Oral history interview with Georgi and Mark Marquisee, April 4, 2012

Marquisee, Georgi and Mark
Arden Media Resources co-founders


Format of recording: Originally recorded as digital wav file. Duration is 62 min.

Collection Summary: An interview of Georgi and Mark Marquisee conducted April 4, 2012 by Caitlin Davis for the Helen Farr Sloan Library and Archives of the Delaware Art Museum.

This interview was conducted for *Dream Streets: Art in Wilmington 1970–1990*, an exhibition held at the Delaware Art Museum June 27–September 27, 2015 on the contemporary art scene in Wilmington in the 1970s and 1980s.

Funding for the transcription of this interview was provided by a grant from the Delaware Humanities Forum.

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Quotes and excerpts must be cited as follows: *Oral history interview with Georgi and Mark Marquisee, April 4, 2012, Helen Farr Sloan Library and Archives, Delaware Art Museum.*

CAITLIN: And let me—okay. So, how do you exactly pronounce your last name?

GEORGI: Marquisee.


So I guess we can first out with both of your backgrounds. Are you guys originally from Delaware?

MARK: No, I’m from Syracuse, New York.

CAITLIN: Okay.

MARK: And Georgi Marquisee’s—

GEORGI: Oh and I’m from—

CAITLIN: Yeah, either—whoever wants to talk go right ahead.

GEORGI: A little town in North Dakota.
CAITLIN: Oh, okay.

GEORGI: Yeah. And my background is in art. I graduated in art and was interested in trying to combine art and trying to work with people.

CAITLIN: Okay.

GEORGI: So I located a program that was only in its second year at Hahnemann Medical College in Psychiatric Art Therapy, so I traveled here to get a master’s in Psychiatric Art Therapy and Wilmington was my first at Terry Center.

CAITLIN: Oh, okay. And then you worked for DuPont. You have a science background.

MARK: I have a Ph.D. I came to DuPont to work in the Central Research Department and my interest was in—my doctorate was in biochemistry and was interested in cancer therapies.

CAITLIN: Okay. How did you go between DuPont and then into filming? How did that start? Did you always have a passion for film?

MARK: Well the way it started—I had some interest in film. DuPont physicist Jerry Millstein and I became members of a group that we started at DuPont by a chemist by the name of Horatio Bergna. And what—what the role of that group was, they would invite experimental film makers to come to Wilmington, bring their films and show at the what was then the Robin Hood Theatre and—

GEORGI: That’s now the Candlelight Theatre, right?

MARK: I don’t—I don’t [inaudible]. And the thing was that Jerry and I would do the—would sell the tickets. We would run the projector. We would do all the kind of nitty-gritty stuff. And some of the experimental film makers came and showed their work and these were people that were noted, Jerry and I would look at each other and say, “Gee, we could—we could do something and that could really”—you know, that kind of thing.

And this—this went on for—I think we did this maybe for a couple of years. I’m not sure.

CAITLIN: Why was the group formed? Just as a fun activity—

MARK: I think Horatio Bergna was culturally sophisticated.

CAITLIN: Okay.

GEORGI: And there was nothing like that in Wilmington. There were no art theatres I don’t think at time, were there?

MARK: No. No, that’s right. Well about that time when Jerry and I were involved in showing these things, my former professor that I worked for at Cornell, Bob Holland was his name, won
the Nobel Prize. And out of the blue came a check in the mail, which said, “To show my appreciation for the time that we worked together, please use this money for something that you wouldn’t otherwise do.”

CAITLIN: Yeah.

MARK: So I told Jerry, “Jerry, I can buy a movie camera.”

And Jerry—I said, “Well I’m going to go up to New York and buy a camera.”

And Jerry said, who had interested in music and sound—

GEORGI: He was classically trained.

MARK: Yeah. Said, “Gee can I come along?”

So I said, “Sure.”

So we got up to New York and I got the camera and Jerry said, “What about sound recording—sound equipment?”

“Well I really don’t know much about that.”

Jerry said, “Well, why don’t I buy the sound equipment for it, okay?”

So we kind of became de facto partners right there in the camera store. He bought the sound equipment and I bought the camera. And so we—we started to do film work and then—what—what happened then was really interesting. One day I was in my lab and I looked through the glass door into the lab next door and there was a film crew in there working. There was a man—sophisticated looking man, who was obviously directing. So I called Jerry and said, “Hey Jerry, in the lab next door there’s a film crew working.”

So Jerry says, “Go in and introduce yourself and tell them you make films, too.”

I said, “Jerry, I’m sorry. I’m—I’m—that kind of thing would be”—

He said, “You go—you go introduce yourself and tell them you make films.”

So with great hesitation I walked through the door and I stood by the person who was clearly the director and I went to him and said, “If you need somebody—a local filmmaker, here’s my name and phone number. It was nice to see you. Goodbye.”

CAITLIN: Never expecting to hear from him again.

MARK: Amazingly the next day I got a call from this guy whose name was Bill Radebaugh. He says, “Look, I need a picture of an aardvark.”
I said, “You need a picture of an aardvark? Oh, okay. We’ll get it for you.”

So I told Jerry and so we went up—we took the camera equipment, we went up to the Bronx zoo and asked around if they had an aardvark. Someone said, “Yeah, we have one. It’s in the lion house. It’s in a—in a lion cage.”

