

Chris Hill interviews DeeDee Halleck 5/18/95

CH: We spoke before about activities that you were involved with in the 1970s, which eventually led to the formation of *Paper Tiger TV* and *Communications Update* as programs for public access cable in the late 70s, early 80s. Your experience with Shirley Clarke and her TP Video Space Troupe and with Videofreex and various education projects were very important in shaping your agenda. Your remarks have pointed to the value you found working collectively in the 70s and doing education with youth using film in the 1960s.

DH: It probably started in the 50s because when I was in high school I worked at a commercial animation house in Chattanooga, Tennessee. I did inking and opaquing of animations for pork sausage commercials—Parks Pork Sausages. That was the first and last time I worked for the industry. It wasn't that bad of a place; I got 25 cents an hour and I worked my way up from being an opaquer to being an inker to being an inbetweener, which was traveling rapidly up the hierarchy of animation work. I was pretty good at it. I could probably have had a career in animation. But what blew me away at the same time was seeing Norman McLaren's films where he actually painted directly on film. I knew what it took to make commercial images. That somebody could actually take a film and draw on it was enormously liberating for me. It completely demystified the whole process of animation.

Actually the guy I worked with at the commercial house was really talented. His name was Hal Walker and he claims to have invented Felix the Cat. He was this old guy, and he told me all these stories about Hollywood. Seeing that Norman McLaren film—it's like a media center and how crucial those points of entry can be. The Hunter Art Gallery, which was the little art museum in Chattanooga, actually two rooms in this mansion. They had a film series, and they showed Norman McLaren and some shorts from Canada, art films. I went and it blew my mind. When I eventually moved to New York, I got a job doing recreation work with kids, and we checked McLaren's films out of the library. I realized that I could get some blank film and have the kids make their own films. So the kids made their own films, which became a film called *Children Make Movies*, my first real venture into working with film, except for those commercials. That was in 1961.

Later I met Shelia Paige and Ariel Doherty and they were starting a women's project and asked if I would mind if they called it Women Make Movies because they knew the film *Children Make Movies*. That film developed a kind of reputation because it was shown in a lot of those young filmmakers events. Young Film Makers the organization started in 1964. By then my film was in a library and it was distributed by Contemporary Films and it was shown at a lot of conferences. It was shown at a UNESCO conference in 1962. It was the first kind of thing that made it clear that children could make media. It's funny, because I show the kids actually scratching on the film, so you see the process of them working. It made me feel that that kind of participation in the media shouldn't be just a passive thing, that people should participate.

From an educational point of view, film and media could work as a way of empowering people, and I wrote in an article for *Screen Education* how making films would help teach children refuse to follow that advertisement or admonitions from the massive networks of power. I still believe that active experience in making media is a way of developing a critical stance on that somehow. I worked with the Henry Street Settlement, and I started a movie club at Movie Made Films, and then I moved out to the country, to Bloomingburg in 1965. I got a grant for doing film with kids in a reform school, the Otisville

School for Boys. I did filmmaking with them. It got kind of famous; it was on *The Today Show*. I used to take the kids to different places around the state like Kiwanis Clubs...

CH: That would get them out of the reform school...

DH: Yes, that was the real point. It wasn't so much that we wanted to go to the Kiwanis Club as they wanted to get off campus. We'd get the state car and the state car had the state sign on it—Otisville School for Boys. We had this gaffer tape and a sign that said the Otisville Film Arts Club, and they didn't want to be seen driving in the Otisville car. So we taped it to both sides of the car and we'd drive to Middletown. They'd check out the girls; we went to churches, to the Kiwanis Club, to the library. I also taught painting so we had an exhibit of their painting at the library. Then I got involved with doing stuff in Middletown and starting a film club there.

When Martin Luther King was killed we had a march in Middletown and we ended up at a black church, and one of the things that we said at the church was that we didn't want his spirit to die and we would do some kind of event. Since I was teaching at Otisville, I said we would try to have some kind of an art thing in Middletown, and the church offered us their place. So we started the Martin Luther King Art Center, and I taught film there and we had a film club and kids made film there. There were some teen mothers I made films with, little Super-8 films, with some equipment donated from Otisville. I rented films from Young Film Makers (now Film Video Arts) in New York. For two summers in a row we got a complete package of equipment—editors, cameras, tripods, projectors—for a filmmaking class. And then we grew to include arts and filmmaking and it was called Live Arts, and we started doing filmmaking in the migrant camps. Antonio Ogaz was a Mexican filmmaker working at Channel 13 in New York who I met through Young Film Makers. I was looking for someone who spoke Spanish. He came up and taught a really nice course, working with older people. That was empowerment...

The first video came about through this grant from the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) to do Live Arts. We were going to do a big happening at the art festival in Middletown and I wanted to do something in video. We had some video equipment at Otisville and I brought that over. We wanted to build a whole video tent; the Videofreex had just moved up to Lanesville, and somebody at NYSCA said—why don't you get in touch with the Videofreex? Lanesville wasn't as close as they thought, but I contacted them. They came down, and we built a big tent, and we had puppet shows. We had monitors outside, so people would come in and talk and it would be projected outside. That must have been the summer of 1971.

We became really good friends, and we did another event at the Orange County Fair that same summer. We built a tent there. Live Arts had a booth there and it was mostly to promote what we had done at the Martin Luther King Center. There was this missionary feel about video. You wanted to show people that television was something that they could do; if we could do it, then you could do it. Just the act of being there and passing around the camera would change the way people looked at TV. The way I used video at Otisville was very similar to Shirley Clarke. We never made tapes because we didn't have an editing facility. I would let them do live feedback, and they liked seeing themselves on TV. They used to sing. They would tape it and then play it back, but it wasn't like they were going to make a tape. The films they made were very highly constructed and they were very wonderful films actually, very passionate—little mini-dramas, a lot about drugs and stuff.

