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A Visit with Bill Daye, Painter Bill Daye: Look, I was a machinist. I worked 10 years at machine work on the steel plant. I worked 14 years for the highway department, heavy duty construction, repairing all the old equipment on the ferry boats, tearing down locomotives in the steel plant too, build them up from nothing, to refit them all over. Anything 'd go wrong. And those big tractor shovels used--tear them down and refit them, build them all up. I was a farmer for 17 years. I was a trapper and a hunter I don't know how long, and I was a taxidermist years and years. I had a business of taxidermy and fur work. I was a mail carrier in Sydney. And I was in so many things that when I'd go out in the woods, I could pick up a little blue violet and worship that more than the prettiest rose that was ever made. And the way it was created and how it showed up in the spring. I see the beauty in those little things, you see? And praise I'd see in the woods and like that, I didn't get enough of them in here, in my body--I couldn't paint it. Then I'd have it in the house, anyway, you see? So that's what I was trying to express. And you've got to be a draftsman one year before you go in the machine shop to learn your trade as a machinist. You've got to work from blueprints and drawings. So, I had the technique of drawing from that. And I went to night school, learning drawing while I was in the drafting office. You've got to be accurate with no give or take when you're doing machine work for ships and all, that's got to be right. You can't change it. Because somebody'll come back and say, "That didn't work." It won't work if it isn't right. See? And being farming and fishing and hunting--I understand the woods and the animals. And being a taxidermist, I know the posture of the animals and birds in order to paint them. So I learned my painting, what bit I do know, in a different manner than going to school and getting instruction. I learned it the way I lived. That's where I got it. Those old pictures, those old horses and those people who are operating the horses-- that was the way those people lived in those years. And that would be lost, because when I was young there was nobody painting like there is today, there were no artists going around painting. I never heard of an artist when I was young, only a photographer. And they couldn't paint the things that were there if they wanted to, because they couldn't paint. Well now, as I grew up and I learned a bit about painting, I wanted to keep that that was going to be lost. I wanted to keep that for the generations that're coming. That's why I paint those things • I can't write and I'm not a good speaker, but painting will tell it in a way that I can do that. That's why I paint--to record history, in the only way I can record it. (And what you paint, it's not just what you were told....) No, no, no, no, no. Those horses, they are painted from memory. I can see them just as plain--and if there was a cracked window in a house, I can remember it. I was starting to paint when I was about 16. But I let it go for maybe 20 years or so. I didn't do any when I was working machine work and that. I didn't have time. And my daughter sent me a box of paints one time for a Christmas present--my wife asked her to do it--"Get him painting again." And I started, I suppose that would be 25 years ago, and I haven't stopped. I keep painting now and then, a picture some months, some



months none. And before I tackle that picture, I can see everything. I'm studying unconscious all the time, all the time--and I can see that coming, coming, coming. And when I get the brush started, as I get one thing done I can see the other. I can see the exact colour, the exact figure that's going to come out. Yeah. (Do you ever dream about your paintings?) Yes, often, often. (Before you paint them?) When I'm concentrating on them. Sometimes when I get up in the morning I have it half done when I wake up. In my mind. (You know what the colours are going to be...?) I know exactly, because it takes a lot of mixing of paints to make colours, you know. Now, I painted a picture of a Dutch ship, an old, old ship that's not in existence any more, and to get the colour of the water that I wanted, I had to mix gray, white, French ultramarine blue, and cobalt blue, and a little speck of gray mixed (23)