Okay, so we took the camera. We went to the lion cage and here in this huge cage with these big metal bars that was made to hold some lion or something, laying on the middle of the concrete bare floor, was this aardvark, which is kind of long skinny thing.

CAITLIN: Yeah.

MARK: I said to Jerry, “The surroundings are so unattractive. [Inaudible] I’ll get in as tight as I can with the zoom lens and even do its nose and so on. Take these real tight shots.”

Took the footage. Came back to Wilmington. Gave the footage to Bill Radebaugh to look at. He looked at the footage and he called up. He said, “The footage, I can’t use it. It’s obscene.”

I said, “Why not?”

“You’ve got this pink, hairy pulsating flesh. It just—it just looks obscene.”

“Give us another chance.”

And I should add to this story that before we went to the Bronx Zoo I called the Philadelphia zoo and I said, “Do you have an aardvark?”

They said yes.

“Can I come up and film it?”

They said, “No because the building it’s in is the reptile house and it’s under renovation and you can’t take any [inaudible].”

That’s why we went to the Bronx zoo.

CAITLIN: Okay.

MARK: At the time I had a girlfriend and I said to her—I said, “We’re going to go to the Philadelphia zoo. They have an aardvark there.” Even though they told me no pictures there. I said, “I rigged up—I have a big powerful battery belt. A heavy thing and a real bright 650 watt light.” I said, “You keep this under your coat, okay? I’m going to keep this camera under my coat. We’re going to go in and when we see the aardvark I say ‘now.’ I pull out the camera, you pull out the light and bingo we get the shot of the aardvark.”
Well we went to the reptile house. We walked in and there was the aardvark. It was sleeping on the floor, but they had a nice painted diorama behind it—painted background. It was very nice. But it’s asleep. So I said, “Okay Carol, now.”

I pull out the camera. She pulls out the light and immediately a uniformed guard rushes up and she says, “Are you the one that asked for permission to film the aardvark?”

I said, “Yeah.”

He said, “Let me go in and kick it so it stands up.”

**CAITLIN:** What?

**MARK:** So he did that. We got the shot. I got wonderful good will from Bill Radebaugh and the DuPont Company and after that we got all kinds of work that Jerry and I would do nights and weekends.

**CAITLIN:** Okay.

**MARK:** And then Jerry said, “If I can keep making films, I’m going to quit—I’m going to quit DuPont.”

**CAITLIN:** Were you getting paid for these films?

**MARK:** Oh yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

**CAITLIN:** And what types of films would DuPont want you to put together?

**MARK:** We—we would—well maybe safety films for example was a big area.

**GEORGI:** You did the corporate—

**MARK:** We did the—

**[Crosstalk]**

**GEORGI:** The company video.

**MARK:** Yeah. And—yeah, yeah. So Millstein quit DuPont and then he started to run the—we rented a little house and that was our studio.

**CAITLIN:** Were you still at DuPont at this time?

**MARK:** I stayed for another couple of years. I’m not sure how many years after that.

**CAITLIN:** Okay.
MARK: I—I—I can—I was there a total of 11 years and then I quit and I was—was—

CAITLIN: That became your full-time job.

MARK: Full-time job.

CAITLIN: Okay.

MARK: And then the next big advance was when I met Georgi Marquisee.

CAITLIN: I was going to say where do you fit into all of this now? Because during all of this what were you doing? You were working at the hospital?

GEORGI: Yeah. I was working as an Art Therapist at Terry Children’s Center. And then I—before that—I mean after that I was working as a Justice of the Peace for the state of Delaware and then after that is when I started working with Mark Marquisee and Jerry.

MARK: We got married somewhere along there.

GEORGI: About the time our son was born I started working with Mark Marquisee and Jerry.

CAITLIN: Okay, how did that go? Did you—did you just kind of come on because you guys were a couple or did you have interest in the film before?

GEORGI: I think we decided that we would try to share a job because we’ve had the [inaudible].

CAITLIN: Okay.

GEORGI: So that was a sporadic thing we tried along with other things in the workplace at that time like—oh, where you vary the—companies would let you vary your hours and that kind of stuff. You couldn’t work from home yet because there weren’t computers. We were trying new things. We thought, well why don’t we try to split a job.

CAITLIN: And was year was this that you guys started working together?

GEORGI: Well at the point—

CAITLIN: Or around. It doesn’t have to be exact.

GEORGI: He worked full-time for Arden films and I started working and that was ’74.

CAITLIN: Okay.

GEORGI: That was interesting. We really worked more like full-time and I worked some.

CAITLIN: Okay.
GEORGI: That’s the way it kind of worked out. But it was a nice way to get started.

CAITLIN: Yeah definitely. And I’m guessing you called it Arden Films because that’s where your studio was.

MARK: It was Arden Films—yeah first it was Arden Films.

CAITLIN: Okay. And what it is now? Arden Media?

MARK: Arden Media Resources because what was—what happened was first it was Arden Films. Then video came out and so—

GEORGI: No, no. Then slides came out. So we called it Arden something—I think there was something in between video.

MARK: Anyway, as the technology changed, we kept changing the name of it. So we thought we can keep to Arden Films. Arden Films and Video was the next name. And then we thought, digital’s coming out now, so we said let’s call it Arden Media Resources then we’re ready for anything.