I was very intrigued by the Videofreex. I was living in the country outside of New York City, and visiting the Videofreex at Maple Tree Farm in Lanesville was connecting to a kind of ferment. There was always activity there, so I used to go up there a lot, and I took my boys. We were living in Bloomingberg, and it was kind of an escape. We'd go up and spend the weekend there, crash there and the Videofreex were always so welcoming. Actually the very first time I went up there I didn't feel welcome. It was because everybody was off doing their own thing, and I finally realized that they saw you as just one of the people working in their place, and that was, in a way, the most welcoming thing. They didn't treat you like a guest, but when you arrived they did give you a room, a deck with a portapak, and a monitor. They had a huge library and you could watch any of the tapes that they had.

CH: And you didn't have to pay, you were just welcome to come?

DH: Well it was sort of implicit that you should give some money. I had a big garden, so I would bring up vegetables and stuff. I always felt obligated to contribute something.

CH: But it was more like barter..

DH: Yes, it wasn't rigid. If you wanted to edit there, then there was a price that you were supposed to pay. I was teaching at Goddard College. We had this Alternative Media Center connected with the Social Ecology Institute, and for three summers I taught there. That was the best media school I ever taught at. We did great things. We had 8 or 10 students and we did really great things up at Goddard. The Social Ecology Institute was going on in the dorm next door and there was interaction. We did media, we did these live shows called *Piña Colada TV*. It was sort of like *Lanesville TV* [Videofreex' low power pirate TV]. I would always try to be up in Lanesville on a Sunday or Saturday night, whichever night they did *Lanesville TV*. The live TV experience was key, and I really liked that form and the media feedback. I remember one time, somebody was doing card tricks on the air. They got a phone call and the caller said—I know a really good card trick. The Videofreex said—well, come on over. So they took the camera outside and they videotaped the caller driving up. And he got out the car, and came in, and did the card trick for *Lanesville TV*.

CH: Do you think there was any relationship between the art happenings that had been going on in the 60s, and this stuff that you were doing?

DH: You mean Allan Kaprow and those people? After I left Antioch, I came to the New York, and was in the city for half a year or so going to art school. I became really close to this group of artists who lived on the lower east side and they were kind of doing happenings. They would have these parties where they would do little skits and some of that developed into happenings. Red Grooms was there and Red Grooms had been doing happenings. Steve Durkee had been doing light shows. Actually more like machines, more like Tingley things with lights. My sister was doing light shows. She was doing dripping oil and integrating that with slides. She did the backgrounds fro Buckminster Fuller's lectures. But Steve Durkee was a little more architectural. He was interested in building spaces. He was interested in the geodesic dome but as a light construction.

I was living on the lower east side until 1965 and I had three kids in 1962, 1964, and 1965 so I was pretty busy and kind of out of the art scene at that time. Then when I went up to Otisville was when a lot of civil rights actions were going on, and my house became a refuge. Julius Sylvester hid there. His wife had been my roommate at Antioch. Julius was a brilliant communicator. He used to read the *New York*

Times on Pacifica radio, On WBAI (New York) he had a show called *The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution*. It was a morning show, and everyday he would read *The New York Times* from his own point of view. I was really intrigued by that kind of media criticism.

CH: It sounds like something you borrowed for *Paper Tiger TV*?

DH: Yes, and I said that in an article that I wrote. I said that the influences were: *How To Read Donald Duck*, the Dorfman/Mattellart book, and Julius Sylvester. I was out of the city; I wasn't really involved with a lot of stuff. But my points of contact were Julius, talking to him about media, and the movement. Julius has since become more conservative. At the time, however, I would hear him on Pacifica radio because we could get WBAI, which was an important contact for us for all the stuff that was going on in 1965-68. I spent a lot of the 60s in this farmhouse raising goats. That's what I was doing, milking goats, and I remember taking the radio down to the goat room and listening to Pacifica.

When I got divorced, I moved closer to New York. I heard that Shirley Clarke lived at the Chelsea Hotel. I'd been a big fan of Shirley's. She'd been a hero to me since seeing one of her films back when I visited the Hunter Art Gallery. I remember just seeing the credits—"produced by Shirley Clark." Wow, that a woman could make a film. She was mythic to me, and when I heard that she was available and that people could actually go see her, that was very exciting. I was very interested in film, so I decided that I'd go see Shirley and learn about film. I went to her apartment, and she wasn't doing film at all. She said—I'm not doing film anymore. Why would you want to do film? She was really interested in video, and had this collection of people who hung around her. Shriker Bapat was there a lot, and Andy Gurion who I had known from Young Film Makers, and teaching filmmaking at Henry Street. He had been in one of Roger Larson's film classes in the Bronx. Who else? Vicky Polon was there, who was a writer and who later worked with Robert Altman, and the Videofreex would come in and out. David Cort from the Videofreex really loved Shirley Clarke and was hanging out there a lot. So I sort of parked myself at Shirley's and almost lived there for a year. I was living up in Rockland County, but I would come into the city and crash at various peoples' houses including Shirley's. It was my first real contact with a daily life outside of my family life; it was contact with an artists' community. Arthur Clarke, who wrote *2001* also lived at the Chelsea Hotel; Agnes Varda came in and out; Viva was hanging out there. It was a constant party.

