goodbye. I've always loved photographs and I went to the . . . There used to be a newspaper in Cincinnati called The Time Star, then it was The Post and Time Star. And they had a wonderful photographic archive and I went there and looked through their archive and found all these beautiful pictures of people riding trains. From servicemen in WWII to . . . and Union Terminal. One of the quilts in about Union Terminal because that's such a great building. And that quilt I had to rescue from eBay, because I sold it to an Italian company that made signals for railroads and they got bought out by somebody and they didn't want their art collection.

Gates: Oh. And you got it back?

Seigel: Yea. But it's at the Kentucky History Center too. I didn't have enough money to buy it back, so I enlisted all . . . before the internet and those things where you get people to give you money, you know, I just contacted quilt guilds that I had been connected with and people donated money and we bought it off of eBay and donated it to the museum.

Gates: Do you have a collection at the Historical Society or is this just . . . ?

Seigel: I guess I just have those two quilts and I don't think there is anything else down there that they own.

Gates: So you made a lot of train quilts?

Seigel: I made four. So that was a theme for a while.

Gates: Where are you living while you're doing all this?

Seigel: Here.

Gates: How'd you get here?

Seigel: We had a friend, Jane Burch. Is Jane Burch Cochran part of the exhibit? She's a quilt maker. She's been a friend of mine. She was the best woman in my wedding. She's been a friend for a long time. She was living down here in a house in Monterey and we came down to visit her and Greg wanted to get out of Cincinnati because he wanted to build kilns. And you can't built a gas kiln next to your neighbor, you know. They don't like that. (Laughter, Seigel) There's zoning issues. So we found this property and that's why we came down here. He said he was in exile for about 3 or 4 years. He was like, "Oh, god" because he wanted to be in Cincinnati but he got used to it.

Gates: How do you find this place from Cincinnati?

Seigel: Because Jane lived down here and Jane also had a place in Cincinnati.

Gates: Ok. People were coming down here. When was that? The 70s? 80s?

Seigel: Early 70s. Yep.

Gates: When did you guys get married?

Seigel: '73.

Gates: Up in Cincinnati?

Seigel: Uh huh.

Gates: And then you came down here where?

Seigel: '74, '75. Nelly was a year and a half, so '74 or '75.

Gates: This is Old 127 right?

Seigel: Uh huh.

Gates: A main route (). That's kind of how you found it. And then they didn't have an expressway back either.

Seigel: We had the expressway! (Laughter, Seigel)

Gates: 75?

Seigel: Yea! 75 they had when I was a kid. And when I went to college we had 75. That's how I got from Cincinnati to Bowling Green.

Gates: I remember coming down to go camping with a friend down in the Smoke's and it wasn't finished.

Seigel: Well, it was from Cincinnati to . . . I don't know where it stopped but. No, I think it went to Florida, didn't it?

Gates: It does, yea. I think they were still building parts of it. '71 or '72 when I was coming down to Red River Gorge and camping and things. And it seemed like a wilderness down here. (Laughter, Seigel and Gates)

Seigel: Well, it is a wilderness where that is.

Gates: So Owenton was kind of your . . . I mean I know a lot of people move to Monterey who are artistically inclined. Did you have anything to do with that?

Seigel: Yea. I mean, we were part of that community, but we always lived here. We didn't live in Monterey, because I wanted a bathroom and that was one of the . . .

Gates: Oh really?

Seigel: I would come to the country, but I had to have a house with a bathroom in it. Because a lot of the houses in Monterey didn't have bathrooms in them. I had little kids, you know, I didn't want to live in a house without a bathroom. I was that much of a city girl.

Gates: So were a lot of people coming down here together?

Seigel: Not so many from Cincinnati. Mostly they were coming from Lexington and UK and a lot of them all went to UK together. Centre.

Gates: And they liked this area? What attracted you to this area?

Seigel: Well, it was nice to have a community of like-minded people and artists. I loved this location because I'm right in the middle of three major cities, but I don't live in a city. I have access to cities, you know, which is great. Lexington, Cincinnati.

Gates: Yea, it is close. Were you guys like outsiders, hippie people coming down at that time?

Seigel: If you ask anybody here in the community, they would say yes, we were.

Gates: Did you fit in or did they reject you?

Seigel: I think that over the years, you know, they came to see that we weren't as weird as they thought, but you know it's just like any counter culture kind of experience. People butt up against each other. I never had any trouble and Greg didn't and he would never have considered himself a hippy. Ever. So, you know.

Gates: He wouldn't have?

Seigel: He wouldn't have.

Gates: Yea. I had long hair, but I wasn't a hippy. (Laughter, Seigel) I walked in peace marches and stuff (). You did the same thing right?

Seigel: Right.

Gates: Like three years behind you, I guess, in that sense. We occupied the student union building, but when I got hungry I went home. (Laughter, Seigel and Gates)

Seigel: You were a daytime hippy?

Gates: My dad was a policeman so I would be in things and he was the policeman out there watching it. So we had big fights all the time. So okay. This community of people, did you all get together on Saturday nights and things?

Seigel: Yea. There were lots of parties and then everybody started having kids. And you know, the kids all played together and so, yea, it was really nice to have that kind of community to be a part of.

Gates: So it was you up here. Monterey down there. Was anybody else up here on the hill? This is a kind of hill, wasn't it?

Seigel: Yea. Cedar Hill. This is Cedar Hill. No. . . Well, there were some people across a couple miles that way who were connected to the community and Monterey is kind of a mythical place, you know, in the minds of a lot of people. A lot of people came through Monterey that are gone to other parts of the world now, but they're still connected to . . . Monterey still has a homecoming, you know, which is pretty cool. And that's just not the hippy contingent of Monterey. That's the heart of Monterey, you know, the people who . . . Have you ever done the Monterey homecoming?