CAITLIN: That makes sense. Was Jerry with you this whole time, or when did he—?

MARK: Yes.

CAITLIN: Okay.

MARK: Well—

GEORGI: He left in about ’76 I think.

CAITLIN: Okay, so still early on in the—

MARK: He wanted a career in music performance.

CAITLIN: Okay.

MARK: And so that’s—he—he was from California.

CAITLIN: And then came out here for DuPont, got involved with the films and then went back to music. Okay.

MARK: Yep that’s—

CAITLIN: Okay. Was he successful with that?

MARK: I think for a while. And then—and then he got into computer programming just at a good time, so that’s what he does now.
CAITLIN: That’s what he does now.

GEORGI: Really great. He started—he helped develop a cab system.

CAITLIN: Oh, okay. Oh. Very bright.

GEORGI: He does pretty much whatever he wants to do.

CAITLIN: Are you guys still in touch?

GEORGI: Yeah. He came out for Mark Marquisees’—

MARK: 70th birthday.

GEORGI: 70th I think.

MARK: Yeah. That was fun.

GEORGI: Mark Marquisee had a pebble liberation party. He had been collecting pebbles from slaughter beach for many years, so we got a box and we invited our friends and we all went down and we carried these pebbles down to the beach.

MARK: We returned them.

GEORGI: We liberated them.

CAITLIN: Oh that’s fun.

GEORGI: Yeah, that was fun.

CAITLIN: What does he think of what you’ve done from small beginnings and to what it is today?

MARK: You know, I don’t think I ever asked him about it. I think he’s—the first film that we made together got us [inaudible] even before we approached DuPont was called Courage and Jerry wrote the script. And the script basically—the idea of the script was a philanthropic foundation that has this nutty girl director who was my girlfriend at the time who had a—kind of a funny persona. She was—she was kind of over the top. And so Jerry wrote a very straight, very serious narration like—like—a corporate fundraising organization would have.

GEORGI: The old ones especially. You know the narrators always sounded like god.

CAITLIN: Yeah. Yep, yep.

MARK: What you would see on the screen was this nutty girl wondering around doing all these crazy things. It did—it was the complete opposite of what the narrator was saying.
CAITLIN: Yeah.

MARK: Well we entered that in a film festival and it won first place.

CAITLIN: Where—what film festival was that?

MARK: It was—it was—it was a Delaware film festival.

CAITLIN: So that was like early ‘70s?

GEORGI: Yeah. Uh huh. That was like ’70—’68, ’70.

MARK: Yeah it was around then. Yeah.

GEORGI: And that won a semi-golden eagle. I don’t know what semi is.

MARK: [Inaudible].

GEORGI: That I don’t even know if it’s still going, but it used to be a very active national competition—international—no it was national. And it was run by the government and they used—those films that they selected were then entered in international festivals throughout the year.

MARK: If I have this DVD, I’ll let you—

CAITLIN: That would be great.

GEORGI: That’s a fun one.

MARK: That’s—so that’s probably what we showed to Bob Radebaugh at DuPont when we asked if there was anything we could do. And then you want to talk about how you got into the [inaudible] of the World.

GEORGI: Yeah. Unless you have other questions.

CAITLIN: Yeah, I do. I can wait if you want to talk about that now.

[Crosstalk]

CAITLIN: So your studio was in Arden. How did you learn about how—how—once you film it how to put it together and everything like that? Did you kind of learn throughout the years how it’s done?

MARK: I think I always like the quote from Nike. It was “Just do it.” And that’s—we were—Jerry and I were two reasonably intelligent. Two Ph.Ds. trying to figure out [inaudible]. So we—we could figure it out. I think we may have taken—we did one—I remember I took one film course—workshop with some Hollywood filmmakers.
GEORGI: That was a [inaudible] photographic workshop, but that was after you had been doing it for about 20 years.

MARK: Yeah that’s—

CAITLIN: Did you learn anything new or did you—?

GEORGI: He did because it was totally about entertainment movie making. But—go ahead I’m sorry.

MARK: The most interesting thing about that was the—there was some Hollywood—famous—

GEORGI: While my brain’s functioning this afternoon.

MARK: Cinematographer. We formed little groups. We’d go out and work on certain film assignments. And this famous filmmaker, I remember in our little group we’d have a director and a camera person and so forth and so on. And remember in our little group, we set up for a shot a certain way and our group director was [inaudible]. And then the famous director would come around from Hollywood and—

CAITLIN: And critique. Yeah.

MARK: And he said, “No, no, no. Not the camera there. Move the camera over here. Light reflector over there, dah, dah, dah, dah.”

And so in the group everybody went around, did what he said. Then this famous director walked away and our little director said, “Okay, now put everything back the way it was.”

And we did.

GEORGI: Another story about him was somebody in the—in the cast—or crew I guess it would be, like the photographer perhaps, said, “Well don’t you think”—and he was directing, [inaudible] was directing and they said, “Well how about if we try it here instead of here?”

And he said, “You’re fired.” He said, “If you were on a crew—a professional crew and you did that, you would be fired because that’s not your role. And if you have any suggestions you go directly to the director and it would be in private. It wouldn’t be in front of the whole group.”