That whole Chelsea scene was right in the middle of this very stimulating environment. First of all, I had always been interested in pedagogical method. I had read *Summerhill* and had actually considered going to Summerhill because a friend of mine had taught there for a year. And I had read Montessori and considered starting a Montessori school. I had read Paul Goodman on education. Paul Goodman was a major influence on the 1960s. He's underappreciated—a very interesting writer, an anarchist. I had always considered myself a teacher. And I felt that being with Shirley was the best learning experience that I had in my life. What intrigued me was her method of teaching and the kind of respect that she gave us as students. Also amazing was the way that we worked together, getting ideas; there was this kind of fermentation that would happen. She was a dancer. She would never just sit there. She was in constant motion all the time, unplugging something, or jumping up, or hooking something up, or let's go over here, or let's walk out there, or let's do this. It was never just hanging out. It was—well, what would happen if we hooked up these two monitors so that they were facing each other? She was constantly moving furniture, rearranging space.

CH: It sounds like a kind of choreography.

DH: We became the TP Video Space Troupe. She would get gigs, and we would go to different places and get \$50 each. She saw this as a dance troupe, and the first thing that we would do when we got to any place was rearrange it. At first, I felt that there was something intrusive about this. I'd think—why, Shirley, we just got here; can't we just look at it for a while? She would walk into a room and start changing it, start moving tables. And then, I grew to feel that that was one of the most important things she did. When she would come into a situation, and she would radically change the space. And that was why she called it the TP Video Space Troupe. She taught people that to wake up, or change, or look, or think you have to change your...

CH: Structure.

DH: Yes. I remember she had this gig up at Cortland State College. She called me and said—I can't go, but I want you to be in charge, and I want you to really do it. I remember when we first got up there, we were given this room, and the first thing I said was—well, we have to move those tables. And they said—oh, we've never folded up these table. And I said—well, you have to fold them, and if you don't want to do it, we'll do it. And it became this other space, and I remember thinking—Shirley will be proud of me. We made a video mural there. We put cameras behind this big piece of paper, and we had monitors sticking out so that if somebody was coming out, their face would be on the mural and painting it. We would go out for these performances, and we would be this wacko group of people that had arrived with video, these video crazies. But we would also do something entirely specific to that place, feel what was going on there too. At Bucknell University there was a big communications conference, and we did several happenings, and worked with the theater students there. It was bizarre, bananas, spectacular, transcendent.

CH: So the idea was that there would be activity and movement...

DH: And that you would get people involved in it. You would get people to move their TV sets. I remember Shirley was always doing these things where she would turn the TV up on end, do vertical TVs. She said—you know, if we're ever going to do anything with TV, we have to get people to take their uncle's picture off of it and move it. We would perfect these exercises. One, for example, was doing sympathy tapes. We would divide into two groups so you couldn't hear what the other group was doing. One group would do nothing but complaints. We would do it ourselves first, and we would set the tone by really complaining. Then the other people would come on, and they'd have to match what we were saying. The other group would be doing sympathy, listening intently. Sometimes they could cry. We would talk about how a person shows empathy to a person, verbally or non verbally. You may not feel their pain but you want to demonstrate in some way that you respect their feelings. Because you can never really know about someone else's feelings, sometimes we would react in a way that was a kind of acting. We would shoot that sideways. Then we had these two monitors and we would shoot it in profile so that the two were talking to each other, set them up high on a table.

CH: So you were creating a theater on what might be called serendipitous exchanges...

DH: When it worked it was amazing. Wendy Clarke's tapes really grew out of those exercises, *The Love Tapes*...Another game we did was a drawing game and I used this for many years when I did workshops around the state for Young Film Makers and NYSCA. There was something about all of these games that reached out very deep into peoples' consciousness. We'd put a camera on a person with a monitor

right above it. The person would have a pad of paper with India ink and a big brush and there would be two monitors: a monitor with the person's face and a monitor of their picture. And the person would try to do a self portrait. And so they'd find out that using a monitor is like looking into a mirror except that it flips the image the other way around, so they'd have to work out their coordination, and they'd fuck up, but they'd make these beautiful, calligraphic images.

I talked to Shirley about this after thinking about it and doing it many times. It was that people weren't used to seeing themselves on television, and it isn't a mirror. It's different. It's very good for people to consider themselves on camera. But if you just turn the camera on people, they look silly. So this was giving them a task to do that forced their concentration, and at the same time they were forced to look at each other. It's really interesting to watch other people and then try the tasks yourself... They're making mistakes and you watch them before it's your turn because you're trying to plan what you're going to do, but after you remember how hard it was, and you empathize with the people doing it next...

CH: So it's interesting, you develop a context, some other framing of the event.

DH: One evening we'd been working, it was getting late and then Shirley had this idea. We should make a tape about dawn, because it was going to be dawn soon. Skip Blumberg was in on this, it was rather like a scavenger hunt. Shirley sent us out. There were 7 groups, and each one was supposed to go make a tape about dawn. Some people went to an all night restaurant where people were washing dishes, and some people shot the lights and street changing from the Chelsea roof. Somebody else did birds flying in the sky and the sun coming up over the East River. Then we brought all the tape back to the Chelsea and went out on to the roof; Shirley was living in the penthouse apartment at that point. And while we were shooting she had stacked up all these monitors. We put all these monitors on the roof and we hooked up the decks, the portapaks, reel-to-reel tapes, and we played back all our tapes simultaneously while it was dawn. It was amazing. The birds would fly by on one monitor and then appear on another monitor because different people would have repeated images. There's this great film that Jay Lida did called *Bronx Morning*, that he made after he had studied with Eisenstein. I asked Shirley if she'd ever seen it and she said she had seen it at Cinema 16.

CH: So you would do these things for yourselves. You did projects and then you were the audience for them.

DH: We were also working out ideas of things we could take to other places...

CH: What years were these?

DH: That would have been 1973, 1974, 1975. It was before we made the *5 Day Bicycle Race* which was 1976.

CH: And at the same time, did you visit the Videofreex in Lanesville very much?