Gates: I went to a couple Monterey festivals, is that the same thing?

Seigel: Yea.

Gates: Yea, okay, yea. I went down there for . . . had a booth there I think and presented some folk artists there. But yea, had great burgoo. It was great.

Seigel: Cakewalk and . . . (Laughter, Seigel)

Gates: So were any of those people like the Mayor of Monterey?

Seigel: I think, yea.

Gates: But you guys were up here. A lot of you came from programs that were from UK . . .

Seigel: Almost everybody was college educated. Which was different from the local population.

Gates: Yes.

Seigel: But, the book knowledge that we had combined with the practical knowledge of how to raise cattle and tobacco, you know. Greg and I were never into that part of living in the country, but a lot of our friends were. You know, they bought farms and they wanted to farm.

Gates: Oh, really?

Seigel: And so the local people were great, especially the older local people who, you know, saw something in us that they could connect to because people wanted to go back to the land and you know, all that.

Gates: I guess I was thinking. Were a lot of you educated in the arts when you brought that with you so you had some connections with these galleries and places?

Seigel: Yea, some. Gray Zeitz, who I'm sure you're . . . And Jane Burch, of course, was here at the time. And Marshall Thompson who was a potter then. They all had some art background, but some of them . . . and writers too. David Hurt, his background was in acting, you know, so.

Gates: So you moved here and you started making money off your work?

Seigel: (Laughter, Seigel) I don't think that we made a lot of money, but that wasn't really the whole . . . unlike Minnie Adkins, we didn't do it for the money.

Gates: So how did you get . . . I mean how were you making your living here?

Seigel: The Arts Council was a great help. I spent a lot of years as an artist in residence working in schools all across Kentucky and Greg did too. That helped support. I taught at the college of Mount Saint Joseph. I did a lot of teaching for quilt guilds and quilt festivals. You know, I built an exhibit to have money to, you know, raise money. You know, the life of an artist, you do what you have to do to get by.

Gates: Did you have other jobs here in Owenton?

Seigel: I worked for the extension for a short time. When the winery came to Owen County, I wanted there to be a strong arts connection there and so I went to work there as an events planner and the gallery manager, but that was much later. That was, you know, 2010, maybe? Seven? I don't know.

Gates: But you were living up here and you were making some things that you were selling.

Seigel: Uh huh and Greg was selling, you know, the whole time.

Gates: Let's talk about Greg a little bit. How did he get into pottery?

Seigel: He moved into a house in Avondale in Cincinnati and he thought he was going to be a musician. He played saxophone. Jazz saxophone. In the basement of this house was a woman who was making pots and he was also making candles at the time and selling them at little craft fairs and he decided that he really liked that which he was doing. And his early work looked like this. This is one of the first kinds of cups he ever made. He knew nothing about clay and this handle is just a wad of clay. But he loved painting, here's a train that he made. That's the early kind of stuff he was making and then he just kept at it. He loved it. He taught himself how to throw. That's not thrown. That's a hand-built piece, yea. He taught himself how to throw on a wheel.

Gates: That would be considered pretty crude wouldn't it there? What do people say about this? Other artists?

Seigel: They thought he was crazy, you know.

Gates: Did they? (Laughter, Gates)

Seigel: Really. (Laughter, Seigel) But he kept at it and like I say, he taught himself how to throw on the wheel and that's fired in an electric kiln. He studied. He just studied everything he could get his hands on. There was a book at a local book store up in Clifton. You remember that little bookstore on Ludlow?

Gates: Yea.

Seigel: Well, there was a book in there on Hamada, a Japanese potter that he absolutely loved. It was a \$50 book and in the seventies that was a lot of money. And he couldn't afford the book so he put it on layaway and he invited all of his friends to go to the bookstore and look through the book but if they looked at it, they at least had to put fifty cents towards the book and his friends helped him buy that book just by going into the book store and looking at the book and giving 50 cents or whatever they could afford. (Laughter, Seigel)

Gates: So you could have it on layaway, but you could still pull it out and look at it.

Seigel: Yea. (Laughter, Seigel) And then he decided he wanted to build real kilns out of bricks and he wanted to fire with gas or oil or wood, something like that. And that's why we came down here. Greg always had a whimsical touch to his pottery. He wanted to make really good sincere pots that Hamada would appreciate, but he also had this little, you know, fun side to himself that made him create pretty distinctive and unique pieces.

Gates: Did he learn from other people in Cincinnati?

Seigel: You know, he probably shared glaze formulas with people, or if he saw somebody's glaze, asked him for the recipe. But he made all his own clay. He made all his own glazes. He didn't buy those things. He bought, you know, a bag of this kind of clay and that kind of clay and that kind of clay and mixed them together to make his clay. So he was a chemist, you know, right from the beginning. He was really interested in . . .

Gates: And he knew what he was doing? Knew what the results were going to do when he?

Seigel: Well, he had a lot of mistakes. (Laughter, Seigel)

Gates: Did he? Ok.

Seigel: Yea. I think making pottery can be really heartbreaking because stuff can happen in the kiln. Stuff can happen while it's drying. Stuff can happen, you know, the cat can walk in and step all over your pots, you know.

Gates: So his formula might not be right ().

Seigel: Yea, you might have to tinker with it. And also the atmosphere in the kiln changes when you're firing with wood or gas. You have to be really aware of what the atmosphere is inside the kiln and sometimes you don't get the right kind of reduction or . . . you know he could talk about this way better than me. I'd just learn about it from living with him, but.

Gates: You know, when I lived in Cincinnati I worked at the Arts Consortium, do you know where that was? In the West end of Cincinnati? I taught photography down there and there was a woman on staff there that was from Northside and she was a potter. Up where Esquire . . .