I thought that was interesting. “You’re fired.”

CAITLIN: Did you—your crew—did you guys choose what movies you made—or film? What is the correct term? What should I be calling them?

MARK: Films. Films.

CAITLIN: Films.
MARK: Working for—it was kind of two things. We did corporate work, okay, but we—

CAITLIN: What companies did you usually—besides DuPont if you—?

GEORGI: I’ll give you a list.

CAITLIN: That’s perfect.

MARK: So we did corporate work and—and when we weren’t doing—when we were waiting to say get a corporate job, we did for fun things of our own. We did lots of films. We did a film on [inaudible]. That was a documentary. Gee.

GEORGI: I told her a lot of them already.

MARK: Okay, cool.

GEORGI: And I’ll give you a list. I’ll give you a list of the awards we’ve won.

CAITLIN: Perfect, yeah.

GEORGI: 100 or more awards. And we’ve worked for all sort of companies.

CAITLIN: Around here?

GEORGI: Yeah.

CAITLIN: Where did you get your inspiration from?

MARK: Inspiration?

GEORGI: For the fun things?

CAITLIN: Yeah.

GEORGI: Oh, that came from everywhere. Everywhere. But even—even the corporate things we tried to make them—

CAITLIN: Tried to make them interesting.

GEORGI: Yeah. And this article I know refers to puppets that we used in a film about plastic safety I think it was and that was the Muppets.

CAITLIN: Oh, okay.

GEORGI: Before they were totally famous. They were working with Sesame Street, but they came down here. But we tried to make everything have kind of a hook to it.
CAITLIN: Okay, yeah.

GEORGI: And sometimes that kind of went overboard and we don’t need a hook for everything. But it worked a lot of the time.

CAITLIN: So for the movies that you guys just wanted to make did you—where did you get funding for that? Or is it just from the payments from other jobs?

MARK: Mostly. I got a grant from Delaware Division of the Arts. Yeah.

CAITLIN: Okay.

GEORGI: I’m not sure what you did with that one. But we didn’t have a lot of patience making application. We did some of that, but not very often. If the—if it was something like a grand idea that they refer to in this article, our clients would be the ones that would get the money and they would come to us. Or else maybe we’d bid on the job.

MARK: Because if you have a choice of spending your time writing applications and trying to get money or going out and making a film. Just do it. Just do it.

CAITLIN: Yeah.

GEORGI: Well that’s what—that’s what happened with our [inaudible] of the world. We spent about—I spent about a year I think going to every place we could think of. Nonprofits. Every place we could think of trying to getting funding for the series and were not successful. And so we finally said if we would have spent this time and money doing this instead of going all over and—we would already have at least one show, so we finally just started doing that. That was the good—a good approach. The right one to do.

CAITLIN: Would you work on more than one film at a time or –?

GEORGI: Yeah. Especially once we got established.

CAITLIN: How long did it take you to fully complete a film usually?

GEORGI: Well a lot of times it—you would be filming—like if you were documenting something, that might cover years. Like The Grand for instance. But more often we used to say, I think, six months was kind of a rule of thumb.

CAITLIN: Okay.

MARK: But during the time that all this was going on, the technology changed and it became so much more doable than film. Film is—if you do film after the shoot the film and you have to edit the film, if during the editing process you cut the film in the wrong place, you’re—you’re dead essentially. You made a big mistake. With video—I loved the button on our edit system says “edit undo.” You push that and okay, you’re back—you want to go back two steps, you want to
go back ten steps, you just keep pushing. And—and not only that, but today I couldn’t even lift the film camera that we used years ago and—and—and video cameras—and the cameras have gotten smaller and lighter as I have gotten older and weaker and it’s worked out just—very, very nice the way that’s worked out.

CAITLIN: Did you advertise your services or—? Okay, where did you advertise?

GEORGI: Once when—about a year before Jerry left, I think, it was about the time you left DuPont Bill Radebaugh retired and he gave us almost all of our commercial work to start with because he was the guy who was doing films at DuPont and most people—I think he was about the only one at that time doing it. And it didn’t even—we were so clueless when it comes to business. I mean we still are, but that was—we didn’t even realize that that might have an effect on our income. The fact that he was retiring from our only commercial source of income. So it became clear that we should start selling and that’s what I started doing and really hated it. I don’t like selling, still don’t like selling but what I discovered was that if you get to know people and you tell them what you’re doing and you show them something that you’ve done that’s good, when the need arises then they remember you.

So that was the way we did most of our selling.

CAITLIN: Okay. Did you have any ads and—?

GEORGI: We did advertise some, but it would be in things like in the program for the Delaware Theatre Company. That kind of thing. And we went—at that time for about ten years, the Delaware State Chamber maybe Newcastle Chamber of Commerce—there may have been others used to have—what did they call them? Not conventions but—I forget what they called them. They have a name for them. But it was where all the businesses would come and we’d have booths and—tradeshow maybe?

MARK: Tradeshow.

CAITLIN: So you would have a booth there and share your services. Okay.

GEORGI: I don’t know how much actually ever got us business, but—

CAITLIN: Throughout the years, how many people do you think have worked with you, or has it just been mostly you guys and Jerry?

GEORGI: Oh you mean like staff?

CAITLIN: Uh huh.