DH: Yes, I would go up there. Maybe one time I drove Shirley up there. The Videofreex would come into the city. I got to know Tom Weinberg, and he was doing stuff in Lanesville, and we would go up together and hang out. That was after the *5 Day Bicycle Race*. *The 5 Day Bicycle Race* was this very energizing even in conjunction with the Democratic Convention in New York and afterwards, we felt we needed a format which would allow people to put their energies together and work in a group. I had

worked with Shirley, I was also inspired at that time by the Grand Union Dance Company—Yvonne Rainer and Steve Paxton and all those dancers. What interested me in that group was the fact that they each maintained their individuality as artists and yet they worked together, and somehow their own work became stronger through that collaboration. At the same time they weren't spending all day trying to have meetings and spending all their time together. They would do it very spontaneously; they would have a kind of general scene and improvise, like jazz musicians...

When I saw the Grand Union I thought—yes, it is possible to do that kind of improvisation in another form. I always thought of TV as opening up possibilities for improvising. Most TV is so closed and seamless. The *5 Day Bicycle Race* was improvisation. You'd go out to the convention with your portapak and you could do whatever you wanted. We had these really terrific talented people, and we'd say—tell us what you're doing so we can figure out where to put it in the overall program, but what you do is up to you. It was really anarchist. We trusted the people we were working with. The *5 Day Bicycle Race* worked differently than Michael Shamburg's TVTV projects. What we like about video was the potential opening, not having the script that we have to go shoot. So that's the way we did the convention.

CH: Do you think that the model that Shamburg and TVTV were working with was more coming from the networks, or coming from working with film, or being about a different kind of organization?

DH: I think that the early stuff, TVTV's better stuff—with the Guru Maharaj Ji (*Lord of the Universe*) and *Four More Years* (1972)—I think those projects were done really openly. I think that Shamburg started having high aspirations. He wanted to be more acceptable so he started asserting more control, and some people reacted to that. One of the things that happened to me around that time was that I got involved with the Association of Independent Video and Filmmakers (AIVF), and organizing. I remember having a discussion with Dave Dellinger and watching our tapes, and I felt like a lot of the questions we had asked were really stupid, and that there was a discrepancy between the knowledge that the people we were interviewing possessed and the kind of questions we were asking. Here we were doing this major political event, this convention and yet we weren't really asking the really hard questions about what was wrong with America...I must say that it was interesting for me to hear Dave Dellinger on the *5 Day Bicycle Race*; he came to the studio and I felt like we were not respecting this guy enough because this guy is going to go to jail and is willing to do stuff. I'm not sure that this Videofreex format is enough to really change the world.

I got involved with AIVF. The guy who was president of AIVF was making films for the government of South Africa called *Portfolio for Progress*. It was during the first years of AIVF, and there was a group of us who were very upset with that and said—Listen, we're going to all of the AIVF meetings. This is a great organization, but how can we say that we are independent if he, who is representing us as a president, is making films for the South African government. So we set up a big screening at NYU with a film about all the atrocities of apartheid and his film. Seeing those two films together and being part of that organizing made me think—there's politics and there's media politics and we have to take this seriously.

I saw that AIVF could go either way. It could be a service organization for the trade or it could become a serious force for an alternative vision. I became very involved with it. I was nominated for president of AIVF and I won by a lot. There were people who said we shouldn't get involved with politics; independents should be able to do anything they want. That's why we're independent. If somebody wants to work for South Africa, they can work for South Africa. We're Americans. We should be able to

do anything we want. I said that I really felt that we really had to take a stand against racism and classism. We made up these bylaws, which created problems for years after, but they finally were passed, and had to be printed in every issues of *The Independent*...

DH: I'm thinking about education and I'm thinking about the fact that I didn't go to college. The things that happened once I became more involved in the struggle of defining a new kind of media or trying to find new ways to communicate and to use video even as a teaching device and beyond that to try to engage a larger audience --the more I really realized that I needed to know more and that I didn't know enough, even though we had had this project at Goddard--which had been very useful because we had had the chance to develop a curricula for alternative media and one of the things, I forget who, Nanet? It was somebody who worked at Pacifica. She brought in Ensenberger "Constituents of a New Media Theory." It was the first time I'd read that. It was just like: yes, you can actually write and think and read about these things. That other people thought about it.

CH: Had you read McLuhan before that?

DH: I read McLuhan; I was really inspired by McLuhan, but I felt there were real problems with McLuhan, and it was only later, when I began really analyzing McLuhan, I did that piece for Media Alliance on McLuhan on the anniversary of *Understanding Media*. It's my critique of McLuhan. I think my instincts were right because at that time everyone was going ga-ga about McLuhan. McLuhan was really on the payroll of all these advertising agencies. The way the press fell all over itself falling over him was, I think, justifying what was beginning to be an awareness and critical stance about the media and I think McLuhan was used to paste over that and to say: The medium is the message, there's no message there, it's not propaganda, want entertainment? It's all global village and we're happy. Although I couldn't articulate it at the time, I think I instinctively distrusted McLuhan. His work is full of aphorisms that were kind of catchy and interesting but ultimately there was a justification of the war there, actually. Here was this war going on and he didn't have anything to say about the war. He wasn't critiquing the war. I think I had a distinctive distrust of McLuhan. I felt that he wasn't enough but then I didn't know much about media theory and I remember somehow coming across the Horkheimer and Adorno piece, "The Dialectic of Enlightenment" and just really liking that. Enlightenment is mass deception, remember that? And the culture industry is mass deception and then running across Shiller's work and the "mind managers" and thinking that this was really important and thinking that home media politics was really interesting and important and Liza Bear and I started Communications Update. Well Liza, she had come from Avalanche to doing Communications Update, wanting to do a cable show. Before that, I was involved with the AIVF politics. We were doing lobbying in Washington and we had this big campaign and putting together testimony for the House subcommittee on Communications and I really didn't know anything about telecommunications policy and so I started reading about that. This was in '78-'79.