Seigel: Was it Joyce Clancey?

Gates: I think it was. She had a claw hand. Did you know her? She was nice.

Seigel: Yep. She was the soul of . . . Right there on Ludlow, she and her husband had a shop where they taught classes.

Gates: Yea. I lost touch with her a long time ago, but she was one of the teachers. We were all white, we were teaching in a community center, basically. And she was one of the people. Is she gone now?

Seigel: Uh huh.

Gates: I was just thinking that she might have been an influence on him.

Seigel: Only in the sense of spirit, you know. The kind of . . . She was making toaster ware.
(Laughter, Seigel)

Gates: Toaster ware. Tell me what toaster ware is again.

Seigel: For Greg, anybody who fires their pots in an electric kiln is making toaster ware. Those glazes are normally lower fire than stoneware glazes which is what . . . Greg was firing at a stoneware temperature, which is much hotter. But he adored Joyce and they were great friends their whole lives.

Gates: Good. I liked her a lot. But I was a young kid too. () She would come down and teach there sometimes. I think I went to her shop one time and saw it. But she had something wrong with her hand, didn't she?

Seigel: Uh huh. She had a birth defect.

Gates: Oh. But that didn't stop her, I guess. Okay. You all came down here and he's learning pottery and you're learning quilting. Did this area effect you? Help you? Did you grow when you came down here, do you think?

Seigel: Well, I hope so.

Gates: Was that an influence on you?

Seigel: I think that the camaraderie and the spirit of seeing other people do things or learning about the arts council, you know, just things that you learn because you are in a community of people who are like minded, was helpful, but I think that Greg and I were both very individualistic in the way we approached our artwork. We weren't derivative of other people. Even though I had many quilt maker friends and he had many potter friends, you know, we had our own way of expressing ourselves, uniquely.

Gates: You said you guys were not derivative of other people. Were all your friends like that or were they going in different directions?

Seigel: I think that everybody has their own style, but some people look at . . . If you're in it for the money, then you look at what you think is going to sell and you make what you think is going to sell. And there were people who did that. I don't think Greg or I either one of us were smart enough maybe, to look at what's going to sell or to make that the driving force and what we did.

Gates: But yet, you were able to make money off of it, because . . . well somebody kind of discovered you in a sense too, right?

Seigel: Phyllis George?

Gates: Phyllis George. Would you consider that like a push?

Seigel: I think . . . I don't know . . . Greg never went on the Bloomingdale's trip with her or, you know, did any of that kind of promotion. There are a lot of people who are a lot more successful at marketing and selling their craft than Greg and I were. We didn't have those really good marketing skills. Maybe that's because we weren't interested in that so much as we were and just making art. Raising good kids, you know.

Gates: Were they homeschooled or were they . . . ?

Seigel: No, but both of them went to the Creative and Performing Art High School in Cincinnati and we had to . . . one of us lived, during the school year, with them in Cincinnati, during their high school years so that they could go school up there. And Max is a jazz musician in New York City now and Nelly is a visual artist in Chicago. You know, I feel like we gave them a good spring board.

Gates: Was that down on Sycamore? Around that area?

Seigel: Yep. And Greg's grandfather was in the second graduating class that came out of that building and my children went to school in that building.

Gates: That wasn't the creative . . .

Seigel: No it the first Woodward High School.

Gates: Oh, was it? Woodward High School. Okay. My sister's kids went there and she lived in Sailor Park and sent them there and one of them is in New York doing set designs. Actually more, not set designs . . . What do you call it when you . . . the sound and all the things that go into a play behind the scenes he's doing that. The other one worked for Disney for a while. (Laughter, Gates) It's funny. We've got some parallels.

Seigel: Yea. (Laughter, Seigel)

Gates: So you had to go up there and live in Cincinnati while they were in school? That's a whole commitment isn't it?

Seigel: It was a commitment, yea. But neither one of them was going to get what they needed here, you know. In terms of the arts.

Gates: And why were they so interested in the arts, just by being around you guys?

Seigel: (Laughter, Seigel) Maybe it's in their genes, I don't know. I don't know. Nelly went to SCBA for set design and she got a degree from DePaul in set design, but after she got out of DePaul she said, "You know, I really don't want to be in the theater". So she's gone on to another . . . And then Max was, you know, he knew he was a musician. . . I knew Max was a musician from the time he was 2 years old. He just thrived in a musical situation.

Gates: He's actually making a living playing music in New York?

Seigel: Yep. He just played a thing that's going to be on PBS. Danny Elfman's music that he and Tim Burton collaborated on movies. Danny did the music and Tim Burton did the movies. He just played all that music at Lincoln Center for, I don't know, a couple weeks. I think he had two weeks' worth of performances or something.

Gates: Is this recently?

Seigel: Yea.

Gates: Because that's what my nephew was working on.

Seigel: You're kidding!

Gates: He said he was working at Lincoln Center with Tim Burton.

Seigel: And he was doing the sound and . . .

Gates: Doing something with it. I mean, sound and maybe the background lighting and things like that.

Seigel: Wow! Well, Max was playing the bass trombone. (Laughter, Seigel)

Gates: That's really interesting, because we didn't know what he was talking about . . . I remember him saying Tim Burton and I was like, "Yea, I know Tim Burton" and Lincoln Center . . . Wow. I'll ask him that. We communicate because we do fit-bits together and now I have

something to talk with him about. (Laughter, Gates and Seigel) And Max. Okay. I'll remember that. That's interesting. So he's doing well there and you guys taught him art. Did they get into pottery at all or quilts?

Seigel: Max used to make these little pins and Greg would go to Berea to the craft fair, Max would have this whole board of little pins that he made. Little faces that he would sell for five dollars apiece and I still have, you know, friends come up to me, or people I haven't seen for a long time and say "I have one of Max's pins" you know, they were . . . I knew that his intelligence was through his ears and that he was going to be a musician, he just played in the pottery because . . .