GEORGI: Well at one time we had a dozen. That was probably the most.

CAITLIN: Okay. Who would write the script?
GEORGI: That always varied. Depended on—like, Mark Marquisee was good at technical stuff. Bill Radebaugh wrote scripts of course early on. But Mark Marquisee really hated anything that was—what did you call it? Soft information or—

MARK: Yeah.

CAITLIN: What’s soft?

GEORGI: Well it was stuff that was not—was more abstract ideas that kind of thing. So he didn’t—

CAITLIN: You don’t like that stuff.

GEORGI: And so that—that’d be kind of—sometimes the producers.

CAITLIN: Okay. Did you ever write?

GEORGI: Uh huh. I wrote scripts a lot. It varied. The producers that we hired during [inaudible]. And we always had a practice when a script in the process of passing it around the whole group and people would—

CAITLIN: Yeah, opinions. Yeah. What was the most memorable film?

GEORGI: Oh my goodness.

CAITLIN: Is there one that’s really stuck with you that meant a lot for you to do? Or that you thought was the best final product.

GEORGI: Well one of the commercial films that I thought was really—where we seemed to have the most control over our medium was called The Sensible Road to [inaudible].

CAITLIN: What was that about?

GEORGI: It was about the idea of the cost of the last 10 percent—the fact that you could do 90 percent—clean up 90 percent of the pollution in air for a reasonable cost, but the 10 percent that was left, they were questioning whether the cost would be equal to the benefit. And so that was—a fun film to work on because we used a mine and instead of graphs and charts and things, we filmed all over for that. And it was just really a very visually appealing film.

CAITLIN: What about you, Mark Marquisee?

MARK: I think the one I liked the best is one that we did very recently. It’s called Conundrum and it’s—it’s about my difficulty in meeting women and not knowing what kind of interaction is expected. Whether it’s to shake hands or whether it’s to hug or to kiss on the cheek or to push my cheek against the girl’s cheek and kiss the air. For me it’s—and for men it’s simple you just reach out and shake their hand and it’s done.
And so I—I have always been somewhat attacked by anxiety with the thought of what—what does the woman expect? So that’s what this—I’ll give you a copy so you can see. I feel like it really captured my inner personality. And I’ve given it to a number of our women friends [inaudible].

[Crosstalk]

CAITLIN: *The Clean Air* would be—what year was that around?

GEORGI: I’m going to guess about ’86, but I could be off by ten years.

CAITLIN: But in the ‘80s, maybe late—I’ll say late ‘80s.

GEORGI: I would think so, yeah. Yeah, I think so.

CAITLIN: And when was *Conundrum*? You said a few years ago or recently.

GEORGI: Yeah. That was for Fringe Festival, I think the first Fringe Festival—

MARK: Yeah, we had the Fringe Festival.

CAITLIN: Where there any movies that stick out for just being bad experiences? You didn’t like the subject? You just wanted to get it over with?

GEORGI: Yeah there were those. Sure. I’m not sure—

MARK: *Families in Guatemala* and the run in with the—

GEORGI: Yeah, some of the *Families of the World* we had some—

CAITLIN: Difficulties?

GEORGI: As far as before that, I guess we tend to forget. Most of them were pretty—pretty painless I think.

CAITLIN: Uh huh. That’s good.

GEORGI: Yeah.

CAITLIN: Yeah, so that article mentions *The Grand Idea* and that’s kind of since that was the renovation. Am I correction in saying it was the ‘70s?


MARK: It was an interesting—

CAITLIN: So tell me a little bit about how you got involved with doing the film for that.
GEORGI: Well that was one of those—I think that was word of mouth. Most of our—you know this is a really small community.

CAITLIN: Everyone knows each other.

GEORGI: Right. It was word of mouth ultimately. And then, unless we were competing. I don’t remember if you—do you know if you bid on that? I don’t think so.

MARK: I don’t remember.

CAITLIN: Is it made up of interviews and what—what’s shown in the—?

GEORGI: It’s made up of interviews, but it’s visually really beautiful because they filmed—they went up to New York City and filmed the ceiling panel being painted. And had an interesting experience doing that. And there was another long segment. Oh, I know. The casting of the cast iron front. So, both of those sequences are really interesting. And then Jerry used to do original music for almost all these films.

CAITLIN: Okay. So he did it with that one?

GEORGI: Yeah, it’s beautiful.

CAITLIN: That’s great.

GEORGI: And all the—almost everything that we did like that would have been during the [inaudible]. So Del-Mar clients feel really good.

CAITLIN: Do you still have a copy of the—?

GEORGI: Yeah, we have a copy of most of them.

CAITLIN: Okay, good, good, good. Explain RAVE.

MARK: RAVE was—we like art very much. There are a lot of artists whose work we see that we love, but probably can’t afford to buy. So the idea was to go—to approach an artist and say, “Hey, here’s an idea. I’ll make a little documentary about you that you can use to promote yourself to museums, to galleries, collectors and in exchange for that, you give us a little of your art. How does that sound??

CAITLIN: Okay.

MARK: So RAVE stands for Regional Exchange Video—Regional Artist Video Exchange. Yeah. All the artists whose work—this, for example, is a Mitch Lyons, okay?

CAITLIN: Okay.
MARK: On the *RAVE* segment on Mitch, you see him creating that piece of art, which is interesting.