CH: But you'd been involved with Manhattan cable.

DH: Not really, I wasn't involved. I advocated in public meetings that independents shouldn't be working in cable because I felt it was this elitist medium. Although we had done the 5 day bicycle race on Manhattan cable, I felt that people should be more engaged with confronting public television and those issues. I really wasn't involved in the early fight around public access.

CH: So you weren't involved with George Stoney?

DH: Not at all. I guess he was a member of AIVF. I had done this film in '75 on the Britain Puppet Theater with George Griffith and that film, I submitted it to public television and they tossed it around for 2 years, never giving me an answer. Meanwhile, the film was all over Europe because Bread and Puppet is very popular in Europe and it was shown on all of these state television stations in Germany and France and Sweden and Greece, Algeria. It was shown all over the place and I thought: Wait, why isn't it shown on public television here? What's up? Then I became very involved with the whole public television struggle and trying to figure out a way to force funding for public television for independents and to force them to play stuff. And I worked really hard on this campaign for the '78-'79 funding bill. And we won. We got what we wanted. We got this clause in there that said a substantial portion should go to independents. It was like ITVS. We didn't have this separate entity but we didn't want a separate entity. We wanted it to be part of the mainstream and we just wanted the money and the channel space and we tried to put language in there that independents would get on public television and that the stations would have to show a substantial amount of independent work--which they didn't. In fact, what happened was Moyers and a number of entities went independent and so they qualified for the money. I was so depressed about that afterwards. I felt like I saw the limits of a certain kind of reform within the kind of representative system that we have. I also remember just the poverty, the difficulty of it. Those were the days before computers. We were using white-out on all these presentations and I remember going down to Washington. I had this old Saab car and there were 8 people squeezed into this car. We had our sleeping bags and we had this address that we were supposed to spend the night to crash. We testified before congress the next morning and we just found out that we needed to have 50 copies of our testimony. We had 3 copies and that was at 8 in the morning and we had to Xerox them and we didn't know anybody with a Xerox machine in Washington. We went through the phone book and all the Xerox places were closed. We couldn't find the address of the people we were supposed to be staying with. I remember we somehow ended up in this one circle and I looked up and we kept passing this big building with all the lights on and I said: what is that big building? It was the National Rifle Organization. They had plenty of Xerox machines and they were open. There were people in there working and it was 12:30 and they were preparing their testimony for some other committee. Total Zen revelation. Wow. That's what lobbying is all about. Who are we? How can a citizen fight these people? It's a stacked fight. Unless we have 20 Xerox machines like they do, what are we going to do. So we did our testimony and we were good and we got what we wanted, a miracle. The people from the oil companies were there testifying against us. PBS testified against us. They were total sleezebags and we had friends on the committee to support us. We had aides. We had made friends with the aides. We were really good at it. We did a fantastic campaign. Joe Chigakawa testified for us. We got a really good line up, multicultural. All these people testifying. It was very effective. It was total work. I was working for two and a half years day and night. And it didn't work. After that, Liza had been peripherally involved with that and actually Liza and I made this tape about the Carnegie Commission. The Carnegie Commission had met about public television and the transcript of that was in the first issue of Bomb only it wasn't called Bomb it was called X magazine. We went down and interviewed, we videotaped this meeting of the Carnegie Commission which was all these oil people and there weren't any independents testifying. I was still president of AIVF and I said why can't the independents have a voice? And they said well Bill Moyers is on, or there was some independent on, it wasn't Bill Moyers, but Robert MacNeil. Well there should be independents on the panel. We said well we want a meeting. You've had all these meetings with nothing but oil companies testifying. There should be producers testifying. So William McGill said, OK, I teach a course, I'm a professor at Columbia. You come up there and we'll set up a meeting up there for independents in the school of international studies. So he set up this big meeting. We put posters up all around. 700 people showed up. It was incredible. The room

was a huge room and we had it filled. We had Flo Kennedy testify. But everybody gave two minutes. Liza and Nancy Kane taped it. So we made this little tape about those issues using some of the footage from the oil company guys and some of the testimonies at the independents meeting and statistics. I said well we should do a whole series on media issues and communication issues.

CH: Was she already producing for Manhattan Cable.

DH: No, I don't think so.

CH: Was she just doing Avalanche and Bomb? Did she do Bomb?

DH: She started bomb. First there was this issue called X and the next issue was Bomb. But by that time she was more interested in video so we did that. Liza did a lot of interviews with artists and I did a lot of stuff about communications issues. We both went to this conference together about international communications where we did those tapes. Liza was doing this Work report which was this thing, there was this guy, he was really wonderful, he was reporting on that. We did these live shows although that was mostly Liza's project it was really a smart idea. It turned out we got all these people because there were certain people around New York who knew that the Work thing was very important. So people watched it and we got calls. We were on to something and some respect came from that. Around that time I was teaching at Hunter. I was always doing these adjunct teaching jobs all over the place and at one point I was teaching with Shiller and I heard his classes. There were always people laughing. He would tell all these jokes and I asked why are people laughing and he said, Ah I was just reading The New York Time to them so I said, oh that a good TV show. You should do an episode of Communication Update. That's how Paper Tiger Television started. At the same time, I had asked Shiller if he would do a seminar with a number of people that I knew from the AIVF committee like Marty Lucas and Jim Gaffney and Daniel Brooks. So we somehow got a group of us together and we had this seminar with Herb at my house on 91st street. Then I decided to do this episode of Communications Update and I asked those same people in the seminar if they would be the crew. And when we did it, after the first night, we said, oh this is fantastic, we should have our own slot and do our own slot because the format work and we should do it with other people and different people had different ideas of people they could bring in. A lot of it was my own working with people at AIVF and trying to get them to... thinking about AIVF as an organizing entity and thinking about what do they need in order to be better organizers. And one of the things that you needed was a more in depth knowledge and an overview of communications issues and that people had to start thinking about these larger issues over the right to communicate and not just in some sort of piecemeal, symptomatic kind of thing ... like, lets see if we can get 5 more minutes on public television and I said well wait a minute, lets look at public television and lets look at public television communication. That's something that people in this country didn't, there was no model for doing, that media was really an important political issue and that it was never being discussed by the Left. No one was taking it seriously as an issue to organize around. If anyone could care about it its the independents because they have a stake in it. Its really hard to organize audiences but people who have a stake --all these university departments churning out graduate students and all the young people in the world and I want to be an independent producer. All right, you want to be an independent producer, well lets look at what that means, lets look at the history of media in this country, lets look at regulatory policy, lets look at all that stuff. And sort of sliding into public access after going through this really rather disappointing bout with --and winning-- with reform lobbying.