Gates: Did he play with any musicians around here?

Seigel: No. He was into jazz, really, from the very beginning, because he played a horn. He went to UC for a year. At the conservatory and then decided to go . . . he didn't like school, he was going to go on the road with Tommy Dorsey Band and he traveled for a year with 16 guys in a bus and that was enough of that and then he just got off the bus in New York and found a teacher that he really wanted to study with at the Manhattan School of Music and he got a degree and a master's degree from there.

Gates: Tell me about your . . . I mean, did you belong to the guild and all the other things like that?

Seigel: I used to. I don't anymore. I mean, I used to go to the shows in Paducah. Won awards at the show in Paducah every year, but I just lost interest in it, I guess. I didn't want to talk about quilts all the time with people. (Laughter, Seigel) Because always the question that you always or the comment that everybody makes when they look at your work is "Oh my grandmother made quilts" or "I have a quilt that my grandmother made" you know? And they want to talk about traditional quilting and that's not what I do.

Gates: But there's a whole group of you out there who do art quilts right? Do you have a fellowship with them?

Seigel: Yes. Absolutely.

Gates: Do you have a fellowship with them?

Seigel: Yes. I've belonged to the Art Quilt Network for quite a while and that was a group of women that all made quilts that were not for bed, but that were art quilts and we would meet twice a year up in Columbus and it was organized by Nancy Crow, who's like the mother of the art quilt in America. That was great because there was a lot of exchange of information about art and about dying processes and, you know, just looking at each other's work. That was very stimulating.

Gates: How long did you belong to that group?

Seigel: Oh, I don't know. 15 years maybe.

Gates: Okay. It sounds like it might have been a little hard showing your stuff when people are looking for traditional quilts and they're seeing this different thing on the wall than they expected. Is that hard for you?

Seigel: No, because I didn't really try to show alongside traditional quilts.

Gates: Oh, you didn't. Okay.

Seigel: You know, I looked for exhibits that were focused on art quilts. The Dairy Barn in Athens, Ohio . . . Quilt National was created in the early '80s and that was . . . Quilt National is an art quilt exhibit every year. So that kind of movement was going on and my friends were mostly all art quilt makers.

Gates: How did you get in with them in the first place? Did you kind of discover each other?

Seigel: Yea.

Gates: How did that happen?

Seigel: I don't know. (Laughter, Seigel) This friend says, you know, "Oh, you should see her work" or "You should meet this person" or you know.

Gates: Okay. So it was that informal.

Seigel: Yea.

Gates: And there wasn't magazine showing your stuff or anything like that in the early days?

Seigel: Yea, there were magazines. But that's not how I found my friends.

Gates: How did you do it?

Seigel: I just met them. (Laughter, Seigel)

Gates: How long have art quilts been out there?

Seigel: Well, Quilt National was founded in about the '80s so I think it all sort of came about after that exhibit at the Whitney in which they hung traditional quilts for the first time in a museum, hanging quilts up was ground breaking. And people started to look at quilts and the artistry and you know, the color and the pattern and they could see that these women who were mostly homemakers really did have a sense of style and a sense of art and a sense of design. And that was kind of the way that the whole movement began in my time.

Gates: Starting with traditional quilts on the walls. When was that in the Whitney?

Seigel: I think that was like in the '70s. Late '70s.

Gates: And that was a pretty big deal?

Seigel: Uh huh.

Gates: Did you go see the exhibit?

Seigel: No.

Gates: But you heard about it.

Seigel: Yea.

Gates: That's the first step, is getting traditional quilts on the walls.

Seigel: You know, I never even thought about it as odd that you would put a quilt on the wall. And I didn't know about the Whitney exhibit until, you know, I was well into making quilts that were art quilts. Like I said, I never learned how to paint and I wanted to make pictures and you know, I knew how to sew.

Gates: What was the first one you made that you considered your first art quilt, I guess.

Seigel: After I stopped making batiks, which were paintings actually, I made one about ducks and the Kentucky Heritage Quilt Society was formed and it won the first prize and that was their first competition ever. That kind of sealed the deal, I guess.

Gates: Feel pretty good about it?

Seigel: At the time?

Gates: Yea.

Seigel: Well, heck yea.

Gates: First prize. Did you get money with it too?

Seigel: I think so. Oh yea! I remembered, it was supposed to be this big, like, \$10,000 prize or something and then it turned out they didn't have the money. (Laughter, Seigel)

Gates: Really?

Seigel: Yea.

Gates: None of it?

Seigel: I think I got maybe one or two thousand. I don't know, I didn't get what it was advertised we were going to get and it was a little disappointing. (Laughter, Seigel)

Gates: And that was your first win?

Seigel: Yea.

Gates: Some people when they win a contest, they never get better.

Seigel: They never get better?

Gates: Well, I'm thinking . . . I remember I won a contest with my photograph once and the guy said, "Don't let it go to your head because you'll never make any () if you think that's your best". You've got to keep working at it and get away from that . . . I didn't. (Laughter, Gates and Seigel) I got into documentary stuff so, I wasn't going to win a prize doing that stuff. I remember in Cincinnati, it was kind of interesting, we had a group of photographers who would meet and critique each other's work and things like that for a while. I guess it was part of the times.

Seigel: Yea. I belonged to the fiber interest group in Cincinnati, which we called ourselves the figs and it was sort of founded by Lenore Davis, who I don't know if you know. She died. She made that sculpture right there of the figure on the couch. This right here.

Gates: That looks familiar.

Seigel: Yea. Lenore was very . . . She was a wonderful artist. And we would get together monthly and just sit around and talk. Show our work and have people comment on it.