This Valetta, who’s up—up in West Chester—

CAITLIN: So did you get a good response from this program?

MARK: Oh, I mean—

GEORGI: We probably did a dozen artists I think.

MARK: Yeah.

GEORGI: I think most of them were on their way—

MARK: It was very, very—

CAITLIN: Wait, when was this?

GEORGI: I think in the ‘90s. I don’t know if that qualifies.

CAITLIN: I’ll write it down. It’s still interesting. It’s still good to have.

MARK: Yeah, as a matter of fact just last week I took some DVDs of *RAVE* to the gift shop of the Delaware Museum of Art.

CAITLIN: Oh really?

MARK: But I’ll give you a copy.

CAITLIN: Oh good. Thank you. So yeah, so you just picked artists that you guys both—

MARK: Really liked.

CAITLIN: Really enjoyed.

MARK: And that—that worked—that was so nice. We found that I think we really relate to artist.

CAITLIN: What you do is definitely a type of art.

MARK: Yeah. Well it just—the kind of art that we liked. It—it—there seemed to be some unity between the art and the artist and if we liked the art, it turned out we would wind up liking the artist.

GEORGI: Usually yeah.
MARK: Pretty much. But we—we had—our house was on North Franklin Street—

GEORGI: [inaudible].

MARK: That’s where this picture was taken. Ten bedroom house. Big old Victorian House—is that was it was?

GEORGI: Yeah, Victorian.

MARK: So we had a huge amount of wall space to hang art. It was wonderful. But as we downsized, I’m sorry to say we had to—had to get rid of a lot of our artwork. Georgi Marquisee’s idea was “Let’s give it back to the artist.”

And that’s what we did.

CAITLIN: Wow.

GEORGI: They had fun with it. Especially when they were huge.

CAITLIN: I guess now—yeah, tell me about Families of the World. That’s been a big part of your life for a while.

GEORGI: Yeah. And that probably [inaudible] ten years. That was my idea. And I always—both of us have been really interested in other cultures and when we had that big old house, we would often have visitors on the third floor from other counties.

CAITLIN: Oh, okay.

GEORGI: Sometimes students, sometimes different people. There were a couple of organizations that had people from other countries that would come and stay for a while. And—so that’s something that we’ve always—that’s been a theme through our whole life together. And we tried to think of a project that would involve other cultures—other countries, other cultures that would could make money on, that we could continue to do it, but it was kind of hard because we don’t know other languages and—

CAITLIN: Yeah.

GEORGI: Many people thought—that’s not our area of expertise at all. And so—but one of the things that both of us were—have always been real interested in, when we go to other countries, we’re not really that into museums and monuments and things like that. We’re much more interested in how does the mailman live.

CAITLIN: Yeah.

GEORGI: And following somebody home and being able to see how they live, boy that was really—
CAITLIN: Yeah. So then want to hang out with the locals [inaudible] tourist areas.

GEORGI: Yeah. And so we—I thought that when you watch TV at that time especially more than now, you might see eight documentaries about—in a—over a couple of days of nature film and in the most excruciating detail of piped plover and how they are building their nests and all the details. You would never see anything about somebody in Thailand cooked a dinner or took a bath or whatever. So to us that was much—not that we [inaudible]. But [inaudible] were people. And so that was kind of the idea—that we felt that we were making nature films about people.

CAITLIN: Okay.

GEORGI: And I would have loved to not really even had that much dialog, but that turns out not to work very well. Our first try at that was focused target audience was adults. And then when we couldn’t get funding for that, it occurred to me that that would be something that would be great for schools and libraries, and so the focus began to be children instead of adults.

[Phone ringing]

GEORGI: I’m not going to get that. So our first shooting we had a film that we were doing for DuPont in India and for a beta we were doing some filming—just a little bit of filming for them. We knew we were going there. We contacted Sesame Street and did [inaudible] that we’d do two or three little shorts for them there. So once our trip was paid for, we said well why don’t we use this to start filming the series.

CAITLIN: So India was your first film.

GEORGI: India and then I went back home and then Mark Marquisee went on to Thailand and did Thailand.

CAITLIN: Okay.

GEORGI: In that same trip.

MARK: And the idea is that these films were being conceived of as for children. And the idea was that—I think we felt we would be promoting international understanding.

CAITLIN: Uh huh.

MARK: Yeah.

GEORGI: And there are two segments. One usually an urban family, one a rural family.

CAITLIN: Okay.

GEORGI: And they’re told from the point of view of a child [inaudible] by the children.
CAITLIN: Okay, how did you get the children involved in the other countries?

GEORGI: That—in India—

CAITLIN: Especially when you guys don’t speak the language, how did you—

GEORGI: We always have to work through the government or friends or something. In this case, in India, we had a friend Joe Patel who ran a travel agency there. He [inaudible]. She had a sister, aunt or somebody who was the principal of the school. So she was the perfect person to understand what we were doing and find families in India.

And then in Thailand, Mark Marquisee just went and looked for people—looked for families.

CAITLIN: And then how did you—how were you able to get them to understand what you were doing? Did you have a translator?

MARK: I found somebody—I found a translator and yeah.

GEORGI: You went to a college, did you? A university?

MARK: I think so.

GEORGI: And got a translator from the university.