CH: Its interesting because, like I said earlier, I've been thinking about the cut off point and why and it seems like it does have to do with a reconfiguration of peoples' relationships to TV, especially when you're looking at people out of more the art scene where video was being defined....as for example, David Antin's article about the distinctive features. You've got the modernist version of video which is not TV and you have the art world sort of organizing itself against the establishment and then turning, at the beginning of the 80's, to TV. Its interesting what you're saying in some ways has similar elements. After having spent 15 years basically doing alternatives to TV and using video in all these other way, then having to say, in the early 80's, now we have to deal with this entity as opposed to very correctly seeing it as something that you didn't want to become involved with, that wasn't going to be your model in any way and you didn't want to bow to that authority. And yet now you had to take it on. Its interesting to hear that other version of it. When we were driving to San Diego, you said something about how Videofreex was a model in some way. How would you relate the experience that you had in the early 70's with Videofreex, or Shirley even, to...

DH: Well, I would relate this particularly with Igor. I think one of the brilliant things Igor has done is figure out a way to question a lot of assumptions and question a lot of paradigms by drawing the people...by loosening the people up so that they become part of his conspiracy. I love that moment in his tape where he says that all these people were part of a conspiracy and I think that they like that and I think that they want to be part of a conspiracy. Not that I don't believe in defining the contradictions and becoming combative when you need to be combative and drawing the lines. One of the things that I admired about the Videofreex and I see it recur in Igor is the ability to play in such a way that opens up the avenues so that people can jump into the game and I particularly think of the tapes that Videofreex did for Langsville TV where they would try to work within TV genres. There was one like the water detective where there was something wrong with the water and it was done as a kind of film noir... like oh we're going down, lets find out what's wrong and get your water tested...Actually that was done in Woodstock by Bart but it was that same spirit where he would go to peoples' houses with the camera running and say, "Can we have some of your water," And the people knowing who Bart is, being his neighbor, instead of saying, "Why are you showing up here with a camera?", accept him and say: "Oh yes here, well I'm worried about my water too, aren't you?" They recognize Bart as a playful neighbor but also they recognize the TV genre, the mystery genre, so they take on those genres as their own and there are real problems. Its not like this wasn't a real problem, the water in Woodstock. Its a way of assigning it a kind of space within the media system, which at this point is defined by these genres and so, for example, the Videofreex did this thing --there was a great deal of concern in the Catskills right around the time of the oil boycotts and the fact that afterwards there was a lot of money in the OPEC countries and people bought up property. And there was this rumor, I think it was total rumor, that the Arabs were buying up the Catskills. So Bart dressed up like a Sheik and went around and they rented a limousine and they drove around with a bag fill of money, going to peoples' houses in Langsville and offering to buy their house. Seeing what people's reactions were. You see, everyone was talking about this so it was taking this rumor, sort of setting this up as though it were this actual happening. So they'd drive up to somebody's house and they'd say: Hey Mrs. Sheik, this is Omar, he wants to know if you want to sell your farm. And people would say, "Well you have to give me a lot of money because my grandfather bought this farm" or somebody would say, " God damn Arabs, you can take"--that was that communist carpenter, Sam who said that. People just jumped on board. Here was this format and people trusted and knew Bart, liked him. At first there was a lot of suspicion and hostility toward the Videofreex but soon they were the stars of the community. People loved them. One time they did Sheriff John. This one little kid, John Benchman, who was Harriet's son. He dressed up like a Sheriff and he and Bart would be cowboy Bart and Sheriff John and they did the Cowboy genre. They drove around and

did little vignettes of life in Langsville but seen from the vantage point of a western epic. There were all these little weekly shows and they were working within television. They were testing out what kinds of genres could work from television that could have that kind of expansion, that they could be used to be more serious, to deal with some real issues. At the same time they were recognizable genres so people could jump in on them. People who had never looked at a documentary film in their life but people who immediately knew what a detective story was or a cowboy story so they could deal with those issues. That was really admirable. Also, what I admired about the Videofreex was that they were able to be this collective. They worked together, they shared equipment, they shared knowledge, they interacted with each other in a supportive way and at the same time they gave each other advice and criticism. At the same time each one kept their own individuality. They were all artists within their own rights. Originally the idea of Paper Tiger was to work with people who were already established and had their own abilities. David Schulman was already working in video art and Shu Lea Chang and Marty Lucas and Estee Marquette was one of the camera people in the first series and working with Liza Bear. Paper Tiger has changed over the years because now we've become this training place where there are a lot of young people who aren't as trained artistically or in terms of their own knowledge of the world so its sort of a little different now. The original idea was to be sort of like the Grand Union. I was majorly influenced by Yvonne Rainer and Steve Paxton and Barbara Jilly and the people who were in this dance group to give that improvisation ...OK I'll do a show and you do it next week and I'll work on your show and you'll work on mine. When you did your show you didn't have to go to a committee meeting to see what you should put on it. There was this trust. It was inclusive, like: I'm not going to ...you can do whatever you want and its up to me to decide whether I want to work on your show or not but I can't decide whether or not your show can be a Paper Tiger Show because I know who you are and I would trust what you do. I think with some of the younger people at Paper Tiger its a little bit harder. I see shows going out there now that I really don't like at all and I wouldn't pass them if they were in my video classes. The people who are working there often haven't had that same experience of working in that situation. And then when they do have meetings they are these endless meetings where minutiae are debated for hours which never took place in the beginning. That's one thing that can kill a collective and I think that's one thing that kept the Videofreex going long after a lot of collectives had folded up their tents and portapaks and gone away because they did have that respect for each other as artists in their own right while at the same time there was this sense of group empowerment. They were too mature to bother with these endless meetings where people accuse each other. Their egos weren't that fragile and they were kind of established and they were... people think of them as being silly but to me they were more serious. They had an agenda that they carried out.