Gates: So it sounds like you've won some awards through your life, right?

Seigel: I have.

Gates: Can you name some of them?

Seigel: One of the big ones was the Museum of American Folk Art in New York did a competition when the Statue of Liberty was 100 years old and quilt makers were invited to make quilts about the Statue of Liberty. And one was chosen from each state and then there would be a grand prize winner picked out of all those who would get \$10,000 and I thought, you know, well. But . . .

Gates: Been there before.

Seigel: Yea. But everybody who won from every state got a trip to New York City to the exhibit. And I thought, "Hey, what a cool way to get to go to New York". So I made a quilt for that competition and it won for Kentucky so I did get to go to New York City, but I should have set my sights on the \$10,000, but (Laughter, Seigel) I just wanted to go to New York.

Gates: You would have put more into it?

Seigel: I don't know. (Laughter, Seigel and Gates) I don't know.

Gates: So every state had a contest and you . . .

Seigel: No, all the quilts went to New York, but there was a winner chosen from each state to represent. So the exhibit was one quilt from each state in the union.

Gates: Oh, okay. Like 5 people from Kentucky could send it in but we're only going to pick one from Kentucky.

Seigel: Yes.

Gates: And you were the one.

Seigel: Uh huh. And that was great.

Gates: What was your interpretation of the . . .

Seigel: I had the statue in the middle of the quilt and Phyllis George owns this quilt.

Gates: I feel like I've seen it some place.

Seigel: You probably have. And then there are three women on either side of her all in the same pose that the Statue of Liberty has, but they're all women that in their own way helped someone else become free or you know. So they're historic women.

Gates: Do you remember who they are?

Seigel: Ann Hutchinson who was a pilgrim. Harriet Tubman. Susan B. Anthony. Emma Lazarus who wrote the poem, but she did a lot of other stuff too. Eleanor Roosevelt.

Gates: I thought you only had three ladies.

Seigel: There's three on each side.

Gates: Oh, okay.

Seigel: So, I can't remember who the other one is right off . . .

Gates: What made you think of that theme?

Seigel: Actually, I was going to have . . . I didn't want to do anything historical. I had this other idea about nationalities. People in traditional dress coming and . . . the same kind of arrangement, but it was more about immigration. But as I was looking through books, you know, at costumes and stuff, these women started jumping out of the books at me and I changed the theme of the quilt.

Gates: To important women. Emma Lazarus did some things about immigration though didn't she?

Seigel: She was Jewish and she brought a lot of people, persecuted Jew to freedom in America.

Gates: So that was an early contest that you won.

Seigel: That was early. I remember what year that was. That was in the '80s.

Gates: So was it fun going to New York and sewing your quilt?

Seigel: Yea.

Gates: Where did they put them?

Seigel: It was in a convention center, I think, maybe on one of the piers. It's been a long time. And then the Paducah shows started happening. . .

Gates: At the Folk Museum or before?

Seigel: It was before the quilt museum. The show was held every April before the quilt museum was ever built and there was always a lot of prize money and it was always a big deal in Paducah. I mean, Paducah turned into a quilt town for that time and so . . .

Gates: Where'd they do it? What museum?

Seigel: At that big hotel that's right there.

Gates: Oh, that one over there? What's that called? Trying to think of it. I saw a concert there one night.

Seigel: Yea, I can't remember. Terrible. We're getting old people's memories. (Laughter, Seigel)

Gates: So why was Paducah a quilt place?

Seigel: Well, there was a publisher down there and still is a publisher and they were publishing a whole lot of books on quilts and they started that whole thing.

Gates: Oh, really? Are they still there?

Seigel: As far as I know. I mean, the museum is there and I believe they still have the quilt show, but I don't pay any attention anymore . . .

Gates: ()?

Seigel: Yea.

Gates: How come?

Seigel: I'm not interested. (Laughter, Seigel) I don't know why.

Gates: When did you start losing interest in that?

Seigel: Greg's death did a lot to . . . You know, it was a hard time to . . . It's hard to lose your life partner.

Gates: Did he die of cancer?

Seigel: Uh huh.

Gates: I know it was a shock to me, because I didn't even know he was sick.

Seigel: He wasn't sick very long.

Gates: What kind of cancer was it?

Seigel: Lung. At the end, it went into his lungs.

Gates: So what other awards did you . . . I mean, you won, did you win that every year for a while?

Seigel: I won a prize, I didn't always win the big prize, but I always won some kind of prize down there for many years.

Gates: So they got to know you pretty well.

Seigel: Yea. But that show kept growing and growing and growing because, you know, the more of us that went out and taught and preached the word of the quilt or whatever . . . that's not really what we were doing, but we were teaching and more and more women were making quilts and, you know, they would all enter the competition and the show got really, really huge. Which is good. I don't know what the state of it is at this point. I don't know as many women who make quilts anymore. But that's probably because I'm not staying in that world.

Gates: The quilts. Is that when you started in categories of different traditional and art quilts?

Seigel: Yea. Those shows had those kinds of categories.

Gates: And you were always shooting for the art one, right?

Seigel: Well, yea. I mean, I couldn't very well enter the traditional one with what I was doing. (Laughter, Seigel) I mean I didn't make quilts for the competition. I would make a quilt and if I felt like it was good for the competition, I would enter it.

Gates: Were there themes each year?

Seigel: No. I think later on they started doing little themes that you could maybe win, you know. But, it was more like applique was a category and machine and traditional and, you know. So I wasn't making work for competition. I was just entering the competition because I had something that I thought was appropriate.

Gates: Did you ever see yourself as kind of a crusader for art quilts versus traditional ones?

Seigel: Maybe in the early, early years, but I think art quilting caught on pretty quickly in my lifetime and I didn't have to crusade.