CAITLIN: Okay.

GEORGI: And then went from there.

MARK: Yeah.

CAITLIN: So have you been to all the countries that you filmed?

GEORGI: He’s been to all of them and I’ve been to most of them.

CAITLIN: Okay.

MARK: So we’ve done I think 27 countries.

GEORGI: Uh huh.

CAITLIN: You guys are world travelers.

GEORGI: Yeah.

CAITLIN: Were you surprised at the success because I looked on the website and it seems like you’ve gotten many awards for these.
GEORGI: Yeah we’ve gotten over a hundred. Yeah. When—when it was just a guess. When I made a few introductory calls after we had India and Thailand, distributors didn’t seem that interested in just one or two titles. So we decided after a couple years to go to Mexico. And we did Mexico. And then I had the three. Then I went to distributors and they—they just, “Yes, yes, yes, yes.” Everybody wanted—

CAITLIN: Then they started wanting more, more.

GEORGI: Yeah. And we were in—I was in Arizona visiting my—my family the first year that we started actually distributing them. And I guess it was the first month, must have been—two months, but we just picked up our biggest distributor and he called and said, “Wow, we got an order today. Guess how much it was?”

And I said, “$200.00?”

“No, more.”

I’m like, “$800.00?”

“More.”

And it was $3,200.00.

CAITLIN: Wow.

GEORGI: And we just—I was just like oh my god. It’s amazing. It looks like it’s going to work.

CAITLIN: Yeah.

GEORGI: And it did.

CAITLIN: Did you pick—from then on did you pick countries that you thought were going to make a good film, or did you pick countries that you wanted to go to?

Okay.

MARK: There’s some irony about that because I think we were—we were very uninterested to a large extent in going to countries that had the same culture and values that we do pretty much. So—

GEORGI: European countries.

CAITLIN: Yeah.
MARK: Yeah. So we went to Egypt and to India. We went to African countries. We went all over the world. But people would be, “You haven’t done Ireland. You haven’t done Ireland. You haven’t done Scotland.”

And so now, after many years, now we’re trying to set up these countries that didn’t attract us the way these more exotic countries did.

CAITLIN: Have you done the U.S.?

MARK: Yes.

CAITLIN: And where was that filmed?

MARK: North Dakota.

CAITLIN: North Dakota, okay.

GEORGI: Well, North Dakota and Wilmington.

CAITLIN: Wilmington, okay.

GEORGI: We did a—

MARK: An African American family and a farming family.

GEORGI: And that—that’s two years ago or last year. We did it a long time ago and then out of the blue the U.S. State Department asked if we could provide all the embassies in the world with them.

CAITLIN: Oh, really?

MARK: Yeah. That was just so interesting.

GEORGI: When people call and ask what is life like in the U.S., that’s what they’re going to get from them.

CAITLIN: Wow, that’s great.

GEORGI: We’re really proud of that.

MARK: I thought they’d be interested in some Hollywood production with very high production value, but ours are very simple and straightforward, so that was a very nice surprise.

CAITLIN: Oh my gosh, the question just flew out of my head. Oh. How long do you spend in the countries filming?

MARK: Two or three weeks.
CAITLIN: Okay. What was your favorite—if you have a favorite? I’m sure you have many favorites but top three?

GEORGI: Well, I really liked Japan. I just really enjoyed that. And Germany, which we just did last year.

CAITLIN: Oh, okay.

GEORGI: And I’ll think of another one.

MARK: I think the Philippines would be at the top of my list. People were so friendly and so nice, I’ve never been in a culture where the people where so friendly and nice. As a matter of fact, as a result of the doing the Philippines, a local friend who was telling me one day about his volunteer work at the Port of Wilmington and he said, what he does is take the sailors to Wal-Mart to go shopping and most of the sailors are from the Philippines. And I thought, gee I could pay back their kindness by—I’ll volunteer. So I volunteer at the Port of Wilmington.

GEORGI: Seaman Center.

MARK: At the Seaman Center.

CAITLIN: Oh nice.

MARK: And most of them—most of the sailors that come are from the Philippines. And so that’s interesting. But that’s—I would say the Philippines would be my top choice.

GEORGI: Korea? We both like Korea. I liked India a lot.

CAITLIN: How would these trips be funded?

GEORGI: We—

CAITLIN: You funded them?

MARK: We fund them by—

CAITLIN: I can imagine the plane tickets get expensive.

GEORGI: Yeah. After—I’m not sure how long we had been doing it—four years maybe—three or four years where we—probably three—where we were doing all the distribution through distributors, one of the distributors approached us about licensing that to her with an exclusive and that’s what we’ve been doing recently.

CAITLIN: Okay.

GEORGI: For the last eight years.
CAITLIN: Uh huh. What does a normal episode—well how long is an episode?

MARK: Half hour.

CAITLIN: Half hour and what does it usually talk about?

MARK: It usually starts with a child waking up in the morning. And it ends with a child going to bed at night.

CAITLIN: Okay, so it’s a day in the life of the child.

MARK: Not only the child, but we follow the father to work, we see what the mother does during the day.

GEORGI: Going to the schools.

MARK: Going to the schools.

GEORGI: It’s usually filmed over several days, but then it’s sort of condensed.