CH: The one thing that's interesting to me in working with these groups is one of the things that's driving my interest in this project around these groups...I think that you do develop a certain kind of visual language and a political ideology that, you could call it a dialect, an art dialect or a communications dialect if your will --which is very interesting, that experience is very interesting and it allows you to work in this way that you're describing where there's a lot of trust, where there are abilities that are known, and where you also become a very good audience in terms of ...you become an audience for each other and a critical audience...critical in the sense that its important, critical also in the sense that it provides criticism. You become a primary audience as opposed to this other audience that's out there which is secondary, ultimately. The other thing is that you also allow people to take chances. It becomes an important way for people to take risks, so that things don't become routine.

DH: I think that's one of the things that excited me most about live television...that just by doing live television you're taking a risk and I think at Langsville TV, the risks were enormous on some level. First

of all it was illegal. You didn't know if the FBI would be coming up. You didn't know if you were about to do something that was illegal and at the same time, because its open ended and you're willing to go with the flow. When you do it that much, and they did a show every week, you're looking for ways to break the routine or to be more interesting so that you're willing to take, to let the improvisatory things happen happen and go with them in a way. So that by the time you come down to the city to do the 5 day bicycle race you don't feel nervous, you don't feel like you have to tie up all those ends, like Michael Shamburg might have so that you're willing to go and follow Ron Kovic in a wheelchair to try to get into the Rolling Stone Party. He doesn't have an invitation and no one's going to want to let him in and that's what's interesting. We'll do it rather than setting up some interview by appointment. Lets just go and see what happens because its more open ended that way. One of the things that in doing Paper Tiger, in setting up, one of the things that we realized was that if you're ... one of the earliest lessons in portapak use is how much better it is if the person you're interviewing is talking to the camera person and they're talking back so its a conversation rather than being an interview where two people are looking at each other and the viewer is left outside. TV News knows that. They talk to you, not to the next person. The people who shot, like Skip worked on the first Paper Tigers, was like: set it up to do a studio show as if it were Langsville TV or if it were portapaks so there's only one camera looking at the person and that person's looking at that camera and then the other camera is free to do a process shot or graphics or have somebody on the set just doing something totally wacky like Mary Feester reading the newspaper or dropping the newspaper or blowing bubbles. I loved it on the Gene Frankin show. Its about soap operas and she sits there the whole time blowing bubbles. I really felt that well, we had one camera and we're going to want to cut away but instead of cutting away to some dumb reviewer with their mouth open waiting or asking their question, you cut away to something that's tangential to the subject but that doesn't detract but might have another comment to the subject. That sense of trying to do something that's visually interesting but at the same time has the immediacy of the portapak camera. And also just going with the handmadeness. The beauty of Langsville TV was that it was there on the porch. You saw it. You knew it. It wasn't like this TV set. It didn't look fancy. It was this porch that everybody drove by. Everybody knows that porch so when you're out on that porch you're out on that porch that everybody sees and you're out there and you're recognized. That's one of the big elements in television, that sense of familiarity, that sense of recognition. Everybody from Mr. Rogers and his neighborhood to Rosanne. Its something that people recognize and want. Its our home, we're coming in. The TV's on and we're going into this house. We're in a space. We're at home, we can relax, we're going to take whatever they give us. So that sense of homeyness like a kitchen chair. With Paper Tiger we had these yellow kitchen chairs and wanted it to look not like some fancy set but like your home. Everybody had a kitchen chair. It doesn't take place in some high tech studio. Its something you can do in your own house. Its home made.

CH: It seems to me that even the art stuff that happened in the 70's tended to construct, or appealed to an audience that was expected to respond in some way.

DH: What kind of art stuff are you thinking about?

CH: Where you wouldn't necessarily get big audiences but you would get audiences that were really interested. So again, you have this situation where people were relatively knowledgeable, where risks were permitted because it wasn't necessary for the event financially to make money because there was either more support or the resources that it took to put something on weren't that expensive. The cost of space in New York wasn't as expensive. The rents went way up in the 80's whereas in the 70's it was actually --I remember Bruce Chatham saying that you could afford to have a loft space and have a musician work with a choreographer for a year to just sort of work through ideas. The cost of the lost

wasn't an issue whereas by the end of the 80's you couldn't afford to have that loft space for more than a month so your creative collaboration was going to be done in a month because that's all you could afford. What do you think about the construction of audience, Martha Rosler writes about that and other people write about that too. I actually think its a fairly important dynamic in video.