Gates: It was readily accepted. Most museums, I mean, a lot of museums do them don't they?

Seigel: That Evansville museum, for a long time, they had a competition, it wasn't just quilts, it was all craft. They have a really nice craft collection down there, because they did have competitions and invite artists to enter and then they would give purchase prizes to the winners, so their work went into their collection.

Gates: Were there other people in the state or the country who were kind of crusaders for this kind of quilt?

Seigel: Yea. Nancy Crow who is in Ohio was one of the first people that probably got noticed. Jane Burch Cochran in Kentucky and Terrie Mangat used to live in Kentucky and she's a luminary in the quilt world. I think Kentucky contributed a lot to that movement. I was lucky to be in this part of the world, I guess, when . . .

Gates: Does Jane live in . . . ?

Seigel: Rabbit Hash.

Gates: Do you have her address or anything?

Seigel: Uh huh.

Gates: Because, actually, we were trying to get her an exhibit, but we lost . . . we didn't have any way of getting a hold of her and she didn't call back.

Seigel: Really?

Gates: I might be able to get her in. We're pretty (). I don't know. We kind of said no at that point. I'll talk to you after. Have you taught many people?

Seigel: Over the years. Yea. Not only, you know, women, but children. I made a lot of quilts in schools across Kentucky as an artist in residence.

Gates: Yea. Tell me about the artist in residence experience.

Seigel: I enjoyed it a lot. I enjoyed getting to see parts of Kentucky that I would never go to, you know, like Kingdom Come or someplace like that, you know.

Gates: Were they six month residencies or a whole semester?

Seigel: Once in a while I had long ones. Greg had one for a year. Actually, we shared one for a year, up in Northern Kentucky . . . A Catholic School. But a lot of them were just two weeks or one week residencies.

Gates: Did you work with John Benjamin a lot?

Seigel: Went to all those Fall Bush summer things.

Gates: The Fall Bush is when you get trained how to deal with teachers and that kind of thing. Curriculum. Yea, I used to go to them a lot too. My kids . . . My daughter said that's what got her into poetry was Judy Sizemore read her poems at one of the cafe things. So the artist in residence. How many of those did you do?

Seigel: Gosh, I don't know. Tons.

Gates: Really? So you had to pick up and live there for . . .

Seigel: Yep. We moved around a lot. I met a lot of really nice people too because often I stayed with people that . . . a teacher, or a friend that I knew in that community or . . . One of the first ones I ever did was in Whitesburg and it was because Josephine Richardson had seen my work and really liked it and I went down to Whitesburg for the first time in my life and, you know, I was like your friend who went to . . . Dan at the Arts Council who went down there for the first time and you just, it's a different culture. And it's a different landscape and it's just, you know. I felt very privileged to get to work down there.

Gates: What school was it?

Seigel: It was the elementary school right there in Whitesburg.

Gates: Yea. I did a little bit there. I got a little claustrophobic in the mountains because the sun came down early and it just felt like, "Whoa". Very interesting people. Did you work with Appalshop people?

Seigel: I had exhibits at Appalshop, because of Josephine but I didn't ever really work at Appalshop.

Gates: So that was a good one for you?

Seigel: Because Appalshop was way more into tradition, you know. I was too weird for Appalshop.

Gates: Yea. (Laughter, Seigel) Does that bother you? Having to work with people . . . I mean you've worked with me a couple times at the festival where I had you working with tradition . . . you were presenting traditional artists.

Seigel: No, it didn't bother me. It just, you know, it wasn't . . . They weren't going to make a program about me or want me to teach anything because they were about the tradition of that area.

Gates: In fact, you were teaching the kids how to do basic quilting weren't you?

Seigel: Yea.

Gates: But you were doing it with an art style. Art quilt.

Seigel: Yea. The one thing I loved about the kids in the mountains, kids in other parts of Kentucky, I could get the needles and pins out and they would look at them and go, "Oh, my grandmother has some of those". They didn't even have them in their own house. But when I went into the mountains, the kids would all, as soon as I pulled a quilt out, they would go, "Oh! My mamaw made me a quilt!" You know they still had a live tradition in their families.

Gates: What other places did you go?

Seigel: I went all the way past Paducah. I was out there for half a year, I think. There's a high school in Ballard.

Gates: Oh yea. I sent the folklorists out there I think. Out that way.

Seigel: Yea. It's a nice part of the state, too. Only you don't feel like you're in Kentucky.

Gates: Well, that's where I'm going today.

Seigel: Yea? You're in the Midwest.

Gates: If you go straight down into Tennessee from there that's where Reel Foot Lake is and Kentucky, Tennessee and Mississippi River meet. Mosquitoes and snakes.

(Laughter, Seigel and Gates)

Seigel: Good. Well, I'm sorry.

Gates: It's the snakes that bother me.

Seigel: There was a school up in Ludlow, Kentucky. I loved working in that system and I worked in that system every year for at least ten years. Because the fourth grade teachers up there had a project, they taught Kentucky history in fourth grade and every year all the fourth graders made quilts for Kentucky history day. And Ludlow is such an interesting, little community that kind of stuck together in the midst of all this explosion of population, but their principal had graduated from Ludlow high school, you know, it was sort of incestuous almost, but I loved that little school system. If you went a couple blocks you were in Covington where there was a terrible school system. But Ludlow was really sweet.

Gates: My grandmother's farm, where I grew up, it was on the hillside that looked down right across the river. I thought that was Kentucky, you know. (Laughter, Seigel) () We looked down and said, "That's an interesting place". My brother played at the Ludlow Lagoon. Do you know what that is?

Seigel: No.

Gates: It was some kind of an entertainment center in Ludlow. It was like, the lagoon was like Coney Island kind of thing. Only it was local. And you'd swim in the lake and . . .