CAITLIN: Put together, yeah. And there are subtitles I’m assuming.

GEORGI: Uh huh. Closed captioning or subtitles.

MARK: Narrated by English speaking child, an American child.

CAITLIN: Oh, okay.

MARK: All—in the background you might here the child speaking their native language, the narration—

CAITLIN: Yeah, but you hear—who is this child?

GEORGI: They’re always from here and they always—they grow out of it.

MARK: Their voice changes as they get older we can’t use them anymore. We have to keep getting—

GEORGI: We try to get kids who match the age of the kids in the video. And sometimes the kids in the video are very young, we finally decided to have a kid a little bit older and be able to understand him. Now we usually try to get an 8, 9, 10 year old.

CAITLIN: Okay. Who—what age do you think watches these? What’s the range?

GEORGI: That’s interesting because we were thinking like five through seven or something, but then kids studied through social studies about third grade, so in school that’s about where they
view them. They love them. They’ve gotten a little bit more—I think the information is a little higher than it was the first—

CAITLIN: Couple of years, yeah.

GEORGI: And then we hear from people that view them with three or four year olds and they say, “My kid loves them. They’ve seen it 15 times.”

And older people—parents love them.

CAITLIN: Yeah.

GEORGI: They like to sit and watch, so it’s real interesting. I think probably—I would say six to twelve.

CAITLIN: Okay.

GEORGI: Which is a pretty wide range for kids’ programming.

CAITLIN: Yeah.

GEORGI: I’m sure the younger kids don’t get some of the [inaudible]. Kids who are real entertainment oriented are not going to like it anyway.

MARK: No high speed chases or—

CAITLIN: Yeah. You can’t kill someone with gun on a video game.

GEORGI: Who they’re just—I don’t know—it’s probably just a matter of interest. But kids who are observers.

CAITLIN: Uh huh. Great. I guess this is kind of off-topic, but I’m just interested. Tell me about your experience with Sesame Street.

MARK: The interesting thing about that was—

CAITLIN: When was that?

GEORGI: We started with them about two years after they started.

CAITLIN: So what—

GEORGI: It must have been 35 years ago.

MARK: When it happened we were in—in the Philippines, yeah. I was in the Philippines filming and one of the things that—that struck me just walking around was seeing children bathing in pans of water on the street or under a hand pump washing themselves or other—other people
standing under waterfalls and washing themselves. And so I shot a little footage of all of this and I thought we could make a little film for Sesame Street “Staying Clean” or—“Taking a Bath” was what it was called. And so I sent a rough edit of—and one of—one of the shots that pulled from Sesame Street that showed one of the puppets taking a bath on the—

GEORGI: We didn’t have that—they—

MARK: They had that.

GEORGI: They wanted that in there.

MARK: So anyway they—they looked at it and they loved it and they said, “Yeah, we’ll take it.” So that was—

GEORGI: They have their song writer write a song for it.

CAITLIN: Okay.

GEORGI: Most of these are set to music. In fact, I think all of these are set to music. Ernie’s the one taking the bath.

MARK: Yeah.

GEORGI: “Even Ernie’s getting clean.”

MARK: I talked to [inaudible]—

MARK: And apparently the people that watched it loved that segment and afterwards when—

CAITLIN: Was that the “Splish Splash I’m Taking a Bath”? 

GEORGI: Kind of, then it—I don’t know. It has a nice feel.

MARK: Afterwards when I would go to some countries, going through immigrations in a country, carrying a camera and photographic equipment—

CAITLIN: I’m sure it wasn’t easy.

MARK: They would give me a hard time because they thought I’m coming to do some number on the—

CAITLIN: Yeah.

MARK: And—and I mean they would give me an unbelievably hard time and then they’d say, “Who have you made films for?”
And I’d say, “Sesame Street.”

MARK: It’s just—it’s so interesting.

CAITLIN: Everyone loves Sesame Street.

MARK: So that was—that was fun because we could be in another country doing one of our *Families of the World* shows and at the same time pick up some footage or something that would fit together for a show for Sesame Street.

CAITLIN: Okay, so how many other involvements do you have with Sesame Street after the bath one?

MARK: I don’t know if there were that many.

GEORGI: Oh, we probably did, I would guess 15.

CAITLIN: Okay.

GEORGI: There weren’t hundreds. Most of the ones for the first 20 years that they had that were international segments, were ones we did.

CAITLIN: Okay, yeah, yeah, yeah.

GEORGI: And then we worked with them for the Muppets for that industrial project.

CAITLIN: Did you get to meet the—?

GEORGI: Directed them. Yeah.

CAITLIN: So essentially the puppet will be up here and someone underneath controlling it with a little—

MARK: Yeah.

CAITLIN: I don’t know what it’s like now, but before didn’t they have little wire sticks or something like that, yeah.

GEORGI: Yeah. And hands I think, too.

CAITLIN: That’s cool.

GEORGI: Yeah, that’s probably about all.

CAITLIN: That’s all my questions.

MARK: Let me get you a DVD of the *RAVE* thing and see what others—
GEORGI: Well Mark Marquisee, why don’t we—why don’t we look for some of the other ones.

MARK: I will. I can do that quickly.

GEORGI: No, I mean not—give her *RAVE* and the rest we’ll look for.

[End of Audio]
Duration: 62 minutes