DH: I know there were people who put down the Videofreex because obviously there were only 16 people in Langsville and what kind of risk were they taking and half of the people in Langsville were inbred and probably had very low IQ's but I think that in a way their audience, their primary audience was themselves and the other video people who trooped there in droves. People came from different countries, from different cities, and who took very seriously the things that they were doing. I didn't even realize that they had founded portable channel...the sense of mission. Highlander folk school in the civil rights movement had that same.. it was like a leadership training place. In a sense Videofreex was like a leadership training place and that's what I related to because I had been at Highlander in the 50's. It was right near Chattanooga where I lived. I was very committed to civil rights in 1953 when I was in Saint Louis where I was a freshman in high school. I got sent there from Cuba because they didn't have a high school in Cuba. My freshman year in high school we integrated the theaters, with CORE we integrated the theaters in Saint Louis. We'd get kids from the black high schools and we'd go together to the movies and dare them to kick us out. When I moved to Chattanooga I said I want to work in the civil rights integration movement so I found out that Highlander was in Mount Eagle and they were having these workshops. I knew friends who's boyfriends were up at Swannee military academy so I'd get rides with them and go to workshops at Highlander. Just as a kind of observer and helper. I helped in the kitchen. I was very impressed by that and that whole notion of leadership training and I recognized that in Langsville. It was different but there was a sense that people were coming there to learn about video and to take it back to their communities; that sense of mission. A lot of the media centers have had that. It seems to me in talking to a lot of the audience that a lot of them are teachers who will come and learn about different videos and be able to talk about them with their students. The whole media scene and who's the audience for art...I think there is a tremendous amount of elitism in a lot of the stuff that goes on. In a way, in my own life, I've tried to fight against that. We specifically fought against that with the Live Arts thing that I started in Middletown and that grew out of Martin Luther King getting killed. When we started Live Arts there was a thing called the Middletown Arts Council which this woman Marion Feeman ran and it was such a corrupt thing. She got hundreds of thousands of dollars to bring in the Minneapolis Symphony and then they would sell tickets to the reform school and bring the kids from the reform school and they would pay top dollar for those tickets. Then that would come in as their earned income. These poor training school kids who hated that music would have to go and they would have to sit all in a row with their state clothes on and be totally embarrassed and all the other audience would be white and there'd be these black people. I went to Marion Feeman and said well I'm working at the training school and these kids hate that stuff. Since they're such a big part of your audience, why don't you bring in Santana or somebody they could relate to or Puerto Rican Plana music. She said, "My dear, the purpose of the Arts Council is to bring people up to the level of the arts, not to stoop to the level of the masses." We said well, we're going to question the amount of money you get and we tried to get them to publish the budgets and we went to their board meetings and gave them a lot of pain but in doing that we also basically forced NYSCA to give us some money. We said there's this huge audience of migrant workers and nobody's addressing that so we did this touring program of puppet shows at the migrant camps. I think that there is a lot of elitism and a lot of that is like in Middletown it was all an excuse for people to get dressed up and see their friends and have their cocktail parties. On the other hand, I think that there are problems with these white civil rights workers who want to bring puppet shows to the migrants. I don't know what the migrants want for culture. Certainly over the years people

have learned a lot about arts funding and what kind of projects can be useful and good and important. One of the sad things if they cut all this funding.. the Minneapolis Symphony will be funded but all these other experimental projects won't be funded. It seems to me that there's a lot of ways to define audience and there's a lot of ways to think about where to use arts money. What really just pissed me off was the way these training school kids were just used. They were excuses. Nobody ever thought about what their cultural needs were or even tried to explain to them. It would have been one thing if they'd come to the schools and talked about orchestras or if they'd played like a Puerto Rican song. There was no attempt. They were just filling the seats. People bought the tickets. To me what's important in any kind of audience interaction is some kind of communication, some kind of relationship, some kind of dynamic has to happen.

CH: Steina said that she began to lose interest in the Kitchen, she didn't say it that way, she said that she knew her relationship to Kitchen ended when she could no longer shake hands with all the people who came in to any event. She felt that that intimate relationship with the audience was really essential to that project. These are different kinds of projects.

DH: I thought that one of the things that the Kitchen did do was create a community around that time of the Grand Union. Some of the really great Grand Union productions I saw at the Kitchen. John Dupuis's Soup and Tart show. That was this great event where a number of us did 2 minute performances. It really was a sense of community and that John was really recognizing that. We ate there. It was reading and food and home and it was very special and all these artists were doing dinner every night like Phil Glass cooked one night a week and Joanne Acalitus cooked another. Soho was this neighborhood. Everyone knew everyone else. It was this sense of collaboration and there was this sense of community. I personally never felt that Steina was a part of that. I always felt that she and Woody, I had real problems with their elitism. She red baited me at some point in some meeting. I felt that they were very against any political content.

CH: That may have been true. I never heard them talk about politics but I have heard them talk about relationships with people. I mean they do credit the people that work with them. They're very careful to credit their engineers and really give them credit for the work, in a sense. What you're saying about the red baiting seems like a different....

CH: I would say, I would recall that that whole struggle that went on at AIVF about whether independents should take a stand. I would say they would have come down on the other side pretty clearly because their whole thing was art for art's sake. Its funny because on one level. Somebody even like Charlotte Mooreman. She was really political. She was really about gender politics. On some level I think she was a tragic victim of it because I think she probably got cancer from all those TV sets she had to wear around her neck.

CH: Did she have breast cancer?

DH: Yes. I think that she was a victim but at the same time before anybody she did... she did this project where she tied things on men's penises sort of an answer to Nam June Paik. She did that great thing the Avant Garde Festival where she let anyone, anyone who wanted to, it was the same thing like Vicky did...Anyone who wanted to be and artist you could be an artists, just sign up, use this application form and then you get a booth. There was no jury or anything.

CH: Where was that held?

DH: Different places. One year it would be at Grand Central Station. Then next year out at this airport on Long Island that was defunct. They were fantastic, happenings, totally open completely different from what Steina and Woody would want. It was a contradiction ...

CH: Well Woody says in his interview that Paik was doing social criticism and that Woody would never consider that. He was really direct about it.

DH: Was Mooreman involved with an organization.... (tape stop