Seigel: No. I never went to the lake. See, I grew up in Cincinnati and we didn't go across that bridge, because people over there didn't wear shoes and they married their cousins and they couldn't read and Newport was over there and I was never allowed to go anywhere near Newport, Kentucky, you know. It was culture shock. (Laughter, Seigel)

Gates: There was a lot of prejudice.

Seigel: Yes.

Gates: My dad was a cop. Hillbillies was one of the terms he used all the time. Come on.

Seigel: Yep. And so many of those hillbillies were living in Cincinnati, because they came up out of the mountains.

Gates: Yea. They had to deal with bad landlords and terrible things. So you had a culture shock when you moved down here, I guess?

Seigel: Yea.

Gates: What was that like?

Seigel: Well, it was like, you almost weren't anybody because they didn't know who your people were. They had to know who your people were to be really a part of the community, you know, but eventually, you know, my kids went to school here and we're friendly.

Gates: Yea, it takes a while. I told somebody I'll never be a Kentuckian.

Seigel: Right.

Gates: I wasn't born here.

Seigel: I always said that too, but I'm feeling like, you know, maybe there's hope. (Laughter, Seigel)

Gates: You've got a beautiful house. Did you guys buy this from somebody? Or did you built it?

Seigel: No, this house is over 100 years old. I don't know, I keep telling my kids I don't think anybody will live in this house after I'm gone, because people don't live like this anymore, you know?

Gates: Do you have a bathroom?

Seigel: I've got a bathroom. (Laughter, Gates and Seigel) But it doesn't have two sinks in it and, you know, granite tile. I don't even have kitchen counters, you know? I don't live like . . .

Gates: Yea. Well, that's how we live too. Ours is 1942 house. She keeps saying she wants cabinets, but then we look at it we saw, "Nah, it looks okay". (Laughter, Seigel) You have a dedication to art here. I mean, you have art all over the place. Who are these people? Why did you buy all this art?

Seigel: A lot of it we traded for.

Gates: Oh, did you really?

Seigel: Yea, you know, it's like, craft fairs were always great shopping opportunities if you found people who wanted to trade with you. A lot of it's because, you know, I have friends who wanted Greg's pots and I wanted their stuff. (Laughter, Seigel)

Gates: What did Greg get known for, his pots? What kind of style did he have? I mean you showed me an early one. Is that one of his?

Seigel: No. Actually, we bought this in West Virginia somewhere, because Greg had broken my favorite cup that he made. It was his . . . you know, I loved that cup and nobody could drink out of that cup. It was my cup and he broke it. We were out on a trip and I said, "Well, I think I could drink out of this one". So this one has been my cup ever since.

Gates: He didn't make you a new one?

Seigel: Well, yea, he tried, but it was one of a kind, you know. (Laughter, Seigel) None of the rest of them had the right shape, the right glaze the right, you know. It was a perfect cup. Well, he was really well known for his plates, because he made beautiful slipware plates. And a lot of

people have great collections of his plates. But also, he made really whimsical stuff, like turtle bowls and alligators and horses.

Gates: Yea, I remember some of those.

Seigel: But he was very dedicated to making good pots that were well fired.

Gates: And he had a couple kilns here?

Seigel: Yea, he had a gas kiln. A big brick gas kiln and then he had a wood fired kiln. And the wood fired kiln always required help, because you have to keep feeding wood in for days. It was usually like maybe a day and a half. So that was a really fun time for him because he'd have camaraderie with guys around the kiln. And some women too, but. It was potters, you know.

Gates: Oh, so the other potters would come over and help?

Seigel: Yea.

Gates: And he would help them sometimes?

Seigel: No, or he'd let them have pieces in the kiln or you know, give them space in the kiln or something like that. A couple of them were just friends who liked to come and they liked the camaraderie of it. They weren't even potters, they just liked fired, I don't know. (Laughter, Seigel) And you know, Greg was fun to be around and told good stories and he liked people who did the same.

Gates: Yea.

Seigel: So. Sort of like going camping without going camping. (Laughter, Seigel)

Gates: Yea. Got everybody there.

Seigel: And a fire. (Laughter, Seigel)

Gates: Fire. Did you have music going on too?

Seigel: Not usually. I don't think they did. Maybe he'd bring his saxophone out or something like that, but . . .

Gates: And drink some beer and have good food.

Seigel: Yea. Not too much beer though, you've got to keep your mind on what you're doing. (Laughter, Seigel)

Gates: Yea. It's pretty dangerous (). How many other quilters do you respect here in this area of Kentucky?

Seigel: Oh, that's a terrible question. (Laughter, Seigel)

Gates: That is pretty terrible. Well, you mentioned the one up in . . .

Seigel: I don't disrespect any quilter in Kentucky, but Jane Burch and I have been friends long before she ever started making quilts actually. Terrie Mangat and I were really good friends and she's, you know, been a good quilt maker. In Louisville, Denise Furnish had been a great friend. I don't know. I can't . . . I think that's pretty good. Lenore Davis, she made quilts.

Gates: You all kind of knew what each other were thinking in terms of what you're trying to do?

Seigel: Um, I guess. I mean, we all liked fiber and . . .

Gates: I consider you pretty famous. Do you ever feel like you made it?

Seigel: (Laughter, Seigel) No. I don't think about it in those terms, I guess. No. I wasn't trying to make it.

Gates: Have you had a couple retrospectives or anything like that?

Seigel: I haven't had an exhibit really, since I stopped showing these quilts. The thing that came closest to a retrospective was when I showed these at Evansville. And the room that I showed them in was too big for the number of quilts, so we hung a lot of other quilts that I had made to fill the space. But most of the place where I hung the paper doll quilts, they fit.

Gates: 13 that size. That's pretty big. It looks like it takes up a lot of space. It must have been a big place.

Seigel: It was a big room, yea.

Gates: I went down to Lincoln Days in Hodgenville. Have you ever been there?

Seigel: I've been to Hodgenville, but not to the . . .

Gates: Yea, I was doing some documentation of that festival and I actually had to narrate a stage with Lincoln impersonator and their wife who was Mary Todd Lincoln. It was fun, but I went to one of the things they do there is a quilt show and it's in a church and basically they just put the quilts over top of the church pews and you just walk around and look at them that way. It seemed kind of weird. (Laughter, Seigel) You don't get to see the whole quilt, you're only seeing a part of it.

Seigel: Yea. It's hard to show quilts.

Gates: Yea. Are you ever a consultant with people who want to show . . .?

Seigel: Yea. There used to be . . . for a couple years, they had a quilt show at the convention center in Frankfort and I organized that through Downtown Frankfort. I don't know what happened to that. They kind of fell apart.

Gates: Didn't KSU do something with African American quilters?

Seigel: They used to have a gallery and they would occasionally things, but they don't really have a gallery anymore.

Gates: I'm trying to think of the woman that I worked with up there, who died recently. Ann . . . Ann . . . I wondered if you worked with her.

Seigel: Maybe a long time ago.

Gates: So some of the other awards you got?

Seigel: I don't know. (Laughter, Seigel)

Gates: That's ok. That's ok. And you had a pretty good website, right?

Seigel: Yea. I have a website and it has paper doll quilts on it. It has some of the older work. It has all this new stuff on it.

Gates: I mean your themes in your quilts have been women, right?

Seigel: A lot of women.

Gates: Why?

Seigel: I don't know. I guess I'm interested in women and their accomplishments. Well, for a paper doll quilt, women's clothing is much more interesting than men's clothing. (Laughter, Seigel)

Gates: Yea. I guess so. Lucille Ball for instance, what . . .

Seigel: Oh, doesn't everybody love Lucy? I mean she was a pioneer in television and also she was one of the first female CEOs of a corporation, which was Desi Lou. So she was pretty groundbreaking.

Gates: She was. I mean, was she a hero to you or was this just somebody you picked?

Seigel: I love Lucy! (Laughter, Seigel)

Gates: I give tours at Buffalo Trace and sometimes I talk about how we send these . . . our big batches to a bottling plant and I'll say, "And it's just like I Love Lucy" and then everybody knows what you're talking about. (Laughter, Gates) It's like, all the bottles coming at you. Trying to put it in your shirt and your skirt, or something like that, because you're behind. (Laughter, Gates). I don't know if she ever did bottles, but I knew she did . . .

Seigel: Well, she did the vitameta vegimen where she got drunk selling the . . .

Gates: Yes. And she did candies too, didn't she?

Seigel: Yea. Chocolate candies.

Gates: I worked in an ice cream factory once in Cincinnati where that happened to me while I was in high school.

Seigel: Did you work at Graeter's?

Gates: No, this is a factory downtown in the west end. I don't know who they made it for. They make it for a lot of different people. It was my first day there and the machine that's feeding me ran out of glue, so all of these things are coming at me and the boxes aren't going () so they're all falling around me and I'm picking them up. (Laughter, Gates) Just like I Love Lucy. It's terrible.

Seigel: Well, I was a Graeter's girl, which sounds like more fun than that. (Laughter, Seigel)

Gates: You were a Graeter's girl?

Seigel: I was a Graeter's girl. (Laughter, Seigel)

Gates: My sister was too. That was fun.

Seigel: I was at the Marmot store.

Gates: Marmot. Okay.

Seigel: Because I'm an east side girl, you know. (Laughter, Seigel)

Gates: Yea. And you got to bring things home. What was left over?

Seigel: Our family always looked forward to that. (Laughter, Gates and Seigel)

Gates: That helped you later on, eh?

Seigel: I guess. (Laughter, Seigel)

Gates: Some of these influences do, I guess. What part of the east side did you live?

Seigel: I lived in Anderson Township.

Gates: Okay. My sister lives in 8 Mile. Is that around there?

Seigel: My mother lived off 8 Mile. I lived off of Salem.

Gates: Salem. Okay.

Seigel: But, after my father died, she moved out farther.

Gates: You east siders. (Laughter, Seigel) Don't eat chili . . .

Seigel: I eat chili!

Gates: You like Cincinnati chili?

Seigel: Yea. I'm a Skyline girl.

Gates: Okay. You've crossed over. (Laughter, Seigel and Gates) Well, cool. Anything else you want to say? We're almost at a quarter of now.

Seigel: No, I've got to go to work. (Laughter, Seigel)

Gates: Oh, you've got to go to work? Oh my gosh, we better get out of here. Thank you. This is only touching a part of your life, I know, but ().

Seigel: That's fine.

Gates: What makes a good quilt to you?

Seigel: Good design, good use of color. I think that . . . I don't care about the stitches that much. (Laughter, Seigel) But I like, visually, what, you know, if it could be a painting, then I think it's a good quilt.

Gates: So you're a painter quilter. Okay. The quote I want to put in with you should be something like that, what you said earlier about I couldn't paint so I guess I'll quilt. That's a good quote, I think.

Seigel: Go ahead. (Laughter, Seigel)

Gates: Do you have some brochures . . . you've been in shows haven't you that have some things written about you. Bios and things.

Seigel: Uh. . . yea. I've probably got those somewhere. Do you need those now or?

Gates: I don't need them now. I'll come back. Drive through. I come through here a lot. Cincinnati and back. Well thank you.

Camerman: We need room tone. Just be quiet for 20 or 30 seconds to get the sounds of the room.

Gates: Okay. Be quiet.

END OF INTERVIEW